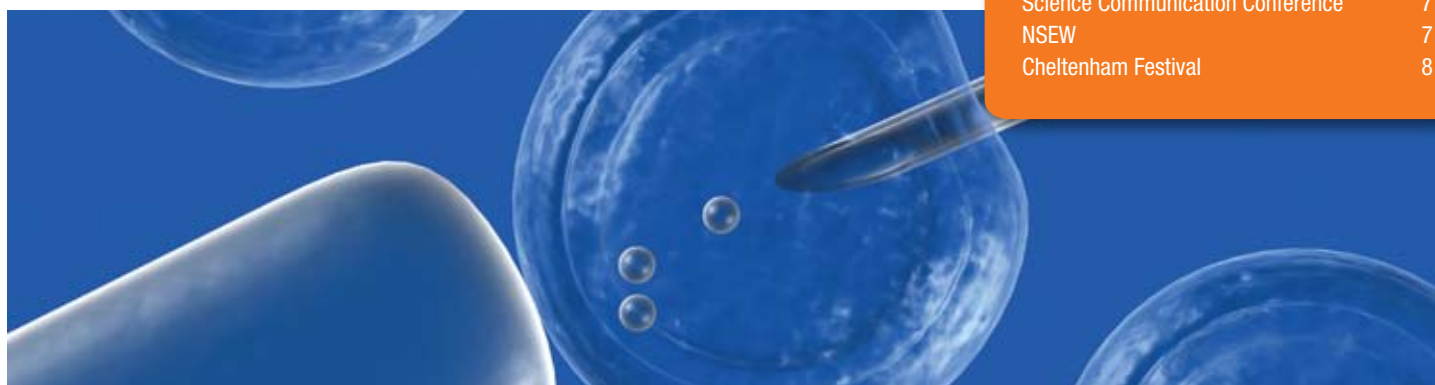


sciencewise NEWS

December 2009

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Animals Containing Human Material

Led by the Academy of Medical Sciences and funded by the Sciencewise-ERC, this public dialogue project forms part of a broader study on the use of animals containing human material in scientific research.

The Academy's study will examine the scientific, social, ethical, safety and regulatory aspects of research involving non-human embryos and animals containing human material. The Academy has convened an expert working group, chaired by Professor Martin Bobrow CBE FRS FmedSci, to address these issues.

