NEW FEATURES REGULAR COLUMNS & MORE

BITTEN BY THE BUG
creepy-crawly fans descend on University

CREATURES OF THE DEEP
what lurks in the ocean depths

FIRMS SHARE SECRETS
‘collaborative innovation’ project launched

ZORRO UNMASKED
student fencer wins gold
Welcome

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted how students and colleagues across the University have excelled in many areas during her recent Annual Staff Address. She emphasised how they make the University a welcoming place where ideas take shape, knowledge is created and where education transforms lives.

So what better way to showcase our enterprise mission in action and how it’s making a difference than in UPfront?

Groundbreaking new research, academics leading their field and students receiving acclaim for their work...it’s all here.

The VC also spoke about the ‘energy’ and ‘enthusiasm’ of students and staff – and we hope to have captured that in the stories covered in this edition.

There’s everything from pioneering research into the management and prevention of sports injuries to international recognition for one of our resident sustainability experts.

We know there’s lots of great work going on here at the University, so if you’re aware of a team or individual who is excelling, involved in a groundbreaking piece of work, or doing something quirky or unusual, then get in touch with us.

There are some exciting new changes earmarked for future editions – including a new ‘spotlight on an academic’ section. So if you are interested in being featured, or know someone who might be, then get in touch!

I hope you enjoy this edition – and welcome any feedback.

Richard Turner
Editor

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Gregory Borne

“The opportunity to test new ideas and innovations tempered by risk culture...”
An academic is ‘going for gold’ and aiming to put the University at the top of the podium after looking at how sustainability is engrained in planning the Olympic Games.

Dr Gregory Borne has been tapping into how the Olympic Committee is preparing for the Games, when they come to London next year. And the top tips he has learned from one of the biggest construction projects in Europe could help the University become more sustainable – one of its key strategic goals.

Dr Borne explored how the ambitious vision for the ‘greenest Games ever’ in areas like waste, biodiversity and healthy living, is being realised on the ground in East London.

He also looked at the role of individual leadership in making change happen and the skills needed to drive sustainable development.

The visit included a tour of the Olympic Park, as well as local communities in the host borough of Hackney where the Games will leave a lasting legacy through urban regeneration.

Dr Borne spent time with some of the finest minds in the field during the fact-finding mission after being awarded membership of a leading international sustainability charity. He is one of just 30 people in this country to become an International Fellow for the Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD), which aims to inspire leadership for a sustainable world.

He said: “The Olympics can be a catalyst for change locally, nationally and internationally and the insights I gained will be of extreme importance to the University

and the city of Plymouth around sustainability, as there are significant lessons to be learned through best practice.

“The Olympics provide a fundamental blueprint for designing and implementing a project from a sustainable development perspective.

“The practical application of the work we did on the Olympics for Plymouth are many and include a need for clear vision and objectives, good governance, proper management around sustainable development integrated into wider project management processes, the opportunity to test new ideas and innovations tempered by risk culture, and the need for new types of money and funding for sustainable development.”

As well as visiting the Olympic site as part of his induction to LEAD, Dr Borne went to Brussels to see how the European Union negotiates international treaties, regimes and frameworks in relation to climate change underpinned by sustainable development. He also visited poor townships in South Africa to explore how sustainable development had been integrated into life there in the post-apartheid era.

Membership of LEAD has given Dr Borne unprecedented access to the valuable knowledge and resources based around different areas of sustainable development on an international basis – including academics, politicians, non-governmental organisations and multinational corporations.
UNIVERSITY OF PLYMOUTH

ROUND UP

It has been another jam-packed term...here are some of the edited highlights as captured by our photographer Lloyd Russell.

Gateway celebrated its first anniversary recently – with nearly 30,000 people visiting the University’s careers and employability service.

The University scooped its first ever Health at Work Award after impressing judges with its stress-busting and fitness work to improve staff wellbeing.

Local religious groups, students and staff celebrated the official opening of the University’s new multi-faith centre where students receive advice and support, study and socialise.

People were ‘bitten by the bug’ during an Insect Film Festival hosted by the University when they got up close and personal with creepy-crawlies like tarantulas, giant hissing cockroaches and stick insects.

