



# Queen's University Belfast Social Charter Newsletter

OCTOBER 2020. VOL 13

Welcome to this edition of the Queen's University Belfast Social Charter Newsletter. In this volume: further developments in COVID-19 research; findings on young people's mental health revealed; food security research to the fore; expanded outdoor space tested; survival of native carnivores explored; key conferences and lectures upcoming; employability programme for autistic students; Athena Swan awards; Future Leaders Fellowships from UKRI and success at national diabetes awards.

## **New risk model estimates likelihood of death or hospitalisation from COVID-19**

A model that can calculate a person's risk of becoming infected and then seriously ill due to COVID-19 has been shown to accurately estimate risk during the first wave of the pandemic in England.

The research is funded by the National Institute for Health Research, led by the University of Oxford and co-led by Queen's University Belfast along with researchers from the universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, Swansea, Leicester, Nottingham and Liverpool with the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Queen Mary University of London, University College London, the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS Digital and NHS England.

The 'QCovid' risk prediction model has the potential to provide doctors and the public with more nuanced information about risk of serious illness due to COVID-19, and to help patients and doctors reach a shared understanding of risk, within the context of individual circumstances, risk appetite and the sorts of preventative measures people can take in their daily lives.

***"The QCovid risk model provides a much more nuanced assessment of risk by taking into account a number of different factors that are cumulatively used to estimate risk. This model will help inform clinical advice so that people can take proportionate precautions to protect themselves from COVID-19."***

Professor Julia Hippisley-Cox, a general practitioner and Professor of Clinical Epidemiology and General Practice at University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences

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## Research with Impact:

### Survey of children's and young people's mental health supports need for early intervention

A landmark survey has delivered reliable prevalence estimates of the rates of mental health problems in children and young people in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Youth Wellbeing Survey was commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board, from Transformation funding from the Department of Health. The survey and report was compiled by Ulster University, Queen's University Belfast, and the Mental Health Foundation over 18 months.

The survey found that 12.6 per cent of children and young people in Northern Ireland experience common mood disorders such as anxiety and depression - around 25 per cent higher than in other UK nations, reflecting a similar trend in adults here.

However, in general, rates across a range of mental health problems in Northern Ireland, are broadly in line with international studies. There are also positive findings with levels of prosocial behaviour – such as being considerate, helping and sharing, and having good relationships with peers, emerging as considerably higher here than in other UK nations.

***"The findings of this survey will ensure a more rigorous understanding of the needs of our population. We know that further sustained investment in children's mental health is needed"***

Robin Swann, Health Minister

## Research with Impact:

### Popular herb Sage found to be heavily adulterated in Queen's study

Researchers at the Institute for Global Food Security (IGFS) at Queen's University have questioned the safety of popular herb sage, after finding more than a quarter of samples were adulterated – some by as much as 58%.

19 samples of Sage, bought from major online retailers; all the well-known UK supermarkets; and smaller, independent shops such as ethnic grocery stores were examined between August and September 2020 at IGFS.

What might be reassuring for some consumers is that none of the brands sold by the big UK supermarket chains was found to be fraudulent. Only some Sage sold by online retailers and smaller independents was found to have been bulked out with olive leaves and/or leaves from other trees. While the leaves detected are not believed to be harmful, food fraud always carries the potential for food-safety and public-health hazards.

***"I am sad to confirm that once again we have identified a major problem linked to the supply chains associated with supplies of herbs and spices to the UK consumer. The potential to cheat in these supply chains has been recognised as a global issue. Testing has shown that just over 25% of all Sage samples analysed were heavily adulterated."***

Professor Chris Elliott OBE, IGFS Founder, Queen's University Belfast

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## Education with Social Purpose:

### Queen's partners on Ormeau Parklet to test expansion of outdoor space

The partners responsible for The Ormeau Parklet have launched it as a test model to expand public space for Belfast's people and businesses.

Belfast Buildings Trust, Queen's University Belfast, OGU Architects, MMAS Architects, the Department for Infrastructure, Belfast City Council, and four local hospitality businesses, are partnering on the project.