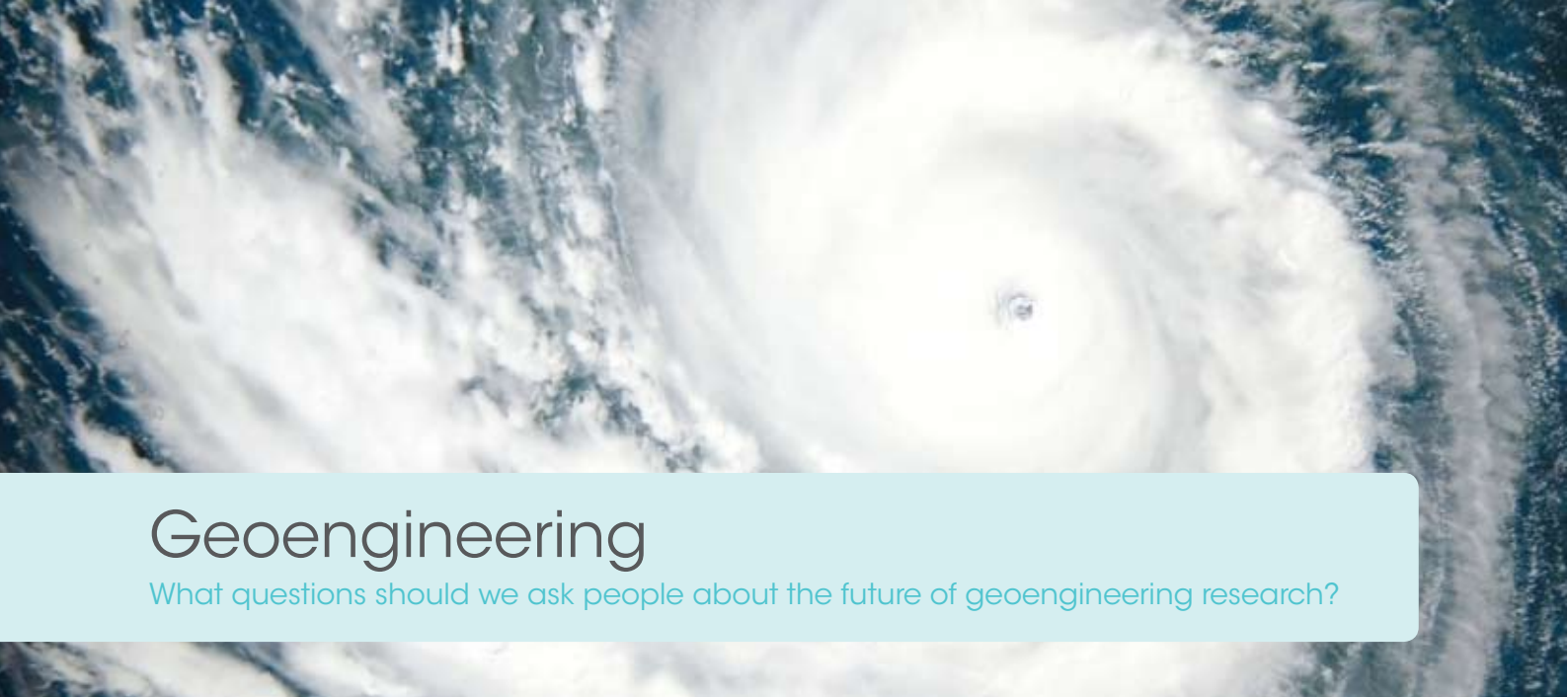
The Sciencewise-ERC funded dialogue will be integrated into the overall project, enabling recommendations to be informed by the views of the general public alongside those of scientists.

The 9 November launch at the Science Media Centre led to a range of print and online coverage in both broadsheet and tabloid publications. Mainstream coverage was positive, with many articles explicitly welcoming the public dialogue element of the study. Lord Drayson, the Minister for Science and Innovation, said:

"These animals can play a key role in advancing new therapies for currently incurable diseases. But for these therapies to ever see the light of day, we must ensure the public is on board.

"The Government takes public dialogue extremely seriously. That's why we are supporting this study where scientists and the public can make their voices heard."

The study's call for evidence is available online until 1 February 2010: www.acmedsci.ac.uk/index.php?pid=203. Submissions from all interested parties are welcomed. An invitation to tender for the public dialogue programme will be announced in December 2009. For information, contact: communications@acmedsci.ac.uk.



Geoengineering

What questions should we ask people about the future of geoengineering research?

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is the latest public body to join forces with Sciencewise-ERC in the commissioning of a public dialogue project.

NERC will be assessing public opinion on geoengineering and how future research on the subject should be directed, conducted and communicated. According to a Royal Society report published in September 2009, the best way to tackle climate change is by cutting emissions of greenhouse gases. However, the report notes that 'unless future efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are much more successful than they have been so far, additional action may be required should it become necessary to cool the Earth this century.'

Geoengineering is 'the deliberate large-scale intervention in the Earth's climate system, in order to moderate global warming'. It includes technologies which could either remove CO₂ from the atmosphere or reduce global temperatures by reflecting sunlight back into space.

A series of workshops with members of the public will form the basis of the dialogue project and will seek to

explore people's attitudes towards potential geoengineering methods. Participants will discuss the ethical, moral and social issues associated with the use of geoengineering to alter our environment. The dialogue workshops will also be supported by public debates and events around the UK.

It is hoped that the results of the dialogue, which are expected in April 2010, can be used to inform future research strategy on geoengineering.

NERC is currently welcoming views on the direction of the dialogue activity, and in particular on the questions: "What questions should we ask people about the future of geoengineering research? What issues and options should be considered?"

