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Embedding public engagement in higher education: Final report of the national action research programme

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action research programme

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This report was written by Danny Burns and Heather Squires on behalf of the NCCPE and the Action Research Group Participants. The report was separately edited by five sub groups of the main action research groups, and was subsequently endorsed by the whole membership of the action research process as an accurate record of the issues, and as a set of agreed recommendations.

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Introduction: the purpose and key findings of this report

Paul Manners, director, NCCPE

We began planning this action research project in 2008, when we were just 6 months into the Beacons project. Two years, 20 meetings and several publications later, this final report distils the learning from what has been a fascinating process.

Our ambition was simple. We wanted to run a systematic and reflective process which would help us get to grips with the profound challenge our funders set us: how to embed a lasting cultural change in the sector that positioned public engagement as a valued and supported activity for staff and students. How we ran the process is revealed in Chapter One.

What we discovered is explained in the following chapters, each framed around one of the key themes that emerged from the process.

In parallel with the action research process we set about a separate but linked consultation with the sector to find out what practical tools they would find most useful to support their own public engagement activity. Additionally, we worked closely with the Beacons and others to distil the essence of how a supportive culture for public engagement can be created in universities. As a result we have developed the range of tools and exemplars featured on our website www.publicengagement.ac.uk.

What is fascinating now is to reflect on how these two processes have aligned, as highlighted in the three 'big ideas,' here, which are woven through the report, and through all of our work:

Clarify your purposes and values

This report demonstrates that any university seeking to embed support for public engagement needs to go back to first principles, and to clarify the role public engagement can play in helping it achieve its overarching purposes.

We have discovered that public engagement can best be understood not at a particular set of activities, but as an approach to the core purposes of teaching, research and social responsibility. To embed public engagement means to make it an explicit part of the identity and values of a university. This does not mean all universities will articulate this in the same way, but clarity of purpose will enable universities to identify what sorts of PE activities they want to prioritise and to support them effectively. This theme is explored in chapters 2, 3 and 4.

Build flexible support structures and processes

Another strong theme emerging from the action research was that public engagement needs support – but this needs to be flexible and responsive, and to nurture networking and shared learning.

This is examined in chapters 5 and 8. A significant issue for many staff is that engagement is not apparently valued by their line managers – so developing a range of formal and informal systems to recognise and reward activity is important. But there are complex and sometimes

unintended outcomes caused by accommodating engagement into workloads which heads of department need to be aware of and to deal with. This is drawn out in chapters 6 and 7. Running through the report is a conviction that many of the challenges can be most fruitfully addressed at departmental level, posing a significant leadership challenge to heads of department.

Put people first

It perhaps sounds banal to emphasise that people matter in this context – but it's something we forget at our peril.

The action research process has revealed the many complex ways in which issues of equity, involvement and mutuality animate engagement, and how – when handled sensitively – they generate significant communal benefits. Not only does the report help identify the interpersonal 'pressure points', it also helpfully lists a whole series of practical ways in which these can be addressed, for instance in chapter 9's exploration of 'space and place'.

How to use this report

There are a number of ways in which you might use this report.

- Reading through the whole report provides a useful grounding in the complexities and challenges you will be likely to encounter should you be about to embark on a 'change' process to better embed public engagement – or if you are already underway, it will hopefully help to contextualise some of the issues you are likely to be confronting.
- You might choose to lift individual chapters and use them as 'discussion starters' in your own institution. Each ends with a set of key questions which you might want to address with colleagues and partners.
- You might also take the recommendations listed at the end and use these to prompt discussion and debate.

However you chose to use the report, we hope you find it a useful stimulus for change. We would welcome your comments and feedback.

Chapter 1: Overview and methodology

In July 2009 the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) launched a UK wide action research programme to support the embedding of public engagement in higher education in Britain. Its aim was to support the transformation of the sector through a comprehensive network of learning groups. These would generate insight into key issues and build an evidence-based change programme from the issues that were raised.

Methodology

A systemic inquiry process

The project drew on a *systemic action research* (SAR) methodology to develop a systemic inquiry process. In SAR processes a learning architecture is built to hold multiple streams of inquiry allowing learning processes to be catalysed, developed and integrated across whole social and organisational systems (in this case the organisational systems of higher education institutions). This approach has been developed over ten years by the SOLAR team at the University of the West of England (Burns 2007). While the focus of this project was on inquiry, a number of significant actions emerged directly from the process - including the drafting of a formal submission to the HEFCE REF consultation from one of the action research streams.

[Burns, D. \(2007\) Systemic Action Research: A strategy for whole system change, Bristol: Policy Press](#)

The learning architecture

The national action research programme convened a series of parallel learning streams. These drew together participants with different organisational relationships to public engagement into a series of small inquiry groups that met between three and six times (depending on the group). As key issues emerged across the groups, facilitators inter-connected them. The facilitators attended all of the group meetings allowing effective integration. Each of the groups had a central starting question around which their inquiry was structured:

1. Heads of departments (HoD)

How can we balance the competing demands on staff time to ensure that PE is embedded in the university?

2. Beacons (BCN)

How can an intensive investment in PE projects translate into sustainable PE across the universities?

3. Vice-chancellors and other senior management (SM)

What are the strategic drivers which affect PE and what strategic changes need to be made in order to ensure sustainable public engagement?

4. Human resources (HR)

How do work practices, performance management systems, appraisal, recruitment and promotions system etc need to be changed to support public engagement?

5. Experienced public engagement academics (PEA)

What can we learn from our public engagement work about how best to embed public engagement in higher education?

6. The sixth strand of the programme involved insights streamed in from other universities and other initiatives. This included a workshop of student volunteers, and a whole organisation learning process initiated within The University of the West of England.

We made considerable efforts to ensure that each of the groups represented a mix of different types of university. More than 40 HEIs had participants in at least one of the action research groups. The total number of active group members was approximately 50. In addition to these streams a Cross Stream Workshop (CSW) with approximately 70 people was held which drew a wider community of stakeholders into the process.

The public engagement academics (PEA) group was largely constructed by invitation. The vast majority of which were senior academics who had pioneered public engagement work in different disciplines. In addition we included a few academics the subject of whose work was public engagement. The PEA group spanned the natural sciences, the arts and the social sciences. The senior management group (SM) was mostly comprised of pro-vice chancellors, with some engagement from deputy vice-chancellors. A number of these also had a personal track record of work on public engagement. The heads of department (HoD) group was partly selected through networks, and partly by open invitation. Here we were focused on getting a mixture of departmental size, type of university and discipline. The Human Resources group (HR) was comprised of senior HR managers and were mostly invited by other participants in the programme. The Beacons group (BCN) was made up of the Directors of the Beacons for Public Engagement (Wales, East Anglia, London UCL/Birkbeck, Edinburgh, Newcastle/ Durham and Manchester, Salford and MMU), and Paul Manners from the NCCPE. The six beacons are university-based collaborative centres that are working to support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement.

While the focus of public engagement is of course outward facing, the issue of embedding concerns change to the structure, processes and culture of the organisations themselves, which is why the groups were drawn from inside the universities. We thought hard about the appropriateness of public engagement in this process, but concluded that engaging “random” members of the public to deliberate on internal changes would only generate superficial information and could be regarded as “token engagement.” Consequently we decided to work with a small selection of community-based organisations in Bristol that had some relationship with the University of the West of England, to build a picture of what they felt needed to change about the relationship between universities and local associations.

On average action research meetings were three and a half hours long. The Public Engagement Academics group met six times. All of the other groups met three times. Detailed transcriptions of each meeting were produced. As the groups progressed, issues which were raised in one group were seeded into other groups by the facilitators. For example, the Senior Managers Group initiated a line of discussion around reputational risk, which was then seeded into the other groups for discussion. This allowed us to see where the resonances and divergences were between groups; to test assertions made by one group in the other groups; to collect stories and illustrations of the points which were being made. Therefore with each iteration we were able to deepen our understanding of the issues.

In July 2010 we carried out a detailed analysis of all of the action research group transcripts identifying a number of key themes from across the streams. These were collated into a set of [theme papers](#) providing the basis for the cross stream workshop; this event was opened up to a broader audience with approximately 70 people attending from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Participants took the theme papers as the starting point for discussion. They were provided with these in advance, but were also given ten minutes at the start of each session to read (or re-read). The ideas and views contained within the papers were then subjected to scrutiny and further developed. Two workshop sessions were held for each of the themes and detailed records were kept of each, including audio recordings. At the end of this event a report was produced which integrates the thinking from the AR streams with the additional insights from this large event. A draft final report, which had been further contributed to by the action research groups, was then presented to a half day workshop at the NCCPE 2010 national conference where a largely new group of 50 people critiqued it, allowing us to make final amendments. Three or four members of each of the action research groups worked with the facilitators to refine the main text, conclusions and recommendations and ensured that they reflected the discussions in the groups. This iterative and co-productive process has resulted in a report with extensive and diverse endorsement.

This document

The aim of this document is not to make the case for public engagement in higher education but rather to explore the issues, tensions and dilemmas faced by those who have some part in implementing it. This should provide a map of the questions that need to be asked by institutions. At the end of each section we ask a number of strategic questions. We hope that by reflecting on these universities will be able to develop a more coherent strategic frame within which to situate the operational decisions that they will need to make.

The perspectives which have been articulated here are either expressed as anonymous quotations from specific groups or as a narrative which is derived directly from their recorded conversations. Quotations are tagged with a code which indicates the group that they came from. A key to these is in the footer of each page in the following chapters. Questions and perspectives generated by the facilitators are headlined in the chapter section titled "reflections and observations". The conclusions and recommendations at the end of the document were either made directly by participants or have been inferred by the facilitators as having strong support across the inquiry groups.

Chapter 2: Framing of public engagement

Most of the action research groups had discussions in their first meeting about the definition of public engagement. Debates emerged not only about what we meant by “engagement” but also about what was meant by the “public.” The public engagement academics group (PEA) saw a difference in how the public was perceived in scientific research compared to social scientific or arts based research. For the former the public was a constructed notion which related explicitly to stakeholders who had some interest in the issues generated by scientific research, whereas the latter tended to work with identified organisations, territories or communities of interest.

Participants felt that while the definition of public engagement was important, almost everyone had a different perspective on it. This difference is not only disciplinary. It derives from different sets of values. Some academics believe for example, that the role of universities is to nurture and disseminate expert knowledge, while others see them as facilitating cutting edge knowledge wherever it may be found. Some see universities solely as providers of education while others see them as having wider obligations to society and so on. The idea that it would be possible to reach consensus on such things was seen to be impossible and would consume all of the time of participants. What was agreed was that public engagement lay on a spectrum where at one end lay simple activities such as communicating better to lay and non specialist audiences, and at the other end was co-constructed research and teaching.

Spectrum of public engagement in HEI’s

Academic knowledge production	Knowledge Transfer	Knowledge Exchange	Knowledge Co-generation
Knowledge is both produced and consumed by academics. Wider stakeholders have little access to academic knowledge. Many parts of society have limited access to education and teaching which is based on knowledge generated by the academy.	Universities make their research more accessible. Degree courses are made available to a wider number of people.	Universities recognise that others also have valuable knowledge and work in partnership. Teachers acknowledge that their students and the places where they live and work are also a source of knowledge and wisdom.	Universities and publics co generate knowledge, including the setting of research questions, research design, data collection, analysis and the ensuing practise implications. Curriculum is developed in collaboration with multiple stakeholders (businesses, community groups, marginal groups etc).

The aim of a public engagement focused change programme was seen to be to try and increase both the amount and quality of work in each of the second, third and fourth columns. Quality is important. It is counterproductive for universities to engage with publics if they are perceived as patronising or uncommunicative, or if they are seen as promoting the interests of the university. Similarly, highly participatory processes will not deliver good quality research without close attention to rigour.

PEA – public engagement academics; HR – senior HR staff; SM – senior university managers; BCN – Beacons project directors; HoD – heads of departments; SV – student volunteers; SVM – student volunteer managers; CSW - Cross stream Workshop; NCCC – National Coordinating Centre 2010 conference workshop

While it was accepted that universities will need to innovate across the spectrum it was universally agreed that university work that is solely in column one should become significantly less commonplace. Even brilliant research produced by uncommunicative scientists can be communicated by others in their teams and departments. At the other end of the scale, most universities should be able to increase the numbers and scope of pioneering co-production projects which engage on more equal terms with non university stakeholders.

Underpinning this thinking is a widespread belief that public engagement produces higher quality research, higher quality teaching and considerable benefits for society.

Whatever approach to public engagement is adopted there will be significant organisational implications for universities.

Chapter 3: Strategic drivers and strategic positioning

It was widely believed across the action research groups that it was unwise to develop policies on public engagement, or programmes of public engagement work without a clear picture of how the university positions itself in the world. Decision makers need to ask 'what is a university in the 21st century', and 'what sort of university do we want to be'. There are many different ways in which universities might articulate their mission. Clarity about this will significantly impact on the sorts of public engagement work that a university will do and its approach to it.

Key issues

In determining what sort of public engagement strategy is required it is important to take a long view. Participants felt that opportunist strategies to align PE strategies with the REF impact agenda, or David Cameron's "big society" will inevitably emerge, but that it was important to remember that universities had been around for generations and had seen a great many policy positions come and go:

"PE should not be aligned to short term political positioning. Hence the strategic case for PE as a core function within universities needs to be made away from specific political ideology. At that point you might consider whether 'function' is the right way to frame PE or whether there is more philosophical underpinning to PE and HEI's" (CSW)

It was felt to be more important to be clear about the deeper merits of PE, and that begged the central question of 'What is a university for?' (CSW) or perhaps more pertinently 'what is our university for?' It was also argued that "it is crucial not to have one model. We need bio diversity.... there are multiple types of university" (CSW).

There is already increasing differentiation between British universities resulting from greater exposure to the market economy and the need to differentiate not only by quality and price, but also by identity and even values. Birkbeck, for example, positions itself as a specialist provider of evening higher education. The University of the West of England describes itself as the 'Partnership University'. The Open University (OU) meanwhile is constructed around a value set of access to education for all; and it is now at least partly distinguished by its innovative modes of delivery. In addition, an increasing number of universities are seeing themselves as locally focused in a similar vein to many North American and Southern Hemisphere universities:

"In terms of the corporate side of things – it's not our strap line but I like to use it: '*We are the nation's favourite local university*'. It's about the values – we are a local university. Our income streams are predominately students, we recruit locally, we get CPD from local businesses – and we spread out from there. But by the time we get out to Malaysia our income stream is small, so we're very regionally driven. We know 70% of our student base comes locally. That's the value – and that's what drives the business. No one likes calling it that but that's what we increasingly recognise as what we are." (HR)

On the other hand:

“UCL sell their work as solving the world’s problems through grand challenges” (CSW)

This is not just about marketing it affects the type of courses that are delivered and the research that is carried out.

