

RESEARCH MATTERS

Celebrating research success and opportunities at the University of Wolverhampton

ISSUE 17

New research institute opens doors for national brownfield regeneration

Partners have celebrated the official opening of the National Brownfield Institute (NBI) at the University of Wolverhampton's flagship £120 million Springfield Campus, opening doors for the future of brownfield regeneration.

The Interim Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Campbell, and Professor Chaminda Pathirage from the University's School of Architecture and Built Environment, welcomed Leader of City of Wolverhampton Council Councillor Ian Brookfield, Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street, and MP for Wolverhampton North East Jane Stevenson to open the building.

The 'shovel-ready' project benefited from £14.9million of funding from the Government's Getting Building Fund for the West Midlands. City of Wolverhampton Council worked closely with the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to secure the funding, with the remainder provided by the Government's Towns Fund.

The NBI is a world-class institute that will develop modern methods of building through innovation and partnership with the construction industry, focusing on the practical application of future brownfield regeneration and remediation through the work of research teams, leading policy development, and commercial services.

The new Institute is ideally placed to identify and address gaps in current provision, with a particular focus on the digital skills needed to transform the industry, bringing together



expertise from across the region and further afield with greater focus on construction design, Building Information Modelling (BIM), off-site modular construction, and lean construction methodologies.

The partnership funding has allowed for investment in state-of-the-art robotic technology, including: Spot, the agile, mobile robot dog, designed by Boston Dynamics; the latest wearable and hand-held laser scanning devices used for high-quality reality capture of buildings and sites; and Igloo Vision, an immersive visualisation suite, providing businesses with access to equipment that stimulates collaboration, simulation, and visualisation.

The NBI will secure the City of Wolverhampton's position as an international leader in sustainable construction, circular economy, and brownfield development and will deliver new skills, jobs, and opportunities for local people in the city.

Professor Ian Campbell, Interim Vice-Chancellor at the University, said: "We're delighted to have welcomed partners and our key stakeholders to officially open the National Brownfield Institute today.

"The NBI will be at the heart of a West Midlands Construction Training Offer – providing the industry with the skills needed both now and in the future. As well as being at the forefront of a transformation of the way we will build homes and communities, it will also ensure that we learn from research around the world on modern construction and remediation technique.

"The NBI will help as a catalyst in the utilisation of brownfield sites and provide developers with advice and knowledge in relation to areas such as building scanning, soil analysis, ground water contamination and ground stabilisation to effectively bring those sites back into use."

EDITORIAL WELCOME

Professor Silke Machold, Dean of Research at the University of Wolverhampton

2022 has been rather full of challenges. Even as we saw pandemic restrictions being lifted, colleagues and research students alike were getting changed research projects back on track, whilst struggling with seemingly ever-increasing demands on our time. The University has faced financial difficulties which resulted in organisational changes. With great sadness we saw and continue to see valued colleagues leaving the University.

There is much rebuilding to be done, but we also have a very strong basis from which that can happen. As the REF2021

results have shown, we have excellent research across all subject areas. We make a real difference with our research locally, nationally, and internationally – whether that is addressing caste discrimination, improving health outcomes for dancers or developing biodegradable polymers to reduce plastic waste, to name a few.

Our researchers always go the extra mile to share their knowledge, skills and experience – so much so, that our research students rated the quality of supervision and research culture so highly, we were ranked in 12th and 5th respectively out of 89 participating institutions in the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey PRES2021.

We have created strong research partnerships including with teams at the Royal Wolverhampton Trust, City of Wolverhampton Council and other local and regional governments, with the Black

Country Museum and many voluntary sector organisations, and with Birmingham City University as part of the 'That's Me' project. In this issue, we are sharing again some of the many awards, projects and collaborations that are ongoing.

It has been an honour and privilege to serve as Dean of Research for the last five years and to have seen research and researchers flourish. I am very happy to hand over research leadership to Professor Damien Page where I know it will be in safe and capable hands. Best wishes everyone, it's been a pleasure to work with you all.



