



UK Research  
and Innovation

# UKRI Agenda Setting Event

15<sup>th</sup> May 2025

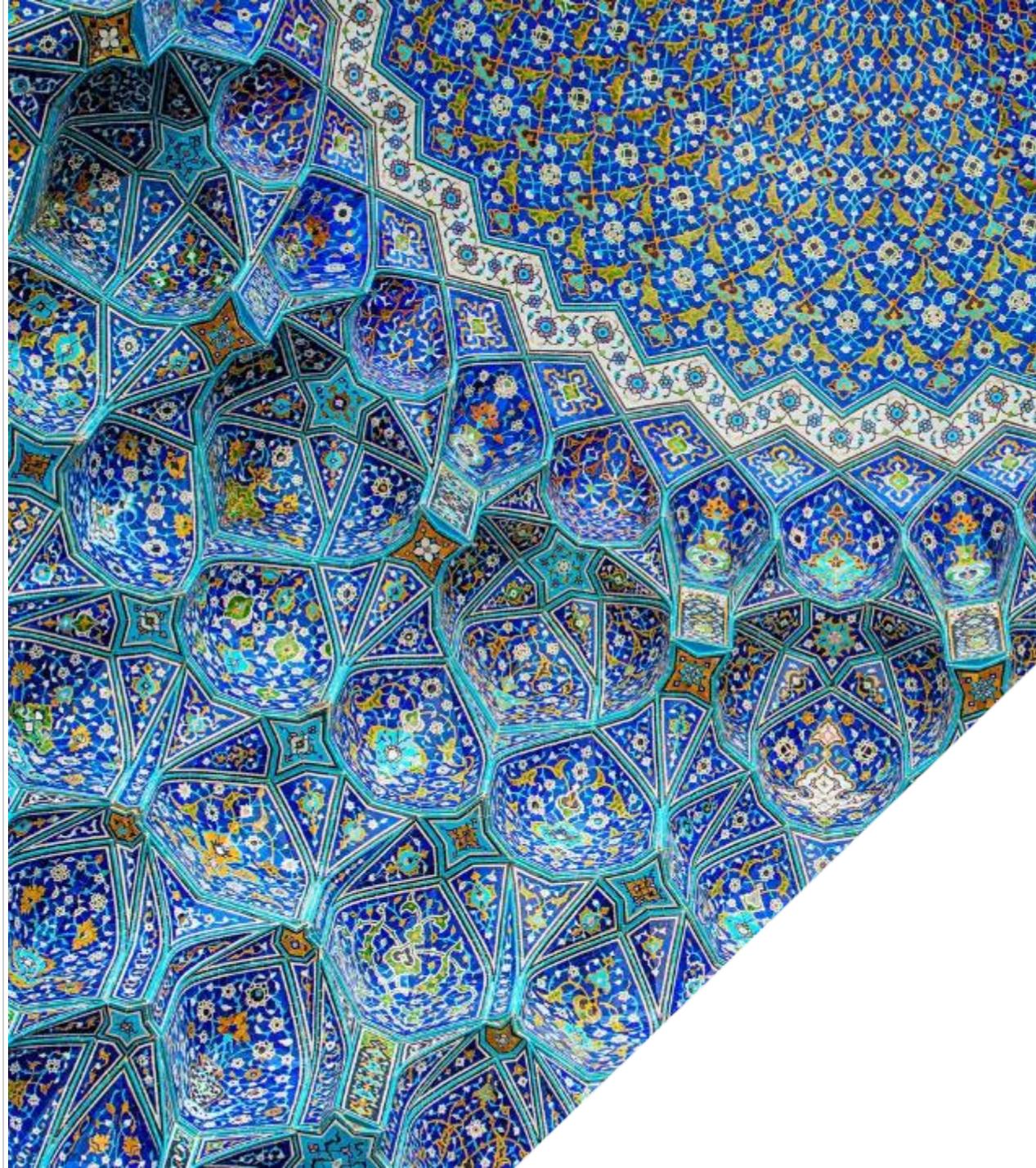


# Agenda

<b>11.00</b>	<b>Welcome and scene setting</b> Alison Park, ESRC; Sophie Duncan, NCCPE
<b>11.30</b>	<b>Current state of play</b> Ben Bleasdale, CaSE; Sado Jirde, BSWN; Tom Saunders, UKRI
<b>12.45</b>	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>1.45</b>	<b>Contextualising the work: engagement in practice</b> Jo Foster, IRIS; Rabiya Latif, brap; Chamion Caballero, The Mixed Museum
<b>2.45</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>3.00</b>	<b>Facing the future</b> Steven Hill, Research England, UKRI, Suzie Leighton, NCACE; Kimberley Freeman, The Royal Society; Meg Hughes, Medr
<b>3.50</b>	<b>Final comments</b>

