Welcome from Director, Professor Mark Shucksmith
Newcastle University is known around the world for its vision ‘to be a world-class civic university’. Our guiding principle – excellence with a purpose – helps us to focus on understanding not just what we are good at, but what we are good for. With this in mind we seek to help address the major societal challenges of our time: ageing, sustainability and social renewal. We benefit groups, networks and communities beyond the University not as passive recipients of the University’s knowledge and resources, but as valued sources of knowledge in their own right.

From Director, Professor Mark Shucksmith
The Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal (NISR) established April 2012, is helping to realise this vision. NISR engages in the process of renewal in three main ways: as a thought leader; through the production and dissemination of high quality research and scholarship that informs policy and practice; and by working as appropriate on co-production projects with partners. Our intention is to explore new ways in which a research intensive university – its staff and students – can connect with society in order to make a difference.

We see the challenge of Social Renewal as addressing the question: how can people, communities and societies thrive when faced with rapid, transformational change? In Britain and worldwide, the impacts of globalisation, technological change, demography, and the uneven and volatile effects of capitalist economic growth are creating challenges of great magnitude to which there are no simple or obvious responses. A crucial element of any response is to gather research-based evidence; but equally important is to deliberate and debate what we understand to be a ‘good life’ and a ‘good society’. Universities play a crucial role in both these respects.

This Annual Review reports some of the ways in which the Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal is pioneering a new approach, enlisting expertise across Newcastle University to help address these challenges. A great deal of Newcastle University’s activity can be seen as related to Social Renewal – from analysing the impacts of welfare reform to working with post-trafficked women in Nepal; from investigating smart specialisation in regional economies to enquiry-based learning and rethinking the school curriculum.

We are proud of what we have achieved in 2013, but there is much more to do. I hope that this Review will convey to you some of the innovative ways in which Newcastle University is contributing to this societal challenge.

Professor Mark Shucksmith OBE, Director NISR
Newcastle University is committed to ensuring its research helps address some of the key global issues, and has three societal challenge themes which respond to some of the most pressing needs within society. NISR was set up to respond to the challenge of Social Renewal while our counterparts the Newcastle University Institute for Ageing and the Newcastle University Institute for Sustainability are the University’s responses to the other two societal challenges.

**Newcastle University Institute for Ageing**

Newcastle University is a world leader in research into ageing, its causes, and its social and health consequences. We have the largest number of academics working on aspects of ageing in Europe, led by our Newcastle University Institute for Ageing. The Institute aims to develop a new focus for the next generation of ageing research at Newcastle University. This new focus will acknowledge the future challenges of our ageing societies, namely, “How can we live better, for longer, in our communities and maintain our quality of life?”

Research focuses on key areas, including:
- Understanding the causes of ageing: Understanding how we age, what changes occur at a cellular level and how these can be reversed
- Understanding and treating diseases associated with ageing: Parkinson’s, Arthritis, Diabetes, Cirrhosis
- Lifestyle factors affecting healthy ageing: How diet, exercise and social activities can help people live healthier, longer lives
- Policies relating to ageing: Influencing Government and business on the impact and opportunities of an ageing population

More information on the work of the Institute can be found at [www.ncl.ac.uk/ageing](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ageing).

**Newcastle University Institute for Sustainability**

In the field of sustainability, the Newcastle University Institute for Sustainability coordinates research across traditional discipline boundaries to deliver practical, engaged solutions to real-world issues. Sustainability can be summarised as: ‘enough, for all, forever’.

Research focuses on these key areas of sustainability:
- Energy: How to produce energy in an environmentally-friendly and sustainable way
- Smart grids and energy storage: How to store renewable energy so that it is released at a time when consumers need it
- Transport (Road, Rail and Marine): Newcastle University has received more transport-related EU funding than any other university in Europe
- Water: Improving waste treatment and access to clean water, as well as predicting future climate change

More information can be found at [www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainability](http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sustainability).
Newcastle University’s work on social renewal during 2013 has enjoyed considerable success. We are pleased to have supported the Inspirational Women of the North East project, highlighting women’s achievements and contributions to public life in the region, and to have worked with the West End Refugee Service to tell the stories of asylum seekers and refugees as they made their homes here.

