

ADVISORY GROUP OF THE BELTANE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

INAUGURAL MEETING – 6TH NOVEMBER 2012

PRESENT

Prof Mary Bownes (Convenor) (MB)	University of Edinburgh
Dr Sarah Anderson (SA)	Beltane Network
Dr Gráinne Barkess (GB)	Edinburgh Napier University
Prof Sarah Cunningham-Burley (SCB)	University of Edinburgh
Ben Dipper (BD)	Scottish Government
Sophie Dow (SD)	Mindroom
Prof Bob Fisher (BF)	University of Edinburgh
Gillian McFadzean (GM)*	Heriot-Watt University
Donald Jarvie (DJ)	Scotland's Futures Forum
Louisa Lawes (LL)	IAD University of Edinburgh
Prof Lesley McAra (LM)	University of Edinburgh
Prof Stuart Monro (SM)	Our Dynamic Earth
Dr Heather Rea (HJR)	Beltane Network
Dr Jon Turner (JT)	University of Edinburgh

** Representing Prof Alan Miller (Heriot-Watt University)*

APOLOGIES

Prof Isobel Davidson	Queen Margaret University
Prof Alan Miller	Heriot-Watt University

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (MB)

MB introduced the first meeting of the Beltane Network Advisory Group by outlining both the Network's origins and its process of transition from Edinburgh Beltane Beacon for Public Engagement to Beltane Public Engagement Network. It was noted that all of the universities that were partners in the Edinburgh Beltane (the University of Edinburgh; Heriot-Watt University; Edinburgh Napier University; Queen Margaret University; the University of the Highlands and Islands [UHI]) are currently supporting the Beltane Network, with the exception of UHI, and that the goal of this second phase of the Beltane project is to further embed public engagement in the culture of the Beltane partner universities.

2. REVIEW OF PAST WORK AND TRANSITION (HJR)

HJR presented an overview of the Beltane's work so far and of its transition from a beacon to a network during 2012.

2.1 CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

- The Beltane approach was collaborative, innovative and inclusive. It had a core team, a steering group, and working groups.
- The Edinburgh Beltane found networking with the other RCUK Beacons to be invaluable.
- The Beltane facilitated networking events to get people together to share knowledge and make new contacts; these events modelled best engagement practice. The Beltane also built up a very strong Twitter presence.

2.2 SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS

- The Edinburgh Beltane had a small core team, supplemented by Beltane Fellows (who were mostly seconded academic staff). Some Beltane Fellows had a specific public engagement project; others used the time as a more general developmental process.
- A significant strand of the Beltane's provision was public engagement training. The Beltane's ethos was to couple training, wherever possible, with practical experience directly afterwards.

2.3 CULTURE CHANGE

- Beltane aimed at embedding culture change in higher education institutions (HEIs). To do so, it worked at three levels: people, institutional and national.
- HJR spent some time in reverse secondment at other institutions.
- Beltane worked with its partner universities to write public engagement into promotions criteria, and set up a public engagement prize with the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) – the RSE-Beltane Prize for Public Engagement.
- Beltane’s final evaluation report indicated that culture change had taken place during the project period, but HJR advised that there is always more that can be done.

2.4 WORKING WITH PARLIAMENT

- The Beltane set up a working dinner which brought together MSPs and university principals.

2.5 QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

Questions and answers are paraphrased here.

Q: *How did the other Beacons do, and what are they doing now?* **BD**

A: The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) has been funded for two more years. RCUK has also funded several public engagement Catalyst projects; the Beltane Network will work with the Aberdeen Catalyst to embed culture change in HEIs with respect to public engagement. None of the Beacons are working together as partners going forward. The Edinburgh Beltane is the only former Beacon retaining the partnership between its constituent universities now that the RCUK funding has ended. **HJR**

Q: *We are hearing a lot about work focussing on the internal life of the Beltane partner universities. Is this now the priority for the Beltane?* **BD**

A: No; it’s just that we need to get the internal mechanisms right now that funding is internal. The Beltane’s external vision and partners are still crucial and the focus of the Beltane’s activity. **MB**

Q: *What is the University of Edinburgh doing about global grand challenges? Does the public know what we're doing? Work on these themes is more important than ever during the current economic climate.* **BF**

A: The University of Edinburgh is going into its third year of public lectures on global grand challenges, but there's more to do. **MB**

Q: *Did the Beltane do any analysis of who its public is? In a city like Edinburgh, it is easy just to engage with the usual suspects.* **SM**

A: There is no single homogeneous audience for the Beltane itself. Courses were run to assist researchers in identifying their audience. The aim was not to get researchers to do different research, but rather to ensure maximum access to what they're doing. **HJR**

Comments:

- **SCB:**
 - The Beltane needs to link with best practice in research units, some of which pre-date the Beltane.
 - There is more funding for public engagement than ever before – the Beltane should be encouraged in pursuing it.
 - Grass-roots level engagement, as well as engagement at policy level, would be good to see.
- **GM:** Relating to SCB's first point, the reason Heriot-Watt has not yet appointed the Beltane Project Officer it committed to fund is because researchers have indicated they may need different types of support.
- **SM:** It would be good for the Beltane to maximise opportunities to work with professional organisations.
- **LM:** The Scottish context of the Beltane is important. Universities should be doing more with the general public, not policy makers, on the Independence Debate.
- **HJR:** There is the option to establish new project groups for the Beltane Network; these would be short-term groups to look at work in specific areas. A group looking at evaluation is one possibility, as is a group looking at a particular thematic priority. **GM** added the possibility of a group to coordinate training.

3. BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE BELTANE NETWORK (JT)

JT outlined the business plan currently being developed for the next three years of the Beltane. At present, some partners have committed to fund the project only until the end of 2013; the business plan currently under development will be used to secure support beyond this date.

JT outlined three potential funding models for the Beltane beyond the end of 2013:

1. **Top-slicing from partner university budgets:** In this model, the Beltane would provide a range of its current core functions to its partner universities: building external partnerships; running the Beltane Fellowship programme; recording activities for institution-level reporting. There would be some limited capacity for project work, such as creation of bespoke researcher development activities for particular units.
2. **Pay-per-use:** The Beltane would operate like a social enterprise, with partner universities paying for provision as they demand it. This would allow the Beltane to be highly responsive to partner university needs. Considerable time would need to be invested in establishing viable costing models.
3. **Project-based:** The Beltane's staff would work on large thematic projects identified by partner universities. One or two projects over five years is a starting assumption. Project themes could be developed by drawing on different Beltane strengths and consideration of how themes might be relevant to non-academic partners. It is likely that additional project-based funding would be required for this model to be possible.

The next twelve months would be an opportunity to pilot aspects of these models. Some decisions about what the Beltane should prioritise during this pilot period need to be made by Christmas 2012.

3.1 QUESTIONS ABOUT AND COMMENTS ON THE BELTANE'S BUSINESS PLAN

Q: *Isn't the Beltane something that the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) or Scottish Government would pay for?* **BF**

A: The SFC and Scottish Government expect universities to support this activity using the funding they receive through the Outcome Agreements. **MB and DJ**

Addition by JT: A mechanism like the Beltane isn't the only way to deliver on Outcome Agreements. However, all university partners have already committed to funding the Beltane for three years except for one, and it is difficult to make considered decisions about the future in less than three years.

Add. by GM: Partner universities are already undertaking Beltane-type activities outside a Beltane structure.

Add. by BF: Even if there is the expectation that core university funds be spent on Beltane-type activities, this funding is often already committed.

Q: Why would a researcher ever ask the Beltane to provide him with the services the Beltane has said it could offer? BF

A: Principal investigators on research funding applications will need to think more and more about public engagement. **JT**

Add. From MB: Researchers still have a long way to go before they realise that public engagement is an issue which has important implications for them – but it does.

Add. From SCB: The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) at the University of Edinburgh has had an ethos of public engagement firmly embedded in its culture from the outset. There is no doubt that public engagement is becoming ever more important to funders.

Comments:

- **LM:** To develop a viable pay-per-use model would be time-consuming: might be better to support actual engagement activity, especially when the project has already been so successful. In response, **JT** noted that, even at this stage, some partners wish to pay only for what they're getting. The advantage of a cost-recovery model is that it would allow the Beltane to provide more granular support.
- **BF:** To make the pay-per-use model work, the Beltane's staff would need to develop sales skills; given this, the third model – project-based – may be preferable. **BF** also noted that he would like to see more actual engagement activity and less training undertaken by the Beltane, as the impact of the former is more measurable. In response, **SCB** pointed out that capacity will need to be continually built, and the Beltane is better-placed to do this than individual centres.
- **LM:** The thematic projects proposed under business model three – project-based – are attractive. Project themes could be determined in partnership with academic

departments who are prepared to match-fund a particular project. **BD** added that to meet Scottish Government needs, the Beltane would need to organise the decision of its thematic priorities in line with those of the Government; fellowships are one way to bring together competing issues and demands. **GM and BD** noted that in some policy areas, the Beltane would have competition from organisations like the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation and the Moredun Research Institute.

- **LM:** ‘Beltane’ is a Scottish name, but much talk at this Advisory Group has been about grand challenges. There are a lot of problems on our back door here in Scotland. **BD** added that local government is what touches people.
- **JT:** There is an opportunity to link the next round of Beltane Fellowships to thematic priorities; these would go some way towards exploring the third business model (project-based). Linking decisions about these topics to universities’ planning rounds would delay the call considerably, so Advisory Group members are asked to give feedback on potential topics by the end of November 2012.

4. AGREEMENT TO REMIT OF ADVISORY GROUP

No member present disagreed with the proposed remit of the Beltane Network Advisory Group (appendix 1).