The Ormeau Parklet has temporarily turned a small number of on-street parking spaces into outdoor space. Pedestrians and local businesses can use the designed pavement area to help with physical distancing. It is being delivered as a collaborative partnership to test a new way of achieving civic projects across the charity, private, and public sectors.

The approach champions the importance of quality design for Belfast's public spaces and includes ongoing engagement and research during the trial to build local evidence for other possible placemaking projects in the City. Partners hope that the Ormeau Parklet will be a model that is used elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

***"Queen's University is delighted to be part of the informed decision-making of this initiative in the Ormeau area of Belfast, using already tried and tested research from our academics, Dr Rachel O'Grady and Dr Agustina Martire. Queen's is taking a leading role in this project, with student researchers from the StreetSpace project compiling constructive data from local businesses and residents to feed into the success of this project, which can also contribute to future initiatives, at a time when we are all learning to adapt and change to circumstances around us"***

Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast



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## **Breaking Boundaries to Produce New Knowledge:** **Queen's University scientists support major food-security investigation in aid to Africa**

Scientists at Queen's Institute for Global Food Security (IGFS) have helped identify the cause of a crisis in humanitarian aid to Africa run by the World Food Programme (WFP). Researchers at IGFS were called in to support an investigation after two major food-poisoning incidents in Uganda in March and August 2019 which saw hundreds hospitalised.

In both regions, the WFP had distributed what's known as Specialised Nutritious Foods (SNFs), used to combat malnutrition and given to vulnerable populations. It was thought that one of these SNFs, a fortified soya and corn product called Super Cereal, might have been the source of both outbreaks of foodborne illness.

Working alongside WFP and the US Food and Drug Administration, Professor Chris Elliott OBE, Dr Simon Haughey and their team at IGFS were able to detect lethal plant toxins known as 'tropane alkaloids' in samples of the Super Cereal from the first outbreak. The team was also able to trace the contaminants from the outbreak back through complex, international supply systems and to identify Turkey as the country where the affected Super Cereal was produced and became contaminated.

## **Sustainability:** **Research finds human modification of natural landscapes risking future survival of native carnivores**

New research led by Queen's University Belfast has found that poor management of forests and natural landscapes may be driving the native predators we are trying to conserve into conflict with humans, risking their recovery and future survival.

The research shows recovering native predators, such as the pine marten, are being pushed into conflict with humans due to a lack of natural dens in human modified landscapes, such as commercial conifer plantations.

The study found that the pine marten survives in human modified landscapes, such as those presented in commercial plantations, by making use of the wider landscape in habitats that are often overlooked and undervalued: scrub, heath and hedgerows forming property boundaries. They find refuge in underground and man-made structures such as stone walls, rocky crevices, log piles and abandoned buildings.

***"In a modern world that is daunted by environmental crisis and ecological collapse, it is more critical than ever to realise the benefits of restoring top-down effects to ecosystems. This is especially true in Britain and Ireland where we have caused the extinction of all our apex predators and continue to persecute the remaining, such as the red fox and pine marten***

Dr. Joshua P Twining, School of Biological Sciences, Queen's University Belfast



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## **Civic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue:** **Discovery 2020! Conference at Queen's University Belfast**

Discovery 2020!, the fourth annual review of archaeological discoveries in Ulster, will be held online on Saturday 7th November 2020 starting at 9.30am. The conference is organised by the Ulster Archaeological Society and the Centre for Community Archaeology at QUB, with the commercial sector, museums, academics, societies and community groups all represented at the virtual podium.

The Discovery 2020! conference will be free to attend, but prior registration is required. To find out more, please click [HERE](#)

### **Declan Kelly Teneo Leadership Lecture**

The Declan Kelly Lecture Series was established in 2017 by Queen's Honorary Professor Irish-American entrepreneur, businessman and philanthropist Declan Kelly.

