

Inspiring Strathclyde researchers to make an active difference to Scotland's legacy

The Initiative

RE:ACTIVE is a researcher development initiative delivered by Strathclyde's Researcher Development Programme (RDP) team. The Commonwealth Games' legacy inspired the University to develop a **public engagement funding initiative** to promote collaborative research and to stimulate public engagement activities throughout the University.

This highly successful initiative provides early career research staff and postgraduate research students the freedom and autonomy to drive projects that will contribute to the future growth and prosperity of Glasgow and Scotland and contribute to the Commonwealth Games legacy. By strengthening engagement with group(s) outside the University, developing collaborations, forging new connections between University and communities, it inspires novel career directions for researchers.

Benefits

Strathclyde RE:ACTIVE responds to the University's Strategic Plan 2011-15 and Outcome Agreements 2014 -2017 on maximising knowledge exchange, public engagement activities and supports the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research. It demonstrates a strategic commitment to public engagement and ensures that researchers are recognised and valued for their involvement in public engagement activities. It raises the profile and positive image of the institution, as well as addressing the University's core values including 'Bold, Ambitious and Collaborative'.

The Concordat was instrumental to the creation of RE:ACTIVE and functions in accordance with the key principles, specifically in Principle 3: Clause 3 and 9*. Applicants were asked how they will use transferrable skills to develop and deliver their activity, encouraging and supporting researchers to take responsibility for their own development. It enabled researchers to:

- **Have a meaningful dialogue with the public** in which academic and members of the public learn about each other
- **Develop their professional skills** such as leadership, entrepreneurship, communication and other transferable skills through experiential learning
- **Challenge themselves** by moving out of their comfort zone and showcasing their project more widely by creating a film
- **Contribute** to the Commonwealth Games Legacy Library
- **Win additional funding** to expand or improve the initial activity

***Principle 3: Clause 3** – *“Researchers need support to develop the communication and other skills that they will need to be both effective researchers and highly skilled professionals in whatever field they choose to enter”*. **Clause 9** – *“...increasing the skill and effectiveness of researchers in key areas such as writing for publication or communicating with a wider audience.”*

Highlighting The Apples for All Project, Dr Kirsty Ross



Following a successful application to RE:ACTIVE, and an initial award of £1,000 seed funding, Dr Kirsty Ross, an Arthritis Research UK funded scientist at the University of Strathclyde, developed the project through the Wee Science Club, a venture she established at the University Nursery, in response to a report by the Wellcome Trust, that indicated nursery children missed out on engagement with Universities. The Apples for All project aimed to engage 140+ nurseries from Glasgow's most deprived areas by gifting nurseries with free Scottish heritage apples trees to inspire pre-school children, their parents and carers. Nurseries were invited to the University, the Botanic Gardens or Glasgow Science Centre to collect their trees, take part in interactive activities around apples and learn about how to take care of their tree. The trees were planted in 2014/15, and were supplied in collaboration with John Hancox of Scottish Orchards. Dr Ross also negotiated heavily discounted (-75%) access to Glasgow Science Centre for all participating nurseries.

Outputs and Impact

- 140+ nurseries engaged with the University of Strathclyde for the first time
- Publicised project on BBC Commonwealth Voices radio show
- Video created in cooperation with the University Nursery for online distribution
- Press releases on University news page and Glasgow City of Science website
- Award for University of Strathclyde Nursery at Holyrood Apple Day 2014 by John Wilson MSP
- Inspiration for a spin-out company and application for a Royal Society Enterprise Fellowship
- Awarded Commonwealth Games Legacy status by Glasgow City Council and permitted to use the brand in association with the project
- Ongoing discussions on the establishment of a social enterprise around apple identification
- Donation of 10 trees to Mobileland™ Vertically Integrated Project in collaboration with Dr Cristian Suau (Architecture)

Career Development Benefits

Kirsty utilised the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) to evaluate the skills and knowledge and other benefits she has gained as a result of the project. Summarised below:

- Gained confidence to deliver a successful project independently
- Reflection of flexible career plans out with academia
- Increased local reputation for effective public engagement and approached to participate in international research projects via Newton funding
- Increased exposure and experience in multiple media outlets – press, radio, film, global audiences
- Knowledge exchange activities now encompass public, business and third sector
- Building, managing and negotiating collaborations internally and externally
- Invitation to present at the NCCPE Engage Conference, one of just 20 posters selected
- Dissemination of complex science making it accessible to the appropriate audience

Kirsty's film:  [YouTube video of project. RE:ACTIVE http://www.strath.ac.uk/rdp/reactive/.](http://www.strath.ac.uk/rdp/reactive/)