A packed audience saw the Vice-Chancellor’s Annual Staff Address when Professor Wendy Purcell considered the major challenges ahead in higher education and how staff will help to shape the future direction of the University.

upfront

4 Spring 2011 • Issue 64
Academics and students have just started looking at the best techniques to cool the body to prevent and manage injuries and ensure quick recovery to return to peak physical condition after undertaking strenuous sports activity.

Particular emphasis is being placed on the use of cryotherapy techniques where low temperatures are used as a form of medical therapy to remove heat from the body to ease pain, spasms or inflammation. These ‘cool down’ techniques are beneficial as they help remove waste products produced in the muscle during exercise, aiding recovery and reducing pain. By cooling the muscle, its heat damage and inflammation can be reduced, enhancing subsequent performance.

The research will involve assessing the effectiveness of the cryotherapy between training sessions for high-performance sportsmen and women by working with around ten local swimmers from Plymouth Leander – including double Commonwealth Games medallist and University student Antony James. This is the first time research of this kind has centred on swimmers and it will take around six months to complete, with ice baths being compared to other forms of ‘cool down’ techniques, such as recovery swimming and stretching. The swimmers’ pain ratings and blood lactate levels will be measured to establish what is the most effective method to aid and speed up recovery – and that could have major benefits for people in other sports too.

Matt Barlow, an Exercise Physiologist at the University who is leading the research, said: “The findings could help Antony James and other top swimmers in their quest to win medals for Britain in top competitions like the Olympics. They will be able to manage their bodies based on tried and tested scientific evidence backed up by hard facts, thereby ensuring that they are in peak physical fitness to compete at the highest level.

“This could form part of Anthony’s competition strategy – hopefully giving him the edge in competitions. He is very keen on this research, as he understands that even a small gain in performance could be the difference between first and second place.

“The University could be contributing to the future success of the nation’s sports stars as it will have relevance to other sports.”

Indeed, although the research is particularly looking at competitions where swimmers may have more than one heat in a day and therefore need to recover quickly and efficiently between races, it could apply to any high intensity sprinting sport where multiple bouts are required, so the results are likely to be useful in athletics too.

The Marine Institute has awarded a grant of £7,500 for its marine sports researchers to buy ice baths for the pioneering study – and the University is believed to be one of the first in the country to use them.
LUVVLY BUBBLY

A group of students from the University enjoyed a real champagne moment when they were granted a rare behind the scenes glimpse of an industry shrouded in mystery.

The MSc Marketing Management and Strategy postgraduates met champagne connoisseurs who gave them the lowdown on the industry and even shared a few of its trade secrets.

They learned about the process of making champagne and how different flavours can be linked to marketing to boost sales, during their fact-finding mission in France.

And no visit would be complete without practical work – with the students tickling their taste buds and knocking back some of the bubbly themselves. They visited four champagne houses in the Reims area and sampled eight champagnes – purely for research and educational purposes, of course.

The students certainly know their stuff – and can distinguish a fine vintage from a cheap bottle. For the rest of us novices, a quality champagne is one that produces a crisp and fresh taste with a good balance of flavours.

Course leader Dr Rob Angell said: “The trip was an excellent opportunity for the students to see a region in the world which is commodity driven – literally, in champagne, everything that the locals do, involves champagne.

“It gave students an insight into an industry which is fairly complicated in nature, and one in which few people know the process from raw ingredients to the finished product on supermarket shelves.”

For many people, the mere mention of champagne used to conjure up images of high society parties with the great and the good rubbing shoulders. But that myth has been busted in recent years and a bottle of bubbly is now on many households’ shopping lists when there’s a good reason to celebrate.

Rob added: “Champagne has positioned itself as the premium celebration drink. The way in which the laws – and love for the product – do not allow houses to deviate in the production process, means that the quality of champagne is guaranteed and consistent and this makes people more willing to come back time and time again to celebrate with it.”

We couldn’t let an opportunity like this pass without asking Rob to share his top tip on a good champagne on a shoestring budget. His choice? The Pommery NV, which is suitable for all foods and occasions and costs around £30 in British supermarkets and £18 across the Channel.

We’ll raise a glass to that...
BILL RAMMELL
WAS RECENTLY APPOINTED AS
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR.

He brings a wealth of experience of government and working in education, having served a 13-year tenure as Labour MP for Harlow. During his political career he was Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education and Minister of State at the Foreign Office and for the Armed Forces.

