

Newsletter Issue 1

September 2006



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Welcome to the Sciencewise newsletter

Sciencewise is an initiative from the Office of Science and Innovation (OSI), funded by the DTI, which is designed to help policy makers identify areas for public dialogue in science and technology, and helps them to put high quality dialogue activities into practice.

Its overall aim is to build the capacity of Government departments to engage in successful two-way communication with the public and other stakeholders on emerging science and technology issues and to embed the principles of good dialogue into internal Government processes by identifying, developing and disseminating best practice.

Originally a grant-making scheme, which funded a number of individual projects, Sciencewise has evolved

over the past year into an overarching “umbrella” programme, which commissions and monitors a range of activities delivered by expert dialogue practitioners. It works closely with the OSI’s Horizon Scanning Centre and Foresight programme and is part of the cross-Government Together We Can initiative, led by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) which is committed to empowering citizens to work together with public bodies for the benefit of all.

Sciencewise is managed by Momenta, an external contractor that works purely for Government and the public sector helping to put “policy into practice”. The programme is managed by Project Manager, Beth Chesney-Evans, together with Dialogue Director, Alison Crowther, a leading expert in national dialogue facilitation. Sciencewise is overseen by a Strategy Group chaired by Professor Kathy Sykes and has

expert input from a panel of science and technology advisors.

Further Information

Website: www.sciencewise.org.uk
 E-mail: sciencewise@aeat.co.uk
 Helpline: **0870 190 6324**.

Policy Makers

If you are a policy maker and have a science and technology issue that may be informed by public dialogue and would like advice, please contact Alison Crowther by e-mail:

alison.crowther@aeat.co.uk or by telephone: **0774 965 7665**.

More Information

For more information about the Sciencewise programme, please contact Beth Chesney-Evans by e-mail:

beth.chesney-evans@aeat.co.uk or by telephone: **0870 190 6072**.

Sciencewise projects

NEW: sciencehorizons

A programme of public dialogue and engagement about the wider implications of future science and technology

Led by Dialogue by Design

NEW: Brain Science Addiction and Drugs

New engagement project on societal, health, safety and environmental issues surrounding drug addiction.

Contract let by AMS

Nanodialogues

Four experiments in upstream public engagement

Led by DEMOS

Nanotechnology Engagement Group (NEG)

Supporting public bodies in developing a coherent programme of social and ethical research and public dialogue around nanotechnology.

Led by Involve

community x-change

Exploring ‘two way street’ engagement to give scientists and citizens a voice on science and technology.

Led by the BA

Risky Business

A multi-pronged model to help 14-19 year olds explore risk and technology.

Led by Sheffield Hallam

Trustguide

Producing clear guidelines for the research, development and delivery of trustworthy ICT.

Led by Hewlett Packard and BT

Science Communication Working Lunches (SCWL)

Sharing experience to build capacity in the sci-comm community.

Led by the BA

Project Spotlight

sciencehorizons ...shaping our future

Launched at the BA Festival of Science in Norwich in September 2006, sciencehorizons is a major new project, funded by Sciencewise, that aims to engage the public in dialogue about the implications of future science and technology.

Identifying the possible implications of any given technology is not an easy task. There are myriad potential applications and uses of science and technology, many of which are not obvious when the technology is first developed. For example, could Tim Berners-Lee,

creator of the world wide web, have imagined 15 years ago that today we would be buying our holidays, auctioning our belongings, downloading music and spending so much of our work and leisure time online?

The OSI's Horizon Scanning Centre has been gathering ideas about what science and technology could look like in the future but has recognised that the views of scientists, technologists and other 'experts' can only take us so far. The future will be shaped by a much broader set of people – and we need to involve the public in conversations about future science and technology's in order to enable Government and others to act. Using the work of the Horizon Scanning Centre as a starting point, a team from Graphic Science, Demos, BBC Worldwide Interactive Learning and Shared Practice, led by Dialogue

by Design, is currently developing a set of future scenarios, each one exploring a number of possible ways that technology developed over the coming decades might affect our minds and bodies, homes and communities, work and leisure time and our planet. These scenarios will be used, through a variety of engagement processes, to stimulate discussion and debate and the results will be used to inform policy and decision-making on setting the direction of research and the regulation of science and technology.

