

# sciencewise NEWS

March 2009

## Sciencewise-ERC

### conference and awards

The first Sciencewise-ERC annual conference and awards were hosted on 18 February 2009 at Savoy Place, London.

A mixture of policy makers, stakeholders and the Sciencewise-ERC team celebrated the awards and first year of the ERC. Kathy Sykes, the Sciencewise-ERC Steering Group Chair, was also in attendance to present the awards.

#### The award winners were:

- **Excellence in public dialogue** - Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA)
- **Most engaged policy maker** - Human Genetics Commission (HGC)
- **People's choice award** - Gallomanor

Winning the award for excellence in public dialogue was the HFEA for its project on hybrid and chimera embryos for stem cell research, which was carried out to guide recommendations to the Government on whether this type of research should take place in the future. Professor Lisa Jardine, Chair of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, said: "The staff team responsible for the hybrid and chimera



consultation went to considerable lengths in terms of time, attentiveness and effort, to ensure that as many people as possible had the opportunity to give their views. It is extremely gratifying that their efforts have been recognised by Sciencewise." For more information on the project please visit [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/hybrid-and-chimera-embryos-for-stem-cell-research/](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/hybrid-and-chimera-embryos-for-stem-cell-research/)

The most engaged policy maker award was presented to the HGC in recognition of The Forensic use of DNA Citizens Inquiry. The project aimed to explore people's views on the forensic use of DNA,

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particularly in relation to the information held on the National DNA Database (NDNAD), and conclusions from the inquiry will contribute to the development of a final report, to be published in 2009. Professor Jonathan Montgomery, recently appointed as the new Chair of the HGC, stepped up to accept the award and said he was delighted to receive the award on the organisation's behalf. For more information on the project please visit [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/the-forensic-use-of-dna-citizens-inquiry/](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/the-forensic-use-of-dna-citizens-inquiry/)

Presented as a joint award with Involve, the participation organisation, the People's choice award went to Gallomanor for the online science and engagement tool 'I'm a Scientist, get me out of here'. 'I'm a Scientist, get me out of here' is a web event which ran in June 2008 and is being followed up again this year in March and June. The event allows young people to engage with scientists on a level they are comfortable with and they can then vote for the scientists just like in the popular TV series that focussed on celebrities in the same way.

The event, which took place over dinner, also featured a snapshot of the soon to be completed Sciencewise-ERC strategic research topics.

Continued from page 1... The work has been undertaken by the Sciencewise-ERC Dialogue and Engagement Specialist (DES) team and one member of the team, Lindsey Colbourne, presented an interesting taster to the specific topic she has been researching - 'Organisational Readiness'. The full results

from the research on all six topics are presented at the research topics results workshop on the 19 March 2009. The awards marked the end of a successful year for both Sciencewise-ERC and dialogue, and provided a great opportunity for all those involved in the world of dialogue to celebrate the achievements.

## Sciencewise-ERC in 2008-2009



As the first anniversary of the Sciencewise-ERC approaches, we've taken a look back over the past 12 months. The launch of the Sciencewise-ERC took place at the end of May 2008, opening up a whole new range of online and offline resources to policy makers across Government.

One of the most valuable assets of the Sciencewise-ERC is the team of Dialogue and Engagement Specialists, which has grown from just a handful to almost 20 in less than a year. The team has been working hard to engage policy makers, not only with support and guidance for Sciencewise-ERC funded projects, but also with more general assistance on conducting dialogue. One of the key tasks which the team has been undertaking is the research topics that are being studied in-depth, and on the 19 March, the final results are presented at a dedicated workshop. There is more information on this on page 6.

Sciencewise-ERC has provided funding and guidance for a number of projects in the past 12 months. Some are ongoing while others have come to an end. The policy link has never been clearer and the 'Hybrid and chimera embryos for stem cell research' project is an excellent example of how effective dialogue can be in influencing policy.

