# Update for National Forum from ASDC, February 2019

ASDC – The UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres

ASDC has recently completed the delivery of several national STEM programmes and continues to run others. For the majority, there is a strong component of inclusion, sharing practices that drive towards a more equitable society, and a more inclusive approach to science and science engagement. For all ASDC programmes there is the ambition to make a step-change in the way large organisations can engage the public with that field of STEM.

Working in partnership with NERC, ASDC has successfully created and delivered our largescale National Environmental Science Programme for families called ‘Operation Earth’. For this national STEM programme, ASDC trained and equipped 11 selected Science Centres and their staff to run Operation Earth, trained 40 scientists to share their science, and equipped the centres with resources including an ‘earthy suit’. The programme ran across 2018 at science centres including the Natural History Museum and Eden. We were invited to Number 10 to present Operation Earth and it was also presented in the Scottish Parliament.

The programme aimed to reach 100,000 children and adults in families, with contentious areas of environmental science and has considerably exceeded this target. A large proportion of people also met and spoke with an environmental scientist.

ASDC have also worked with NERC and artist Luke Jerram to create a huge 7m ‘earth’ artwork to celebrate our precious planet. This has been on display at the Natural History Museum and Blue dot and will now tour the world. The response to this has been enormous from across the Arts and Science world. Our previous collaborative artwork with the same artist ‘Museum of the Moon’ has been all round the world (!) and over 2.5 million people have come to see it.

ASDC has recently started a new collaboration with STFC, Explore Your Universe Phase 4, focussed on creating institutional change in participatory practice across the science centres and reaching disadvantaged families, schools and communities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Overall over 380,000 children and adults have taken part in earlier phases of Explore Your Universe and most recently we worked with science centres to engage 39,273 children and adults from a range of communities in the top 25% on the indices of multiple deprivation, remote areas, a prison and children excluded from school. Within this ASDC programme, Postcode data analysis shows that 97% of the outreach schools taking part were in the top 25% of the IMD or geographically very remote from STEM. In just the first phase, 45,852 met a scientist or engineer. The programme has created a step-change in the way particle physics and astronomy engagement happens at centres across the UK.

ASDC has also recently started a new programme with the UK Space Agency focussed on UK Spaceports and UK space launch capacity, The Exomars mission, Satellite Applications and the James Webb Space Telescope. This will reach 200,000 people.

The first phase of this programme, Destination Space reached 914,616 school children and adults who participated in school’s workshops, space activities, our family show and special events in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This included 100,244 school children age 5-14 in curriculum-linked school’s workshops and 75,741 children and adults who met and spoke with a space scientist or engineer. If we include people visiting events and exhibitions, the total is over 2.1 million. 23% of the schools taking part were from the top 20% of the IMD.

ASDC is the main UK Partner on two Horizon 2020 programmes, one on improving gender equity in STEM and the other to increase citizen participation in the way science is funded across Europe (requested by H2020). Both are now complete. We work a lot a t a European level and every year since ASDC began, we have received many approaches to partner with European Universities and the main STEM engagement organisations across Europe for Horizon 2020 programmes, Since Brexit these have dwindled and we get few approaches, and those we do get are of considerably lower quality.

Another National STEM programme delivered by our small team is The Secret World of Gases, that ran across 2018 at 9 UK centres following a year of ASDC’s development and training. This programme was developed by ASDC in partnership with the Royal Society of Chemistry and BOC exploring the future uses of gases and how they will be used for a greener future. 106,261 children and adults in families took part (exceeding the target of 54,000)

Our 2019 ASDC National Conference will be coming to London in Sept/October. In February we will be seeking and finalising our hosting venue. We would be delighted if any members or colleagues in this forum would be keen to host this high profile conference. Last year our conference was in Manchester with lots of knowledge exchange sessions, and speakers including Lord David Puttnam, Lord David Willetts, Prof Louise Archer, and the CEO of the Social Mobility Foundation.