# Scene setting

Alison Park, ESRC

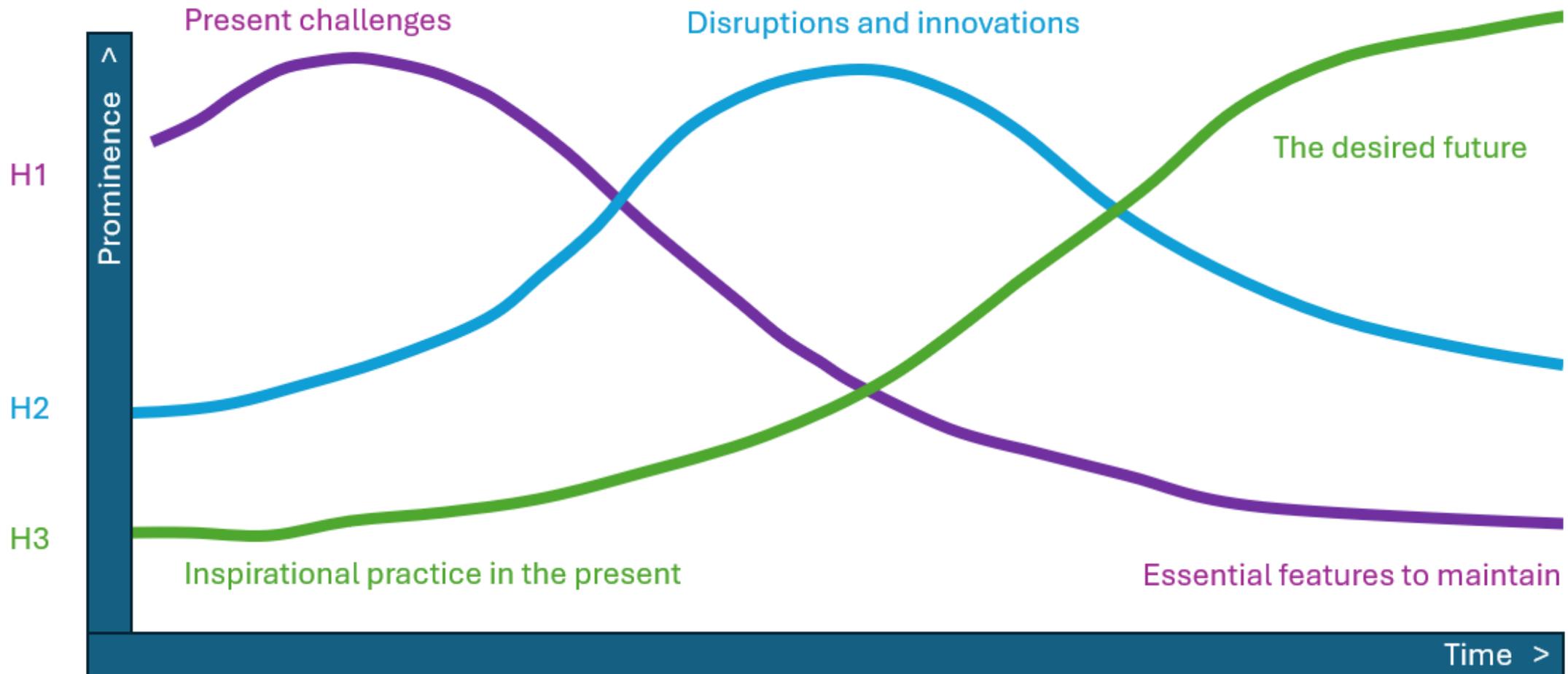


# Scene setting

Sophie Duncan, NCCPE



# Engaged Futures: Three horizons



H1

H2

H3

Prominent

Structural and cultural hierarchies (professional and knowledge) replicate and exacerbate persistent historical exclusions. This drives inequity of access and professional progression and limits the potential of knowledge production.

Disconnect between universities and society/local people. Relationships feel extractive and transactional rather than trustworthy and mutually supportive.

Emphasis on income generation undermines the potential contribution universities are and can make to society, and the value of courses that contribute to the vibrancy and creativity of the UK.

Funding schemes create power imbalances, time pressures and expectations that hamper community power and agency in 'collaborative' work.

Structures and processes do not support engaged or collaborative approaches to knowledge.

**Exclusive**

**Physical Space**

**Hiding Mistakes**

**Validator**

**Short Term**

**Tanker**

**Transactional**

**Belonging**

**Reimagined Space**

**Embracing Failure**

**Connector**

**Sustained & Regenerative**

**Flotilla**

**Relational**

Collaborative ways of working are valued and enabled. University staff and students collaborate across depts and with outside organisations, and processes enable this.

Multiple forms of knowledge are recognised and shared. This results in universities being seen for their social value as much as their contribution to inclusive growth

Approaches to teaching and learning encourages a more diverse student body. Students can access different learning opportunities across their lives

Research culture enables deeper slow thinking and collaboration. Imagination and creativity are encouraged as is appropriate risk taking.

Porous and inclusive institutions integrated within place: physical spaces for communities, businesses, HE staff and students to work together. People can connect with HE throughout life at different times.

Universities have a key role within an evolving knowledge landscape, offering a knowledge service and skill set to address societal needs.

# Table discussions

How do you see the current relationship between research and innovation and society through the work you have been leading?



