



Association for
**Science and
Discovery Centres**

Our World From Space
Community of Practice and mini grants programme

ASDC Space engagement community of practice Report (March 2025)

Summary

(Authored by Cait Campbell & Shaaron Leverment)

ASDC developed and ran *Our World From Space*, a strategic two-year, national STEM programme funded by the UK Space Agency in partnership with the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), part of UK Research and Innovation. The programme has had a significant national reach, engaging with **over 263,847** individual participants across the UK. From schools in the Outer Hebrides to community groups in coastal towns of Devon, *Our World From Space* fostered a new understanding of space science's role in our everyday lives and for the future health and sustainability of our planet.

Within this programme, ASDC developed an impactful 'inspire the inspirers' work package that engaged, inspired and involved 195 space engagement professionals from 97 separate organisations. This included science and discovery centres, university outreach departments, science museums, astronomy societies, planetaria and wider specialist organisations across the UK. A series of forums focussed on specific topics of interest were exceptionally well received. In addition, mini-grants (£300-£500) were made available within the flexible and responsive work package, to enable additional activity at key moments for collective engagement over the 2 years, reaching an additional 5451 additional children and adults across the UK.

Community of Practice meetings

An additional stand-alone work package (WP8: Destination Space) allowed ASDC to support *Our World From Space* centres and museums and a far wider network of discovery centres and museums, and wider space outreach and engagement organisations, to stay up-to-date and connected in with current UK space interests.

This agile work package created a UK space engagement 'Community of Practice'. From October 2023 to March 2025 ASDC ran regular online meetups and opportunities to engage with collaborative campaigns and national events, and find out the news relating to upcoming missions, discoveries, recent advances in technology and on topics of high public

interest (e.g. aurora, upcoming eclipses). The aim was to provide regular opportunities for space engagement professionals to share ideas, inspiring practice and build capacity and connections. The calls always involved time for networking and a share of hands-on demos or digital demonstrations and resource sharing.

Our first sessions established a close advisory group who represented gate-keepers and key stakeholders across the space engagement landscape, who tested ideas for future sessions and suggested areas of activity we could group calls and campaigns around (e.g International Observe the Moon night).

- Dr Jenny Shipway (IAU and WSW ambassador and consultant)
- Steven Gray (BAP president and outreach)
- Dhara Patel and Sophie Allan (National Space Centre and National Space Academy)
- Kate Clark and Tom Lyons (STEM Learning)
- Sheila Kanani (Royal Astronomical Society representative and EDI advisor)
- Prof Stephen Wilkins (University Sussex)

To support practitioners to look ahead to key dates of interest, or topics that might spark audience interest, ASDC developed a Padlet which has been very well received, widely shared, and continually kept up-to-date (last updated March 2025)

[Destination Space Padlet](#)

Each meeting then focussed on a topic of interest for the sector and involved an expert speaker, a series of hands-on and/or digital demonstrations to bring the topic area to life for audiences, shared resources and networking between space professionals. Keynote speakers across the series have included:

- Prof. Sanjeev Gupta, Professor of Earth Science, Imperial College London
- Prof Stephen Wilkins, Professor in Astronomy and Public Understanding of Science, University of Sussex
- Vicki Lonnon, Spacecraft Product Assurance Engineer, Airbus
- Ray Fielding, Head of space sustainability, UK Space Agency
- Staci Tiedeken, Outreach Coordinator, NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center
- Dr Jacob Richardson, Deputy Lead of Applied Lunar Science Group, NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center

- Prof Lucie Green, Mullard Space Science Laboratory, UCL
- Prof Lewis Dartnell, University of Westminster and TV presenter

Each call had between 40 and 60 people registered, with the final 5 calls engaging 195 individuals from 97 organisations interested or engaged in space science education and communication. Many of these individuals had not previously engaged with ASDC.



13 Sep 2023

ASDC Sept Members' Forum: What's next for UK Space?

Calling education and engagement teams! Join the first in a series of regular meetups for a shared space engagement Community of Practice.



31 Jan 2024

ASDC Space Community Call

Join us to hear from expert guest speakers on key space topics for your audiences in 2024. This event is open to all public engagement colleagues and researchers.



17 Apr 2024

ASDC Space Community Call

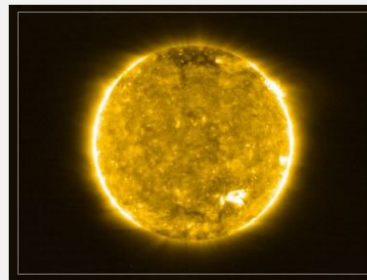
Join us for the second lunchtime Space Community Call on 17th April, 12pm-1.30pm. We will be focusing on space sustainability and what methods and policies UK Space sector is implementing, including methods for retrieval. We will also be looking ahead to the launch of BIOMASS. These community calls are open to all space engagement practitioners, so please share the details with your networks.



