

# Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

## NCCPE briefing for managers of researchers

### About this series

This is one of several briefing documents developed by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) for stakeholders with a role to play in the implementation of the principles in the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research. It should be read in conjunction with the Concordat itself, which constitutes the set of principles officially agreed to by signatories and supporters ([www.rcuk.ac.uk/per](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/per)). The series draws on the learning from the Beacons for Public Engagement project to provide guidance and practical tips which we hope will prove useful as your institution works to implement the principles. Of course, how the Concordat is implemented is the responsibility of individual organisations, but we hope that you find this briefing helpful.

The NCCPE's website hosts a wealth of additional resources to support managers and research staff to develop their public engagement activities and institutional strategies, complementing and deepening the advice offered here. In particular, we would draw your attention to our Manifesto for Public Engagement, which was launched in December 2010. By signing up to the manifesto, institutions can declare their strategic commitment to public engagement, and access additional support and guidance from the NCCPE: [www.publicengagement.ac.uk](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk)

### The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

The Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research is a joint statement from Research Councils UK (RCUK), the Funding Councils, academies and research charities. It describes the expectations and responsibilities of research funders with respect to public engagement. Its goal is to increase the quality of public engagement by reducing barriers and rewarding the efforts of researchers. It seeks to avoid compulsion or the creation of additional burden.

The Concordat outlines four key principles:

- UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement.
- Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.
- Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.
- The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

This briefing takes each of the concordat's principles in turn, suggesting areas for consideration and providing a simple set of prompts to help you consider the implications for your work. Parallel briefings are provided for senior managers, supporters of researchers and for researchers themselves. It provides links to the NCCPE's site, where much more in depth guidance, support and advice can be found, as well as information about events and networking opportunities.

## Strategic Commitment

### UK research organisations have a strategic commitment to public engagement

Managers in universities and research institutes play a critical role in creating the conditions within which public engagement can thrive. When such leaders champion public engagement and its contribution to both your research and the institution's wider mission, and then express that commitment (for example in strategic and operational planning), then they create a climate within which engagement can flourish.

## Your challenge

Recognising and championing the value of public engagement within your team, both informally and formally; ensuring that it is supported in departmental strategy and operational plans; and taking a leadership role in the institution with regards to public engagement.

## Areas to consider

The NCCPE site contains much more information and support, including a self-assessment tool and range of case studies and exemplars showing how different institutions have tackled the key areas identified below:

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Developing a shared understanding of public engagement and its value</b>	Research organisations should hold an understanding and definition of public engagement, appropriate to their context, which is shared and used consistently across the organisation.	<p>Although it is impossible to expect to achieve a completely uniform understanding of public engagement, it is important to invest time in opening up the debate: to support your organisation in developing a definition for public engagement and its value which can be used consistently, and which is based on a robust rationale for your engagement activity.</p> <p>The NCCPE site includes a section dedicated to answering the question 'What is public engagement?':  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what</a></p> <p>Another explores 'Why Public Engagement Matters':  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter</a></p>
<b>Strategic planning</b>	Public engagement should be embedded within research organisations' missions, key strategies and operational plans to help to provide focus, meaning, emphasis and support for public engagement. This may include an organisational public engagement strategy led at senior levels and communicated effectively (internally and externally).	<p>This may take time, but it makes a critical difference if your institution's commitment to public engagement is reflected in the official mission statement and in other relevant institutional strategies, with success indicators identified. Supporting senior management in developing a strategic plan specifically focused on advancing public engagement, which includes viable short-term and long-term goals, helps ensure that that commitment is followed through. You can also stimulate discussions within your own department so that public engagement is reflected in your department's strategies and operational plans.</p> <p>The NCCPE site provides guidance on how different universities have tackled this area:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/mission">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/mission</a></p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Leadership</b>	It is recognised that senior public engagement champions are essential in fostering public engagement throughout all researcher levels, and these individuals should be encouraged and supported by their research organisations.	Formal policies and statements of intent are important – but equally so are individuals who act as advocates and champions, and in the process positively influence the culture or the institution. Ideally, the Vice-chancellor / Principal will act as a champion for public engagement but your role is critical too in demonstrating your commitment to your teams and encouraging at all levels in your department to become part of a wider network of champions and enthusiasts across the institution.  You can find out how other universities have developed their leadership around public engagement here: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/leadership">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/leadership</a>
<b>Communication</b>	The Concordat states that your public engagement strategy should be: communicated effectively (internally and externally).  It also recommends that: research organisations are encouraged to celebrate and communicate their researchers' successes in public engagement.	How visible is your commitment to public engagement – for instance, in your institution's internal and external communications? Ensuring that your public engagement activity features regularly across your communications contributes significantly to the creation of a positive climate.  You can find out more here: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/communication">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/communication</a>

