



# ENGAGED RESEARCH

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*Strategic Plan 2025*



*Our vision is to inspire and understand the mutual needs of our global – local communities and provide measurable pathways to global impact through our pioneering research*



## FOREWORD



**Since its establishment as the world's first Mechanics' Institute in 1821, Heriot-Watt has been a place where people from all walks of life can gain an education aligned with the needs of businesses and society.** This founding ethos of providing accessible learning to people of all backgrounds remains highly relevant today and is integral to our vision of an engaged university for the 21st Century. In our recently published Prospectus for Recovery and Future Growth, we commit as a university to supporting the global recovery efforts in relation to Covid-19. As society rebuilds, we will maximise opportunities for innovation, solve significant issues and drive impactful socioeconomic benefits through the commitments and actions laid out in the prospectus.

Central to this is our Public Engagement strategy and over the past two years we have been working closely with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement, to understand university culture and the role of universities in a global and local context. The knowledge from this research has fed into this Engaged University Plan, which will shape our Public Engagement priorities over the course of Strategy 2025.

This strategy embeds our four guiding values – inspire, collaborate, belong and celebrate – into our mission to benefit society, and engage with those impacted by our research. Through the implementation of this strategy we aim to have a positive influence on the communities where we are located, shaping tomorrow together to deliver benefits for all of society.

PROFESSOR GARRY PENDER  
Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation)

# OUR ENGAGED Research

At Heriot-Watt University, we define public engagement as the **wide range of ways we engage specific members of the public with our research design, process, and outputs.** Drawing on the definition of the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement, our engagement:

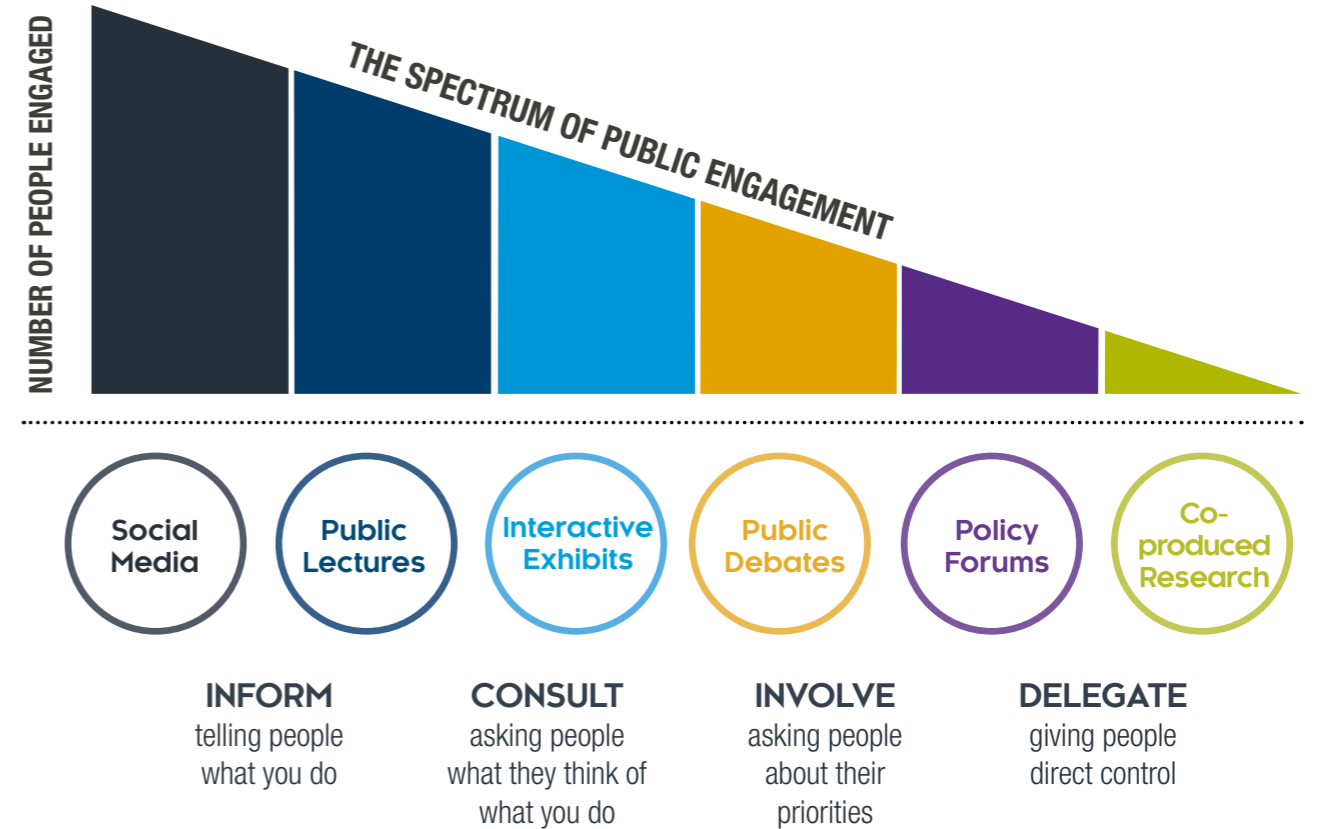


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*Involves creating an opportunity for people to consider, participate and debate ideas. It is a two-way, mutually beneficial process, which may involve activities like participation, conversation, interaction and listening - from hands-on activities, to artists inspired by research issues, to public debates and community focus groups.*

As an engaged university, our researchers strive to embed public engagement within their research through informing, consulting and collaborating with identified publics, ensuring our research benefits all of society.

