PURPOSE:
In pursuit of Newcastle University’s vision of a world class civic university, to contribute to the understanding and practice of social renewal in NE England, the UK and internationally.

MISSION:
To show how a world class civic university can help people and societies thrive at times of rapid, transformational change.
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SOCIAL RENEWAL:

Process of Social Renewal

Forces of change both from outside and within

Public Sphere
Deliberative Democracy; Citizenship

Social Justice
Fairness; Social inclusion; Equality; Compassion

Prosperity
Economy; Wellbeing; Quality of Life

Thriving in context of rapid change
1. Key Messages from our first 5 years

Newcastle University pursues the vision of a world class civic university, promoting excellence with a purpose, in other words doing excellent academic work while actively engaged in the affairs of our city, region, nation and world. Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal operates as a focus for achieving this. Our goal is to contribute to the understanding and practice of social renewal – how to thrive during turbulent times. Thriving in turbulent times will not happen without addressing major societal challenges in an effective and innovative way. NISR therefore enables the University to play a key role in addressing a wide range of societal challenges. Happily, this vision of what a university should be also resonates and motivates colleagues and partners who share these values, and in Newcastle we have the opportunity to show that this can work.

NISR has made excellent progress during its first five years, achieving or exceeding all the milestones envisaged, and its approach is now embedded in the work of colleagues across the University and beyond. There are some outstanding examples of how excellent research (often engaged research) can make profound differences to people and society across many global, national and local societal challenges, presented in our Annual Reviews and on our website. What have we learned from this experience?

- Interacting with policy and practice partners is an effective means of social innovation and of creating new knowledge – generating academic outputs and impact case studies while helping people thrive in turbulent times.
- Leading scholars and partners are attracted and motivated by our vision of the world class civic university, enhancing the excellence of our research and teaching as well as helping to make a difference at home and abroad.
- Tomorrow’s ‘pillars of excellence’ are likely to grow from seeding and fostering interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research addressing complex and intractable societal challenges today.
- As we gain experience of working across these boundaries to address societal challenge themes we are better able to respond to new funding calls around global challenges, the industrial strategy and responsible research and innovation (RRI).
Our strategic objectives for the period 2017-18 will be as follows:

NISR will lead public debates in the understanding and practice of social renewal.

NISR will champion the vision of a world class civic university (excellence with a purpose) and its successful realisation.

NISR will engage in high-quality research, scholarship, learning and teaching that informs policy and practice at all levels and across many societal challenges through knowledge production and exchange.

NISR will build relationships, and work on selected projects on a co-creation basis, with trusted partners to improve the practices and effectiveness of social renewal.
2. Our Strategic Objectives

Through reviews of our work and constructive feedback we have identified four strategic objectives. These priorities guide our work and are embedded across all our themes.

Leading public debates in the understanding and practice of social renewal.

These are turbulent times. Even before the Brexit referendum and the US elections, people, communities and nations faced the challenge of adapting and thriving in times of rapid, transformational changes. Globalisation, digital innovations, international instabilities and austerity policies are among the forces contributing to a sense of powerlessness and a search for answers. Universities have a responsibility to bring their knowledge and skills to bear on the big societal challenges of our time, offering analysis, critique, new ideas and alternatives, and sometimes reframing debates. NISR will encourage and assist Newcastle University colleagues and partners to contribute to public debates and understanding of how best to thrive in turbulent times. Our work in this respect includes our research on the bedroom tax, cited in The Guardian; our innovative blog series on “Ideas for an Incoming Government” and “Messages for May’s Ministers”; our events “Devolution Revolution”, “Thriving through and After Brexit” and at the major Party conferences; the report “Re-imagining the countryside: what’s missing in rural policy?” discussed with officials in 10 Downing Street and cited in the Treasury’s Rural Productivity Plan; and Newcastle City Futures which engages stakeholders and publics across the city and beyond.

Championing the vision of a world class civic university and its successful realisation.

Our starting point is the idea of a civic university, somewhere with deep responsibility to its home city and its region, but at the same time attuned to and engaged with wider national and global issues. This reflects our belief in public service for the common good alongside evidence and excellence. As John Brewer puts it, “a civic university is a value statement as much as a new way of organising higher education: it is about encouraging universities to have souls, to nurture a normative commitment to improve the lives of communities, regions and nations.” At Newcastle University we have the opportunity to demonstrate to universities and funders worldwide that this approach is not only a better means of fulfilling universities’ role in society but is also successful in terms of the narrower, instrumental metrics against which we are increasingly
judged. This vision is already attracting leading scholars to join us in Newcastle, helping us build for the future; and, far from diverting colleagues from their core activities, it is also helping stimulate and motivate staff to improve our external funding successes and our published outputs. The Institute provides spaces for colleagues from across the University to interact, with ideas inspired by these hybridities feeding back into their parent disciplines and fostering innovation and excellence. In 2017 we hope to initiate a UK network of civic universities.