Prior to that he worked for both the University of London and King’s College London as General Manager of their Students’ Union, was a Regional Officer for the National Union of Students, and Head of Youth Services at Basildon Council.

Here we put him under the spotlight to find out why he joined the University, what qualities he will bring to the institution and his plans for the future.

WHAT APPEALED TO YOU TO COME AND WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY?

I made a conscious decision after the election that I didn’t want to return to parliamentary politics, but I felt I still had another big challenge left in me.

I wanted to come to Plymouth for many reasons, including the palpable ambition of the University and the energy around the place.

I was attracted by the shared belief to transform lives and communities through education, a shared vision around enterprise and how the University is differentiating itself from other institutions, as well as the impressive £150 million investment in student services here.

I’m also excited about the opportunity to use my experience to develop the student experience here and promote internationalisation at Plymouth.

HOW DO YOU THINK YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE HERE?

I worked in education for a long time before becoming an MP and I’m really looking forward to going back.

I hope to bring a number of specialist skills to the table, including an understanding of the political landscape around higher education, a strong contacts base on the international scene – which I hope will help the University attract more foreign students – and the experience of running the largest student portfolio in the country.

DESCRIBE YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE...

I’m an energetic, outgoing, open and accessible manager and leader who listens.

I have high standards for myself and for others.

HOW DO YOU SEE HIGHER EDUCATION EVOLVING IN THE NEXT DECADE?

I believe that there will be a global hierarchy of universities and we’ll increasingly be in competition with institutions from overseas.

I think we’ll see more opportunities for students here at Plymouth to study abroad as part of their courses, which will help to broaden their minds and help them become more self-reliant.

One of the ideas we are exploring is to create a campus overseas and this would have benefits such as increasing opportunities for research, raising awareness of our ‘Enterprise’ brand and bringing additional income to the University.

FROM WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY, WHERE IS THERE ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT/DEVELOPMENT HERE?

There’s lots of great work already going on here – for example, I’m coming to an institution which is well led and where great emphasis is placed on research.

I’m keen to ensure that we incorporate the student voice right through the system and, importantly, also feed back to them on what we are doing.

WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL PRIORITIES?

I will be talking, learning and connecting with people, so that I can hit the ground running. I’ll also be reviewing my portfolio areas in student experience and internationalisation.

WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR CAREER SO FAR AND WHY?

The high points for me professionally include being the first and only British government minister to visit North Korea and engage with their regime; I’m also proud to be the minister who overhauled the fees system – which has seen the number of applicants increase, including those from poorer backgrounds; and I was delighted to be involved in work around the regeneration of Harlow.

TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF THAT STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY MIGHT NOT KNOW?

I used to be Ricky Gervais’s boss when he was Entertainments Manager at the University of London’s Students’ Union – and, no, his David Brent character wasn’t a take on me, although I know who he is based on! That’s a secret pact between the two of us though! He is a personal friend and a funny guy. I could tell he would go far when we worked together.

I’m also very passionate about football – I’m a big Spurs fan – and cricket.
Companies are always looking for ways to stay one step ahead of the competition and, in the past, have kept bright ideas and top tips under wraps. But that’s about to change, thanks to a ‘collaborative innovation’ partnership scheme to encourage firms to alter their mindset and share best practice.

The three-year project will help nurture innovation among around 1,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Somerset to boost their economic resilience, competitiveness and rate of growth.

They will also be encouraged to make greater use of external input in their own business and to licence out any ideas, processes or equipment which they aren’t using.

The University and its partners in the project – Somerset County Council and Southwest One – will be offering collaborative workshops, training, mentoring and support to businesses thanks to a €250,000 grant from the North West Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme.

Roger Hall, Project Manager in Research and Innovation at the University, said: “Somerset has a relatively low knowledge base, so we want to help companies up their game and improve the region’s innovation levels and boost their knowledge economy.

“Our message is simple: ‘Don’t try and innovate on your own; use what is around you, as well as your internal ideas, and when you have a technology or idea that you don’t use, licence it out to another organisation who will’.

“Involving other parties when developing new products and technologies can be of great added value.

“Enlightened companies are evolving to more collaborative approaches and moving fast to stay competitive.”

