

2020

Health and Environment Public Engagement





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Since being set up in 2013 HEPE has been consulted on over a 120 research projects, funding bids, journal articles and lay summaries, across a diverse range of areas within health and environmental research. There are currently 24 members of HEPE, but over 40 people have been members of the group. Through workshops and community activities, HEPE has also involved more than 70 other people from Devon and Cornwall in research activities. We have worked with over 60 researchers, taken part in 27 workshops, attended 25 conferences and supported the development of 12 medical students through the Special Studies Unit programme. In addition, we have supported the learning of numerous undergraduate and postgraduate students. Prior to 2020, HEPE had held 26 regular quarterly meetings and since the move to digital platforms in 2020, we have held more than 30 virtual meetings. The value that HEPE members provide stem from the contribution of curious minds and compassionate hearts, their consideration of the disadvantaged and marginalised, their aspiration to make a difference and their commitment to sharing many different types of knowledge.

Since 2013	Topics	Community Partners	Academic Partners	Membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120+ Consultations • 60+ Researchers • 27 Workshops • 25 Conferences • 9 Teaching sessions • Co-Authors of academic paper <p>Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 26 Quarterly • 30+ Virtual 2020-21 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antimicrobial Resistance • Green/Blue Space • Meaningful activities in Care Homes • Virtual reality nature experiences • Impact of Pharma waste. • Impacts of Phthalates • 3rd Sector Service Commissioning • Mapping Social Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butterfly Conservation • Wildlife Trust • Making it Better • Falmouth Primary School • Sensory Trust • Cornwall Council • Coastline Housing • One for All Community Garden • Polzeath Marine Conservation Group • Maritime Museum • Neighbourhoods for Change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Exeter • University of Plymouth • NIHR ARC South West • Wellcome Centre Cultures & Environments of Health • NIHR HPRU-ECH • Public Health England • LSTMS • UCL • University of Sussex 	<p>40 Members Since 2013</p> <p>24 Current Members</p> <p>3 Original Members</p> 

It seems timely to pause, take stock of these activities and celebrate HEPE’s many achievements by looking back at some of the work HEPE has done over the past seven years. It is not possible to mention everything, so here are some highlights. However, in keeping with the collaborative mode of working that defines HEPE, if a project or activity isn’t mentioned that you feel should be, please let us know.

In October 2014 HEPE worked with [Anne Leonard](#) on the [Beach Bums](#) project, providing feedback in preparation for the project to be considered by the Ethics Committee. Recruitment started in June 2015, with the project completing in June 2016 and in November 2016, Anne reported back to HEPE with research findings and to highlight the positive impact of HEPE’s feedback on her work. This led to HEPE collaborating with Anne to deliver teaching to students on Living With Environmental Change at Penryn Campus.

April 2015 saw the start of HEPE's involvement in the Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU) a large multicentred initiative focussed on environmental change and health. HEPE members were invited to join the Advisory Board, to attend annual conferences in London and report the progress of research teams back to HEPE. A number of workshops were held in Truro looking at research prioritisation & utility for HPRU. For example, the November 2018 workshop looked at the research gaps on the impacts of climate change and considered questions relating to extreme weather, vector borne diseases, food safety, extreme temperatures, air quality, water related illness, mental health and, populations of concern. We developed a butterfly themed theoretical model of a public engagement cycle, based on this work, and HEPE members co-authored an academic paper about this.



Not all of the project applications HEPE were consulted on went on to be funded, such as the 2013 proposal to look at the impact of climate change and coastal populations on seaweed, or the 2014 application on the impact of pharmaceuticals in the environment on human and environmental health. In some cases bids highlighted research areas that went on to be investigated by successful funding applications elsewhere. The 2015 Dose of Nature proposal was a planned feasibility study about the possible benefits of nature activities for those with mild to moderate depression, and this got no further. However the 2016 Intervention mapping for [nature on prescription](#) bid went on to look into establishing best practice for a nature based green prescription for people with depression.

This highlights the research continuum that HEPE occupies, where understanding & experience of different research terrains and approaches goes on to be utilised further down the line. The workshop with [James Fullam](#) & [Kaye Richards](#) is a timely example of this, with their project on Natural Outdoor Environments and Mental Health. This aims to develop [Sustainability Indicators](#) (SIs) for the effective, ethical, and equitable use of outdoor natural environments in the treatment of mental health problems and the promotion of mental health in a time of COVID recovery and beyond.



