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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

All-female crew complete pioneering journey Round Britain to raise awareness of plastics and toxics in our oceans

8th August–4th September 2017

Including outreach events in six ports and data collection for 15 different scientific studies

An all-female crew sailed Round Britain in 28 days collecting scientific samples and data on plastics and toxics in UK waters. These samples and data will be analysed by specialists across the UK, in Germany and in the USA and will help provide a clearer image of plastic and toxic pollution in UK waters.

When they sailed into Plymouth to complete their journey on 4th September, the Round Britain team had travelled 2035 nautical miles and collected nearly 100 scientific samples for further analysis. Unfortunately, as expected, microplastic particles were found in all areas tested throughout the journey. Although more will be learnt more from the lab results, from general observation on board while collecting samples, it is clear there is considerable plastic pollution in UK waters. This appears to be particularly apparent in areas of higher population.

“The field component of our mission has been successfully completed,” says aquatic toxicologist, fish biologist and eXXpedition Science Advisor Diana Papoulias. “These will now be analysed by our many collaborating researchers and further our understanding of the movement of plastic from land to sea. But our greatest achievement has been to deepen the technical understanding of our citizen scientist ambassadors, so that they can effectively work for the societal changes that ultimately will solve this global environmental problem.”

The eXXpedition team believe that to combat plastic and toxic pollution there needs to be action taken across all sectors of society and globally, too. “We are campaigning for upstream solutions, particularly for single-use packaging,” says ocean advocate and eXXpedition Co-founder Emily Penn. “We are asking industry to rethink and redesign products, government to legislate solutions, and you and I, as consumers, to make good choices to use less plastic.”

“As we have sailed, plastics and toxics has risen up the agenda,” says scientist and eXXpedition Co-founder Dr Lucy Gilliam. “We welcome the implementation of a bottle return scheme in Scotland – something we discussed at length with campaigners at our Scottish Round Britain stops in Arran and Edinburgh. Our hope is that this initiative is implemented UK wide and that our studies drive ambitious actions to tackle plastics and toxic pollution in our water and globally.”

The crew also stopped at 6 ports during their journey – Plymouth, Cardiff, Belfast, Arran, Edinburgh and London – to host a variety of outreach events with fantastic partner organisations. These included science lectures, immersive art experiences, film screenings, crafts with ocean plastic and beach cleans. The team met with politicians and collaborated with thought leaders, explorers, artists and activists. It was particularly rewarding for the crew to connect with passionate individuals and organisations working in their local communities to bring about change in the management of plastic and waste.

The female crew members included scientists, students, artists, filmmakers, business women, psychologists, ocean activists and sustainability professionals, who ranged from first-time to experienced sailors. They battled against fierce winds and sea sickness during some of the legs, which tested even the most experienced among the crew. But they still rallied when the forecast around the top of Scotland forced the skipper to adjust the course for safety reasons. This led to an unexpected diversion through the Caledonian Canal and an opportunity for some loch-based science around plastics and toxics – an underexplored area in inland waterways, which is gathering interest in scientific circles.

eXXpedition, the Community Interest Company behind Round Britain, specialises in all-women sailing trips with a focus on highlighting the devastating impact single-use plastic and toxics from land-based activities are having on our planet's oceans, ecosystems and on human health. Previous research carried out by eXXpedition has highlighted the endemic nature of microplastics within our ocean environments globally and the increasing potential impact they have on human health.

The eXXpedition crew sailed 72ft challenge yacht Sea Dragon (owned by Pangaea Explorations) from Sutton Harbour, Plymouth on the 8th August and completed their sail in the same location on the 4th September.

eXXpedition successfully raised £10,000 through crowdfunding for outreach activities at ports visited during the voyage. All sailing costs were covered by crew contributions.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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NOTES TO EDITOR:

To find out more about eXXpedition, please visit www.eXXpedition.com where you will find more information about the founders, previous expeditions and upcoming Round Britain events.

For Round Britain video content and high-resolution images, please visit <https://goo.gl/8XEgng> or email media.exxpedition@gmail.com. All images must be credited to 'eXXpedition' when used, including the images included in this release. Photographs requiring alternative credits will state so in the file name. Further Round Britain specific images and video content is available, on request.

BROADCAST OPPORTUNITIES:

- **Telephone or Skype interviews** with eXXpedition co-founders Emily Penn and Dr Lucy Gilliam, eXXpedition Round Britain co-mission leaders Anne Baker and Sue Weaver, and additional Round Britain crew, including scientists