Comments, which will be taken into account when designing the dialogue process, can be sent to geoengineering@nerc.ac.uk

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

One of the seven UK Research Councils, NERC is the UK's main agency for funding and managing research, training and knowledge exchange in the environmental sciences.

Its work covers the full range of atmospheric, earth, biological, terrestrial and aquatic sciences, from the deep oceans to the upper atmosphere, and from the poles to the equator.

Working internationally, NERC has bases in the most hostile parts of the planet. It runs a fleet of research ships and aircraft and invests in satellite technology to monitor gradual environmental change on a global scale.

It provides knowledge, forewarning and solutions to the key global environmental challenges facing society.

For further information, visit www.nerc.ac.uk

Low Carbon Communities Challenge

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) is being supported by the Sciencewise-ERC in its ground-breaking Low Carbon Communities Challenge.

Launched on 28 September 2009, the Low Carbon Communities Challenge (the Challenge) is a two-year programme to provide financial and advisory support to 20 'test-bed' communities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland seeking to cut carbon emissions.

The Challenge will allow the carbon saving experiences of communities that take part to be shared publicly, to inform not only Government's wider delivery plans on energy and climate change, but also other communities and members of the public wanting to take their own action on climate change. The Challenge springs directly from last year's Big Energy Shift public dialogue, which was commissioned by DECC and co-funded by the Sciencewise-ERC (visit www.bigenergyshift.org.uk/ to see videos, reports, discussion about the dialogue).

This dialogue explored public views and attitudes to low carbon technologies and options, and concluded that households needed joined-up 'packages' of support, delivered locally in the community, to help them reduce home energy consumption and make deep cuts in their carbon emissions. Such packages could include, for example, smart meters, home energy audits, access to local demonstration homes, leadership from local schools,

businesses and public buildings, and more hands-on support navigating advice and determining which energy efficiency measures and renewable technologies are right for them. However, as yet there is no blueprint for effective action or clear sense of how much can be achieved. The Challenge is designed to test the success of different approaches, getting a better understanding of specific barriers, opportunities, decision making and delivery processes on the ground – genuinely learning from doing at the local level!

Sciencewise-ERC is helping to design and co-fund the public dialogue for the Challenge, and will be pioneering new 'devolved and distributed' approaches to engaging the public in designing, implementing and learning from low carbon initiatives. Sciencewise-ERC is also advising and facilitating the national partnership of organisations that has been established to support local community action.

Selection of communities to take part in the Challenge is happening now and there have been more than 500 expressions of interest! The successful projects will go live early in 2010.

Sciencewise-ERC will be pioneering new 'devolved and distributed' approaches to engaging the public in designing, implementing and learning from low carbon initiatives.



For more information on the Challenge visit: www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/what_we_do/consumers/lc_communities/lc_communities.aspx

Synthetic Biology

- Update



The public dialogue on synthetic biology, commissioned by BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) and EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) and supported by Sciencewise-ERC, is now underway.



Synthetic biology is a fast developing area of science that applies engineering principles to biological systems. Many scientists believe that this approach will ultimately result in the rational and systematic design of systems that may help us to address major challenges of the future. Possible applications of synthetic biology could include the creation of novel systems to generate power, new medical applications, nano-scale biological computers, new approaches to cleaning up dangerous waste, or sensitive biosensors for health or security applications.

