

sciencewise NEWS

June 2009

BISness as Usual:

Science and Society forges ahead

Keen-eyed readers will have noticed that DIUS has merged with BERR to form the new Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Launched at the beginning of June, the new Department brings together Government's key strengths and expertise in business, innovation, enterprise, skills, science, research, and post-19 education to enable us to work more effectively to help the country through the recession and to compete successfully in the future world economy.

Lord Drayson will continue in his role as Minister for Science and Innovation, but also taking on a role with the Ministry of Defence.



Lord Drayson with Countdown star and science enthusiast, Rachel Riley

But it is BISness as usual for both the Science: [So what? So everything] campaign and the Science and Society strategy.

Since the last newsletter, the Science and Society strategy for the UK has begun to take shape, with the announcement of the formation of five expert groups to take the strategy forward. The five groups reflect the five key themes identified within last year's consultation, and are:

- Science for All (headed by Sir Roland Jackson, British Science Association)
- Science and Learning (headed by Sir Mark Walport, Wellcome Trust)
- Science and Careers (headed by Diana Garnham, Science Council)
- Science and the Media (headed by Fiona Fox, Science Media Centre)
- Science and Trust (headed by Tony Whitehead, GO-Science and Aileen Allsop (Astra Zeneca))

Each of the groups has been charged with developing an action plan for the way forward across each of the themes. The group structure is an exciting one in that it is one of the first examples that we are aware of where Government is facilitating wide-ranging collaboration in this way.

More detail, including the strategy narrative, membership, and terms of reference for each of the groups can be found on the interactive hub, <http://interactive.dius.gov.uk/scienceandsociety/site/>

Several of the groups bring expertise in public dialogue to the table. The Science for All Group is of particular interest, as it is charged with developing a co-ordinated public engagement framework which is sufficiently flexible to recognise a range of engagement activity, including dialogue.

The group will also work to achieve greater acknowledgement of the importance of public engagement activity supported by increased training and recognition in all sectors.

So, exciting times for the public engagement landscape. The Science for All group, working with the others, will also have a remit to deliver a shift in cultural awareness, recognition and support for science by building on the Science: [So what? So everything] campaign.

The campaign has been going from strength to strength since the last newsletter, and some interesting developments are in the pipeline.

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We were out and about during National Science and Engineering Week in March, with Campaign Ambassador Rachel Riley, newest star of Countdown, at the Big Bang Fair, and TV Vet Steve Leonard actively championing the "Save our Bees campaign," which saw almost half a million people engaging in science and doing their bit to boost the bee population.

The Science: [So what? So jobs] theme has generated significant mainstream tabloid media interest, especially important in the current economic climate. The team is also developing a [So Sport] theme, to highlight the relevance of science to all aspects of sport, from fitness and nutrition to improving performance through the use of advanced materials. As we get closer to London 2012, this is likely to be a useful

and appropriate way of bringing new audiences to science and enabling them to realise its relevance to their everyday lives, hopefully as a stepping stone to furthering that interest.

We're putting together a series of summer events, so watch out for activities near you during the next few months. And finally, in September we'll be in Guildford at the British Science Festival – if you're there, come and say hello.

To find out more about the Science: [So what? So everything] campaign, visit www.direct.gov.uk/sciencesowhat

If you think your organisation can help the campaign, or if you have an event you'd like us to publicize, please e-mail scienceandsociety@bis.gsi.gov.uk

The Road Ahead

Professor Kathy Sykes talks about the one of the latest dialogue offerings



Photograph courtesy of Dave Pratt

Kathy Sykes, OBE is Professor of Sciences and Society at the University of Bristol. She helped to create the Cheltenham Festival of Science, NESTA FameLab and the hands-on science centre Explore-At-Bristol. She advises Government and funders of science on a variety of committees, including the Council for Science and Technology. She also chairs the independent advisory panel of Sciencewise-ERC.