### Sciencewise-ERC projects in 2008-2009

- Drugsfutures - AMS launched its 'Brain science, addiction and drugs' report on 22 May 2008
- Hybrid and Chimera Embryos for Stem Cell Research -results published in June 2008 and directly influenced the recent Human Embryology Act that went through Parliament in late 2008
- community x-change - final workshop held in summer 2008, final report will soon be published
- The Forensic use of DNA Citizens Inquiry - dialogue completed and the results of the Inquiry will feed into the HGC's report to Government on the forensic use of DNA, expected in early 2009
- Stem Cell Dialogue -results were launched at a high profile event in December 2008 attended by Science Minister, Lord Drayson
- Understanding the Public Perception of Industrial Biotechnology - a number of workshops carried out in late 2008, final report expected in Spring 2009
- Low Carbon Solutions for Households and Communities- project started in early 2009 and a number of events have been held. Results will inform policy decisions in response to the proposals in the Climate Change Bill

The global reputation of the Sciencewise-ERC is also on the rise. For example, we were recently asked to participate in a conference in Belgium. Furthermore, we have been approached by the Swedish Public and Science (Vetenskap & Allmänhet) Association with regards to sharing our expert knowledge of dialogue. In response to that, Alison Crowther, our dialogue development manager, will be sharing knowledge and communicating the Sciencewise-ERC experience to MPs in Stockholm in April.

In recognition of the past year, the first Sciencewise-ERC annual awards were held on 18 February 2008. Another big event will take place in March, when we celebrate the results of our strategic research topics. Then to crown this successful year, an essays collection will be published in early April, representing the 'state of the art' on public dialogue within science and technology.

# DIUS launches major science campaign

Science: [So what? So everything] works on the power of partnership



**Friends in New Places.** The Science: [So what? So everything] campaign is highlighting different areas where science can have a positive impact.

Science Minister, Lord Drayson, was in good company when he announced in January the start of a campaign for boosting interest in science over the course of 2009 and beyond. Science: [So what? So everything] aims to get more science stories covered in the popular media and to break through to those who might think that science is not for them. The campaign wants to create a more widespread awareness that science is an important tool for life - one which brings benefits to the individual and the UK economy.

That the campaign was launched at Number 10 Downing Street by the Prime Minister is a sign of the importance which the Government attaches to greater participation in science - as a subject to study, as a career to work in and as an investment of taxpayers' pounds. The attendance of diverse figures such as James Caan (Dragon's Den), Heston Blumenthal and Charlie Boorman, shows that such a campaign can find support beyond Whitehall and the scientific world.



*"The campaign explains that science will help us to deal with the great challenges of our times" says Lord Drayson "climate change, the ageing process, clean energy production and global security."*

*"Nobody will be surprised to hear the science minister making these arguments, but hopefully they will be more engaged - and entertained - if a science message comes from less predictable quarters."*

The campaign has already met with great success, achieving significant print and broadcast coverage and gaining a foothold in the popular media. But its bigger purpose is to bring other organisations and individuals on board in order that media coverage is not just multiplied, but also that science is more accessible through its association with a diverse range of people, professions and places.

Proof that an interest in science is not the preserve of 'men in white coats' comes in the form of a wide range of figures that PR agency Kindred has enlisted from the arts, showbiz and popular culture. This includes writers like Terry Pratchett and Bill Bryson, comedian Ben Miller, Big Brother star Jon Tickle, and more traditional science presenters such as Alice Roberts and Sciencewise's own Kathy Sykes.

The campaign relies on the contributions of research councils, learned societies and other Government departments for supplying the many science stories that are being used to show their human interest and relevance, as well as providing that all important fun factor.

However, the campaign organisers are keen to widen ownership and to bring in employers and voluntary organisations as supporters and routes through to different audiences. Science: [So what? So everything] acts as an umbrella brand, giving coherence to a wide range of UK scientific endeavour and is available for use by any organisation that supports its aims.

Plans are currently in development for maintaining the campaign through 2009 using the highpoints in the science communications calendar, like the science festivals, as well creating new, complementary activities.

The Science: [So what? So everything] campaign is a key strand of the Science and Society strategy due to be published in the late Spring. The strategy will emphasise the importance of public engagement and science communications as one of its priority areas for action.

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

If you think your organisation can help the campaign, e-mail [mike.rose@dius.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mike.rose@dius.gsi.gov.uk)

# Assessing the Public Perception of Industrial Biotechnology

In August 2008, BERR, in partnership with the 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 aim was also to identify the key issues of importance for consumers to help with potential future communications exercises and public dialogues.

