



Beacon for Wales

Final Report >



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Executive Summary

The Beacon for Wales has initiated a culture change in Welsh Universities where public engagement is more embedded, more supported and more visible than it was 5 years ago. >

27 projects exploring new ways of undertaking engagement or working with new audiences were funded and these delivered over 35,000 contact hours of engagement.



The Beacon for Wales was a partnership between Cardiff University, University of Glamorgan, Techniquist, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales and BBC Cymru Wales. Working in the context of Wales, the two lead universities, Cardiff and Glamorgan, and the other Welsh universities have supported and encouraged their staff and students to undertake high quality public engagement. The role of the three engagement organisations cannot be understated through their expertise and challenging of the state of engagement within universities. They also provided opportunities for academics to reach new audiences.

Glamorgan and Cardiff universities have adapted their reward and recognition structures so that staff can include public engagement activities as a dedicated part of their role. At Cardiff, academic promotions are being made on the basis of excellent engagement work. Glamorgan has appointed a reader and a fellow in public engagement.

There are now two networks linking university staff with those of community organisations which look to share good practice and to make it easier to link up with others interested in engagement.

27 projects exploring new ways of undertaking engagement or working with new audiences were funded and these delivered more than 35,000 contact hours of engagement. They identified new successful methods and have been built upon already by the project leaders, their departments and others.

The project also looked to engage with policy makers in Wales to improve the quality of public, political and academic dialogue in Wales. Events were attended by many Ministers and Assembly Members. We also began a pairing scheme linking Welsh politicians with academics across Wales which will be continued next academic year.

Overall, the Beacon succeeded in making significant advances in embedding public engagement as an academic priority and encouraging more and more academics to take up the engagement mantle. There is a network of people across universities and other organisations who are championing engagement and getting their colleagues to get involved and to improve practice.

Strategic priorities for the Beacon >

The Beacon for Wales had 6 objectives that fed into the aims of the Funders of the project. These were:

- 1 To develop an effective network for engagement in and with Wales
- 2 To create universities that value and reward the public engagement activities of their staff and students
- 3 To develop the skills and confidence of staff and students to undertake high quality public engagement activities
- 4 To develop new models of university public engagement
- 5 To increase the academic rigour of public engagement
- 6 To improve the quality of public, political and academic dialogue in Wales

Overall approach to culture change >

The Beacon for Wales was conceived and developed as a partnership project where the two core universities would learn from each other and from the expertise of specialist engagement organisations (Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, BBC Cymru Wales and Techniquet). As such the governance of the programme was through a Management Board with senior representatives from each partner. Initially, this was simply the most senior representative, but this was quickly increased to include additional academics from the partner universities to provide greater context to debate. In principle, each partner organisation had a single vote but there was no issue across the entire period that relied on a vote to make a decision.

The core team was based at Cardiff University and co-located with the University's Community Engagement Team and shared the same line management. From the start, the relationships with Cardiff academics were mediated through this recently established team as they were Cardiff's key institutional resource for public

engagement and were likely to be in existence beyond the end of the Beacon for Wales.¹

The relationships with the University of Glamorgan academics and the institutional systems more generally were through the Faculty Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, who had been given the institutional lead for public engagement by the University of Glamorgan Management Board.

To help provide academic credibility, both institutions appointed senior academics as Champions for Public Engagement. University of Glamorgan appointed two (one for sciences and one for arts & humanities) and Cardiff University appointed one. These played important, and different, roles for the Beacon. As Cardiff University had existing central support for engagement, their Champion was seen as someone who could provide expert advice to colleagues. They also provided significant support to the Beacon Research Associate in linking them to a broader research network than would have been available solely through the Beacon for

Wales. The University of Glamorgan champions played a more proactive role in the coordination and organisation of public engagement activities at their institution.

It is important at this stage to comment on the numerous staffing and organisational changes at the partner organisations throughout the duration of the Beacon for Wales. Over the three and a half years, we have had four maternity leaves, one paternity leave, the departure of both key university leads, a change in the line management structure of the division that Beacon for Wales was located within, four members of Beacon for Wales staff leaving, and the departure of one of the Champions. When the Beacon for Wales Manager first started both his direct line manager and the person that wrote the bid had recently begun a spell of maternity leave.

It is also important to note some specific elements of the Welsh context. In November 2009, Wales' Education Minister issued a new higher education policy² that focussed on two main objectives. These were that universities

should support a buoyant economy and deliver social justice. One of the key elements of this policy is the Minister's belief that there are too many small universities in Wales and that there should be mergers so that the numbers drop from 10 to 6. There is also a strong regional approach within this policy. This added to the distractions from embedding engagement to those in the rest of the UK.

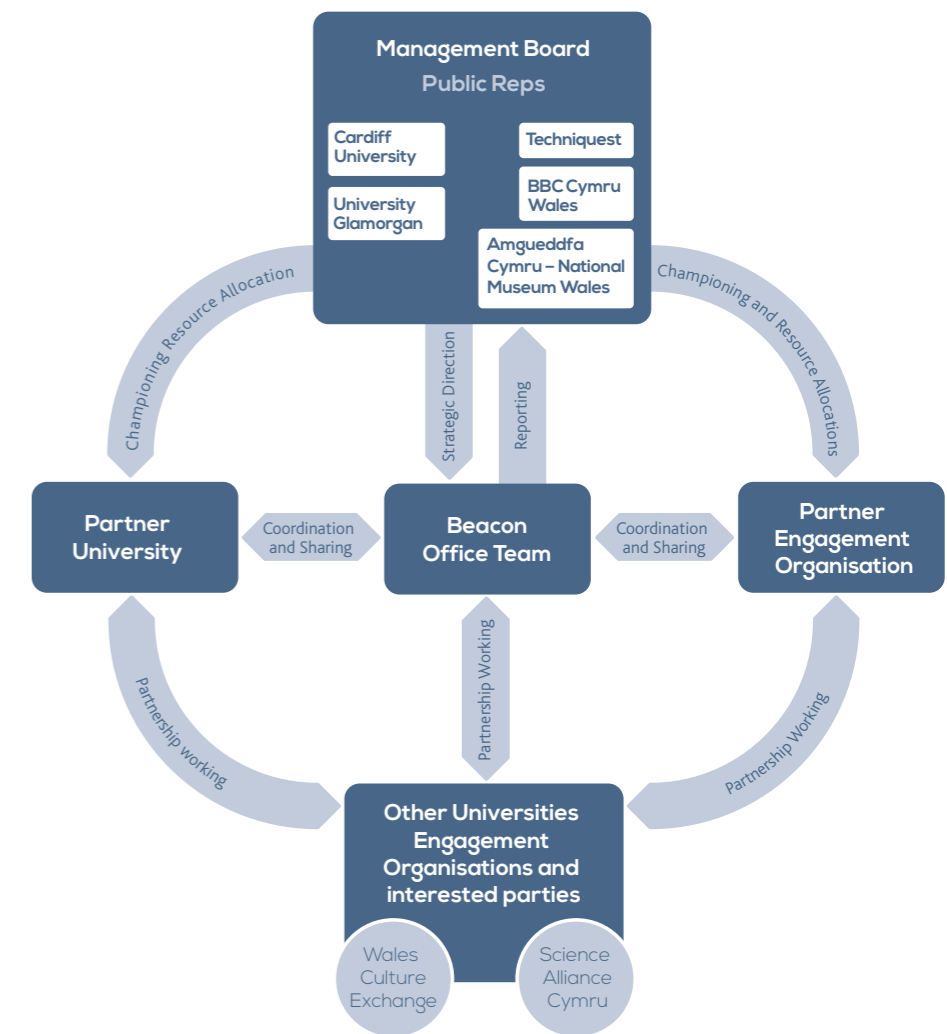
As the Beacon for Wales had the additional remit to work with the other Welsh universities, a core principle of our way of working was that the Beacon for Wales team would concentrate its work on cross-institutional activities whilst challenging and encouraging the universities to undertake changes relevant to their particular needs. For example, when looking at including engagement as a part of the work of academics, Cardiff University chose to highlight the possibility for promotions through engagement and University of Glamorgan chose to bring engagement into their workload-balancing model. This also allowed the Beacon for Wales team to talk to other universities about possible changes that they could make without being prescriptive but through highlighting the ways that other universities were attempting to make the changes and the positives and negatives that they were encountering.