University receives national recognition for regeneration and community role



The University of Wolverhampton is one of the top institutions nationally for local regeneration and engaging with the public and community, according to new data.

Research England's Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) looks at the diverse contributions of universities to help level up their local areas.

The data shows the rich contributions English higher education providers (HEPs) make economically and socially, on both local and national levels.

It looks at the performance of universities from different perspectives including public and community engagement, working with partners ranging from big businesses to small local firms, and how they commercialise their research. The University was assessed in a cluster of universities that demonstrate more of a teaching focus and benefiting from research largely funded by government bodies and organisations. The University of Wolverhampton was identified as having evidenced very high engagement in terms of public and community engagement, plus local growth and regeneration. There was also high engagement in terms of working with the public and third sector as well as for IP and commercialisation.

Tim Steele, Pro Vice-Chancellor for International and Regional Development, said: "We are delighted to have received recognition for our role as an anchor institution in our region. The University's mission and priorities are shaped and informed by local knowledge and partnership engagement."

"Through working with our partners and collaborating, we transform individual life chances for the benefit of our students and our place. This enables us to make a significant contribution to improving the educational, social, and economic outcomes for our students and communities across our wider region."

The University's KEF submission included examples of key regeneration projects, such as: the £100m Wolverhampton Springfield Campus; the £9m Midlands Centre for Cyber Security in Hereford; and the £5m Marches Centre for Excellence in Allied Health and Social Care in Telford. These have involved strong partnership working between the University and Local Enterprise Partnerships, local councils and wider partner stakeholder groups from both public and private sector.

Research England will continue to develop future iterations of the KEF annually.



Research underway to improve the lives of families affected by domestic abuse

Researchers at the University of Wolverhampton are working in collaboration with Birmingham Children's Trust to improve the lives of families affected by domestic abuse. Domestic abuse is a significant and widespread national issue that has a profound and long-lasting impact on victims, their children, wider family, communities, and society.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 identifies that children exposed to domestic abuse are also victims. Research and experience identify that children and young people who are exposed to domestic abuse may experience emotional, mental, and social difficulties that can affect their developmental growth, life chances, and later relationships. Researchers Professor Elaine Arnall, Dr Mahuya Kanjilal, and Dr Nazanin Khastegnan in the University's School of Society and Community, have been awarded funding by Birmingham Children's Trust to research the effectiveness of the Trust's 'Think Family' domestic abuse service.

The Trust's 'Think Family' programme is a response to the Government's Supporting Families Programme to support targeted interventions for families experiencing multiple problems including domestic abuse, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor school attendance, unemployment, poor mental and physical health, and children in need of help and protection.

University experts begin their research this month, carrying out qualitative research to understand the impact their service is providing to families. The research team will also include some baseline quantitative research including the number of families supported, staff trained, number of services provided and for how long and their known outcomes, plus a rapid evidence review.

Elaine Arnall, Professor of Social Work at the University, said: "We are so pleased to undertake this important research in collaboration with Birmingham Children's Trust. "Many families are deeply impacted by domestic violence and developing a better understanding of the effectiveness of interventions is critical. "Working with families experiencing domestic violence and abuse also forms a large part of everyday social work practice. By working with social workers and other practitioners to understand what works potentially has a significant impact to improve the lives of many families across Birmingham."





Japanese Judo Champion joins University's research team

The University of Wolverhampton has welcomed Olympian Yoko Tanabe to embark on a research project with the School of Sport and British Judo. Yoko Tanabe is a three-time Judo Olympic medallist, a multi-world medallist, and holds the record for having won seven All-Japan judo championship titles, which is the most prestigious event within Japanese Judo.

Following her successful career as an elite athlete, Yoko entered academia and has continued her research focusing on coach development in judo. The inspiring athlete joins the University of Wolverhampton after taking a sabbatical from Nihon University in Tokyo, to carry out her research. Yoko will be based with the British Judo Olympic and Paralympic National Training Centre at the University's Walsall campus until April 2023. Yoko will combine work with British Judo's elite coaches and athletes and work with the University's Sport and Physical Activity Research Centre (SPARC) on a project to examine coach behaviours and beliefs in elite judo. The project will study elite judo coaches and athletes from across the UK and Japan with leading researchers from the School of Sport, including Professor Andrew Lane, Professor Tracey Devonport and Dr Ross Cloak supporting the project.

