

PROJECT REPORT AND WORKSHEETS

BELTANE ENGAGEMENT NETWORK

2ND SEPTEMBER 2016

Summary of findings and recommendations

Observation: People who use Beltane's services are clear on the value it provides to them, but there isn't a shared understanding of the Network's services, aims, value and ways of working across services, users, stakeholders and partners

- **Recommended:** Co-developing the Network's definition would help build a presentation of Beltane that works outwardly for the public partner institutions seek to engage, and inwardly for the partners and staff

Observation: Beltane was created over eight years ago, during which time the public engagement landscape has evolved. The next priorities for Beltane aren't presently clear

- **Recommended:** *Possible* priorities which have emerged from Snook's research need to be developed, selected and prioritised, but include:
 1. Communicating more clearly about Beltane (aims, services, expectations) and public engagement more generally
 2. Reflecting deeply on the link between public engagement and impact
 3. Using public engagement to promote cross-disciplinary work
 4. Influencing local and national decision-makers
 5. Strengthening relationships between Beltane partners, helping them to balance collaboration and competition
 6. Daring greatly – consider to create novel and risky engagement opportunities like the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas

Observation: Public engagement at Beltane's partner institutions has evolved in different over the last eight years, meaning the partners need different types of support

- **Recommended:** Develop a model whereby the different but equally valuable contributions of each partner are recognised, and Beltane reciprocates with the services that that particular partner really needs

Observed: There seems to be a gap between the core Beltane team of two members of staff and each of the partner institutions

- **Recommended:** Put in place a clear and empowered Beltane contact point in each partner

*Sarah Anderson, Beltane Public Engagement Network
22nd November 2016*

Introduction

From June to August 2016, Snook worked with the Beltane Public Engagement Network to help rethink its vision and services. Along with the Beltane team, we worked with the stakeholders and people who already engage with or could engage with Beltane.

The research and engagement phase used a mixture of short supported interviews and facilitated group activities. The aim was to capture the value of the organisation to participants, what worked well or not so well, and what they need from a 'public engagement network'.

Timeline

- June 6th - Stakeholder mapping session with Heather
- June 6th - Interviews at the Beltane Annual Gathering (Edinburgh)
- June 20th - Workshop during the Fellows' lunch (Edinburgh)
- June 23rd - The Beltane team continued the research at the Threshold meeting
- August 17th - Workshop with guests of the Beltane network

The insights drawn from the interviews were shared separately and will be enriched with the contributions from the workshops.

We found that the people who use Beltane services are clear on the value it provides to them. However, there doesn't seem to be a shared understanding of the services, aims, value and ways of working across services, users, stakeholders and partners.

The report will provide Beltane with a framework to help continue the work to re-design its identity and services with its partners. It will be built as a series of worksheets exploring the following questions.

[Introduction](#)

[What is Beltane?](#)

[Beltane definition worksheet](#)

[Who is Beltane?](#)

[What is the value of Beltane to stakeholders?](#)

[What are the priorities for the next x years?](#)

[What services does Beltane offer?](#)

[A new working model?](#)

The quotes in italic in the report are taken from the post-it and notes gathered during the sessions and the interviews.

1. What is Beltane?

The definition of Beltane presented on the website is mainly aimed at service users.

The Beltane Public Engagement Network (Beltane) is a network for people interested in making academic research accessible to a wide variety of audiences. Beltane is supported by four Edinburgh universities: The University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University.

It doesn't help the partners understand (and remember) *how* they support Beltane, especially as the landscape of public engagement and the funding of Beltane have evolved since its launch.

While service users are clear on the value that Beltane provides them, there doesn't seem to be a strong and shared understanding of what Beltane is, what it provides, how it provides it and to whom among stakeholders and partners.

“Articulate their offer more clearly - I find it a bit difficult to understand their role and remit, what they do and don't do.”

Suggestions / working drafts

“Beltane is a public engagement asset shared by the Universities based in Edinburgh.”

“Beltane allows the Universities based in Edinburgh to share their public engagement assets.”

“Beltane is a network that allows the partners to share approaches, resources and assets for public engagement.”