**Highlights of 2013**

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Other highlights have included:
- the award of a Queen’s Anniversary Prize for our work on rural economies and societies and the award of the Bertelsbos prize to Professor Philip Lowe
- the award to Professor Sugata Mitra of the $1m TED prize to pursue his work on the ‘School in the Cloud’
- the award of the Ramon Magsaysay prize to Shakti Samuha, our partners in Nepal helping survivors of trafficking
- Professor Sandel’s inspirational lecture on the moral limits of markets and the award of an Honorary Degree to Sir Michael Marmot for his work on health and inequality.

Most encouraging, though, has been the enthusiasm of colleagues to work together to address the challenge of Social Renewal, and to realise the University’s vision of excellence with a purpose.

**Labour Party Conference September 2013**

Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal was delighted to head to the Labour Party Conference in Brighton to take part in a fringe event organised by the University. This panel debate on “The University in the City” was chaired by local MP Chi Onwurah and featured contributions from shadow ministers Gordon Marsden MP and Gareth Thomas MP.

**Michael Sandel delivers 2013 Lord Patten Social Renewal Lecture**

Professor Michael Sandel (Harvard), the world’s ‘most relevant philosopher’ delivered the 2013 Lord Patten Lecture on Social Renewal. His talk ‘What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets’, examined how market values have come to define our lives in ways that aren’t good for democracy or the quality of public or private life. Professor Sandel argued that market values have spread into spheres of life where they don’t belong, and that this is corrupting ourselves, our society and our environment. He called for renewal of the public space so that we can debate these vital issues.

Professor Sandel’s lecture was filmed and can be watched on the NISR website: www.ncl.ac.uk/socialrenewal/about/AnnualLectures

**Inspirational Women of North-East England: Past, Present, and Future**

This exhibition, supported by NISR, ran at the Hatton Gallery from September until December. During that time, it is estimated 5000 people attended. The exhibition sought to make a contribution to redressing the historic and present-day under-representation of women’s achievements and contributions to public life in North-East England. It challenged the cultural and social stereotyping of women, particularly the undue emphasis on celebrities judged primarily for their looks and body image, and offered alternative iconic images of women from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, ages and religions. The exhibition received substantial media coverage, including Helen Berry’s appearance on BBC Radio 4’s Women’s Hour in December.

**Queen’s Anniversary Prize**

Newcastle University has been awarded the Queen’s Anniversary Prize for our work on ‘Places of Possibility: towards sustainable rural economies and societies’, led by Professor Philip Lowe at the Centre for Rural Economy and including work from across the University. These prizes honour work of outstanding importance and quality in HE and FE in the UK. The result was announced in November, and the University will be presented with this prestigious award by the Queen at Buckingham Palace in February 2014.

Our entry highlighted the innovative features of Newcastle University’s work on rural economies and societies over the past 21 years, including the original concepts of networked rural development and deliberative place-shaping; the pioneering development of the practice of interdisciplinarity; innovative and effective knowledge exchange; and the bringing together of theory, practice and engagement to make a difference to society beyond academia. This work exemplifies Newcastle University’s vision of the civic university as an active agent within a knowledge-based economy, creating and adding value to the links between local systems and broader national and international circuits of knowledge and expertise.

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**Inspirational Women of North-East England, Olivia Grant.**

**Queen’s Anniversary Prize: Guy Garrod, Philip Lowe and Mark Shucksmith.**

**Professor Michael Sandel delivers The Lord Patten Lecture on Social Renewal.**

**Audience at the Michael Sandel lecture.**
School in the Cloud
Professor Sugata Mitra’s wish to inspire children and teachers across the globe is taking shape. In 2013 Professor Mitra won the internationally renowned TED Prize, and talked about his plans to design a School in the Cloud: a learning lab where children can explore and learn from each other by tapping into online resources. The first dedicated Self Organised Learning Environment (SOLE) that will help make this happen opened at George Stephenson High School in Killingworth, North Tyneside in November.

School in the Cloud is the culmination of over a decade of research and observations from all over the world. From his earliest experiments while working at NIIT in Delhi with the Hole in the Wall project, which inspired the film Slumdog Millionaire, through to setting up the original SOLEs in India, Professor Mitra discovered that children’s innate sense of learning is magnified when they are given the freedom to explore the Internet in small groups. There will be seven Schools in the Cloud in total: five in India and two in North East England.