Members of the senior managers group were clear that while they may personally endorse university public engagement on moral grounds, universities by and large are not strategically involved for such reasons. Universities, they argued, are fundamentally businesses and any public engagement will only be supported where it enhances the business case. This position received strong responses from participants in other groups. Many pointing out that Universities are charities and that their infrastructure and reputations have been built through public money. Another take on this which might be more widely endorsed was:

“There is a difference between ‘being a business’ and acting in a business like way. Being a business is about the need to balance books, being business like [is much wider and includes] efficiency in processes that encourage creativity.” (CSW)

As well as product price and quality, long term sustainability for universities is dependent on relationships of various sorts with:

Individuals: People who have a relationship with the university, identify with it, have loyalty to it and can therefore potentially promote it to others. This includes alumni and former staff.

Communities: Universities are located in a physical place, and will draw at least a proportion of their staff and students from that place, regardless of broader recruitment strategies. An argument can be made that this physical situation carries with it a responsibility to that locality. And in an era of fiscal restraint with an increasingly competitive market, many more students may choose to live at home during their studies. Thus universities will become increasingly dependent on local and regional markets. The extent to which universities support the local public and community may have a significant impact on reputation, and potentially on recruitment. This highlights a theme of *civic leadership and civic responsibility*:

“Civic is really key. We have been told off for not bidding for things that are local.” (SM)

Civic responsibility contains the idea that a university which has expertise in social work or education or governance, or many other areas, might have a duty to support a struggling local government, education or health service, or contribute in other ways to civic life.

Society: Universities are increasingly being asked to document how they make a positive contribution to society for the public funding they receive. Both global and local reputation and access to student markets can be enhanced by evidence of the increasingly mainstreamed language of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Businesses and organisations:

“Corporate Social Responsibility is non-negotiable. How do we keep developing that? How do staff help that?” (HR)

Considerable attention was paid by the senior managers AR group to the notion of ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’. Some argued that public engagement is a priority for universities, not

because of an intrinsic value for universities to engage with society, but because of other external drivers - including the drive to show that public sector funding to universities delivers tangible societal results. But irrespective of an accountability function, this group accepted that universities - like other businesses - have corporate obligations to society. Rationalising public engagement as an element of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was considered by some as a useful way to capture both the rationale and the reporting of public engagement activity. Public engagement framed as CSR could build reputation if pursued strategically. Furthermore because businesses also have Corporate Social Responsibility strategies this might provide additional space within which to build partnerships. The typical motivation behind CSR, however, was acknowledged to be different from that which typically underpins university based public engagement.

The problem with CSR, like with public engagement, is that it is a very generic concept. There may be greater merit in focusing down on specific ethical policies which align with a university's identity so that rather than being seen solely as universal centres of education, knowledge and learning they could become recognised for values which they hold in relationship to society. For example, a university that clearly espoused values of environmental sustainability might choose to develop a brand identity based on its alignment to those values - declining for example to work on the development of technologies that resulted in environmental pollutants or otherwise put the environment at risk.

"[We] need to ask deep questions like *"how do you stop poverty?"* These value positions are ways of making sense of what the university does". (PEA)

This might be akin to the Co-operative Bank positioning itself as the ethical bank and begins to open up a discourse on the notion of a university as a social enterprise. This could become more significant in the context of reduced public sector investment in universities. As one participant said:

"At what point do we lose the public good if we lose state funding? A lot of us are already down to 20%. What happens when we are mostly student funded?" (SM)

This quotation raises some interesting tensions as students are increasingly paying for what they perceive as a service or product from a university. Some are beginning to see themselves as *consumers* and as such might challenge a focus of HEI resources and attention on things other than the quality and price of what they purchase - which might include universities' contributions to the wider society. On the other hand:

"The more you pay the more you feel you want to have a curriculum which is connected to the real world" (HoD)

"Of course there are lots of assumptions, and we don't actually know what students will feel." (HoD)

"For students making choices about HEIs there needs to be information about the extent of an organisation's PE, as they want to know what kind of place they are applying to." (NCCC)

It also has to be remembered that students are also members of society and often of the local community as well.

Some caution was counselled as there was a danger that the changes underway in higher education will create panicked reactions undermining the potential for a strong university contribution to society. More specifically a danger was expressed that with increased competition (and a more difficult institutional environment within which to cross subsidise) there would be a need to open up new markets. This might result in the prioritisation of outward facing activities that generate income over and above others which have a more social benefit:

“If there isn’t any money why should we justify letting them do it at all?” (HoD)

Positioning, however, is not just about customers and consumer markets, but about attracting and retaining high quality staff – particularly as high quality research will continue to be a ‘selling point’ for many universities; attracting the staff to conduct this research will remain very important. As one senior manager pointed out:

“We’ve been looking at branding... to get people to think about our HEI’s values. We’re trying to sell [x] university as an employer based on a value set – how can we promote the business to get the most talent in? More people are questioning what organisations stand for – we’re getting more serious about that. A lot of people do care about the values they have matching those that the institution offers. Ethics is such a big thing now. People are buying into this.” (SM)

It is also closely tied into the ability to manage. As one Head of Department said:

“I don’t know what our priority is. I want to know what that is, because I don’t know what i am managing”

Reflections and observations

These deliberations are located within a context of significant change in higher education. The Browne report (2010) has stimulated a shift in the underlying funding structure for British universities with university fees increasingly differentiated.

This will inevitably affect student composition in universities and the balance of work that universities do. Those universities that can raise greater income through student fees may have a stronger financial base from which to carry out public engagement work. Those that struggle financially may face a greater imperative to generate income from sources beyond research and teaching, requiring them to show much greater relevance to the wider world within which they are situated. In this sense it is possible to argue that the opportunities for public engagement may be greater in the new era, though engagement focused on income generation.

However if public engagement is dominated by the demands of students as consumers and the need to generate additional income, then it will fail to address some of the deeper concerns about the role of higher education in “society.” Some of the action research groups highlighted the importance of embedding corporate social responsibility into the strategic outlook of universities to address this issue. It would, however, need to mean something different to universities than it does to purely profit motivated businesses. Despite some similarities, universities remain more than just businesses.

Universities today are both charities and businesses – in this regard they may have more in common with social enterprises than with the private sector. The social enterprise sector has had over ten years of trial and error in Britain, including significant policy discourse and development of a formal support infrastructure. A housing association, for example, is a not for profit business with a set of core values.

Browne, J. (2010) Securing a future for higher education: An independent review of higher education funding and student finance

Key questions

1. Should we be focusing more on the core proposition of what society needs from universities, than on articulating a set of “activities” that academics might adopt in pursuit of public engagement? For example: should we be encouraging research managers and heads of department to ask questions like these of their staff:

- What does our local (or other) community need? How can we identify those needs?
- How might your teaching and research contribute to this?
- Are there any other activities which would support that?

2. What are the implications of different value sets driving public engagement at different levels of the university?

3. If we were to explore CSR models for universities, what sort of things might we want to include in a check list?

Examples could include:

- Public transparency about activities and their impact?
- Facilitation of public debates on controversial issues?
- Explicit investment of university funds in things that benefit society (including through pension funds)? - What else?

4. How can a university marry serving the student as customer, and being civically responsible to the larger society? Should a university be driven by both?

5. There will be increased competition around public engagement. What are the implications of this for the types of public engagement that are developed?

6. Is it time for the higher education sector to learn from third sector business and social enterprise?

Chapter 4: Reputation and reputational risk

Key issues

There was considerable sensitivity to how public engagement activity is perceived externally and the reputational risks involved when things go wrong. More broadly issues of quality control were raised. Not just anyone can do public engagement. It requires particular attitudes, ways of working and skills. Considerable damage can be done if we engage with publics in clumsy or patronising ways.

Engagement as managed process

The issue of reputation and reputational risk emerged strongly, particularly in the senior managers' action research group. This was initially articulated as a concern that individuals may go off and do things which reflect badly on the university.

"Colleagues are creating noise because they are going off and doing whatever they want to. But to what extent is it free and easy, and to what degree should this (public engagement) activity be managed? And to what extent do we open ourselves up to reputational risk?" (SM)

Reputational risk was also identified by members of the Beacons action research group, as a concern amongst some academics:

"In [x university], academics want quality assurance. The issue came up because there had been some bad experiences. Public engagement done badly is worse than not doing it at all" (BCN)

Some group participants observed that there are academics that shouldn't be allowed anywhere near the general public. This might be because they are unable to communicate in straightforward language, or they come across as boring, arrogant and superior. This concern was allayed to some extent by the arguments developed in chapters six and eight that universities need to develop public engagement as a group based responsibility. But another aspect of this is how to ensure that relatively inexperienced academics develop the skills and sensitivities to work with different publics.

Reputational risks were identified from a range of activities or motivations:

- Large projects - such as the contentious Beagle programme of one university - carry with them tremendous potential to either improve or damage a university's image.
- Sensitive topics - e.g. the controversy emanating from a team of climate change researchers at one English university, which has opened debate on the responsibilities of a university as employer to protect and manage risk for its employees. While this example deals with traditional scientific research, its dissemination - and use or mis-use - opens up concerns for a broad range of public engagement practices, and the responsibility of the university in relation to them.

PEA - public engagement academics; HR - senior HR staff; SM - senior university managers; BCN - Beacons project directors; HoD - heads of departments; SV - student volunteers; SVM - student volunteer managers; CSW - Cross stream Workshop; NCCC - National Coordinating Centre 2010 conference workshop

- Individual academics with an interest in raising media profile may, knowingly or unknowingly, misrepresent their views as being those of the university
- Individual academics participating as 'experts' on matters external to the university, may be perceived as an 'expert' (in whole or in part) through their university affiliation – regardless of any formal agreement with their university. The views of such individuals may also be ascribed, knowingly or unknowingly, to the university as a whole. An example illustrates:

“The sociology department got in trouble with a report on the low quality of life of ethnic groups in [the community]. The groups reported on were outraged that their lives were recorded as “poor” quality, and the department and the university were blamed.” (SM)

As a result of all of this senior managers felt that there may be a need for greater boundaries, raising the notion of, “*Bounded public engagement.*”

This seems to describe public engagement that is clearly connected to a university wide strategy as opposed to purely individually motivated. Here public engagement is harnessed and directed to help to shape a brand and differentiate one university from another.

Aligning public engagement activities around core strategic aims was fairly uncontroversial across the groups, but there was no real support for limiting public engagement only to those areas designated as strategic priorities by central management. Most felt that this would kill the spirit which motivates people to do it. Furthermore many pointed out that the risks identified apply equally to traditional pieces of research existing in the public domain:

“PE is no different than anything else that an institution does” (CSW)

And indeed these might be may be mitigated by public engagement:

“Q: Is PE higher risk than other areas of teaching and research?

A: No – less risk. The risk in PE is normally pretty minimal, and relatively easy to manage. The risk of the research report that comes out that says something about the society you live and work in, [and is] based on what someone has said in an interview - that’s a greater risk; the university ends up being labelled for saying something about a group.” (CSW)

There are however other types of risk which relate to a shift in perception about what a university does:

“The move from a deficit model to a dialogue model – is a move that can increase reputational risk because it opens up not being an expert. If you don’t answer the question correctly you can be criticised because the public often expects a certain level of “expert” from the university. There is way more risk from dialogue and two-way exchange than there is to just go out there and stand in front as an expert” (CSW)

The overwhelming view of the groups was that public engagement did involve some risks, but not significantly more than other university activities, and that the benefits usually far outweighed the risks:

“One of the things about universities is that they are full of mavericks – we need mavericks, that’s why we employ them – they’re different. We want them to be creative and challenging” (CSW)

“It’s not so much about reputational risks – we need to talk about the reputational benefits of public engagement. There are occasionally people who damage reputation but it’s mostly on the positive side.” (CSW)

One example of reputational benefits given at the cross stream event was:

“We had a report launch – followed by a community book launch – in an estate that is in close proximity to the university. I worked there before as a housing officer. 70 people were involved in telling their stories. This publication came out last April; there were some issues of white ethnicity. There was an article in the Guardian. But we decided we wanted to have a community book launch – to involve those that were involved in the process. It ended up being an extremely positive event. Many residents came to it; and academics from the university, in addition to who did the research originally. There was one letter written to the university complaining on the bad reputation it gave the estate, but only one. Otherwise it was extremely positive. Publishers reduced the book price for community members (£15 vs £60) and they all went. It was a very positive thing; the university has a campus divide – there was a risk but it was good to do.” (CSW)

There was also a strong message from some of those engaged with more controversial projects that these can be turned around precisely because there is a dialogue with the public.

“[The] Beagle – it crashed – but there is a way to turn it around – show that you took a risk and it didn’t work but that you can learn from that activity and do something more constructive next time around.” (CSW)

A similar story seems to be emerging around the climate change controversy in one university where predominantly negative publicity has resulted in a significantly increased interest in the work of the centre:

“From the outside ‘climate-gate’ is interesting ... ‘genuine mistakes are accepted by people if properly explained.’” (CSW)

This is important because it connects to a strong contradiction facing institutions. Organisations learn most effectively when they are able to understand the mistakes that they have made, but to do this can expose the institution. An interesting take on the Beacons initiative itself is that:

“The whole Beacons work was about risk taking. Funders repeatedly saying, ‘tell us about your failures, we want to learn from it.’”

Finally it is important to point out that there are many aspects of this debate which are not entirely in the control of universities. Changes in the environment and the development of technologies also change the nature of reputational risks:

“Universities need to be open, but it’s getting muddled by twitter etc. where you don’t know what people will do with what you say”. (CSW)

“If we go down a risk-averse route it limits the types of PE you can do. Just because you are secretive it doesn’t mean that you might not be engaged. You can be made to be engaged – e.g. hacked.”

“X: New technology amplifies reputational risk. New technology allows people to choose to be outraged. So you can build a reputational storm....

Y: With X institution e-mail addresses being freely available it allowed that storm to brew”

Universities might want to think through the implications of a university sector which is already having to adapt rapidly to an open information society.

Risk to academics of being associated with the university!

A contrast to the perspectives advanced above was provided by both the public engagement academics and the heads of department AR groups. Both noted that some individual academics who work in the public sphere – for example: in the performing and visual arts - see reputational risk in identifying their work *with* the university.

This may also be true of some specialised research groups within universities. A significant amount of public engagement can be carried out by the latter, who build their own identity and relationships with ‘clients’ or ‘publics’; these publics associate principally with the research group and not to the university as a whole. For academics in such groups, many prefer for their work not to be closely associated with what may be perceived as a bureaucratic university institution.

These mindsets could be perceived as a risk to the ‘corporate brand’, as envisioned by senior managers, though in reality it is perhaps more likely that these types of contracts and partnerships are important ‘ways in’ for those various publics – and may serve to heighten their understanding and appreciation of the university’s wider value.

Engagement and loyalty

If universities are fundamentally businesses, the logic holds that they must deliver to consumers on quality and price. However this leaves aside notions of trust and loyalty within higher education (SM). This is important to a university because building university reputation is not a linear process, and loyal publics can have a significant influence on recruitment of future students - an area of significant competition amongst universities. Loyalty acquired through public engagement activities, of all sorts, can act as an important buffer to risk. Loyal publics may not instantly reject an institution if minor issues are perceived to go wrong. Both trust and loyalty are widely ascribed as typical, or at least expected, outcomes of public engagement.