17 Jul 2024

ASDC Space Community Call

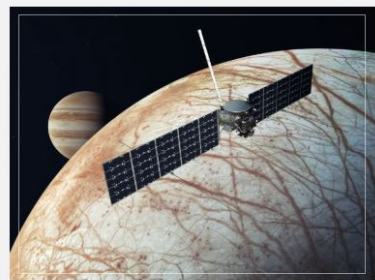
Join us for the third lunchtime Space Community Call on 17th July, 1pm-2.30pm. This meeting's key theme will be the Moon, hearing about the Artemis missions and looking ahead to the International Observe the Moon Night



2 Oct 2024

ASDC Space Community Call

Join us for the lunchtime Space Community Call on 2nd October 12pm-1.30pm. This meeting's key theme will be solar science, looking closely at our Sun, including solar eclipses, the aurora, and much more!



25 Mar

ASDC UK Space Community Call: Astrobiology, exoplanets and upcoming missions

This call will focus on bringing the community back together one last time, to reflect on what we have shared and to look ahead across the coming year for key points for public engagement with Space and possibilities for collaboration.

Find links to our YouTube recordings of speakers and demo ideas below. There are unlisted and recorded for the benefit of those registered and attending, not for wider circulation on request from participants and speakers:

- [Focus on findings from JWST and Perseverance](#)
- [Space sustainability and space for sustainability](#)
- [The Moon](#)
- [The Sun](#)
- [Astrobiology and upcoming missions](#)

Feedback from participants demonstrated that the Moon and the Artemis mission community call (July 2024) was the most popular, in terms of numbers attending, playback on YouTube by attendees, and voted the most relevant and valuable for practitioners. The call on When commenting on whether the space community calls influenced practice the feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

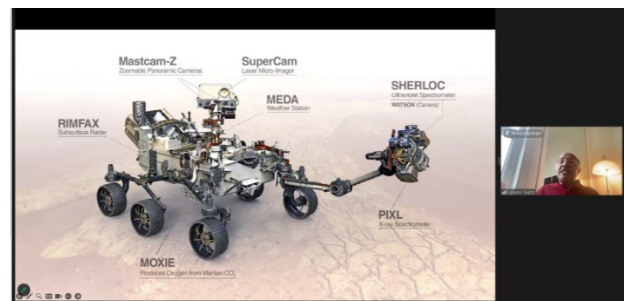
- *"They've given us contacts / experts that we could invite to our events, provided activity ideas to incorporate into our programmes, and the speakers have provided excellent backgrounds and information on science topics that we try to communicate with our audiences so have given us some valuable 'spacing up'!"*
- *"They have provided ideas for topics we could be covering. It has also informed some of our plans to show content by giving us a direction to research in."*
- *"Have given me confidence to answer children's questions and share latest info."*
- *"Such seminars are invaluable in adding to the memory banks for onward transmission as necessary at the schools and other groups I visit. Huge thanks to all responsible for arranging and presenting the Community Space Calls!"*
- *"Absolutely – during 2024 I was writing a huge coffee table book about the universe for Phaidon (Exploring the Universe: Your Complete Guide to the Cosmos, publishing autumn 2025). The calls I watched helped me to pinpoint some key areas of research and exploration to include in the book, and the enthusiasm of the speakers was infectious. I felt very lucky to be able to hear from them firsthand. I have thanked the ASDC Space Community Calls in the acknowledgements for the book."*
- *"Provided inspiration and knowledge for outreach activities"*
- *"Yes they have given me ideas for activities increased understanding of the subject matter and a chance to share with others."*
- *"A definite yes! It's a great way to bring people together that work in the space sector, whether they're academics, planetarians, amateur astronomers or teachers. The wealth of knowledge and experience that is shared in these calls is phenomenal and it has either*

inspired a new programme or activity or has raise new opportunities to work with other organisations or people."

- *"In particular, having expert academics who are also fantastic science communicators has definitely helped me to think about how I pitch those concepts, and has also given me confidence to talk about concepts that I'm less familiar with. I've taken what I've learnt from these calls and shared it with the wider team so the ripples of knowledge propagate beyond the call."*
- *"They have been a great way to network and get some great ideas for STEM activities. Alongside some of the newest data and discoveries have been some amazing speakers; I've been able to pass on this information to the public quicker and include that I've had direct interaction with some of the scientists."*

There were a few suggestions for improvements:

- *"I'm always disappointed with science organisations for not engaging with STEAM methods enough and not working with artists and other creative industries, which is much needed if you want to have inclusive and high-quality demos & resources."*
- *"I was interested in the links with art, such as Luke Jerram's installations. Some of the other activities were too focussed on the US and NASA when we have an important space industry of our own here in the UK and through ESA. I don't know why US speakers were used."*
- *"I was hoping for collaboration but no follow up on that."*
- *"Yes, as it's given us a few ideas. But they haven't been implemented yet as we are a small site with limited staff."*



Pictured: Steve Gray director of Aero Space Kinross sharing James Webb planetarium clips and Keynote speaker Prof. Sanjeev Gupta during the on the January 2024 meeting.