## The process

Two initial citizens' group meetings were delivered in Manchester and London involving 24 people at each, who were introduced to the basic issues surrounding IB and the chemicals-using sector. A single group of 24 citizens was then re-convened in London. The agenda for this second stage was steered by the issues, questions and concerns raised at the initial meetings. At this event, participants were exposed to a wide range of perspectives on different aspects of IB and chemicals, including biofuels, genetically modified organisms, bio-plastics, land-use, bio-refineries and specialty chemicals. In addition, a total of 16 expert speakers from Government, industry, academia and NGOs were available to talk to and answer the participants' questions to inform their deliberations.

## Results

The deliberative process used in this research was highly successful in engaging the participants in a subject about

which they previously had very little experience. By the end of the process, participants felt that they had learned a lot and that they now knew a fair amount about IB and wider related scientific issues.

The project revealed to policy makers and the IB-IGT that public perception does not present an unassailable barrier to IB overall; the public feels differently about the different applications of IB depending on the circumstances in which they are used. The public, on greater understanding, perceives a distinct difference between IB uncontrolled in nature and IB 'in the lab'.

The whole process also allowed policy makers greater insight into how to successfully communicate IB in a manner that the public can engage with. It has shown that it is essential to provide the public with the factual information it needs to facilitate this understanding.

## Learning

The project demonstrated that when the science is communicated in an accessible way, relevant to people's lives, the public can engage with and become enthusiastic about the subject. People are particularly keen to hear balanced viewpoints on such potentially controversial and relatively unfamiliar topics as IB - it is crucial to achieve a mix of perspectives in order to empower true deliberation. Underpinning this, interactive methods and establishing a dialogue between the public and 'those in the know' really do have the power to give the public a say on science. The Project Advisory Group helped to ensure that the materials used with the public were accurate and balanced.

The final report on this project will be published in Spring 2009 and will shortly be available at [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk)

## Project outcome: Public and Stakeholder Dialogue on Stem Cell Research

The results of this project were launched at an event in London in December 2008, with speakers including the Science Minister, Lord Drayson, the Chief Executive of the MRC, Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, and Chief Executive of the BBSRC, Professor Douglas Kell. There were many scientists and policy makers in attendance and participants from the dialogue were also on hand to bring the project to life and share their experiences.

## Background

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC)

approached Sciencewise-ERC for funding in 2007 to find out more about people's views on stem cell research. Together, the BBSRC and MRC commissioned a consortium, led by the British Market Research Bureau (BMRB), to carry out the largest ever public and stakeholder dialogue on stem cell research in the UK.

Dialogue activities took place in summer 2008 and over 200 members of the public took part in workshops which ran simultaneously in London, Cardiff, Bristol, Newcastle and Edinburgh. In addition, nearly 50 stakeholders from fields such as science, medicine, industry, ethics and religion were interviewed. The stem cell dialogue looked at:

- The UK vision for stem cell science
- People's views on the sources of stem cells, clinical applications and potential therapeutic benefits
- Perceived social and ethical issues surrounding stem cell research

# Project Update:

## Deliberative Public Dialogue on Low Carbon Solutions for Households and Communities

In December, Sciencewise-ERC commissioned a new project on low carbon solutions. The project is carried out by co-operation between a group of Government departments under the umbrella of the Interdepartmental Low Carbon Economy Engagement Working Group (IEWG). The key aim of the dialogue project is to enable UK Government to make fully informed policy decisions in response to the proposals in the Climate Change Bill.

The project is planned to take place over a period of six to nine months and a lot of the work is already well under way. In late February and early March, a total of nine community events took place in various locations in England and Northern Ireland, each with 30 participants. Each group was given the opportunity to visit a site in their vicinity that uses some sort of low carbon solutions. Among these were a visit to a couple of retrofitted properties in Exeter that use the 'whole house' approach, a trip to the BRE Innovation Park in Watford to witness virtually all available new build low carbon technologies, and a chance to see a

biomass boiler in action at a hotel in Irvinestown, Northern Ireland.

The participants from those nine events have now been given a few weeks to ponder on and digest the information already received and will soon be reconvened to deliberate at a joint event in London on 2 April. The overall project is expected to come to an end in early summer 2009, and a final report will be available on the Sciencewise-ERC website shortly afterwards.