“Through Beltane, the four Edinburgh Universities gather a network of people interested in making research accessible to a variety of audiences and share approaches and resources to maximise their impact.”

“Through Beltane, the four Edinburgh Universities gather a network of people interested in making research accessible to a variety of audiences. The Universities share approaches and resources to increase the reach and breadth of their public engagement.”

Co-developing this definition would help build a presentation of Beltane that works outwardly for the public and inwardly for the partners and staff.

Beltane definition worksheet



What is Beltane?

Updated definition added to the Beltane website in October 2016:

Beltane is a brand which denotes activities that support innovative, high quality public engagement with research at the four universities in Edinburgh.

Physically, Beltane has two dedicated staff who are currently based on Holyrood Road, Edinburgh (in the Institute for Academic Development). These two staff act as shepherds, making sure that things happen. The suite of work delivered under the Beltane brand is much larger than just these two jobs, involving all sorts of stakeholders:

- Researchers from all of Edinburgh's universities (and beyond)
- University students
- Public engagement support staff in universities
- University management
- Beltane Fellows
- Associates from outside Edinburgh's universities (e.g. the Scottish Parliament, the NHS, the National Museum of Scotland, the Edinburgh Fringe)
- Members of the public

For this reason, the project is described as the Beltane Public Engagement **Network**.

The Beltane Network is not a members club. Simply by being part of a university in Edinburgh, you are part of the Network, and we would love to see you at our events! We also do not have a list of external 'preferred partners': if you would like to exchange knowledge with researchers at one or more of Edinburgh's universities, we will do our best to help, regardless of where you are from.

This is an interim definition and can be changed!

2. Who is Beltane?

The following groups emerged as stakeholders of Beltane:

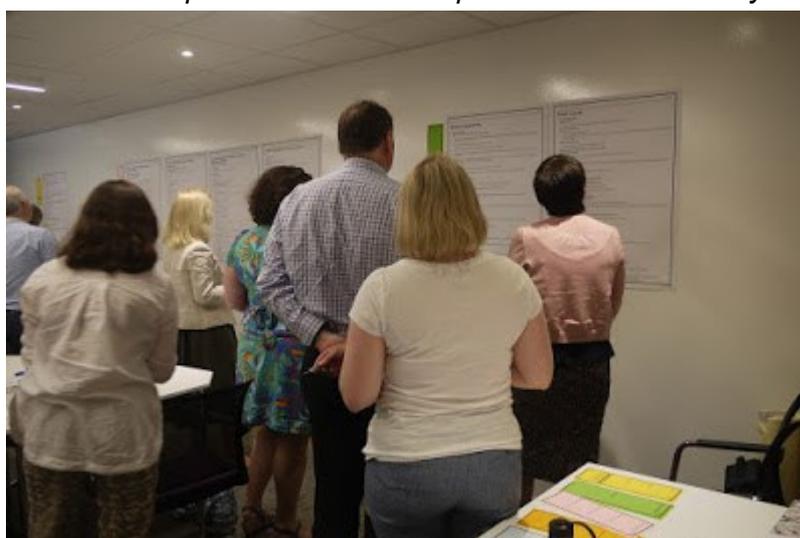
- Publics
- Funders
- Partner universities
- Researchers
- PE professionals
- Beltane network (members, associates, fellows, advisory group - overlap in part with groups above)
- The wider landscape of PE

There is wide diversity behind the single term of ‘publics’, from communities to businesses, third sector to the Scottish Government and local authorities. It would be beneficial to run a separate exercise to explore who are the ‘publics’ and what might their motivations and needs are, but in the meantime, it is useful to keep this diversity in mind when going through the rest of the document.

