

Public engagement



Public engagement

Introducing our approach

Maggie Leggett

Nearly five years have passed since I joined the University and set up the Centre for Public Engagement in its current form. We have seen significant change in that time, most of which has been incredibly positive. Research has shown that our academics are more committed than ever to engaging the public with their work, and increasingly their interest is in involving people at the ‘front end’ of research: taking into account others’ views and ideas as they develop research strategies and collaborating with an ever increasing number and type of organisations and people.

The drivers for these changes are varied. Internally, there is continued explicit support for public engagement, from commitment from the senior team through to practical support offered by my Centre. Externally, there is no doubt that moves by the funders around impact, and inclusion of public engagement within it, have had a large effect; asking researchers on their application forms for research grants to describe how their work may achieve impact prompts them to think through options, and also specific funding streams that are only open to collaborative ventures stimulate people to think about new partnerships and new ways of working.

Inclusion of impact in the Research Excellence Framework, whilst a controversial move in the eyes of some of the academic community, has also reinforced the importance of this area of work. The Beacons for Public Engagement initiative has raised the profile of engagement at a national level, and we have benefited greatly from our relationship with the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) in comparing ideas and sharing best practice with other universities.

The next few years are likely to be just as interesting as the last. With the change in the way universities are funded comes a whole raft of changes around teaching and learning and the student experience. I think this opens up opportunities to think about the value of engagement for students, both for them in terms of enriching learning and increasing employability and also for the way in which we work with the community, as students will always be the most visible and accessible part of the University. Those changes, coupled with academics’ increasing interest in all forms of engagement, makes for an interesting time. Life is not without challenges, most noticeably the economic environment, but on the whole it is a wonderful time to be in this position at Bristol.

Guy Orpen

Public engagement is part of the fabric of this institution, and has been for many years.

From my point of view, as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, it is an intrinsic part of academic life and the way in which we think about and carry out research. Gone are the days when research was a solitary activity within an ivory tower. Researchers are increasingly working in multi-disciplinary teams with a diverse range of people and organisations feeding into their work, to enable them together to tackle complex societal challenges.

Public views, thoughts and ideas are an important component of this mix, with the distinction between ‘expert’ and ‘lay’ becoming increasingly blurred as members of the public advise on research strategy, come up with new lines of enquiry and in some cases work alongside the researcher all the way through to publication and other outputs.

This way of doing research is not only a necessity but is also really exciting, with many of our younger researchers crafting paths that cross disciplines and sectors and open up opportunities to work with the widest variety of people possible. It is a pleasure, as Chair of our Engaged University Steering Group, to work with Kathy and Maggie to facilitate and promote this activity and enable our staff and students to engage in productive dialogue with all those who are interested in our research.

Nick Lieven

I couldn’t have taken over as Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education at a livelier time.

The focus on students – how we recruit them, their experience with us and where they go on to is acute and challenging. That focus is extremely valuable and reinforces their position right where they should be: at the front of everyone’s minds. Public engagement plays an extremely valuable part of academic life and increasingly will for our students. They are already engaged with so much work around the city, from volunteering to project work that is intrinsic to their degrees, that the task we have is more about opening up and expanding these opportunities rather than setting up anything new. Public engagement at this University is well established, and my work will be to ensure students are at the heart of our engagement activity and that we continue to build upon and strengthen our relationship with the city and region.

This publication was produced by the University’s Centre for Public Engagement, a small support service department dedicated to supporting engagement across the University. It is part of the Communications and Marketing Division.



Top: Maggie Leggett, Head of the Centre for Public Engagement
Middle: Guy Orpen, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise
Bottom: Nick Lieven, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education



Professor of Sciences and Society
Kathy Sykes

The pace of change in public engagement policy over recent years has been exciting and challenging.

Increasingly, public engagement is viewed by the funders as an intrinsic part of research and teaching and funding mechanisms have changed accordingly. Some stand alone sources of grants for public engagement have been closed, and instead funders are expecting to see these activities costed into grant applications. We are also seeing greater consistency from funders in their approach to public engagement, as exemplified by the Funders’ Concordat published in 2010¹.

Then there is the rise of the impact agenda, with public engagement acknowledged by all as one route to impact. This is undoubtedly in general positive, but with the potential pitfalls that academics could see only certain types of engagement as legitimate and potentially that for some motivation might change, from engagement being an activity that researchers see as morally right to something that is part of a tick-box exercise.

