

Communication and outreach activities within the CLF

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Introduction

The Central Laser Facility (CLF) recognises the importance of communication with our current and potential users, STFC, UKRI and other funders, new industry partners, the wider scientific community, and the general public. Over the past year, a CLF communications team has been established and a social media account has been added to the range of channels we use to reach our stakeholders.

The communications team now includes an Impact and Engagement Officer, and a communications sandwich student, who shares their time with ISIS. Twenty-two staff from across the CLF have now been trained to edit the CLF website and help keep it up to date. The team has published over 40 news articles to the website this year. The CLF website has attracted over 11,000 users over the past six months, with almost 53,000 unique page views. Excluding 1250 users based at Harwell, this corresponds to 55 external users per day. A CLF Twitter account @CLF_STFC was started on the 1st February 2018, and had gained nearly 300 followers by the end of March 2018.

Public engagement encompasses outreach activities that will inspire the next generation and raise the profile of our world-class research, as well as communication activities that offer a platform on which to demonstrate the high-impact and inspiring science that the CLF delivers. Opportunities for communication and engagement in the reporting period 2017-2018 have been diverse, reaching across the UK and around the world. Here we highlight a selection of those activities.



The CLF 40th Anniversary

STFC celebrated the CLF's 40th anniversary by hosting a one-day conference on the 'Impact and Importance of UK Laser Science on the Global Stage'. Leading speakers from the world of laser science spoke at the event, including renowned physicist Professor Sir Peter Knight from Imperial College London.

The CLF produced a booklet and held a photographic exhibition, "40 Years in Pictures", to commemorate the anniversary. The CLF website featured an interactive timeline of CLF history, and the communications team also produced anniversary content for the STFC and CLF websites.

The Incredible Power of Light Roadshow

The *Incredible Power of Light* roadshow visited Norwich as part of the Norwich Science Festival in October 2017.

The roadshow was set up in 2015 by STFC in partnership with the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). It was designed to support the UK laser science community, showcasing the unparalleled range of state-of-the-art laser technology provided by the CLF.

The portable interactive roadshow was designed for people of all ages to enjoy and learn from, featuring interactive exhibits, including a walk-through of the laser area of the Vulcan laser, informative artwork, digital media and a 'live' laser show highlighting the CLF's world-class science.

We have particularly focused on exhibiting the roadshow in harder to reach areas of the UK, with the knowledge that people from these areas will find it more difficult to visit RAL site for our events and open days. We have also aimed to reach a more diverse audience through these efforts, giving more people an equal chance to learn about and be fascinated by science.

Speakers at the CLF 40th Anniversary included Dr Andrew Taylor, Executive Director of STFC National Laboratories, Professor Sir Peter Knight from Imperial College London and STFC Chief Executive Dr Brian Bowsher

(Credit: STFC)

The *Incredible Power of Light Roadshow* has proved popular and has been very well received. Families in particular have tended to visit multiple times during the duration of the show, because the children have asked to return.

After much success, the *Incredible Power of Light Roadshow* was decommissioned in 2018 after 16 events at 15 venues across the UK, having captured the attention of thousands of people over its 6,228 mile journey.

Artist Helen Towrie becomes CLF Impact and Engagement Officer

Helen Towrie, an artist who was originally recruited for three months to help with the CLF's 40th Anniversary, has been kept on for a year with the expanded role of Impact and Engagement Officer.

One major change made by Helen is the establishment of the CLF Twitter feed, the first and, so far, only social media channel for the CLF. Through this account, which is aimed at the science community and CLF users, she has shared stories and photos depicting day-to-day life in the CLF, as well as science highlights, workshops, events, STFC tweets, and other laser-related news. In its first two months, the Twitter account has garnered around 200 followers, and it is becoming a hub for users to interact with the CLF in an informal way.

As well as writing articles for the CLF website, STFC website, and the STFC internal newsletter (*in.brief*), Helen has also delivered articles to external newsletters such as *LaserLab Europe*. She also aids CLF engagement by photographing the laboratories and people at work, keeping the CLF's visual identity up-to-date.

Despite these changes to her remit, illustration has remained a large part of Helen's job. She has continued to use informative and representative illustrations to help break down complicated scientific subjects into easy to follow concepts for use on various media platforms. She has also used her artistic and creative thinking skills to help scientists to help explain their work more effectively to non-scientific audiences.

Helen has been commissioned by STFC and ISIS to carry out various art and design projects throughout the year; for example, she created artwork for STFC to illustrate dressmakers in the lab, and developed several pieces depicting the RAL landscape and ISIS applications.



Sandwich Student in the Communications Team

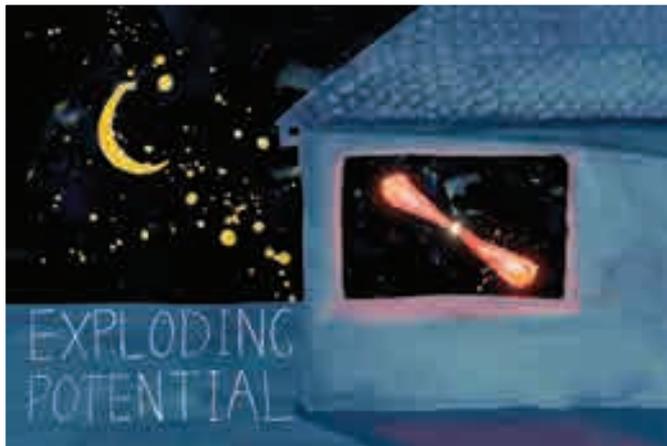
In 2017, Emily Cooke, a sandwich student was recruited to spend 50% of her time with ISIS, and 50% of her time with CLF – a first joint appointment for both facilities. Emily's role was intended to help the CLF and ISIS with communications in general and science writing in particular, and to establish a stronger bond between ISIS and CLF. The appointment has proved invaluable to our outreach and engagement efforts.

Emily has worked with Helen in her role as Impact and Engagement Officer, and together they formed a new CLF communications team. As a team, they have written articles for the CLF website, and helped to generate content for STFC social media channels. On top of this, they have worked to support tour visits and education access days, and have helped the STFC central communications team to get CLF news stories and features out to the general public, the user community and industry.

The communications team also produced a special issue of *in.brief* (the STFC weekly internal newsletter) in March 2018, carrying 15 stories about CLF work and staff. An internal email newsletter specifically for CLF staff was successfully piloted in early 2018, and will now be issued every two months, featuring a mixture of CLF highlights, staff news and events.



Training Weeks in 2017 continued to provide an excellent opportunity for participants to network with other members of the EU high power laser community, as well as benefit from hands-on and classroom learning provided by the CLF.



A series of illustrations depicting high power laser scientific highlights for the special CLF edition of in.brief



Cosmic rays and the RAL landscape