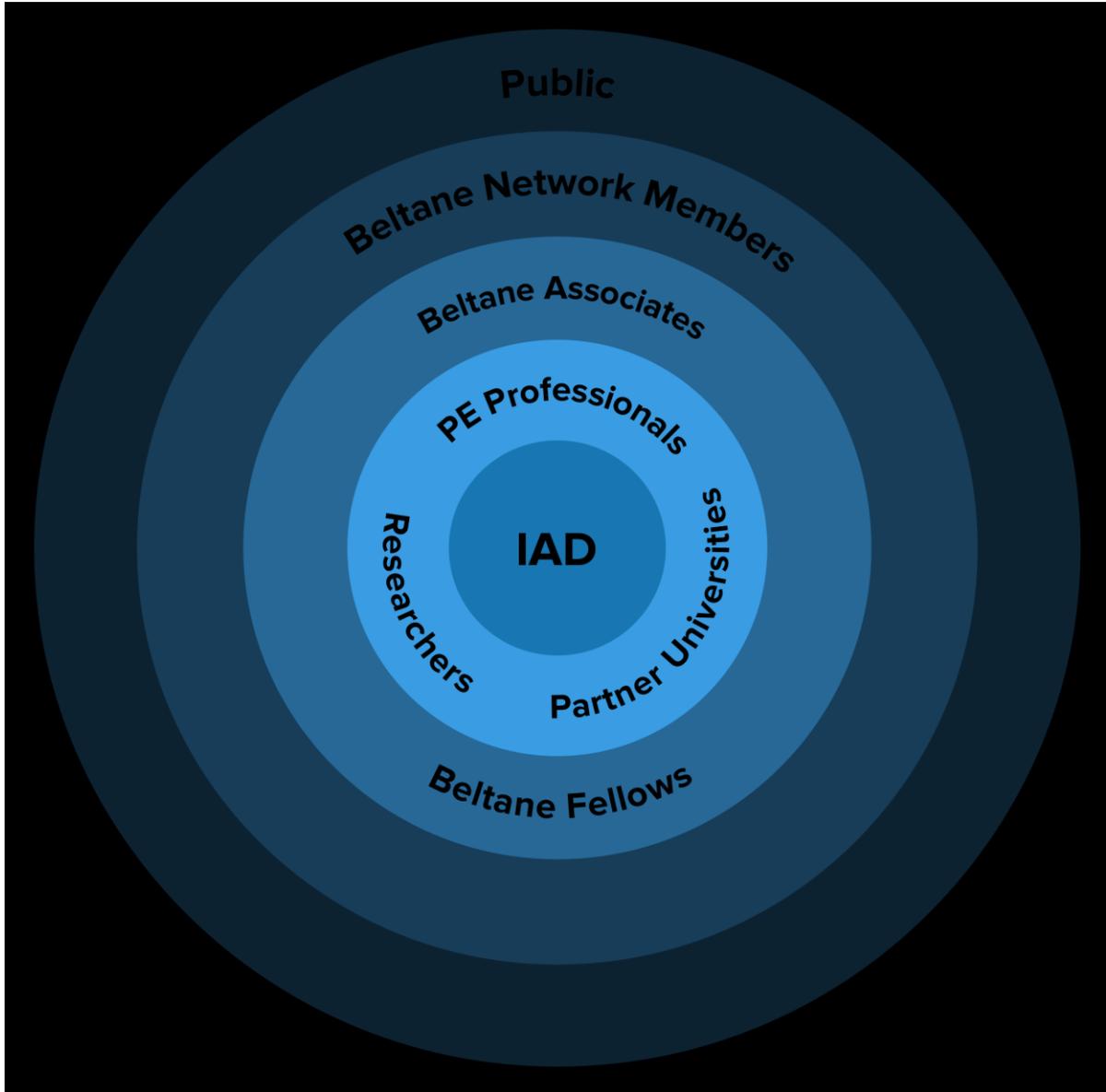
Beltane is composed of several circles: the IAD staff, the associates, the Fellows, the network and the advisory group. There is opportunity to clarify roles, expectations, value and how they interact with each other in order to increase ‘buy-in’ and support from the partners.

There seems to be a gap around a working group composed of two members of staff and a representative from each partner university in order to foster closer working relationships.

“Need a clear and empowered PE contact point in each University.”