She writes:

“Over the last decade, the UK has moved from being seen by some as a technocratic laggard to being seen as one of the most progressive countries in the world in terms of how it governs science and emerging technologies. Over the last five years, with a commitment to 'upstream engagement' in the Government's 10 year Science and Innovation Investment framework, public dialogue has been moving from

an experimental bolt-on to an increasingly core part of policy-making on issues of science and technology. With the creation of the Sciencewise-ERC, public dialogue has been done to inform policy development on nanotechnologies, future drugs and to contribute to controversial issues such as the use of hybrid embryos in research. One of the key aims of the programme is to embed good practice in dialogue across all Government departments and agencies.

But how is this endeavour really going? The time is now right to take stock of what has been achieved, progress the debate about public dialogue and provide a steer for the next five years.

The Road Ahead is a collection of eight essays by leading thinkers and practitioners of public dialogue within science and technology, including scientists who have been involved, policy makers, social scientists and participants. It aims to provide a landmark analysis of the last decade of public dialogue within science and to look forward to the next. Edited by Jack Stilgoe, a Demos associate who ran the Nanodialogues public engagement project in partnership with Sciencewise-ERC, The Road Ahead includes the history and context of dialogue, giving some of the multiple rationales for carrying it out.

It explores some of dialogue's successes and also some of the lessons learnt and the limitations of dialogue. It marks the distance travelled by UK policy makers in embedding direct dialogue in their work and reports on some of the examples of good practice. In reviewing these aspects of public dialogue the collection gives some concrete lessons for the science and society community while also inspiring others to experiment with dialogue. We hope that The Road Ahead will reflect upon and update the string of policy documents that have made the UK a world leader in public dialogue with science.

I hope this collection of essays manages not just to update people, but also to influence, challenge and inspire. I hope that it shares good practice, and good thinking and that it helps inform a way forward for the next few years.

The Road Ahead is now available on the Sciencewise-ERC website at www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Online dialogue masterclass

A handful of dialogue experts came together earlier this year for a unique online dialogue masterclass. The event, which took place on 27 March, was hosted in the format of a webcast and featured key experts in the field including Kathy Sykes, Professor of Science and Society at the University of Bristol, and Alison Crowther, Sciencewise-ERC Dialogue Development Manager.

Andrew Acland, an experienced trainer, facilitator, mediator and Dialogue Engagement Specialist, then talked viewers through the development and design of a dialogue engagement process. A review of the various factors to be considered were discussed, including the type of product required, the number and type of people to be involved, the type of process involved, the price and finally timing.

One element of the webcast which anyone considering setting up a dialogue process may have found particularly useful was a case study presented by Darren Bhattachary, Director at the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB), on Stem Cell Dialogue, a Sciencewise-ERC funded project commissioned by BBSRC and MRC. Listening to Darren's experiences from this project gave viewers the opportunity to gain real insight into dialogue from the practitioner's perspective. Darren focused on the aims and objectives of the project, the approaches taken during the dialogue and an overview of the findings and evaluation.

“The webcast is a fantastic educational tool for academics and public engagement practitioners...I took part in the webcast because dialogue is my area of expertise and I thought it was a fantastic opportunity to see some practitioners talking about it.”

Oliver Escobar of Queen Margaret University

The webcast enabled us to interact with an audience across the UK and emphasised the growing importance of dialogue in science and technology and the ways in which the Sciencewise-ERC is helping policy makers, scientists and the public in their understanding and use of dialogue. Karen Folkes, head of Public Engagement with Science and Technology at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, presented first and highlighted the importance of "gathering experiences and embedding public dialogue within the policy-making system." She also outlined the funding and support that Sciencewise-ERC can provide to Government departments and agencies considering commissioning a dialogue process that will inform policy.

Next to present was Alison Crowther, the Sciencewise-ERC Dialogue Development Manager. She provided an overview of what dialogue is and also the contexts in which it may often be used. In doing this, she referred to the Sciencewise-ERC Guiding Principles, a direct source of information to guide policy makers in their development of a dialogue project. Describing dialogue as "democracy in action", Alison spoke about the positive experiences which all stakeholders in the dialogue process can experience.