Honorary Degree for Sir Michael Marmot
In December, Newcastle University chose to award an honorary degree to an expert who has revolutionised our view of health inequalities. Professor Sir Michael Marmot has led research groups on health inequalities, and how people’s social circumstances affect their health, for more than 35 years. He chaired the World Health Organisation’s Commission on Social Determinants in Health, and the landmark Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010 (the Marmot Review).

Cornell University
The NISR Director visited Cornell University, with senior colleagues, in October to propose a university-wide strategic partnership around the common civic university missions of the two universities. Cornell University is one of the Ivy League’s top US universities with a stellar reputation. Uniquely it is also a ‘land grant’ university which means that it has a public purpose, an obligation to a wider societal mission. This social purpose and ambition parallels Newcastle University’s vision to be a world-class civic university.

Foresight Visit
The long-term future of the greater Newcastle region was under the spotlight when Professor Sir Mark Walport, Chief Scientist, visited the University in December.

Sir Mark was here to find out more about the long-term future of cities using the knowledge and experience of Newcastle University academics from all three societal challenge themes. The visit was arranged by Professor of Town Planning Mark Tewdwr-Jones and Andrew Lewis, deputy chief executive of Newcastle City Council. It was supported by a number of different public, private, community and voluntary organisations as well as colleagues from across the University.

Working with policy and practice
During 2013 we have continued to work closely with local councils, North East Local Economic Partnership, and those engaged in policy and practice regionally, nationally and internationally. For example, we prepared background papers for the Independent Economic Review of the North East, chaired by Lord Adonis; we began to work with Newcastle City Council on the impacts of the ‘bedroom tax’ in Walker; and we signed a strategic partnership with Northumberland County Council. Nationally, apart from the Foresight visit and the Labour Party conference, the Director gave evidence before the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee, delivered an invited lecture in the House of Lords, spoke in the Scottish Parliament and spoke at an invited seminar on the future of European rural policy with the European Commissioner in Brussels.

Public Lecture: Gurcharan Das
In October we were proud to attract the bestselling author and journalist Gurcharan Das to present the Social Renewal Lecture on ‘India Grows at Night: a liberal case for a strong state’. He argued that India needs a strong liberal state with authority to take quick, decisive action. It would have a rule of law to ensure those actions are legitimate and be accountable to the people. But he acknowledged that achieving this will not be easy because historically India has had a weak state and a strong society. An author, management guru and commentator, Gurcharan Das wrote India Unbound, which was an international bestseller, published in many languages and filmed by the BBC.
Working with Communities

In line with the University’s civic mission, the Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal works closely with community and voluntary organisations in the North East and beyond. Our engagement with communities is pivotal to ensuring that our academic work reflects societal needs, benefits from knowledge outside academia, and is rooted in real world concerns. We are proud to have worked with a wide variety of organisations, community and voluntary groups, businesses and policy makers during 2013. This involvement makes our work richer, better informed and more effective.

Disabled Young People’s Perspectives on Sport

In October, the European Academy of Childhood Disability (EACD) held their international annual conference of healthcare professionals and researchers who work on disability in our region. Professor Janice McLoughlin and Dr Jacqui Rodgers held a workshop on disability and sport at the Sage Gateshead as part of this international conference. This was the first time the EACD had included a workshop which actively involved disabled young people. The workshop had been designed with the input of disabled young people from local schools: Thomas Bewick, Woodlawn and Beaconhill.

Under the theme ‘Being Active, Keeping Healthy’, young people at the workshop debated what was important with the input of disabled young people from local schools: Thomas Bewick, Woodlawn and Beaconhill. The workshop had been designed with the input of disabled young people from local schools: Thomas Bewick, Woodlawn and Beaconhill.