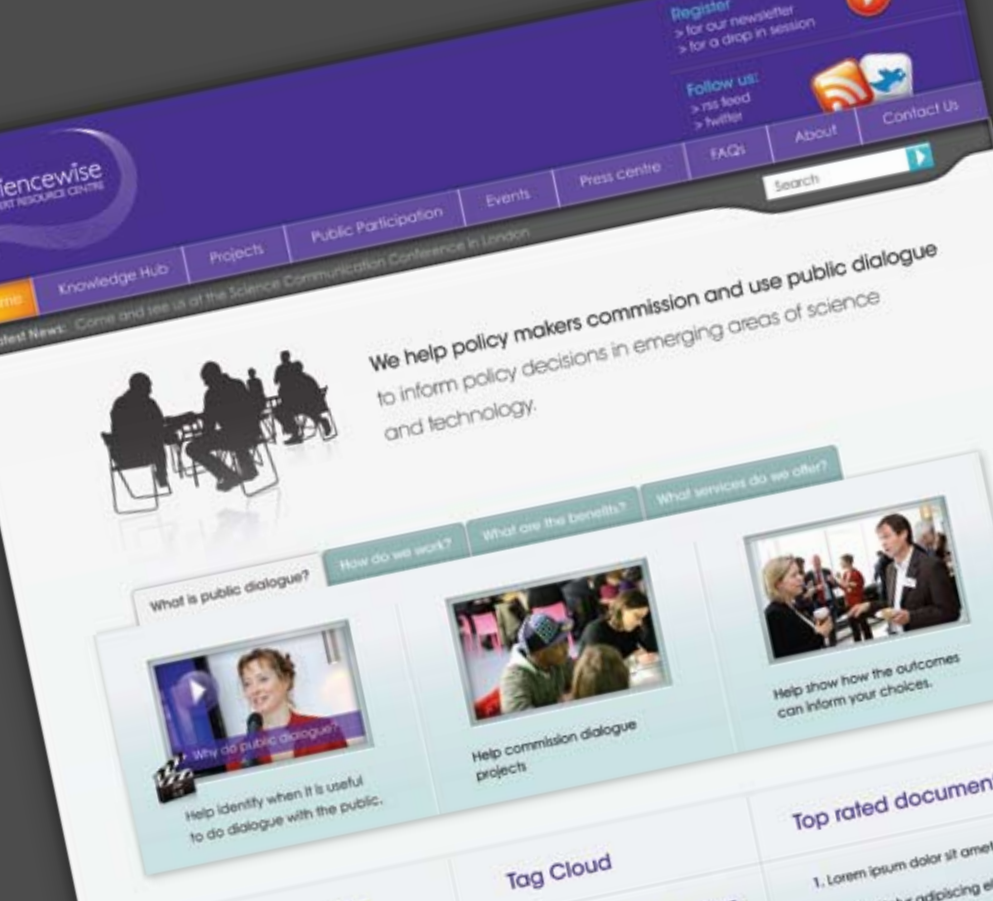
Synthetic biology is attracting significant interest from the wider public, making this the right time to begin a public dialogue programme to ensure that future Research Council and wider Government policies can reflect the public's views.

A contract to deliver the dialogue was awarded to BMRB (British Market Research Bureau) and following discussions with an expert oversight group, that has expertise including public engagement, synthetic biology and social science, a methodology was agreed to allow the dialogue to begin.

BMRB is now conducting a series of in-depth telephone interviews with interviewees with a range of different viewpoints of, and interests in, synthetic biology. All the stakeholders were initially approached by letter from the two Research Council chief executives – a step that demonstrated the high level commitment to this dialogue within the Councils. The interview stage will be completed before Christmas.

In the New Year the dialogue will move on to a series of workshops to explore attitudes towards synthetic biology amongst members of the wider public. Multiple groups will meet in venues across the UK three times over a number of months, allowing participants time to reflect and develop their views between workshops.

BBSRC and EPSRC public engagement staff will be discussing the dialogue at a number of events over the coming months and is aiming to publish its recommendations in summer 2010.



Evaluating Sciencewise-ERC

A thorough evaluation of Sciencewise-ERC is now under way. Building on the independent evaluations of each individual dialogue project that Sciencewise-ERC has been involved in, this broader evaluation is examining both the longer term impacts of the dialogue projects supported by Sciencewise-ERC, since 2004, and the effectiveness and value of the advice, guidance and other services provided by the Sciencewise-ERC since its launch 18 months ago.

The findings from the evaluation will feed into the future development of the Sciencewise-ERC programme. A report will be produced on the findings from the evaluation, and published in Spring 2010.

