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This is the presentation given at the 4th European Conference of Apidology, 7-9th September 2010 at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey

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The University of Sussex lies in the south of England just above Brighton and within the South Downs National Park

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The Laboratory of Apiculture and Social Insects (LASI) lies on the edge of the University campus so that bees can be kept close by for research and teaching purposes. We also have a second apiary located in a field at the top of campus

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Professor Francis Ratnieks
5 Postdoctoral researchers
6 PhD students
1 Junior Researcher
1 Volunteer (Retired)
Various student volunteers



Laboratory began in October 2008, officially opened in April 2009
Members represent nine different countries

LASI is led by Prof Francis Ratnieks and has quickly grown to the currently 13 members in the team

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Engagement with Business and Community

- Facing greater challenges and opportunities to live in a peaceful and intellectually and culturally stimulating world
- Live in a globally connected world, yet struggle to understand and enjoy the diversity of other peoples and the multiculturalism in our own nation
- Value clearly the benefits of higher education (HE) to wealth creation, but perhaps don't celebrate enough the civilising contribution that HE can make to a more complex social environment
- HE prepares people for participation in civic life and gives them skills needed for rational problem-solving, but also provides resources for intellectual and cultural enrichment that make the world a more exciting and vital place to live

Strategic Plan of Higher Education Funding Council for England

Sussex University has adopted the principles of the Higher Education Funding Council for England with respect to our involvement with business world and the community in general

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- What is public communication?
- Why is this important?
- Examples from LASI
- Measuring impact
- Conclusions



This presentation covers the following topics

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What is public communication?

- It describes the many ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public
- It is generally a two-way process involving interaction and listening, generating a mutual benefit
- Is focused on individuals (people and communities) or organisations (business, government, NGOs, charities, professional bodies etc.)

Public communication can also be termed public engagement, outreach and extension work

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Informing

- Presentations and talks for the public
- Displays at open days or festivals
- Working with the media, e.g. writing for the non-specialist, broadcast
- Providing advice to members of the public or external organisations



Public communication can be classified under three different categories : Informing, Exchanging, and Collaborating

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Exchanging

- Interactive discussions, e.g. taking part in a public debate
- Lifelong learning, education for all ages
- Involving and consulting the public about your research
- Postgraduate researchers working with the public as part of their course, e.g. applying research skills in a community context

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Collaborating

- Collaborative co-inquiry research, e.g. co-producing research, with the public involved in shaping the research question, design and delivery as co-researchers
- Forums where researchers, policy makers and the public explore the future direction of a particular research topic

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Activities run in partnerships

- Museums, galleries, science centres and other cultural venues
- Festivals, exhibitions
- Teachers and schools
- Community organisations



We also collaborate with other institutions, organisations and community groups

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Why engage with the public?

- It can improve the quality and impact of research
- It raises aspirations, e.g. inspire children to become scientists
- Introduce fresh perspectives and injects energy
- It can help build trust e.g. controversial issues, GM crops
- It develops transferable skills which can aid future employment and promotion prospects
- It contributes to accountability, public fund much research
- It is important to research and funding councils and can attract additional grants
- It improves relationships between the university and its neighbours

"The engaging researcher", Vitae

It is extremely important to interact with the public and here are some of the reasons why all research groups should attempt to do so

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Examples of public communication at LASI

- Media
- Visitors to LASI
- Community events
- Public lectures
- Networking and Collaborations
- The Web



There follows just a few examples of LASI's commitment to public communication

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Media

- Newspapers and Magazines
- Television
- Radio
- Journals
- Popular articles



LASI makes use of all forms of media whether broadcasting or the written word

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Newspapers, popular articles, journals



We appear in many different kinds of articles and features

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Sky News filming Norman Carreck performing the freeze-dried brood technique to establish which hives exhibit the hygienic behavioural trait

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Niel Pringle from Radio Sussex, interviewing team members involved in decoding the honey bee waggle dance to determine where bees go to forage

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Visitors to LASI

- Local schools and colleges
- Members of Parliament
- Bee farmers
- Land Owners
- Business
- Funders
- Interested individuals
- Other research groups

A group of people are standing outdoors, possibly at a public event or meeting. They are looking at something in the foreground.

We have welcomed many visitors to the lab during the past nearly two years

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These are pupils from Carden Primary School in Brighton, they have taken part in an ECO week at school and have written poetry and designed honey bees made entirely from recycled material

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These children aged 4-5 years old are visitors from a local primary school, St Josephs, who regularly bring pupils to visit our lab as part of their school curriculum

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We also have older pupils, here Francis Ratnieks shows Brighton College students (aged 16-18) around the lab and the talks about the research we perform at LASI

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LASI has also played host to many members of parliament (MP). Here Caroline Lucas, previously our European MP now the first Green MP of Britain, came to learn more about our work.