Anyone at the University who would like to get involved with the project should contact Mr Hall at roger.hall@plymouth.ac.uk
The quintet have seen their works catch the judges’ eye to reach the final of the ‘Best of British Illustration’ Awards.

The students’ shortlisted submissions range from a gorilla adrift in an urban area to a picturesque rural scene of the English countryside.

In some cases they would have taken up to three days to produce, plus time spent researching, hand rendering and then scanning the designs onto a computer, for final editing.

The showpiece event is run by the Association of Illustrators (AOI), the champion of the industry and the only professional body for illustration in Britain. An expert panel of internationally-acclaimed judges will select the winners from the best up-and-coming talent from around the country in August – with evidence of an individual, unforced visual language and strong, characterful drawing uppermost in their thoughts.

The designs of all five students will feature in the ‘new talent’ section of the AOI’s annual catalogue, which is read by leading figures in the industry.

Illustration is big business, with lots of career paths ranging from film directors to gallery artists – and the award will help to set the students apart from their peers and open up new doors for them in an expanding industry.

Ashley Potter, Programme Leader of the Illustration course at the University, said: “To be selected to appear in the annual catalogue is a real honour for any illustrator – student or professional – and they will reach a vast number of commissioning art directors across the world.

“We try to instil into our students that it’s no good being brilliant at illustration in your own bedroom – networking and entrepreneurial spirit need to be a large part of how they will become successful.”

The students at the University – who have beaten hundreds of others from around the country to be shortlisted for the award – are Laura Kingdon, Rob Hodgson, Sam Rennocks, Oli Butcher and Helen Butler.
It’s a challenge getting the right balance between providing an environment for creativity, risk taking and being enterprising without unduly creating an unsafe workplace at the University.

There are plenty of potentially dangerous situations that without careful management could leave health and safety inspectors tearing their hair out – from mixing cocktails of harmful and explosive chemicals in laboratories to diving at sea.

The stakes can be high in the pursuit of greater knowledge and research and one wrong move could lead to injury and also affect the reputation and financial credibility of the University.

But here at Plymouth robust processes, procedures and training ensure that health and safety isn’t a barrier to entrepreneurialism and sees us compare favourably with other universities, according to a member of staff’s painstaking research for the University of Strathclyde.

David Morton, the University’s Safety Officer, looked at how health and safety can successfully integrate into a vision of enterprise based on good governance, strong leadership and effective risk management.

The study considered university management systems at 15 universities around the world where similar themes of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship formed part of the management and cultural development of institutions.

Based on the findings of these universities, the key common themes which were highlighted in the study were the importance of a safe working environment, the development of enterprise networks internally and externally across the academic and business community, a drive for excellence, and a move to develop opportunities in new technologies and to ensure that risks were addressed and that safety wasn’t compromised.

David said: “In recent times, Plymouth has experienced a transformation in its aim to be more creative, innovative and trying to meet the needs of staff, students and partners. A good safety system is essential in supporting this development through three essential principles: strong and active leadership across all levels, engagement with staff, and effective assessment and monitoring.”

“The recent Capita staff survey highlighted that 97 per cent of staff felt that they worked in a safe environment – a positive indicator that our safety systems are working.”

Other examples where David found Plymouth is performing well included strong health and safety compliance, with a solid framework of policies and procedures; no improvement notices or prohibition notices from the Health and Safety Executive; a new Annual Safety Inspection where faculties, schools and directorates have to assess their own areas; and improvements to buildings to benefit people with disabilities, including improved access.

He said: “You cannot prevent all accidents, but with good management and leadership you can prepare for the unexpected and significantly reduce the outcome.”

The dissertation, which was supervised by the University of Strathclyde and Edinburgh, also highlighted areas where health and safety policies are making a difference, including the development of a well-being framework for staff and students and a flexible risk management approach to the management of future risks in areas such as nanotechnology research, biodiversity and wave energy.

“97 per cent of staff feel they work in a safe environment”

David added that it was vital that students at the University were knowledgeable and respectful of health and safety to enhance their career prospects.

“In developing our relationship with the local community and business, it is important that our students are safety conscious and adopt safe working practices set out in their academic course work as this will give them a better chance of getting employment in the future,” he said.