These developments have meant that the grey literature and blogosphere have been rife with comments, and it is certainly possible to misinterpret some of the messages from policy makers. The overall message to me seems clear – public engagement has never been more important. Over the next few years we will be grappling with embedding some of the changes and making the most of important developments like the Concordat. We will also be working with the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement to embed the learning from the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative.

¹ Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research (2010) Funders of Research in the UK. Available at: www.rcuk.ac.uk/per/Pages/Concordat.aspx

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This booklet contains just a few highlights of public engagement at Bristol. It is impossible to include all the stories and case studies that we would like to showcase, and we encourage you to also look at our online collection at bristol.ac.uk/publicengagementstories

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Co-generated research

Involving the public in the development of research has been shown to improve the quality and impact of the work, and is now a requirement of some funders and funding streams. A selection of examples of co-generated research projects which have bridged the gap between researcher and user are described here.

UHBristol Academic Rheumatology Unit

Patient, carer and public engagement is at the centre of the UHBristol Academic Rheumatology Unit's mission and activities. They have delivered on and increased their commitment to co-generated research over a sustained period of more than 10 years such that it is now fully embedded into working practice to the great benefit of the Unit, and clinical and research outcomes.

Patients and carers have been involved as:

- advisors on all research projects as members of steering committees or as grant holders
- co-authors of research publications
- mentors to clinical PhD students
- advisors to new researchers helping them to gain the most from working with the public
- representatives of the Unit speaking at international and national conferences.

The Unit is recognised internationally as at the forefront of involving patients in research and has been a significant player in drawing in patient research partners to OMERACT (outcome measures in rheumatology) which sets internationally agreed research outcomes for arthritis and strongly influences regulatory bodies such as the US Food and Drug Administration.

“Our engagement with patients continues to evolve, and we are striving to ensure that our partnerships are as effective and advantageous as possible.”

Professor John Kirwan is based in the University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust Academic Rheumatology Unit at the Bristol Royal Infirmary



Working regionally

In order to enable quick translation of research from bench to bedside the University is working in partnership with local organisations including Bristol's four NHS Trusts, the two universities and Bristol City Council to form the Bristol Health Partnership. As part of that, *People and Research SW* is an initiative that supports researchers involving the public in health and social care research. The collaboration offers regular training and events to bring together members of the public, clinicians and researchers to share best practice, experiences and expertise in a variety of health-related research areas.

The University of Local Knowledge

“ULK is a project that aims to celebrate and share the talents and skills that exist within the Knowle West community. We have created over 900 short films each focusing on a different skill or knowledge that is held within the community. Subjects are diverse, and include ‘breaking in a horse’, ‘spotting a fresh fish’ and ‘dealing with post-natal depression’.”

Penny Evans Creative Director for ULK and Deputy Director of Knowle West Media Centre

ULK is a multi-partner project, commissioned and produced by Knowle West Media Centre, with partners including international artist Suzanne Lacy, Arnolfini (curatorial advisors), the BBC (film digitisation), Bristol City Council, Public Art (co-funders) and the University of Bristol.

“ULK aims to challenge perceptions of how knowledge is gained, organised and valued” describes Penny. “With the initial structure being loosely based on a university, a web platform is being developed to allow the user to access, add to and rearrange the films in knowledge constructs that suit them. Using the web in this way pushes the boundaries of public engagement enabling a fully co-generated and sustainable database which is community owned and managed.”

When the project was first presented to Bristol University at an Engaged University forum it was clear there were areas of overlap of interest. Academics from three faculties quickly became involved. Dr Mike Fraser (Department of Computer Science), Dr Angela Piccini (Department of Drama: Theatre, Film and Television) and Professor Rosamund Sutherland (Graduate School of Education) began to discuss with Penny Evans how a web platform could be developed to support the initiative. Those discussions led to a successful bid to EPSRC's 'Research in the Wild' scheme for

approximately £300K to enable the platform to be developed.

Alongside that work, Penny, Angela and Maggie Leggett from the Centre for Public Engagement set up 'seminars', where community members could meet with academics who had common interests, on subjects including horse welfare, education and exclusion, classic cars and grandmothers who are guardians for their grandchildren. These meetings were fascinating. Each group met twice. The first meetings collaboratively designed an agenda for the seminars, which were filmed and took place in various locations around the Knowle West estate. Not surprisingly, it took some time in each of the initial meetings to find common ground, but all the academics who participated commented on what a privilege it was to hear the stories and experiences of the residents. Two of the seminars have led to follow up work.

