



Association for
**Science and
Discovery Centres**

CEO Report

ASDC AGM 2022: Wednesday 28th September 2022

The UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres (ASDC) exists to support and serve the ASDC membership by fostering learning, engagement and innovation within the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics for the public benefit.

ASDC is the largest network of informal science learning in the UK, reaching across all 4 nations with a diverse and impactful network of place-based organisations who together engage over 25 million people each year with science and its role within British culture.

ASDC Membership

The ASDC membership comprises of science and discovery centres and museums and associate organisations such as eco-attractions, learned societies, research council and aligned networks.

As of 28th September 2022, ASDC has a strong and growing membership of 44 organisations, 4 national partners and 11 new associate members.

New members (2021-2022) include:

- The National Stone Centre, Matlock
- Oriel Science, Swansea
- Dark Space Planetarium, Kirkcudbright

ASDC Staff

In the year April 2021-March 2022, A focus of activity and resource for ASDC was on internal staff restructure with the loss of 2 key full-time members of the team, dipping down to 2.6 FTE from 4.2 FTE.

- Dr Penny Fidler (CEO) who resigned in March 2021, working until April 2021
- Abi Ashton (Project Manager) who resigned March 2021, working until June 2021

The remaining executive team for the year under review comprised of:

- Shaaron Leverment, Acting CEO
- Cait Campbell, Project Manager
- Rachel Tapping, Communication and Digital Manger
- Kierann Shah, Destination Space Project Manager (appointed September 2021)
- Vicky Hull, Office and Projects Administrator (appointed October 2021)

These staff remain at ASDC in the roles at ASDC as illustrated in the CEO report slides



Vision, Mission, Values

Please hold the refreshed Vision, Mission and Values of ASDC in mind as we reflect on the past year of activities and the future of ASDC's work:

- **Our Vision** is of a society where science is accessible, inclusive and valued by all as a fundamental part of everyday life.
- **Our Mission** is to champion our members, bringing them together to achieve collective impact and reach through connection, advocacy and insight.
- **Our Values** provide a lens through which we evaluate our work and working practices. They define who we are, how we work, what we believe in and stand for:
Inclusion - Connection - Collaboration – Innovation - Sustainability

ASDC Performance 2021-2022

From 2021-2022, ASDC has worked to our mission by creating and running regular knowledge exchange and professional development events, leading national STEM projects, and facilitating ongoing opportunities for collaboration, connection and innovation via a number of digital platforms. Through our activities, together we aim to raise the profile of our sector, champion the impact of the ASDC national membership and to promote a culture of accessible science for all.

Opportunities for sharing ideas, insight, challenges and inspiring practice include curating a number of knowledge exchange opportunities such as:

- In-person and online meetings for our network of Ambassadors and Emerging Leaders
- CEO and senior leader breakfast meetings to discuss priorities and strategy
- Staff wellbeing sessions following changes of home/hybrid working
- Supporting benchmarking requests across the sector
- Member forums taking place monthly for members at all levels and across a variety of departments including:
 - Measuring Impact
 - Digital marketing and strategy
 - Safety and Security
 - Strategies for increasing staff diversity
- Providing increasing commitment to regular digital celebration and communications with members via ongoing updates across the following digital platforms:
 - [ASDC newsletter](#)
 - [Twitter](#),
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [ASDC Website](#) and [Futures Website](#)
 - [The Inclusion Portal](#) and the [Accessibility Hub](#)
 - [The Climate Hub](#)



- The ASDC 2021 National Conference ran virtually (online) with the theme ‘Sustainable Futures’ on 24th & 25th November 2021. Three key strands were highlighted from the theme, with parallel session and keynotes driven from membership interests:
 - Sustainable Futures: Resilience
 - Sustainable Futures: Diversity
 - Sustainable Futures: Environment

National and International STEM Programmes

ASDC continues to run National Programmes that align with our vision, mission and values. Projects enable us to deliver sector-wide support, share knowledge, bring together communities of practice, and contribute to the sustainability of the charity. During 2021-2022 the following ASDC national programmes ran.

- **Explore Your Universe, Phase 4 (EYU4)**

Funded by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC), this programme worked with 8 science centres and places participation, equity and inclusion at the heart of engagement with STFC science. The methodology works with a multiple engagement model, allowing the time for science centres to build equitable partnerships with local communities and pushing the boundaries of their participatory practice. Outcomes for participants included increased pride, ownership, skills, science learning, belonging, confidence, agency and connection to science. Case studies, evaluation methods and learning from this programme can be found at: <https://inclusion.sciencecentres.org.uk>

- **Project Inspire**

In collaboration with the Inspiring Science Fund, a partnership between UKRI and Wellcome, this programme launched in September 2020 and closed in October 2021. It had 2 distinct strands of work:

- ASDC Emerging Leaders Programme - an investment into the professional development of our staff, providing skills, approaches and practices to nurture and support the inclusive and innovative science centre leaders of our future.
- A Digital Engagement and Innovation Programme – with eight science centres delivering innovative digital projects that open-up new participatory ways of engaging and involving their underserved audiences.