Dr Ross Cloak, Associate Professor at the School of Sport, said: "On behalf of the School of Sport, I would like to welcome Yoko to the University and say how excited we are to be working together over the coming months.

"Our research centre SPARC is excited to collaborate with not only one of the best female judo players of her generation but also a researcher with a passion for improving coaching practice within Judo. "The project provides opportunities for our students and staff to exchange knowledge and create impactful findings. Working with Yoko will also be a great benefit to our partners at British Judo and aspiring judokas."

Professor Yoko Tanabe, PhD Sport Sciences at Nihon University, said: "I am grateful for the opportunity to study judo coaching behaviours in cooperation with the University of Wolverhampton and British Judo.

"I am very happy to be able to work with Professor Andrew Lane, Professor Tracey Devonport and Dr Ross Cloak on the research, and Nigel Donohue's team on the judo high performance over the coming months."



Funding success to strengthen community engagement

The University of Wolverhampton's Centre for Sikh and Panjabi Studies (CSPS) has secured £35,000 to deliver three externally funded projects, which highlight the continued success of the Centre in addressing issues in local and regional faith communities.

The Director of CSPS, Dr Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, has brought together a team of academics from the University's School of Society and Community, School of Public Health, School of Allied Health and the Wolverhampton School of Art to deliver the projects, which are focused around healthy lifestyles and organ donation. One of the projects concentrates on delivering and disseminating a Healthy Lifestyles Toolkit to the Sikh community in Birmingham, which has been funded by Birmingham City Council. CSPS was previously commissioned by Birmingham City Council to write the Healthy Lifestyles Toolkit, which can be found on its website.

Another of the funded projects, also funded by Birmingham City Council, focusses on disseminating the Hindu Healthy Lifestyles Toolkit to the Hindu community in Birmingham. The dissemination of both the Sikh and Hindu Toolkits will primarily take place in places of worship and community hubs. The checklist will function as a monitoring tool to assess the impact that the dissemination has made on the lifestyle choices amongst Hindus and Sikhs in Birmingham. The third project, funded by NHS Blood and Transplant, will deliver awareness events amongst Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and Jains in Wolverhampton and Birmingham. This follows the successfully

Story 5 continued on the next page...

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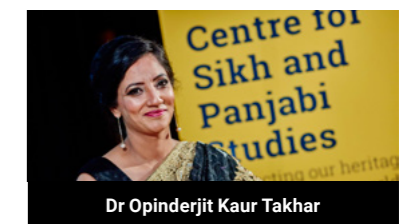
Primate behaviour changed as zoos closed for pandemic

Primates spent more time resting and alone, performed more sexual and dominance behaviours, and ate less when zoos were closed to the public during the first COVID-19 lockdown, a study suggests. Research involving experts in animal behaviour and welfare at Nottingham Trent University, Harper Adams University and the University of Wolverhampton investigated how the behaviour of bonobos, chimpanzees, western lowland gorillas and olive baboons changed as visitors began to return to zoos after prolonged and repeated periods of closure. Human-animal interactions and the impacts of the presence of visitors are considered crucial in relation to zoo animal welfare, with studies showing that different species and even individual animals respond differently to different humans. Research was undertaken in collaboration with teams at two zoos. Bonobos, chimpanzees and gorillas were observed at Twycross Zoo, while baboons were monitored by keeping staff at Knowsley Safari Park. The researchers found that as visitors returned bonobos and gorillas spent less time alone and gorillas spent less time resting. Chimpanzees ate more and engaged more with their enclosures when the zoo was open. Olive baboons performed less sexual and dominance behaviour when visitors