5. UPDATES FROM ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

- **SD**
The last Mindroom conference had over fifty speakers organised into two strands – science and reality; the conference was a huge success. The big vision of Mindroom has always been to create a building with clinic, education and research unit under same roof – like a Maggie's Centre. Mindroom is now in dialogue with the University of Edinburgh about this and is speaking to one or two philanthropists.
- **BF**
The College of Science and Engineering at the University of Edinburgh has been undertaking a project to produce one-minute videos of researchers talking about their work – ‘Research in a Nutshell’. So far, 350 videos have been produced, and will be promoted shortly.
- **GM**
Heriot-Watt has been undertaking a project similar to ‘Research in a Nutshell’. The University is also exploring some of the work which came to light during the latest competition of the Principal’s Public Engagement Prize.

- **BD**
BD and colleagues have been working to produce a response to a report from the STEM Education Committee. BD is also on the steering group of the Sciencewise initiative and is looking for ways to encourage the group to be more active in Scotland. BD is looking into running a training session with Oliver Escobar (a Beltane Fellow) on the local authority policy process in Scotland.
- **DJ**
Scotland's Futures Forum is currently doing a seminar series to stop people thinking in silos; it references Horizon 2020
- **LM**
As Head of School, LM has been trying to bring about culture change with respect to public engagement in Law at the University of Edinburgh; engagement is now built into the School's strategic objectives. In her own research, LM has been working with the Grassmarket Community Centre on how to get silenced voices into debates and has introduced a street-law honours course. The School of Law runs a free legal advice centre and a children's advocacy project, and is developing a fourth University of Edinburgh Global Academy – the Global Justice Academy. LM would like to explore running a Beltane Fellowship in partnership between the School of Law and the Beltane Network.
- **JT**
JT's key priority is to maximise the value of the Beltane Network for its host, the Institute for Academic Development at the University of Edinburgh, and vice-versa. Part of this will involve looking holistically at career development support.
- **SCB**
SCB has recently become Head of School of Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences at the University of Edinburgh and will shortly be meeting with the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine's public engagement team. CRFR, of which SCB is Co-Director, has pioneered using working groups to identify key research challenges; there is potential to share this best practice more widely. SCB was involved with Gengage and would like to sustain the network's activities with the Colleges of Science and Engineering and Medicine and Veterinary Medicine at the University of Edinburgh.
- **GB**
Napier University has been reflecting on its policy and procedures for promotions, and is looking at buying out the time of contract research staff to allow them to undertake public engagement.

- **LL**
A priority will be to find a way to manage the administrative work of the Beltane Network so that Beltane staff time is not over-consumed by this. The sharing of places on courses among Beltane partners is another area for work.
- **SM**
SM is a member of Scottish Consortium for Rural Research, whose recent seminar on public engagement was oversubscribed. He is in the process of putting together a bid for Heritage Lottery funding for a new gallery at Our Dynamic Earth.
- **MB**
MB has recently visited the public engagement team at Connecticut University and was impressed by their system for making public engagement work undertaken by students credit-bearing.

6. ACTIONS

- **HJR: To speak individually with Advisory Group members over the coming weeks.**
- **All: Discuss potential Beltane business models, project groups and Fellowship themes with own organisation.**
- **BD: Provide advice to help 'future-proof' Fellowship themes.**
- **SA: Minutes of Advisory Group meeting to be posted on Beltane Network website.**
- **SA: Updates from Advisory Group members to be included in next Beltane newsletter.**

Produced by Dr Sarah Anderson, Public Engagement Officer, Beltane Public Engagement Network (created on 8th November 2012; finalised on 28th January 2013).

Paper B – Please read and be prepared to provide details of any suggested changes

ADVISORY GROUP REMIT DRAFT

MEETINGS

Meetings will be twice per year in October and in April.

PURPOSE

The remit of the group will be to:

- Provide advice on the direction of Beltane activities and guidance on business plans
- Highlight opportunities for the Beltane
- Identify and support potential Beltane collaborations with other relevant initiatives

In addition the members from the universities/colleges will:

- Act as representatives from their university/college, providing their university/college perspective on discussions and reporting back the developments of the Beltane activities to the appropriate management groups
- Champion and support public engagement activities and work in their university/college
- Promote relevant Beltane activities in their university/college

MEMBERSHIP

The Members of the Advisory Group will be invited to represent the partner organisation and key stakeholders of the network.

Membership Role	Name
Convenor	Senior VP Mary Bownes
Member nominated by Head of College of CHSS (new)	Prof Lesley McAra, HOS Law
Member nominated by Head of College of CSE (new)	Prof Bob Fisher, Dean of Research
Member nominated by Head of College of CMVM (new)	Prof Sarah Cunningham Burley
Representative from Heriot Watt University	Deputy Principal Alan Miller
Representative from Edinburgh Napier University	Dr Gráinne Barkess
Representative from Queen Margaret University	Prof Isobel Davidson
Member of Public (new)	Sophie Dow, Mindroom

Representative of non-academic associations	tbc
Parliamentary Engagement (new)	Donald Jarvie, Scotland's Futures Forum
Scottish Government Engagement	Ben Dipper
Project Lead	Heather Rea
Director of IAD (new)	Jon Turner

Representatives from the Beltane Public Engagement Network other key groups or stakeholders may be invited to attend for specific meetings or agenda items.