This is one of the most fascinating public engagement projects we have been involved with, covering areas including what constitutes knowledge and managing very complex power relationships. These kinds of partnerships take a long time to develop and mature. Our work with Knowle West has given us lots of insights that we can apply to partnerships with other communities, which will lead to many more exciting projects in the future.



ALSPAC

The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), also known as the Children of the 90s, enrolled more than 14,500 pregnant women over the course of 1991 and 1992.

The health and development of their children has been studied ever since and, together with data collected from the mothers and fathers, has created a vast amount of information from which scientists around the world can learn about health and other issues affecting families. ALSPAC involve their participants in the design and development of the research. They have a young person's advisory panel, made up of cohort participants, which both help with strategies for retaining people with the study and suggest new research ideas. Proving effective as providing a means of two-way communication is the Children of the 90s Facebook page. Amongst the benefits for the ALSPAC team is the speed they can turn around research issues – for instance using a Facebook poll to query the wording of a new questionnaire.

ULK aims to uncover the skills and talents and expertise that exist within Knowle West, Bristol

Working with schools

The University touches schools in many ways. We recruit students from them, do research with them, act as governors and do many outreach activities with them. Our relationship with local schools strongly influences our relationship with the city and region. Over the past years we have been looking at the way we work with schools, particularly but not exclusively in the local area, to see if we can improve the way we work together.



Working with Merchants' Academy

The University is a partner in Merchants' Academy, a school in a deprived area of South Bristol. Over the last few years standards have increased dramatically, and we were delighted that in 2011 the Academy achieved a highly complimentary report and rating of 'Good' from Ofsted. Three members of the University are on the Academy's governing body, and we work with the Academy in a number of ways including curriculum development, offering work placement opportunities and after-school activities in different subjects. The Principal, Ms Anne Burrell, commented "The partnership with the University works extremely well, and helps to raise the aspirations and ambitions of the young people we educate. We are always looking for ways of extending the benefits of the partnership and are very grateful to the University for its support."



Bristol ChemLabS

Bristol ChemLabS is the University's biggest schools outreach project, and includes a programme of talks and workshops that are taken out to over 200 primary and secondary schools each year aided by postgraduate chemists. The workshops include a range of activities that draw school children to the University and various online resources.

Outreach director Tim Harrison, an ex teacher, commented "Some schools do not have the facilities or knowledge to do the kind of science that we can involve pupils in. ChemLabS has been to some far flung corners of the world, including South Africa and Namibia. We have the potential to grow and grow, and excite ever more people with the wonders of Chemistry."

"I never knew science was such fun. I used to think science was boring but since Bristol ChemLabS came to our school I've wanted to learn more science."

Year 6 pupil



Graduate School of Education

Naturally, a large part of our interactions with schools is through the Graduate School of Education (GSoE). Through the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme, GSoE, in partnership with over 65 schools in the region, trains over 200 teachers each year, many of whom go on to teach and lead in local schools.

Additionally, the partnership enables University tutors to contribute to the continuing professional development of teachers and to run tailored sessions for targeted pupils from local schools. For many years, local teachers have also studied on the GSoE Masters programmes to develop their knowledge and expertise in a range of educational areas.

Working with Bristol City Council, the GSoE has developed a seminar series that brought together stakeholders from across the city to look for ways of improving the outcomes for young people. Professor Rosamund Sutherland commented: "We can't expect to improve standards by doing research on schools. We must do it with them, and involve all the other stakeholders in the discussions as well. Merchants' Academy is an excellent example of how true partnership

can work, and our seminar series now regularly attracts a wide range of stakeholders all interested in one thing: improving the chances for young people in our city."

Professor Keri Facer joined the Graduate School of Education in 2012. With a varied background in academia, independent research organisations and creative digital media she is keen to broaden and develop the way we work with schools. She commented: "I'm looking forward to working with and learning from the very wide range of formal and informal learning settings and institutions in Bristol. I hope we can work together to build new learning partnerships that can tackle the big issues of social justice, environmental change and economic resilience that face us as a city."



Student volunteers

Student volunteers work in 20 schools across the city, supporting reading and writing and mathematics and working with others to provide after-school activities.