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This photo illustrates a visit from the Country, Land and Business Association, an organisation of 35,000 members of mainly land owners. Mihail, a PhD student is demonstrating the process of pollination

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LASI also has visitors from potential sponsors, and here two food technologists from the supermarket chain, Waitrose, came to see our research and have subsequently funded Fiona her PhD in honey bee foraging

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Community Events

- Community orchard celebrations
- Science festivals
- Science café
- Family nature events



Members of LASI also go out into the community to explain our research and generally show the amazing world of the honey bee. We usually bring a specially designed observation hive, so that bees can be seen on the comb

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Science Festival



This science festival took place during a weekend in March 2010, and was set at a TV presenter's organic farm (Jimmy Doherty), and the aim was to show families the importance of science in food production. The festival was a hugely popular event and is being repeated each year

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Café Scientifique



Here Francis Ratnieks gives a talk at a science café. These cafes encourage the public to interact with scientists in a relaxed and fun way. They are usually held in pubs, restaurants or coffee shops

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LASI members also give public lectures, top left hand: at the Women's Institute (WI), an organisation set up in 1915 and now has over 200,000 members across the UK. Groups can be found in almost every town and village across Britain. The WI was initially establish to help regenerate rural areas and involve women in food production. Bottom right hand photo was taken at a presentation given to the friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London. Dr Karin Alton is also heavily involved in the training of the next generation of beekeepers

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Earlier in 2010 we organised a networking meeting called 'What's the Buzz? Bees, land use and the community' where representatives from education, media, farming, land management, growers, and local government were invited for a series of presentations, debates and workshops to see how we all can join forces to halt the decline in honey bees and other bees

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This also gave LASI the opportunity to showcase the projects that we are working on here at the bee lab

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From this networking event, our link with the Royal Botanic Gardens have been strengthened (bottom left photo); Iain Hartle, the Volunteer Coordinator from the South Downs National Park has offered the services of the 300 volunteers working in the national park to aid our research (top left photo); a collaboration with Donderry Lavender Farm, who hold the national collection of lavenders, has been forged (top right photo); and an invitation from Brighton and Hove City Council to join a forum of specialists with the aim of making Brighton the most bee-friendly city in the UK

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From the outset, LASI was keen to have a web presence and with the aid of a grant to employ a web developer and the kind assistance of the University web team, the LASI website now contains 55 pages and is growing. The website features regular news and events updates as well as research details and teaching materials

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It is important that the website is a real resource for many user groups, including education and beekeepers. We also have an on-line donations page

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Social networking sites are becoming more popular and therefore we have made use of sites such as twitter, facebook and flickr

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Measuring impact

- How many people did you impact?
- How many people were satisfied?
- either with your research or outreach
- How much did knowledge increase – better informed public?
- Did people adopt the practices?
- Did this result in social and economic benefits to the community?


Pers.com. Assl. Prof. Jamie Ellis, University of Florida

It is becoming increasingly more important to funders and universities to establish whether the performed public communication has made a difference, and there are various tools to do this, from performing surveys and questionnaires to the use of google analytics to establish the traffic on the website

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Conclusions

- Benefits of public communication for LASI?
- Disadvantages?

A photograph of a baby sitting in a colorful toy basket. The basket has a red and yellow striped border and a red fabric with the word 'LIZZY' written on it. The baby is looking down and appears to be sleeping or resting.

There have been many benefits to LASI, such as the huge rise in our public profile, within a short space of time LASI has become well known and this in turn has attracted sponsorship; to date (Sept 2010) this amounts to over £750.000 (one million euro) which includes some matched government funding. From a personal point of view it gives great satisfaction to impart/transfer knowledge and has given focus and determination to the research. The main disadvantage is without doubt the time and energy it can consume, and which without proper management can interfere with research and field work, especially in seasonal honey bee research. Much public outreach has to be performed

in the evenings and/or weekends which may be unpaid and so relies on passion and commitment. The employment of a dedicated Extension Co-ordinator would greatly enhance LASI's commitment to the public communication of our honey bee research

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All the researchers and technical staff at LASI
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Rowse Honey Ltd



www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi

The slide contains a blue rectangular box with white text. The text lists acknowledgements to LASI researchers, University of Sussex staff, private and corporate funders, the British Beekeepers Association, and Rowse Honey Ltd. Below the text are two logos: the British Beekeepers Association logo on the left and the Rowse Honey logo on the right. The Rowse Honey logo features a stylized bee and the text 'Rowse Honey'. At the bottom of the box is the website address 'www.sussex.ac.uk/lasi'.