The series has included a range of high profile international business leaders including Declan Kelly himself, CEO of the world's leading CEO advisory firm Teneo; Ursula Burns, former CEO of Xerox; and Lord Mervyn Davies, Partner and Chairman of Crosair Capital.

This year's guest speaker is Vincent Roche, the CEO of Analog Devices and believed to be the only Irish born CEO to lead a Fortune 500 company.

As President, Chief Executive Officer, and member of the Board of Directors, Mr. Roche sets Analog Devices' strategic vision and oversees operational execution across the business.

To book to attend the online event, please click on the image below.



**THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES' CLUB AT QUEEN'S**  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH QUEEN'S MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

### **The Annual Declan Kelly Teneo Leadership Lecture**

**'Seizing Opportunity in Technology  
Disruption'**

**Vincent Roche**

**President and Chief Executive Officer  
Analog Devices**

An online lecture and Q&A, with opening remarks from Queen's  
Honorary Professor, Declan Kelly



**WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2020  
3.00PM GMT**



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## Equality and Excellence:

### Queen's University joins new employability programme for autistic students

Queen's University Belfast has joined The Employ Autism Higher Education Network, a ground-breaking higher education employability programme, which aims to unlock the potential of autistic students and graduates and help them into full-time work.

The nationwide programme is run by Santander, through Santander Universities UK, and the charity Ambitious about Autism and will enable autistic students and graduates studying at Queen's to access paid internships and tailored careers support and advice.

This new programme aims to tackle this issue by ensuring more autistic students and graduates have access to meaningful employment experience. It will also ensure local businesses can benefit from neurodiverse talent within their workforces.

During the 18-month programme, careers and employability professionals at Queen's will receive specialist training and support from Ambitious about Autism to work specifically with autistic students, helping to guide them into sustainable employment.

***"At Queen's we are committed to producing workplace-ready graduates and are delighted to be joining The Employ Autism Higher Education Network and playing our part in helping more autistic students and graduates achieve their potential and access full-time employment. We look forward to working with our students to match their talents to employers who can support their needs and allow them thrive in the workplace."***

Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor, Queen's University Belfast

### Athena SWAN success for Queen's Schools in latest round of awards

Four Queen's University Schools have been successful in the latest round of Athena SWAN awards, with a new Gold, two Silver renewals and a Bronze award.

The Athena SWAN Charter recognises commitment shown by Universities and their individual Schools and Departments to advancing gender equality.

Schools applying for SWAN awards must undertake a detailed analysis in their areas, enabling them to plan measurable actions that drive real impact in advancing gender equality.

The School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences was awarded Gold in the latest round, having held Silver since 2012. The School of Mathematics and Physics and the School of Nursing and Midwifery both renewed their Silver Awards, while the School of Arts, English and Languages achieved a Bronze award. All awards are valid until 2025.



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## **Recognising and Rewarding Contributions from Staff and Students: Queen's Researchers Awarded Future Leaders Fellowships from UKRI**

Two researchers from Queen's University Belfast have been awarded Future Leaders Fellowships as part of a £109 million investment from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme is designed to establish the careers of world-class research and innovation leaders across the UK.

Dr Alison Garden, from the School of Arts, English and Languages and Dr Raymond McQuaid, from the School of Mathematics and Physics at Queen's are two of 101 research and innovation leaders of the future from universities and businesses across the UK to be named fellows.



## **Queen's University Belfast commended at prestigious national diabetes awards**

Queen's University Belfast initiative "Making Insulin Treatment Safer (MITS) Through Reflective Case-based Discussions" was commended at prestigious national diabetes awards.

The initiative was highly placed in the Diabetes Education Programmes - Healthcare Professionals category at the 2020 Quality in Care (QiC) Diabetes Awards that were held virtually on Thursday 15 October to safeguard the health and safety of our entrants, attendees, supporters, judges and programme partner which are of paramount importance.

This category recognises initiatives for the educational needs of HCPs to advance skills and knowledge to support effective and efficient management of children, young people and emerging adults, and adults with diabetes