# Current state of play

## Panel

Ben Bleasdale, CaSE

Sado Jirde, BSWN

Tom Saunders, UKRI

Chair: Sophie Duncan

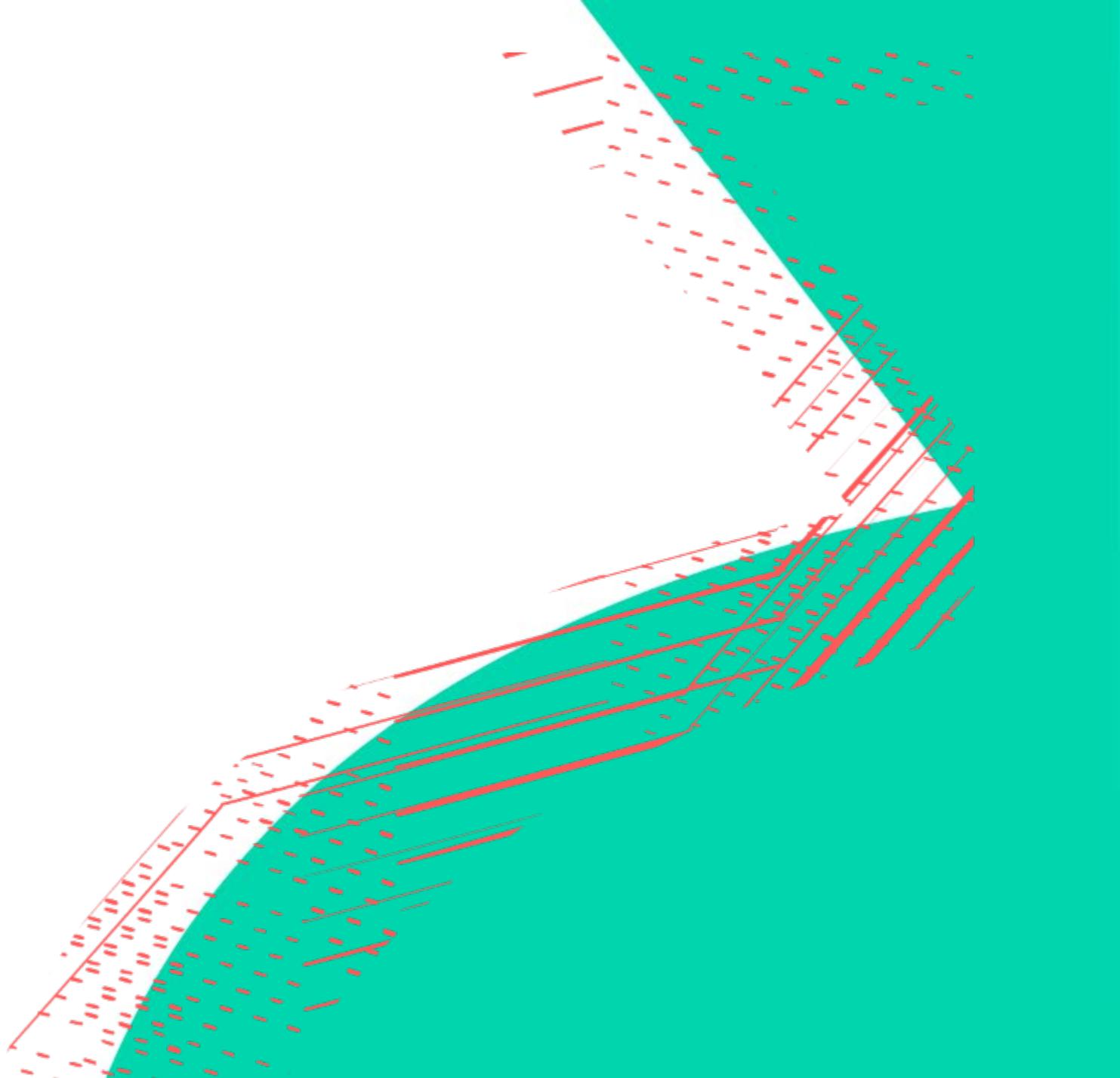


# Lunch

Back at 1.45pm



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# Contextualising the work: engagement in practice

## Panel

Jo Foster, IRIS

Rabiyah Latif, brap

Chamion Caballero, The Mixed  
Museum

Chair: Paul Manners



# Contextualising the work: engagement in practice

- Which of these examples resonate with you work?
- What examples of innovation have you initiated or come across that is benefiting our collective work?
- Do you have specific examples that are innovative or disrupting the current system?



# Contextualising the work: engagement in practice

Jo Foster, IRIS



# The challenge we face



Of 100 students joining secondary school at age 11, only 2 will choose a STEM pathway and be in a STEM job 6 months after graduating...