## The strategic importance of public engagement

Many universities now have a commitment to engagement embedded in their corporate strategies. University College London (UCL), for instance, prides itself on being 'a modern, outward-looking institution, committed to engaging with the major issues of our times'. The University is currently developing a public engagement strategy, involving senior academics from across the institution.

*"Universities are very different places than they were even ten years ago, and their focus is much more outward-looking. The focus on dialogue, on exchange rather than simple knowledge transfer, which is the heart of true public engagement, is one of the greatest challenges for the modern university. It is also a significant opportunity for universities to reinvent themselves as a public good for the 21st century."*

**Professor Michael Worton,**  
Vice-provost, UCL

The University of Bristol has made its commitment to engagement explicit in its corporate plan. It has developed an 'Engaged University' strategy; and established a high level steering group to oversee the delivery of this.

*"Engagement with our publics is vital to modern researchers - it informs us about society and its hopes and fears for the work we do, and challenges us to improve the quality and impact of our research. To articulate the reasons why we do research and be reminded of the expectations that society has for us is both directly refreshing and beneficial - and for many is a very enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding experience."*

**Professor Guy Orpen,**  
Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research),  
University of Bristol

Find out more here:  
[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/mission](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/mission)

## Reward and Recognition

Researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement with public engagement activities.

Recognition and reward is a key way in which you can demonstrate to staff and students that you and your institution genuinely values public engagement. In many HEIs, staff and students feel they get little or no acknowledgment for the work they do around public engagement, evidenced for instance in the Royal Society's 2006 report 'Factors Affecting Science Communication: A Survey of Scientists and Engineers'. If people feel that their career prospects are not improved (or even sometimes jeopardised) by engaging with the public, then many of them will choose not to get involved. Small steps can make a big difference in terms of encouraging engagement enthusiasts and convincing novices to give public engagement a try.

## Your challenge

Ensuring recognition for engagement with the public is reflected in institutional HR policies, and in more informal ways (e.g. through positive feedback in meetings, regular mentions in internal communications, or through establishing awards that celebrate success).

## Areas to consider

The NCCPE site contains a section offering practical guidance on this topic. You will find a self assessment tool, several case studies and exemplar policies and job descriptions at: [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition)

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Embed support for public engagement in your staff policies and processes</b>	<p>Research organisations should consider whether public engagement is appropriately represented in staff policies and processes (such as for inductions, performance review, promotions criteria or workload planning) to allow researchers to be involved in public engagement activities without impairing their career.</p> <p>Those responsible for the implementation of such processes, including research managers and relevant supporters of researchers, should receive appropriate briefing and support.</p>	<p>Your institution may review its HR processes and develop a policy to ensure public engagement is recognised, and this is certainly something you can actively encourage in your department, whether it is a formal institutional requirement or not. Staff will need to be supported to implement this, for instance through developing a good understanding of the skills required for engagement (see the next section for more about this).</p> <p>You could encourage and promote public engagement activity by offering incentives within your school/department/team. These could be as simple as small bursaries or secondments. More profound change can be effected by ensuring that public engagement is a legitimate activity in workload planning. Equally important is emphasising the valuable role public engagement can play in career progression, for instance through developing transferable skills.</p>
<b>Actively promote and celebrate public engagement activity</b>	<p>The benefits of public engagement to researchers should be clearly recognised and promoted at all stages of their career, including its valuable role in developing transferable skills.</p> <p>Research organisations are encouraged to celebrate and communicate their researchers' successes in public engagement.</p>	<p>It is important to celebrate the achievements of your researchers in public engagement. It may be that your institution decides to award prizes for public engagement, in which case you could encourage your researchers to apply for these, or even instigate something similar within your department.</p> <p>You can do many other informal things to help, such as through regular mentions in internal communications, or by personal emails to staff to recognise their achievements. This can make a huge difference and is relatively easy to implement.</p>