Reflections and observations

What is clear from this discussion is that there is strong a relationship between what happens outside the university and what happens inside. As one of the NCCPE team observed:

“Experiential learning if done well is tricky. It puts the student in an uncomfortable place. This may lead to lower NSS scores... as shown perhaps by Arts subjects consistently scoring lower on the NSS.

Universities also have a stake in the quality of their students work, whether through volunteering or work/community based learning – their reliability, not letting public down

etc. Volunteer managers, and people who work in PE play a crucial role in navigating these risks, making sure the ball is not dropped when enthusiastic staff and students move on.”

The potential impacts can drive senior management toward increased ‘corporate’ control. In reality, it may mean that some senior managers do not invest financially (through budget allocation) in groups which are not aligned to core strategic aims of the university – rather than explicitly censoring or discouraging individuals from pursuing their personal engagement priorities. Group participants tended to support a pragmatic response to these issues:

“I’m not in favour of constraints. I am more in favour of encouraging staff to be aware of the constraints and self manage it themselves”. (CSW)

“When I worked for the BBC we had producer guidelines. We were always engaging with the public – the producer guidelines laid down the rules of engagement. Would it make sense for some sort of guidelines to be used across all institutions – but guidelines not rules. People could pick up what they feel is appropriate? But not rules more like: “if you are going to do PE this is what you need to think about” (CSW)

This reflection on student engagement contains some wisdom that might be more widely applied:

“I would suggest more hand-holding, informal supports; it needs to be individually focused. It is very important to use students and peer role models etc. But you train them up, trial them out in a low risk situation – and if it doesn’t work out ... the danger is not too high for anyone”. (CSW)

This could equally be applied to researchers and teachers.

Key questions

1. To what extent is it desirable or possible to ‘manage’ public engagement? Is there a ‘best fit’ level of management, which enables the effective management of risk while also supporting individuals to be creative in their engagement activities? Are there systems or processes we can learn from to support such a mix?
2. Is the reputational risk from public engagement any greater than the risks associated with more traditional research or teaching?
3. Apart from a few exceptional individuals, public engagement tends to occur through niche research groupings or strong teaching programmes. By explicitly focusing PE around these, is it easier to align PE with the strategic foci of the university? Would a group focus help to mitigate risk?
4. What is the risk of not doing public engagement (genetically modified foods, climate change etc...)?
5. Some areas attract greater interest than others eg. robotics. But others such as “improving pumps because the way in which they are being made is killing people” are just as important. How do we ensure that universities don’t only do the exciting innovative “sexy” things?
6. Is it better not to do public engagement than to do it badly? How should the quality of public engagement be ensured?

Chapter 5: Supporting emergence - developing flexible systems for public engagement

The systems and processes designed to deliver mainstream research and teaching are not the same as those required for public engagement activities. Academics trying to initiate public engagement activities may find themselves frustrated by slow moving bureaucracies which are designed for other purposes. Finding ways in which flexible systems for public engagement can run alongside those that support the management of teaching and research was seen to be crucial.

Key issues

A different model of organisation based on emergence

Universities are designed around the management of large scale operations and are therefore locked into highly mechanised processes of planning, control and audit. This may be an impediment to the sort of flexibility needed to deliver effective public engagement.

“We tend to be driven by processes which are designed for big whole sale undergraduate provision and they get rolled out for everything – [even] a half day course” (HoD)

Yet in discussions, there was remarkable consistency about what characteristics organisations needed to have in order to adapt to contemporary circumstances: flexibility and responsiveness:

“I feel it’s like seed scattering. We see what grows. Look for patterns, see where the energy is.” (BCN)

We talked about a common approach which was different to the usual programme of this sort, characterised by a shift from projects to process, from methods to ideas, and from a focus on where the energy lies rather than who has formal responsibility. (Discussion- BCN)

“The Beacon as a virus, not as an organ” (BCN)

“There are two ways of thinking about your public engagement activity (1) the show case, like a display of orchids, (2) the rhizome effect, with lots of subterranean activity with unexpected outcomes! The second is less glamorous and slow burning but better reflects our approach. (SM)

These discussions highlighted problems inherent in the standard planning models when applied to public engagement. Some knowledge exchange may fit easier into a planning approach but publically engaged research tends to develop more organically and is based on relationships rather than procedures. Good public engagement in this instance will depend on the ability of a university to respond to the agenda and needs of various publics, rather than structuring an independent engagement agenda. This requires a degree of flexibility that is often not characteristic of universities.

Procedures need to be flexible, fast and responsive

Small changes can be critical to success. For example: the PEA group highlighted the issue of expense claims and pointed out that while it may be possible for professionals (on salaries) to accumulate expenses, submit them and then wait for claims to be processed before being recompensed, this is not a practical option for many of the people that they work with, who may have little money or tight financial commitments:

“It is hopeless the way in which universities pay expenses, so that poor people have to wait weeks and weeks for their money” (PEA)

“There’s a real tension here – we want things to happen, but we have this duty of care... I went to book a room the other day and the safety form was huge ... I thought ‘bloody hell, I’m not doing the event. It’s not worth it’ and that’s the system – it puts people off. So all that happens is that people go outside the institute to do what they want” (CSW)

Institutions have to find a way to circumvent the traditional processes: risk assessment; timetabling; partnership agreements etc:

“We tried to get a long contract signed which was just an agreement to work with X University. It became so complicated we gave up - “lost the will to live”. The Browne review may be beneficial in this sense. HEI’s have been able to be extraordinarily risk averse, but we are going to have to be smarter and quicker in order to compete with other universities” (BCN)

Just as procedures need to be flexible so too do staff:

“What is needed is someone who can work with uncertainty and do things last minute. The problem with many administrators is that they are used to planned and scheduled tasks which do not map easily onto PE activity”. (HoD)

“B&Q had approached [us] to do a project with students. There was a lack of coherence within the university – who was the person dealing with it? Who was going to track and deal with it in the required time? Because there was nobody to take responsibility they lost the contract” (CSW)

At issue here are both the attributes of staff and the motivation and capacity within departments to mobilise staff to work flexibly. This latter point is important, as it is difficult to respond to things as they emerge if the staff are already working at or close to capacity:

“Capacity is an issue irrespective of income, even if you have a profitable department” (HoD)

Meanwhile, re-distribution of staff to balance workload can be problematic even when there is an income stream to permit more staff resources - since re-alignment doesn’t tend to happen uniformly:

“Buying yourself out of teaching can be at the direct expense of students due to someone who may have less qualifications or experience taking the academic’s place (CSW)

“When staff buy out their time - they tend to buy out of teaching. In reality it’s the administration that gets put on the shoulders of fewer and fewer people – [you] can buy someone in to replace teaching but not administration or management”. (HoD)

And increasingly where new posts are required, a business case must be made that shows the financial benefits of the post to the university. This can be a difficult case to make for much public engagement work since many of the benefits are known only once the work has begun.

“To put into a work plan you need to have a business case, but because it’s so difficult to make these tangible links it’s very hard”. (HoD)

In any case the primary benefit of some of this work may be to a community and only indirectly to the university. Their impact may also be long-term and not fit easily into short term reporting and projections. The ability to manage this relies heavily on managerial flexibility and discretion.

Managerial discretion

Deciding to pursue an area of work within the university depends on identifying the value of that work. The return may not be financial, and the academic value itself might take some time to come through. This requires knowledge of context and judgement about likely outcomes. Though public engagement work is often emergent, therefore academics may not know the likely result until the work is underway.

To make judgements in advance of knowing likely outcomes requires front-line managerial discretion. Yet, this is increasingly difficult at a time when management discretion is being eroded.

Participants in the heads of departments group (HoD) identified a number of factors impacting on their decision making discretion, making it harder to respond flexibly:

“[The] new workload model is taking away discretion. Formerly there was a bit of a lack of transparency but now everything has to be agreed centrally – and central management has to decide. Transparency has increased, but discretion is gone.”

“Before FEC [Full economic costing] came in we could meet an income target then keep some funds back, but now there’s no space for this”

“What are we doing PE for? The logic [is] that we develop something different as a result of the engagement? But in a context of less discretion, more scrutiny – what is the result? How do we build in space for creativity and flexibility?”

“The problem is academic activity is a creative activity. You can’t have that on tap. There is a 9-5 type thinking which is killing off a sense of freedom. If someone works best from 5 to 7 in the morning they should be allowed to do that – taking time off elsewhere in the day. The challenge is how to build back that flexibility”.

Most universities have under articulated processes for management, and many departmental heads will be asking:

“do I have the tools to generate that kind of activity amongst my staff if they don’t want to do it” .

As one said:

“I can champion public engagement, but that is a very different to the exercise of managing.”

There needs to be a recognition that it is about managerial competence as well. There isn't a culture of management.

"Managing poor performance is incredibly difficult. It takes years. ... we can't be fleet of foot when the people we manage are unmanageable" (HoD)

"We don't have any punishments. It would never happen like that in a private organisation. Most universities have tended to shy away from sanction as a tool of management. Most universities do not even have an appraisal system" (HoD)

"How as managers are we able to ensure quality. The quality agenda becomes more of an issue. The more publicly engaged you are the less easy it is to disguise [poor quality]." (HoD)

"Academic freedom is meant to be freedom to think, not necessarily freedom to do whatever they want to do. That makes it difficult to impose particular agendas. They can also think that this is something that they don't want to participate in." (HoD)

Discretionary time allowances

Meanwhile, participants in the senior managers group (SM) saw the flexibility for emergence around public engagement as best lying within the discretionary/unallocated time that academics traditionally get. Most felt that this was not under threat, although it seemed to vary in the amount available and the criteria from institution to institution¹. It remains open to question whether this is realistic, or is this time taken up already? If the core of PE lies with teaching and research, then perhaps it is those activities that don't fit so easily into those categories (e.g. networking) that need to find a place in this unallocated time. If this is the case it might be wise for departmental managers to try and protect this space for such activities.

Reflections and observations

There is a tension between the increasing centralisation of university systems and the discretion to manage at the department level – the latter being critical to both developing and supporting public engagement. Universities may make efficiency and other gains from centralising, but may underestimate the impact that this will have on their flexibility to develop new lines of work – including those which may have a financial return in future.

While some areas of public engagement work well through a planned approach, provision is needed for more emergent activity. The latter is likely to require:

- Very fast response to demands
- Support to non income generating activities to nurture relationships – recognising that they may result in income generation over time
- Non bureaucratic procedures for payment of expenses to participants
- Flexibility in the system to allow for appropriate backfilling – including of administration

¹ This is a category of discretionary time built into most permanent academic staff contracts – typically permitting a certain proportion of time to be spent on specific external endeavours, such as acting as a school governor, sitting on various committees, being a JP, etc.

Learning from other change processes

The HR group counselled us to learn from the experience of implementing *equalities* programmes in universities. Participants noted that it is not fundamentally the procedures that make the biggest difference, but the strong conviction and advocacy of those in positions of power and leadership:

“Having been involved in equalities work for over a decade, [what strikes me] is the similarity to the discussions which are mirrored closely against this PE issue: ‘*How do we embed this into an organisation?*’ was the starting point – the exact same language. I’m not suggesting we’re going that way, at least not yet, but there are very strong lessons in this. We started with the Race Relations Amendment Act; the message was that this work is special, you must do something to engage with your communities – there were impact assessments and it was systematised right down to minor areas with statutory sticks. In all universities there were people initially motivated to push this – informed amateurs, etc. The next group that came along was focussed on disability, then gender, and so on. The result was a massive machine to monitor all this. We now have people totally dis-enfranchised to be involved, whereas they could have been real champions. There’s a tricky balance between embedding and incentivising” (HR).

Even when equalities legislation was enshrined in law with all of the associated legal sanctions it was not easy to embed. Where it worked was where managers used their conviction to make it happen. Procedural responses are even less likely to be successful where there is no legal framework to underpin them, as is the case with public engagement. There is clearly a lot to learn from other ‘change projects’ both within and outside higher education.

Some key questions raised by the discussions

1. In addition to the planned models of organisation necessary to support large numbers of teaching programmes and high research volume, what processes would support rapid response to publicly identified need (requests?)
2. What would be the implications of this for the way in which universities and university departments are run?
3. Would performance monitoring of public engagement undermine the development of individual champions?
4. What other ‘change projects’ have lessons to share with the public engagement change agenda? What are some of these lessons?

Chapter 6: Recognition and incentives for change

There are many internal and external factors that drive academic behaviour (for example the Research Excellence Framework). This makes it even more important to incentivise those things, such as public engagement that tend to lose incentive as a result of the dominant higher education drivers. We also need to look at who is incentivised.

Key issues

This section is not about practical issues surrounding what might go into a workload model for example, or how promotion criteria should be framed. It is about the strategic issues and dilemmas which need to be thought through if public engagement is to be effectively incentivised for university staff.

“Individual academic identities are also in conflict – some see public engagement as very important, but people are slapped down for promotion and told to come back when they’ve got their research well advanced – this is formally what they’re told”. (HoD)

“Suddenly we are going to have to require people to do more of the very visible stuff: teaching, research supervision and chasing money. They will be either unable or unwilling to participate in the other [public engagement]... Much of the public engagement work is invisible.” (HoD)

Another perspective on this is that, “perhaps we should be focussing more on not disincentivising rather than incentivising,” (HR) because the major barriers are discouragement and the explicit prioritisation of other activities.

Motivating public engagement

Across the groups there was a strong view that public engagement needed to be built into the criteria for reward and recognition – and should therefore become a routine element of performance review, appraisal, workload management, promotions criteria and so on. There was a widespread view that it is currently implicitly and explicitly discouraged.

Various individuals cautioned against too much formal institutionalisation of public engagement. Numerous comments were made about the danger of killing off the passion that drives people to carry out public engagement work.

“There’s an issue between regulating and formalising versus just doing it because someone loves doing it. We need to be careful not to create a straight jacket and encourage work that is not from the heart”. (HR)

“Most people aren’t motivated by pay once they are in post” (HR)

Likewise many commented on the changing face of academia, and the increasing burden of management systems:

“We engaged in a survey with about 20 universities around 2007-08, it was all about drivers and motivators for people inside universities. The two strongest drivers for

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academics were 'Freedom of choice' ('I came into HE not FE because I want greater freedom in what I do'), and 'the ability to do research.' Of course, this work we're all doing is taking away this freedom – things are becoming more mechanistic, systematic. Academic freedom is freedom to think, not do what you like. But we're eroding this – the freedom the academic thinks they're entitled to. Usually people think of freedom as freedom to act, not think – but this is different with academics. But fundamentally, there's no business case for promoting this academic freedom to think, not do". (HR)

A slightly more cynical perspective was put on this issue:

"There is a danger that top heavy workload management kills 'self-exploitation', creativity, and good will. And micro accounting of time leads people to prioritise those things that they think the system values more". (HoD)

The theme of personal commitment to engagement runs through all discussions and applies as much to management as to those that do public engagement work. There was a strong feeling that regardless of how much you build public engagement into formal recruitment and promotion procedures, this will not find its way to being embedded unless those making the decisions believe in it. This exchange between facilitator and group participant was instructive:

Facilitator: Are you saying that HR can amend the regulations but it won't find its way in to job specifications, or that it may get included, but not valued and turned into reality?