“Employers are not interested in students who are not safety conscious and are considered a liability to their business and profitability objectives. Accidents are expensive to the person and the organisation.”
A University academic has helped unravel the largely unexplored weird and wonderful world of deep-sea marine life.

Videos and images of bizarre animals lurking hundreds of metres in the depths of the ocean provide a valuable insight into this mysterious habitat, thanks to a groundbreaking new website which allows academics and researchers to share their findings.

Dr Kerry Howell, an academic research fellow in the University’s Marine Biology and Ecology Research Centre, and her PhD student Jaime Davies, have spent five years painstakingly putting together images of over 460 species of deep-sea creatures which live at depths of up to 2,000 metres for their website.

And, as our pictures show, there really is a mix of the good, the bad and the ugly living down there!

Many of these bizarre creatures have gaping mouths, bioluminescence and stretchy stomachs to help them survive in an underwater world short of light, where the temperatures can be extreme and where food is in short supply.

The website will help scientists and researchers to map the wildlife of the oceans and assess impacts which can affect changes to sealife including changes in fishing activity, development of emerging energy, extraction of oil and gas, impacts of climate change, warming oceans or oceans becoming much more acidic.

Dr Howell said: “The website is the first of its kind that is openly accessible for academics to share their findings and is helping to standardise the identification of deep-sea species.

“It gives an insight into a deep sea environment which is less explored than the surface of the moon. Some of the creatures are beautiful, while others are right out of a horror movie!”

The deep sea creatures can be viewed at: www.marlin.ac.uk/deep-sea-species-image-catalogue

The Census for Marine Life, a global network of researchers in more than 80 nations, estimates that about 230,000 species of marine animals have been discovered, and that there could be a total of between 500,000 and 10 million species in the sea.

Scientists use submarines – either manned or remotely operated vehicles – that are controlled from the ship at the surface to discover and record marine life.
New talent injected into firms

A University programme has matched hundreds of recent graduates with businesses needing an injection of new talent.

Of the 274 interns involved in the scheme, 70% were retained by their host company.

Emma Hewitt, Head of Knowledge Transfer and Business Development at the University of Plymouth, said: “The 70% retention rate is a real testament to the quality of graduates in the region and the hard work carried out by the PGIP team in making sure the graduates and businesses were effectively matched. Indeed, 100% of participating businesses who responded to our survey said that they would recommend PGIP to other businesses, which is why the University has committed to offering a recruitment service to enable this programme to be sustainable”.

The Plymouth Graduate Internship Programme (PGIP) was launched after the University was awarded funding £440,000 from the Government to stimulate graduate employment and was tasked with placing 274 interns into businesses based in Devon and Cornwall.

Internships were for a minimum of eight weeks and were designed to give the intern the opportunity to gain practical, hands-on experience of ‘real world’ working – where possible in their chosen industry – and to progress their careers locally over the next few years.

From a business perspective, the programme provided an opportunity for employers to expand their workforce and tap into the up-to-date knowledge, fresh ideas and enthusiasm of graduates, while also receiving financial assistance of up to £1,450 towards the intern’s salary.

The innovation centre at the heart of the University’s enterprise work in Cornwall is proving so popular with the business community that it has shattered all expectations and forecasts.

The Pool Innovation Centre took just 20 weeks to reach a near 50 per cent occupancy target which had been expected in year three of its operation. And over 4,000 people have now passed through its doors attending one of a remarkable number of events engaging people at grass roots level in the business community.

Not bad for a first-of-its-kind facility in the county, and one with award-winning environmental credentials to boot. As Bernard Curren, Director of the Innovation Centres of Cornwall, said: “We have had to work very hard to ‘build the market’ and explain exactly what an innovation centre is. But this has been a tremendous start and has ensured that we are genuinely plugged into the local business network.”

The University won the 25-year-contract to run the centre on behalf of Cornwall Council in a competitive bid, and is the preferred operator on two other planned centres, the first of which has been confirmed in the last few weeks at the Tremough campus in Camborne. Built at a cost of £12 million from Convergence and Regional Development Agency money, the three-storey complex is now home to 22 businesses, with several more in the pipeline. But it is not just the incubation potential of the facility that is its selling point.

“It is a resource for the whole business community in Cornwall,” said Bernard. “We operate an inclusive policy – we are here to partner with a whole range of organisations, stimulating enterprise and economic growth.”