We understand that public engagement is of increasing strategic importance for higher education and research and innovation, to strengthen relevance, responsiveness, and accountability, and to build trust. Societal transformation, like rebounding from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic with a Research and Development led recovery, progress towards Net Zero and the increasing prevalence of robotics and AI, need strategic engagement to prepare publics and to build relationships and backing.



Source:  
Adapted from Beltane

# HERIOT-WATT ENGAGED

The Heriot-Watt Engage team promotes, stimulates and supports public engagement activities by the research community. Heriot-Watt Engage was established in 2013 to build upon Heriot-Watt's partnership with the Beltane Network, one of six UK Beacons for Public Engagement funded by Research Councils UK, the Funding Councils and the Wellcome Trust.

The HW Engage team is supported by the Public Engagement Steering Group, chaired by the Deputy Principal for Research and Innovation. They work with Heriot-Watt staff, students and community partners to deliver a shared vision of an engaged University.

Heriot-Watt's wider societal engagement includes engagement with schools, community groups, third sector, and through media, policy and industry. HW Engage collaborate with other Heriot-Watt teams involved in external engagement to ensure they maximise our stakeholder engagement potential. Externally, the HW Engage team build and support relationships with a diverse range of cultural and community partners. Exemplars include our collaboration with the three Edinburgh universities through the Beltane Public Engagement Network.



2013

- Heriot-Watt Engage created

2014

- Wellcome Trust People Award



The Year of the Sea

2018

- Year of the Sea
- RSE Public Engagement Award

2020

- Engaged Research Strategy
- Engaging Libraries Funding
- EPSRC Engineering Engagement Champion

2008 - 2012

- Beltane Beacon for Public Engagement



2016

- Leverhulme Artists in Residence
- RSE Innovators Award

2017 - 2019

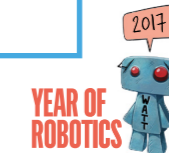
- UKRI Strategic Embedding Project (SEEPER)
- RSE Public Engagement Award

2014 - 2020

- EU Researchers Night (Explorathon)

2015

- UN International Year of Light
- Wellcome and Royal Society of Chemistry funding
- ARMA Award for Public Engagement and Advocacy



2017

- Year of Robotics



2019

- Year of Health

# OUR VALUES *and Aims*

Heriot-Watt's Engaged Research Strategic Plan is influenced by our university values, which underpin who we are, how we behave and the ways we work together.