Antiphonal

Twelve poets were commissioned to write a poem inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels. These poems were published as a pamphlet entitled Shadow Script, and were turned into a sound installation, Antiphonal, by digital artist Tom Schofield. Antiphonal was sited in two iconic places: the newly renovated Lookout Tower on Lindisfarne and the crypt of St Aidan’s Church, Bamburgh, and ran through July and August 2013. The sound installation produced from the poems worked in a different way from the written page, enacting a dialogue between the poems, and demonstrating the emotive power of the human voice. In November Antiphonal was turned into an exhibition, with films of its two original sites of Lindisfarne and Bamburgh shown in the Sanctuary Artspace, Gateshead. The exhibition then travelled to Derry as part of the Derry City and Bamburgh shown in the Sanctuary Artspace, Gateshead. The exhibition then travelled to Derry as part of the Derry City of Culture 2013 celebrations. The making of the project, led by Professor Linda Anderson, was featured in a special BBC Radio of Culture 2013 celebrations. The making of the project, led by Professor Linda Anderson, was featured in a special BBC Radio 4 programme in October.

School’s Out for Summer: Quayside and Baltic become giant classroom

As soon as the sun comes out every school pupil wishes they could learn their lessons outdoors. That wish came true for Newcastle school children in June as a number of Newcastle and Gateshead’s most iconic locations were turned into a giant outdoor classroom. Subjects including English, Maths, History, Music and Science were taught at the BALTIC M4 and along the Quayside at a special outdoor learning event. The day was designed by ‘Dr Maths’ Steve Humble and trainee teachers studying at Newcastle University.

The seven to 10-year-olds from schools around Newcastle were asked to write a detective story Death on the Tyne. They had to collect clues to the crime on their trip along the banks of the Tyne and to the iconic art gallery. Once they returned to school they wrote up their short story, comic strip or poem. The authors of the six best tales won a £10 voucher.

West End Refugee Service (WERS): A Sense of Belonging

This project commissioned film maker David Campbell to make five short films which capture the stories of a number of asylum seekers and refugees and their experience of finding ‘a sense of belonging’ as they make homes for themselves in the North East. The films can be found on the WERS YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/WERSvideos

The films have also been recorded on 150 DVDs which will act as a resource for WERS and Newcastle University when working with schools. Teachers packs are being put together to help aid the use of the DVD’s as a teaching tool in schools. They will also be used to help raise awareness and provide insight about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers among stakeholders such as local authorities, agencies that help refugees, and the police force. The screening and discussion of the videos of refugees’ and asylum-seekers’ voices was held at the Tyneside Cinema in November. Challenging negative assumptions about refugees and asylum seekers is integral to this project.

Community Champion Awards

In November we were delighted to support the Evening Chronicle Community Champion Awards, which aims to honour the North East’s ‘unsung’ heroes and publicly reward these community champions for their contribution to the region. The Institute sponsored the Champion Neighbour category which Institute Director Mark Shucksmith presented to Eddie and Audrey Stringer. Eddie and Audrey have been actively involved in founding and running a youth group in their local community of Blunhamfield for over 50 years.
Newcastle Council for Voluntary Service

We continue to work closely with Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services (NCVS), an independent organisation which aims to support, develop, promote, connect and represent a thriving voluntary and community sector in Newcastle. NCVS has been running since 1929 and are able to make a real difference to the people and communities of Newcastle. The University awards a grant to NCVS so that they may further their work locally, which has in the last year included research around poverty, mapping the state of the voluntary sector, and evaluating the impact of welfare reform on local communities. In November we hosted and supported their Annual General Meeting and we continue to fund Inform magazine, a newsletter produced by NCVS which ensures voluntary and community partners are provided with up to date news, information and resources on developments in the sector.

Glendale and FLUX

NISR has worked for some time with the innovative Glendale Gateway Community Development Trust, based in Wools, Northumberland. The NISR Director chaired a two-day workshop there in August with representatives from several community trusts on the theme of ‘What can a community initiative achieve?’

NISR also put Newcastle University’s Enactus students and the University Careers Service in touch with the Glendale Trust. As a result, 120 students addressed the real world challenge of how to attract and retain young people in Glendale. The students benefited from advice from 24 business experts from companies such as Aldi, Accenture, Deloitte, Santander and Bond Dickinson. The winning team will represent the University at the National Final of FLUX in April 2014; and a host of ideas produced by the event are being fed back to the Glendale Trust. As a result, 120 students addressed the real world challenge of how to attract and retain young people in Glendale. The students benefited from advice from 24 business experts from companies such as Aldi, Accenture, Deloitte, Santander and Bond Dickinson. The winning team will represent the University at the National Final of FLUX in April 2014; and a host of ideas produced by the event are being fed back to the Glendale Trust.