... but around 29% of the UK's jobs are in STEM industries

# A different approach



**Our solution**  
An R&I  
approach to  
STEM



**Our findings**  
Students,  
teachers  
& schools



**Our future plans**  
Growing R&I  
in schools

**Find out more**

**[jofoster@researchinschools.org](mailto:jofoster@researchinschools.org)**



# Contextualising the work: engagement in practice

Chamion Caballero,  
The Mixed Museum



# ***What Happens When Community Leads the Learning?***

Dr Chamion Caballero  
Director  
**The Mixed Museum**

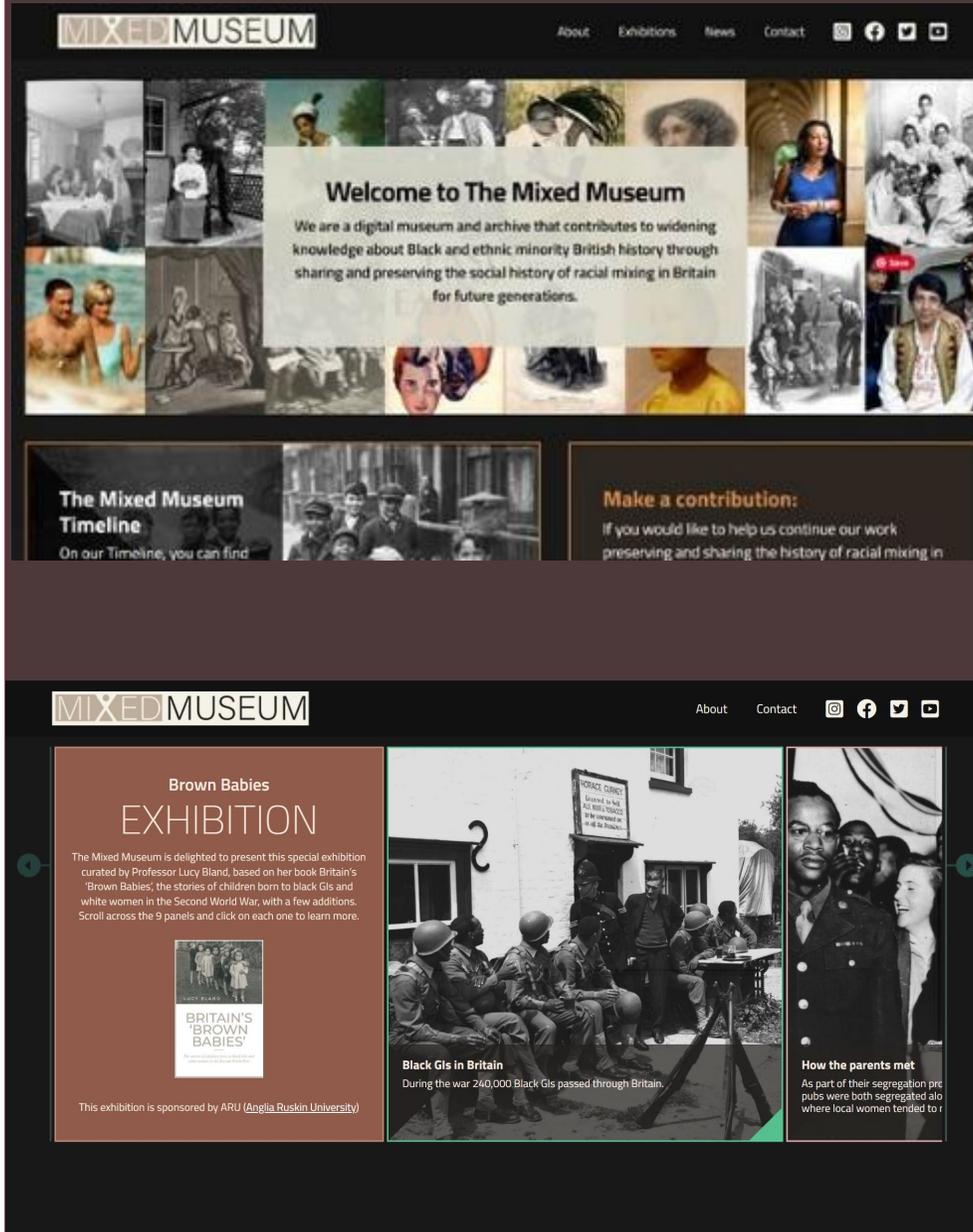
MIXED MUSEUM

[www.mixedmuseum.org.uk](http://www.mixedmuseum.org.uk)



## Question...

What does meaningful public engagement look like for people who've spent most of their lives feeling excluded, unseen, or misrepresented?



- Digital by design, not just necessity.
- A focus on little known histories, e.g. the 'brown babies' of WW2.

- An inclusive, flexible and approachable model.
- Attempting to reach those who don't see themselves in traditional heritage spaces.

# What we did

Project:

*Reclaiming History Through Science: DNA Testing in the lives of 'brown babies' families*



## The project

- Funded under the Mindsets + Missions programme, connecting 'underrepresented communities' with science learning.
- 'Brown babies' families exploring the DNA testing journey · Scattered community · Little support · High emotional stakes · Aged 21 to 80.