*Our engagement will:*

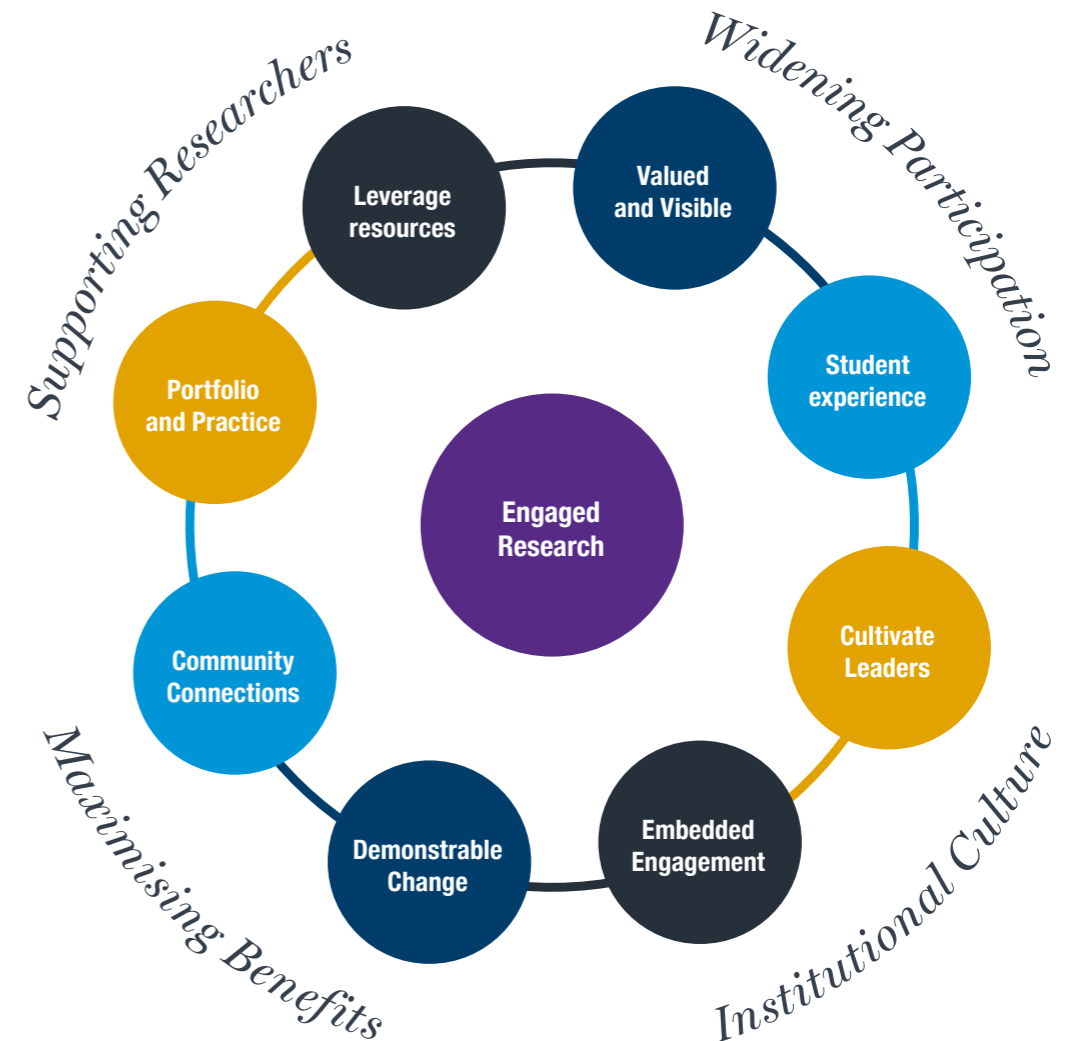
1. **Inspire** everyone, including those who might not typically have the opportunity to engage with research, identifying and breaking down the barriers so that engagement becomes equitable.
2. **Collaborate** with a breadth of people in the development of research, to better align our research with societal needs.
3. Create a sense of community and **Belonging** within our global-local communities.
4. **Celebrate** and support our engaging researchers.



*As set out in Strategy 2025, the goals of the Engaged Research Strategic Plan are to:*

1. Create an **institutional culture** where proactively engaging the public and communities in research is recognised as a core part of the research life cycle and student experience.
2. **Support our researchers** to drive culture change and mainstream dialogue between all our communities and publics on the value of our research.
3. Have a demonstrable **widening of participation** and diversity in public engagement of all flavours, at all of our locations.
4. **Maximise the benefits** our engaged university can make for the public and enhance the understanding of these impacts amongst our global – local communities.

*Heriot-Watt University's Engaged Research Strategic Plan is composed of eight priority themes. This plan focuses on the key action steps we will take over the course of Strategy 2025 to ensure our research benefits all of society.*



# OUR ACTIONS AND EVALUATION

*The Engaged University Implementation plan maps out what the HW Engage team will do, and the proposed strategy to enhance engagement with our global-local communities over the next 6 years. The plan is flexible to ensure we can adapt with the changing needs of the University and society.*



## *Supporting Researchers*

1. Develop an innovative **portfolio** of support and **practice**, enhancing the ability and confidence for all staff and students to engage, and aligning with funders requirements.
2. We will **leverage resources** for engagement, through mechanisms to embed PER in grants, enhancing our success with external funders and creating opportunity for innovative engagement through a seed fund.

## *Widening of participation*

3. We will ensure engagement is **valued and visible**, raising our profile locally and globally. This will help create an environment attractive to staff, students and collaborators to Heriot-Watt.
4. We will explore opportunities for our postgraduate and undergraduate students to engage with our communities, embedding engagement and communication within the **student experience**.

## *Maximising benefits*

5. We will enhance our **community connections**, increasing awareness of the opportunities to be involved in research through a programme of engagement.
6. We will develop and support bespoke public engagement that catalyses significant, positive, **demonstrable change** across our global-local communities. We will ensure our academics are supported to evaluate and understand the impact of their engagement.

## *Institutional culture*

7. We will **embed engagement** within our policy, governance, development and reward and recognition procedures.
8. We will continue to **cultivate leaders** of engagement, through our Bicentennial Research Leaders and Global Research Institutes.

# EVALUATING SUCCESS

Drawing on NCCPE best practice, and through extensive work with Evaluation Support Scotland, we have developed key success measures to measure our performance against our objectives. A full evaluation framework is available on the HW Engage SharePoint site and will be continually updated to reflect institutional priorities and sector best practice.

*By achieving our goals, we will aim to have recognition with an NCCPE Gold Watermark within the period of Strategy 2025.*



# MOVING FORWARD



*We all have our part to play to ensure our research benefits all of society, helping shape a better future for us all.*

Through our actions, we will continue to increase public debate and understanding of our research and innovation, building public support for research and influencing policy. We will make our University welcoming and accessible to all, developing activities and interventions that maximise the flow of knowledge and ideas between our researchers and publics. This will help our research community better frame and understand why our work is so important.

**Heriot-Watt Engage**

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