In addition to the universities, the Beacon for Wales has three main partners whose expertise lies within engaging with the public across different sectors and communities. These were Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, BBC Cymru Wales and Techniquet. These provided a number of extremely important roles:

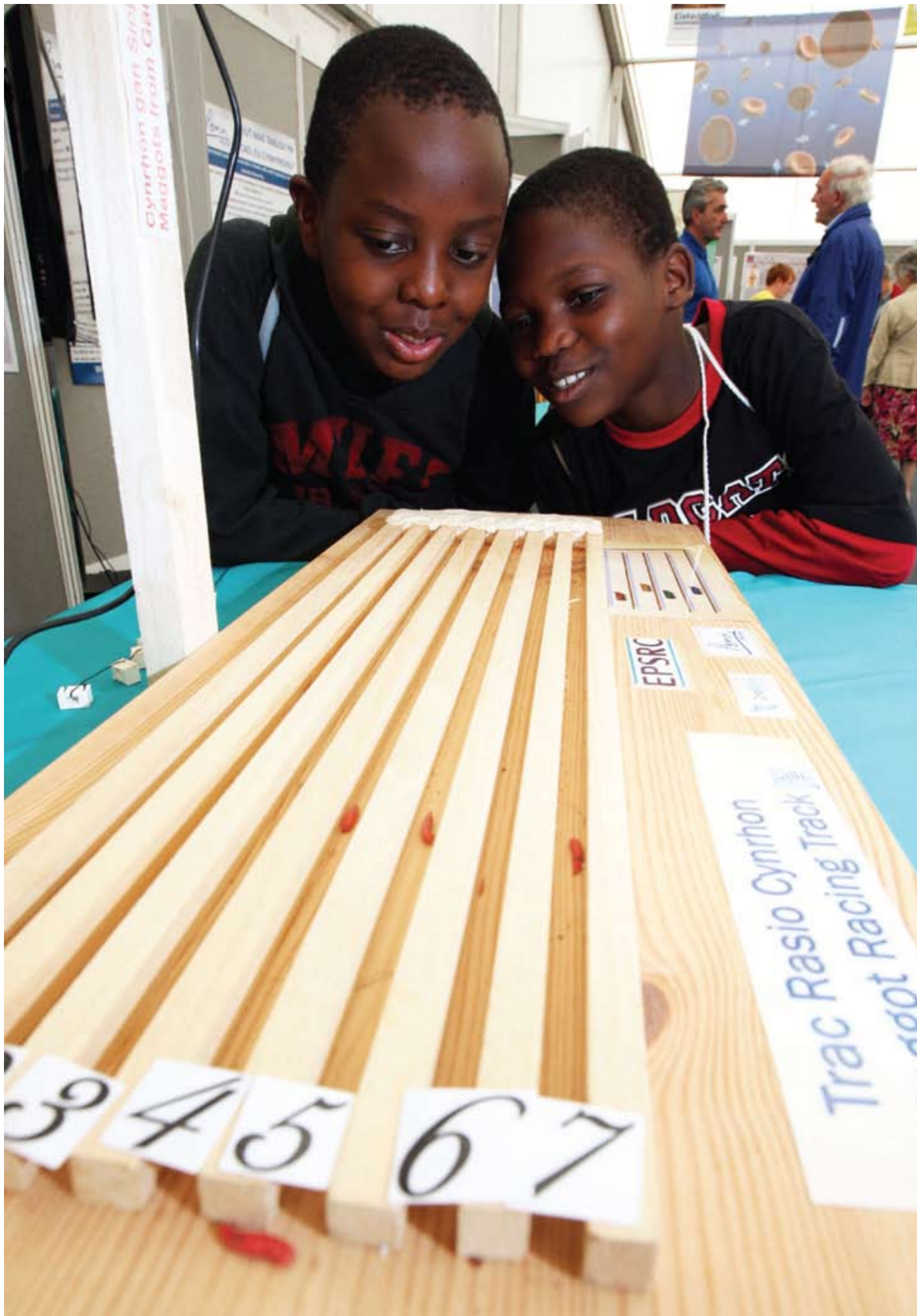
- Provided experiences of the changes in communication/engagement techniques that they have experienced in recent years
- Provided experiences of the cultural changes that their organisations have undergone in recent years towards a more open and engaged culture
- Linked with academics directly and through the networks to share knowledge and to develop projects that were submitted to the Beacon project funds and other sources
- Provided a potential route to the audiences that the universities were trying to reach.

Initially, the engagement partners thought that the project would be far more about working together on public engagement activity rather than embedding culture change in the universities that lead to some initial confusion about potential roles. This was quickly adjusted to, and the partners played valuable roles in advising on, critiquing and facilitating the changes that the universities were trying to make. In part, the main aims of better links between the partners and greater input from academics in content generation were medium to long term rather than clear success indicators within this first phase.

The Beacon for Wales' philosophy was based on the principle of the Funders that public engagement was not just about the transition of knowledge between expert and non-expert but experts working with listening to and learning from non-experts. This was a real challenge for those whose idea of engaging the public was along traditional academic lines such as the lecture, seminar and master class. These would often be prefixed with the word 'public' and become a form of public engagement without any other adaptation.



¹At the start of the Beacon, the Community Engagement Team were funded from the Innovation and Engagement funds from HEFCW and were on fixed term contracts. During the second (?) year of the Beacon, Cardiff took the decision to move the team onto core funding and open-ended contracts. ²For our Future



Impact >



The Beacon for Wales' impacts are numerous, far-ranging and with every indication of being long-lasting.

1 To develop an effective network for engagement in and with Wales

The Beacon for Wales has been instrumental in fostering an effective network for engagement across Wales. It has enabled important spaces for both academic and non-academic parties to share their experiences of engagement and so to facilitate new learning, improved practice and created opportunities for collaboration.