## University of East Anglia (UEA) engagement awards

UEA and the Norwich Research Park have launched an Individual Engagement Award to acknowledge the remarkable contribution that staff and students at UEA have made to university public engagement, and to raise the profile of this area of work. The Awards are presented at UEA Congregation ceremonies and take the form of an ex-gratia payment. Whilst it was acknowledged that a financial reward is not the key incentive to getting involved in public engagement, this scheme formed part of an overall incentives package at the University which now includes staff promotions criteria that recognise public engagement.

One of the first winners was Dr Stephen Ashworth who has been actively involved with public engagement for the past ten years and is the Schools Liaison Officer for the local section of the Royal Society of Chemistry. He has worked with hundreds of local pupils of all ages; run regular

workshops for Women's Institute Groups on forensic and food science themes; developed a workshop for blind and partially sighted participants called 'Looking Glass Laboratory'.

*"The news of the award was a lovely surprise and I am honoured to be a recipient of one of the first individual engagement awards."*

**Dr Stephen Ashworth**

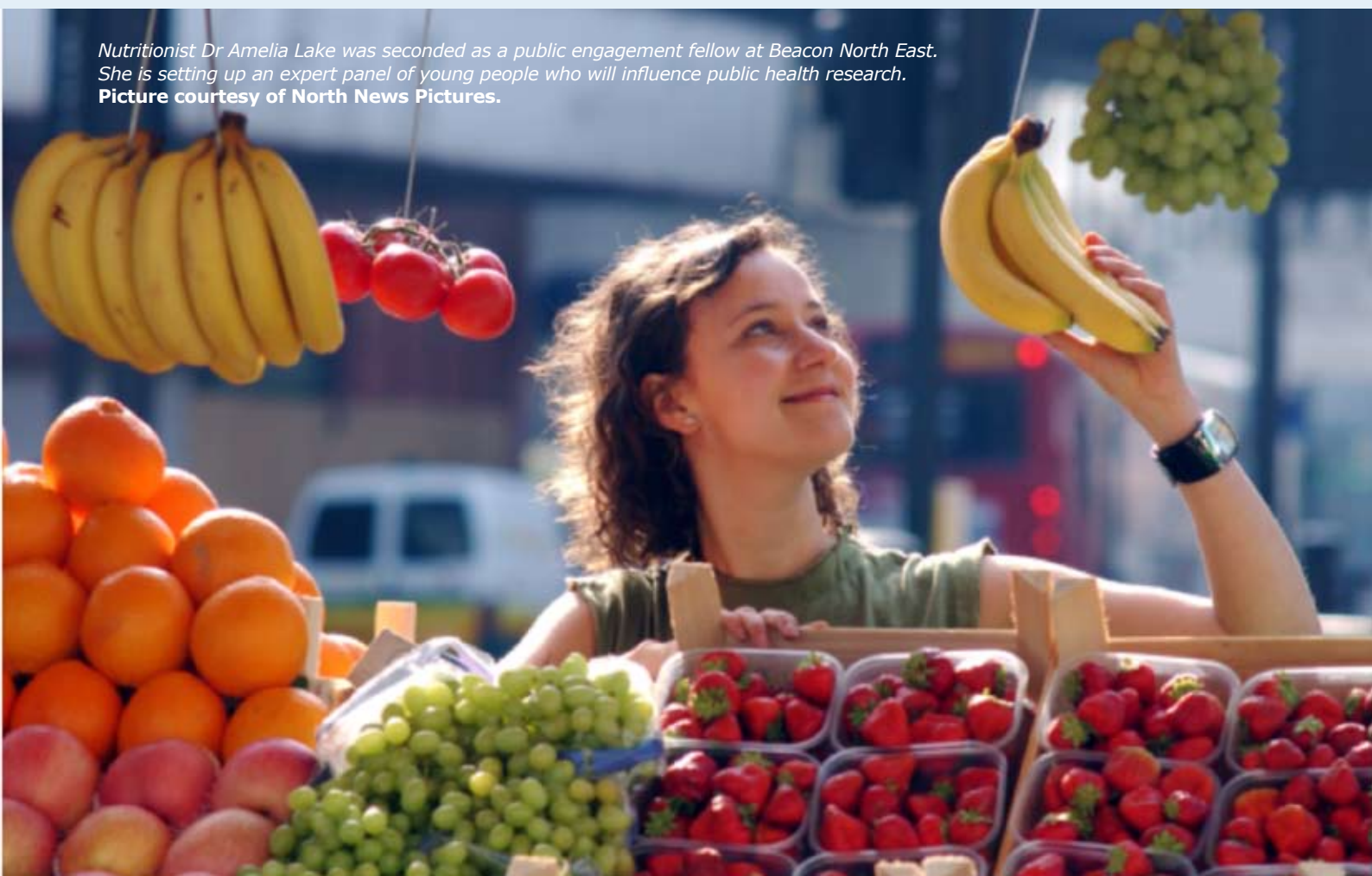
Find out more about the award and about UEA's approach here:

**[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/recognition)**

Researchers can also be encouraged to apply for national awards, such as the Royal Society's Kohn Award for Excellence in Engaging the Public with Science:

**<http://royalsociety.org/Kohn-Award/>**

*Nutritionist Dr Amelia Lake was seconded as a public engagement fellow at Beacon North East. She is setting up an expert panel of young people who will influence public health research. Picture courtesy of North News Pictures.*



## Skills, Support and Opportunities

Researchers are enabled to participate in public engagement activities through appropriate training, support and opportunities.

Public engagement can bring great benefits – for your team’s research, the institution and for the public that your staff and students engage with. But this mutual benefit can’t be taken for granted: it relies on researchers developing new skills, understanding and expertise. Recently, this has been recognised by the launch of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF), “a tool for planning, promoting and supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers in higher education” (Vitae, 2010). One of the four domains within the RDF is ‘Engagement, Influence and Impact’, recognising the critical role that engagement plays within a researcher’s career.

There are also strong synergies with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Supporting staff to engage effectively with the public is a key way in which institutions can increase the attractiveness of research careers, and contribute to the development of transferable skills and lifelong learning.

## Your challenge

- Ensuring that researchers can access informal support and formal career development to advance their skills in public engagement; and that a range of opportunities to engage with the public are on offer.
- Developing a strategic approach to staff development that integrates the demands of the two concordats and the Researcher Development Statement.

## Areas to consider

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Providing co-ordination, support and infrastructure</b>	<p>Consider how public engagement is co-ordinated across the institution to enable the sharing of good practice and help ensure activities are consistent with the institution’s policy.</p> <p>Research organisations should seek to provide practical support for researchers to engage with the public, whether delivered at a departmental, institutional or regional level (e.g. through deployment of staff). This could include administrative support, expertise, advice, access to information on financial assistance and/or signposts to examples of good practice and potential partners.</p> <p>Research organisations should actively assess and manage potential institutional and personal risks associated with public engagement.</p>	<p>Having some practical support for public engagement is important, perhaps drawn on from a central unit, or, if feasible, as part of your own departmental support infrastructure. Support can also be provided by including public engagement in the remit of appropriate existing support staff.</p> <p>The goal is to ensure that researchers can access advice, training and support, to ensure efficiency and quality in the public engagement taking place. The effective co-ordination of engagement activity, for instance through updating central web-based resources and supporting active networking, also really helps.</p> <p>You can find out about a variety of support and co-ordination mechanisms here:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</a></p>