During the course of the webcast, viewers were invited to post live questions to the presenters. Questions touched on the possible effects of the current economic crisis on dialogue. Participants also raised issues such as the challenges of creating shared meaning around a subject during dialogue, while striving to remain open to differences in order to get participative input into the dialogue. In addition to live questions, two online polls were also carried out, one of which revealed an approximate 50/50 split in participants who had been involved in a dialogue process versus those who had not and another which demonstrated that the majority of participants felt that their level of dialogue experience was of a lower level rather than a higher one.

Going forward, Sciencewise-ERC hopes to host further webcasts and to really take advantage of the interactive opportunities they offer for all those involved.

The full webcast is now available and can be viewed online at <http://sciencewise-erc.webcastglobal.com/>

Assessing the Public Perception of Industrial Biotechnology



In August 2008, BERR (now BIS), in partnership with Sciencewise-ERC, commissioned Opinion Leader to explore the public's perception of Industrial Biotechnology (IB). The overarching aims were to enable BERR's Industrial Biotechnology Innovation and Growth Team (IB-IGT) to make better informed decisions on policy and the uptake of IB by the chemicals and chemicals-using sectors by taking account of the public's views.

The process

Two citizens' group meetings were delivered in Manchester and London to introduce the basic issues surrounding IB and the chemicals-using sector. These were followed by a re-convened session with an agenda steered by the issues and concerns raised at the initial meetings.

Further details of the process can be found in the March 2009 issue of this newsletter.

Action

The outcomes of the study were considered by the IB-IGT as it developed its recommendations. The final IB-IGT report is keen to ensure that key issues identified - the fear of the unknown and lack of understanding along with a pervading mistrust of Government and industry - are addressed. The IB-IGT final report recommends that:

...Government, industry, Research Councils, NGOs, and professional institutions should develop an effective, balanced and informative communication strategy, including stakeholder and public engagement, for IB.

The strategy should utilise academic scientists to provide factual information on IB processes, regulations and fit to daily life; involve the environmental NGOs in the process; and give consideration to the consequences of indirect land use change through moving to a more bio-based economy.

Conclusions

Overall the project was a success and achieved its aims in providing the IB-IGT with a better understanding of the issues surrounding IB and how it is perceived by the public. Implementation of the IB-IGT's recommendation will be an important step in continuing the dialogue that this project started and Sciencewise-ERC will keep up to date with its progress.

The final report from the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation and Growth Team (IB IGT) can be found at: <http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file51277.pdf>

250 people, 9 communities ... big decisions

In Spring 2009, 250 people from nine communities across the UK (from Lisburn to Harrow, Exeter to County Durham) started meeting and talking about changing the way we insulate, heat and power our homes and communities. These groups were brought together by a project called the Big Energy Shift, which aimed to discover people's opinions about domestic low carbon options.

Together they learnt about new low carbon technologies and energy efficiency measures, visited real-life examples of sustainable good practice, and discussed the different options for supporting the Big Energy Shift. A series of three events for each community formed the key focus for the project and allowed the participants to speak to experts, hear about new low carbon technologies and visit technology which is already in use. Following these events, the initial findings were then presented to Ed Miliband, the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change, in April. This final event gave the participants the opportunity to come together to discuss the report's findings and to put their thoughts and recommendations forward to the policy makers involved.

The dialogue revealed support within the UK public for tackling issues of energy security, fuel pricing and climate change. Participants in the research acknowledged in principle the need for a 'Big Energy Shift' - and suggested a range of policies and incentives to help householders play their part. Their views will inform DECC's plan of action on energy and climate change and an initial summary report on the project was released in April of this year, with the final report due to be published shortly. The work was supported by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government and is funded by the Sciencewise-ERC.

