Who we are: Staff

Nick Bibby

Founder &
Director (outgoing)

2019-2023

Dave Bell

(new) Co-Director

2021-Present

(new) Co-Director

**Recruitment being
launched soon…**

Who we are: Board

Linsey Dickson

SPRE Chair & Director of Research Services at the University of Stirling

Dr Andrea Tonner

SPRE Trustee & Senior Lecturer at the University of Strathclyde

Prof. Katherine Smith

SPRE Chair & Professor at Strathclyde University

Prof. Nick Fyfe

SPRE Trustee & Vice Principal (Research) at Robert Gordon University

Dr Isla Kapasi

SPRE Trustee & Research & Analysis Manager at Zero Waste Scotland

Jane Gordon

SPRE Trustee & Policy & Public Affairs Officer at Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems.
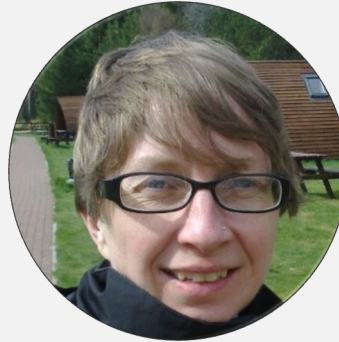
Who we are: Board

Freya Collier-Sewell

SPRE Trustee & PhD Researcher at Sheffield Hallam University

Dr Sam Staddon

SPRE Trustee & Senior Lecturer at the University of Edinburgh

Dr Clare Taylor

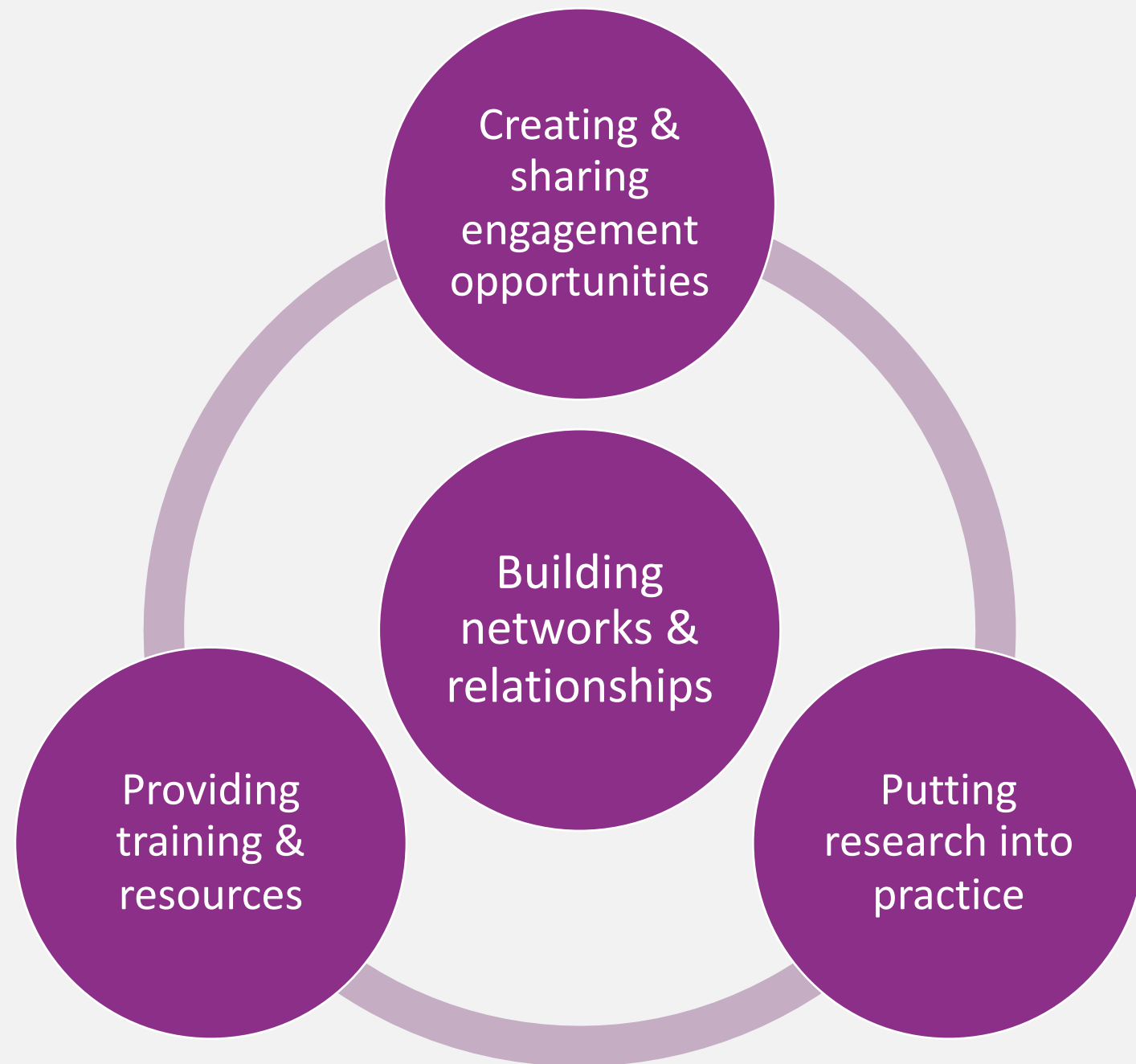SPRE Trustee & Senior Lecturer at Edinburgh Napier University