## Pivot point

*“You won’t get them to focus on the science until you let them talk first.”*

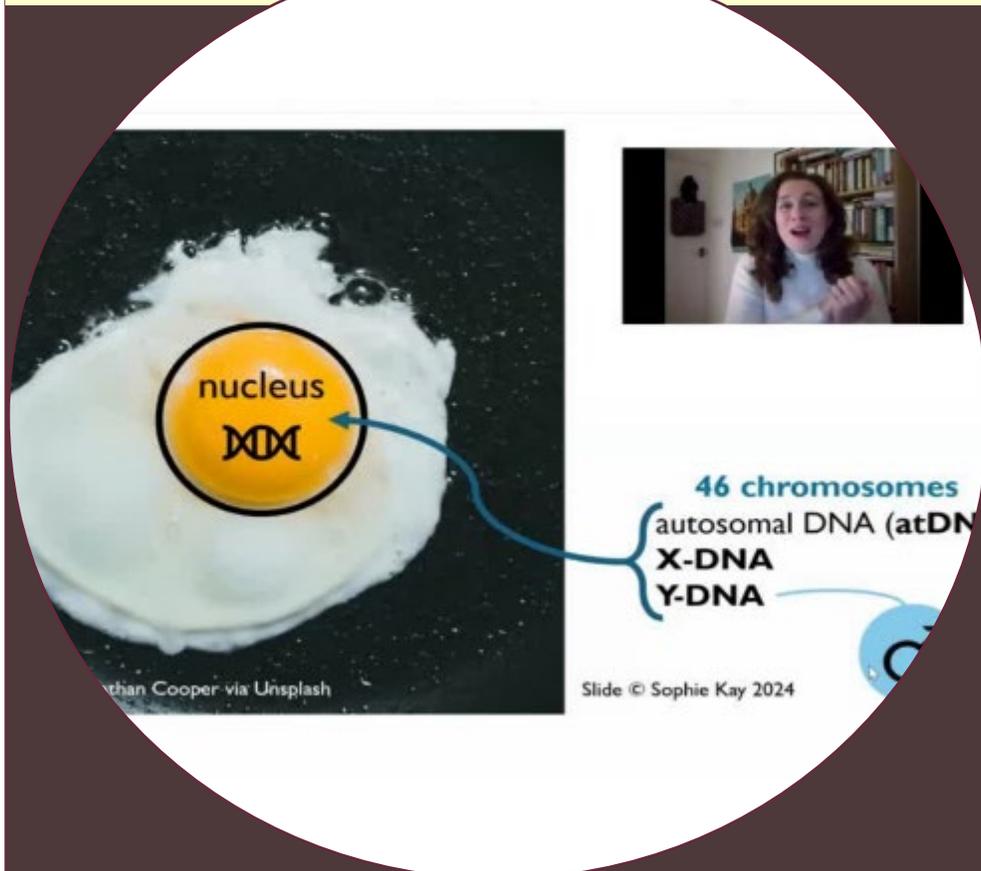


## The Shift

- Internalised pressure to ‘show impact’ · Pushed science learning too fast.
- Needed connection first · Moved focus from deliverables to dialogue.
- Conversation and connection took multiple forms:
  - Zoom drop-ins; digital noticeboard; weekly newsletter; in-person workshop; residential weekend; group outings.

## The science returned

*“The best part for me was understanding the straightforward way Sophie explained DNA. I loved it.”*



## ‘Talking DNA with Dr Sophie Kay’

- Emerged from real group questions.
- Bespoke webinars · Content and focus shaped by the group · Sessions run by genealogist Dr Sophie Kay.
- Real world need · genuine engagement and learning.
- Series success · Dr Kay now The Mixed Museum’s first Scientist-in-Residence.

## ‘Quiet connectors’

*“I know I haven’t engaged much. Realistically I can’t see myself getting involved with the Zoom meetings [but] I would like to continue getting news and updates as long as you’re happy for me to dip in and out in that way.”*

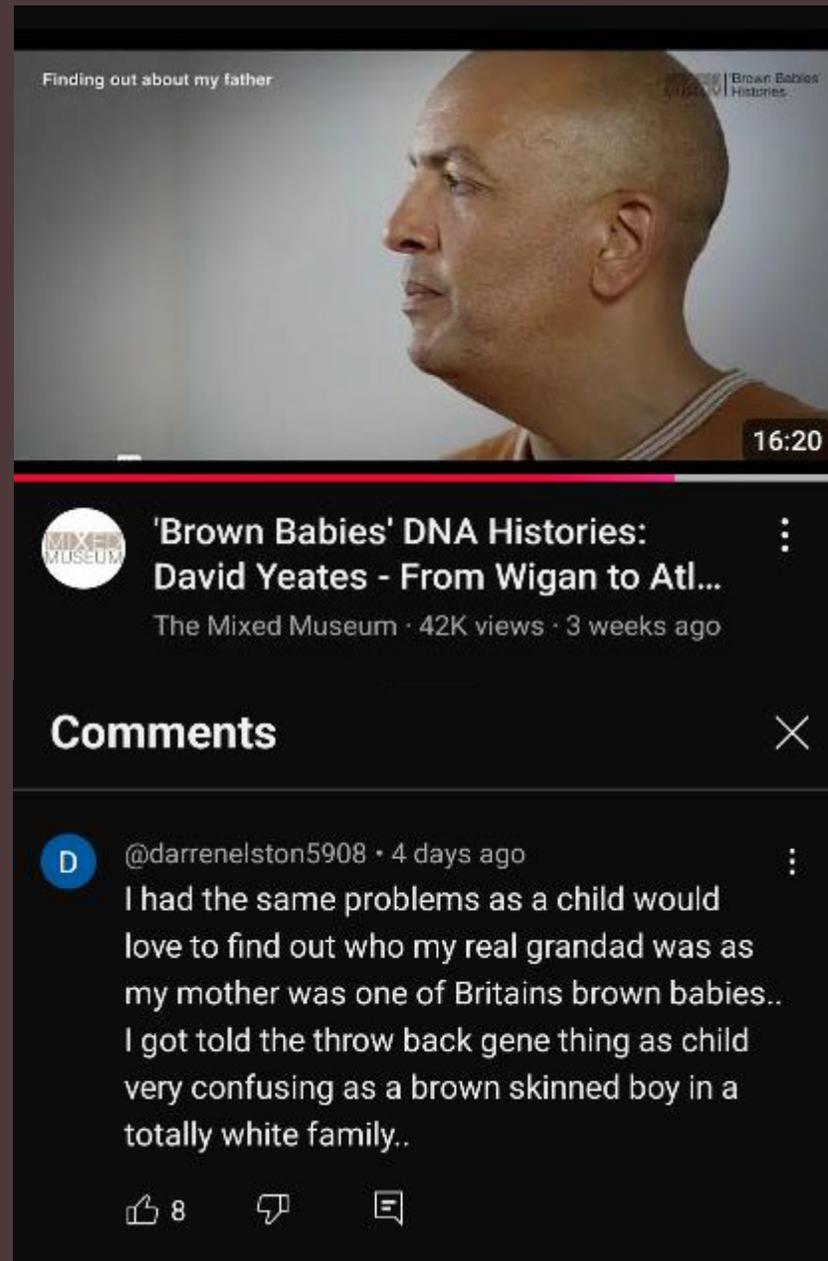


### Group engagement comes in many forms

- Some spoke often · Others never · But present in different ways: reading, watching, listening, emails, artwork.
- Not in conventional metrics · Yet still central, still shaping the work.

## Where we are

And where we'd  
like to go



Finding out about my father

Brown Babies Histories

16:20

MIXED MUSEUM

'Brown Babies' DNA Histories: David Yeates - From Wigan to Atl...