The research for the evaluation will include analysis of all feedback from Sciencewise-ERC events, findings and lessons from across the individual dialogue projects, as well as statistics on all Sciencewise-ERC activities. It will also include interviews with some of the key figures involved in Sciencewise-ERC over the years.

This is a crucial time for public engagement, with increasing experience and enthusiasm for engagement, but also growing pressures to demonstrate achievement and impact. We are therefore working to identify the successes of dialogue in the past, to ensure that the lessons from experience are used to improve practice, and to develop ideas for how best to provide support in future.

If you would like more information, or would like to contribute your views, please contact Diane Warburton, Evaluation Manager, on diane@sharedpractice.org.uk

New Look Website

Many of you will have noticed that the Sciencewise-ERC website has undergone a bit of a facelift. The new look site offers all of the previous features with a few new ones. Easier to navigate and providing a more interactive platform, the website gives visitors access to advice and guidance on public dialogue.

The website offers a comprehensive online resource of information, advice and guidance together with a wide range of support services aimed at policy makers and the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public.

Via the website you can access information on how to do public dialogue through the fully searchable Knowledge Hub that includes

vidcasts, publications, guidance documents and online tools. One of the most recent additions to the site is our blog, where you can hear from the Sciencewise-ERC Programme Director with the latest news and reflections. You can also follow us on Twitter, sign up to our monthly newsletter and find out what events we are running or where we will be exhibiting.

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk



People and Participation.net

Have you visited peopleandparticipation.net recently? Run by Involve and funded by Communities and Local Government and Ministry of Justice, this website is a great resource if your work involves engaging citizens in decision making.

The site is full of information about public engagement. It contains information on over 60 different participation methods, over 100 case studies and lots of links to other resources, websites and blogs.

There are practical tools for participation practitioners, such as the 'process planner' that helps users choose a method that fits their needs and budget, and an 'ask an expert' function where people can post questions about public participation that are answered by expert staff. You can also upload your own case studies and resources, and comment on what others have added.

The site is mainly for people who are directly involved in planning, running or commissioning public participation activities. For example this includes:

- Civil servants working in central and local Government
- Community development workers and other public sector front line workers
- Elected officials in central and local Government

Visiting the site you will see examples from the science and technology area provided by Sciencewise-ERC.

Departmental Dialogue Expertise

Over the past six months, policy makers across Government have been offered a new service for direct support and expertise in the area of public dialogue delivery within science and technology.

This new service comes in the form of Sciencewise-ERC departmental dialogue sessions. Held within any department, these free sessions have helped policy makers to identify areas for public dialogue and to overcome challenges faced in the dialogue planning process. Government departments that have taken part so far include the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

Feedback from the sessions has been very positive and it seems policy makers with different levels of experience in dialogue and engagement have been attending and benefiting from the sessions. A policy maker working on the UK's Renewable Energy Strategy at DECC said that they came along to 'find out exactly what Sciencewise-ERC was all about...and how it might be of use for future roles'. Another policy maker attended with the objective of gaining a better understanding of the resource centre and its role within science and technology policy making, commenting that they felt dialogue was important because 'it encourages better understanding and transparency'.

Receiving face-to-face support and guidance from the Dialogue and Engagement Specialists is one of

the key benefits these sessions offer, helping policy makers to really understand the dialogue process, the benefits it offers them and the ways to overcome the challenges that may arise. Departmental dialogue sessions offer the additional benefit that they can be tailored to a department's particular qualities and characteristics, targeting the issues which are specific to that department.

Could a departmental dialogue session benefit your department?

Dialogue sessions are open to all those within Government and its agencies, who have responsibility for national policy making in science and technology.

Sessions can be held on a date and time to suit, and delegates can also make use of one-to-one sessions with one of our Dialogue and Engagement Specialists after the workshop has ended.

If you are interested in us visiting your department, or to find out more, contact:

karen.smith@aeat.co.uk

Further information about the Sciencewise-ERC can be found at:

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

or phone the Helpline on

0870 190 6324.