The Whitley Bay Film Festival

Newcastle University lecturer Tracey Tofield is co-director of the Whitley Bay Film Festival, which celebrates film and art in unique locations around North Tyneisde. The NISR supported Arthouse Programme 2013 worked alongside and within the Whitley Bay Film Festival to bring artists’ film, video, moving image, site-specific installation, interventions and live performance to the iconic seaside town of Whitley Bay and its community. The programme worked across a variety of venues, using hairdresser salons, cafés and people’s homes as locations for the broad range of art. Arthouse was created to provide a platform for artists and students based locally to show work alongside their national and international counterparts. It allowed students and graduates to showcase their work on a public platform, and provided a rare opportunity to co-create a high quality event based within a community and outside of a traditional gallery setting.

Social Renewal in Action

The Civic Study Programme

Newcastle University was named one of the top civic universities in the country in the latest Times and Sunday Times university league tables. A civic university brings the outside world into its teaching, research and engagement activities. Research has socioeconomic impact designed in from the start and teaching has a strong community involvement. Most importantly there is a soft boundary between the institution and society, which facilitates interaction.

To turn this into a practical way in which university leaders and managers can appraise their own organisations our team has suggested seven dimensions of the civic university:

1. It is actively engaged with the wider world as well as the local community in which it is located.
2. It takes a holistic approach to engagement, with institution wide activity which is not confined to specific individuals or teams.
3. It has a strong sense of place – it recognises the extent to which its location helps form its unique identity as an institution.
4. It has a sense of purpose – understanding not just what it is good at, but what it is good for.
5. It is willing to invest in order to have impact beyond the academy.
6. It is transparent and accountable to its stakeholders and the wider public.
7. It uses innovative methodologies such as social media and team building in its engagement activities.

Emeritus Professor John Goddard OBE
Livelihoods of Post Trafficked Women in Nepal

This research focuses on the livelihoods of women in Nepal who have been trafficked. Working with the women themselves, data was gathered to illustrate how post trafficked women may be stigmatised and discriminated against. This includes lack of access to citizenship and ensuing rights. The research goes beyond the immediate ‘rescue’ of trafficked women and combines a focus on livelihoods with the need to address their right to citizenship.

Professors Nina Laurie and Diane Richardson are working with project partners Shakti Samuha, an anti-trafficking non-governmental organisation run by returnee trafficked women. In August 2013 Shakti Samuha received Asia’s prestigious Ramon Magsaysay award. Established in 1957, the Ramon Magsaysay award is Asia’s highest honour and is widely regarded as the region’s equivalent of the Nobel Peace Prize.

International Human Rights Conference

Dr Maria Teresa Gil-Bazo set up an international workshop bringing together experts to discuss the role of international organisations and International Human Rights Monitoring Bodies in the protection of refugees. In particular, it explored how these may be filling the gap resulting from the lack of an international body with jurisdiction to receive individual applications under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Improving the Protection of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict

Professor Peter Stone has built up a body of work understanding the destruction of cultural heritage and cultural property during times of conflict. In particular, his work has focused on the consequences of war in Iraq. His work examines societies attitudes towards the preservation of cultural and heritage resources and the growing political awareness of their importance. Cultural heritage includes sites, museums, galleries, libraries and archives. Professor Stone’s book, “A Four-Tier Approach to the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict”, is now being taken up by military practice and the cultural heritage community.

He has been invited to present his research at a number of UK and NATO armed forces symposia and this year was asked by NATO to develop a training module on cultural property protection for use with middle ranking officers.

Improving Access and the Quality of Schools Operating in Slum and Low Income Areas of India and Africa

Dr Pauline Dixon has worked for the last 13 years researching the different school management types that provide education to poor children in Asia and Africa. Her projects seek to discover who exactly runs schools for the poor and why, and has taken her to slums around the world including those in India, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and China.

Dr Dixon’s research showed that children’s learning outcomes in low cost private schools for the poor were statistically better than other school management types. The results have attracted the attention of international aid agencies who have now started to recognise the contribution these schools make.