For more information please email:
contact@sciencehorizons.org.uk
or visit
www.sciencehorizons.org.uk

Brain Science Addiction and Drugs

In July 2005, the Foresight programme on 'Brain Science, Addiction and Drugs' produced the report 'Drugs Futures 2025?'. The report reviewed the relevant research literature and explored the likely impact of future science, including social sciences, on addiction, drug use and treatment for mental health. The project overview raised a broad spectrum of issues for society and for future public policy.

The Department of Health and the Department of Trade and Industry's Office of Science and Innovation now want to see further deliberation of these issues and have asked the independent Academy of Medical Sciences (AMS) to take this process forward. The AMS has convened a multi-disciplinary Working Group to consider, in consultation with experts and the public, the societal, health, safety and environmental issues raised by the report.

As part of this work, the AMS is currently commissioning a national programme of public engagement activities

that will explore the hopes and concerns of a broad cross-section of the public on current and future issues relating to brain science, addiction and drugs. The results from the engagement programme will be fully integrated into the discussions of the Working Group.

A procurement exercise to appoint a suitable contractor to carry out the public engagement programme is now underway. The project itself is expected to begin in November 2006 and will run for six months until May 2007.

Further details on the 'Brain Science, Addiction and Drugs' project can be found at
www.acmedsci.ac.uk. **Any queries should be addressed to Robert Frost at**
robert.frost@acmedsci or on **0207 969 5284**.

Q&A with Kathy Sykes



Professor Kathy Sykes is Chair of the Sciencewise Strategy Group, which provides strategic direction to the overall Sciencewise programme. She is currently Collier Chair of Public Engagement in Science and Engineering at Bristol University and is a member of the Council for Science and Technology (CST), the UK Government's top-level advisory body on science and technology policy issues.

Why do you think dialogue on science and technology is important for policy makers and the public?

Public dialogue helps policy makers to think more broadly and deeply around issues. Dialogue can help to challenge assumptions, explore possibilities, and work out implications, opportunities and potential inequalities.

What can't dialogue do for a policy maker?

It can't make decisions for you.

Could you provide us with some examples of where you have found dialogue to be helpful?

One example of where a dialogue activity really contributed was in some work the Council for Science and Technology carried out on the better use of personal information. This work was prompted by the Government's White Paper on Transformational Government - enabled by technology. The dialogue looked into the issues surrounding the Government's use of personal data. The dialogue activity carried out for CST highlighted the practical ways of addressing people's concerns and also helped develop the idea that people could 'own' their own data. This dialogue provided a really positive way of framing the discussion

so that it wasn't just about people's concerns but gave the alternative view of empowering people and giving them responsibility. In bringing in this alternative view of the issues, the dialogue activity changed the CST report.

...and maybe one where it wasn't?

An example of where dialogue did not inform policy was the 1994 Consensus Conference on Plant Biotechnology (co-ordinated by the Science Museum and funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council). Held in 1994, this dialogue allowed people to question the experts, assess their responses, and then reach a consensus on scientific and policy for plant biotechnology research. The conference was ahead of its time, and the policy makers weren't paying attention. The recommendations it made though, about the importance of agreeing clear international labeling about biotechnological products, the need to tighten up government regulations about releasing modified plants into the environment, and establishing effective international controls over commercial exploitation, were really valid. If attention had been paid at the time, we might now be in a much better position regarding the use of

plant biotechnology.

What can be expected from a dialogue activity?

Good facilitation, lots of listening and explaining concerns, lots of thinking and discussions. You should also expect to attend quite a few events, to really think about the dialogue outside the events you attend and also to discuss those events with colleagues and friends.

Why is Sciencewise exciting for you?

It represents a real Government commitment to dialogue with the public and to improving the techniques required by using good practice, sharing good practice and then getting better at dialogue. And of course, Sciencewise can be helpful right across Government and within different Agencies.

Given the background of changing from public 'understanding' of science to public 'engagement' in science, the time is exactly right for Sciencewise and Sciencewise itself is a real manifestation of how dialogue around science is being really being taken seriously and becoming embedded within policy making processes.

The Nanotechnology Engagement Group

The Nanotechnology Engagement Group (NEG) has been established to help bring about a step change in our thinking and acting on public engagement in the lifecycle nanotechnologies and other emerging sciences. Its lead partners include Involve, Cambridge University, University of East Anglia, and the Policy Studies Institute.

The development of nanotechnologies has become an ideal testing ground for the application of public engagement processes to science and technology. The NEG works in partnership with public bodies (particularly government departments, agencies, and the UK Research Councils) through the OSI-led Nanotechnologies Issues Dialogue Group in developing and implementing a coherent programme of social and ethical research and public dialogue around nanotechnology. The NEG is a two-year project, which runs until September 2007.

