# Update for National Forum from ASDC, February 2020

ASDC – The UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres

Climate and environment, along with issues around Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are still at the top of ASDC’s agenda and throughout our national strategic programmes. Our National Programmes fund 95% of our organisation, and have the strategic goal of advancing the field by pooling the very best ideas and knowledge world-wide in a specific area, and then training science engagement professionals across UK science centres and museums to use these new practices and resources to deliver these programmes with their communities. This model also creates new communities of practice, with new expertise to share knowledge and innovate into the future.

ASDC’s flagship national environment programme ‘Operation Earth’, in partnership with NERC, is poised to start Phase 2 in the coming days to bring the latest environmental science to children, families and communities who don’t generally seek out STEM opportunities. Phase 1 of Operation Earth trained 11 science centres who together reached 201,442 people across the UK with the very latest in environmental science. This new programme would work deeper in communities, with smaller groups, in partnership with seven science centres across the UK.

ASDC has also been having numerous conversations around COP26, including with Glasgow Science Centre who will be at the centre of the action. We convened key ASDC members in January to share their plans and ambitions for COP26 and much is in development.

Likewise, the 2019 ASDC National Conference in November in London focussed on climate and diversity, and our national role, and attracted 160 delegates from 80 organisations. It was very much by and for the sector with over 40 discussion hosts and speakers including Sir Mark Walport, Google Deepmind and The Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology. Two of the 24 discussion tables were on behalf of the Forum. There were also three specialist half day discussion meetings on Day One with delegates on climate and what we can do together, and all our actions around (EDI) Equity, Diversity and inclusion. Delegates came from all across the UK, and some from Europe.

The 2020 ASDC National conference will be in Glasgow on Sept 23-24th in the run-up to COP26.

To further our ambitions to work more closely with communities, we are delighted to be working in partnership again with STFC for our communities-focussed Explore Your Universe 4 Programme. Here, we are working with 8 UK science centres and their community partners to pioneer new approaches to make their science centres more inclusive and inviting for all and to build relationships and share approaches that last. New evaluation approaches have been created through this programme to look at organisational and systems change, along with the impact for all involved.

We are working with 15 centres on a new ‘Science Capital in Practice’ national programme, in partnership with the Science Museum, for centres to explore and pilot new approaches for our sector to become more inclusive and relevant to all communities. Like the STFC programme this has had input from Louise Archer’s UCL team.

In October (2019) we launched our Spaceports in Communities programme, working across the rural and remote areas of the Scottish Highlands and Islands, and rural Cornwall and North Wales. Spaceports are likely to start operating in the UK from next year (2021), and this is to bring the latest science and engineering to communities, children and families who are geographically remote from STEM, and close to the Spaceport proposed locations. This programme is funded by the UK Space Agency and Launch UK.

Some years ago, ASDC secured £20 million from BEIS to create An Inspiring Science Fund of capital investment. ASDC were delighted when Wellcome also added funding of £10 million. This programme is now administered by Wellcome and 12 selected science centres are now delivering capital investment projects to reach more widely and deeply into their communities. The centres all collaborate with ASDC in various ways as the instigators of this programme. There is much more that can be done of course to share the knowledge and learning from this major investment across the whole of UK science engagement.

We are also delighted to be working again with the UK Space Agency to nationally celebrate the latest in the ExoMars mission and the Webb Telescope (both launching in 2021), UK Spaceports (Scotland, wales and Cornwall) and satellites applications, especially around earth observation. ASDC has trained and equipped everyone and Destination Space is now running in 13 UK organisations.

This follows on from the earlier ASDC work last year, creating a full national full programme celebrating The 50th anniversary of the Moon Landing along with [www.Moon50.uk](http://www.Moon50.uk), and Destination Space Phase 1 where 914,646 children and adults took part in workshops and events, 80,201 people met and spoke with a space scientist or engineer, 152,348 school students were brought by teachers for curriculum-linked space workshops and 2.1 million people visited the new space exhibitions.

ASDC is a charity working in strong partnerships across the science engagement sector, funded almost entirely through our programmes. These allow us to deliver a proportion of our strategic sector-wide goals through our small team of just 3.6 staff, however, our ambitions are significantly more ambitious, and there is of course much more we could do to transform the sector.