



Going into the unknown: science engagement in usual locations

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When you think of public engagement with science, what do you think of? Blogs, TV shows, science festivals? These are all commonplace methods employed by individuals and organisations to engage a non-peer audience with science. However, there is an increasing trend in taking outreach activities into less traditional venues.

Have you ever come across science outreach at a music festival? Or on a beach? Or at a craft fair? You might be surprised to hear that these are all locations visited by the Met Office's STEM outreach programme over the last couple of years (STEM is Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). In 2014 we were awarded the EMS's Outreach and Communication Award for our 'substantial and comprehensive outreach effort, sophisticated and ambitious, that communicates the joy of science'. Since then, we have been working hard to further develop our programme. We recognise that many methods of public engagement reach an audience already engaged, to a greater or lesser extent, with science. Through our outreach programme we are keen to engage with people of all ages, but primarily under 18s, who don't necessarily see science as part of their everyday lives, and as a national weather service in a country obsessed by the weather we are in a perfect position to do this.

Here I will present an overview of the non-traditional locations in which we deliver our outreach, considering why we choose to do this, who we are looking to reach and how we come up with our ideas. From our evaluation of the events, I will also outline what challenges and benefits engaging in this way presents.