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<p><b>Providing opportunities for researchers to get involved in public engagement and for informal learning</b></p>	<p>Research managers should support and encourage the development of their teams' public engagement practice (e.g. through professional development and appropriate participation in public engagement activities).</p> <p>Researchers share the responsibility for developing their engagement practice and are encouraged pro-actively to engage in appropriate professional development.</p> <p>Research organisations should facilitate opportunities for researchers to engage with the public.</p>	<p>For many researchers a big barrier to engaging with the public is knowing how to get started. Again, you can make a real difference by actively facilitating and communicating opportunities to get involved (e.g. through schemes like 'Researchers in Residence', or a departmental events programme), and working with senior managers to invest in a variety of practical support measures (e.g. brokerage; bursaries; fellowships; secondments). You can find out about a variety of support and co-ordination mechanisms here:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support</a></p> <p>Learning informally from colleagues and sharing public engagement experience is very valuable for researchers. Actively bringing together people from across your department (and the wider institution) with an interest in public engagement, and helping them to access and share relevant information can build a sense of community and lead to new partnerships and collaborations that significantly improve the quality of public engagement activities. You can find out about ways of supporting informal learning here:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning</a></p>
<p><b>Building formal support into CPD programmes</b></p>	<p>Research organisations are conscious of the attributes required for public engagement, recognising that such attributes are a subset of the skills, behaviours and personal qualities that researchers should be aspiring towards in their professional development (as outlined in the Researcher Development Statement and relevant professional qualifications).</p> <p>Research organisations recognise the importance of professional development in public engagement for researchers and provide access to relevant training and development opportunities (for example by integrating public engagement attributes into institutional professional development plans), ensuring that a lack of skills is not a barrier to engagement.</p>	<p>The attributes needed for public engagement are a subset of those skills, behaviours and personal qualities that researchers should be aspiring towards in their professional development (and which are spelt out in detail in the Researcher Development Statement). You can help by supporting your researchers to participate in relevant professional development programmes run by your institution or their research funder, many of which are free. The NCCPE site contains a section dedicated to advice about how to support learning and CPD internally:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning</a></p> <p>It also lists current external training courses:  <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/training">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/training</a></p>



## Supporting early career researchers to develop their public engagement skills

The Manchester Beacon and the Vitae North West Hub are working together on a programme of public engagement support for early career researchers across the North West. This was kicked off with a mini conference at Manchester Metropolitan University. At the workshop, experts shared their knowledge and experience whilst delegates attended practical workshops based on three levels of public engagement experience – beginners, developers and advanced. As part of the programme, the Manchester Beacon launched and awarded Early Career Researcher Awards to four pilot projects to create opportunities for early career researchers to communicate their research and develop supportive partnerships with experienced public engagement providers. To foster these new partnerships, a public engagement Opportunities Zone was hosted at the conference. A showcase event was held

during the Manchester Beacon Summit Week in November 2010 to celebrate and share the learning from these projects.

*"I met inspiring people that inspired me to broaden my public engagement activities."*

### Conference delegate

*"I felt it gave me renewed vigour and passion for my PhD particularly in relation to my dedication to working with members of the community on research projects."*

### Conference delegate

You can find out more about similar projects on the NCCPE website:

**[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/learning)**

Participants at a staff development event at Beacon North East, exploring the potential role of public engagement within the Research Excellence framework **Beacon North East**





## Implementation and Impact

The signatories and supporters of this Concordat will undertake regular reviews of their and the wider research sector's progress in fostering public engagement across the UK.

The signatories to the Concordat are not seeking to establish further reporting structures to monitor 'compliance'. Their expectation is that existing reporting requirements will be adequate.