The Mixed Museum · 42K views · 3 weeks ago

Comments

@darrenelston5908 · 4 days ago

I had the same problems as a child would love to find out who my real grandad was as my mother was one of Britains brown babies.. I got told the throw back gene thing as child very confusing as a brown skinned boy in a totally white family..

8

## Continuing the Work

- Official M+M project ended · But group continues · Connection and trust maintained by bridging activities.
- Building on video series success and enquiries: DNA search digital toolkit?
- Other ideas: Digital noticeboard development · Mapping Black GI bases · Blue plaques scheme.

*“I honestly feel that the careful thinking and creative ideas you have all put into this project have really opened up pathways for me. I feel this is the family I never had as a child or as an adult until now.”*



**‘BROWN BABIES’**

**DNA PROJECT RESIDENTIAL**

**12-14 JULY 2024**

**MIXED MUSEUM**

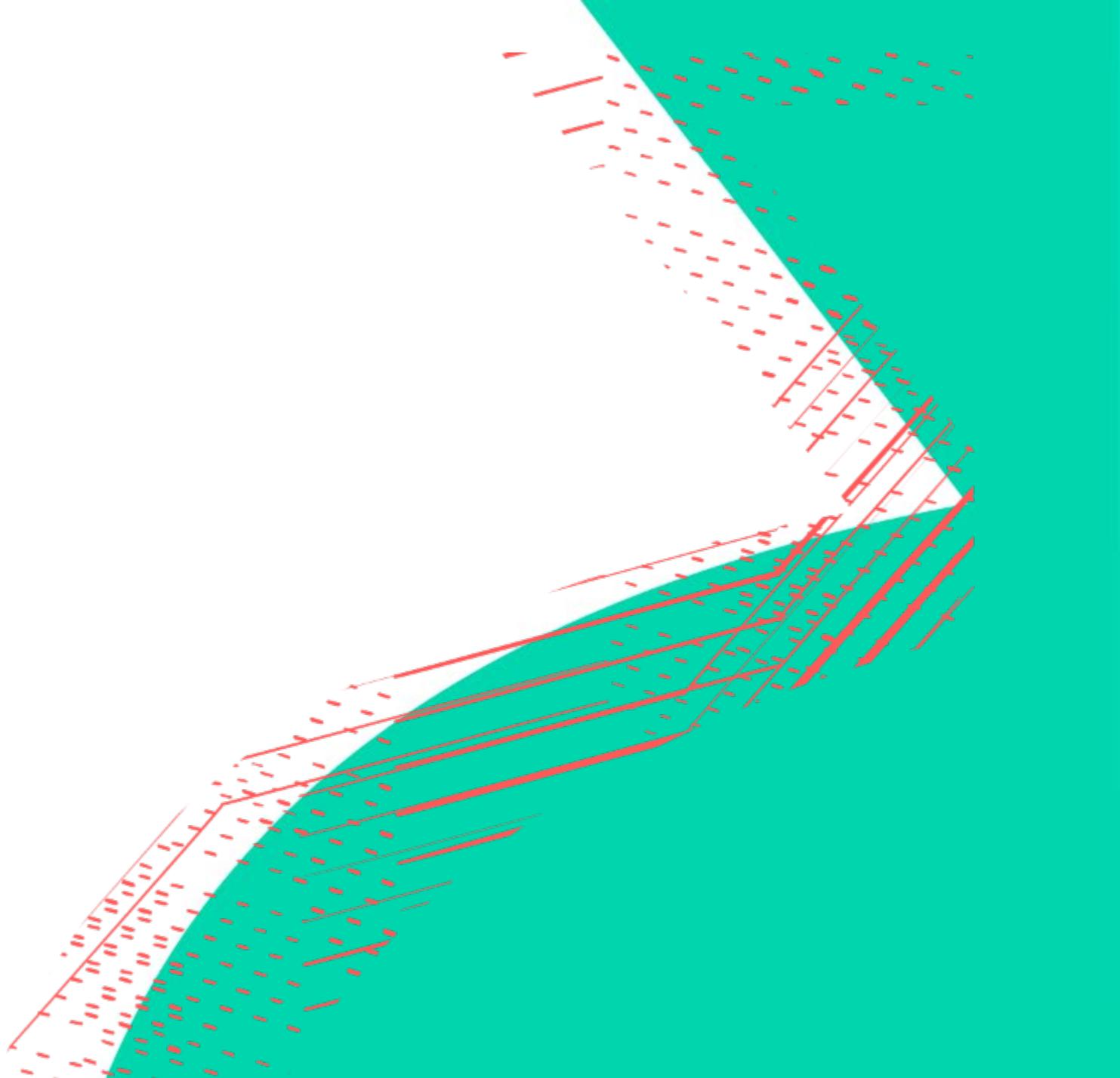
[www.mixedmuseum.org.uk](http://www.mixedmuseum.org.uk)

