should we continue to pursue dialogue?

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what is the BA?

• established 1831
• British Association for the Advancement of Science
• nationwide organisation with a regional & branch network
• communicating science in an open society
• open & inclusive membership
what does the BA do?

broad programme of events

- the BA Festival of Science
- UK National Science Week
- media fellowships
- sciBArts
- science & society forums
- public consultations
- mass participation expts
- events for professional science communicators
- Science & Public Affairs magazine
- Alpha Galileo press service
- young science writers awards
- young people award schemes
- major hands on science events for
- Visions w
didactic to dialogue

• what is dialogue?
• reasons behind recent push for dialogue?
• is dialogue working?
  – sciBArs
  – the x-change
  – media fellowships
• should we continue to pursue it?
what is dialogue?

- two way communication
- open and inclusive discussion
- exchange of mutual understanding, not just information
- interaction with key social actors
recent push for dialogue

• UK House of Lords report, 2000
• is it ‘deficit model’ in new clothes?
• stated reasons include:
  – to win public support
  – to reduce conflict
  – increase level of trust in regulators
  – increase inclusion of public knowledge
    • in setting research agenda
    • in policy making decisions
potential for dialogue?

- yes – massive potential
- much talk about the process, as opposed to the outcomes, of dialogue
- what is our approach so far?
  - present the topic as an issue that involves science, rather than framing it as scientific
sciBArs

objective

• to provide informal opportunities for publics and scientists to discuss issues that involve science, as well as quirky science

audience

• an already present one, though we tend to attract our own
sciBArs examples

• Soft drugs – hard facts
• Fancy a flutter? – probability and betting
• Spit or swab – DNA data bases on trial
• Farm to fork – lessons learnt from foot & mouth
• Killer asteroids and rogue comets

• regional sciBArs
sciBAr outcomes

• quick turn around and inexpensive
• often Q&A sessions
• reaching new audiences? either interested in science or are already interested in the topic
• opportunity for scientists
the x-change

objectives

• informal discussion of the ‘best of the fest’
• to encourage scientists to discuss a broad range of issues in a public space

audience

• festival goers – science aware public and scientists
x-change outcomes

- informal, end of the day gathering in room with a bar
- panel of 5-6 scientists who are invited to comment on issues outside of their speciality
  - e.g. the UK chief scientists and Nobel prize winners, most interesting speakers that day
- looking for ways to increase its impact
media fellowships

objectives

• create greater awareness of the workings of the media to scientists

• promote better links between scientific community and media

audience/partners

• working scientists and science journalists
media fellowship outcomes

• 10 scientists each year hosted with science journalists for 4-8 weeks
• provides a chance for scientists to learn from journalists – reverse of typical ‘dialogue’
• reflections change from stated motivations
• “I have come away with far more than I ever expected – including a very real view of how ruthless the media industry can be.”
• “The scheme is excellent and has given me a unique opportunity to gain insight into how scientists and the media interact.”
impact of dialogue?

• more appealing than didactic approach
• more opportunities for public to comment and state their experience and opinions
• yet is their evidence that greater listening is occurring?
• do we achieve mutual understanding?
continue with dialogue?

• to answer this we need improved evaluation
  – to determine if dialogue is occurring
  – impacts of dialogue
    • with members of the general public
    • within scientific community
    • other key social actors e.g. policy makers

• we will continue to promote opportunities for different knowledges to be voiced and heard
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