Respondent: "Yes, the latter - for e.g. we introduced a stage where promotion applications were assessed for meeting a basic standard for teaching as well as research. The relevant PVC for teaching pushed and got this into the academic process – to a sub-committee level. But the main committee still didn't reject applications when the teaching competence wasn't demonstrated. It is a big cultural change to challenge the primacy of research. My experience in talking to others is that teaching is secondary, let alone anything like public engagement". (HR)

This was not a universal experience, however. In one university, internationally renowned professors have been turned down for the highest professorial banding because they are not doing adequate public engagement work.

"We can really annoy our top stars – we've told them they'll no longer be top paid if they're not engaging. But this is a risky strategy, as some other top universities perhaps do not force these things and they can move there for an easier life. There is an annoyance factor, for the most senior researchers anyway"... (HR)

This view of research was supported by others:

"When we relook at criteria for promotion, we should be seeing that the criteria for good research includes public engagement rather than having public engagement as a separate strand" (CSW)

Re-enforcing this perspective was the observation that, sometimes brilliant researchers are also brilliant at public engagement. While not fully endorsed by all academic staff, the changes have come from senior management and appear to be increasingly accepted over time.

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As not all are motivated by an intrinsic belief in the value of public engagement, including public engagement in promotions criteria should be seen as necessary, but not a sufficient condition for ensuring that academics are motivated to carry out public engagement.

Assessment of different levels of public engagement

Another issue raised by the HR group was how to assess different 'levels of public engagement'. This is not about the different types of public engagement but about competence and different levels of achievement. If public engagement is one of the things that academics might use to show that they are promotable, then a framework outlining criteria which correspond to different grades will be necessary:

"We probably need to do measuring it if we're not doing it. The different pay points forces us to consider what public engagement looks like at various grades [for example]. It's not on/off. There might be size measures, or reach; another could be the personal role or contribution the person played (whether as a team member or leading a team), doing something innovative or different, etc." (HR)

"Generally people are getting through on promotions by just doing it – but we're beginning to question this." (HR)

This introduces the issue of how to distinguish acceptable criteria for different levels of academic staff doing PE: a lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor etc., as well as the different professorial grades. Universities have started to think about this:

"Research is banded local, national and international. But for PE it's more a case approach – someone makes a case. As people begin bring examples forward you start to see an idea of what it could be." (HR)

Academics are normally promoted to professorships on the basis of research leadership as well as individual research accomplishment, so if public engagement is regarded as a key part of research leadership then it can easily be incorporated into the criteria for senior promotions. This does not mean that you have to do the public engagement; it means that as a leader you have to ensure that it happens. It may now be helpful to bring a cross university task group together to explore this.

Focus on heads of departments and research team leaders

A strong line of thinking about the focus of rewards, incentives and sanctions emerged in the HR group. It was felt that it was more important to focus attention on heads of departments, research team leaders and curriculum development leaders than on other staff within a department. If front-line managers are committed to PE then it is much more likely to happen.

"For some, doing PE is seen as a guilty secret – because the Head of the Dept might not approve of this type of thing" (HR)

From discussion within Heads of department group, it was suggested that a system of decentralised management at departmental level might best support the flexibility needed for PE. Heads of departments could be required to think about how their departments' work contributes to society and may be enhanced by public engagement. This would then be

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reflected in the criteria, which relates to their departmental performance appraisal. This would enable HoDs to think about a departmental response to issues, which did not necessarily involve all staff. Additionally, the performance incentives could be built into the targets for heads of departments rather than for individual staff (HoD discussion).

“There needs to be appraisal for Heads of Department and Research Group Leaders even on their personal appraisals. eg. What has your research group done” (CSW)

“There’s a breakdown at departmental level, its up to them to look at staff work and to allocate time” (CSW)

Meanwhile, in the public engagement academics (PEA) group it was felt that a priority in the acceptance of PE as legitimate academic activity lies with *research group leaders*. Having a degree of autonomy and respect amongst fellow academics, it’s these senior researchers who hold tremendous sway with both early career researchers and with senior management. It was noted that – unlike heads of departments, who may only be in this role for a few years – research group leaders may have a longer term influence on the direction of research work and on incentives for academic practice in the university.

“Where you have a rotating head of department there is not a long term view”

Critically it was perceived that champions of public engagement need to have academic credibility. They cannot be senior managers who are seen as simply responding the latest policy initiative or management fashion:

“By the time you get to senior PVC level, then your academic career is past anyway, so in a sense you might not carry credibility academically, so you could have credible academic leadership from academics down a level” (CSW)

This means that heads of departments need to be directly involved in public engagement – supporting for example external networking and acting as a role model.

“If part of your role is to be a role model, then you have to do those things. If you are not doing them why should they.” (HoD)

One of the issues here is that heads of department don’t just lie at the interface between management and staff “they embody both cultures simultaneously”. HoDs are representing academic freedom and managerialism in one person, they are not just caught in the middle. Yet many heads of department are forced, by the demands of work, to take on a largely managerial role (ripped out of their academic work). This makes it harder for them to stay close enough to the reality of public engagement work to fully understand how to represent it internally.

Reflections and observations

It was noted across all of the groups that public engagement work is generally not well rewarded and recognised – for academics, support staff or students. This requires a cultural and attitudinal change valuing public engagement, which has yet to be embedded in Britain’s universities.

Practical ways to validate 'good' engagement need to be developed - particularly promotions criteria. However, while promotions criteria which value public engagement may be a significant step (and goal) for many universities, an onus still needs to be on changing mindsets – particularly at the head of department level, amongst research group directors and curriculum development leaders. It is also important to think about recruiting people who have a different mindset:

“recruitment is arguably more important - as you are looking to recruit people with attitudes, values, competencies and equally staff and students might be more choosy about where they work - the choice is not always with the employer - people in our institutions are realising that this could be a talent attracter and retainer” (BCN)

Key questions

1. How can we encourage recognition of the value that public engagement can make to high quality research and teaching?
2. What is the best way to incentivise heads of departments who may only be in post for 3-4 years (because they are rotated) to support the development of public engagement activities?
3. How can research group leaders be encouraged to value and embed public engagement in their research agendas?
4. What criteria should be used to assess different levels of competency and achievement with regard to public engagement?
5. There are examples of institutional schemes which reward public engagement activities outside of mainstream teaching and research:

“We have a staff volunteering programme, accredited with ½ your time credited back. The HR department has participated in lots of activities with this: cleared allotments, worked with special needs schools, worked with a school to become an Academy, etc. If you do the volunteering through the official programme you get the time reward – there’s been a valuing of this activity, which is broader than the JP² type list. But it isn’t monitored, and it doesn’t fit into performance appraisals. This is under threat now anyway as the funding is going” (HR)

Are there other ways of approaching this which would be sustainable?

² Many universities have a formal list of acceptable external activities for which staff can receive time off to participate in; e.g.s: being a JP, school governor, etc.

Chapter 7: Equity at departmental level

Individuals with head of department responsibilities have to balance staff workloads, but most participants in the heads of department group felt that there was some flexibility and interpretation which could be applied to the majority of workload management schemes. A bigger problem concerned equity issues at the level of the department.

Key issues

An additional burden on those not doing engagement work?

Staff with heavy teaching loads can resent those who are spending time outside the university working with groups or others (especially if this external engagement provides opportunity for additional income). In many departments, this outside involvement can mean extra workload for those not participating. This can create tensions within a department which can be very hard to manage. A selection of comments from head of department (HoD) participants:

“A big issue is uneven workloads. Staff have become very cynical because someone gets left with the students”.

“There are issues of equity/fairness that haven’t begun to be dealt with. Who does the PE? It isn’t allocated equally – it emerges/rises up for some staff”.

“If I allow staff to work one day a week on engagement, I can easily end up with a situation where staff go out and do activities that pay the most – it’s only natural. I’ll then see other staff that don’t have this opportunity – they will be forced to carry the burden for the others, carrying the teaching and the student support burden”.

The problem is that public engagement work cannot be equally allocated, for many reasons: some academic staff work on topics and issues which are easier to fund externally; partnerships and external relationships can be built more easily around some issues; and some individuals have a natural affinity to work with people and organisations externally. Public engagement requires enthusiasm, passion, and the ability to foster relationships built on trust. These attributes are not evenly distributed within departments. This gave rise to the need to:

“Focus on fairness rather than equity. It may be fair that some people do more than others. People worry that the average level of activity will move up if some people do it, but we can show that it can be different. Some people work slowly and others work quickly.” (HoD)

These equity issues are also rooted in practical issues. One example raised in the previous chapter is the way in which academics ‘buy themselves out’ of teaching; this is the common practice of individuals using external revenue (derived from a broad range of possible engagement activities) to pay for others to take on teaching responsibilities – thereby freeing them for external engagement work of various sorts. While the additional income stream may allow for backfilling of teaching, it’s very rarely adequate to backfill teaching *administration*. As a result, not only is there a potential for perceived inequity in teaching load, but there is a view that more teaching administration falls on people with already heavy workloads. It is

important that these issues are thought through as departmental public engagement strategies evolve.

Personal affinity and motivation to do public engagement

For some academic staff, public engagement is seen as just one of the many things that they are obliged to do; for others it is the very spark which makes their job worthwhile. As a result, heads of departments need to understand the personal motivations of individual staff members. Restricting or eliminating what may have been a small amount of public engagement work for one member of staff may destroy that person's central motivation for their work. For another it may not be important at all.

"For some it's a very important element of their work and if they can't do it, it has a disproportionate impact on their job satisfaction – as a Department Head I need to know who these individuals are".

Nevertheless it does need to be valued, and action research participants (particularly at the cross stream workshop) stressed the importance of training and practice opportunities within departments:

"The university needs to show support by providing training, and the person would then know he or she was recognised by the department as having value" (CSW, session 1).

PE as an income generator for individuals

There are significant financial issues at the departmental level connected to public engagement. Public engagement can be an income generator in three major ways: (1) Academics working outside the university can directly generate additional income, independent of their affiliation to the university; (2) Individuals may work on behalf of the university, for which they may earn money in addition to their salaries (e.g. consultancy); and (3) Individuals may work on behalf of the university, with income (in whole or in part) accruing to the department. Income accruing to individuals, whether working on behalf of the university or not, can be significant. For example, artists can earn six figure sums. These variations can exist both within and between university departments. Furthermore, individuals with independent external income may be very resistant to attempts by their (university) employer to badge this work as part of their formal employment.

"Some people have a good second income through their public engagement work, so an institution asking them to do this as part of their job is not welcome" (HoD)

Conversely, department heads may feel that it is not appropriate for people to generate income on the back of a set of skills and relationships that they have built through their formal work. These issues can be especially problematic in departments where staff are employed on part time contracts, which is increasingly common in at least some universities. If you are working part time at a university, and doing public engagement work in the remainder of your week, how can a university make demands on this outside income generation? This is further complicated when some individuals generate income for their department while others for themselves. In general, this can act as a disincentive for income generation accruing to the department.

To re-visit a previous statement, financial incentives can also distort the types of engagement work that is done:

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"If I allow staff to work 1 day a week, I can easily end up with a situation where staff will go out and do activities that pay the most – it's only natural". (HoD)

If money drives the type and amount of public engagement work done, then it may serve neither the social needs nor the strategic needs of the university. All of this requires active 'management' rather than procedural guidelines:

"Managers in universities have never been confident managers, so feel more confident in falling back on management processes. People might be happier if there was a requirement for every academic to do 5% of their time on PE, but what is needed is the ability to make judgements about who does what"

Managers also need to advocate for public engagement and convey that public engagement supports the teaching process and feeds directly back into the curriculum etc.

"If you are trying to balance workloads then you are getting people who are bringing something back in as well as exporting it" (HoD)

Reflections and Observations

It is worth noting that the issues raised here have also played out in the past in relation to research - particularly in new universities characterised by high teaching loads and little historical investment in research. Many of these universities took on the challenge of building a research culture, which required incentivising and managing staff with differing strengths and interests in research. The lessons from this process might be relevant to public engagement.

Key questions

1. If, as most have argued across the action research groups, that it is inappropriate to encourage all academic staff to do public engagement (and indeed – that some people should not have a public facing role!), then perhaps public engagement needs to be managed as one of many functions of a university department - and the impact and relevance of this work may best be accounted for at the group level. This fits with the recent HEFCE discussion on how HEIs might report on *research impact* in future (via the proposed REF). It is obviously crucial to bear in mind that measurement can't capture all of the most important impacts, and there is a need for expertise in assessing qualitative impacts. What are the implications of managing public engagement at this level?
2. In general, less attention in the action research groups has been directed towards 'engaged teaching' than to the relationship between engagement and research or to engagement through external consultancies/technical assistance. Could stronger PE external links rooted in the teaching curriculum open up opportunities for teaching staff and students - and for teaching excellence - or would such opportunities be an additional and unrewarding staff burden?
3. To what extent can the attributes necessary for good public engagement be taught? Aside from teaching PE relevant skills, what would an effective and integrated system of PE support look like? What cultural factors and behaviours support PE ? (if it is not part of the culture its unlikely to be valued).

Chapter 8: The organisation and management of public engagement

Key issues

Decisions need to be made by universities about where they organisationally locate public engagement, how it is championed and embedded, and what support is needed for that process. There are many organisational dilemmas that relate to embedding public engagement. This section highlights some of the bigger strategic questions raised in the various discussions:

Third stream or part of teaching and research?

Considerable discussion surrounded whether public engagement should be seen as a third stream in addition to teaching and research or should it be integrated into teaching and research. Almost without exception the groups felt that quality teaching and quality research encompasses good public engagement. They felt that if public engagement was largely framed in relation to teaching and research it was less likely to be marginalised and consequently more likely to happen. One participant pointed out:

“In Sweden they have a third arm for public engagement which is part of legislation – it is completely ignored” (CSW)

“By making it a separate strand there is a danger that it will die out when the money runs out” (CSW)

“We are all supposed to be doing research engaged teaching so we should be doing the same with PE. So explicitly making the links between what you do in the classroom and what can be done outside. A link to the employability agenda is important. Universities have expertise and resources not just in their staff, but also in their students.” (HoD’)

“There are weaknesses of aligning PE with volunteerism since this is under-funded/under-supported in HEIs” (NCCC)

While this was fairly universally agreed it was also acknowledged that certain categories of third stream work would continue to need separate recognition:

“By stating we don’t want a 3rd stream it marginalises civic responsibility and volunteerism – this needs capturing, independent of teaching and research as functions of a university.”(NCCC)

Furthermore:

Public Engagement shouldn’t be discreet, it has to be embedded. But there is a benefit of maintaining visibility as a discreet activity. The danger is that you provide a context in which engagement activity is marginalised. (NCCC)

Thus while the operational agenda needs to focus on research and teaching, the institutional agenda requires a distinctive set of time and resources at the centre to support public engagement (primarily in teaching and research but also in other activities such as volunteering) to ensure its visibility. For example, much public engagement is built on long term relationship and network development. This is difficult to fund within teaching programmes or research projects, and requires central support for engagement.

