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Newsbrief

A breath of fresh **Eire for professor**

A DURHAM University chief has been appointed to lead Ireland's largest university. Professor Andrew Deeks, Durham's Pro Vice Chancellor (Science), will become president of University College Dublin (UCD) in January. Prof Deeks joined Durham from the University of Western Aus-tralia, in Perth, in 2009 and has led Durham in growing its presence on the world stage, particularly in China and Brazil. He said: "I am very much looking forward to taking up the role.

UCD plays a unique role in Irish society and economy." Dermot Gallagher, chair of UCD's governing authority, said: "Andrew Deeks has an impressive track record of leadership roles in the international university sector. His expertise and knowledge will help us to strengthen our national position while maintaining an active outward-looking focus.

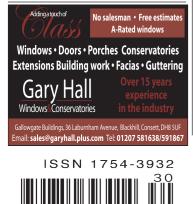
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Liquidation woe

Durham County Council has been criticised for allowing a firm it had a controlling interest in to trade while insolvent ... page 5

Fire training

The site of the former colliery at Bowburn is to be used for a new fire training centre ... page 8





by Mark Tallentire

news@durhamtimes.co.uk A FORMER Durham University academic jailed as a political prisoner in his native Iran has been freed and returned to the UK, the *Durham Times* can reveal.

Reza Molavi, a former head of Durham University's Centre for Iranian Studies, has told how he had his passport seized on trying to re-turn to the UK in June 2010, was arrested at his Tehran home the next morning and detained at the notorious Evin Prison. He was repeatedly interrogated and held in solitary confinement in a tiny cell for four months.

In January last year, he was convicted of aiding a "velvet revolution" and jailed for three years, before being released last October. In total, he spent around 15 menthe behind here

months behind bars. But speaking exclusively to the *Durham Times* in London, he refused to condemn the Iranian regime, calling

his ordeal a "great opportu-nity" for "field research". The 67-year-old now wants to be a bridge between Iran and the West, travelling between the two and teaching university students in his homeland. He said: "I don't want to become bitter. I want to spread goodwill. I want to work to leave them with an impression that they can live with the West in peace and harmony

Dr Molavi also wants to

BRIDGES: Dr Reza Molavi

use his experiences to inform

use his experiences to inform debate among academics and policy makers. Secret diplomatic cables from April 2008 released through the controversial Wikileaks website suggested a named Durham University academic not Dr Molavi academic, not Dr Molavi, sought £273,000 in US funding to develop contacts in Iran.

Iran. Dr Molavi claims he twice refused to be involved be-cause he did not want to be seen as "spying or pimping for some foreign govern-ment".

Iranian-born and US-educated, Dr Molavi was in Durham from 2003 to 2010, first as a PhD student and then on the university staff.

He was detained in Tehran in June 2010 having returned home to his ill mother. Plain-clothed agents, who he said were extremely respectful, seized his computers, mobile phones, books and articles and took him to Evin Prison, known to house the

regime's political enemies. There, he was repeatedly in-terrogated although, he emphasises, never physically abused.

He was kept in a fourmetre square cell and it was three months before his wife was allowed to visit him. However, after being re-

leased he was invited to lec-ture at Tehran University, given his passport back and allowed to leave the country. He said: "To me it was all

an expedition – a fact-finding mission. I look at it as field research. It has given me better understanding of politics in the Middle East and particularly in my home country. "It gives me the impetus to

be of service for peace and harmony – to be a bridge be-tween the Anglo-Saxon countries and my own coun-

"And it opened my eyes to how hypocritical and how stupid some of these highly acclaimed professors in Ivy League universities are and how separated they are from

reality." Dr Molavi's temporary re-turn to the UK comes as hopes are rising in the West of a thawing of relations with Tehran following the election as president of reformistbacked cleric Hassan Rouhani, who will take office Hassan

on Saturday, August 3. A Durham University spokeswoman said it was very pleased Dr Molavi was safe and well.



Gospel fun for young but that's shallot

CHILDREN enjoyed a morning of medieval-themed games in the surrounds of Durham Cathedral.

Youngsters took part in the Marvellous Monastic Games event in the cathedral's cloisters. Games included Cuthbert's Onions, Leaving Lindisfarne

Games included Cuthbert's Onions, Leaving Lindisiarne and Escape the Vikings. The event was part of a programme of family fun to cel-ebrate the return of the Lindisfarne Gospels to Durham this summer. There will also be story-telling, arts and crafts, lectures, hands-on talks, calligraphy, jewellery making and more.

making and more. Upstairs at Durham University's Palace Green Library, where the Gospels exhibition is being staged until Sep-tember 30, families can enjoy the free-to-enter interac-tive Wolfson Gallery, where they can dress up as monks, learn how the Gospels were made and hear stories of bygone eras

Meanwhile, ticket sales for the Lindisfarne Gospels ex-hibition have now topped 40,000 – half-way to the 80,000 organisers were planning for. For more information and full listings, visit lindisfarnegospels.com. Playing Cuthbert's Onion are (from left) Sadie Johnson (six), Irish Williams and Casey Lane (both five).



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