Over 500 events have already been held, from those aimed at helping the long-term unemployed to an inspirational business workshop run by Professor John Potter and yachtsman Pete Goss. With artwork adorning the walls courtesy of nearby Cornwall College students, and the chance for people to drop in and use the wifi in the break-out spaces, the socio-economic focus of the innovation centre is apparent.

Bernard added: “PIC gives us not only a footprint in Cornwall, but a network to engage with in the course of our other enterprise work, such as knowledge exchange and community research.”

“And the beauty is we are already strategically aligned with the work being done in Plymouth through the Peninsula Growth Acceleration and Investment Network.”

If you have an event that you would like to stage in Cornwall, contact Bernard at bernard.curren@plymouth.ac.uk
He got special access to the inner sanctum of the club – something every die-hard supporter dreams of.

Jon, who works in the Student Registry Office, has been going to Home Park since he was a young lad in the early 1980s.

So the chance to watch a training session, talk tactics with Greens’ boss Peter Reid and his sidekick Paul Mariner, and enjoy lunch with the players and management was too good to miss.

Jon – who is a UEFA B licensed coach – has since put some of the tactical tips he learnt on the day into practice with the Launceston team he is player-coach of in the South West Peninsula Premier League.

“Peter Reid was a really nice, down-to-earth guy, and even offered to help me with my coaching badges in the future,” enthused Jon. “I was very impressed with the passing and possession training drills I saw and am now using them myself.”

The biggest eye-opener of the day for Jon was the incredible attention to detail of a top secret scouting report on the opposition, which the Argyle boss let him view.

The in-depth dossier left no stone unturned and contained everything from diagrams of player movements to the strengths and weaknesses of their kicking during a game.

But the meticulous preparations couldn’t legislate for Argyle having two players sent off, as they lost 3-2 to Oldham in the League One clash that weekend.

“The season hasn’t been great so far, but I’m sure Peter Reid will turn it around if he gets the chance to bring his own players in. I could tell he was a manager who had a great rapport with the players and coaching staff, but also that he wasn’t someone to cross,” said Jon.

Probably just as well then that Jon didn’t mention he was a Liverpool fan to Reid, who had a distinguished and trophy-laden career at their Merseyside rivals Everton!

Jon was also given access to the home team’s changing room and boot room and even had a cup of tea in the manager’s office during the visit.

But it wasn’t the first time that Jon has been to the hallowed turf at Home Park – he’s played there twice against the Greens during trials as a right back with Cheltenham Town.

Jon won the prize at a silent auction during the Partners Through Sport Celebration Dinner, co-hosted by Back the Bid and the University, which brought together key parties who were trying to bring World Cup games to the city had England got the go-ahead to host the event in 2018.

And, to cap a great day, he also got the players to autograph his five-year-old son Ryan’s treasured Argyle shirt.

Plymouth Argyle fan Jon Dawe was handed the opportunity of a lifetime when he was treated to a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the club after winning a University competition.
STUDENT TROUBLESHOOTERS
HELP LOCAL BUSINESSES AND COMMUNITIES

Students from the University are being parachuted into local businesses and communities to make use of their specialist skills and knowledge, as part of an innovative social enterprise scheme.

The Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) project sees participants gain a valuable insight into the working world and vital hands-on experience, whilst improving the working practices and output of businesses which have called on their help.

The students are also working in local communities, volunteering their services to help improve the lives of local people and getting involved in multi-agency projects, including urban regeneration.

One of the key projects is to work with Plymouth City Council to develop and enhance the way migrants positively integrate and engage in the area.

This will involve students working with community members and council staff to build a website that will bring all resources for migrants into one central place and create a hub for dialogue and communication between the many different groups to break down barriers, dispel myths and highlight their positive economic impact on the city.

The students will also be asking 30,000 people in Plymouth about their views and experiences of antisocial behaviour in partnership with the local council, police and MPs.

SIFE places particular emphasis on five core areas – market economics, personal success skills, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and business ethics – and the students are guided by University and business advisers.

Marc Lintern, Head of Employability at the University, who is helping to establish the initiative at Plymouth, said: “SIFE is dedicated to nurturing the entrepreneurial skills of students, empowering them to analyse problems and develop solutions to make a difference in their communities, while developing the skills to become socially responsible business leaders. “It’s a great way for them to develop their skills and experience, while also providing a platform for these ‘ambassador’ students to promote the University among local and national businesses and graduate recruiters.”