What we do

We are the only organisation dedicated to supporting the needs of the Scottish research-policy landscape.

We have created the Brokerage network – a unique community of research and policy professionals that provides effective connections between policy demand and research supply.

We have strong relationships across Scottish & UK central & local government, parliament, HEIs and evidence intermediary organisations (e.g. RURU, UPEN, Transforming Evidence, CSaP, WCPP, IPPO, Y-PERN).

Creating & sharing engagement opportunities

Building networks & relationships

Providing training & resources

Putting research into practice

Engagement opportunities

- We provide a unique service that collates and shares all UK and devolved *government and parliamentary inquiries*
- We put out *calls for experts* in response to policy demand
- We undertake bespoke **brokerage services** to connect researchers and policymakers
- We create *collaborative engagement events* that connect research, policy, and practice communities

Call for experts - Waste Sector Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Forming a Specialist Advisory Group for a Scottish Government led project

Dear Knowledge Mobiliser

SEFARI Gateway – the knowledge exchange and impact hub for the Scottish Environment, Food and Agriculture Research Institutes – is forming a Specialist Advisory Group (SAG), which will be led by Kerry Dinsmore, Principal Science Adviser, Rural & Environment Science & Analytical Services Division (RESAS).

The project is focused on waste sector greenhouse gas emissions, and the long-term aim is establish a platform to build a network of experts.

The aims of the SAG are:

- To review the methodology for waste emissions forecasting, assessing the quality and relevance of the underpinning science and assumptions.
- To put forward key recommendations to improve the methodology for future waste emissions forecasting – for example, making the methodology more flexible to allow easier modelling of different scenarios, or identifying additional data requirements.
- To identify key linkages between waste and other sectors, identifying where actions in one sector will have knock on emission impacts in another.

Example of a recent 'call for experts'