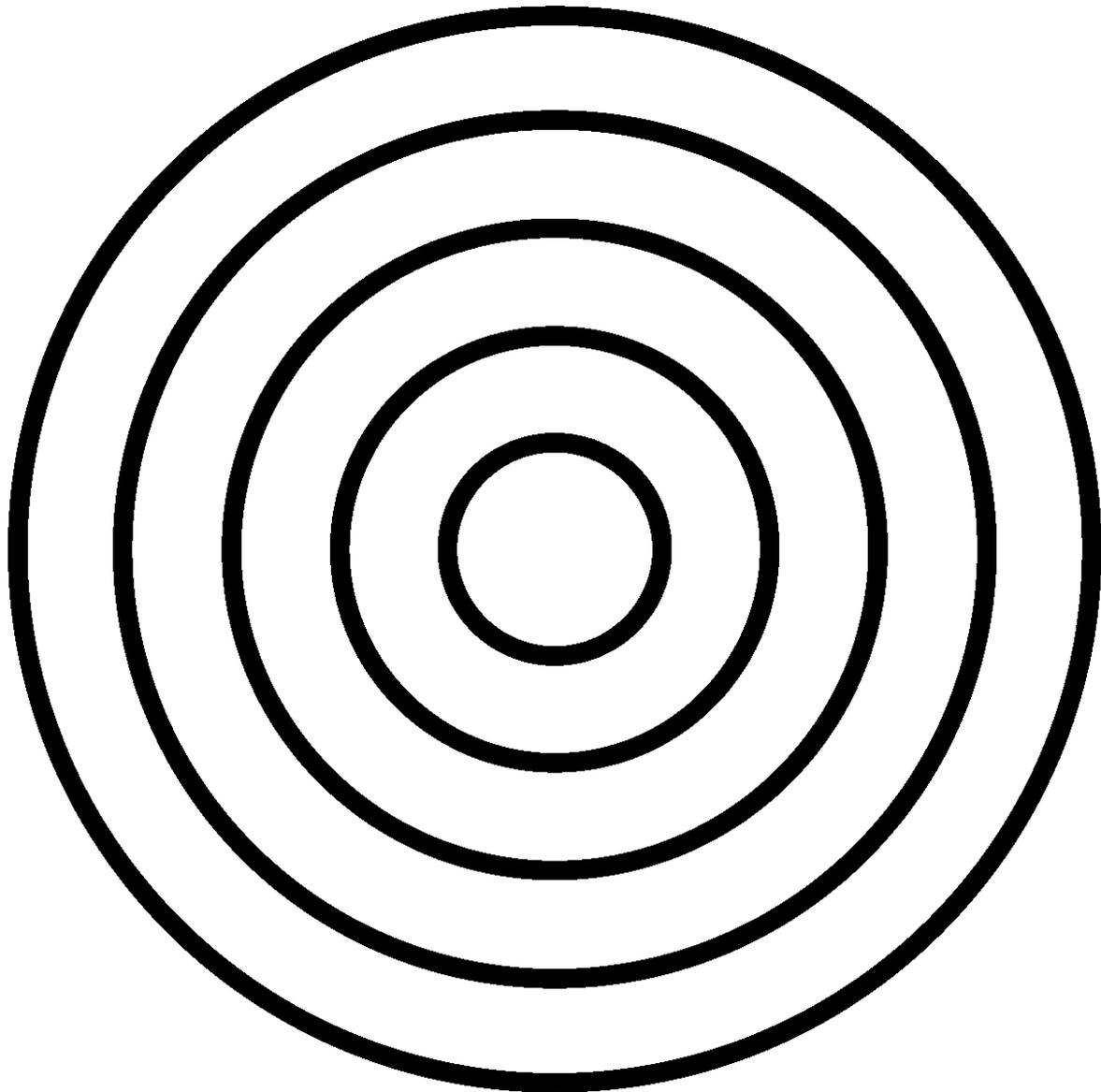
Stakeholder Map



The editable file can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B43M06gjTF50RHBrM3IuU2stR2c>

Stakeholder worksheet



3. What is the value of Beltane to stakeholders?

During the workshop, we assumed that the discussion would start at the benefit of a public engagement *network*, but a lot of the discussions seemed to be around the benefit of public engagement in itself so we have included it here.