### The IEWG consists of:

**DECC** - Department of Energy and Climate Change

**BERR** - Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform

**Defra** - Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

**OCC** - Office of Climate Change

**CLG** - Communities and Local Government

**DfT** - Department for Transport

### Key learning

The project demonstrated that the public is able to make sensible and sophisticated conclusions about stem cells and where the line should be drawn on research. If the public receives clear information, it has no problem understanding and digesting complex science.

The results revealed high levels of public support for stem cell science and technology, although this was conditional on ensuring that Government funding is focused on 'serious' medical conditions rather than cosmetic uses.

### Impacts

This report will help to inform decisions that research councils and others will make as stem cell research matures and treatments move closer to clinical application. Policy makers from the research councils and Government departments have already had the opportunity to explore some of the areas covered in the dialogue and use the results in decision-making, for example, in

“The Government takes public dialogue extremely seriously. In areas such as stem cell research - which are so important to this country's future - it is vital that any public concerns are listened to and acted upon,” Lord Drayson, Minister of State for Science and Innovation.

developing guidelines for consent and in forming policy on cord blood banking. One of the key recommendations from this study is that public engagement in stem cell science should be an ongoing, two-way process. The research councils will be responding to the study recommendations, with details on how these will be incorporated into both policy and communications strategies.

The final report and case study from this project is available on the projects pages at [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk)

# Meeting the challenges of dialogue in science and technology - results workshop



In our last newsletter, we told you about six research topics that are being studied in-depth by the Dialogue and Engagement Specialists of the Sciencewise-ERC. The research is now coming to an end and the results are celebrated and explored in a special workshop on 19 March 2009.

**The results of this research will help policy makers in central Government departments and agencies by developing ways to address those challenges, including the production of practical tools and guidance. It will also contribute towards embedding good dialogue practice into Government policymaking processes.**

The following is a small taster of the outcomes of each of the six topics. The final reports of each topic will be available at [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk) towards the end of March.

## Assessing organisational readiness for undertaking dialogue and other engagement

Perhaps the most innovative tool to come out of the research topics is a mechanism for assessing organisational readiness to involve the public in policy making. A comprehensive questionnaire has already provided many with a 'light-bulb moment' giving clarity about why their enthusiasm for

participation has not been understood by their own or a partner organisation. Furthermore, Lindsey Colbourne, the topic leader, has come up with simple steps to help clarify departmental needs and remove blocks to understanding.

## Effective use of experts

'Wise up' is the name of the report focussing on the use of experts and expertise within dialogue processes. The challenges identified ranged from the personal communications skills of experts, through how they are briefed and involved in the design of the process. Dialogue provides the opportunity for academic studies to be discussed in the preparation of policy, yet a huge amount of work is needed to translate difficult texts into work which can be understood and acted on within a dialogue setting. As a practical outcome, Suzannah Lansdell has identified 12 steps for the successful use of experts in a dialogue process.

## Mass engagement

The 'mass' element of dialogue has long been a quest for Ministers...on the understanding that 'mass' is somehow more robust. Pippa Hyam's research topic has blown this question wide open and challenged what 'mass' actually means. The answer appears to be threefold. The aim of public dialogue is to make public policy the best it can be and to ensure that all the different parties can leave the process informed. Interestingly, this research has concluded that after about 1,000 people have inputted their opinions into a dialogue project, the distribution of ideas and values collected remains very similar, so there is no need for higher numbers of participants if the quality of the policy is the main aim.

## Evaluating public dialogue

Diane Warburton observes that public engagement is a field where practice is often ahead of theory, and has created a groundbreaking report with a number of key messages. There are some clear gaps in current knowledge and to date, not one of the major national public policy dialogues in the UK has been evaluated in terms of cost effectiveness. Also, there are currently no comprehensively agreed methods of measuring quality in public dialogue. This work aims to fill these two gaps in current evaluation practice and provide practical guidance on measuring the quality and cost effectiveness of public dialogue.

## Science communicators and the media

Since Government started using dialogue as a way of feeding the ideas of the public into policy, there have been very few mentions of 'dialogue' processes in the press. The difficulty of getting press attention, even for the most controversial or popular of issues, has been a major challenge. Through interviews with journalists and projects which have successfully worked with the media, Melanie Smallman has studied the

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*Continued from page 6...* subject in detail and comes up with a series of 'lessons' for dialogue practitioners planning to promote their activities.

