

# University of York Department of Biology



The University of York's Department of Biology achieves international excellence and impact through a collaborative approach and an outward facing culture, connecting our research and teaching to many diverse audiences.

York is one of the leading university biological science departments in the UK.

With over 60 academic staff, we cover the spectrum of contemporary biological sciences from molecular aspects of cancer to field ecology.

Our collegial and collaborative approach creates an exciting environment that allows our staff to undertake cross-disciplinary research using cutting-edge technologies. In addition our internationally recognised excellence in research and teaching underpins all of our activities to deliver academic, knowledge exchange, commercial, policy, and societal impacts.



York's "Hidden Worlds - Secret Lives" outreach programme (funded by CNAP, Yorkshire Forward, BBSRC, The Arts Council England and RCUK) uses microscopes to introduce primary school pupils to the natural world, allowing them to explore for themselves the fascinating structure of a wide range of specimens

## Delivering Impact

Our approach to achieving sustainable, international excellence and impact across our remit involves the fostering of an outward facing culture, connecting our research and teaching to diverse users in the wider community.

To achieve this we have embedded impact responsibilities in the groups, committees and administrative roles that are part of the Departmental fabric and infrastructure. Key examples are: the Departmental External Relations Officer, the Biology Outreach Committee, and the Biology Enterprise Group. These provide the ongoing focus for facilitating impact.

Individuals are further encouraged and assisted with their involvement in impact activities through many routes, for example: recognition of impact activities in promotion criteria, pump prime funding and inclusion of outreach activities in the assessment of individuals' workloads.

Through participation in the Excellence with Impact 2011 competition, we have strengthened our processes to support and incentivise impact activities by: creating the new role of External Relations Office; appointing an Industrial Project Placement Officer; expanding our annual census to improve impact data capture; successfully lobbying to have impact activities explicitly included in the University's promotion criteria; revising profit sharing procedures for commercially funded work; and establishing a fund to encourage social entrepreneurship in our PhDs and Post-docs. Most importantly, we have embedded the impact culture through our management structure to support a continued commitment to the promotion and reporting of impact activities by all members of the Department.

## Combating malaria

The Centre for Novel Agricultural Products (CNAP) mission is to realise the potential of plant and microbial-based renewable resources through gene discovery and germplasm development. Current projects include the development of improved varieties of the medicinal plant *Artemisia annua*, which produces the leading anti-malaria drug artemisinin.

By winning significant support from The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (\$26.1M), CNAP has utilised basic and applied research to deliver (and verify in field-trials) non-GM hybrid plants that provide better artemisinin yields than the current market leaders. These improved strains offer the potential to dramatically improve the supply of artemisinin and save lives.



Young *Artemisia* plant hybrid produced in York being planted at a field trial site in Madagascar (credit: Darshna Vyas - CNAP Artemisia Research Project)

## Volunteers go bats to collect data

Research Fellow Dr Nancy Irwin recruited a team of community volunteers to help with her major challenge of gathering enough data on bat populations for her studies on bat behaviour and genetics.

Using funding from the Biology Outreach team, she was able to successfully train 190 community volunteers to help with her research and the data they gathered is already being incorporated into a PhD thesis.

Nancy has improved contacts between charities, local councils and volunteer organisations, allowing better coordination of data collection. She was also successful in winning additional funding to provide training material to over 800 extra volunteers.



A few of the almost one thousand volunteers from the North of England who have been trained to collect data on bats for York researcher Dr Nancy Irwin

## Contact

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**BBSRC**  
**EXCELLENCE**  
**WITH IMPACT**  
**2011**



The BBSRC Excellence with Impact 2011 scheme ran from 2008 to 2010. It was developed to reward and esteem those university departments most active in embedding a culture that recognises and values the achievement of impact alongside excellent research.