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Is the flow of water over a crayfish in a river the same as the flow of air over a Formula One car; opportunities and challenges of outreach and engagement in the geosciences

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As geoscientists we are used to being inspired by and seeing the physical and scientific value of the landscapes surrounding us. We are also used to questioning why and how landscapes evolve and as well as trying to unravel the complex interactions between the human and physical landscapes. However, typically scientific results remain within the scientific community and there is relatively little engagement beyond that community particularly with underrepresented or hard-to-reach audiences.

From making slime glaciers to discussing whether or not the flow of water over a crayfish in a river is the same as the flow of air over a Formula One car, running geoscience themed outreach and engagement events have provided me with some of the most exciting and rewarding times of my academic career. In this lecture I will share some of the passion I have for ensuring academic research is shared, is accessible and is inspiring for everyone, not just scientists. Using examples of how I have engaged with a diverse range of non-academic audiences from school children to governmental policy makers I will talk through the challenges and opportunities these engagement experiences have presented.

Looking to the future I will discuss the potential opportunities the geoscience community has for overcoming current barriers to engagement, the significance of training undergraduate and postgraduate students in delivering engagement activities and the importance of engaging citizens with scientists in order to understand and help mitigate against the impact humans are having on our fragile planet.