All of this work is student led and student organised. Rachel Miller, Community Engagement Officer in the Students' Union said "Our students do an amazing amount of volunteering – over 100,000 hours per year. We have many projects in schools including, for example, Bristol Student Action for Refugees, part of the STAR National network, where students volunteer on a range of activities such as mentoring refugee secondary school pupils. Working with schools is one of the most popular activities, as students can see the immediate benefit of what they do and can gain valuable experience."



Right:
Professor
Rosamund
Sutherland

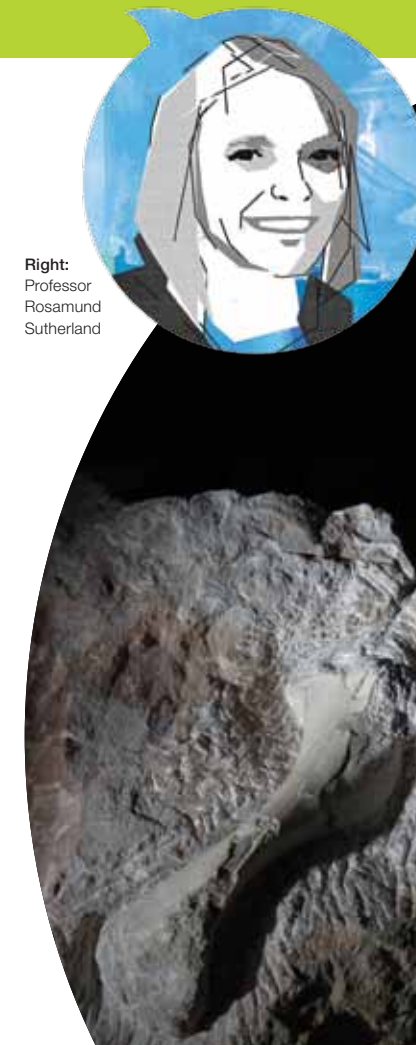
Bristol Dinosaur Project

The Bristol Dinosaur Project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund has reached over 12,500 children, as well as involving 40 students as volunteer helpers. Ed Drewitt, the Bristol Dinosaur Learning Officer and his team of volunteers have taken their outreach activities to over 135 schools as well as running stands at festivals and open days.

"The Bristol Dinosaur is a gift in terms of inspiring school children," says Ed. "You need to make sure that they get a good learning experience and bring something unique to the classroom, something that the teachers can't offer. That's where the actual dinosaur bones come in very handy!"

"The Bristol Dinosaur has its own history since its discovery in 1834. So beyond discussions about evolution I can talk to the public about the modern history of the Bristol Dinosaur and interweave stories about the social history of Bristol, the Bristol riots, grave robbing anatomists and even World War II."

Remmert Schouten Fossil Preparator



Left: a partially prepared out Thecodontosaurus upper arm bone.

Engaged learning

Students at the University of Bristol have a long history of civic engagement carrying out over 100,000 hours of voluntary work annually. Increasingly, we are looking at ways of incorporating this voluntary work into their degree programmes, recognising the range of skills that can be gained and the potential benefits to students and the community alike.

Dental care in a community setting

Dr Louise Nash of the School of Oral and Dental Sciences is heading up an initiative to take primary dental care services to the residents of South Bristol. Part of the new South Bristol Community Hospital in the Hengrove Park redevelopment project, Dr Nash leads an expert clinical team of staff and final-year students offering dentistry with the latest facilities to the local community.

“Basing our community-based teaching programmes in the new community hospital is crucial as it places dentistry at the heart of primary healthcare,” said Louise. “The South Bristol Community Hospital aims to make a significant contribution to improving the general health of local people and it’s essential that oral healthcare is part of this ambition.”

“We’re going to find out whether public perceptions of dentists and oral health improve as a result of this new outreach model.”

The 2008 expansion of the University’s dental school saw an increased focus on community-based teaching. This involves engaging students in primary care dentistry which prepares them



for a future in general practice. “It’s a great opportunity for students to understand what general dental practice will be like once they have finished their studies,” said Louise. “They will work as part of a dedicated dental team focusing on individual patients’ needs. As well as improving their skills in general practice, this programme helps them to learn essential patient communication skills and how to work with other dental care professionals in their teams.”

“We’re going to find out whether public perceptions of dentists and oral health improve as a result of this new outreach model,” continued Louise. This initiative shows how the latest academic knowledge can be applied through providing a much-needed service to local people.

Bristol Innocence Project

On offer to both undergraduate and postgraduate law students is the opportunity to work on the highly successful University of Bristol Innocence Project (UoBIP).