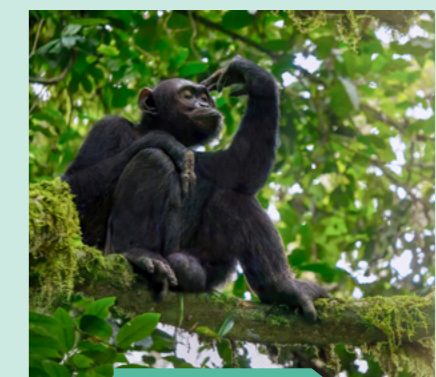
returned and approached visitor cars more frequently than they had the ranger's vehicle when the park was closed. The research team argues that, while it can be difficult to state accurately whether experiences were positive, negative or neutral for individual animals, the return of visitors appeared specifically to stimulate the chimpanzees and baboons. Similarly, bonobos and gorillas spending less solitary time could be seen as positive, although the reduction in resting behaviour in more sedentary gorillas could also suggest they were disrupted by visitors, the researchers say. The team observed that gorillas altered the use of their enclosure which suggested they were able to modify their behaviour to reduce potential overstimulation and manage their own experiences effectively. Baboons may have been stimulated by visitors and the presence of cars, the researchers say, but there was a threshold after which this did not increase. And the study reports that their increased sexual behaviour during closure may have been because they did not have the stimulation of the presence of moving vehicles. The University of Wolverhampton team included Dr Stefano Vaglio (Reader in Animal Behaviour), Dr Sara Fontani (Marie Curie postdoctoral fellow), and a University

Dr Opinderjit Kaur Takhar, MBE, said: "We are delighted to have received the funding to carry out these projects which have community health issues as their focus. The Toolkits cover a variety of areas such as physical exercise, healthy eating,

addressing mental health and many more. "The engagement will take place in places of worship which highlights that the Centre for Sikh and Panjabi Studies plays a key role in the health of the region. We have an excellent team of colleagues from across the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing, together with the Wolverhampton School of Art who will work collaboratively in delivering these projects. "In keeping with the ethos of place and presence, the Centre for Sikh and Panjabi Studies is also on the steering board of an exciting project from the Wolverhampton Art Gallery which focusses on the Sikh and Panjabi community in Wolverhampton. This is part of a larger national project by the National Portrait Gallery titled 'Citizen UK.'



alumna - Ms Sarah Hickman (MSc Wildlife Conservation). **Dr Vaglio said:** "This collaborative work with regional safari parks, zoos and universities provided us with invaluable insights about the impacts of the C19 lockdown closures on zoo animals. Our newly established EU-funded endocrinology laboratory based at the University's Rosalind Franklin building at its City Campus in Wolverhampton was crucial to add objective and rigorous hormone measurements to behavioural observations in order to assess such impacts." "Primates are some of the most cognitively advanced species in zoos and their interactions with visitors are complex," said Dr Samantha Ward, a zoo animal welfare scientist in Nottingham Trent University's School of Animal, Rural and Environmental Sciences.



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She said: “A limitation to understanding how visitors can affect behaviour of animals in zoos and parks is that they rarely close to the public for prolonged periods, so this provided us with a unique opportunity.” **Dr Ellen Williams, a zoo animal welfare researcher at Harper Adams University, said:** “Our study showed the varied ways in which visitors can influence the behaviour of primates in captivity. Behavioural changes and changes in enclosure use in the presence of visitors highlights the adaptability

of zoo species to their environments. Provision of environments which enable animals to actively adapt in this manner is really important for their welfare.” **She added:** “This collaborative study was really important in enabling us to understand the impacts of the closures on zoo animals. Future work could involve looking at the impact on a wider range of species in both zoos and safari parks as well as differences among individual animals.”

Behavioural data for the study was collected from April 2020 to September 2020, and November 2020 to January 2021, and spanned multiple open and closure periods. This study is published in the journal *Animals* with associated media coverage appearing in a very broad range of media outlets, including *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* as well as radio and TV channels that included BBC Radio 4 and ITV Central News. The story has also been covered in news outlets in Italy and Poland.