One of the most important achievements of the Beacon for Wales has been its role as a relationship broker facilitating meaningful interactions between previously unconnected (or poorly connected) communities. This role has helped to strengthen new or underdeveloped associations and signposted opportunities for partnership and shared practice. As a funder of engagement projects; network coordinator; trainer, broker and researcher, the Beacon for Wales has served to enhance the interface between academic and 'public' groups in Wales through more frequent and effective dialogue.

The Beacon for Wales has been immediately responsible for the co-ordination of the 'Science Alliance Cymru' and 'Wales Cultural Exchange' networks, which have and continue to attract and unite a broad cross-section of academics, HE administrators and managers, educators, practitioner and public groups in critical discussion. These networks have been critical in identifying and sustaining a critical mass of individuals' committed to the conceptualisation, theoretical and practical orientation of engagement and the embedding of a 'community-of-practice'. Science Alliance Cymru has also formed the basis of a proposal to the HE STEM programme for a project exploring how third sector organisations can support widening access to STEM subjects.

2 To create universities that value and reward the public engagement activities of their staff and students

Public engagement is now a recognised and official criteria for appointment, appraisal and promotion protocols in both host HEIs. Academic staff and managers are increasingly recognising the importance of public engagement, in part as a method of identifying

and proving the impact of their research, or as a measure of the social and economic impact in the Research Excellence Framework. The Beacon for Wales played an important role in guiding academics with an array of practical advice based on other academics' experiences.

Cardiff University developed a set of performance measures for Innovation and Engagement in the summer of 2009. These were piloted in the following academic year and have formed the core of the measures implemented in the latest Innovation and Engagement Strategy for the University and form part of the reporting process to HEFCW. These are still predominantly quantitative in nature as Cardiff University sought a simple set that could be consistently applied. However Cardiff University is now looking at how more qualitative data can be used to improve the engagement work.

Cardiff University also introduced explicit engagement related aspects into their academic promotions criteria for all levels of promotion. Cardiff University had made changes to its promotions criteria in 2004/5 to reflect the growing importance of "Third Mission", and the measures focused on knowledge transfer.

The reason for including engagement explicitly within the promotions criteria in 2008 was to provide processes that fully recognize and reward individuals contributing to the full breadth of Cardiff University's mission whilst maintaining the current focus of Teaching and Research Excellence.

This development was a major change in an institution where research excellence had become the established dominant route for promotion. The development of appropriate criteria to assess cases submitted under the 'wider mission' heading helped to ensure

that this development was accepted as an appropriate route within a research-led university. A further challenge at this time was ensuring that University Schools received adequate support/ information to deal appropriately with applications under this heading.

Cardiff University runs an annual promotions cycle. The first stage is the School Promotions Panel. This Panel must identify and approach a suitable external assessor to comment on the standing of the case against the agreed criteria. Having received and considered the external

assessment and reviewed each application in full the School Promotions Panel is required to prepare a report for Cardiff University's Academic Promotions Sub-Committee. If the Panel considers the application to be premature, this conclusion is discussed with the candidate by the Head of School, together with one other member of the School Promotions Panel.

Every applicant has the right to insist that his/her case be considered by Cardiff University Promotions Sub-Committee regardless of the School Promotions Panel decision.

The Beacon for Wales has been instrumental in fostering an effective network for engagement across Wales.



The applicant is assessed against benchmarks under three general areas:

- Research
- Learning and Teaching
- Contribution to the wider mission of Cardiff University

There is fundamentally only one criterion for promotion at Cardiff University - which the individual can prove that they generate excellent outcomes in one of the three areas above. For promotion to Senior Lecturer this is excellence on a national level, and for promotion to Professor it is an international level of excellence. There is an additional requirement for professorial promotions, which is that, whichever area they chose to demonstrate excellence within, they must also show ability and effectiveness in the other two.

Focusing on contribution to the wider mission of the University area, under which public engagement sits, there are 4 benchmarks, each of which has a set of Indicators for Assessment. The 4 benchmarks are:

- Contribution to interdisciplinary or University administration
- Leadership and Senior Level management/ co-ordination
- Contribution to innovation and engagement
- Enhancing Cardiff University's reputation/ profile.

And the assessment indicators for innovation and engagement are:

- Innovation and knowledge transfer
- Contribution to the successful commercialization of Intellectual Property
- Significant contribution to professional practice/policy at a national level
- Contribution to the public understanding of one's subject as national/ international level
- Contribution to capacity building in Cardiff and wider communities
- Contributions to culture and cultural enrichment.

The University of Glamorgan has introduced a new Higher Academic Award to go alongside the role of Reader.

The Innovation and Engagement Fellows shall have demonstrated excellence in innovation and engagement activities and will be expected to provide leadership. The full aspects of the role are:

- To provide leadership, which stimulates and guides colleagues to be innovative, to undertake innovation and enterprise related projects and to embrace public engagement
- To mentor junior staff and develop the enterprise skills base;
- To demonstrate commitment to sharing knowledge, resources and skills with the public
- To demonstrate a shared understanding of the purpose, value, meaning and role of public engagement to staff and students, embedding this in your work and evidencing its importance publicly

- To convert innovation, public engagement and enterprise activities into research and publish this work in journals, books and/or monographs
- To seek, secure and manage external funding for example commercial, consultancy or research income
- To raise the research and enterprise profile of the University of Glamorgan by gaining external recognition of the work by engaging widely with stakeholders through, for example, publications, obtaining external funding and awards, and attendance at public events or high profile press and media articles
- To develop and share knowledge and integrate this into teaching and research
- To demonstrate competence as a teacher, especially at Honours and Masters levels
- To contribute to professional education, training or development in the relevant professional sector
- To infuse Cardiff University's curriculum with relevant key knowledge to identify and contribute to the development and engagement with employers with respect of CPD activities.

3 To develop the skills and confidence of staff and students to undertake high quality public engagement activities

This objective is the one that has the greatest input from activities in other areas. For example, as the universities made their support for public engagement more explicit, staff would feel that they would be able to undertake more engagement. Similarly, the money made available to encourage new project ideas also encouraged people to take some risks with their activity. The main activity of the Beacon for Wales under this objective was to develop and pilot a series of development activities to support public engagement.