Every respondent to our survey **(100%)** said that yes, if ASDC were to arrange future space community calls they would be likely to attend. Requests for future content included:

- Careers in the UK space industry
- Dark matter and dark energy
- The aims of commercial space companies
- Future telescopes and planned missions (e.g. searching for habitable zone planets)
- Enjoyment of the national buzz around a single topic (in advance of dates/campaigns)
- Mars, JUICE/Europa Clipper missions, GRBs asteroids
- Blackholes
- More on Artemis and human space travel
- Latest discoveries from Webb and continued mission updates

This has been an incredibly impactful 'inspire the inspirers' model of delivery that has connected perfectly with the mission of ASDC. This is a unique offer which has gathered a great deal of attention for wider and international networks. ASDC would be very keen to continue to run these calls (e.g. twice a year) to keep the community we have curated updated and connected with latest discoveries, technologies, opportunities and ambitions in UK space.

Mini-grants programme

This work package provided a mechanism to respond to space activities in the news or new priorities for the UK Space Agency during the project period. ASDC was able to support a number of activities taking place across collaborative events such as National Astronomy Week (focus on planets), British Science Week and Mars Week.

The mini-grants (£300-£500) enabled the delivery of additional events on broader space topics (beyond *Out World From Space*) and recipients applied through a competitive process to be awarded for their activities. Grantees included Aberdeen Science Centre, Aero Space Kinross, Dynamic Earth, Dundee Science Centre, Explorer Dome, Glasgow Science Centre, Jodrell Bank Centre of Engagement, Kielder Observatory, Science Oxford, STEM Discovery Centre, and W5.

Below is a summary table of additional activities and engagements that engaged and involved a further **5451** adults and children across the UK.

2024: Celebrating British Science Week and Mars Day	
Numbers engaged	Description of activity
175	International Women's Day celebration with exciting exhibits exploring mars soil sampling, crater creation, robotic coding, satellite exploration and meeting space scientists from local universities.
639	Science late planetarium show on the theme of TIME with resident space scientist taking participants on a journey through the cosmos explored by the James Webb Space Telescope.

73	Under 5s and carers event based on a teddy bears trip around the solar system, including early years learning and story time sessions on World Book Day.
60	Mars attack workshop using Lego Mindstorms, where families learn together to program a mini-Mars rover and apply their new skills in a space race.
2025: Celebrating the planets during National Astronomy Week	
Numbers engaged	Description of activity
1113	Building satellite-shaped cameras, robot arm challenges, moon phases puzzle, solar system top-trumps, worksheet and colouring pages.
54	Planetarium show ('Chasing the Moon') developed for National Astronomy Week where audiences learn all the objects visible in the night sky across the month, including the parade of planets and the moon phases across the month
1800	Planetarium show ('Chasing the Moon')
1331	Live stream 'Ask an astronomer' encouraging engagement and discussion with the public in an informal conversation setting
86	30 minute planetarium show, drop-in space and astronomy activities and hands-on telescopes with local astronomical society.
120	Planetarium show, urban stargazing, activities and demonstrations (e.g. meteorites, Hoffman Voltmeter (water to rocket fuel))

Total numbers engaged:	
Numbers engaged	
4,637	Families with children aged approx. 3-14
175	Brownies, rainbows and guide groups,
639	Adults only
5451	TOTAL number of participants

The mini-grants captured impact of the events. At Aberdeen Science Centre, 75% of participants who completed the survey said they would want to learn more about space science. At Science Oxford, 100% of participants said they were more likely to look up at the night sky and identified learning about the scale of the universe, planets, moons and other celestial objects.

- *"The two women facilitating the experience were incredibly knowledgeable & made the experience buzz. I entered the dome a 70-year-old... and left as a wide-eyed child!"*
(adult visiting Explorer Dome)

- *"It's so important that women, girls and all underrepresented groups see people like themselves working in areas where we still have gender inequality... I hope the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides left feeling informed, inspired and excited for their future, encouraged to follow a STEM path, and aware that they have an important role to play in helping us all work towards a more sustainable future."*
(Researcher from Abertay University, participating at Dundee Science Centre)
- *"This marked our first opportunity to offer a free public event, made possible by the funding we received. Thank you."* (STEM Discovery Centre Lead practitioner)

A full document containing all project summaries is available on request. Summaries of activity were shared on the ASDC newsletter and website:

- ["ASDC programme 'Destination Space' lives on"](#)
- ["Chasing the moon for National Astronomy Week 2025"](#)