New toolkit launched to improve dementia care for South Asian people

People living with dementia from South Asian communities will benefit from improved culturally sensitive support, thanks to a new online toolkit launched by universities and charities.

The toolkit hosted by the Race Equality Foundation will provide enhanced care for members of South Asian communities – many of whom receive significantly less effective dementia care from statutory services compared to their counterparts from White British communities.

People from South Asian communities are at greater risk of developing dementia but are less likely to access all points of the care pathway – and more likely to present in crisis and/or at a later stage. They are more likely to face barriers including a late or missed diagnosis, reduced access to treatments, and inappropriate or inadequate support coupled with problems caused by language barriers. They often rely on local, community-led organisations for support. Alarmingly, the number of people from South Asian and communities with dementia is expected to increase sevenfold by 2051, due in part to inequalities in service provision and the increased risk of other health factors associated with dementia. For White British people, the rise is expected to be more modest – doubling over

the same time period. Combatting the current one-size-fits-all model, the South Asian Dementia Pathway Toolkit (ADaPT) aims to provide more accessible, tailored resources enabling services to provide more culturally appropriate care. Designed to address the uphill struggle that many people from South Asian backgrounds face, the toolkit includes short films, animations, awareness-raising materials, assessments, and post-diagnostic support – all of which have been culturally and linguistically adapted for people from South Asian communities. To ensure the toolkit was designed to meet the needs of these communities, public participants from South Asian communities (along with staff from voluntary and statutory services) were asked to share their experiences and feedback about the current level – or lack – of support and to identify what more was needed. The project was jointly led by researchers from the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) and the University of Bradford, with other collaborators including the Race Equality Foundation, the Dementia Alliance for Culture and Ethnicity, and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG, as well as researchers from the universities of Bath and Wolverhampton. It was funded by the National Institute for Health Research, under its Research for Patient Benefit Programme, and has been launched in Dementia

Action Week. Dr Karan Jutlla, Dementia Lead at the University of Wolverhampton, said: “Working with our public contributors on this project made powerfully evident the challenges faced by South Asian communities when attempting to access services. Indeed, the lack of knowledge of dementia in South Asian communities and lack of culturally inclusive care has led to a large proportion of people not accessing services. “Not only will this toolkit help commissioners, stakeholders, service managers, and health and social care professionals provide better support for South Asians living with dementia, but also provides resources for South Asian families. “One of our public contributors described the toolkit as ‘shining a torch for people who have been scrambling around in the dark’ as it describes an understanding of the dementia care pathway and evidenced-based resources and interventions. We hope that this toolkit will provide better outcomes for a hitherto neglected but growing part of our British community.” Following her dedication and commitment to support those affected by dementia, Dr Karan Jutlla has been announced Alzheimer’s Society’s new ambassador and will support the charity in its work to reduce healthcare inequalities and improve dementia diagnosis and care in the South Asian community.



Dr Karan Jutlla

Dr Karan Jutlla said: “I’m delighted to become an ambassador for the Alzheimer’s Society. Through my research, I know how crucial it is that support is available to everybody in a cultural, exclusive way. “By becoming an ambassador, I aim to shine a spotlight on the challenges faced by those affected by dementia from South Asian communities, highlight the support available and champion the way to further change. “Dementia does not discriminate, and I want to make sure that our healthcare system is able to provide support to people affected by dementia, despite their cultural backgrounds.”

Engaging with the changing character of Place



Dr Chris Wyatt

Dr Chris Wyatt, Impact and Policy Engagement Manager, and Dr Camelia Dijkstra, Head of Research Services, discuss working in collaboration on Place and Policy Engagement at the University. Place is an important theme at the University of Wolverhampton, forming a key part of the Institutional Strategic Plan and informing the way the University appreciates its role as a civic institution. The [University’s Strategic Plan](#) exemplifies this and states that: ‘We believe that universities are about transforming society by ensuring the needs of their Place, and that people are at the heart of what they do. Our Place informs the courses we teach, the research we invest in, and the skills we equip people with.’