- **Destination Space**

Funded by the UK Space Agency, Destination Space 3 launched in October 2021, working across nine science and discovery centres and museums in a 6 month programme, this programme focussed on schools and family engagement, playing to the current strengths within individual science centre delivery partners and focussing on the content areas of the James Webb Space Telescope, UK Spaceports and



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Climate from space. Over 67,000 people (93% in-person) took part in Destination Space 3, with 82% of participants strongly agreeing/agreeing that space science is relevant to their own lives.

- **Operation Earth**

Funded by NERC, Operation Earth 2.5 launched in September 2021, working across 10 science centres and reaching over 67,000 people with a significant impact on participant interest in climate and environmental science, with 92% strongly agreeing/agreeing that climate and environmental science has a strong connection to their own lives. Staff development, relationships-building and confidence for science centre staff were also key outputs for this programme.

- **Equity@Ecsite**

ASDC has been an integral part of this core advocacy group since 2016 and wrote a successful Collaborative Grant application to Ecsite for 2020 to enable the development of the 'Diversci' framework (chosen to emphasise Diversity, Inclusion, Values, Equity & Responsibility in Science Communication). Led by ASDC, this framework was piloted across 17 European organisations during 2020 and into 2021, with workload during 2021 focussed on the finalising of the framework (launched in June 2022 - to be launched May 2022).

Listening to the membership

In order to identify how ASDC could best place its resource to support and serve the ASDC membership, a listening project (survey and a number of informal interviews) took place in summer 2021 to uncover the value of ASDC for current and potential members, and listen to members' current ambitions and professional challenges.

The following areas of ASDC activity 2020-2021 were voted to be of most value to those answering our 2021 survey.

1. Networking opportunities: bringing people together into communities of practice (90%)
2. Emergency resilience calls throughout the pandemic (84%)
3. Being part of national Projects (79%)
4. Opportunities for CPD (74%)
5. Lobbying an advocacy (58%)
6. The annual conference (n/a in 2020) (53%)

89.5% of those responding to the survey felt that ASDC supported their organisation and team in achieving their centre's mission. There were also a number of reflections on how ASDC could better help build resilience and sustainability for science and discovery centres and museums.

During this time, the external research conducted by The Liminal Space 'Science and Discovery Centre Futures: Missions and Opportunities', took place, highlighting themes for the future of our



sector and areas where ASDC might facilitate (for example) collective evaluation and impact and providing space for sharing resources, expertise and feeling collectively confident.

Future priorities

The focal themes from the listening project were crafted into the strategic goals of ASDC presented to the board of trustees in April 2022. These dictate our decisions on where to place the limited resource of ASDC, including maintaining an accessible, online opportunity for staff at various levels / departments, national programmes that address equity, inclusion and sustainability, or events and masterclasses to promote connection and professional development our workforce.

The ASDC **mission** is to champion our members, bringing them together to achieve collective impact and reach through **connection**, **advocacy** and **insight**:

Connection: We enable our members to leverage the power of the network to access partners, people and opportunities to thrive. Our goals for connection include:

- Maintain a flourishing network with a valuable offer for all sizes and contexts of science centres and science museums
- Valuable membership for professionals at all levels within science centres and science museums
- Year-round networking opportunities to share inspiring practice, facilitate collaboration and innovation, to be collectively brave and reflect on practice
- Sustain current and identify new partnerships to improve the quality and collaborative power of our programming and membership

Advocacy: We give our members a greater collective voice, representing their needs and strengthening their impact. Our goals for advocacy include:

- Raise awareness and increase visibility of the impact, value and diversity of the network, through digital channels and working directly with government, funders and higher stakeholders
- Collate and celebrate case studies, regional and national datasets that evidence our impactful sector
- Demonstrate the impact of the membership with a priority focus on our work in partnership with traditionally under-served and marginalised communities

Insight: We share knowledge, ideas and perspectives to support our members to innovate, develop and think ahead for the future of our sector. Our goals for insight include:

- Develop a clear understanding of the diverse models and priorities of the sector to serve their needs and highlight their strengths.
- Co-produce a charter / framework for EDI work to measure, prove and improve practice



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- Maintain a future-focussed, open, outward-facing culture with partnerships and collaborations that drive innovation.
- Share sector insights and inspiring practice with a focus on our members' priorities of:
 - Equity, diversity, inclusion & access
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Digital & hybrid innovation & engagement
 - Supporting a flourishing practitioner network
 - Funding opportunity that aligns to our values