Its first interim policy report was published in March 2006 and the next report is due in November 2006.

One of the activities undertaken by the NEG was a workshop held at the Royal Society on 30 June 2006. The workshop, named Terms of Engagement, brought together public engagement practitioners, former participants, scientists and policy makers to discuss the needs and challenges of key actors in public engagement on nanotechnologies. The report and presentations from the

workshop are available to download from the NEG website:

www.involve.org.uk/neg

Over the next year, the NEG will run two further events - a seminar allowing public engagement practitioners to share their experiences of engaging the public on nanotechnologies, and a workshop looking at scientists' perspectives in public engagement.

The group's final recommendations to the OSI are due to be published in a report in September 2006.

The Nanodialogues

The Nanodialogues, a project led by the democracy organisation, Demos, consists of a set of four public engagement experiments looking at different aspects of nanotechnology, three of which have already been completed.

The first, with the Environment Agency, involved a group of East Londoners discussing the possible use of nanoparticles to clean up pollution. The group spent three days deliberating on the subject and their feedback has already helped to clarify the Environment Agency's approach to this very timely issue.

The second experiment was in Swindon, home of the UK Research Councils, which gathered people's views on what they thought about getting involved in early-stage university science. RCUK is particularly interested in what public engagement should

look like and what we can expect from ordinary people when even the scientists are unsure about the direction in which they're going. The third experiment, which took place in Zimbabwe, was prompted by the claims that people in rich countries have been making for the developing world applications of nanotechnology. The three-day workshop revealed a huge gap between what the imagined benefit of nanotechnology and the grassroots reality of demand for new technologies.

The fourth experiment, with Unilever, is currently in progress. One of the key questions for a large

multi-national company such as Unilever is how they talk about science when most of their science is invisible - built into the products they sell.

The end result of the Nanodialogues project will not only be a collection of knowledge about how to conduct good public engagement, but will also aim to produce a new, more democratic story about nanotechnology and the future.

For more information about the Nanodialogues, contact:
jack.stilgoe@demos.co.uk

The community x-change

The community x-change, led by the BA (British Association for the Advancement of Science), is a series of workshops where citizens meet to discuss issues involving science and share their thoughts, feelings and ideas for possible actions. Community x-changes will take place in East Anglia, Yorkshire and Liverpool, and the discussions will help to shape major science events taking place in these areas as well as shaping a programme of events to be rolled out across the UK.

The project uses an approach that provides time and space for citizens to discuss issues of local concern as well as those with national implications. The first set of x-change events took place at a community centre in Norwich in June and July of this year in advance of the September 2006 BA Festival, where the participants were asked to discuss



climate change and their environment.

In order to recruit participants, the organisers used electoral roll data and an outreach officer who linked up with community and disadvantaged groups. Traditionally under-represented voices were specifically over-recruited. These included senior citizens, people for whom English is their second language, Portuguese immigrants, homeless young men, Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BMEs), young people excluded from the school system, young mothers

and disabled people, as well as a number of scientists from the University of East Anglia.

Participants discussed their environment and had space to talk about other issues of local concern such as crime, youth culture, school facilities and transport. A video report of the workshops is being compiled that not only details the participants' thoughts and feelings on the environment but also explores their participation in the project and how they feel about the processes being used to feed their thoughts into policy.

Trustguide

Trustguide is a collaborative project between the British Telecom Group Chief Technology Office Research and Venturing, and Hewlett Packard (HP) Labs that seeks to build on the findings of the [Foresight Cyber Trust and Crime Prevention Project](#) to develop guidelines for enhancing cyber trust.

Some time ago, the Foresight Cyber Trust and Crime Prevention Project began a dialogue into where the responsibilities lie in making our future ICT-enabled world safer and this debate was then extended by the Royal Society's Science in Society programme to include the public. The Trustguide project seeks to produce clear guidelines for the research, development and delivery of trustworthy ICT by bringing

together particular research projects, those interested in formulating trust-enhancing guidelines and the public. BT and HP have extensive experience of developing technology from research through to product and services, in testing that technology with the public, and in routinely supporting the wider involvement of our society with science, and so represent a strong partnership to undertake the Trustguide project.