This began with a series of focus groups, stakeholder interviews and a look at the existing programme to identify what was needed and where there might be gaps in the provision. The main gaps identified were:

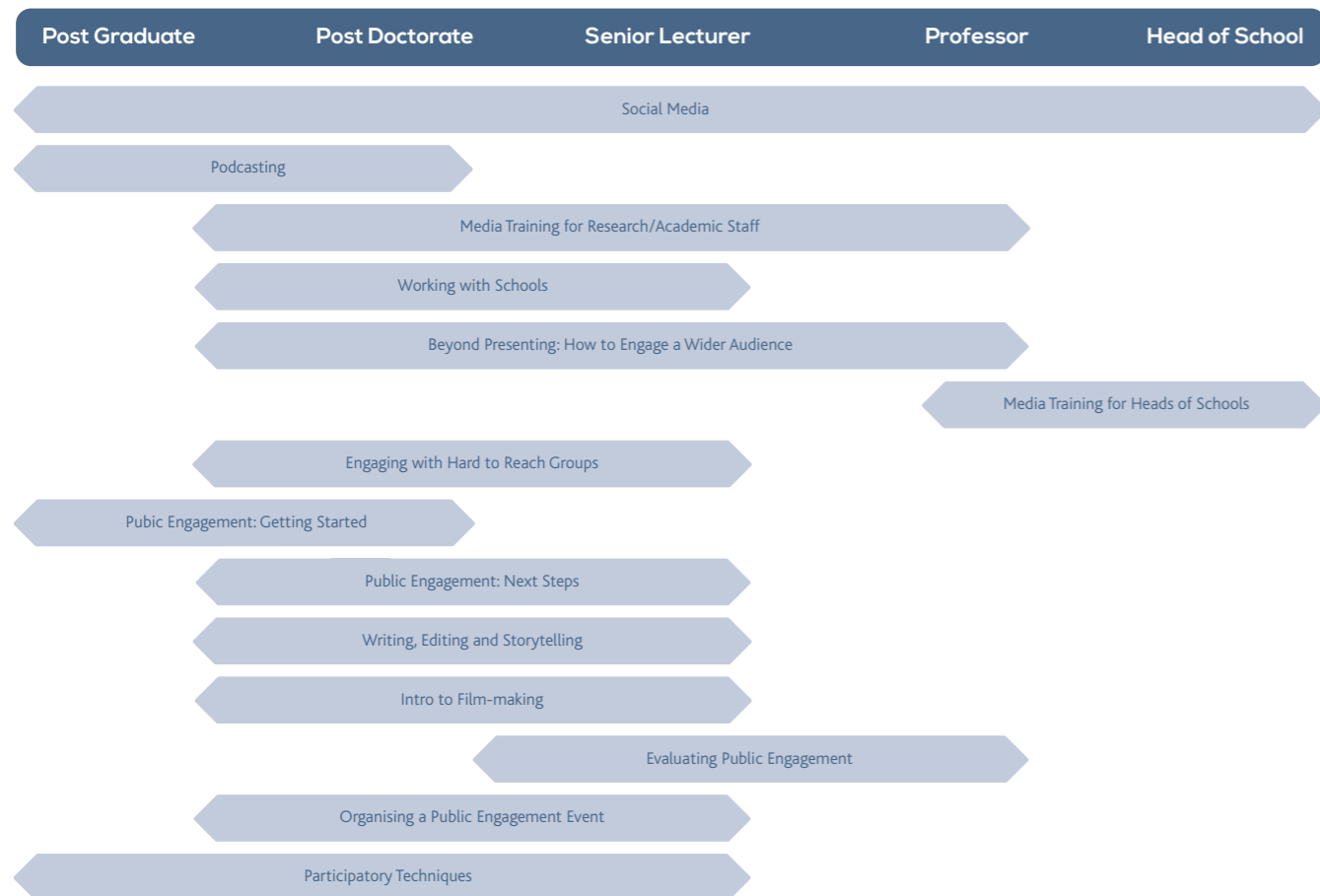
- Working with the media
- Using Social media
- Speaking in a 'live' debate
- Delivery of scientific issues
- Engaging with 'hard-to-reach' groups
- Lobbying for funding/fundraising
- Presenting educational and entertaining lectures or shows

As a result, the Beacon for Wales put on 17 workshops between April and December 2011, which reached 156 attendees. We also ran 3

All the workshops were evaluated and the feedback was extremely positive

lunchtime seminars which reached a further 135 people. All these workshops and seminars were open to all and not just university staff and students. This was to help academics to meet with people from other organisations. The workshops were designed to reach staff and postgraduate students at all stages of their career as can be seen from the diagram below.

The workshops were all arranged through external providers and are available for all Welsh universities to use in the future. Cardiff



University have already booked a further media training session after the end of the Beacon. Based on the Beacon programme and the NCCPE's work for the HE STEM programme, Cardiff University's Community Engagement Team have developed a programme for post-graduate researchers consisting of eight workshops across the year.

A decision was made to charge for attendance at the training and this was set at £100 per day. This is equivalent to the charge that Cardiff University already makes for its internal training. The reasons for this charge were to ensure that participants realised that there was a cost to the activity, even though it was subsidised by Beacon for Wales funding, and also to make sure that there was not a massive jump in cost between the Beacon for Wales subsidised course and those that would be run in the following year. This additional income also allowed the Beacon to run more workshops than would have been possible solely from its funding.

All the workshops were evaluated and the feedback was extremely positive. All were scored by participants on a scale of 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent). The average response for the 11

different workshops was 4.5 with the lowest score as 4.

"The content was appropriate and expertly delivered" Participant on Media Training for Research and Academic Staff

"I found this very useful – a safe environment to learn." Participant on Media Training for Research and Academic Staff

"Very clearly delivered, very applicable. Immediately gave me the confidence to do it" Participant on Going Back to School course

All the Beacon for Wales activities that worked to support this objective have made a difference; there were an increasing number of requests for support and advice to the Beacon for Wales team throughout the period of the programme. Cardiff University's Community Engagement Team also reported an increase in the number of requests that came to them. This is against a backdrop of more people within Cardiff University's academic Schools having a remit to support public engagement within their School. This suggests a significantly greater increase in the support being sought by academics at Cardiff University to undertake public engagement.

Over the period 2005/6 to 2009/10, Cardiff University and University of Glamorgan both increased their outputs for the relevant HEBCI measures. For staff days, Cardiff University went from 936 to 999 and Glamorgan from 60 to 335. They also both reached far more people. Cardiff University increased the number of people that they engaged with annually from 23,000 to 307,000 and University Glamorgan went from 14,000 to 31,000. In contrast every other university in Wales bar one (Trinity) reduced the number of staff days that they reported to HEBCI.

Another significant impact, and one that bodes well for the future, was the interest and involvement of post-graduate students in the training programme. They accounted for nearly half of the total participants in the workshops, although very few came to the seminars. This was partly through the close working between the Beacon for Wales, the local Vitae hub and the postgraduate support mechanisms in both Cardiff University and University of Glamorgan that ensured that postgraduate students heard about the programme and were supported. The charge for postgraduates was £30 per day and Cardiff University students were funded by the University Graduate College to attend.

4 To develop new models of university public engagement

Through investing in a portfolio of engagement projects, the Beacon for Wales has increased an awareness of the 'what, why and how' of engagement and nurtured engagement advocates/champions among project award-holders who have become an important resource to their local and wider academic communities. These individuals are able to input, advise, steer and encourage others less experienced or new to engagement activity. At

the same time, the Beacon for Wales project portfolio provides a practice manual for doing public engagement, which given the cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary nature of project teams offers guidance for academics of all walks.

