



Northumbria University students, staff, partners and Phil Packer MBE (far right) come together to launch Northumbria's Row Britannia Challenge

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Northumbria University community come together to make waves in student mental health sporting challenge

Northumbria staff, students and alumni have set themselves an ambitious challenge to row 2,020 miles by Friday 13 March 2020 to raise funds for Row Britannia and Sport Relief in support of student mental health and wellbeing projects.

The University is fast becoming a leader in the research and support of

student mental health. Last year saw the Office for Students name Northumbria as the lead in a £2m transformational project looking at how the [Higher Education sector identifies mental health issues in students](#).

Along with the adoption of [kooth student](#), enhancements tailored to student services, including additional face-to-face and telephone appointments, and 24/7 support via the Student Portal, the University is committed to students getting the help they need, when they need it.

Research also shows that physical activity can have positive impact on mental wellbeing. Northumbria encourages students to be empowered by sport and use it as a tool to improve and manage their physical fitness and mental health. The University's long-term ambition is to have the majority of Northumbria students engaged in some form of regular sport, physical, health or wellbeing activity.

To promote awareness of the benefits of physical activity for mental wellbeing, the Northumbria community is taking part in [Row Britannia](#), an inclusive, adaptive sporting challenge by The British Inspiration Trust (BRIT) in support of mental health, fitness and wellbeing.

Friday 13 March will see the University's flag-ship sport facility, Sport Central, host students, staff, alumni and corporate partners as they row 2,020 miles in aid of the charity as well as Sport Relief.

Speaking ahead of the event, Professor Andrew Wathey CBE, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, said: "At Northumbria we take students' mental health extremely seriously and seek to provide our students with support in the most meaningful ways possible. Through our ground-breaking research we are also identifying the best ways for all universities to deal with issues associated with poor student mental wellbeing."

"Our £2m Office for Students research project, which includes partners from across Higher Education and technology, is looking at how mental health can be supported through a combination of educational analytics, technology and innovative methods of intervention."

"However, we already know that to build a thriving student mindset, sport and physical exercise can play a key role. I am delighted that the

Northumbria community is coming together to take part in Row Britannia.”

One member of the University community taking part will be Northumbria Student Sport President, Grace Donnelly who commented: “We know that taking part in regular exercise can be really important to students’ mental health, and a big part of my role is to promote this to all of our students, even if they don’t think they are particularly sporty.

“It’s great to be part of the team taking part in this challenge, and I’m really confident we’ll reach the target and raise loads of money in the process!”

British Inspiration Trust and Row Britannia Chief Executive, Phil Packer MBE, said: “I am delighted to have visited over 70 institutions so far on a 100 day, 200 visit, schedule of every university in the UK and who have been asked to assist and support their local colleges. There is huge potential for something very special to be achieved throughout the UK and I am delighted that both challenges are gaining momentum. The positive impact of raising vital funds will be greater if every university and college takes part and if their leaders take on the Row Britannia Leadership Challenge too.”

Alumni, staff and students can register to take part by submitting details via this [link](#).

For those not able to make it to Northumbria’s City Campus to take part on the day, including global alumni, can still take part in by rowing at their local gym, sharing photographs with the hashtags #RowBritannia and #RowNorthumbria.

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