For further information about this project please visit: www.bigenergyshift.org.uk



Seeking Projects in Priority Areas

The Sciencewise-ERC has funds available for projects that feature public dialogue on science and innovation in policy decision-making. Grants are available to Government departments, agencies and NDPBs for dialogue projects that fit with the Guiding Principles for Public Dialogue in Science and Innovation. Projects are commissioned directly with policy makers in line with priority areas for engagement in science and innovation. These priority areas are Advanced Materials, Energy & Environment, Health & Well-being and Information Management. Grants are awarded to 'commissioning agents', i.e. Government departments and agencies, to procure and manage their own dialogue and engagement projects, with support and guidance from the ERC. Grants are provided for a proportion of the total project cost and there must be a financial contribution and active commitment from the commissioning department.

A number of areas for potential dialogue projects have been identified. These include:

- Space exploration
- The use of animals in research
- Air travel in connection with climate change
- Waste management
- Drugs
- Privacy and data protection issues
- Energy technologies in the home and personal responsibility for combating climate change
- Wellbeing and 'the golden years'
- GM technologies and the benefits of their development

Some of which already have projects in progress.

Projects are expected to fall into the following categories:

- Large scale projects with Sciencewise funding of £200k - £300k, typically lasting for a minimum of 12 months
- Medium sized projects with Sciencewise funding of £100k - £200k, typically lasting up to 12 months
- Smaller scale projects with Sciencewise funding of £30k - £100k, typically lasting up to six months

Funds will be allocated to projects on a case-by-case basis in line with BIS priorities and after consideration of a business case, prepared in consultation with the Sciencewise-ERC.

We would like to hear from you if you would like to discuss your ideas for dialogue projects further. Please contact Alan Mercer, Sciencewise-ERC Projects Manager Tel: 0870 190 6192 or through the ERC helpline at enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk.



Practitioners and academics exchange views on research on dialogue

The relationships between academic researchers and practitioners working in the field of public dialogue in science and technology have not always been positive. A new series of seminars, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), aims to develop the research agenda on participation in science and the environment by bringing together social scientists, natural/physical scientists, participatory practitioners and policy makers. By taking this approach, the seminar series hopes to overcome some of the existing divisions between academic research and practitioners and establish an active network of all those working on participation in science and the environment.

The first scene-setting seminar was held in Birmingham on 24 April 2009. Present at the seminar were many of the leading academics in public participation in the fields of science and the environment. Professors Susan Owens (Cambridge University), Andy Stirling (Sussex University) and Alan Irwin (Copenhagen Business School) made presentations on some key current

issues for public participation, including the nature of different publics, politics, precaution, accountability and consensus.

Although this first seminar focused on academic social science research, the plans for future seminars are expected to provide more opportunities for all interests to work together to explore the issues and provide the space for critical reflection. The next seminar, in July 2009, will focus on participation, power and sustainable energy futures. Future seminars will consider democracy and the governance of science and technology, natural hazards and connecting to policy. There was great interest among practitioners in learning more from practical research findings, and from academic researchers in hearing about specific case studies.

For more information about the seminar series, see www.uea.ac.uk/env/esrcsems, or contact Diane Warburton at Sciencewise (diane@sharedpractice.org.uk).

Drop in for Dialogue goes on tour!

Sciencewise ERC has been holding monthly 'drop in' sessions over the past year at Future Focus, 1 Victoria Street. These sessions are designed to provide an introduction to dialogue and tips on how to use it to help policy makers carry out better, more appropriately timed dialogue with the public to assist better policy making. The sessions have been very successful and have helped us spread the word of good practice around Government.

Drop in for Dialogue enables you to:

- get specific advice from a Dialogue and Engagement Specialist (DES)
- hear from others about their experiences
- learn from practitioners about current best practice in public dialogue

We have now decided to take this service a step further by going on tour with the sessions and have them within departments. So from now on, interested policy makers can ask us to come and hold a workshop tailored to the needs of their own department.

