Welcome!

Welcome to the first SEE alumni newsletter! My aim is to produce regular issues to update all our former students on what we are doing here in the School, including how we are aiming to engage with you more. So whether you are early in your career or already retired I hope that there is something of interest for you. In this first issue, we highlight some of our activities including high profile research, outreach, a staff update, report on alumni news & events, and provide ideas for how you can get involved too!

This year marks 10 years since the formation of the School of Earth and Environment from the merger of the School of Environment and the School of Earth Sciences. In 10 years the department has gone from strength to strength and now houses 300+ staff, 600+ undergraduate and 450+ postgraduate (taught and research) students.

Get Involved:

Leeds Network

The Leeds Network is a University-wide initiative to enable current students and graduates to make contact. It is a great way to share your career experiences and insights, something that students really value. Plus, alumni have found it a rewarding way of volunteering for the University. If you would like to register or find out more visit:

www.alumni.leeds.ac.uk/leedsnetwork

Alumnus shakes Obama’s hand

The Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers is the highest honour bestowed by the United States Government on scientists and engineers. Gavin Hayes (MGeophys BSc Geophysical Sciences, 2002) was chosen for the award in recognition of his work improving the knowledge of earthquake processes. Gavin, who now works at the US Geological Survey, Denver, was presented the award at the Whitehouse in April 2014.

Do you remember... Colin Pitts?

Colin Pitts has been with the School since 1996! He is a Senior Teaching Fellow with interests in water pollution and ecology and is our Academic Lead for on Employability through highly successful activities such as the School Careers Fair held now every October and modules such a SOEE2032 on Careers and Personal Development. He is also the academic lead on the Year in Industry and having taken a placement himself when he was an undergraduate, has always encouraged our students to engage in the opportunity to take a year working as part of their degree.

Our School has offered a Year in Industry for many years and we have always offered this opportunity across every one of our undergraduate programmes. As students become more career conscious, more of them are putting in a lot of hard work to gain an industrial placement opportunity. Colin explains “This year we have a record number of students out on placement. Many of the companies that take our students come back to us year after year, which clearly says a lot about the calibre of our students, and we are always looking to make links with new employers to meet increasing demand. A significant proportion of the companies that we work with employ our former students and these individuals are often the key link for us”.

If you would like to find out more, please contact Colin via placements@see.leeds.ac.uk

SRI Celebrates its 10th Anniversary

The Sustainability Research Institute (SRI) will celebrate its 10th birthday in autumn 2014. We will be marking the occasion with a series of events during the academic year 2014-15 that bring together staff and students, both past and present. One of these will be an Alumni Event on the evening of Saturday 6th June 2015, to celebrate the achievements of our past students, and to offer Alumni the opportunity to meet up with your ex-classmates. The evening will take place in the Woodhouse Suite of University House. Further details to follow in January 2015. To express your interest in the event please email Mollie, M.vandergucht@leeds.ac.uk
New NERC award funds cutting edge fluid dynamics research in SEE

The Sorby Environmental Fluid Dynamics Laboratory (SEFDL) has just received £490k from NERC to fund a new 3D Laser Doppler Anemometer and Volumetric Particle Image Velocimetry. These systems, in combination, will for the first time allow SEFDL to visualise and quantify entire complex three dimensional flow fields. This represents a step-change in measurement of flow; existing techniques can only collect data in 1 or 2 dimensions and therefore cannot fully represent the experimental data, making validation of 3D numerical models difficult.

Fluid dynamics underpins an array of NERC science including environmental hazards, natural resources, and environmental change. In addition to supporting these areas this asset holds huge promise for Discovery Science. Understanding of many fluidal processes remains limited, in part because fluids form 3D coherent flow structures at a wide range of scales that vary spatially and temporally. There is a need to understand coherent flow structures in areas as diverse as turbulence, eco-hydraulics, biomimetics, sedimentation, river flooding, and atmospheric dynamics. However, experimental techniques have been restricted to 1D profiles and 2D planes, consequently limiting understanding, and numerical model validation. This revolutionary technique will enable 3D coherent flow structures to be measured instantaneously for the first time. This is a unique asset nationally, and consequently is not currently available to the NERC community. It will be integrated into a NERC Recognised Facility, the Sorby Environmental Fluid Dynamics Laboratory which possesses a wide range of complementary facilities, and expertise in laser measurement techniques. The new facility will benefit academia, society and industry through better understanding of fluid dynamics and deliver demonstrable impact. In combination with the £350k of equipment investment currently going into the laboratory, this will keep SEFDL at the cutting edge of environmental fluid dynamics and provide a key facility for the UK and international research community.

Environmental Studies Academy

The Environmental Studies Academy launched on the 3rd July 2014 aiming to provide a unique and rewarding experience for AS and A2 level students. Teachers and pupils from local schools were invited to study at SEE for a day undertaking activities that focused on key areas of the Environmental Studies AS/A2-level curriculum. The AS Group participated in river sampling at Ringshaw Beck and the A2 Group session studied preserved soil samples. The groups also had the opportunity to experience lectures given by environmental scientists.

Pupils and teaches shared lots of positive feedback with the coordinators Dr Steven Dobbie and Mrs Cara Healy. A good first step was made in building relations with schools, hopefully interesting students to potentially study with us in the future. Look out for further information:

www.see.leeds.ac.uk/envstudiesacademy

Did you know about... our beehives?

The Sustainability Action Group (SAG) established 3 beehives behind the School of Earth and Environment (SEE) in 2012. We felt it was important to raise awareness of issues facing bees and pollinators more generally amongst the University population and the broader community. In recent years bee colony numbers have been declining. While no sole cause has been identified, it is likely that a combination of agrichemicals and modern farming practices, parasites, viruses and commercial beekeeping operations are responsible. The decline of bees could have disastrous impacts on biodiversity and the availability of food crops.

The SAG hives are checked weekly during the months when the bees are active and we have extracted a small amount of honey each year, which has been used for making cakes and soaps to raise further funds for the project. We have also started an outreach programme with local primary schools and community groups who come to SEE to learn about biodiversity and see the bees in our observation hive. If you are interested in finding out more about any of these activities please contact Jen Dyer: j.dyer@leeds.ac.uk

SAG would like to gratefully acknowledge Leeds for Life and the School of Earth and Environment Student Experience Fund for helping to fund the beehives.