Central support for public engagement

While public engagement activity should largely be located within teaching and research there is still a need for corporate support for public engagement. The types of activities that participants saw as crucial for central support units included:

- Sign posting
- Corporate Support Units to provide advice and advocacy etc to academics and other PE practitioners
- Pro VC's for Public engagement to champion PE across the university
- Methods support
- Publicity
- Accessible buildings/ rooms/ venues
- Development of networks and partnerships
- Development of corporate policy on public engagement

There are now good examples of public engagement units which provide advice, support, and encouragement internally. There are also good examples of network development and support from the centre. Furthermore a number of universities are developing 'one stop shops'. These are often in city centre sites (off campus) in places where publics and professionals can access them. These should provide a window in to the university and help to make connections with academics that can support publics. Another important aspect of this corporate centre is the website. Groups observed that so many university websites are still designed around the organisational structure of the university. This frequently makes no sense to those on the outside. HEIs need to think through typical web paths that might be made by different publics and design their websites to reflect this. We also note in chapter nine the importance of physical space. A strong central support unit could help both to develop appropriate university buildings and to identify spaces in the community where University/ Community partnerships could be enacted. It would also help to ensure that public engagement was build into the planning cycle:

"track data for example doesn't have a public engagement category".

Corporate processes also need to reflect the need to do underpinning work which cannot be financially supported by individual teaching or research programmes. This fits with the departmental focus that we have highlighted earlier suggesting a need for investment in group workload models to support network development, generic public engagement events and so on.

Finally it is important to be aware that because public engagement work derives from personal links and connections built over years there is a danger that universities don't reach out beyond these to build important relationships where they don't exist. In some cases this is where the greatest need will be:

"Is there a danger of drawing on old boy's networks and missing the PE agenda?
A: It's a risk but we look at working closely with the community to capture other things going on and who academics could work with – 70% of our work is about brokerage"
(CSW)

Network development of this sort may take more time and resources than a 'one thing leads to another' process which would be typical of most academic engagement.

Learning-based approach to change – based on action and task groups

While we have highlighted the need to provide good corporate support to public engagement, this should not imply a top down approach to organisational development. It is easy to invest in 'positions' such as a 'Director of Public Engagement' or give responsibilities to a new 'pro-vice chancellor for public engagement', and there may be some merit to this, but there needs to be clarity about what it will deliver.

An alternative approach being adopted by one UK HEI is to set up inquiry and task groups which pick up key strategic issues such as the development of the university campus infrastructure, or group workload allocation. The idea is that these generate experimental action and organisational pilots, and costs related to these are funded rather than infrastructure costs tied to posts, which may or may not deliver any change. Like the action research approach we have adopted for the national programme this has the potential to involve far more people in creating the solutions which should make them more sustainable. There is much to learn here from the more organic approach that the beacons have been adopting in this respect.

The Cross Stream workshop (CSW) produced a washing metaphor which depicted public engagement as a red sock which had been put in the washing with two white shirts (research and teaching) both of which had turned pink. This may be a helpful metaphor. The red sock is the conversation and enthusiasm which carries the message. The dye is an outlook on research and teaching which always asks the question 'How might my work be relevant to organisations, communities and society?' and 'How do I need to change what I do to reflect that relevance?' The mechanisms for these conversations to travel across the organisation need to be built.

Support for niche units with a strong external brand

There is a danger that the drive to a corporate identity combined with an economic rationalisation of research administration will lead to a breakdown of the niche identity that supports effective relationships with external publics. Every university has centres of expertise which organisations and publics identify with. These might be for example centres for animation, or robotics, or applied social science. Publics build links to a group which provides confidence and legitimacy (derived from its reputation); breadth of support (because there is a community of academics); and continuity of relationships (as even if people leave the relationships can be sustained). Observations of public engagement within one university showed that with a few exceptions public engagement is concentrated in small niche units. Yet, the direction of travel, for most universities, is to concentrate research in larger units and to move away from smaller research centres. This may well make sense, because it gives research units the critical mass that they need to be economically viable, but it could have significant unintended consequences for public engagement work. This suggests the need for smaller branded units with a public engagement focus sitting within larger research centres.

Reflections and observations

Once some clarity has been achieved about "what the university is for?" attention needs to focus down on the key strategic organisational questions that have been raised in this chapter. It is important to understand the location of public engagement, what support is needed to broker it, what theory of change will underpin the process of embedding, and how to preserve an interface with potential "users" / "engagers" that can respond to their needs. Too often universities rush to operational solutions such as building PE into workload management schemes or appointing strategic management posts without thinking these things through.

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Key questions

1. If the core funding streams for public engagement lie within teaching and research then how can activities such as law clinics and volunteer programmes be creatively aligned so that they are mutually reinforcing?
2. What support functions do universities need in order to support public engagement?
3. Is there a learning culture in the university? If, as is generally agreed, a more organic championing process, is likely to have the most impact on embedding public engagement, then how can processes for learning be introduced more generically into the university? Do we have examples to draw on?
4. How can the identities of niche research and development teams be developed and preserved, even where there are organisational and financial pressures to create larger more generic research units?
5. What is the role of more distributed forms of support such as networks and groups?

Chapter 9: Space and place

The location of universities within our towns and cities is seen to be an issue which impacts on engagement. Campus universities are often quite far from town and city centres. Conversely universities located within cities are often seen as elite and inaccessible. The cliché of academics in ivory towers is not always a million miles from the truth, so there are important questions about how academics might work within communities and organisations and in public spaces.

Key issues

University owned space

"We literally have a '*perimeter committee*', to ensure space is recognised as ours, but it puts up a barrier. In part it's about being able to move through that, to build spaces that are organic. But there are issues, security etc." (PEA)

"University grounds can be quite intimidating...At our campus there are signs that say that the green space is not for the public!" (SV)

"Many students aren't aware of areas and organisations that are right on their doorstep. The university has traditionally been very separate from areas that need more engagement" (SVM)

"If you have a wall round your campus you can be cut off" (CSW)

This separation of the academy from the community not only fails to maximise the potential that lies in engagement, but it also leads to distrust. Because we don't know what is going on inside then we are less likely to be forgiving when things go wrong.

"Letting the public in leads to trust" (PEA)

There are different possibilities for using university owned space, with a range of benefits and implications. One example cited was a new build for a medical school which also has a bio-science research lab and a public engagement centre. This is a real life research lab, behind glass, where the public can see scientists at work, and vice versa – scientists can see the public.

"It has changed the culture within the institution. Researchers are actively wanting to be involved, a big change. It was built as a place where engagement and research comes together. It happened because at the beginning there were people involved who genuinely valued public engagement". (PEA)

Even a simple lab which is used by school students can demystify a university. This raised some interesting questions about how the work of universities can become more visible and accessible, and how we might encourage people outside universities to feel that universities are for people 'like them'. This story from one university is far from unique:

"At [institution X] we have a huge issue around equalities – we have champions of equality, etc. But we remain totally divorced from our local community – we are a white middle class community, totally different from the surrounding area. There's a problem around ethnicity issues – even students have raised this – we have black students coming in, for example, and they see no role models. We can go into partnerships with

the local council to encourage recruitment, etc but basically we are turning people off locally". (HR)

One group participant described the need for the literal "transparency of spaces". This contrasts strongly with the 'iconic buildings' which are frequently associated with universities:

It's clear that different signals are sent out to the public by different sorts of buildings but accessibility issues don't just apply to specially designated public buildings, and do not only concern design:

"I don't think it's a design issue – it's about how people relate and are welcomed into space; do I have a right to be here?" (PEA)

The common use of swipe card access makes university buildings almost impossible to penetrate. Very poor signage makes campuses very hard to navigate. While there are many reasons to improve the use of university space, it was acknowledged that not all stakeholders will be supportive of opening up campus space to 'outsiders'. One participant commented that parents concern for the safety of their children might be a big factor and that "safety conflicts with welcoming people". On the other hand "people don't need to go everywhere" and students aren't the only constituency that need to be taken into consideration, and as one participant pointed out:

"For certain periods of the year they [campus spaces] are not used at all. There could be much more creative use of outdoor space" (CSW)

One way to do this is to think about the potential for housing things that are valued by local publics on university premises:

"Space isn't something we've tackled yet, but we have a planning application to double the size of the campus. It's a huge change for the area – you have to give something back to the area [which will suffer from 'traffic blight']. One option is we could house one of the local football teams. Should we locate something with a huge amount of civic pride into the university, and all the things that could be run off that? But others have said we could have a hotel etc. The prompt of having the space allows you to think of options. The prompt is that [X] is a local university - the students come here, but others don't. We might have a cinema etc – why can't we do this?" (HR)

One participant suggested locating family centres on the university campus. Another suggested services such as "hairdressing or shops, dentistry". Some universities have introduced more novel invitations to local communities to enter the campus such as a "tree trail".

Spaces for learning, engagement and knowledge exchange

We also need to take account of the fact that as the nature of teaching changes so too does the nature of the buildings needed for teaching and learning. If universities start to publish their teaching materials freely on line, then the relationship between formally registered students and academics may become less about 'delivery' of content and much more about dialogue, interaction and joint interrogation of issues: "*It is about the interaction not the knowledge*" (PEA). This might demand a different sort of space to the traditional lecture theatre, and one which is much more conducive to interaction and dialogue. A further factor impacting on design in future is that many academics only spend one or two days a week on

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campus, since they can do much of their 'non-contact' work from home. This gives greater flexibility to the academic but may mean that universities could need less physical space for offices in future.

But bringing researchers together in a high energy milieu can be conducive to good research; so too can bringing researchers together with different publics. How can interactive spaces continue to be a core part of a university - to better support co-generation of ideas from wider groups of stakeholders and publics?

Whatever and however spaces are designed or re-designed for greater engagement, it's important to recognise that finance can be a dominant driver in how university space is used. Facilities allocated to stakeholder/community engagement can gradually become taken over by commercial bookings because these generate higher financial returns:

"Another pressure is their use for corporate hospitality – it may start out as available for other audiences but it gets used for corporate uses instead. The bottom line comes into it." (PEA)

"We've got things going on: kids coming in on Saturday morning etc – they're only happening though because they're not in competition with other things that can pay the university more." (PEA)

A further revealing observation on space was the observation that recent large public investments in children's centres, schools and academies, mixed media centres, hospital buildings and so forth, can by comparison leave many university buildings looking quite shoddy. Members of the public may expect a higher standard of building and may be put off by the spaces that they are invited into:

Moving the university out

So far this chapter has focused on the use of university buildings, but the use of non-university spaces for public engagement is also strongly supported for its many benefits.

"The physical closeness is so important. We see the perception again and again: '*You can't be a scientist because you have a sense of humour!*' Breaking down barriers by being out there – it's just as important as bringing people into a university space. Bringing people in – it will be a self selecting group; a posse of white middle class folks" (PEA).

Nevertheless, many people will never feel comfortable coming into university buildings however accessible they are. The PE Academics (PEA) group was keen to point out that we should think more about how universities can build a presence in new public buildings being constructed by others, as well as partnering in the use of existing civic and other space.

"Another area to think about is universities working with city academies – are there ways to build into new build schools? The academy that we were working with, there were discussions to ensure lab spaces were built that were equipped to house researchers so they could come in and be involved. There was a willingness to do it, and the budget to do it with the new builds." (PEA)

"We're seeing at the university there's a regeneration opportunity – the university has bought a site in the city centre to influence and be part of the life of the city." (PEA)

Public Engagement Academic participants were also interested in a more creative and opportunistic use of temporary spaces, thinking of how they could be better utilised for engagement:

“There’s a tremendous under-utilisation of space, it’s a big issue for artists – they can’t find urban space to work in.” (PEA)

“On a strategic level, aside from public services there’s also the railways estate. With railways, there are many buildings owned in complex arrangements, there could be opportunities here.” (PEA)

Guerrilla science - “they go around and find places not being used. There are health and safety issues but they sort that out”.

Temporary space - “it allows you to get out into areas for a short time, with maximum spread and impact”

Festivals - “it’s surprising not more festivals are happening in higher education. Example, the Hay-on-Wye festival – it’s an extraordinary event; it indicates a thirst for knowledge and celebrity – it’s surprising HE hasn’t placed themselves more strongly in this market”.

A: “We have a ‘word festival’ – almost all central buildings are open. Plus, we use marquees – they really add to accessibility”.

B: “Marquees can make a difference. They say ‘come in’ in contrast to buildings”. (PEA)

In one university an extended discussion has taken place about how the university uses external meeting space. For example: academic teams frequently use corporate venues for away days. One faculty, however, has developed an explicit strategy to use community/NGO facilities. This helped to build relationships and brought a direct income stream from the university into the area of the city where it was located and much needed.

More generally there were widespread discussions about how university services, expertise and partners can be signposted to publics within their localities through one-stop shops that are located in town and city centres rather than on campus.

Reflections and observations

The issue of “transparency” of buildings brings to mind a 1980’s experiment by Islington Council. Instead of locating services within the City Hall they built 24 local neighbourhood offices, all with large glass vistas. The idea was that the public in this very diverse locality would see their own diversity reflected back at them through the windows of the offices. Universities would do well to incorporate this sort of thinking into their forward planning.

One of the key roles of a university central support unit team (see chapter 8) could be to work with civic partners to maintain a constant awareness of public spaces which could be utilised for public engagement purposes.

Key questions

1. How could publics use university space in different ways or in ways they don't do now? What would be the implications of this on other users of this space – good and bad, and how could the bad be minimised and the good incentivised?
2. If we were redesigning universities to be publically engaging, what would they look like?
3. In what different ways can universities engage more effectively in the spaces and places which communities and publics inhabit?

Chapter 10: Impact and the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

The proposals for the new Research Excellence Framework (REF) were published during the action research process. This galvanised a lot of discussion as well as a formal submission to the consultation from the public engagement academics group. The REF is seen to be important because for the first time a research assessment process had prioritised social and economic impact, and of course the REF is such a strong driver within universities. This means that there is a danger that the way in which universities position themselves for the REF will dominate the approach they take to all public engagement.

Key issues

Nevertheless all of the action research groups were positive about the idea of introducing an impact assessment to the REF. They felt that it could and should act as a strong incentive for academics and HEI's to carry out public engagement work. Similarly the explicit inclusion of engagement as part of the environment criteria was supported. The definition of research as "a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared" highlights the interaction with stakeholders as part of the research process and is seen as a step in the direction of effective public engagement.

There are dangers though. Assessing the impact of work may help to catalyse more public engagement but it is likely to encourage only that public engagement whose impact can be assessed in a relatively straight-forward way. The groups explicitly pointed out there are many types of research where this was not entirely clear. For example:

- Research where it is impossible to know the impact
- Research which impacts maybe 20 years after publication
- Research which is built on other research where the tipping point piece of research has the impact but without the other research it would have never happened
- High impact research which has had a negative impact.

