

Founder of training provider heads to Antarctica to witness effects of climate change ahead of green skills courses launch



THE FOUNDER of a training provider has joined a once-in-a-lifetime expedition to Antarctica in a bid to see any effects of climate change first-hand - and learn how the continent's geology and glaciology has changed over the years.

Next month Kiwi Education, which delivers a wide range of qualifications within workplaces, will diversify its range of 'green skills' apprenticeships and short courses to cover waste and recycling, energy efficiency and corporate responsibility and sustainability.

According to founder and managing director Michael Steel from Southampton, who set the company up in 2013, this is a much-needed move as more young people question employers' environment, social and governance (ESG) commitments.

The 40-year-old is urging businesses to look at their own environmental policies and green culture - and how they can entwine them into their recruitment practices.

Michael is joined by his 72-year-old fellow-adventurer and friend Pauline Bisson, and hopes to be able to better inform learners and stakeholders about the importance of climate change awareness and the steps they can take to lessen their impact on the environment following the trip.

The duo started their 16-day trip by flying to Punta Arenas in Chile, South America, then over the world-famous Drake Passage to King George Island. From there, they've headed by ship with Quark

Expeditions to the Antarctic Peninsula, where it's the start of winter and temperatures are 0°C to -10°C. They are visiting places like Graham Passage and Portal Point.

Polar experts onboard the ship are teaching Michael and the group of adventurers about Antarctic wildlife, history, glaciology and geology. They will stay on the ship and take daily excursions to the land via Zodiacs, getting water-level views of icebergs, wildlife and more. Each landing is different and weather dependent, but the team plan to hike to a penguin rookery, may witness ice breaking off of glaciers and spot apex predators like leopard seals and orcas.

Michael said: *"I'm planning to learn more about the impact of climate change and document my journey through photos and videos. Penguin colonies have been impacted due to the changes in temperatures on the Antarctic Peninsula, which we'll learn about, and microbeads have been discovered in the ocean there."*

"There's a real possibility my home could be underwater one day and that's really serious. People have got to, in my view, start thinking about how they can actively take small steps to make changes both personally and as employers. The more I learn, the more I can inform learners and businesses about the importance of climate change awareness, as we expand our green skills offerings, which will also help stakeholders to make changes that lessen their impact on the environment."

"As the number of green jobs continues to grow, so does people's level of social awareness about how our actions impact the planet and it's driving more people to question an organisation's environmental performance."

"Keeping talent isn't as simple as just increasing salaries. Lots of factors make up the reason for someone leaving a job and now you can add 'climate quitting' to the list. This is known as the growing trend of people who are leaving their jobs to pursue a career focused on tackling climate change, or, because their employer's ESG commitments aren't solid."

Michael added that one third of 18-24-year-olds have rejected a job offer based on the prospective employers' ESG performance in favour of more environmentally-friendly roles and businesses.

In 2008 Michael and Pauline climbed Mount Kilimanjaro together, as part of the UK's first multi-disability ascent of the dormant volcano - buddying with a disabled youngster who was injured after a moped accident. In 2014 they trekked across part of the Sahara Desert in Morocco. Both efforts were in aid of raising money for the Enham Trust, a disability charity in Hampshire.

Next month, Kiwi Education is set to become a provider of two National Open College Network (NOCN) courses, offering the awarding body's Level 1 Award in Waste and Recycling course and Energy Efficiency course.

Kiwi Education is also launching two Level 4 apprenticeships - Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability and Community Energy Specialist. These will join the existing Climate Change and Environmental Awareness short course already offered, which is made up of 110 guided learning hours and aims to bring greater understanding of key issues surrounding climate change.

It's a Level 2 NCFE course and as of this month, anyone that completes any apprenticeship with Kiwi Education will be able to complete it for free as an additional extra, should they choose.

Michael said: *"Far more learners want to move into corporate responsibility and sustainability roles, which actively consider social impact, and evidence to their colleagues and customers the progress their organisation is making in these areas."*

"Businesses can make a start by looking at their own environmental policies, green culture and how they entwine this into their recruitment practices. Every UK job has the potential to be green and small steps which could include training and apprenticeships for employees can help demonstrate to current and future talent that your organisation takes seriously the change needed for a sustainable green world."

To coincide with the launch of their new green skills offerings next month, the training provider will also be launching a new green hub page online, detailing its own sustainability and carbon action plans, as it moves towards becoming a true green provider.

Kiwi Education has more than 40 staff and is based at Burlington House, a grade two listed building on Portland Terrace. They offer 17 apprenticeships and 20 short courses, as well as delivering traineeships. They cover everything from marketing and finance to mental health awareness and digital skills.

Michael added: *"We've been running for almost a decade, and our focus for the next decade is our diversification into green skills and our aspirations to become a net zero employer ourselves. While we've already taken small steps like moving all paperwork and documents online, and we're very conscious of water and energy usage, we're going to move to electric company cars and have charging points installed, and we're looking at installing a city beehive on our roof."*

"We're in the process of forming a relationship with the Woodland Trust, to have a tree planted in honour of each learner that comes on to any of our programmes and receives a paper certificate."

"As a training provider we're going to be supporting other organisations to also put together net zero aspirations and deliver apprenticeships and short courses to those employers."

"To offset the mileage of this trip as much as possible I've cancelled future trips I had planned abroad and I've cut down on my own personal energy usage. I've been walking or taking public transport as much as possible over the last year."

At age 19, Michael was a former apprentice himself for a national training provider. He went into teaching, helping 16-18-year-olds who were youth offenders, battled substance misuse, had family issues and so on, gain work or an apprenticeship.

From there, he went to work for a disability organisation and before setting up Kiwi Education, worked for the Department of Work and Pensions. He resigned from his job of seven years at Enham Trust to follow his passion to deliver apprenticeships and launched Kiwi Education with just three months salary in the bank.

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About

Kiwi Education is an award-winning training provider which delivers a wide range of qualifications within the workplace - goodbye classroom, and hello onsite delivery. We specialise in apprenticeships and online short courses covering a wide range of industries and topics. Whether you're looking for a structured apprenticeship programme or a bespoke skills training course, Kiwi Education is sure to have something to suit you.

Notes to Editors

Upon Michael's return from Antarctica next week he will be available for direct interviews.

Sources

[Climate quitting - younger workers voting with their - KPMG United Kingdom](#)