

Evaluation report for The Douglas Bomford Trust

The early stage researchers meeting 'Cranfield Science for a Circular Economy – how to tackle water, food, energy nexus' (cranWEF17) took place on Friday 16th June 2017.

CranWEF17 targeted PhD students and post-doc, bringing together expertise from Water, Energy and the Environment, with the aim of creating research collaborations and promote the critical contribution that a sustainable approach could make to the environment.

The event took place over a single day 09:00 – 19.00 and it saw a new record number of participants with 200 registered and over 160 confirmed attendees. The program included a keynote speech by Dr Doug Wilson, Director of Scientific and Evidence Services at Environment Agency, in addition to 14 Oral presentations, 37 posters, 12 speakers for the 3 min thesis competition, and 5 exhibitors from relevant companies and professional societies. To alleviate any barriers concerning affordability for some students, the event was free of charge. In addition, part of the funding received was made available to help some postgraduate research students to cover the financial cost of printing posters for the conference.

CranWEF17 started with an overall introduction from the chair of the conference Dr Raffaella Villa (Senior Lecturer in Biopress Technology at Cranfield Water Science Institute), who introduced the keynote speaker Dr Doug Wilson and explained the importance and role of circular economy for research and for our society. Dr Doug Wilson delivered an inspiring speech on how important is a sustainable approach, and how the conference was bringing together expertise to help further. With his boundless energy, and unique delivery he stimulated discussion among those attending. Following the day was divided in 4 sessions with 14 oral presentations (covering a wide range of scientific topics from agricultural engineering, energy technology, ecology, mycology), and 4 posters sessions in between. During the 4 sessions we encouraged attendees to use Glisser (an award winning audience-engagement software) to share presentation slides in real-time, and engage the audience interaction to improve the delegate experience. To keep things fresh we changed the format of the conference this year, engaging attendees in a final three minutes thesis competition (3MT) at the end of the day. The 3MT competition challenged research candidates' ability to effectively explain their research in language appropriate to a non-specialist audience. Ultimately, in our delegate pack we promised our audience that there would be a special networking event with a live band. We certainly did not break that promise!

The funding obtained from Douglas Bomford Trust also supported part of a cash prize for best student oral presentation, best poster presentation, best 3 minutes thesis presentation, the networking lunch and the travel expenses for the invited speaker. We have included the logo of the Douglas Bomford Trust in all the marketing material, name badges, posters, and presentations. We also have invited the Trust to attend our conference with a stand and participate at the conference engaging with early stage researchers and promoting the Trust.

Feedback identified that the conference was a worthy gathering of early stage researchers, and presented an excellent global perspective on the importance that a sustainable approach could make to the environment. The highlights for most delegates were the inspirational keynote speaker, and the engaging three minutes thesis competition (3MT).

Overall we saw a great engagement of all the participants through both social media (twitter and Facebook) and Glisser responses. Here below some feedback live on twitter:

"Thanks for an amazing conference. Wish you all the best"

"Totally amazing & dedicated team of @CranfieldUni postgrads & postdocs delivering cranWEF17"

"The next generation of Environmental Professionals? Some innovative work is being produced by CranfieldUni students cranWEF17"

Greater opportunities to engage with speakers and other delegates on small group basis were the highlighted suggestions to improve the conference. Instead of having afternoon sessions when delegates felt tired from a full day of presentations, it was suggested that open discussions or

discussion groups could have been facilitated to provide sharing of information between delegates and speakers. We will definitely consider this format for the next year.

In conclusion, we believe the event was a success, and on behalf the organising committee, I would like to thank you for your very generous sponsorship. I enclose some photos of the event.

Best regards
Maria del Mar Batista Segui
E: m.batistasegui@cranfield.ac.uk

200 registrations
162 confirmed attendees
37 posters
14 oral presentations
12 3MT competitors
5 Exhibitors