Working within the Innocence Network UK, UoBIP sees students investigating cases of long-term prisoners maintaining factual innocence. The driving force behind both initiatives is Dr Michael Naughton of the University of Bristol Law School “The feedback from students is that they greatly value the opportunity to work on real case studies. They take part in activities including visiting prisoners and their families, applying their academic skills and knowledge, and collaborating with practising lawyers, forensic scientists and other experts.”

This student engagement, together with pro bono work offered by University staff, contributes a conservative estimate of 100,000 hours of work across the Innocence Network UK per annum. As a result of this effort there has been improved access to justice in an area where public funding is notoriously limited and several cases have progressed to the Criminal Cases Review Commission and the Court of Appeal.

Learning in the community

With initial funding from the National HE STEM Programme, the University has begun offering community-based projects for undergraduates in civil engineering. Student interns were recruited in the summer of 2011 to help find community partners for research and design projects.

Projects were taken up by a total of 17 third and fourth year students with topics ranging from flood risk management at Temple Gateway to understanding the nature and sources of contamination in the Floating Harbour. The process of creating and sustaining these placements is being evaluated as a model which can be rolled out across the University.

Similar opportunities also exist for students on the part-time degree in English Literature and Community Engagement. As part of the course, students set up a community project related to their studies. “Some students organise a reading group,” says course director Tom Sperlinger, “and these can run in a whole variety of settings: pubs, cafés, online, in a library, or with an organisation like a drug rehabilitation centre. Other students get involved in helping children read at a local school or utilise what they are learning at work. Our hope is that each project contributes to the student’s understanding of literature – but also that it extends the English Department community outwards, well beyond the building where seminars take place.”

“Bristol is a city bubbling with diverse, motivated and knowledgeable people and community groups working on hundreds of solutions to social issues” says Max Wakefield. “When I ran for election as Vice-President: Community at the Students’ Union, one of my manifesto pledges was to ‘create a student-community research network, linking students’ research interests with community needs’. I pledged this because, for me, this represents the greatest new opportunity the University of Bristol has to contribute to the well-being of the city and the development of its students. Cross-institutional commitment to community-based learning and community research partnerships would unlock an elite university for the benefit of vital community groups and a whole world of learning, experience and opportunity still shuttered away from so many Bristol students.



“Working with the Centre for Public Engagement I have been able to help drive forward discussions, research, pilot projects and a broad stakeholder forum aimed at putting community-based learning firmly on the agenda at Bristol. I hope that over the next few years the University of Bristol will continue to set new precedents for the sector, create an institutional culture that embraces community-based learning and begins to reinterpret just what exactly a university is in relation to its neighbours.”

Max Wakefield Vice-President: Community, University of Bristol Students’ Union 2011-12



© Nicholas Wray

Botanic Garden

The Botanic Garden is a focus for public engagement within the University as it runs a variety of activities for, and with, the general public, attracting 7,000 visitors annually and 2,500 people on the tours and courses. Importantly, the diversity of activities gives University of Bristol students unprecedented opportunities to participate in public engagement, to capitalise on existing expertise and training schemes, and to become part of a truly ‘engaged University’. The Botanic Garden provides an excellent example of making connections across a wide cross-section of the local community.

UBU Volunteering

Organised by the Students’ Union, UBU Volunteering enables hundreds of students every year to engage with the local community, supporting marginalised groups and working with local charities.

Students work with older people, adults and children with learning disabilities, people overcoming mental ill-health and young carers. Additionally UBU Volunteering works closely with homelessness and housing support organisations; both in awareness raising and practical support through painting and decorating, working in local homeless shelters and fundraising activities.

A directory is sent out termly to local schools so they are aware and regularly reminded of the array of skills and services our students can offer. This has resulted in greater participation in volunteering through non-traditional volunteering routes. Societies including Spotlights Drama Society, Feminist Society, Biology Society and Engineers without Borders are among the many groups which visit schools, raise aspirations, enable many school pupils to find out about life at university and engage with traditional school subjects in a refreshing and appealing way.

Policy

Working with policy makers is an incredibly important route to impact for many academics, and we have many examples of effective policy engagement across the University from serving on relevant advisory boards and committees to conducting research specifically aimed at informing policy. In this section, we have concentrated on examples where policy and public engagement are inextricably linked.