The first departmental Drop in for Dialogue took place in Defra in May 2009. It was attended by 20 policy makers, all keen to find out more about the merits of public dialogue and what Sciencewise-ERC is all about. Several delegates made use of the one-to-one sessions with one of our dialogue and engagement specialists after the workshop ended. This valuable session was such a success that we are looking forward to similar experiences within departments such as DECC, DH and DFID over the next few months. If you are interested in us visiting your department then please contact Karen.Smith@aeat.co.uk

Who are the sessions for?

These sessions have been designed specifically for those with a responsibility for, or involvement in, national science and technology policy-making. This includes central Government and its agencies, and executive, advisory and non departmental public bodies. Drop in sessions are only open to these individuals so it is a perfect environment in which to share experiences and discuss issues for potential dialogue.

Missed a session?

If you have missed one of the sessions then visit the Drop in for Dialogue past session pages on the events section of the website and you will be able to view the slides, and read a review of the day. You can also listen to a recording of the last session on What Is Dialogue? presented by Sciencewise-ERC Dialogue & Engagement Specialist, Carl Reynolds.

Upcoming sessions at Future Focus:

17 August 2009: A case study - What actually happened

19 October 2009: The true costs and benefits of public dialogue

14 December 2009: Building partnerships

Visit the events page of the Sciencewise-ERC website to find out more about the sessions and to register.



Focus on a DES – Andrew Acland

Sciencewise Tell us about your experience as a dialogue practitioner?

Andrew Acland My career in dialogue began twenty-five years ago when I worked as a mediator in a number of political situations, and I was also involved in the early development of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) to reduce the stresses and costs of resolving legal and commercial disputes. I have since specialised in dialogue around environmental and sustainable development issues.

Sciencewise Are there any specific areas of science and technology which you think have really benefited from a dialogue process?

Andrew Acland I think dialogue is most important when profound issues of principle are involved, so dialogue around stem cells and chimeras, such as the Sciencewise-ERC project on Hybrid and chimera embryos for stem cell research, for example, has been essential.

Sciencewise Why is dialogue so important to science and technology in particular?

Andrew Acland Because modern science and technology are re-shaping our world and re-defining what it means to be