A total of 27 projects were funded which reached more than 7,000 people and involved 60 academics and 100 students. There were three rounds of funding each with a slightly different focus and process to selecting projects. The projects were not measured by the numbers

of people that they engaged with as the key was learning about the engagement process and what universities need to do better to support engagement. However, these projects reached a significant number of people and delivered a total of 35,000 contact hours of engagement. This worked out at a cost of less than £9.50 per hour. This is an impressive effort for projects that were designed to be exploratory by nature.

In addition to these outputs, the projects also delivered significant outcomes.



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Impact on Community Participants

Knowledge and Understanding

- Increased understanding of what universities are about and for
- Increased understanding by young participants of what it takes to get to university
- Increased awareness of resources available to communities (not just those the university has to offer but also of other organizations)
- Increased knowledge about the subject at the core of the project

Activity, Behaviour and Progression

- Embedding of projects into the secondary school schemes of work
- Strengthening of existing networks and development of new ones
- Greater community cohesion (especially across age groups)
- Development of community actions plans
- More involvement in local issues
- Creating high quality products that participants want to repeat
- Teachers taking more responsibility for initiating projects with academics
- Change in aspirations of young people
- Parents seeking out information about how they can support the development of their children

Skills

- Technical (video editing, audio editing)
- Communication
- Team working
- Interviewing people
- Artistic skills
- Leadership skills of main community organisers/teachers

Attitudes and Values

- Participants felt that their views and opinions were listened to
- Participants explored their attitudes to topics such as climate change adaptation
- Desire to maintain involvement in working with the university on engagement projects
- A number of participants reported surprise at the emotional responses that participation in the events generated
- Participants felt rewarded through working with the academics and students
- Some more senior community representatives enjoyed a change in role where they became more of a facilitator for their staff rather than directing the work.
- Greater self confidence especially where learning was concerned
- A sense of ownership of local heritage

Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity

- A high quality drama performance that the participants wanted to invite family and friends to
- Feeling proud, exhilarated and competent on stage

Impact on Academics

Knowledge and Understanding

- Greater understanding of working with particular audience group
- Greater understanding of the challenges of good engagement projects
- Greater understanding of the nature of participatory culture
- Greater knowledge of the theory of engagement and not just practice
- Greater understanding of the purposes of engagement
- Greater understanding of different perspectives of research
- Learnt to simplify messages
- Learnt importance of fully understanding your subject as best you can
- Understanding how research fits in society

Activity, Behaviour, Progression

- Building relationships with community partners
- Made the team more likely to engage in the future
- Projects got academics/students who were not originally involved interested in engagement and, sometimes, involved with the project itself
- Reach a wider group of people who have knowledge that is useful for academics
- "I want public engagement to be a regular feature of my future scientific career"
- More students viewed teaching/education/community education a more suitable career for themselves
- Building a shared community of practice
- Stronger relationships with colleagues and students

Skills

- Communication skills
- Networking skills
- Facilitation skills
- Relationship management skills
- Working with young people
- Range of new engagement types
- Reflexivity
- To adapt behaviours and spot new connections
- Evaluation

Attitudes and Values

- Strengthened commitment to engagement
- Increase value on the creative process as a research tool
- More mindful about how engagement benefits different partners
- Enabling public as equal partners
- Undergraduates developed a different view of themselves as semi-professionals
- Engagement is not an easy process
- Being honest if you do not know the answer
- More reflective about engagement
- Achieving a more collegiate relationship

Enjoyment, Inspiration, Creativity

- "I really enjoyed the process"
- Importance of creative process to research

Links were created by the projects between academic and practice based research that will continue beyond the project and are spreading to others in the department

In addition to these initial outcomes from the projects, there was evidence of a wider change in the culture of the participating universities. As one academic commented, "No longer do I have to convince colleagues of the merits of engaging in first class outreach activities". Some projects reported that more departments than originally planned have become involved in the engagement either during or after the Beacon funded element.

Links were created by the projects between academic and practice based research that will continue beyond the project and are spreading to others in the department.

Some project leads were looking at how they could continue the work with little or no external funding. Others were developing funding bids in collaboration with their community partners to continue the work.

Academics involved in the teaching of undergraduates were building engagement into their teaching plans. Some staff have been asked to run engagement training/development events for colleagues and students.

There is also some evidence that the community is changing the way that it works with universities. For example, some teachers have become more proactive at initiating project with the universities that they worked with on Beacon projects.

It was not all plain sailing as all the projects reported experiencing difficulties. Some of these were 'technical' such as staffing changes or issues with university systems. Others were more complex and reflected

the different skills needed for community engagement compared to other aspects of university work. These include:

- The difficulty of working with multiple organisations with different timescales and priorities
- The difficulty of working with organisations with overlapping remits
- Judging the balance between the university leading and the community leading (and at what stage of the project this should be changing)
- Communicating across multiple organisations

Another group of issues could be attributed to "initial expectations [which] were naïve and lacked a detailed knowledge of the reality on the ground." (Academic project lead), including:

- Underestimation of difficulty of working with target audience
- Drop in the motivation of university participants when difficulties were experienced
- Insufficient institutional commitment to partnership working
- University project management systems/ approaches not flexible or responsive enough for the requirements of working with communities.

All project holders were asked what would deter them doing more engagement. The main answers were:

- Time – including the total time available but also the difficulty of scheduling time with so many busy partners
- Lack of a coordinating role (in some institutions) between academics, third sector organisations and publics

- Pressure to publish and the Research Excellence Framework
- Identifying suitable public partners/making first contact with public groups
- Time spent in evaluation
- Lack of recognition and broader support from department

The final point was further explored by asking all projects about the level of additional support that they received from their department. About a quarter of the projects stated that they had not received any additional recognition from their department. A further quarter mentioned that they had received unofficial and 'quiet' encouragement

The remainder were more positive about the support they were receiving from their departments:

Many had received direct support in terms of finance, or re-allocation of time. Some were asked to take on a more high profile role for supporting engagement in the department. A couple were being actively used as examples of how the department works with communities when these are needed.

The Beacon for Wales has provided a secure space for academics to experience and experiment with public engagement and an opportunity as one member of the management group claimed 'to try new things which probably would never have been tried without this type of funding being made available'.

The teams involved in running the projects funded by the Beacon for Wales showed a commitment to furthering their learning and to developing ideas about the public engagement



and knowledge exchange/transfer processes. These teams have also been aware of their limitations with respect to public engagement and been prepared to explore their own understanding and knowledge of the area. Project leads have revealed that Beacon for Wales funding allowed them to build strong 'working' relationships with a host of known and unknown communities, collaborators and users.

These projects have had some spectacular successes:

- The Talent Trails project was identified as a case study of innovative practice for key stage 3 pedagogy HM Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn).
- Teen Talkback Theatre created a model of working that is being extended through the national Barnardo's network.
- Stories of Men who Care has shifted the demographics of foster carers in Wales. About 50 per cent of attendees to Foster Network Wales support meetings are male compared with less than 10per cent in the rest of the UK. The booklet produced is the most downloaded resource that the UK network has ever created.
- Future Animals has evolved from a school and family activity to one that is running at 4 music festivals in 2012.
- Sounding the Way was used by the BBC Cymru Wales to produce audio walks for the BBC stand at the National Eisteddfod in 2010.