The discussions around value often focus on *what* the organisation provides i.e. its services. What we're talking about is what benefit will they draw from it? How will it change their practice or their lives? During one of the activities, the 'disrupter' challenged the conversation by asking "Who cares?", "So what?". It's those passionate answers that need to be articulated and communicated clearly. It's not *what* Beltane does but *why* should the stakeholder engage.

The detail of participants' input is available here, in particular the "Beltane helped me, then I could..." section:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B7OyOxW5aW5eF5VmpadVE2UE0>

The table below attempts to sum the value identified by the participants. They are presented here only as a starting point for a further conversation.

Stakeholder	What is the value of public engagement to them? [Why should they bother?]	What is the value of a network to each stakeholder group?
PE Professionals	<i>PE professionals are passionate about connecting researchers with the publics</i>	<i>Helps them continuously improve their PE practice and grow in confidence in order to maximise their impact</i>
Researchers	<i>PE allows researchers to connect their research with the publics to involve them in the research, increase its visibility and impact (and meet funding requirements?)</i>	<i>The network complements the PE support researchers receive from their university by providing additional awareness, credibility, training, support and networking</i>
Partner universities	<i>PE allows the Universities to increase and demonstrate the impact of their research (link to funding?)</i>	<i>The network allows the partner universities to raise awareness of PE, share resources to deliver innovative, impactful and efficient PE</i>
Funders	<i>Ensure that the investment in research delivers tangible impact and benefits to the community</i>	<i>Funders want to see that the resources dedicated to PE are used wisely and shared among universities</i>
Publics	<i>Have access to quality events, world-</i>	<i>The network maximises the number of</i>

	<i>class research to inform their decisions, make people's voices heard and find a way into universities</i>	<i>opportunities, increases their quality and facilitates access.</i>
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Value worksheet

Stakeholder	What is the value of <i>public engagement</i> to this stakeholder group?	What is the value of a <i>network</i> to each stakeholder group?

4. What are the priorities for the next 5 years?

The original purpose and priorities that prompted the creation of the Beltane network are relatively clear. However, as the public engagement landscape evolved and the funding changed, the next set of priorities doesn't appear to be clear. It might be that they are defined and 'simply' need to be communicated better or that an exercise is carried out to redefine these priorities for the next time period.

These possible priorities raised below draw on all the participants' input - use case cards, opportunities, Beltane helped me, and MoSCoW; which can all be found here.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B7OyOxW5aWeFeHk5VmpadVE2UE0>

These priorities are presented as *possibilities*. They would need to be developed, selected and prioritise by the Beltane team and with the advisory group.

4.1. Showcase PE and the network

It has to be a priority of the next phase to improve the communication **around Beltane** and **around public engagement in general**: clarify and communicate clearly the aims, benefits, and services that Beltane provides and what can each stakeholder group expect of Beltane.

This clear outward-facing communication (to the publics, researchers, PE professionals) needs to be supplemented by continuous 'inward' **communication from Beltane to the partners** to build a dialogue on expectations and ways of working.

"How has the network made a difference to-date?"

4.2. Explore the link between public engagement and impact

The REF agenda will clearly be on everyone's priority list but there is an opportunity for Beltane to invite the partner universities, researchers and PE professionals to deepen their reflection by exploring the link between public engagement and impact.

"How does PE overlap with the REF agenda?"

Part of this reflection could be around disseminating research that is closely linked to issues high on the social, political and economic agenda.

"Opportunity to provide the public with impartial evidence."

"The public trust experts and not seeing them as special or out-of-touch."

"Inspiring companies to implement research findings."

“Scottish Parliament.”

4.3. PE as an opportunity for cross-discipline work

Beltane could use its network to foster opportunities for multidisciplinary projects and help people interested in collaboration to find each other.

“Cross-disciplinary working strengthens PE.”

“Linking disciplines together in combined events (eg: science + social / humanities).”

4.4. Widen engagement

What are the frontiers of public engagement that Beltane will aim to tackle during its next phase?

Are we working enough with hard-to-reach groups? Can we widen the reach to a Scotland-wide role? Are there opportunities for deeper engagement with the third sector? With the NHS and Health & Social Integrated Partnerships? Are Beltane & PE professionals working with researchers who are the easiest to engage? Helping recruit participants for studies. Facilitating access to new or hard-to-reach publics is incredibly useful.