Training & resources

- We provide *free policy engagement talks and workshops*, designed to meet the different needs of PhDs, ECRs, PIs and knowledge mobilisation professionals
- We develop and share *online tools and resources*, such as our 'how to get started guide'
- We provide bespoke *mentoring and advice* to individual researchers and research projects
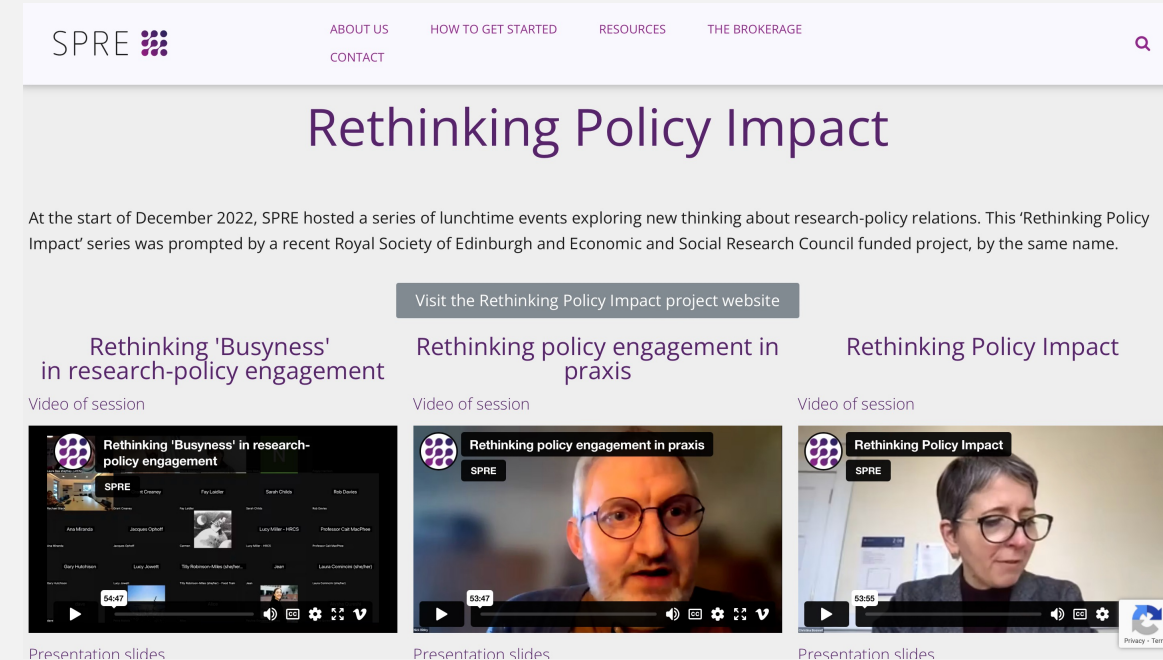
Screenshot of our recent series of events exploring recent academic developments in the study of research-policy impact, and what it means in practice.

Research into practice

- We engage and collaborate with a diverse network of experts and literature, to ensure we ensure we are bringing the best evidence on 'what works' into our own practice.
- Our particular focus is on:
  - Navigating tensions between REF and policy impact
  - Designing and delivering large interdisciplinary impact-focused projects
  - Engaging with local government
  - Critical insights on EDI, co-production and participation
  - Complexity-aware 'theory of change' and impact monitoring, evaluation and learning

Utilising WPR to strengthen reflexive capacities in academic-policy engagement practice

Dave Bell[1,2], Laura Bea[2,3], Nick Bibby[1,2], Kathryn Chard[4], Simon Divecha[5], Gearoid Millar[6], Johanna Mufic[7], Alejandra Recio Saucedo[3], Kayleigh Renberg-Fawcett[2,8], Olivia Stevenson[2,8]
[1] Scottish Policy & Research Exchange, Edinburgh, UK
[2] Universities Policy Engagement Network, UK
[3] Public Policy Southampton, University of Southampton, UK
[4] School of Health and Social Care, University of Essex, UK
[5] (be) Benevolution
[6] School of Social Science, University of Aberdeen, UK
[7] Department of Behavioural Sciences and Learning, Linköping University, Sweden
[8] University College London, UK

Note about the authors:
Between 2018 and 2019, two new research-policy engagement intermediary organisations were set up in the UK: the Scottish Policy & Research Exchange (SPRE), and the Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN). Both of these organisations work through networks to support increased capacities for (university-based) research-policy engagement, including brokering relationships.

The authors of this paper all have links through being part of or engaging with SPRE and/or UPEN, and span professional identities and experiences across research, policy-engagement practice and, to a lesser extent, policy. We all have a particular interest in understanding the practical implications of research-policy engagement through the lenses of complexity, power, equity and justice, in order to shape more ethical and effective research-policy engagement systems and practices.

Introduction

Overview

Our starting point for this paper is well captured by a recent study of 1,923 research-policy initiatives from 57 organisations in the UK and overseas (Oliver et al., 2022). This study documented a huge expansion of activity in research-policy engagement, characterising it as a "vast and increasing mass of rudderless activity, which is busy rather than effective" (Oliver et al., 2022 page 14). Importantly, the study findings emphasise that this 'busy' and 'rudderless' activity is far from harmless: there are significant implications for wasted time and resources, reduced goodwill, and the (re)production of inequities.