Public awareness raising

Working with policy makers can be a route to public engagement, as is the case with Christine Barter’s work, in the School for Policy Studies. Her pioneering research, which involved a large scale survey and in-depth interviews with 13-17 year olds showed that roughly 25% of girls and 18% of boys reported physical partner violence, and nearly three-quarters of girls and half of boys reported controlling behaviours.

Christine was invited to give evidence to the Government’s review on the Sexualisation of Girls and Women, and in the subsequent report there was a section specifically on teenage partner violence. The Labour government directly responded to Christine’s research by commissioning in 2010 the first ever £1.8 million public awareness media campaign on the issue of teenage partner violence. The campaign included a commissioned short film on teenage relationship abuse which ran on all major terrestrial and cable TV channels and in cinemas. Advertisements were also placed in a range of teenage magazines. Christine acted as the main expert consultant on the campaign and advised on all aspects. A website – *This is ABUSE* – was launched and associated information packs sent to UK schools. David Cameron’s coalition government repeated the campaign (£1.5 million) in 2011. In addition, a 30 minute film exploring the issues called ‘Crush’ was commissioned and this film has been shown in all Scottish schools. Christine has acted as an expert consultant on all of this work. She commented:



Left Christine Barter Right This is Abuse campaign poster



“Obviously, this level of public awareness raising is well beyond the scope of an individual academic, but it has been incredibly satisfying seeing the research catalyse actions which will hopefully bring about change for young people. It is really shocking that so many are living with violent relationships, and raising awareness of the issue should enable some young people to take steps to change their situation. I consider the interaction with policy makers, and all the media work I have done, to be part of my responsibility to see that the research has impact.”

University Research Institutes

The University is creating University Research Institutes, to galvanise cross-disciplinary working and to provide a means of interface with the outside world in critical areas. The first of these was the Cabot Institute, which tackles the challenges of living with environmental change. Policy and public engagement is a key part of the Institute’s work. “This is a really exciting time for universities” said Cabot Institute Director Professor Paul Bates. “With the Institutes, we are bringing academics from across the University – from social scientists and economists to engineers and biologists – to tackle society’s biggest issues.”



“The way we interface with organisations and people external to the University is key to our success, be that through collaborative research and teaching and policy and public engagement.”

Professor Paul Bates Cabot Institute Director

Research Institute for Health

Public and policy engagement is also central to the University Research Institute (URI) for Health. “I’m really excited about the way we can involve the public in the design and strategy of our research,” said Director, Professor Jeremy Tavaré. “Ensuring that we include the public in our research innovation right from the bench through to the bedside and into our community is truly important.”

Finding these innovations is increasingly becoming a collaborative activity, requiring that bioscientists and clinicians work with non health-related researchers such as engineers, mathematicians, physicists and economists. A major role of the URI for Health will be to provide a conduit by which people in disparate disciplines can speak a common language and work together, while bringing in complementary expertise from anywhere else in the world where this is required. “We can learn a lot from the patients, public and local businesses about how to approach these challenges” Jeremy says. The URI for Health will also work closely with

the newly formed Bristol Health Partnership, which brings together Bristol’s four NHS Trusts, Bristol City Council and the two universities. This partnership will help ensure our research is exploited to enhance the way patients are treated and NHS services are delivered, and so improve the health of local people. Professor Tavaré concludes, “There is fantastic health research going on at this University with world-leading expertise in many areas, but we are not complacent. Public engagement will be core to our philosophy and feeding the public’s ideas directly into this range of activity will be challenging but highly rewarding for everyone.”

Impacts of public discussion on multiculturalism research

Engaging with policy is often viewed as a form of public engagement, and frequently works alongside public engagement; public discussion can inform research and policy development and many researchers also see a role for themselves in raising the level of debate around political issues.

“For me, achieving impact from research is not a linear process,” comments Professor Tariq Modood, from the School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies. “Often, I will put ideas into the public domain and the discussion and debate that follows feeds back into the research, which may then develop into an academic paper and an effect on policy. The public discussion, as well as feeding into the research, can also help with the policy impact. So for me public engagement is part of the process, not something that happens at the end.” Professor Modood is one of the world-leading authorities on multiculturalism, and his research was one of the key sources that led to religious discrimination being outlawed (initially in employment (2003), extended in 2007 and scaled up to match all other equality strands in the Equalities Act of 2010), and the creation of the offence of incitement to religious hatred (2006).