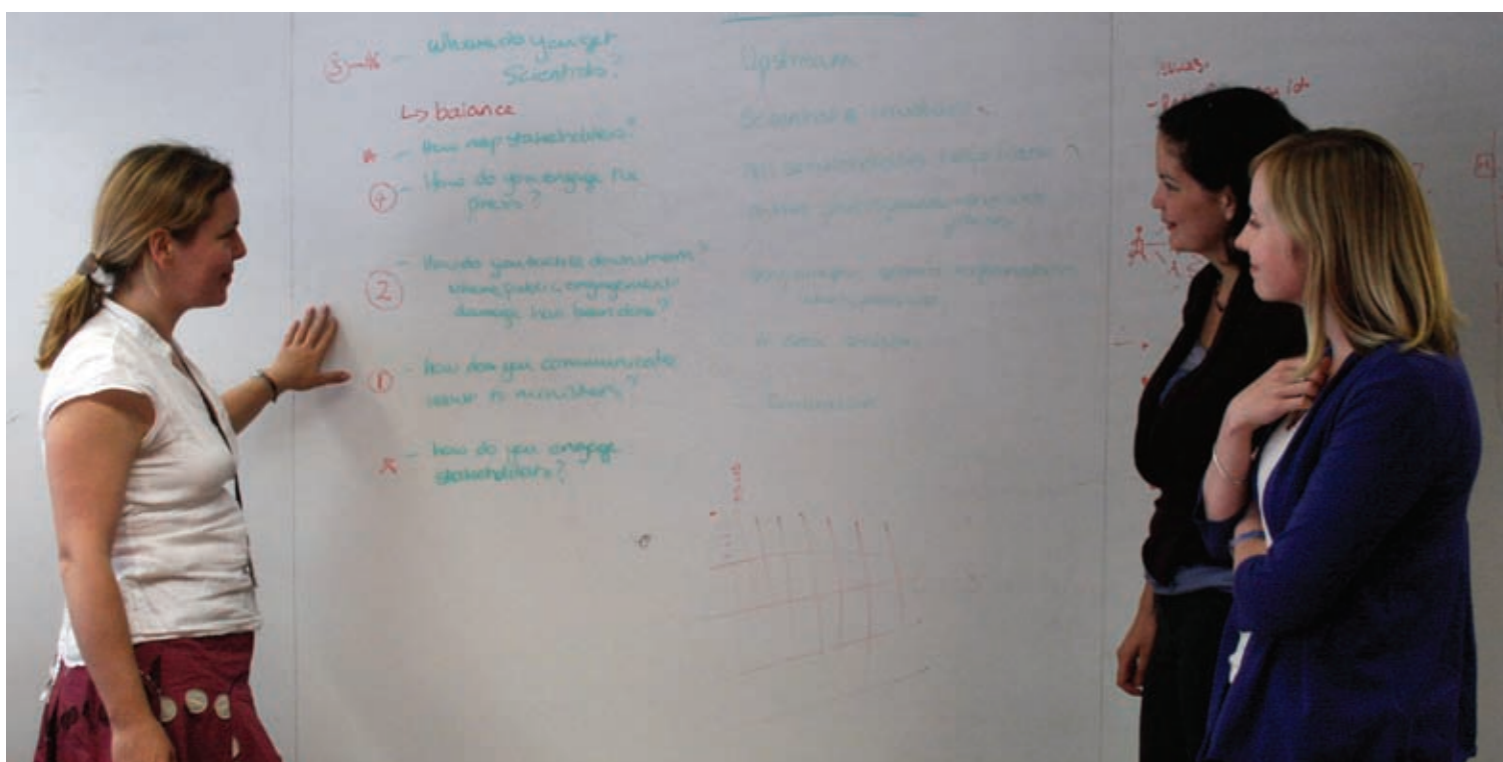
human. Change of this importance should not proceed without insight, advice and guidance from many quarters, particularly those most affected.

Sciencewise In your experience, what are the biggest barriers to dialogue?

Andrew Acland Fear and arrogance, which are viscerally related. Fear of exposing uncertainties, of disagreement, of being misunderstood. Arrogance because dialogue involves willingness to admit that you may be wrong, or that you may not know everything, or that others may have ideas that are better than yours. You need to be willing to change direction if needed.

Sciencewise What has been the most interesting dialogue you have been involved with?

Andrew Acland For me the most interesting are those that involve what I call 'deep dialogue': processes that call on people to engage their deepest feelings and values. I have just returned from facilitating a meeting in Sweden, for example, which explored the meaning of wilderness, the importance of biodiversity and the nature of human relationships with the non-human world. Work can't get much more interesting than this.



Sciencewise-ERC on Twitter

Twitter, the 'microblogging' social networking tool now features Sciencewise-ERC. We have our own online profile where we provide updates on current news, events and activities that we are involved with. It's a great opportunity for us to let the science community, as well as the wider public, know what we're up to. Regular 'tweets' are providing our followers with an insight to the latest updates and features on our website as well as highlighting other key organisations Sciencewise is working with.

We expect the "real-time" nature of this communication mechanism to come into its own once new projects are up and running, when we'll be able to let more people see the value of the dialogue process as it is occurring. Our use will obviously develop over time, and if you have ideas on how you'd like to see us engaging, do let us know.

We are also taking the opportunity to stay informed with updates from our stakeholders, nationally and internationally on the latest science, technology and dialogue news and events. From updates by US astronaut Mike Massimino (@Astro_Mike), during the recent shuttle launch to the latest events updates from the Wellcome Trust (@wellcometrust), to Lord Drayson (@lorddrayson), UK Science Minister, who recently did his own bit for dialogue by engaging in real time with the science community. We're very pleased to be hearing more from Sophia Collins (@imascientist), representing "I'm A Scientist Get Me Out of Here," winner of the Sciencewise-ERC/Involve People's Choice award profiled in our March issue.