Screenshot of a recent conference paper we co-led on, which documents a SPRE-UPEN project to apply critical policy studies insights to a collective response to a UKRI policy consultation

Our new direction of travel

Research-policy engagement needs to be more purposeful, learning focused and better equipped to navigate the ethical and political dilemmas inherent in this work.

Re-thinking what 'impact' means and how to achieve it, and creating enabling environments for more ethical, equitable and effective practice is key.

How can SPRE help address this?

"Overall, the picture is of a vast and increasing mass of rudderless activity, which is busy rather than effective...

"Harms are likely to include wasted time and resources, reduced goodwill and interaction, and increased inequalities in terms of participation in evidence production and use."

Quotes from a recent study into research-policy engagement, which paint a picture many are all too familiar with...
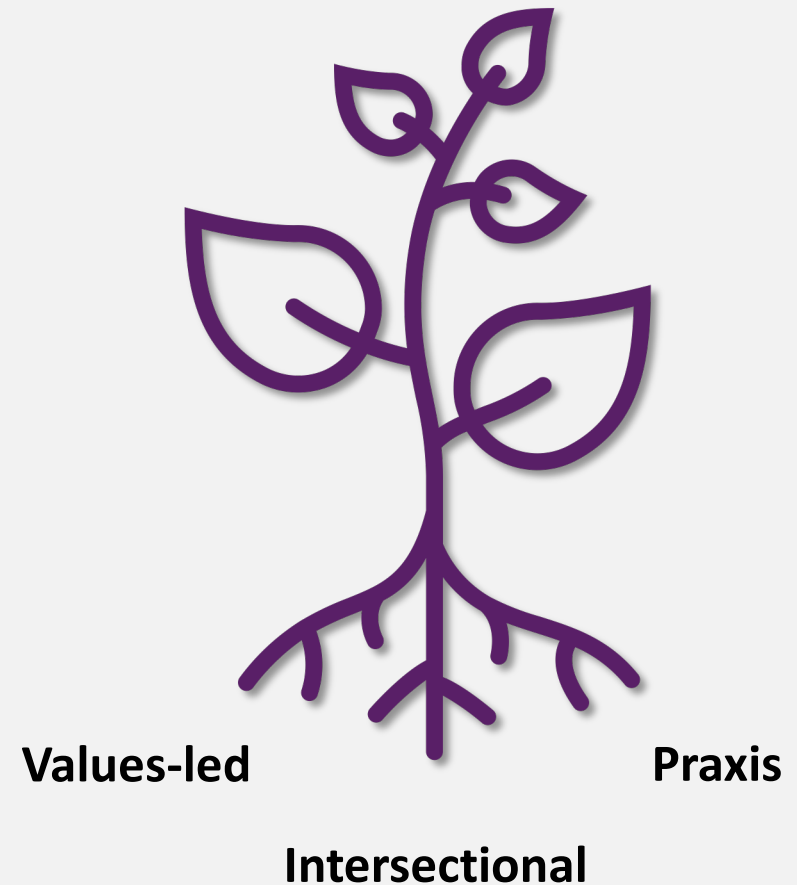
Oliver, K., Hopkins, A., Boaz, A., Guillot-Wright, S. and Cairney, P. (2022) *What works to promote research-policy engagement?*, Evidence & Policy, vol XX no XX, 1–23, DOI: 10.1332/174426421X16420918447616

Our new direction of travel

New roots for supporting the needs of the Scottish research-policy landscape

We're re-imaging our approach to supporting the needs of the Scottish research-policy landscape by placing values, equity, learning and improvement at the root of everything we do, as we grow into a new organisation.

A central part of this approach will be to co-design our new strategy around supporting the needs of the Scottish research-policy landscape, with our key stakeholders.

Values-led

Praxis

Intersectional

Our new direction of travel

➡ We will develop new training and resources to support:
- Strategic & learning-focused engagement
- Embedding ethics and equity into practice
- Meaningful approaches monitoring impact

➡ We will create spaces for peer-to-peer learning across Scottish research and policy communities

➡ We will collaborate on projects that map the research-policy landscape

➡ We will support systemic changes that create enabling environments and cultures for policy impact

Values-led

Praxis

Intersectional