Media

Engaging through the media, particularly through television, allows researchers to reach vast audiences. Combining traditional media with new media can open up opportunities for interactions to be two-way. Researchers also use different types of media in their research and teaching.

Researchers in the media



Meet Your Brain

In 2011 the Royal Institution Christmas Lectures were presented by Professor Bruce Hood from the School of Experimental Psychology. The three-part series was viewed by four million people and included a range of lively demonstrations in the areas of cognitive neuroscience and psychology.

"I expected that children who came along to the Christmas Lectures would be excited about the cameras and the action, but I did not appreciate that children watching at home would be so inspired. Their parents came telling me about the effects of the series on their children's scientific curiosity," Bruce explained. Mindful to continue this work, Professor Hood and his team are developing an outreach programme based on the lectures for delivery to children aged 5 to 17 years via the network of Science and Discovery Centres.



Stem cell technology

Professor Anthony Hollander, Head of the School of Cellular and Molecular Medicine, was brought to international attention when in 2008 he was part of the team who developed the first tissue-engineered trachea (windpipe) using a patient's own stem cells.

Already an experienced science communicator, Anthony found himself discussing the potential of stem cells in medicine with members of the public, policy makers and the media. Professor Hollander sees public engagement as integral to his work "As scientists we can become divorced from what members of the public think about our work. Talking with different people gives me the opportunity not only to explain what I do and why but also to listen to their views and ideas, which can both suggest new research ideas and also allow you to see your work in context."



Directory of experts

The University offers a searchable database, the Directory of Experts, for journalists seeking academics with specialist knowledge. This open resource means that Bristol academics are easily accessible and when a rapid response to world events is needed then representatives from Bristol are on hand e.g. Professor Steve Sparks on the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption of 2010; and Professor Colin Taylor on designing buildings to withstand earthquakes after the Japanese tsunami of 2011. Over 1,000 academics are now on the database.

Social media and digital technology

Tweeters and bloggers

With the arrival of social media, researchers have a much broader set of options than previously to disseminate their work and encourage two-way communication. Bristol academics have been quick to adapt with a large number of regular 'tweeters' and 'bloggers'. One glance at the number of responses to any post on Dr Tamsin Edwards' (School of Geographical Sciences) blog is a indicator of how effective this media can be at enabling researchers to connect and interact with a wide and varied audience. In the first four months of the blog's creation in 2012 there were nearly 11,000 unique visitors and 900 comments.

See Tamsin's blog 'All models are wrong... but some are useful' – allmodelsarewrong.com

"I am overwhelmed by the fantastic response to my blog. It just shows how much of an appetite the public has for direct conversations with scientists, especially in politically sensitive areas such as climate change. I get so much from it: practise at explaining my research to a general audience, wider awareness of my work among colleagues, better critical thinking, and a broader knowledge base from finding answers to their questions. I am lucky because the University of Bristol, my research group and my funders are very supportive of this engagement."

Learning from the public

Professor Nello Cristianini has been developing automated methods to analyse the content of newspapers and social media, by using various artificial intelligence techniques, for many years.

"Twitter content can be used to gauge the state of society in many respects, including its overall mood, or the presence of a flu epidemic. We have been able to observe a deterioration of overall mood during the past few years. Newspaper content, on the other hand, can be analysed in many ways, for example to discover what stories people like to read. I am involved in public engagement about the impact of new media on privacy, as well as on their potential to shape public opinion. My work puts me in touch with social scientists, psychologists and philosophers, as well as scientists. The contact with the general public is particularly important for me, as ultimately the challenges posed to society by modern technology will not be solved by technology but by education and awareness, much like what happened for environmental challenges."



"People use the internet and networked media in so many different ways. Media are now pervasive, ubiquitous and convergent. We expertly and often unthinkingly shape the world by shifting our attentions and habits from mobile phones to computer to TV to advertising space to large urban screens. I'm interested in how these technologies transform teaching and learning and how we involve different communities in this process, from the ground-up."

Dr Angela Piccini is working with Dr Mike Fraser from the Department of Computer Science and with Knowle West Media Centre on the University of Local Knowledge project described on page 3



Using virtual reality to bring Pompeii to life

A different slant on using digital technology for public engagement and as a teaching tool is demonstrated by the work of Dr Shelley Hales and colleague Dr Nic Earle. Using *Second Life*, an online virtual world using three-dimensional modelling, they recreated a Pompeian house which was drawn from a replica built inside the Crystal Palace to entertain the Victorians from 1854 until the Palace's destruction in 1936. Speaking of the project Dr Hales commented "The original model of the Court created by the Victorians was a wonderful example of 19th century public engagement and now with the new technologies available to us we can extend their work into the 21st century using virtual reality – this has been tremendously exciting for us as researchers."



