

# The engaged University

Public engagement at Bristol plays an important part in how we as a university connect and have dialogue with many of our key audiences.

## The University's priorities in this area are to:

- support and promote dialogue with staff/students and the public;
- play a leading role in setting the national agenda on public engagement in higher education;
- respond positively to community needs;
- play a positive role in the affairs of the city, region and nation;
- nurture relationships with alumni and other friends of the University;
- behave responsibly as an institution.

## Playing a positive role in the city

The University's Public Engagement strategy is set by the University's Engaged University Steering Group and is managed by the Centre for Public Engagement (CPE) within the University's Communications and Marketing Division. Over the past year CPE helped to organise a wide range of events, including:

- a festival, involving more than 200 academics and students, showcased research from across the University using 20 interactive exhibits. These ranged from life-sized model cows and images of trees carved by soldiers before going to war to giant structures showing the strength of nano materials. Over 1,500 members of the public and around 1,000 primary school children attended the event;
- ninety-one free public lectures and talks run by a variety of departments, which attracted over 20,000 people. Topics ranged from the psychology of language to using Twitter to assess public mood. A highlight was a public debate before the mayoral referendum, which attracted a capacity crowd;
- a new Festival of Arts, which included talks, concerts and workshops and showcased research from across the faculty;
- a collaboration with 16 other institutions to create an exhibit for the Royal Society's Summer Science Exhibition to mark the anniversary of the discovery of cosmic rays and the subsequent progress in particle and astrophysics research. The exhibition also travelled to the Bristol Balloon Fiesta, where school children accompanied cosmic ray detectors on balloon flights;

- a new festival of history, made possible by a generous bequest to the School of Historical Studies;
- a University presence at the 2012 Festival of Nature, which attracted over 10,000 people. For the first time our contribution to the Festival was almost entirely student-led and included a game for youngsters on optimising pollination strategies.

## Setting the national agenda

The University has agreed funding for the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) beyond the end of its current funding period. Areas of close collaboration include working with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on the inclusion of public engagement as a route to impact for Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014. This year, CPE led two sessions at the NCCPE conference on engaged learning and partnership working.

## Responding to community needs

Bristol's Community Sport Programme has had another excellent year with more than 100 volunteer coaches and mentors from the University helping to promote sport and healthy living at the annual Festival of Sport. Over 1,300 school pupils took part in activities from football to Zumba classes.

A series of CPE-led events brought together researchers in History, Archaeology, Drama and Computer Science to explore Bristol's history and heritage. Members of the public brought some incredible memorabilia, including hand-drawn maps of the voyage of the *Titanic* and photographs depicting life in Bristol through the ages. The researchers are now working with community groups to develop follow-on projects, which should help bring Bristol's history to life.



**Top:** Three former members of the 1952 St Barnabas school hockey team are reunited at a CPE-led Know Your South Bristol event, which used their team photograph on its flyer.

**Above:** The 'Know Your Fossil' stand at Bristol's Festival of Nature enabled visitors to share their knowledge of fossils.



AMANDA EDMONDSON/CPE



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**Top:** A young visitor to the University's exhibition at the Bristol Festival of Nature finds out about the workings of the body's immune system.

**Above:** David Brodowski, leader of the University's string quartet in residence, the Brodowski Quartet, performs at a free lunchtime recital open to the public.

**Nurturing relationships with alumni**

The University of Bristol is proud of its 100,000-plus alumni, and works closely with its alumni association, Convocation, to keep the sense of *alma mater* strong. Although the focus is on alumni in greater Bristol (around 11,000) and greater London (around 40,000), the University reaches out to alumni in more than 170 nations around the world.

More than 11,000 people now use Bristol alumni LinkedIn and Facebook pages, tens of thousands read regular Bristol

e-newsletters, and the award-winning *Nonesuch* magazine is posted to Bristol alumni twice a year.

With strong support from the Convocation Committee and other alumni volunteers around the world, the University holds a wide range of alumni events. In 2011/12, these included receptions at the House of Commons, a 'new graduates London networking' event, a Bristol lecture by Professor Chris Stringer FRS (PhD 1973, DSc 1990, Hon LLD 2000), a talk in New York by human rights expert Professor

Malcolm Evans, social events in Paris, Hong Kong, Victoria BC and Cambridge, and many more.

Perhaps the best evidence of the University's strong engagement with alumni and other supporters is that Bristol has more alumni donors than any other UK university, apart from Oxford and Cambridge. More than 6,500 alumni gave gifts in 2011/12, with 301 of these giving at Pioneer level (see pp27-28).