5 To increase the academic rigour of public engagement

This strand originally started as a section on improving the evaluation of public engagement. We were able to reorganise some of the funding to recruit a three-year research associate post. The researcher has been able to go far beyond the original aims and help to build a body of work that places academically critiques public engagement and, especially, its relationship to Impact in the Research Excellence Framework.

The Research Assistant, Dr Richard Watermeyer, created 12 academic papers during the period of the Beacon for Wales in addition to his work on the evaluation of the Beacon for Wales. These include a study into the views of medical academics about engagement, a paper on the public value of research and one on the challenges of public engagement.

In addition, many of the Beacon for Wales funded engagement projects have also produced papers and conference presentations about their work.

For a full list of both sets of work, see website

6 To improve the quality of public, political and academic dialogue in Wales

Through the many events that the Beacon for Wales has organised, it has shown the importance of public engagement as an academic activity. The Beacon for Wales has also showcased the achievements and progress of the academic community across the whole of Wales as it has responded to the challenge of becoming more publicly accountable, visible and transparent.

Better links between the university academics and politicians

The Beacon for Wales has used its pan-Wales remit to showcase the public engagement work of the Universities to politicians and policy makers. It has held two showcase events at the National Assembly for Wales. These were hosted by the ex-First Minister and by a Cabinet Minister and were attended by over two-thirds of all the Assembly Members. The second event showcased the work of the Beacon funded projects and was attended by three Ministers. These events served to show that Welsh Universities were engaged with their communities.

The Beacon for Wales has also started an Assembly – University Pairing Scheme. This is based upon, and with the endorsement of, the Royal Society's MP-Scientist Pairing Scheme. In its first year of operation, the scheme has partnered 15 Assembly Members with researchers from 6 universities. The scheme will continue to run in future years as a pan-Wales activity coordinated from Cardiff University.

Better understanding of public attitudes to universities

In order to measure any improvement in public dialogue with universities, it was necessary to identify the existing level. This was done through two commissioned telephone surveys. The first was undertaken in the Autumn of 2008 and the second in the Summer of 2011.

The key question in the latter survey was "To what extent do you agree with the statement 'University organised events, facilities and services are much more open to the public than they were a few years ago.'" 60 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement compared with 10 per cent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This was backed up with the view that 81 per cent were proud of the high standard of education provided by Welsh universities and a similar number agreeing that Welsh universities provide a valuable contribution to Welsh culture.

Some of our funded projects also looked to work with policy. This included the Climate Change adaptation project which developed young people's responses to climate change and presented these to the Climate Change Commissioner for Wales. Both Ruthin: Market Town of the Future and Voices from the Future worked with policy makers on a local authority level.

Stories of change >

Cardiff University's Story – Professor Hywel Thomas

In 2008, the University had recently started its work to embed public engagement having appointed a Pro Vice Chancellor with a formal remit for Engagement in 2005 and created a Community Engagement Team in 2006. Over the duration of the Beacon, the University has continued along this path at a faster rate than if it had not been present. We now feel that engagement is embedded throughout the University and that staff and students are actively seeking to undertake engagement work.

A summary of the changes can be seen in the EDGE tool spidergram below highlighting the difference between the University pre- and post-Beacon:

The presence of the Beacon has raised the profile of public engagement within the University as something that is valued by the funders of research and not just by the senior management of the University. It has also provided opportunities for academics to take risks with engagement through its funding process and by importing novel projects such as Bright Club.

Public engagement has been part of the University's mission since its inception. The focus recently has been about bringing it more explicitly into other strategies and plans of the University. The most recent incarnation of the Innovation and Engagement Strategy has Effective Engagement with Communities as one of three core aims. There are also explicit and challenging targets associated with these aims including engaging with one million people over the period of the Strategy (2011-12 to 2013-14).

We introduced public engagement into our academic promotions criteria and are increasingly building engagement into the job

descriptions of new academic and administrative positions.

The most important change has come from the senior management within Academic Schools who are appointing Directors of Innovation and Engagement to sit alongside the Directors of Research and of Teaching & Learning. This is providing both strategic direction for engagement within the Schools and a better network for communicating and discussing issues around engagement across the University. We ensured that engagement was a key criteria in the appointment of senior colleagues for our three overarching research institutes.

We still see scope for improvement, which we target within our latest strategy. There is more that we can do to integrate engagement into postgraduate and undergraduate activities. We can further improve the communication and engagement with local communities to ensure that, where appropriate, our research directly addresses local issues. This will be achieved through a series of Grand Challenges in conjunction with key local partners. There is also room for improvement around staff involvement with training and development although this is a wider issue than engagement training alone as the interaction with training generally is not as high as it could be.



The Beacon has helped Cardiff to articulate what it wants from public engagement and helped to highlight some stars of engagement who we did not know about before. It has provided a space for the exploration of new ideas for engagement and helped form a culture of creativity in engagement where academics can develop ideas such as SciScreen and Fashion EXPOsed.

Finally, a number of staff recruited to the Beacon have found work beyond the Beacon within the University and will bring valuable public engagement knowledge and experience into their new roles.

Stories of change >

University of Glamorgan's Story – Professor Hamish Fyfe

The University of Glamorgan's involvement in the delivery of the Beacon for Wales project has been successful and developmental. Recognising that the University has a civic duty as a publicly funded institution to engage with wider society on the local, national and global scales the Beacon for Wales has provided an opportunity to develop this commitment beyond the level of work with individual staff and through specific projects towards the development of strategies to ensure that Public Engagement becomes an institution wide commitment. The Beacon's activity has allowed the University of Glamorgan to develop strategies to guide engagement with wider society, to manage itself accordingly and to work with external partners to obtain a measure of success.

The wider context for the development of the socially engaged role of universities just now is the severe recession, pressure on the public finances and major societal challenges such as global warming and the aging population. These, amongst other issues, require universities to make a response that indicates that they cannot deliver what is being asked of them on their own any more. Partnerships like those established through the Beacons for Wales project are no longer a luxury but a necessity. The University of Glamorgan's location in the former mining communities of South Wales helps form its identity and provides a particular set of opportunities for it to grow and help others.

The Beacon for Wales project has prompted the University of Glamorgan to start to develop a strategy that reaches across teaching, research and enterprise activity to establish, develop and sustain relationships with a variety of publics. The potential range of these engagements is exemplified in the projects undertaken

throughout the Beacon for Wales and referred to elsewhere in the document but also in the clear partnerships that have characterised the University of Glamorgan's activity in South East Wales for some time now. Launched in December 2009, the Wales Culture Exchange has been created to complement Science Alliance Cymru. It provides an opportunity for people with an interest in the arts, humanities and social science subjects to meet up to discuss issues around engagement with these areas across Wales.

The University of Glamorgan has always had excellent and mutually beneficial relationships with business, public and third sector organisations.