We're always pleased to welcome new followers: you can find us on Twitter as @sciencewise, by searching for 'Sciencewise' or by visiting <https://twitter.com/Sciencewise>.

Upcoming events



BIS
Department for
Business Innovation
and Skills

Civil Service Live

Following a successful launch event last year, Civil Service Live will be taking place again this year for three days on 7 – 9 July 2009 at Olympia Two exhibition centre, with up to 10,000 civil servants expected to attend. The event, which is being organised by The Cabinet Office, in association with Civil Service World and National School of Government, will feature high profile speakers such as Alastair Campbell and unique new content including 'Lions Lair' and 'Civil Service Challenge'.

This year's event hopes to provide the opportunity for civil servants and organizations from the private, voluntary and wider public sector to collaborate and learn from each other.

For further information on Civil Service Live please visit www.civilservicelive.com



Darwin 2009 Festival

2009 sees the bicentenary of Darwin's birth, the 150th anniversary of the publication of his seminal work, 'On the Origin of Species', and the 800th anniversary of the University of Cambridge.

Hosted by Cambridge University from the 5 – 10 July, the Darwin 2009 festival will be bringing together key leaders in science and the arts for a wide-ranging programme of academic, cultural and community events. The festival programme will feature more than 40 events ranging from morning talks and debates to street dancing.

Presenters at the festival will include Sir David Attenborough, Richard Dawkins and Dame Gillian Beer to name but a few.

For further details, and to view the festival programme, please visit <http://www.darwin2009.cam.ac.uk/>



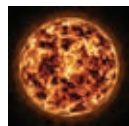
British Science Festival

The British Science Festival (formerly the BA Festival of Science) is one of Europe's largest science festivals, taking place each September. The Festival is in a different location in the UK each year, bringing you the latest in science, technology and engineering.

The week long, jam-packed programme features events for everyone, from talks and debates to hands-on activities. This year the Festival is hosted by the University of Surrey in Guildford from 5 – 10 September.

The Festival will be joining in the national celebrations of Darwin200 marking 200 years since the birth of Charles Darwin by exploring his scientific ideas and the impacts they made.

For more information on all the events taking place please visit <http://www.britishtscienceassociation.org/web/BritishScienceFestival/index.htm>



Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition 2009

The Royal Society's Summer Science Exhibition is the perfect opportunity to find out more about the UK's cutting edge science and meet the minds behind it.

This year the exhibition isn't just an opportunity to marvel at the smart thinking that's shaping the world around us, it's a brilliant chance for you to meet and fire questions at the scientists behind the research.

Over 20 fascinating interactive exhibits are lined up, covering topics from how fluorescent fish could provide better understanding of human disease to how new space missions could help unlock the history of the universe.

For more information on the exhibit visit www.summerscience.org.uk



International Year of Astronomy

The International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA2009) is an exciting global celebration of astronomy and its contributions to society and culture. Coinciding with the 400th anniversary of Galileo's first glimpses through a telescope and the birth of modern astronomy, it gives people all over the world the chance to get involved in this fascinating science and experience the wonders of the night time sky.

With the participation of 140 countries worldwide, and with events taking place nationally, regionally and globally throughout the year, IYA2009 is not only allowing people to observe first hand some of the amazing celestial bodies that make up our Universe, but is providing a wide variety of events and projects, from touring astronomy exhibitions to virtual blog interactions with practicing astronomers.

For further details on The International Year of Astronomy visit www.astronomy2009.co.uk

Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (ERC)

The Sciencewise-ERC, funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) helps policy makers commission and use public dialogue to inform policy decisions in emerging areas of science and technology. It consists of a comprehensive online resource of information, advice and guidance, together with a wide range of support services aimed at policy makers and all the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public. The Sciencewise-ERC also provides co-funding to Government departments and agencies to develop and commission public dialogue activities.

Contact details

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