



CORE

Creative Outreach for
Resource Efficiency

Recycled Kayak takes flight

Creative Outreach for Resource Efficiency (CORE) supported the delivery of a vibrant and creative outreach programme helping academics to “get out of the lab” and communicate world class science to new audiences.

The EXHUME project investigated the challenges of recycling fibre reinforced composites. This looked at all aspects of the process, from the material science and chemical engineering required, the manufacturing, to the environmental and economic viability of developing a market for recycled materials.

The EXHUME team – supported by CORE – wanted to demonstrate to prospective industrial partners the potential of recycled carbon-fibre materials and how they can be used to create new goods, therefore reducing the amount of carbon-fibre waste being sent to landfill.



EXHUME

Composite Recycling

The engagement project involved taking carbon-fibre waste from the aerospace industry, creating a racing kayak from the recycled fibre (a world-first), participating in the gruelling Devizes to Westminster International Canoe race over the Easter Weekend 2016, and working with PR experts to engage with new audiences, including high profile manufacturers.

Academic lead for EXHUME, Professor Gary Leeke, negotiated with an aerospace manufacturer to supply the appropriate grade waste that would otherwise be sent to landfill. He and his team then treated the waste, using processes developed in the lab, to create enough recycled composite material for the boat to be made. Kirton Kayaks agreed to make the prototype boat, using the recycled composite material.

PR agency Creative Concern was brought in to ensure that maximum exposure was gained for the project, with the right audiences. A PR plan was put into place that included photography, leaflets, film and social media activity as well as press and media engagement.

Gary and his colleague, Professor Liam Grover, had to make sure that they were physically fit, training every weekend in the run up to the race. They were ready for almost every eventuality, but what they could not plan for was a major storm sweeping over the UK during the race. And sadly, after 16 hours and 85 miles of valiant paddling, the team were forced to withdraw as Liam had hurt his back. This was not the end of the story though. The PR agency developed messages following the withdrawal from the race – explaining that the humans were unable to continue, but that the prototype boat was fine!

Key to success

The key to the success of the project was a “hook” that attracted media attention and using a specialist PR company that could reach new audiences. It was important to make time to communicate with the PR agency and to allow time to prepare for media interviews and follow-up questions.

→ *“Without the help of the PR agency, we would not have reached a global audience and dissemination would just have been through traditional academic papers and conferences,” said Professor Gary Leeke. “It has been great to have interest in our research from outside of the academic circle, and has opened up access to non-technical audiences.”*



A PR value of over £40,000 AVE was achieved

“I had to be confident in my science,” said Professor Gary Leeke. “I had to believe in the data that were coming out of the experiments and put that into a practical application.”

“You need to be prepared for the impact of impact. I am still getting enquiries about recycled composites as a direct result of the project, months later. It has opened my eyes to different ways of achieving pathways to impact.”

The impact generated by the project far exceeded expectations. It resulted in unexpected linkages and contacts that were outside of the academic “norm”. The team has now built up a network of contacts from leading manufacturers in the composite sector, and have been invited to take part in NGO conferences and policy discussions. It has raised the profile of the EXHUME project and established trust in its ability to deliver results with key industrial partners.

→ ***Impact is about reaching new audiences as well as bigger audiences***

Our recommendations

Thinking of working with a PR agency to engage with new audiences? Here are our recommendations for a successful collaboration:

- **Engage a professional PR company or work closely with your organisation’s PR team.**
- **Be clear on your objectives, and the outcomes you want.**
- **Make sure the agency is appropriate for the needs of your project.**
- **Identify risks and take steps to mitigate them.**
- **Keep in frequent contact with your partners.**
- **Allow time to talk to the PR agency – remember that they’re not experts in your field.**
- **Allow time to talk to the media and be prepared for interviews. Know what your key messages are, and who your target audience is.**

Led by Loughborough University, Creative Outreach for Resource Efficiency (CORE) was a collaboration between the Universities of East Anglia, Cranfield, Edinburgh, Loughborough, Manchester, Surrey and Warwick.

EXHUME was a collaboration between the Universities of Birmingham, Cranfield, Exeter and Manchester.

EPSRC

Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council