The University of Glamorgan has always had excellent and mutually beneficial relationships with business, public and third sector organisations. The period of the Beacon for Wales has coincided with major policy shifts in the work of the Funding and Research Councils that have placed a greater emphasis on partnership and knowledge exchange, as opposed to knowledge transfer. The Beacon for Wales has played its part in the ecology of



change that it making institutions responsive to public engagement. This is about ensuring that institutions provide opportunities for the society of which they are a part and the Beacon for Wales has secured this intention within the University of Glamorgan.

Public Engagement has become a guiding principle of the University and this is exemplified, for example, through the promotion system in which public engagement is now a requirement. Another example of this is the creation of an Engagement Fellowship that has a particular focus on developing public engagements. Universities are usually sincere in their desire to ensure public benefit accrues from their work. This is not always the case though. The Beacon for Wales has ensured that more of the benefit trickles down more often towards the many people who pay for universities without ever going near them.

Lessons learnt >

Embedding public engagement within the fabric of university life, and as an intrinsic component of what academics do, takes time, patience, empathy and flexibility. In addition, any programme of culture change requires sensitivity and an understanding of the state of the existing culture. As a result, it was first necessary to benchmark and document existing levels of engagement activity and strategies for engagement.

Culture change requires developing appropriate types of interactions and communications with academic groups. Public engagement has not always featured as a critical or academic discourse which has, on occasion, tended to confuse or alienate. The work of the Beacon for Wales and other academics has begun to change this.

The relationship between the cultures of different institutions can also make collaboration for public engagement more challenging. This can be due to different concepts of public engagement between the different institutions, e.g. engagement as a mode of research dissemination vs. engagement as a tool for community teaching.

Public engagement activities may be expensive and time consuming. Successful engagers require training and skilling over significant periods of time. Consequently, funders and institutions sponsoring engagement must continue to make funding and resources available to allow academics to commit to the idea and practice of engagement

Lessons learnt about embedding public engagement within universities:

- It is important to think strategically about public engagement at all levels from the formal overarching University strategy, through Faculty/School level right down to research teams. The tipping point for many

research leaders was the realisation that "If I treat engagement in the same way that I treat research and teaching and spread it amongst the most appropriate people in the team, we can get more done with less negative impacts on the group."

- Accept that public engagement is loosely defined and let it be as broad as possible to encompass the different disciplinary issues and individual preferences, e.g. working with infants, preferring to blog rather than interact face to face.
- Actively generate multiple opportunities for people to try different types of engagement. The chances of someone finding a method that they are good at and comfortable with on their first go is quite slim. It's OK not to like it, try again with a different method or a different audience – but don't give up on the first go.
- Try to remove 'excuses' – there are common reasons (such as those identified in many surveys³) why people say that they do not do public engagement, including a lack of perceived career reward, the fact that new ways of working with public can be risky so it is quite easy for team heads to fund what they know works. For example, the Beacon for Wales has funded a number of projects to try new ways of working for that unit. Many of these have already been taken on by the unit as part of their activities and funded from within that unit.
- Provide network opportunities for people interested in engagement to meet each other and to meet interested people from outside the university. The two networks provided these unstructured spaces to allow people to discuss plans and potential projects. About 1/6th of network members say that they have developed new collaborative projects as a result of attending these network meetings.
- Aim for everyone to do some form of public engagement – this encourages teams to think a bit more broadly about what they can do in order to get DrY involved. Often

the conversation would then start "I wouldn't want to put DrY in front of the public because..." but it soon turns to other ways of communicating and engaging that may be more suited to DrY's skills and character. As much as engagement is about including more of the public in what universities do, it is about including more academics in what we do.

Lessons learnt about working with other HEIs and the NCCPE to share best practice:

- Good, confidential network between wider Beacon directors/managers – allowed for discussion about sticking points and alternative strategies. This also acted as a pressure valve allowing Beacon directors/managers to vent about difficult issues without affecting the relationships within their institutions.
- Replicated by the relationship between Cardiff University and University of Glamorgan, which was not shared with the other Welsh universities – as these two were 'contracted' to work together they shared information and thoughts with each other. This is not to say that Cardiff University and University of Glamorgan did not wish to work together, but that their relationship with the Beacon for Wales was fundamentally different from those of other Welsh universities. Other Welsh universities were more interested in learning from Cardiff University and University of Glamorgan and less prepared to share their learning.

CHALLENGES

The most significant challenge to the Beacon for Wales, which also provided some of its best opportunities, was the Wales-wide remit that it had. This was seen by some as a gross over-estimation of what a small team local to Cardiff would ever be able to achieve. This pan-Wales

remit did, however, encourage much more working between universities than would have been possible otherwise. It also ensured that the Beacon for Wales team were not seen as being of a particular institution and so could be critical friends to all.

Research has shown that there is a strong link between the institutional focus on research or teaching and the degree to which that institution has an international or more local agenda. It is also argued that teaching-focused institutions have an advantage over research-led universities in being better practised and proficient at engaging with their local communities, and not only as service provider to student groups. This has led to the assumption that where universities are local institutions of and not just in their communities, that they are therefore already versed and adept as public engagers.

This assumption is problematic however. It imagines a local community as undifferentiated or as mainly constituted by students and potential students. There is also a semantic confusion where the terms "community" and "public" are made the same when they are not. Localism is also, sometimes, deployed as an indicator of the publicly conscientious institution, which implies a sense of intimacy or access for the university to its native constituency. However, this also creates the possibility for the university becoming subservient to its immediate, and market-led, economy.

These issues have complicated the arrangements and potential for public engagement in Wales as the Beacon for Wales' vision for engagement was contested and fractured according to the micro politics and professional prioritisation of academics in different universities with varying voices and missions. In other words, the conditions by which the Beacon for Wales might have generated a vision of public engagement for the whole of Wales were never favourable. The differences separating institutions

coupled with forms of institutional rivalry and historical prejudices also may be seen to have compromised the potential of the Beacon for Wales to speak to a university audience so ideologically and geographically distant and divided.

The Beacon for Wales has, however, not only successfully managed to circumvent any potential institutional politics rather its impartiality has allowed it to work in a reconciliatory capacity, drawing academics from different universities together in collaboration. The Beacon for Wales has, in a small way, had some success in healing institutional rifts and rehabilitating working relationships and, as one member of the Management Board commented, "brought together those who wouldn't normally have been talking".

A PROJECT JUST BEGINNING

Whilst the Beacon for Wales has made significant advances in embedding public engagement as an academic priority and encouraging more and more academics to take up the engagement mantle it would be presumptuous to assume that the task is done and won. Whilst more academics are involved in engagement activity in Welsh universities these however continue to remain a minority.

There are also signs of a culture of quasi-expertise, or academics claiming to 'know it all' when their involvement and exposure to engagement practice has been largely cursory, short-term and/or elementary.

The role of organisations such as Amgueddfa Cymru, BBC Cymru/Wales and Techniquet in scaffolding the continued development of academics' public engagement beyond the life of the Beacon for Wales is critical. These are the bona fide experts when it comes to public engagement and it would be tremendously shortsighted were the university community in

Wales to fail to continue to consult and benefit from their expertise and from the expertise of other relevant organisations.