# Break

## Back at 3pm



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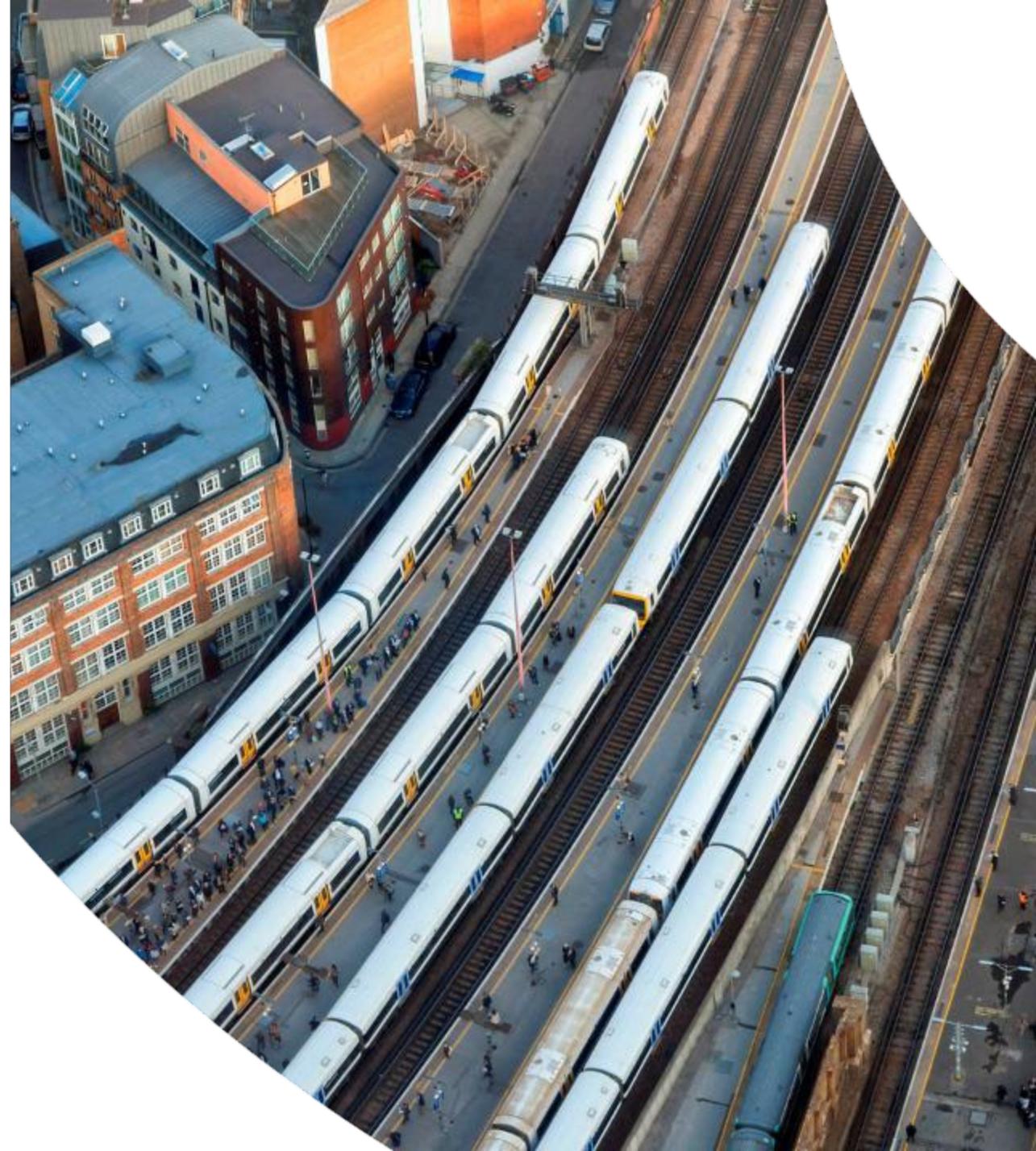