Partnerships

Partnership working is central to public engagement and many of the examples in this booklet demonstrate exemplary partnership activity. These pages are devoted to more formal partnerships we are involved with.

The Bristol Natural History Consortium

BNHC began in 2003, when six organisations in Bristol joined forces on flagship environmental communication projects. It has grown and there are now twelve members, including the two universities in Bristol, the BBC Natural History Unit, Bristol City Council, Defra, the Environment Agency, the National Trust and Bristol Zoo Gardens.

Together, we run the award winning Bristol Festival of Nature, which attracts over 13,000 people annually to a festival about the natural world at the harbourside in Bristol; Communicate, an international conference for environmental communicators and BioBlitz, a national programme of activity that gets people involved with their local biodiversity.

In 2011 the Festival of Nature won the Bristol Tourism and Hospitality Awards 'Bristol's Best Tourism Event'. The same year it also won a bronze award in the South West Tourism Excellence Awards Event of the Year. Evaluation in 2011 showed that the University of Bristol's contribution to the Festival was voted by attendees as second only to the BBC's.



Above: BioBlitz 2011



Left: The NCCPE's Engage conference is now the most well regarded public engagement conference in the UK

University festivals

The Arts and Social Sciences and Law faculties both have biennial festivals, to showcase research and invite the public to experience and share their research. Thanks to a generous donation from an alumnus, the Department of History has also set up an annual festival,

'Past Matters: Reading, Writing and Making History'. Working with the Centre for Public Engagement, they were able to involve different groups early in their planning to ensure a range of audiences were able to take part.

“In the age of the internet and social networking, our attention can seem relentlessly focused on the here and now. But history matters as much as ever, nowhere more so than in a city such as Bristol, shaped by centuries of trade and migration. We are delighted to be working with innovative venues in the heart of the city to host a series of events that explore how history is read, written and made. Working with the Centre for Public Engagement we have involved various community groups in our planning, and that helps ensure that as wide an audience as possible are able to take part.”

Professor Robert Bickers Department of Historical Studies

Partnerships led by academic groups

Increasingly, public engagement is a central part of collaborative endeavours led by academics. University Research Institutes have public engagement as a strong thread within them, and large collaborative bids almost always have a public engagement element.

An early example of this is the Synthetic Components Network. Public engagement was a necessary and costed part of the bid for leadership of this network, which included academics from institutions across the UK.

The science centre At-Bristol was also part of the network, and through this partnership we were able to trial experiential training for early career scientists, discussion events and the use of innovative techniques to support dialogue around contentious issues. We have a dynamic relationship with At-Bristol, spearheaded through Kathy Sykes' presence on their board, and partner with them on many activities including 'Meet the Expert' sessions, activities for Brain Awareness Week and discussion events.



Right: Paul Manners, Director of the NCCPE

National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement

With the University of the West of England, the University of Bristol secured a bid from the Beacons initiative in 2008 to set up the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). The primary aim of the NCCPE was to share best practice and learning from the six Beacons for Public Engagement, and to help to galvanise change across the HE sector. The NCCPE has been invaluable in that and so many other ways, and has recently been awarded a further two years' funding to consolidate its impact. Its website is a reliable and deep source of information on practically any aspect of public engagement, from training and evaluation to getting started and inspiring case studies. Perhaps the most important aspect of the NCCPE's work is in the policy arena. The NCCPE worked closely with Research Councils UK and all the key research funders to develop the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research and has encouraged over 50 universities to sign up to its Manifesto for Public Engagement, which is helping to catalyse deep and lasting change in many universities.

Maggie Leggett from Bristol's Centre for Public Engagement worked with the NCCPE to advise the REF (Research Excellence Framework) team about how best to include public engagement in the REF, and in this and many other areas the partnership has worked really well.



Left: The NCCPE invites universities to sign up to the manifesto. This helps demonstrate a university's commitment to public engagement, and also can be used as a self assessment tool. Bristol was one of the first universities to sign up.

If you need all or part of this publication in an accessible format (eg in Braille, in large print or on CD), please contact the Centre for Public Engagement, tel: +44 (0)117 33 18313 or email: cpe-info@bristol.ac.uk

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