Engaging in high-quality research, scholarship, learning and teaching that informs policy and practice at all levels through knowledge production and exchange.

Excellence in research, scholarship, learning and teaching are essential foundations for advising, influencing and educating, as well as ends in themselves for any world class university. Excellence in each of these aspects can in turn be enriched through engagement and knowledge exchange, in the same way that research informs teaching and vice versa. Many scholars have argued that new knowledge is generated primarily through the dynamic interaction and combination of different knowledge forms, notably of explicit knowledge codified by academia and tacit knowledge acquired through practical experience. Certainly, universities have no monopoly on knowledge production, such that knowledge exchange is now widely recognised as important to research, scholarship and student learning (as, for example in service learning). Moreover, evidence is also emerging that research is much more likely to have impact if policy and practice communities are involved. Indeed we are not going to have an impact on global societal challenges without co-production. NISR has undertaken a considerable volume of work in this field, including the Carnegie report *Interactions: how can academics and the third sector work together to influence policy and practice?* along with many practical projects which have made real differences to society and which could form institutional impact case studies in REF2021 and beyond.

We continue to champion the use of experiential learning across the University to the benefit of our students as well as our partners. There are many ways that students already engage with the community that are linked to learning outcomes. There is substantial potential for the community and students alike to make such opportunities open to all students, both undergraduate and post graduate, and to structure the opportunities across faculties and central services such as Careers and Widening Participation.
Building relationships, and working on selected projects on a co-creation basis, with trusted partners to improve the practices and effectiveness of social renewal.

Often the complex, intractable nature of these challenges requires not only a transdisciplinary or interdisciplinary effort from academics but collaboration with other social actors and publics, including government, industry, NGOs and civil society. In some cases, this may require fuller involvement of various publics in the formulation of the research problem and subsequent interactions throughout the research process. Transcending boundaries (between disciplines, between universities and society, between business and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and between countries) and learning how to co-create knowledge with trusted partners is therefore a major theme of our work. Universities are anchor institutions. The different ways that we are working with partners suggests a number of innovative models of co-production. The European Commission characterises innovation in Horizon 2020 as a ‘quadruple helix’, through which universities work with public and private sectors and civil society to develop new approaches to economic and social renewal, and we are contributing to this in the H2020 Accomplish project, led by Groningen University. Examples of projects in Newcastle include City Futures/Urban Living, work with the West End Refugee Service, the Children’s Zone in the West End, and Citizens UK. Community driven digital technology and services through partnerships with industry will be part of these new relationships.

We continue to champion the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation. Our emphasis upon co-creation is embedded within our commitment to Responsible Innovation and the synergy of research with the values, needs and expectations of society.
Key issues:

- Change in power relations (parent-child)
- Changing roles
- Lack of documentation
- Planning & logistics - political & legal uncertainty
- Education
- Keeping links & communication & integration
- Income
- Family separation & guilt
- Lack of legal support
- Access
- Shelter
3. Cross-thematic Priorities

We continue to attach importance to our themes and to the work of the NISR theme champions whose contribution has been central to our success. Each theme addresses a social renewal issue of importance to society for which this University has the potential to make a difference through engaged local and global research and engaged teaching. These themes will be subject to change as new challenges emerge and as opportunities arise. We work to animate and draw together people around our broad themes, encouraging new synergies, emergence of research ideas and bids and of impacts/contributions beyond academia. Often this work will help contribute towards future REF Impact case studies.

During 2017-18, while continuing to support a broad range of activities under our themes, NISR will focus its resources especially on three cross-thematic and interrelated priorities. This approach will strike a balance between greater focus on three pressing cross-thematic priorities and the inclusive approach which we have adopted with our support so far. We are also committed to internationalisation, both at home and abroad.

New pathways to social renewal

Underlying the turbulent times in which we live are numerous forces for change, including globalisation, deregulation, digital technologies and many more. Attempts to manage and govern these forces have relied broadly on Keynesian economic management (1945-80) and latterly on Neoliberalism (1980 until now), and each has eventually failed. Keynesian management and the postwar settlement agreed in Bretton Woods gave the world greater stability, stronger labour rights and lower inequality but could not cope with the oil shock of the 1970s. Neoliberalism hastened globalisation and financialisation alongside growing inequality and insecurity in the western world, eventually leading to the 2008 economic crisis, austerity policies and perhaps the disaffection revealed in Brexit and the US election. There is now a pressing need for new thinking at this more abstract level: what new logics and theories could guide the management and governance of global change and national policy in the 21st Century? New thinking is needed to solve global societal challenges. While individual commentators publish their thoughts, we will explore what evidence-based contributions an interdisciplinary community of scholars might make together to this major challenge of our time. We are aware this is a hugely ambitious task, and we do not expect to produce a simple or complete answer; nevertheless, through this process we may develop some innovative and important contributions to rethinking a paradigm for thriving in turbulent times. Our search is therefore for new pathways to social renewal.
Thriving through and after Brexit