4.5. Influence decision-makers

“Linking universities to policy development & financial decisions at national and local levels.”

4.6. Strengthen relationships between the partners

Participants highlighted how Beltane finds itself at the crux of a discussion that is bigger than itself. The universities are at the same time *collaborators* and *competitors* for impact, funding etc. At any given time, there is an encouragement towards *sharing* approaches, knowledge and resources as much as there are *barriers*. Being by essence a partnership structure, Beltane suffers from this pendulum back and forth.

“Competition or Collaboration?”

“Are partner universities sharing all the could? Should they share everything?”

However the fact that universities *have to* work together together also came through clearly. Resolving this collaborating/competing in the context of public engagement would benefit the partner universities.

The other aspect raised around the importance of sharing assets was in order to achieve critical mass, maximise impact and realise economies of scale.

“Critical mass.”

“Creating activities with more impact than one university would alone.”

“Build critical mass and economies of scale between universities.”

“Create critical mass for expensive training that partners can’t do alone.”

4.7. Dare greatly

Researchers felt that Beltane gives credibility to public engagement. It shares examples of good practice, even the most radical engagement. Many people quoted the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas as a very successful engagement. To continue increasing the visibility of public engagement in general, and of its value, Beltane could pursue other high-visibility projects.

“Make PE normal” ... “or make it exceptional!”

“Beltane allows people to take risks.”

“I could do different, more risky types of PE than are not just based on outcomes and outputs, but PE as a process.”

“Create opportunities to open doors - some of which one would never even know were there eg. Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas; Scotland’s futures forum.”



MOSCOW worksheet

<p style="text-align: right;">SNOOK</p> <hr/> <p>In the future Beltane</p> <p style="text-align: center;">must</p> <hr/> <p>In the future Beltane</p> <p style="text-align: center;">should</p> <hr/> <p>In the future Beltane</p> <p style="text-align: center;">could</p> <hr/> <p>In the future Beltane</p> <p style="text-align: center;">wont</p>
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5. What services does Beltane offer?

Each of the services can be seen on a spectrum: from light-touch engagement to more in-depth support, from working with researchers early in their career to offering CPD to PE professionals etc. This progression is presented by the arrows on the left hand side. They leave room (represented by ...) for existing or new levels of services.

5.1. Skills development: learn

Participants saw an opportunity for Beltane to share more information about PE and sign-post to other sources of information. Beltane should continue a reflection on what does each stakeholder group want to know about PE, and develop specific communication strategy to respond to each group.

There was a particular emphasis on the importance of sharing best practice more widely - within the network, within or across universities and learning from the developments in the wider landscape (literature reviews).

- | Introduce the public to PE
- | Increase awareness of PE within the partner universities (incl. value)
- | Examples of good practice
- | ...
- ↓ Disseminate PE literature reviews among PE professionals in Edinburgh

“Beltane helped me learn what PE really is (I thought I knew but I didn’t).”

“Links to literature on PE or recorded webinars.”

5.2. Skills development: train

Beltane’s training offer is well established and clearly valued by the participants who had accessed it. It helps them embed PE in their research which increases its impact. They are able to teach others, observe greater self-confidence and generally ‘take PE to the next level’. The training supports people at various stages of their PE experience, from novices to experts.

We invite you to read in more detail the feedback provided in the ‘Beltane helped me ... then I could..’ posters and the use cases.

- | Offer training material and information online to wide range of interested parties
- | Offer training to researchers early in their career
- | ...

| ...

↓ Offer CPD and train-the-trainer training courses

“Offer to network specific expertise skills training, not just generic”

5.3. Skills development: support

It appears that Beltane already unofficially has a flexible support model for researchers. In some areas, Beltane works with a PE professional who, in turn, support the researchers. In other areas, Beltane works with the researchers directly. This flexibility works well to provide value where it is most needed and not duplicate support already provided by the partner universities. However, we found that this flexibility is not clearly understood and causes confusion. Instead of removing it, it might be beneficial to clarify the working model (see section 7. below) and clearly communicate the services provided, and to whom.