The groups felt that it would be more meaningful to focus on outcomes than impacts. This would allow for engaged research to show that it had changed attitudes, behaviours, procedures, approaches to practice etc as well as final impacts such as "higher average educational attainment" which are extremely hard to attribute. Intermediate outcomes might include: enhanced networks, improved quality of relationships, and a variety of capacity building and social capital indicators.

The environmental aspects of the REF agenda may have even more to offer to public engagement. The action research group highlighted the following factors as being crucial ways in which research teams should be able to demonstrate meaningful engagement with publics:

- Evidence that the research agenda is constructed through engagement with publics, rather than purely the individual interests of academic staff.

- Evidence that research teams have built in processes for reflection on their practice. This will not only indicate a higher quality of research design, but will strengthen training and generic skills within research teams.
- Evidence that long-standing relationships with “stakeholders, users, clients” have being built, maintained and developed. Research communities need to show demonstrable and effective partnerships. This issue of long standing relationships is important. Firstly, because a relationship maintained suggests long-term mutual benefit. Secondly, it suggests that the impact is sustainable, and thirdly it avoids the possibility that short tokenistic relationships are built just for the purpose of the REF. More generally there is currently no consideration of the role and responsibility of the research community towards its local environment and this should be explicitly sought.

All of these could become criteria that departmental and research managers use to assess the quality of engagement within their teams.

A further issue that flows from the impact agenda is evaluation. This has the potential to be both positive and negative for public engagement. On the one hand impact work should drive researchers to build good evaluation into their work which will give some indication of the difference that the work is making as well as how and why change has resulted. On the other there is a danger that evaluation leads public engagement work to be skewed towards work which can be assessed in a straightforward linear way through a logic model when many complex engagements cannot be meaningfully assessed in this way.

A further danger of the impact agenda is that it may designate as positive impacts those which are aligned with government policy. What is particularly significant about this is that HEI staff will consequently direct their engagement efforts to areas which have such validation. Group members felt that this tendency should be strongly resisted. Research which is diametrically opposed to government policy could have high impact and serve communities, organisations and society more generally. One dimension of this might be a tendency to direct efforts to more domestic concerns at the expense of crucial issues such as the millennium development goals (MDGs), impacts on peace, and international sustainability targets.

Finally Impact Assessment raises the same dangers as performance assessment for public engagement. As the impact agenda becomes more formalised academics may be put off doing public engagement because of the administrative requirements that go with it:

“It raised scepticism about the impact statements that they needed to write” (CSW)

Reflections and observations

There are a number of key messages here. Firstly it is important that the whole of the engagement agenda is not skewed by the REF impact agenda. Secondly, the impact agenda requires much more than a list of crude (or even sophisticated) indicators. It requires a sophisticated approach to evaluation which needs to be built into the work that academic departments do.

Key questions

1. What support do universities need to provide to researchers to ensure that their research is evaluated effectively? How might publics be actively engaged in the evaluation process?

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

The conclusions outlined here are a distillation of the main arguments developed from the action research group discussions. The detail underpinning each can be found in the chapters.

Chapter 2: Framing public engagement

Public Engagement cannot be defined as a particular set of activities. The approach that a university takes to public engagement will depend on how it (and the different people that it comprises) views 'expert knowledge', and the values it holds. This will vary within and between universities. What we can say however is that, public engagement activities exist across a spectrum which ranges from elite knowledge at one end, to co-construction (of research and teaching) at the other. HEI's will inevitably prioritise activities on different parts of the spectrum. This report does not argue that universities should be moving all of its activities to the far end of the spectrum. This would not be possible, nor in many cases appropriate, however the aim of any HEI public engagement strategy should be to move a higher percentage of its activities along this spectrum.

Chapter 3: Strategic drivers and strategic positioning

Public engagement needs to be seen in the context of the question "What is a university in the 21st Century for?" To embed public engagement means to make it an explicit part of the identity and values of a university. This does not mean all universities will articulate this in the same way, but clarity of purpose will enable universities to identify what sorts of PE activities they want to prioritise and to support them effectively. Having a core mission to engage with the public will enable senior managers to justify the investment in the types of teaching and research which furthers the development of that identity. For example QR money can be invested in areas of the university which are enhancing the quality of teaching and research where there are strong engaged external relationships. Corporate Social Responsibility may be a fruitful way of articulating such a mission, but it needs framing specifically in the context of universities. Similarly the idea of civic leadership (or even "civic partnership") may be a helpful framing. Universities are major regional and local employers, and own considerable physical assets. Their potential to impact on their localities is far greater than is realised. Senior university managers need to have a clear idea of why they are doing public engagement work in order to know its shape. It is very easy to generate activity before you know why you are doing it.

Chapter 4: Reputation and reputational risk

Reputational risk was identified as a concern for senior managers in particular. Maverick academics, high profile research programmes etc, have the potential for generating bad publicity. However, this problem is as much a research problem as a public engagement problem. The best way to manage risk is not to restrict engagement, but to increase the range of people within and beyond the university who are involved – providing greater ownership and visibility, and a greater depth of reflective insight from stakeholders as programmes and projects progress. It is also important to note that there are risks both ways. For those that see engagement as the primary purpose then there can be considerable risks associated with being associated with a university.

Chapter 5: Supporting emergence – developing flexible systems for engagement

Universities tend to be structured around the management of high volume research and teaching activities. This requires most activities to conform to relatively standard processes and procedures. These can be time consuming to engage with, and very difficult to change where necessary. Public engagement requires a much more flexible approach. Careful consideration needs to be given to building flexibility into all of the relevant decisions and ensuring research leader and department head discretion where quick and non standard responses are needed to make things happen.

Chapter 6: Recognition and incentives for change

People tend to do public engagement because they are enthused by it. Individuals who carry out good public engagement work need to be formally recognised and rewarded for it, but this does not mean that everyone is required to do it. Over-formalising it may incentivise more people to do it badly. Department Heads and Research Team leaders need to be formally responsible for ensuring effective public engagement in research and teaching across their teams. Public Engagement should thus be regarded as a core component of departmental and research leadership.

Chapter 7: Equity at departmental level

Embedded public engagement cannot be achieved solely through effective workload management systems and formal incentive and reward schemes. It makes no sense to impose public engagement. People do it because they believe it is important, and some people are better at it than others. It cannot in any case be equally distributed because it is built on personal relationships. At the same time some staff will be resentful of those who are seen to be out and about while others have to carry the teaching load. What flows from this are a series of practical and management issues such as backfilling teaching and teaching administration, guidelines for how to handle externally generated income and so on. It is crucial that department heads are given the tools and support to handle these issues.

Chapter 8: The organisation and management of public engagement

While there will inevitably be considerable 'third stream' public engagement activity such as volunteering, for most groups public engagement was not best seen as third stream. Unless it is fully embedded into research and teaching it is likely to be marginalised and under-resourced. However, it does need dedicated support from the centre, and universities should create a corporate support function to signpost, encourage, support and help to manage public engagement initiatives.

Embedding public engagement in HEI's will require a major culture change which is rooted in the development of successful action. A learning based approach to change, rather than one rooted in top down directives, is best suited to facilitate the corporate transformation that is needed.

Finally it is crucial to understand that publics have a relationship with very specific brands. There are strong drivers within universities to develop uniform corporate identities, and to aggregate small research and development units into larger cost centres. Effective public engagement requires the retention of niche brands, and attention needs to be given to how they can be preserved in the context of these macro drivers.

Chapter 9: Space and place

Universities are located within communities. They have facilities that can be used by citizens, local associations and community based organisations. While there are issues (including staff and student security) that need to be addressed, university facilities (sports, catering, learning facilities etc) could be made significantly more available to the public. Universities that are developing their land can consider how to build in public amenities such as theatres, shops, dentistry or medical facilities - thereby making the university space a public space. Universities need to think about what sorts of buildings would facilitate wider public learning. Finally universities should consider how and in what ways they are able to get out and engage with publics in their own spaces.

Chapter 10: Impact and the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

The inclusion of impact assessment as a key criterion for the REF is strongly welcomed. There is also greater potential for public engagement to be articulated as a key element of the overall research environment. Generally impact is seen as hard to evidence. A focus on research outcomes might be more productive. There is a need to build evaluation processes much more strongly into research in order to evidence either outcomes or impact and this has wider implications for research within universities. Finally it is crucial that the whole impact agenda is not skewed by the REF agenda. There is a great deal of world leading co-generative research which cannot easily be packaged into articles for leading journals, much of which is jointly attributable to the publics that researchers are working with. Public engagement implies a much greater diversity in both the research process and in the types of publications which are regarded as valid and appropriate.

Recommendations

These recommendations do not represent all of the ideas generated by the groups. Nor are they the conclusions of the action researchers. They were derived by the action researchers on the basis of where we believed that there was a consensus across the whole of the action research programme. This was then tested by the editing groups from each of the action research streams, and finally endorsed by participants. The recommendations are as follows:

1. While some "third stream" activities will need to be pursued independently of research and teaching, for most universities a focus on integrating public engagement into research and teaching is likely to be the most effective approach.

Public engagement in research might involve:

- Creating a culture where research questions are generated through public dialogue
- Encouraging managers to ensure that researchers explicitly explore how their research might be made relevant to different publics, and to develop action plans based on those reflections.
- Developing participative research projects with publics. Participation here will include question generation, research design, data collection and analysis.

Public Engagement in teaching and curriculum development might include:

- Ensuring that as far as possible courses across the board involve placements and other forms of engaged and experiential learning (including community-based

research and learning). Teaching should involve opportunities for broad knowledge exchange within the community.

- Ensuring that external publics are brought in to share their practice and their learning (including in curriculum design).
 - Building on initiatives like Service Learning in the US, or the emerging tradition of 'community-based' or 'co-curricular' learning in the UK which provides students with opportunities to contribute to projects in community settings, and to reflect on their learning from these activities.
2. Public engagement is likely to have the greatest impact if it is focused at the level of the group (department, research & development team, and or curriculum development leaders). There are a number of implications of this:
 - Workload (points, credits, hours, days ...) could be allocated at a group level for public engagement. This allows team leaders to allocate them where they will be most effective rather than requiring every team member to carry out public engagement
 - Until now most of the public engagement effort has centred on strategic managers and frontline staff. Much greater attention needs to go into supporting heads of department, research team leaders and curriculum developers to act as champions, and systems need to be developed to allow them to act responsively to public led initiatives. More investment may need to be made into ensuring that they are more open to public engagement.
 - Public engagement can be built into promotion and recruitment criteria by incorporating it as a key element of 'research leadership' and 'teaching leadership', whereby a key role of leaders is to ensure that their teams or programmes deliver on this agenda. A cross university task group could be set up to explore how criteria for public engagement can be attributed to different levels (eg lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor)
 3. As research centres become rationalised into larger units, and whole university identities become more uniform, urgent attention needs to be paid to how niche units and their associated brand identities might be supported.
 4. We recommend that universities build a central support function for public engagement. It is critical that this is not seen as the place where public engagement happens, but rather as a resource for those that are carrying it out. Key functions should include: training; development of networking opportunities; use of space; marketing and communications; and so on.
 5. Pro-Vice Chancellors responsible for research and teaching need to have the integration of public engagement into research and teaching as an explicit part of their brief.
 6. Expectations around public engagement in research and teaching need to be made clear to staff when they are recruited. This means building it into job descriptions and making it clear at job interviews and induction.
 7. Universities should pay greater attention to their accessibility. This means making universities more welcoming and friendly places, and thinking strategically about where

the university might take its work beyond its buildings and campuses. University facilities can increasingly be made available for the public to use. Where they do not exist HEIs should give consideration to 'street level' one stop shops which give publics an accessible doorway into the university. These physical places can signpost members of the public to parts of the university that they can build a relationship with. There are good examples of this across the sector.

8. There are straightforward practical ways in which universities can contribute to and be seen to contribute to their local and strategic communities. For example:
 - The default policy for departments could be to book community or other partner venues (rather than corporate meeting spaces such as hotels) whenever staff hold events, conferences, away days etc. This does not mean that other venues should not be booked when the occasion demands, but that supporting community organisations in this way is seen to be the norm. Similarly space could be made available for local community use (for example in the evenings and vacations).
 - HEI's should develop quick and simple financial processes to ensure that community based participants in research and teaching can get paid expenses either up front or within days of attending events. This is a significant barrier to engagement for those who are not on professional salaries.
 - HEI's are typically large local employers and could think in a more integrated and creative way about how local learning and work experience initiatives can create pathways to local recruitment to university positions.
 - HEI' s also need to consciously engage local staff (academic, professional, technical, domestic and administrative) as bridges between the university and local communities and organisations.
 - Volunteering can make a substantial contribution to local social and economic life. Universities – with their wealth of staff and students are well placed to carry out and co-ordinate volunteering activities. Universities should encourage and facilitate volunteering.
 - Universities should priorities investment in making their web presence accessible to wider publics not just to students. At the same time it is important to be aware that some publics will continue not to have easy access to the web. Greater use can be made of local notice-boards, the local paper and so on.
 - parking for visitors on university campuses can put people off visiting universities. It is too complicated for people who are not familiar with the system and the physical layout.

There are many other things that universities will want to consider – practical and strategic. These recommendations reflect strong points of convergence between the groups. We recommend that universities consider carefully the key questions that conclude each chapter. These will help to determine the most effective ways to implement public engagement in specific university settings.

Appendix 1: Action research participant biographies

This aim of this document has been to genuinely reflect the views and perspectives of all of the participants. This is not to say that all of the participants agreed with everything in the paper. This would not be possible as many tensions are articulated. But participants were asked to sign up to this document as a road map of issues that need to be focussed on. The authority of this report derives from the quality of participants in the action research process. They are listed below.

Action research team

Danny Burns leads the Power, Participation and Social change team at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. Between 2002 and 2010 he was Professor of Social and Organisational Learning and co-Director of the SOLAR Action Research Centre at the University of the West of England, Bristol. Between 1986 and 1992 he was a lecturer, then senior lecturer, in the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. He has previously been Director of the Decentralisation Research and Information Centre, as well as Director of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service for Scotland. Danny has published widely on community engagement and on participatory approaches to research. His latest book is Systemic Action Research: A strategy for Whole System Change. He is an academic advisor to the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) and lead support to its national action research programme.

Heather Squires is Research and Learning Manager at the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), where she is responsible for the research agenda and supporting the learning and evidencing of the value of public engagement for universities. She manages the centre's national action research programme and is involved in supporting the lesson learning of the six Beacons for Public Engagement which, together with the NCCPE make up the Beacons for Public Engagement project.

Short biographies of higher education staff participating in the AR programme

For more details please visit the action research area of the NCCPE website

(a) Public engagement academics

Sarah Banks is Professor in the School of Applied Social Sciences, Durham University. She is Durham theme leader for social justice and inclusion, as part of the North East Beacon for Public Engagement. She is also Co-director of a newly formed Centre for Social Justice and Community Action at Durham and co-edits the journal Ethics and Social Welfare. She has worked in the field of rural community development and has a long-standing involvement with Durham Rural Community Council. She teaches and researches in the fields of professional ethics and values, community development and young people, and is currently experimenting with the use of Socratic dialogue in community engagement and research.