# Facing the future

## Panel

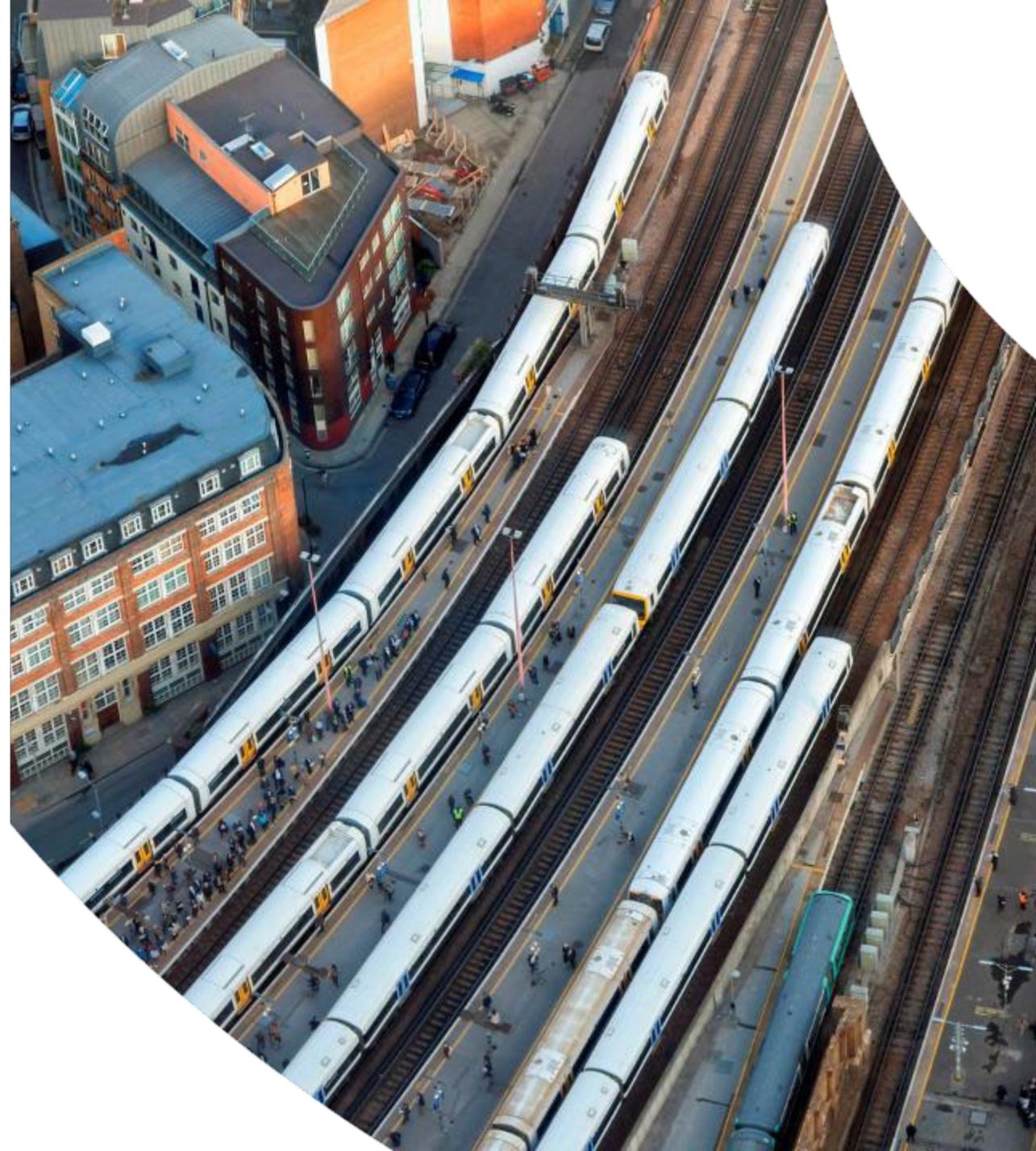
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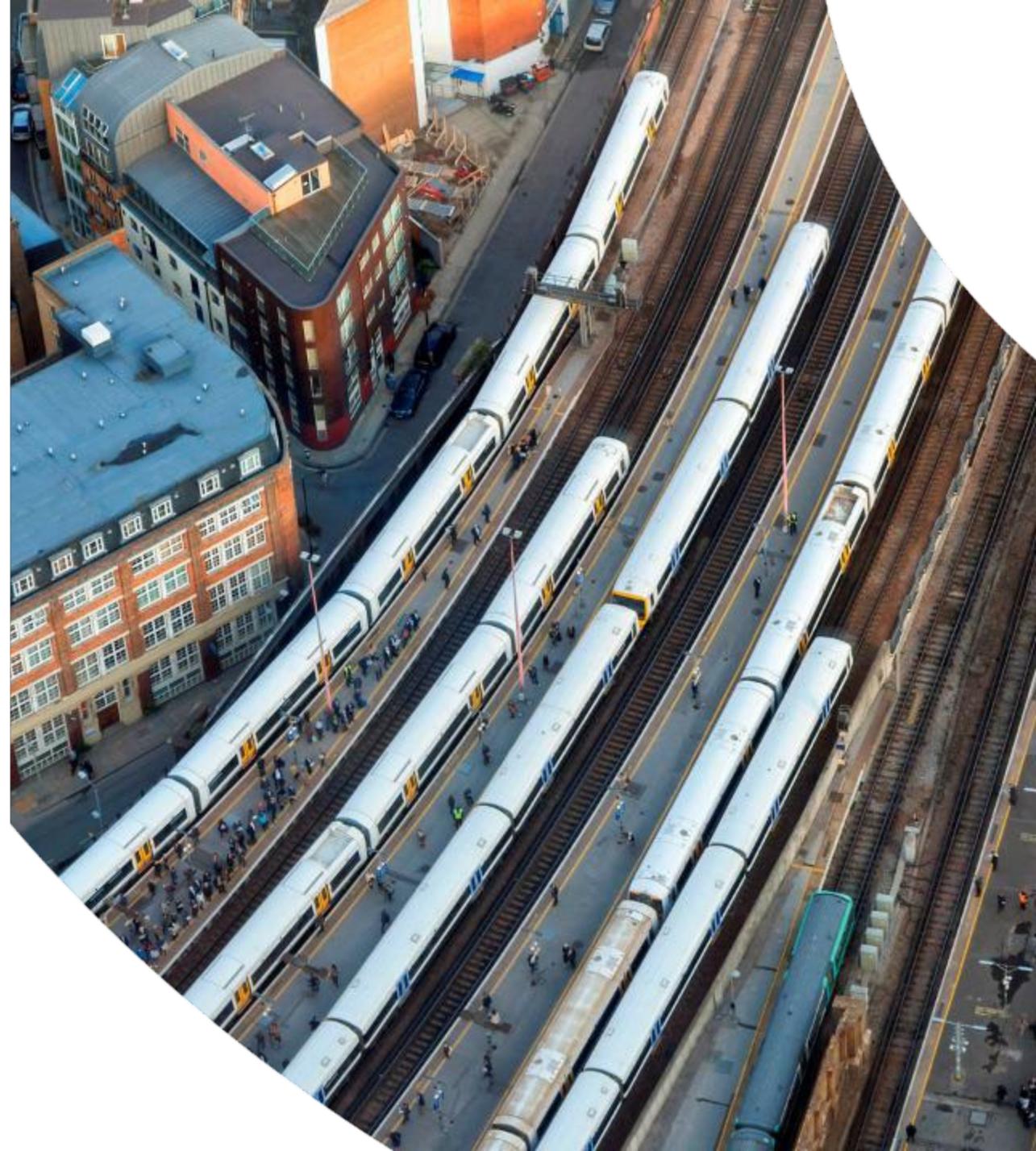


# Facing the future

- Significant insights about the future of public engagement
- How insights align with the work you are currently doing to support the relationship between R&I and society?
- What do they mean for what we might work collectively and what might UKRI contribute to help our collective efforts?



# Final Thoughts



# Thank you



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