The Higher Education community in Wales is only really at the very beginning of developing a sound reputation for engagement practice in HE settings.

Academic understandings of public engagement have certainly increased and expanded yet require sustained effort and impetus. More academics require more experience of public engagement. Indeed, one major criticism of the funded projects is that they tended to be conducted by those already predisposed or with a personal history of doing public engagement. It could be argued that the Beacon for Wales failed to sufficient invest in those for whom public engagement was a completely unknown activity. However, many of the projects that were funded were led by academics experienced in engagement and who brought in less experienced colleagues, including post-graduate students and other early career researchers.

The research also indicates that there is still a relatively low number of senior academic managers advocating and encouraging members of their academic staff to become involved in public engagement. The continuing role of high level engagement ambassadors will be of critical importance post-Beacon for Wales. In consolidating and building upon the experiences of those already with some engagement experience, the Beacon for Wales has nurtured a cohort of role models able to influence the decision making process of senior academics and managers – getting engagement firmly on the table.

³Royal Society (2006) Factors affecting Science Communication
Oakleigh Consulting (2010) Interim Evaluation of Beacons for Public Engagement
AHRC(2011) Public Engagement Survey 2011: A summary of results presentation to the AHRC Public Engagement in the Arts and Humanities October 2011

⁴Watermeyer 2011a

Sustainability plans >

Both Universities remain committed to supporting the public engagement of their staff and students. They both see how engagement has benefitted the institutions, their staff, students and communities. There is also the recognition that this is not a finished process. There remains work to do to make engagement as effective as it can be.

The University of Glamorgan's engagement committee will continue to meet regularly to provide a strategic overview for the institution and support for the engagers. The appointment of an Engagement Fellow has helped to highlight the importance of the work to other members of staff at the University of Glamorgan and their work will continue to develop the institutional support for engagement as well as improving the quality of the engagement work.

The existence of the Community Engagement Team prior to the Beacon for Wales was a key aspect in the programme's success. The Beacon for Wales team was able to concentrate on supporting all Wales' universities to consider and implement the changes that they wanted without appearing to align with the interests of one specific institution.

Rather than expand the Community Engagement Team, Cardiff University has chosen to encourage Academic Schools and Research Institutes to employ their own engagement staff. As a result every Academic School has at least one academic and one support staff who has public engagement as part of their role. The Cardiff University Research Institutes and Research Centres have also staff that look after the engagement with research. This is a significant and sustainable shift from prior to the Beacon for Wales and shows a big change in the culture of the academic sections of Cardiff University as they have subsumed public engagement into their work rather than see it as a centrally 'imposed' function. This provides a sustainable network across the whole of Cardiff University and can link the work of individual

academics and students to the overarching strategy of the institution.

Towards the end of the Beacon for Wales, Cardiff University developed a new University Strategy. Under the Innovation and Engagement Strategy, one of the three objectives is "Effective Engagement with Communities" in order to benefit economic, social and cultural developments globally and locally. The high profile of this strategy, together with the Innovation and Engagement Implementation Plan, has helped to ensure that Cardiff University continues to ensure that its public engagement work is embedded throughout the whole institution and is adaptable to meet the changing needs of Cardiff University's communities.

Both Cardiff University and the University of Glamorgan have taken aspects of the Beacon for Wales developed training programme into their own programmes. Cardiff University's Community Engagement Team will be delivering 7 days of training to postgraduate students as part of their development work.

Effective Engagement with Communities

Both Science Alliance Cymru and Wales Culture Exchange will continue to operate, led by committees including the Beacon for Wales partners. This will provide opportunities for sharing between the Beacon for Wales organisations and others beyond the end of the project.

Both the networks supported by the Beacon for Wales will continue to operate through a committee of interested parties. These two networks provide the opportunity for universities to meet with each other and with engagement professionals to share ideas and develop new engagement work.



In addition to these formal aspects, many of the academics that the Beacon for Wales worked with have gone on to undertake more and larger scale engagement work. This includes taking engagement to music festivals and repeating funded projects with different audiences to try to reach different groups. All of these academics have also considered how to involve the next generation of engagers by ensuring that students play key roles in the development and delivery of the activities. This, perhaps, is the biggest sustainable change across the Beacon for Wales programme – academics thinking about who else can deliver their activities so that the public engagement is not dependent upon a few individuals.

Conclusions and recommendations >

The Beacon for Wales has made significant advances in embedding public engagement as an academic priority and encouraging a greater number of academics to take up the public engagement mantle. At the same time, however, it would be wrong to assume that the task is completed. Whilst more academics are involved in engagement activity in Welsh universities these continue to remain a minority.

More academics have an understanding of public engagement and the range of activities undertaken has broadened, but they still require more experience of different types of engagement. The next steps are to continue to work with the academics who are emerging as publicly engaged in order to develop their activities still further. In addition, more work will need to be done to bring in those academics who are still not aware of what public engagement means and can do for their work.

In contrast to this view is a small, but emerging, culture of quasi-expertise. This is where academics claim to "know it all" about public engagement when their involvement in and exposure to engagement practice has been largely cursory, short term and/or elementary.

The role of organisations such as Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, BBC Cymru Wales and Techniquet in scaffolding the continued development of academic public engagement beyond the life of the Beacon for Wales is critical. These are the bona fide institutional experts when it comes to public engagement. It would be unfortunate were the university community to fail to continue to consult and benefit from their expertise and the expertise of other similar organisations.

There is a significant funding difference for the Innovation and Engagement agenda in Wales compared to that in England. The larger funds have allowed English Institutions to develop projects that can address longer term issues of working with communities. English universities have the funding to employ people over a long period to build up trustful relationships with communities. In contrast, the smaller funding levels in Wales mean that projects (including many of those that the Beacon for Wales has funded) cannot run for more than one or two years before ending and leaving the community cut off from the support of the University. For example, the Head of University Engagement for an English Russell Group University has an annual budget of £1.7M for supporting community based research and public engagement. This is about 1/5 of Wales total Third Mission Fund from HEFCW.

Recommendations for funders:

- Continue communicating the importance of public engagement through highlighting good practice, highlighting funding opportunities, and linking it in to appropriate concordats.
- Explore mechanisms that allow new engagement methods to be piloted.
- Explore mechanisms to reward researchers/institutions who engage their communities with excellent research where those communities would otherwise be excluded from that research.
- Explore mechanisms that allow universities that are not research-intensive to fund public engagement work.

Recommendations for other universities wishing to embed public engagement:

- Promote a culture where engagement is beneficial for teaching and research and not one where engagement is seen as a recruitment tool.
- Engage senior managers and engagement practitioners – the former can provide encouragement and legitimacy for the latter.
- Support middle managers to balance the demands of managing public engagement along with their other responsibilities.
- Provide some funding that allows experimentation in engagement. This will increase the number of people who engage with the institutional structures for engagement.
- Provide a clear externally focussed team/role so that community groups know how to access the university.

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For further information about the project, please contact:

Bruce Etherington
Community Engagement Manager
Cardiff University
community@cardiff.ac.uk