Call for Proposals

Science Communication Conference



The British Science Association is working in partnership with the Wellcome Trust to organise the 2010 Science Communication Conference.

The event will take place on 24 & 25 May in central London and individuals and organisations are now being sought to propose sessions. The Conference addresses the key issues facing science communicators in the UK and each year brings together people who are involved in public engagement - a diverse group of people from a broad range of backgrounds. It is a fantastic opportunity to network, share ideas and good practice.

The theme for the Conference will be 'Audiences for engagement' and can involve experts from other disciplines who have engaged successfully with certain audiences, not necessarily about science. Conference sessions are generally 60 to 75 minutes long and run in parallel with 2-5 other sessions. This allows for smaller group discussion and better sharing of learning. A range of formats are encouraged at the Conference and the organisers are particularly interested in showcasing activities within the sessions.

If you are interested in submitting a session idea please visit: www.britishtscienceassociation.org/ScienceCommunicationConference

Please note that the deadline for submissions is Monday 21 December 2009.

If you would like to discuss your idea prior to submission then please contact Alice Taylor-Gee on **020 7019 4940** or email alice.taylor-gee@britishscienceassociation.org



National Science and Engineering Week

Planning for National Science and Engineering Week (NSEW) 2010 is well underway with events and activities due to take place across the UK from 12 to 21 March 2010.

Co-ordinated by the British Science Association, NSEW is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). The ten day programme of activities is aimed at people of all ages with the objective of celebrating science, engineering and technology and its importance in our lives. In total, around 3,500 events will be taking place, organised by a range of people.

Each year NSEW has a theme and for 2010 this will be 'earth', offering a range of possibilities for events and activities.

More information on funding, resources, event listings and activity suggestions can be found on the British Science Association website at: www.britishtscienceassociation.org/web/nsew

Science engagement at Cheltenham Science Festival



BIS
Department for
Business Innovation
and Skills

Since 2002 The Times Cheltenham Science Festival has transformed the town into a hub of activity for five days each June, and its position in the science engagement calendar has been acknowledged by an ever growing list of partners from Government research groups and major corporate groups, to leading institutions and societies that all benefit from the festival's large and committed audiences.

This year we are excited to be working with NERC to produce an innovative event about geo-engineering as a follow-on to its Sciencewise-ERC dialogue workshops. We will be probing even further for the opinions of the public on this delicate issue.

Now entering its 9th year, the festival has a reputation for getting the best brains in science and engineering together with the public to probe the most topical issues. It is constantly building upon its strengths to develop the programme, the range of audiences and speakers, and the public's engagement in science and its wider implications. From tackling climate change to the science of chocolate, from the ethics of stem cell research to science comedy, the festival is always attracting new audiences and speakers, and challenging the stereotype of what a science festival can, and should, offer.

It offers the general public the chance to engage with researchers, policy makers and presenters, and to contemplate the impact of science on society, environment and the economy. Together, the festival and its partners

have the potential to make a real difference to the public's engagement in science and technology.

The festival is as much about participation from the audience as that from our huge variety of expert speakers. In each of our events we allocate a significant portion of time to audience questions and feedback. In 2009 we trialled novel event formats, encouraging even more participation and engagement from the audience, using personal voting keypads to make decisions and holding further dialogue sessions after events in the dedicated 'The Times Talking Point'.

We work with a large number of organisations to create events that are popular, thought-provoking, innovative and relevant.

The Times Cheltenham Science Festival is an ideal place for dialogue. Please join us on 9-13 June 2010.

For further information, please visit www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/science or contact stephen.burgess@cheltenhamfestivals.com



Professor of Surgery at Imperial College, Lord Darzi, taking part in the 'Robot Surgeons' event in 2009.



Alice Roberts, Anne Cooke and Janice Murills add the finishing touches to a body painting model.

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. For further information please log on to:

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Email: enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Helpline: 0870 190 6324

Sciencewise-ERC, AEA, 329 Harwell, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 0QJ