Peter Beresford OBE is Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Centre for Citizen Participation at Brunel University. He is also Chair of Shaping Our Lives, the independent

PEA – public engagement academics; HR – senior HR staff; SM – senior university managers; BCN – Beacons project directors; HoD – heads of departments; SV – student volunteers; SVM – student volunteer managers; CSW - Cross stream Workshop; NCCC – National Coordinating Centre 2010 conference workshop

national user controlled organisation and network and a long term user of mental health services. He is a Trustee of the Social Care Institute for Excellence and member of the Advisory Boards of the National Institute for Health Research and Involve, and a member of the Department of Health Ministerial Reference Group on Social Care and Transformation of Adult Social Care Programme Board. He has a longstanding interest in issues of participation and empowerment as writer, researcher, educator and campaigner. He is interested in the development of participatory and emancipatory research approaches as well as the development of inclusive and participatory approaches to change in policy and practice and the development of theory.

Felix Bivens was a DPhil Candidate in the Institute of Development Studies, at the University of Sussex. His research explores the institutional factors within higher education institutions that enable and sustain community engagement and social change programmes. His background is in political organizing, community development and carpentry. He is a graduate of the London School of Economics and the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

Kevin Burchell is Senior Research Fellow at Kingston University. He is a sociologically-oriented analyst of public engagement - particularly in the context of science and technology. Kevin is the author (with Sarah Franklin and Kerry Holden) of *Public Culture as Professional Science* (2009), the final report of the Wellcome Trust-funded ScoPE project (Scientists on public engagement: from communication to deliberation), in which the public engagement agenda is addressed from the perspectives of life scientists. Kevin has also recently conducted research, with funding from HEIF3/HEFCE, into the relationships between social science and the burgeoning PE with science and technology policy agenda. Following three years as a Research Fellow in BIOS (Centre for the Study of Bioscience, Biomedicine, Biotechnology and Society) at London School of Economics, Kevin recently moved to Kingston University as the Senior Research Fellow on the EPSRC-funded CHARM project, which examines the potential for social norm messages to encourage sustainable behaviours.

Robert Doubleday is Senior Research Associate, in the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge. Robert recently spent a year at the Government Office for Science as an ESRC Placement Fellow working on activities to strengthen engagement between Government and academia. At the University of Cambridge he is the principal investigator (PI) of a Wellcome Trust funded project that explores how academic scientists working on nanotechnologies relate to the wider policy contexts in which they work. Prior to joining the Department of Geography, he was based in the Nanoscience Centre, University of Cambridge carrying out research on social and ethical dimensions of nanotechnologies. Robert has a first degree in Chemistry (Imperial), an MSc in Science Policy (Sussex) and a PhD in Geography and Science & Technology Studies (UCL).

Hamish Fyfe is Professor of Arts in the Community at the University of Glamorgan and Director of the MA in Arts in the Community. His research interests currently fall into the following broad areas: Creative community building through cross-sector collaboration with the arts; what is creativity, how does it 'work' and how can it be fostered? Theatre, ritual and identity; and Social policy and the arts. In a recently published a book - 'She Danced and We Danced - Artists, Creativity and Education' Hamish examines the role of artists and other creative professionals in learning and community building. Hamish is the Director of the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling and, formerly Director of The University of Glamorgan's Centre for Border Studies and a Professorial Champion for Public Engagement.

Paul Hoggett is Professor of Politics and Director of the Centre for Psycho-Social Studies at the University of the West of England, Bristol. For over twenty years he has worked as a researcher, consultant and trainer to community and voluntary organizations. He was Chair of Trustees of the Bridge Foundation and is a Fellow of OPUS (An Organization for the Promotion of Understanding of Society). He also has had a long involvement in community mental health issues and is a trained and practicing psychotherapist.

Richard Jones is Professor of Physics and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Sheffield. His first degree and PhD in Physics both come from Cambridge University, and following postdoctoral work at Cornell University, U.S.A., he was a lecturer at the University of Cambridge's Cavendish Laboratory. In 1998 he moved to the University of Sheffield, and in 2006 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He is an experimental polymer physicist who specialises in elucidating the nanoscale structure and properties of polymers and biological macromolecules at interfaces. Richard was the co-author of a report published by the UK's ESRC, *The Social and Economic Challenges of Nanotechnology* (2003). He chaired the Nanotechnology Engagement Group, a body set up by UK Government to support the development of best practice in public engagement around nanotechnologies, and to ensure that public engagement feeds into policy and decision-making. He was the Senior Strategic Advisor for Nanotechnology for the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council from 2007 to 2009. He is the author of more than 110 research papers, and three books, the most recent of which is *Soft Machines: nanotechnology and life*, published by Oxford University Press in 2004.

Margaret Ledwith is Emeritus Professor of Community Development and Social Justice at the University of Cumbria. She is also one of the Coordinators of the international Collaborative Action Research Network. For many years, she was a community worker/educator in a variety of settings in Scotland and North-West England, and it was this experience of working with marginalised communities that forged the foundation of a lifetime commitment to social justice. She is the author of three books: *Participatory practice: Community-based action for transformative change* (2009) (co-authored with Jane Springett); *Community Development: A critical approach* (2005); and *Participating in Transformation: Towards a working model of community empowerment* (1997).

Peter McOwan is Professor of Computer Science and Director of Outreach in the School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science at Queen Mary, University of London. His research interests are in visual perception, mathematical models for visual processing, in particular motion, cognitive science and biologically inspired hardware and software. He is also active in science outreach through various projects such as cs4fn (www.cs4fn.org) and Sodarace (www.sodarace.net). Peter was awarded a National Teaching Fellow in 2008 by the Higher Education Academy

Marjorie Mayo is Professor in Community Development at Goldsmiths, University of London. She has worked in the community sector, and local government, and has experience of working internationally. Publications include: *Imagining Tomorrow: Adult Education for Transformation*, National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (1997). *Cultures, Communities, Identities: Cultural Strategies for Participation and Empowerment*, Palgrave (2000). *Global Citizens*, Zed (2005) and *The Dilemmas of Development Work* (with Paul Hoggett and Chris Miller), Policy Press (2008)

Jo Morrison is based at the Central Saint Martin's College of Art and Design, University of the Arts (London) where she develops and directs a college-wide programme focused on the exploration of digital technologies and cross-disciplinary collaborations. She also supports the adoption of ICT within learning and teaching, research and content creation by staff and students within the college. In addition to her role at CSM, Jo is working to help coordinate the University's participation in the London 2012 Olympics, Paralympics and Cultural Olympiad. Prior to this, Jo was the founding Creative Director of Futurelab, a leading educational research organisation. She has also worked for a number of years for BBC News and Current Affairs.

Colin Pulham is Professor of High-Pressure Chemistry and Director of Teaching in the School of Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh. He is also a member of the Centre for Science at Extreme Conditions (CSEC) at Edinburgh and has research interests in the study of the effects of high pressure on molecular compounds such as pharmaceuticals and energetic materials (explosives, propellants). Colin has a longstanding interest in public engagement and was awarded the RSC/Royal Institution "Bringing Science to the Public" prize in 1999 and the Royal Society Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science in 2005. He is a member of the STFC Science in Society Advisory Panel and the EPSRC Public Engagement Strategic Advisory Team. In the period 2005-2008 he was heavily involved with the Science in Society Programme organised by the European Commission and served on the jury of the European Union Competition for Young Scientists. He holds an STFC Science in Society Fellowship and is currently leading a public engagement project called "The Big Squeeze" that seeks to highlight the research conducted at CSEC and at ISIS and Diamond.

Ken Skeldon has held research fellowships from the PPARC (now STFC) and Royal Society of Edinburgh, working in the fields of gravitational wave astronomy, optical instrumentation and most recently medical physics at the University of Glasgow. In 2005 he was awarded a NESTA fellowship for science communication. Through his science consultancy, he developed bespoke exhibits and shows for the media, science centres and museums here and abroad. A past holder of the Institute of Physics Communications Fellowship and winner of the first Royal Institution / Nature Niche Prize in Sci-Art, Ken continues to lead innovative engagement within his new role as Development Co-ordinator in the University of Aberdeen's Public Engagement with Science Unit.

Jane Springett is Professor of Health Promotion and Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University where she is lead for the Health Promotion, Policy and Inequality Network within the Institute for Health Research. She is Visiting Professor at Kristianstad University in Sweden where she recently led the development of the interdisciplinary Forskningsplattform F[o]r Utveckling av N///// , a research unit based on participatory action research methodology. It was co funded by the regional government, six local authorities and the university. She has worked with action research approaches for over 17 years, particularly in the evaluation of community based interventions directed at improving health and is known internationally for her expertise in participatory evaluation. The participatory approach to research is consistent with the ecological world view she inherited from her early background as a geographer and the values and philosophy she holds.

Iain Stewart is Professor of Geoscience Communication at the University of Plymouth. His broad geological interests on earth hazards and abrupt environmental change have featured in several BBC science series, most notably Earth: The Power of the Planet and Journeys from the Centre of The Earth. Recent programmes have focused on climate change, including Earth: The Climate Wars (BBC2), Climate Catastrophe or Global Conspiracy (BBC4) and Future Earth

PEA – public engagement academics; HR – senior HR staff; SM – senior university managers; BCN – Beacons project directors; HoD – heads of departments; SV – student volunteers; SVM – student volunteer managers; CSW - Cross stream Workshop; NCCC – National Coordinating Centre 2010 conference workshop

(BBC1). He is currently filming a major BBC/National Geographic/ZDF co production called How Earth Made Us, due for release in early 2010

Kathy Sykes OBE is Professor of Sciences and Society at the University of Bristol, holding a Chair since 2002. She is a member of the Council for Science and Technology (CST), the UK government's top-level advisory body on science and technology policy issues. She chairs the 'Sciencewise' Strategy Group and Panel, which oversees a government programme aiming to increase and improve public dialogue on science and technology across government departments and agencies, and has sat on strategic panels in public engagement in science for the Royal Society, the Wellcome Trust and the EPSRC. She is a member of the EPSRC's Societal Impacts Panel. She co-directs and helped create the Times Cheltenham Festival of Science and NESTA Famelab. She has presented various BBC2 TV series, including Alternative Therapies, Rough Science and Ever Wondered about Food, and was Head of Science for Explore@tBristol. She is a trustee of NESTA and ExploreAtBristol, and has been a trustee for VSO and the Science Museum. She was the recipient of the 2006 Royal Society Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science. The Guardian named her amongst Britain's top 50 "women to watch". She is helping to steer and oversee the National Co-ordinating Centre for Beacons of Public Engagement (NCCPE).

(b) Beacons for public engagement

Sarah Aldridge was responsible for the Beacon North East programme until summer 2010, alongside her work as programme manager for the Aimhigher programme across Tyne and Wear, Northumberland. Sarah is a trained project manager who has diverse skills in partnership working, developing strategies for change and setting the strategic direction of both programmes with all partners.

Steve Cross is Head of Public Engagement and responsible for UCL Beacon for Public Engagement. A long time ago he was a geneticist, and has since worked on family exhibitions and events for the Centre for Life in Newcastle, as an exhibition curator for Wellcome Collection and the Science Museum, and as a writer and web content developer for anyone who would have him. These days he tries to help UCL staff at all levels and students to connect their work more effectively with people outside academia. Amongst other things, he's the developer of Bright Club, where researchers from every discipline make their work funny in front of a public audience.

Bruce Etherington is the manager of the Beacon for Wales, a partnership between Cardiff and Glamorgan universities and Techniquet, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales and BBC Wales. The Beacon for Wales works with all the Welsh universities to learn from them and to provide advice on how to embed public engagement in their work. Previously, Bruce was the manager of SETPOINT Wales, a programme to increase the number of young people taking scientific and technological qualifications and careers. He has also worked in university outreach, in planetaria and at Techniquet and Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales.

Paul Manners is Director of the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE). Originally trained as a secondary English teacher, he worked for twelve years at the Open University as a producer of TV, radio and multimedia before joining the BBC as an executive producer of a number of national public engagement campaigns. He advises a number of national organisations on learning and engagement, including the National Trust

and the Science Museum, and attempts to relax through a combination of playing blues guitar, football, reading, sharing music and pottering in the garden.

Erinma Ochu is the Director of the Manchester Beacon for public engagement. Prior to this, Erinma worked for five years as organizational change consultant with Creative Partnerships, supporting Greater Manchester and Merseyside primary and secondary schools to embed creative teaching and learning in the delivery of the curriculum. Erinma worked for five years in the creative industries as London-based Artistic Director and executive producer at B3 Media, programming culturally diverse content for cultural venues and festivals across London. Erinma is an honorary research fellow at the University of Manchester, NESTA fellow in science communication and Royal Society of the Arts fellow. She has a PhD in Applied Neuroscience from the University of Manchester. She contributes in an advisory capacity to the Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel, Manchester Science Innovation, Research and Development Panel and the Manchester Cultural Partnership Community and Neighbourhoods Advisory group.

Julie Worrall is Director of the UEA Beacon. She joined UEA in 2005, after nineteen years in public and voluntary & community sector roles, most latterly, Chief Executive of Victim Support Norfolk. Julie has a Postgraduate Diploma in Management. She has extensive project management and partnership experience in housing, homelessness, social policy and criminal justice, including a range of ground-breaking initiatives such as the Norfolk Joint Protocol for Homeless Young people, Norwich Link Line (winner, National and European Crime Concern Awards 1997), the first Strategy to Tackle Street Homelessness in Norwich and the Norwich Equality Charter (winner, Anglian Regional Council Equalities Award 1998). She is a trustee of the Association for Research in the Voluntary and Community Sector, and represents UEA on the management committee of the West Norwich Partnership. Julie instigated and coordinates UEA's Annual Community Engagement. Julie is a member of UEA's Enterprise & Engagement Executive and the Association of Universities East of England Community Engagement Sub-Group.

Heather Rea is the Project Manager for the Edinburgh Beltane Beacon for Public Engagement. She did a degree in Mechanical Engineering at the University of Waterloo in Canada, and a PhD at Edinburgh Napier University in Manufacturing Systems. She worked as a researcher at Heriot-Watt University where she ran a number of public engagement projects funded by the EPSRC and the Royal Academy of Engineers before joining the Edinburgh Beltane project working to encourage researchers and PhD and undergraduate students to share their enthusiasm with school children and the Edinburgh International Science Festival audiences.

(c) Heads of department

Anne Dawson is Associate Dean and Head of Department of Media Production and Communications at the University of Gloucestershire. Anne read English at Exeter University and began her career as a newspaper journalist, training as a regional reporter. She then joined the BBC as a reporter at Radio Brighton and later a TV reporter and presenter at BBC South in Southampton. She then joined ITV and worked in the Midlands for 15 years, anchoring the evening news programme, a weekly politics show and other current affairs programmes. She moved into education in 2002, took an MA in Educational Research from the University of Oxford and joined the University of Gloucestershire, A Skillset Academy, in 2004.