There is a strong pool of talent for businesses and the local community to dip into, with students with business, finance, IT, sociology and graphic design skills signed up to the initiative.

The team, SIFE Plymouth, will have the opportunity to showcase their achievements when they compete with 40 other universities in the final of SIFE UK in April.

“there is a strong pool of talent for the local community to dip into.”
NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR HISTORIC SITE

The University’s plans to inject new life into historic Drake’s Place Reservoir and Gardens on North Hill have received a big vote of confidence from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), which has awarded the exciting project nearly £60,000.

The ‘Parks for People’ funding will be used for development work including further investigations, such as developing design plans, as well as building on partnerships with key local organisations and community groups who want to be involved in revamping the area and making better use of the space there.

The vision for the reservoir and gardens includes opening up a new public access route from North Hill to the Enterprise Cafe in the University’s Nancy Astor Building, maintaining an area for wildlife that naturally occurs in and around the reservoir, and highlighting items of historic interest. The site will also be used for learning and training projects for the community, as well as students and staff of the University.

Plymouth City Museum and Plymouth High School for Girls are just two of the local organisations that have already expressed interest in partnering the University in historical and scientific projects linked to the area.

“This is a fantastic example of our community engagement in action – driving up opportunity for local people to enjoy the University being at the heart of our City,” said Vice-Chancellor, Professor Wendy Purcell. “We want to see this very special space become a focal point for a wide variety of events and activities, open to all. “It will be a jewel in Plymouth’s crown and continue the University’s role, along with its partners, in helping to regenerate key areas of the city.”

Last year, the University established the Friends of Drake’s Place Gardens and Reservoir Association and launched a programme of events – including a cultural garden party and Christmas carol singing – that will be expanded in coming months.

Following development work, the University will submit its application to the HLF for the next stage of the project and, if successful, further significant funding will then be provided to bring the plans to fruition.

Regular updates on the project will be available at www.plymouth.ac.uk/community

Got ideas and suggestions for activities, events or learning and research projects that could take place in the area? We want to hear from you!
Please email drakesplace@plymouth.ac.uk

What’s the story?

Drake’s Place Gardens and Reservoir have a rich history dating back to the 16th century, when Sir Francis Drake was instrumental in a scheme to channel water from Dartmoor to Plymouth via what became known as Drake’s Leat.

To read more, visit www.plymouthdata.info/WaterSupply-Plymouth.htm
Student puts rivals to the sword

James Harris

The University can lay claim to having its very own Zorro after a student won a prestigious national fencing competition.

But unlike the legendary caped swordsman, who went to extraordinary lengths to conceal his identity, we can unmask James Harris and his wonderful achievement.

Fencing fanatic James received a trophy and gold medal after winning the final of the Men’s Epee – the heaviest form of fencing weapon – which is his best competitive victory.

It's the first time that the University has had a student on top of the podium in fencing at the British Universities and Colleges Sport event, which attracted 120 competitors.

Now James, who is currently ranked eighth in the country, has set his sights on breaking into the top five by next summer and eventually being crowned British Number One.

He’s also aiming for a medal haul at the top events – the European, World and Commonwealth Championships and the Olympics.

James said: “Fencing appeals to me because it is both physically and mentally tough and provides me with a challenge, as I set my goals at a high standard.

“My strengths include the ability to adapt to the fencers I am fighting and the timing and distance of my attacks or counter-attacks.

“There is always room for improvement in every aspect of fencing, from footwork and speed of attack to fitness.”

The University has supported James – who is studying civil and coastal engineering – by awarding him a sports scholarship to help fund his entry, transport and accommodation costs when competing and also free gym membership to build up his general fitness and stamina.

James has been fencing for over 12 years and now dedicates around 15 hours a week to the sport, dividing up his time between practising, gym work and tactics.

And he has a few permanent reminders of just how intense and competitive the sport can be.

"Sometimes you do get hits which hurt a lot,” said James. “I have been hit several times which have drawn blood and I have got a few scars, despite wearing my kit.”

As one of the country’s top fencers, it’s likely that many of his opponents have come off worse!