### Citizen involvement

Ex-participants who have contributed to policy through public dialogue have a heightened awareness of the particular science and technology issue they were discussing, as well as the process of Government itself. They are often keen to continue involvement and hear of further developments after the funding for projects has run out and departmental leads have moved on. Diane Beddoes sought to establish a framework/foundation for a participant network and comes up with guidance on how departments can make use of this exciting and excited resource. Advice has been created around what participants can expect from dialogue and the departments who ask them to be involved.

## Drop in for Dialogue

The Drop in for Dialogue sessions for policy makers continue to be held on the third Monday of every month. The sessions are designed to help policy makers carry out better, more appropriately timed dialogue.

Several sessions have been held already. In January, Suzannah Lansdell gave a presentation on using experts in dialogue projects, and in December, Pippa Hyam shared her knowledge on mass engagement. Feedback from the sessions has been very positive. One policy maker commented: "It was an extremely interesting and useful session and we are now keen to undertake dialogue with the public in the future." Another one, who attended the session on working with experts, said by attending the session he had gained 'an understanding of many of the issues in the whole process - especially the more common points that can easily be overlooked or mean that the dialogue does not work as well as it might'.

### Upcoming sessions are:

**20 April** What is Public Dialogue?

Each session starts with a presentation, followed by lunch and an open discussion. One-to-one mentoring sessions will be available with dialogue experts before and after the presentation and discussions, to give policy makers the opportunity to discuss policy issues and potential dialogue projects. Please note that these sessions must be pre-booked.

The Drop in for Dialogue sessions are held at Futurefocus, part of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) headquarters at 1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0ET. To register, please contact the Sciencewise team via the website or call the helpline on 0870 190 6324.

For information on various events in public engagement and science, check out the events calendar on [www.sciencewise-ERC.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-ERC.org.uk).

## Sciencewise-ERC

### dialogue 'master class' - 27 March 2009

On 27 March 2009, Sciencewise-ERC will be launching its first online 'master class' for dialogue, featuring dialogue engagement specialists, who will share their expert knowledge and experience in the field of dialogue.

This online 'master class' takes the form of a web based seminar or workshop, offering delegates the opportunity to log in and attend the event from their own desks. Delegates will be given the chance to interact in the webcast, asking live questions and receiving a step-by-step guide to engaging in

better public dialogue. Live poll questions will be asked on hot topics of the moment and the results of these will be shared with the audience. The interactive nature of the session, which will last approximately one hour, will present policy makers with the chance to receive support in the areas of public dialogue and engagement in a completely new dimension.

For further details of the event and to register, please visit the webcast pages at [www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/webcasts](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/webcasts)

# Future events



Department for  
**Innovation,  
Universities &  
Skills**



## Edinburgh Science Festival

The Edinburgh Science Festival will host a variety of fantastic events, including a look at the cosmos, From the Earth to the Universe, and a fascinating debate, Darwin, Ideology and God. This year festival takes place on 4-18 April and is now in its 21st year. To celebrate this anniversary, the festival has a new look and logo and will unveil a varied programme of events across the whole city. For further details of this year's programme, please visit [www.sciencefestival.co.uk/](http://www.sciencefestival.co.uk/)



## Engaging Science grants workshops

Engaging Science is a grants programme offering over £3 million per year to support projects that engage the public with biomedical science and its social contexts. The Wellcome Trust is offering free workshops for those interested in applying. The next workshop is due to take place on 22 May at the Wellcome Trust in London. For more information or to register, please visit

[www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Public-engagement/WTX039015.htm](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Public-engagement/WTX039015.htm)



## Cheltenham Science Festival

The Cheltenham Science Festival will be taking place on 3-7 June and the theme for 2009 is heresy. The festival programme will include celebrations for the International Year of Astronomy and also Darwin200. As usual, this annual event will explore science through a mixture of talks, workshops, debates and interactive activities. Well-known TV presenter Carol Vorderman will be this year's Guest Director. For more information, please visit [www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/](http://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/)

## 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 and agencies 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. 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.

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 DIUS 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

**Louise de Rome**, Sciencewise Projects Manager  
**Tel:** 0870 190 3678

or through the ERC helpline at  
[enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk).

The Sciencewise-ERC, funded by the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS), 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 go to:

[www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk](http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk)

**Email:** [enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk)

**Helpline:** 0870 190 6324

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