On 23 June 2016 a momentous decision was taken in the public referendum to leave the EU. The implications and consequences of this decision remain unclear while negotiations proceed, but they will be far reaching and set the UK on a new path of change. Apart from seeking to understand the reasons behind this vote to leave, there will now be many opportunities to contribute to debates about future policy directions and to help design new policies in many areas (e.g. social policy, human rights, regional policy, agriculture and rural policy). The subsequent election of Donald Trump as US President in November 2016 was another seismic political moment, and these two events have come to be associated with each other as evidence that our democratic systems are being transformed in various ways. Links have been drawn between the two, for example, with regards to populism and the belief that people can overturn the power of “elites”, with some commentators pointing to the resistance of ‘people left behind’ or ‘places left behind’ to neoliberalism, globalisation and rising inequality and insecurity. NISR has begun to provide fora in which researchers from different disciplines can come together to discuss these accounts, share ideas and stimulate colleagues to think how their own research might address the new opportunities and societal agendas which are opening up as a result.

Social renewal in the North East

Our region, the North East of England, has a proud history and many assets but also faces long-standing challenges arising from its post-industrial transition. Quality of life is high in many places but average incomes are low, services and institutions are threatened by reductions in public spending and governance is fragmented. There are challenges of building prosperity, tackling inequality, maintaining social cohesion and leadership, among others. Newcastle University is a major asset of the North East and its responsibility and commitment to the region is highlighted in Vision2021. Building on earlier work on Justice and Fairness in the City, during 2017-18 we will promote and support a coordinated programme of research and knowledge exchange directed towards social renewal in the North East, embracing economic, social and democratic renewal. We hope this programme will include a scoping phase, seminars and workshops, funding calls, collaboration and knowledge exchange with key partners, preparation and editing of an accessible book and briefing papers for public debate. Whilst this focus is regional, it will provide, through detailed case studies, insights that will have much wider global application and significance.
OUR THEORY OF CHANGE:

Champion vision of world class civic university, and promote university renewal across the UK and abroad.

Build relationships cross boundaries and promote engaged research and teaching that informs policy and practice.

Combine our expertise with other knowledge to address pressing societal issues, and make a difference to public debate and people’s lives.

Social Renewal: Thriving in Turbulent Times
4. Our Theory of Change

The Institute for Social Renewal envisages bringing about social renewal (and university renewal) through our theory of change.

Our starting point is the championing of Newcastle University’s vision of a world class civic university, excellence with a purpose, outlined above, both internally and externally. This requires challenging cultures and practices within universities, their faculties and schools and the ways in which staff have internalised the incentives and structures which surround them and which disconnect us from society. By changing our cultures and practices we will grow used to thinking about how to put our academic excellence to a social purpose. We hope to persuade universities elsewhere in the UK and abroad to adopt such a vision.

This, in turn, should encourage colleagues to build new relationships of trust and knowledge exchange, crossing boundaries between disciplines, between the academy and the worlds of policy and practice, and internationally. The wicked problems – the global social challenges we face – increasingly require us to work more holistically, calling upon interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary expertise, and bringing together many varied sources of knowledge through processes of co-creation, knowledge exchange and engaged research and engaged teaching. Such interactions will not only help to inform our research agendas, but also make it more likely that the results will be effective in, and available to, policy and practice, including in relation to global challenges associated with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This will be assisted by directed funding calls, springboard events, seedcorn funding, demonstrator projects and closer relationships with external partners, as well as training in our new Policy Academy and building capacity to access the Global Challenges Research Fund.

These approaches can be applied in many areas of research and teaching in the University, and accordingly we encourage and support a wide range of activity in an inclusive approach.
Ultimately our work will contribute to social renewal in the wider world – helping people, communities and societies to thrive in turbulent times across all societal challenges. Excellent research and teaching is a necessary foundation for this, but this is not sufficient: our research and teaching has to be put to use in the world, and this will be more likely if we can adopt a more outward-facing culture and learn new practices so that we can interact to mutual benefit with external partners and stakeholders who help shape our research and teaching agendas, and who carry our work into the world beyond academia and into use. These hybridities will, in turn, strengthen our research and teaching, helping to grow tomorrow’s ‘pillars of excellence’. We can offer thought leadership; we can educate our students as citizens of the future; we can work closely with partners; and we can inform policy and practice through knowledge exchange and co-creation. In these and other ways which we are still learning we will promote social renewal and help to realise the Newcastle University’s continuing vision of excellence with a purpose.
What do you think about migration?

Where is your home?

If you moved away from Tyneside where would you go and why?

Have you ever felt homesick?

Add a tag to this wall and share your thoughts.