In the context of ICT use, and in particular e-commerce, e-gov, and e-health, the creation, maintenance and enhancement of trust is of primary concern to those involved in the successful design, development and implementation of ICT-based applications and services. Trustguide takes a "citizen-centric" approach to

exploring issues of trust, security and privacy in ICT use via a series of workshops and discussion groups that cover a broad and appropriate spectrum of the UK's citizens. The aim of the project is to use this dialogue and its outputs to establish recommendations and guidelines for the research, development and delivery of trustworthy ICT and to inform the policymaking processes used by government, industry and other key organisations. An interim report is now available and a final report is due to be available at the end of September 2006 when the project closes.

For further information visit
www.trustguide.org.uk

Science Communication Working Lunches



Audiences also include individuals interested in science communication invited from non-scientific organisations including National Health Service networks, youth groups, residents' associations, community groups and local council consultation teams.

This year, a Working Lunch road show is touring the UK providing science communicators with the opportunity to learn more about participative methodologies and techniques and to learn from those who have undertaken public participation exercises on scientific issues. A pilot dialogue Working Lunch road show was organised in London which enabled the format to be tested and this was used to shape a 'toolkit for dialogue' Working Lunch in Edinburgh. In addition, a number of Working Lunches were held in

The Working Lunches, led by the BA and ECSITE-UK, is a series of lunch-time events for the science communication community designed to provide opportunities to share good practice, develop skills and engage in some networking. Invitees include those working in science centres and museums, government, research institutions, universities, industry, education, funding organisations, learned societies and PR.



Scotland in April as part of the first Science Communication Conference. Topics covered included 'toolkit for dialogue', 'working with the media' and 'linking formal and informal science education', whose report was submitted as part of the curriculum review consultation engagement process being carried out by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED).

The 'toolkit for dialogue' Working Lunch was repeated in Oxford and Cardiff and the latter was linked into

the CreScENDO project to offer an additional networking coffee morning before the lunch for all interested in public engagement to attend. The CreScENDO project (Science Engagement Networking Organisation) supported by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (Nesta), aims to build a lateral network between the people and organisations trying to engage the public in science.

"Providing science communicators with the opportunity to learn more about participative methodologies and techniques and to learn for those who have undertaken public participation exercises on scientific issues"

Policy Makers

If you are a policy maker and have a science and technology issue that may be informed by public dialogue and would like advice, please contact Alison Crowther by e-mail: alison.crowther@aeat.co.uk or by telephone on **0774 965 7665**.

More Information

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Looking into the future...

Foresight, together with the Horizon Scanning Centre, produces challenging visions of the future to ensure effective strategies now, by providing a core of excellence in science-based futures expertise and access to leaders in government, science and business. Our aim is to improve the relative performance of UK science and engineering and its use by government and society.

To achieve this, the Foresight

programme identifies particular issues arising from new science and technologies, or considers how future science and technologies could address key challenges for society and the economy. Foresight then runs a rolling programme of three or four projects based on these selected issues. In doing so, Foresight brings together key people, knowledge and ideas to look beyond normal planning horizons to identify potential opportunities and develop actions to help realise those opportunities.

Examples of latest Foresight projects are:

Energy - A Foresight project will be undertaken in the autumn on

sustainable energy management and the built environment as a result of the Government's Energy Review.

Obesity - The Tackling Obesity: Future Choices project aims to produce a long-term vision of how we can deliver a sustainable response to obesity in the UK over the next 40 years.

More information is available at:
www.foresight.gov.uk

Top tips for public dialogue

THE KEY ELEMENTS

- There will be an independent **facilitator** or organisation or consortium running the process on your behalf – it is a skilled profession which demands experience.
- **Scientists** are actively involved as a minimum talking directly with participants in **two-way discussion**, and probably in the creation of materials. All those involved, from citizens to scientists and other influencers, leave the process changed and informed.
- The process is **deliberative** which means that groups must reconvene after a time to mull information and discussion before coming up with recommendations or advice.
- The process is **transparent** – a participant will know how their words will be used, whose desk they will end up on, when and what policy/decision/initiative(s) they may be used for.
- The process is **evaluated** by an independent evaluator.
- The process will be **owned** by a named owner within Government who has the responsibility to the participants to deliver their findings to the correct place.
- Participants are clear from the outset that they are there to advise – **Ministers make decisions**.

For more information on how Sciencewise can help you carry out public dialogue, please contact Sciencewise Dialogue Director, Alison Crowther at alison.crowther@aeat.co.uk or telephone 0774 965 7665.