## Your challenge

- Being able to articulate the outcomes and impact of the engagement activity underway in your department
- Ensuring that mechanisms are in place to allow you to monitor the effectiveness of your department's support for engagement, and the extent to which you are meeting the principles of the Concordat.

## Areas to consider

Area of focus	Concordat principles	What you can do
<b>Supporting staff to evaluate their own engagement activities and monitoring how well your research 'environment' supports researchers to engage effectively</b>	Research organisations should themselves monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the public engagement they support in addressing their strategic aims and the extent to which they are meeting the expectations outlined in this Concordat. This could include seeking feedback from staff, students and the public.	<p>There are two key challenges here: one is to ensure that your staff themselves are supported to evaluate their own engagement activity, to enhance its quality and impact.</p> <p>The NCCPE site contains links to a variety of practical evaluation guides, including RCUK's Practical Guidelines to Evaluation: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/introduction-evaluation">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how/guides/introduction-evaluation</a></p> <p>The other challenge is to monitor how effectively the environment of your department supports public engagement. The NCCPE site contains a range of practical examples to show how different institutions have gone about evaluating their engagement activities, for instance through conducting baseline surveys: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support/evaluation">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support/planning-change/support/evaluation</a></p>
<b>Sharing effective practice in public engagement with other research organisations</b>	Research organisations should work together to develop and share good practice in public engagement and in the implementation of the Concordat.	<p>You can encourage your researchers to share their expertise in public engagement both within and outside the institution. The NCCPE provides several mechanisms to support this such as the NCCPE national network or ambassadors' scheme.</p> <p>The NCCPE are also very keen to publish case studies from different institutions. You can find out more here: <a href="http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-help">www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how-we-help</a></p>



*The Butterfly Effect, CUE East & Partners, at the Norwich & Norfolk Sustainable Living Festival 2009: organised to bring university staff and students together with NGOs and community organisations to inspire discussion and debate about the future.*

Keiron Tovell

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## Other briefings to support the Concordat for engaging the public with research

You can also access the following individual briefings and guidance on implementing the Concordat from the NCCPE site:

- An introduction and overview
- Senior manager briefing
- Researcher briefing
- Managers of researchers briefing

You can download these briefings at: [www.publicengagement.ac.uk/concordat](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/concordat)

## Beacons for Public Engagement

Funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust, the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative aims to inspire a culture change in how universities and research institutes engage with the public.

It consists of:

- the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE), which co-ordinates, captures and shares learning between the Beacons and across UK higher education institutions and research institutes;
- six Beacons, university-based collaborative centres that help support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement work. The six Beacons are based in Newcastle and Durham; Manchester; CUE East UEA; UCL; Wales; and Edinburgh.

## Other NCCPE Resources

The NCCPE provides a 'one stop shop' for anyone in the university and research sector with an interest in public engagement. Set up in 2008 as part of the Beacons for Public Engagement initiative, our focus is on supporting university staff and researchers to develop their skills in engagement, and to assist senior managers to develop strategic approaches to supporting public engagement.

Our website provides:

- Advice on public engagement practice: an extensive collection of guides and case studies **[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/how)**
- Context: exploring what public engagement involves and why it matters **[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/what)** and **[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter)**
- Resources for managers: an extensive collection of resources to help institutions assess their own strategic and practical support for engagement, and a rich array of case studies and tools developed from the work of the Beacons and other institutions **[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/support)**
- The Manifesto for Public Engagement: by signing up to the manifesto, institutions can declare their strategic commitment to the Concordat principles, and access additional support and guidance from the NCCPE **[www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto](http://www.publicengagement.ac.uk/why-does-it-matter/manifesto)**

## Other Useful Links

- Research Councils UK: Public Engagement with Research **[www.rcuk.ac.uk/per](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/per)**
- Researcher Development Framework **[www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/234381/RDF-overview.html)**
- The Engaging Researcher booklet **[www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/The\\_engaging\\_researcher\\_2010.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/The_engaging_researcher_2010.pdf)**