In October she received the Luminary award from The Free Market Foundation of South Africa for ‘making a unique contribution to the betterment and advancement of mankind’.

Obesogenic Environments: Exploring the Built and Food Environments

Around the world obesity rates have risen rapidly, with an associated increase in the number of related health conditions. The basic equation of obesity is simple – too much energy consumed, too little energy expended – but the causes are complex.

Tim Townsend has attempted to unravel some of this complexity by trying to understand the way in which the built environment influences the choices we make in terms of food consumption and the ways in which it might encourage, or constrain, physical activity. The results of his work have been communicated to practice based audiences, in particular public health and planning audiences, and cited in many publications advising on public health.

Northumbrian Exchanges

This project, led by Professor Eric Cross responds to identified needs of various partners in rural Northumberland (the sparsely populated county in England), exploring new models of knowledge exchange relating to rural cultural economies. Bringing together research excellence in creative practice and theory, it focuses on the contribution of culture, particularly visual arts practice and music, to rural development.

The project responds to key issues identified by partner organisations, such as the Holy Island Partnership, Allenheads Contemporary Arts and Alwinton Festival, who each wish to develop new ways of working relating to local communities.

Livelihoods of Post Trafficked Women in Nepal.

Where cultural property protection can work. The remains of the battle in the foreground is one of six mobile radar units positioned next to a small Roman fort in Pakistan discovered by Professor Stone during the NATO’s air strike.

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Simply Cracking Good Stories

Simply Cracking Good Stories is a project to create engaging and accessible fiction for low-educated immigrant adults. Immigrant adults with little or no schooling in their native language progress very slowly in developing basic reading skills. Slow progress is not surprising when no reading occurs outside the classroom, but Professor Martha Young-Scholten and Margaret Wilkinson are working to fill this gap.

Developments have included introducing four new reading levels and increasing the number of books written to 30. The books will soon be available on blurb.com to teachers and their immigrant adult students in the UK, and in English-speaking countries around the world.

Northumbrian Voices

Northumbrian Voices dates back to Kathryn Tickell’s childhood, as she grew up absorbing Northumbrian folk traditions first-hand from family and friends. Kathryn combined old recordings with new interviews, and fashioned them into a performance about culture and lore of the North Tyne Valley. Just as the featured music combines traditional, contemporary and original material, these voices both eschew the past and speak to the future.

The music and stories are wonderful in themselves. But beyond that this is a performance which tells the people of the North East something about themselves and their history and identity, celebrating people’s memories, lives and culture while looking forward and taking this heritage into the future – a link between continuity and change which is the essence of social renewal.

The Victoria Tunnel Project

The Victoria Tunnel runs beneath Newcastle city centre from the Town Moor to the River Tyne. A programme of repairs has been carried out and part of the Tunnel is open all year round to the public for guided tours and is now an award winning tourist attraction administered by the Ouseburn Trust. The Tunnel is an invaluable addition to maintaining a living memory of Newcastle’s heritage.

In summer 2013 Professor Savvas Papagiannidis arranged for two student placements to research and prepare a business plan for the Tunnel project. The aim was not only to ensure the sustainability of the Victoria Tunnel project, but also to contribute to its future growth. The students set out to review the structure, operational systems and marketing strategy in order to provide recommendations for the improvement of the Victoria Tunnel’s efficiency and income generation.

Northern Bridge

NISR was pleased to support an intensive meeting between colleagues from Newcastle University, Durham University and Queen’s University Belfast which led to a successful bid to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for a Doctoral Training Centre. This will fund 60 PhD studentships over the next nine years in the arts and humanities.

Enactus

NISR has begun to work closely with the Enactus Student Society, a worldwide organisation which encourages students to use their entrepreneurial skills to transform lives while working on community social enterprise projects. In 2013 we put them in touch with Glendale Community Development Trust (Wooler) and with West End Refugee Service (WERS). We also arranged for a politics student to undertake a work placement in the Institute. The worked focussed on exploring student opinion of the NISR and the final report has helped develop relations with Newcastle University students.