- | Sign-post toward PE support available within each partner university
- | ...
- | Offer guidance to PE professionals who support researchers
- | Offer support to researchers who might not have additional PE support in-house

↓ ...

“Providing a critical friendly view of PE practice.”

5.4. Support a network of PE professionals

Beltane is the catalyst for a network of people interested in public engagement from a variety of backgrounds: universities, researchers, publics etc... As mentioned earlier, it might be beneficial to clarify the circles of this network and their roles so that they are clear not only to themselves, but also to others.

- | Network
- | Associates
- | Fellows
- | Advisory group
- | Partners contact groups
- | IAD staff

↓ ...

To help better define each of these circles and how they work together, Beltane could follow the same framework presented here. Example for the network:

1. What is the network?

2. Who is the network?
3. How does it help deliver the benefits of Beltane to each stakeholder group?
4. What priorities does it help deliver?
5. What does it do?
6. How does it work with the other circles?
7. How might that look?

“Outwith the bubble of work colleagues.”

“Beltane helped me connect with like-minded people.”

5.5. Connect publics and universities

A two-way dialogue: help people outside the university who are trying to connect with people inside the university and vice-versa. Beltane is ideally placed between the university and outside world to broker greater access between the two.

“As a pair of motion designers, I need to meet communicators who need videos so that we can collaborate”

“As a science festival organiser, I need easier access to researchers that are keen to work with us”

“Then I could do PE in new environments, Fringe, Parliament”

5.6. Share assets between partners

Participants of the workshop indicated that each university might be able to contribute various assets that can be shared across partners. From event spaces to social media experience, health and safety expertise, funding expertise, and discussions around achieving critical mass. “Assets” should be understood in the widest sense (see also Strengthening relationships between universities)

5.7. Facilitate funding

“Does it give the opportunity to collaborate on bids for external funding for public engagement projects across the universities?”

“Developing partnerships to apply for funding and running innovative PE projects is key.” “Beltane helped me with funding and to continue projects that were coming to an end otherwise.”



Services worksheet

Use case cards are a way to capture and prioritise what people need from a service. In this case, it will be useful to consider each service from the point of view of each stakeholder group i.e. not simply “What does a researcher need from the training?” but “What does each partner university need from the training?”. Considering each service from each point of view will help articulate the value and align the interests of the stakeholders.

	As a...	when...	I need... (from Beltane)	So that...
Learn				
Learn				

	As a...	when...	I need... (from Beltane)	So that...

6. A new working model?

As public engagement has matured across all partner universities, there is an opportunity to define a flexible working model that recognises partners might be at different points in their public engagement, they need different things from Beltane and are able to contribute differently.

This flexibility might bring clarity on what Beltane can do and how each partner contributes and uses its services. It might also provide a mechanism to recognise the contribution of each partner. The partner universities would work together and with Beltane to define how they interact with each service.

Contributes >>	Service	>> Needs
	Develop knowledge	
	Train	
	Support	
	Network	
	Connect to the publics	
	Share assets	
	Funding	

University A working model

Contributes >>	Service	>> Needs
University A has a PE researcher who can share the latest developments in PE research with Beltane	Develop knowledge	
University A is able to offer/ would like to provide training to researchers early in their career >>	Train	>> University A needs advanced CPD training for their PE professionals
	Support	
	Network	
University A is able to liaise with a social enterprise network who is interested in	Connect to the publics	
	Share assets	
University A 'houses' Beltane for financial and administrative aspects and so that it can put forward funding proposals >>	Funding	

University B working model

Contributes >>	Service	>> Needs
	Develop knowledge	>> University B is interested to receive information about the latest PE research
	Train	>> University B needs training for researchers early on in their careers
	Support	>> University B doesn't have an in-house PE professionals so would like Beltane to support researchers directly
	Network	
University B has strong connections with its local yyy community and is able to connect researchers from other Universities to them >>	Connect to the publics	>> University B needs support engaging with community zzz

University B is able to offer training rooms >>	Share assets	>> University B needs support to promote their researchers' engagement events
	Funding	

Service model worksheet

Contributes >>	Service	>> Needs