This is echoed by a recent contribution from the **University’s Interim Vice Chancellor, Professor Ian Campbell**, who wrote: ‘Any attempt to truly level-up ‘left-behind’ regions that does not recognise the role of modern universities as anchor institutions and make them a central part of that mission would be missing a trick. Through the ongoing research they do and the technical and vocational education they deliver, modern universities are working to realise the government’s stated ambitions.

‘Often the biggest employer in their regions, universities are the beating civic heart of their local areas. Their successes are also their community’s successes.’ In such an encouraging policy environment, it was logical to focus on Place. The Place journey began with research into Place Policy and work to understand how best to interface with it, on a number of levels.

This is because Place, as we encounter it, manifests itself in different ways. For example, civic and local aspects of Place are immediately obvious but cross-regional ones, such as Free Ports, are less so. Colleagues at the University were also fortunate to be able to liaise with colleagues from other universities to understand what they do. Two groups stand out. These are: the University Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA). The ability to compare perspectives and experience has been invaluable and the willingness of colleagues to give so generously of their time has further illustrated the strong collaborative working for which the sector is so well known. The first task was to understand the Place Policy landscape, and this resulted in the [Place Policy Review](#), which was published by ARMA in September 2022.

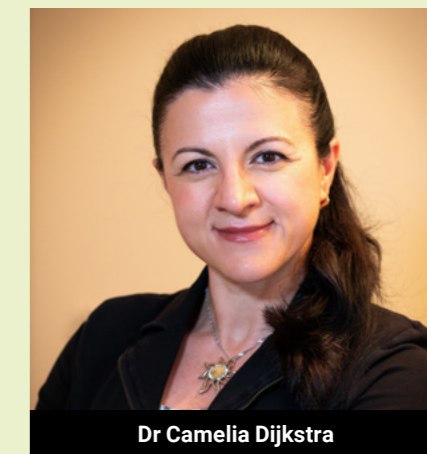
The Review summarised the policy discussion concerning Place and engaged with themes such as the importance of the local, economic factors, and the role of Levelling Up. These all provide policy hooks, which are so important to universities. An associated question is the changing character of Place. Changing ways of working and trading, especially in towns and cities, can have a considerable effect, something understood before the pandemic started. These changes alter both the structure and prosperity of the Places where higher education institutions are situated and this, in turn, affects the nature of engagement with local and regional interlocutors. While exploring the Place Policy landscape, a field enlivened by the publication of the [Levelling Up White Paper](#) in February 2022, attention turned to what best practice could be developed.

The integration of partnership, Impact, and funding was the optimal direction of travel, and a seminar series was developed, which was delivered with fifteen other colleagues and hosted by ARMA. The seminar series provided: ‘An overview on current policy on Place/Levelling Up, including the role that research and development and, specifically, the roles that partnership, impact and innovation can play in the Place agenda; and insights on how

different policy and funding streams can be brought together to support place-based impact, and research partnership and innovation activity, to bring benefit to an area/region or nation of the UK.’ The result was Place: Partnership, Impact and Funding: A Framework for Best Practice, also published by ARMA. This set out a checklist, which was designed to support research managers in the preparation of research proposals and which was also intended to be used to raise the quality of applications to UKRI, and other funders, for funding relating to Place. The publication of the above framework coincided with a blog, entitled *Reflections On Why Place Matters*, also hosted by [ARMA](#).

The second best practice publication was entitled [Enabling Universities to Engage Better in their Place: An Outline Toolkit](#), and has been recently published by UPEN. The Toolkit sees Place from various stakeholder perspectives and sets out the findings of a UPEN survey on Place, discussing what works for HEIs in terms of maximising best practice. The Toolkit collates member responses as a practical aid to support HEIs considering enhancing their engagement with the Place agenda and policy.

Taken together, the three publications provide both a survey of policy regarding Place, and two mechanisms through which managers and research professionals can develop best practice with regard to it. This represents an encouraging step forward in what is a new and emerging field. We are also mindful that policy is an ever-changing aspect of government and that there are more Place-related themes to explore, and we look forward to doing so in the months and years ahead.



Dr Camelia Dijkstra

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