Election Manifesto Competition

Over the summer of 2013 we ran a ‘General Election Manifesto Competition’, looking for the best evidence based ideas for policies relating to social renewal which could be included in the political parties’ 2015 General Election manifestos.

The competition proved popular with our student body, with entries coming in from all three University faculties. Peter Hetherington, journalist, and Baroness Joyce Quin, Labour Peer, joined Professor Shucksmith on the judging panel and narrowed the entries down to a shortlist of eight proposals. These eight proposals were showcased at a special celebratory event in December. The judges decided the overall winner at this event: Jonathan Mayes idea of ‘New Youth Projects’ – inspired by his desire to tackle the problems associated with childhood poverty. See the NISR blog:

https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/nisr

SCAN

Many of our students work to address community needs through volunteering with other charitable/ community organisations and through their own youth-led projects. Student Community Action Newcastle (SCAN), located in Newcastle University Students Union, helps over 3,200 students find volunteering opportunities across the North East.

For example, SCAN has recruited a group of students, who, armed with laptops, go into local elderly care homes once a week and help to teach IT and basic computing skills to the residents. This may involve helping someone to set up an email account, showing them how to browse the web or watching videos on YouTube. This is only one instance of the many SCAN projects in which students work on a wide range of activities across the region.

Newcastle University is proud that our students become involved in extracurricular activities such as volunteering and work placements within the city and region. This benefits not only the community but also the students themselves, broadening their horizons and attuning them to the needs and worlds of others. Embedding Social Renewal into their education and student experience helps to prepare them to put their own talents and energies to a purpose as the citizens of the 21st Century.
Looking Ahead

The Newcastle University Institute for Social Renewal is building on our achievements as we progress through 2014. Our Theme Champions and Ambassador are playing vital roles in animating and leading work on our priority themes, working with partners, adding insight and embedding the work of NISR within Schools and Research Centres across the University.

Examples of the work being taken forward include:

- A major conference on Public Health and Welfare Reform which brings academics and practitioners together to share knowledge.
- Discussions on promoting Newcastle as ‘a reading city’.
- Work on the rights of children and young people in custody.
- Enhancing life for senior citizens.
- The potential of community-based curricula which promote enquiry-based learning.

Our ‘Dr Maths’, Steve Humble, is planning a Guinness Book of Records attempt for the largest maths teaching activity ever to be held outside. It will take place on the Quayside with local communities, schools and teachers taking part.

An exciting programme of work on Digital Civics – how digital technologies might enable greater civic engagement in health, education, planning and social care – will proceed following a major award to Professors Patrick Olivier and Pete Wright of £5.8m from EPSRC. Professor John Goddard and colleagues will continue their international study of eight universities in four countries which pursue civic university visions. The question of how universities can address the big societal challenges of the 21st Century is also the subject of our 2014 Lord Patten annual lecture which will be delivered by Professor John Brewer, author of ‘The Public Value of the Social Sciences’.

The University is also planning “Newcastle City Futures: People, Place and Change” - an exhibition and ‘city conversation’, tracing the development of Newcastle upon Tyne since 1945 and considering how the shape and look of the city will develop into the future. Led by Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones of the School of Architecture Planning and Landscape, who is also the NISR People, Place and Community theme champion, the multi-media exhibition will be located in The Guildhall on the Newcastle Quayside from May 23 – June 10 and will focus on the built and unbuilt environment, home, travel and leisure. It will allow visitors to explore Newcastle’s heritage and reflect on the forces which shaped the city, leading visiting through to the present day and allow for questions to be posed about how the city, and its people, might want to develop in the future. Among those participating will be the Tyne and Wear metro, the airport, the City Council, Science City, NUFC, Amber Collective, and the Discovery Museum.

In addition, we look forward to the presentation of the Queen’s Anniversary Award for Newcastle University’s work on rural economies and societies at Buckingham Palace in February. The Centre for Rural Economy will not rest on its laurels, though, hosting a meeting of the Trans-Atlantic Rural Research Network in April, and continuing to work closely with rural communities, councils and government.

2014 therefore promises to be a busy year for NISR. We hope this year to broaden and deepen our relationships with our partners, while continuing to support colleagues within Newcastle University in rising to the societal challenges of social renewal. Our progress during 2013 encourages us to believe we can do even more.