Andy Gillespie is a Professor of Communications Geography at the University of Newcastle. He was appointed as Head of the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology in 2005. He was formerly the Executive Director of the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS). His research expertise lies in the field of information and communications technologies and the development of cities, regions and rural areas, a field in which he also has a long-standing policy advisory interest. His research interests also encompass the interaction between transport, telecommunications and urban form.

Harriet Gross is Head of the School of Psychology at the University of Lincoln, which she joined in 2007. She was previously at Loughborough University, where she was Psychology Programme Director in Human Sciences. For the past ten years she has been involved with the British Psychological Society and the dissemination of psychology to a wider public. She has been the Chair of the BPS Media and Press Committee and Deputy Chair of the Publications and Communications Board, and is currently Chair of the Parliamentary and Policy Group. She is an Associate Editor of *The Psychologist*.

Graham Harris is Director of the Lancaster Environment Centre (LEC) at Lancaster University. His specialism is in the complex interactions between the environment and society. After completing a degree in Botany and Ph.D in Plant Ecology at Imperial College, London in the late 1960s, he taught at McMaster University in Canada for 15 years. He moved to Australia in 1984 and worked for CSIRO for over 20 years where he held many senior research management and executive appointments. Graham is an advisor to a range of Universities, research agencies, private companies and government jurisdictions both in Australia, UK and around the world. He was awarded the CSIRO Chairman's Gold Medal in 1996 and was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in 1997. In 2002 he was elected a life member of the International Water Academy, Oslo. He was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal in April 2003 for services to environmental science and technology.

Martin Hewitt is Professor of History and Head of the Department of History and Economic History at Manchester Metropolitan University. He was previously Professor of Victorian Studies and Director of Research at Leeds Trinity and All Saints. He has served as Secretary of the British Association for Victorian Studies. His research interests are in Victorian Studies as a field, and in the cultural history of the nineteenth century city.

Cath O'Halloran is Head of the Department of Clinical and Health Sciences in the School of Human and Health Sciences at the University of Huddersfield. The department provides pre- and post registration, undergraduate and postgraduate education for midwives, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, podiatrists, operating department practitioners and those seeking a career working in public health and well-being. Cath joined the University of Huddersfield in 2005 having worked at the University of Southampton as Curriculum Development Lead for the Department of Health funded inter-professional learning initiative 'The New Generation Project'; the University of Newcastle as Education Advisor to the Postgraduate Deans for Medicine and Dentistry; and New College Durham as a senior lecturer in podiatry. Her professional background is podiatry and she holds an MSc in Rehabilitation Studies from the University of Southampton and a PhD in Education from the University of Newcastle.

Sue Robson is Head of the School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences at Newcastle University. She is co-Director of the LINKS into Languages NE Centre, is advisor to

the Teacher Training for Burmese Teachers programme, which is funded by Prospect Burma, and is a member of Newcastle University's Engagement Strategy Working Group (2009). Sue convenes a regional internationalization university network and is a member of Newcastle University's Internationalization Executive Group. She was a member of the research team that reviewed frameworks for effectiveness for the Learning and Skills Research Council (Moseley et al, 2004)

Bruce Senior is Head of Department in the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences at UWE. The department includes a rich diversity of subjects; including: public health, social work, environmental health, social policy, and the integrated children's agenda. He previously led the social work programme at UWE until 1996 and previously worked at Sheffield Polytechnic and in various social work and management roles in London and Bristol. His academic interests focus on organisations, leadership and management.

Annette Sterr is Head of Psychology and Associate Dean for International Relations, having joined the University of Surrey as a Chair in Cognitive Neuroscience and Neuro-psychology in 2003. She held previous positions at the Universities of Konstanz, Zurich and Liverpool. Her research focuses on clinical neuroscience with particular emphasis on functional brain organization, neurological rehabilitation, and most recently sleep. A second strand of research aims to understand the neuro-modulatory effects of nutrients and hormones on cognition. Her work is/was funded by the German/Swiss Research Foundations, MRC and ESRC, as well as Charities and Industry.

Peter Stone is Professor of Heritage Studies and Head of the School of Arts and Cultures at Newcastle University. He has published widely on heritage management, interpretation and education. Peter has worked extensively overseas and advised UNESCO's World Heritage Centre on the development of the World Heritage Education Programme. Peter has done a number of national and international consultancies including advising the Ministry of Defence in the identification and protection of the archaeological cultural heritage in Iraq, and being seconded to the Regional Development Agency regarding the value of World Heritage Sites to the North East. Peter was Honorary Chief Executive Officer of the World Archaeological Congress between 1998/2008 and Executive Series Editor for *One World Archaeology* between 1999/2003. He is currently a member of the Executive Board of the *Heritage Matters* series; a member of the Culture Committee of the UK National Commission for UNESCO; Chair of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site Management Plan Committee; and a member of the National Trust's Archaeology Advisory Panel; and is working on projects in China.

(d) Senior managers

John Annette is Professor of Citizenship and Lifelong Learning and Pro-Vice Master for Lifelong Learning and Engagement at Birkbeck, University of London. He is currently researching and publishing in the areas of citizenship education in schools and for lifelong learning, community based learning and community partnerships in higher education, and on community leadership and involvement in community development and local governance. His publications include: *Education for Democratic Citizenship* (2005), *Lifelong Learning for Active Citizenship Through Community Involvement* in 'Old' and 'New' Worlds of Adult Learning (2006), (ed. with Marjorie Mayo) *Active Learning for Active Citizenship* (2008). He is an advisor to the DfES on youth volunteering, to the Civil Renewal Unit on capacity building for citizenship and community development, and to the DfCFS on youth volunteering and citizenship education. He is on the Executive of the Universities Association for Lifelong

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Learning (UALL) and Chair of the 'Higher Education Community Partnership' national network. He is a trustee of Student Volunteer, England. He is a board member of CITIZED and also advises the QCA on the community involvement stand of the national curriculum citizenship education subject. He is an adviser to the London Civic Forum, is on the steering committee of the London Empowerment Network, and is a member of the Advisory Board of the vInspired students programme of the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE).

Paul Drake is Chair and founder of the Higher Education MIG and is Executive Director of External Relations at the University of Gloucestershire. He worked in local government for over 15 years prior to joining the University in the spring of 1999. He has worked as a play leader, artist in residence, as a further education teacher and as an arts and museums education manager. He was a County Councillor between May 1998 and June 2001 where he led the Labour Group and chaired a number of council committees. He is a Chartered Marketer, an Honorary Fellow of the University of Gloucestershire and an Honorary Alderman of the County Council.

Paul Gough is Professor of Fine Arts and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange) at the University of the West of England. He has university-wide responsibilities for Research and Development; Business Engagement; Public Engagement and Community Engagement; Graduate studies, PGR and CPD, Work-Based Learning and the Shell Award Framework. He is the UWE lead for regional relationships, in such areas as HEIF, ECIF, ERDF. He has executive oversight of four Institutes: Bristol Robotics Lab (with University of Bristol); Institute for Bio-Sensing Technology; Institute for Sustainability, Health and Environment; Countryside and Community Research Institute (with Hartpury College, Royal Agricultural College and University of Gloucestershire). He is Director of the UWE professional support service, Research, Business and Innovation (RBI). For ten years Paul was Executive Dean of the Faculty of Creative Arts, and a founding Director of the UWE Research Centre PLaCe. His research interests lie in the processes and iconography of commemoration, the visual culture of the Great War, and the representation of peace and conflict in the 20th/21st century. As a painter, he has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad. In ten years as a television presenter, researcher and associate producer he worked for ITV, BBC and C4 on a wide range of programmes, including the award winning documentary Redundant Warrior. In addition to occasional work on BBC radio, he has a credit for 'design research' in the animated feature film, Chicken Run.

Brigid Heywood is currently Pro Vice Chancellor at the Open University with responsibility for the strategic development of Research and Enterprise. The research objective is to sustain and develop the Open University's presence in areas that are nationally and internationally recognised, while expanding research activity which makes a key contribution to the University's third mission agenda. Her research interests include the controlled growth of inorganic crystals and how to enhance material properties. Her main areas of research build on crystal building in optical and magnetic materials, crystal science applied to bulk materials such as cement, and crystallization phenomena affecting particulate processing of chemicals.

Dominic Houlihan is Vice-Principal for Research and Commercialisation. He is a Professor in Zoology and his research interests have been fish growth and metabolism. His career has gradually shifted towards management; firstly as Head of Zoology, then Head of the Faculty of Science and latterly as Vice-Principal for Research. His main responsibilities cover the generation of income to the University from government and non-government funding and in the conversion of research ideas into a form that will attract external funders. Dominic works

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with colleagues in the University's Research and Innovation group to assist academics to form companies or license intellectual property in order to promote research findings. The University has developed a pipeline of commercial ideas that has led to several new company formations. Dominic has been a member of several Funding Council committees and is a director of several of the spin-outs he has formed. He has spent the last 5 years developing the University's international strategy and is responsible for successful links, particularly in China.

Ray Hudson has been a member of staff in the Department of Geography since 1972 and a Professor since 1990. Ray was Chairman of the Department (1992 - 97) and holds, or has held, various senior positions in the University and is currently Pro - Vice - Chancellor. He has also served as a Vice President of the Royal Geographical Society (1999 - 2004) and on various ESRC committees and boards, including the Training & Development Board (2002 - 06). His research has been recognised in a number of ways, including: a DSc from Bristol and an honorary DSc from Roskilde University; the award of the Victoria Medal of the Royal Geographical Society; and election to the Academy of the Social Sciences to the British Academy and to the European Academy (Academia Europaea). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arb, Manufacturers and Commerce and involved in numerous organisations concerned with regional development. He has acted as Special Adviser to the House of Commons Select Committee on Coalfields Regeneration.

Geoff Layer is Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC Academic) of the University and Professor of Lifelong Learning. He took up office as DVC in December 2008. He is responsible for the academic development of the University across its Teaching, Research, Knowledge Transfer and High Level Skills activity. He is currently the champion of the University's Ecoiversity initiative. Between 2000 and 2006 he was the Director of Action on Access, an agency established to advise HEFCE on its Widening Participation Strategy. In this role the team contributed to 10 HEFCE policy documents, produced 50 publications, provided 52 seminars and 7 conferences. He has been a consultant to Universities UK, Higher Education Quality Council and many universities in Widening Participation and Learning and Teaching strategies. He was also Director of the HEFCE Innovations Co-ordination Team from 2000-2002. He was involved in the background work to the ESRC Research initiative in widening participation.

Judith Petts is currently the Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Research and Knowledge Transfer at the University of Birmingham and is a member of the Senior Management Group representing those issues. Her responsibilities to the Vice-Chancellor cover the coordination and guidance of research efforts at Birmingham. An important part of this work is maintaining an effective dialogue with research sponsors such as research councils and charities with the aim of shaping our research ambitions. Promotion of the research activity at Birmingham is another central role for this post. This entails the definition of policies which encourage excellent research at Birmingham and develop staff in their research interests and skills. Judith was Head of the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham from 2001-2007, she is also Director of the Centre for Environmental Research and Training, and holds the Chair of Environmental Risk Management. Prior to joining Birmingham (1999) she was Director of the Centre for Hazard and Risk Management, Loughborough University.

Peter Slee is Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Huddersfield and responsible for planning and resources. He joined Huddersfield from Northumbria University where he was Pro Vice Chancellor with responsibility the staff and student well-being. Peter began his career as a research fellow in history at the University of Manchester and has worked at Durham and

Aston Universities and the CBI. He is a member of UCEA's Communications Committee, Chair of the CASE Strategic Marketing Institute and a recent winner of the CASE award for Teaching Excellence.

Senior human resources staff:

Ian Apperley is Director of Human Resources at the University of the West of England. He has previous experience of policy development (public transport), and has management experience in both the public and private sectors. Prior to taking up his current post in 2007, he was HR Director for the Mayor of London and London Assembly. His particular professional interests are in promoting equality and diversity, and employee engagement. He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Lesley Broughton is Deputy HR Director for Cranfield University, with operational responsibility for employee relations, diversity, recruitment and talent management, policy development, as well as pay, reward and employee engagement. Having studied occupational psychology at Birkbeck, she became a chartered psychologist with a keen interest in wellbeing at work and the links to business performance. This interest led to her becoming co-founder of Mindfulness4life, an organisation aimed at supporting emotional wellbeing.

Susan Field is currently Head of Human Resources, Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, University of Manchester combining delivery of strategic objectives with leading an operational team. She has spent 20 years working in senior positions within Human Resources in the Higher Education sector. She is Director on the Charity Board of SETA (Stockport Engineering Training Association), is an Associate Member of ICSA (Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators), and is an accredited Mediator. Susan holds an MSc in Organisational Psychology.

Geoff Lang is Director of HR Policy and Planning at University College London (UCL). Prior to taking up his current post in May 2009 he spent seven years at the University of Southampton in a similar role. Geoff has led a number of initiatives in his time in the higher education sector, including pay modernisation, reform of employment statutes, development of academic career pathways and promotions criteria, professorial banding, academic leadership programmes, online appraisal systems, equalities and diversity initiatives and employment policy development. Prior to working in HE, Geoff was a management consultant, specialising in organisational design and reward strategy. Geoff is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and holds an MA (with Distinction) in Human Resource Management and Training from Leicester University.

Eilidh Fraser is Deputy Director of HR at the University of Edinburgh. Eilidh graduated with an MA in Economics, and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Human Resources Management. Following briefly working in Jobcentres and the NHS, she has had a career in HR in Higher Education, working for Teesside and Heriot-Watt Universities and, since 1999, for the University of Edinburgh. She chaired the Scottish and Northern Irish Reward Modernisation Network from 2005-7. Eilidh currently leads employee relations, equality and diversity, policy and systems development in Corporate HR in the University of Edinburgh, as well as overseeing the Staff Counselling Service. She chairs the University's Gender Equality Scheme group and represents HR across a wide range of internal and external activities. Eilidh is also a Director of the First Scottish Universities Credit Union.

Clare Martlew is currently Deputy Director of HR at the University of Nottingham. In addition to managing a team of professional HR advisers, she takes an operational lead on staff Equality and Diversity issues at the University. Prior to her current post, Clare worked at Keele University as an HR Manager and led on race equality. She has HR experience within the NHS, Further Education and the private sector. Clare has a BA (Hons) from the University of Liverpool and a Post-Graduate Diploma from Glamorgan.

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement's vision of a higher education sector making a vital, strategic and valued contribution to 21st-century society through its public engagement activity. We are working to help support universities to improve, value and increase the quantity and quality of their public engagement and embed it into their core practice.

The NCCPE is part of the National Beacons for Public Engagement initiative, funded by the UK Higher Education Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust.

The six Beacons are university-based collaborative centres that help support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement work, based in: Newcastle and Durham, Manchester, CUE East UEA, UCL, Wales and Edinburgh.