In April 2016, [Matt White](#), [Lewis Elliott](#) & [James Grellier](#) introduced [Blue Health](#), a European-wide project investigating the links between urban blue spaces, climate and health bringing together 90 researchers from 9 different institutes. Combining interdisciplinary approaches, Blue Health examines how wellbeing might be promoted through the development of blue infrastructure. HEPE reviewed the survey questions at the May 2016 workshop and highlighted that while the survey quantified people's relationships and experiences of water spaces and health, it didn't capture the meaning of these encounters. This became the springboard to launch [My Blue Health](#), a qualitative project exploring the nuanced richness of people's experiences around different waterways. HEPE took photographs, recorded stories and wrote poetry to convey their reminiscences of significant blue spaces from their lives, going on to code and analyse this data at workshops in 2018 & 2019. One of the themes identified from this analysis was the importance of childhood experiences in shaping people's feelings about the water.





Meanwhile HEPE's work with Blue Health culminated in the Slam held in October 2019 at the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth. [Jo Garrett](#) presented the survey findings to HEPE and key points from this discussion were that blue space means different things to different people, and people's relationships to different sorts of blue environments are not the same and so not equally impactful. Notably, people expressed strong feelings about the sea. Informed by the analysis of My Blue Health data and the significance of childhood experiences, HEPE were keen to work with a local school and Year 6 from Falmouth Primary School joined us for the afternoon. Working with [Ruth Purdy](#) from [Mitber](#), the children explored their feelings about Blue Space, using tablets to take photographs from the museum's lookout tower, and adding captions to personalise their images. Children also drew pictures and made models using playdough and Lego.



In April 2018 HEPE were consulted on the survey questions for [SOPHIE](#), a project focussed on Seas, Oceans & Public Health in Europe. These were refined at a joint workshop in May 2018 when time was also given to generating questions to interrogate [Health Survey England](#). HEPE went on to work with SOPHIE again and although we were invited to send someone to the end of project conference in Belgium in March 2020, we decided a more sustainable use of the available funds would be to hold a workshop at the Maritime Museum working with Ruth Purdy again. Sadly this was to be our final face to face activity of 2020.

Researchers from Plymouth University contacted HEPE for input on their proposal for a [3rd Sector Commissioning project](#) to improve the mechanisms between organisations in delivering social care. At the initial consultation in September 2018 Alex Gibson set out their

aims of looking at how the commissioning process relates to patients, the interaction between different bodies- voluntary, community and social enterprises, and how they are influenced and affected by the NHS. The project was successful in getting funded, will run until 2022 and a member of HEPE will be on the Oversight Group for the duration; Edward Chapman is currently fulfilling this role. Edward is also an Ambassador for the [Ask for Evidence](#) campaign which is a public campaign that helps you to ask for the evidence behind health claims, news stories, advertisements and policies. HEPE member, Carol Miller, is now also on the Ethics Committee for the University of Exeter College of Medicine & Health, providing a lay perspective on research project applications.

Nature and natural environments have been prominent in much of the work HEPE has done, whether that's been exploring the health benefits of [school gardens](#) (2016) or the effects of [sensory experiences](#) with nature (2016). The Mini Beasts of Bodmin (2019) provided an opportunity for community engagement at the [One for All Community Garden](#), taking science into public spaces and encouraging young and old to connect with the wildlife around them. The event was facilitated by Katie Vause, Jo Poland, and Carol Miller.



Other projects to mention are the [Meniere's disease](#) project, the [Inclusivity project](#), the [Big Data Beacon Project](#), [Smartline](#), [Soundscapes](#), & [SAIL](#). While this is by no means an exhaustive list, it gives an indication of the variety of projects HEPE has worked with and the breadth of research areas covered.

HEPE has faced the challenges of this year by adapting and being ready to explore different ways of working together and continuing to be the critical friend that research needs. The move to virtual weekly meetings led to the development of our citizen science research proposal and although this has not been funded, yet, the richness of the experience cannot be understated. To witness ideas taking shape from people sharing their personal experiences of how they accessed nature while remaining indoors to then becoming a clearly defined research bid was remarkable, as was the activation of HEPE's different networks.

HEPE members recently attended the successful online transfer (an examined presentation marking the midpoint of a PhD study) of researcher and communicator [Alex Smalley](#). Alex has engaged with HEPE as communications lead for number of research projects. In his presentation Alex acknowledged the role HEPE played in developing his own studies. This is testament to the value of the ongoing relationships that HEPE members have helped to build between the University of Exeter and its local communities.

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HEPE was founded by [Professor Ruth Garside](#) and is supported by [Dr Kath Maguire](#) (NIHR Knowledge Mobilisation Research Fellow), and [Ritadevi Alflatt](#).

