Public engagement implementation plan (2021-22)

Responsibility, relevance and impact
As the UK’s largest funder of independent environmental science, we have a responsibility to share the science we fund with society. Beyond communication, we want to engage and involve people with current environmental science which has relevance to all of our daily lives, and maximise the impact of the research we fund. By listening to, engaging and involving the public, we aim to fund the best environmental science relevant to society, to enable informed, evidence-based decisions to be made by all.

Strategy
The NERC Public Engagement with Research and Innovation Strategy supports the UKRI Public Engagement Vision, and is guided by five objectives:
1. To build the capacity of our researchers to engage
2. To promote engaged research
3. To convene public debate about contemporary issues in environmental science
4. To inspire public audiences with environmental science
5. To listen to the public through public dialogue to inform NERC

Key activities
Activities will deliver for multiple objectives, and in-line with the approach and commitment outlined in the strategy. NERC’s annual public engagement programme budget is £0.5m. Whilst we will strive to deliver please note these activities are subject to change.

Engaging Environments: delivery of this innovative project where researchers collaborate with diverse communities on issues in environmental science. The £1.3 million award is NERC's largest single investment in public engagement over three years, with match funding from other NERC programmes.

Professional development for researchers: Following on from the Impact Development Programme, we will work with the NCCPE to deliver a series of co-designed professional development opportunities for researchers.

Knowledge Exchange fellowships: As a key part of knowledge exchange, and a route to increasing research impact, public engagement activities are included in Knowledge Exchange fellowships. They are intended to enable sharing and flow of knowledge and expertise with the aim of generating impact.

Inspiration project: we will deliver a new project seeking to inspire diverse groups.

COP26: As part of UKRI’s contributions to the UN Climate Change Conference, we will deliver two public engagement projects: a co-created digital engagement activity for young people who report feeling eco-anxiety and grants for arts-based public engagement with climate change.

NERC Wales Showcase: Showcase events have been postponed to 2022 due the coronavirus epidemic. We will work with researchers to run public engagement activities as part of our Wales showcase at Techniquest Science Centre and feature successful projects following our call for Environmental Science Collaborative Research Projects.

Listening to diverse views: we will commission a new project, so that we can respond to public concerns and aspirations in developing a new area of NERC research. This follows on from our Healthy Environment dialogue in collaboration with Beard Askew and Helix.

Delivering for our approach and public engagement commitment: We will publish evaluations of our coronavirus public engagement grant and healthy environment public dialogue; continue to publish on the Engage Blog and begin a review of our internal support for public engagement.