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Centre for
Public Policy

The Foundations of Policy Engagement in the UK COAST-R Network 28 May 2026

The Centre for Public Policy and College of Social Sciences
Research Support Office, University of Glasgow

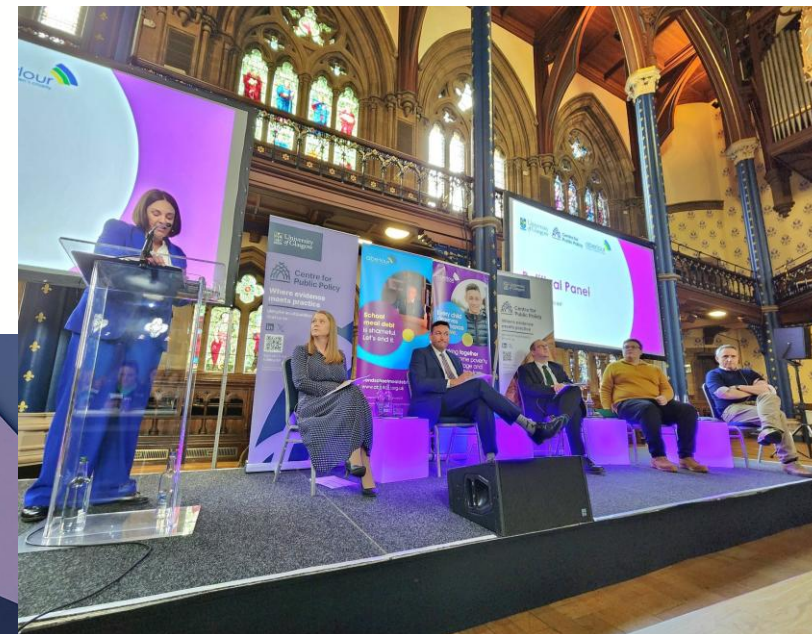
Welcome

Kimberley Somerside, Policy Engagement Lead, CPP
Dr Sarah Weakley, Research & KE Lead, CoSS & CPP

The Centre for Public Policy

Where Evidence Meets Practice

- Our Aim: To build collaboration between the research and policy community, by sharing evidence, nurturing skills, creating space for fresh thinking and preparing the next generation of policymakers.
- Policy Related Research
- Evaluation Hub
- Practice Fellows
- Policy Labs and Policy Schools
- Blogs, insights, podcasts, reports



Breaking the Cycle
Poverty, Policymaking
and Public Debt





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Who are we?

Dr Sarah Weakley

Research and KE Lead,
CoSS

- Staff member at Centre for Public Policy
 - CPP Practice Fellows
- PhD Social Policy, youth transitions and welfare (quant methods)
- HoC Specialist Advisor, Welfare in Scotland inquiry
- Knowledge broker, advisor, facilitator for policy engagement across university



Kimberley Somerside, Policy Engagement Lead, Centre for Public Policy.

- Convening space for policy discussions
- Background in policy engagement and political monitoring
- Third sector
- Focus on public health and health inequalities



Learning outcomes



1. Describe why policy engagement is a useful activity in your work, and begin to articulate what parts of your research/evidence are policy relevant
2. Articulate the concept of policy actors, including those within and beyond government and parliament, and identify those relevant to your work
3. Understand the key mechanisms for policy engagement in the UK
4. Identify next steps in your own engagement, including crafting your elevator pitch



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What is Public Policy?

‘Anything a government chooses to do or not to do’ (Dye, 1972)

Why Policy Engagement?

We might consider policy engagement as an activity when you want to change how something is done or delivered.



[Chipski](#) via Upsplash



What parts of my research are policy relevant?

- **Interrogate your own work**

- Is your work filling in gaps, affirming what is already known but in a new context, refuting previous work?
- Does it bring up new issues not currently in the conversation?
- Does it reframe debates about ‘what works’?
- Does your work interrogate the impacts of existing policy? (e.g. on people, places, states)

- **Then, articulate for yourself**

- What are **your key areas of expertise**?
- What are some of the **2 or 3 key findings** from your work



Devolution: Where in the UK should I engage?

- System of **multi-level governance** in the UK.
- Finding out if your area of policy is devolved could be complicated.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT	DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT	UK GOVERNMENT
• Deliver front-line public services. • Enables local government to have more control over decision-making, tailoring policies to their circumstances. • Some tax powers.	• The power to make laws in devolved policy areas. • Areas like health, education, housing etc. Scotland has a wider range of powers. • Some tax powers	• Power over reserved areas of policy for the whole UK – Defence, immigration, trade, UC etc. • Executive power on matters specific to England.
In England – combined and local authorities + Metro Mayors	Gov in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Parliaments - Holyrood, Senedd, Stormont.	UK Government and Westminster Parliament.



What: Horizon Scanning

- Position yourself and your work as directly speaking to a **policy issue at hand** – but how to find out?

UK

UK:

- King's Speech,
- Areas of Research Interest* (UK Govt, UK Parliament),
- HoC Library
- POST/POSTNotes;
- Committees of interest

Scotland/Wales

- Programme for Govt

Scotland:

- Scottish Government directorates
- Areas of Research Interest,
- SPICe.

Wales:

- Welsh Gov Organisational Chart
- Senedd Cymru – Welsh Parliament - Topics

Local Government

- Local Government Association
- Local Council Websites (county, district, metropolitan or combined authorities)
- ARIs
- Policy Documents or Regulations: Eg. Shoreline Management Plans



Quick Look: The Kings Speech

The King's Speech sets out the UK Government's policy priorities and planned legislation for the next session.

- It included **37 Bills to be passed in the next year.**
- **The Clean Water Bill** will merge the functions of several existing regulators, including Ofwat, in a bid to end the "fragmented oversight" over the privatised water sector.
 - Previously trailed in the Vision for Water: White Paper.
- An **Overnight Visitor Levy Bill** giving local mayors in England powers to levy "tourist taxes" on overnight stays.
- Other topics included: European Partnerships, Housing, Transport, Immigration and Health.





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Questions so far?



WHO are the policy actors you want to engage with?

- Useful to think of broad **POLICY ACTORS** as people who:
 - **make policy** - legislators
 - **design policy** - civil servants & legislators via secondary legislation
 - **deliver policy** - civil servants, public sector, voluntary sector
 - **influence policy** - think tanks, regulators (e.g. WHO, OECD), professional bodies (e.g. TUC), universities, voluntary sector/advocacy orgs, media, industry
- Levels of influence and action: UK-wide (reserved policy areas), Scotland, regional, local authority, neighbourhood/ward. Or your own country of work!
- Beyond UK, supra-national orgs (e.g. EU, OECD, UN)





WHO - Government and Parliament: **Knowing the difference!**

GOVERNMENT

If you want to:

- Help with policy (or service) **design**
- Inform policy **implementation**
- Shed light on the **impact** of policy

PARLIAMENT

If you want to **scrutinise** existing or planned legislation and policy



Tip: Make sure you know if they are an **elected member, civil servant or parliamentary staffer**. If they are Members – are they a member of the **Government** or a member of the **Opposition**.

Parliament: Working with Committees

Find the Committee that engages with your research topic – there may be more than one!

UK Parliament: House of Lords and House of Commons.

- HoL: 1 substantive inquiry a session per Committee
- HoC: many running in tandem

Scottish Parliament: 15 Committees, 1 Chamber.

- *Guidance for submitting evidence (HoC)*
- *Scottish Parliament submitting evidence guide*
- *CoSS evidence submission template*

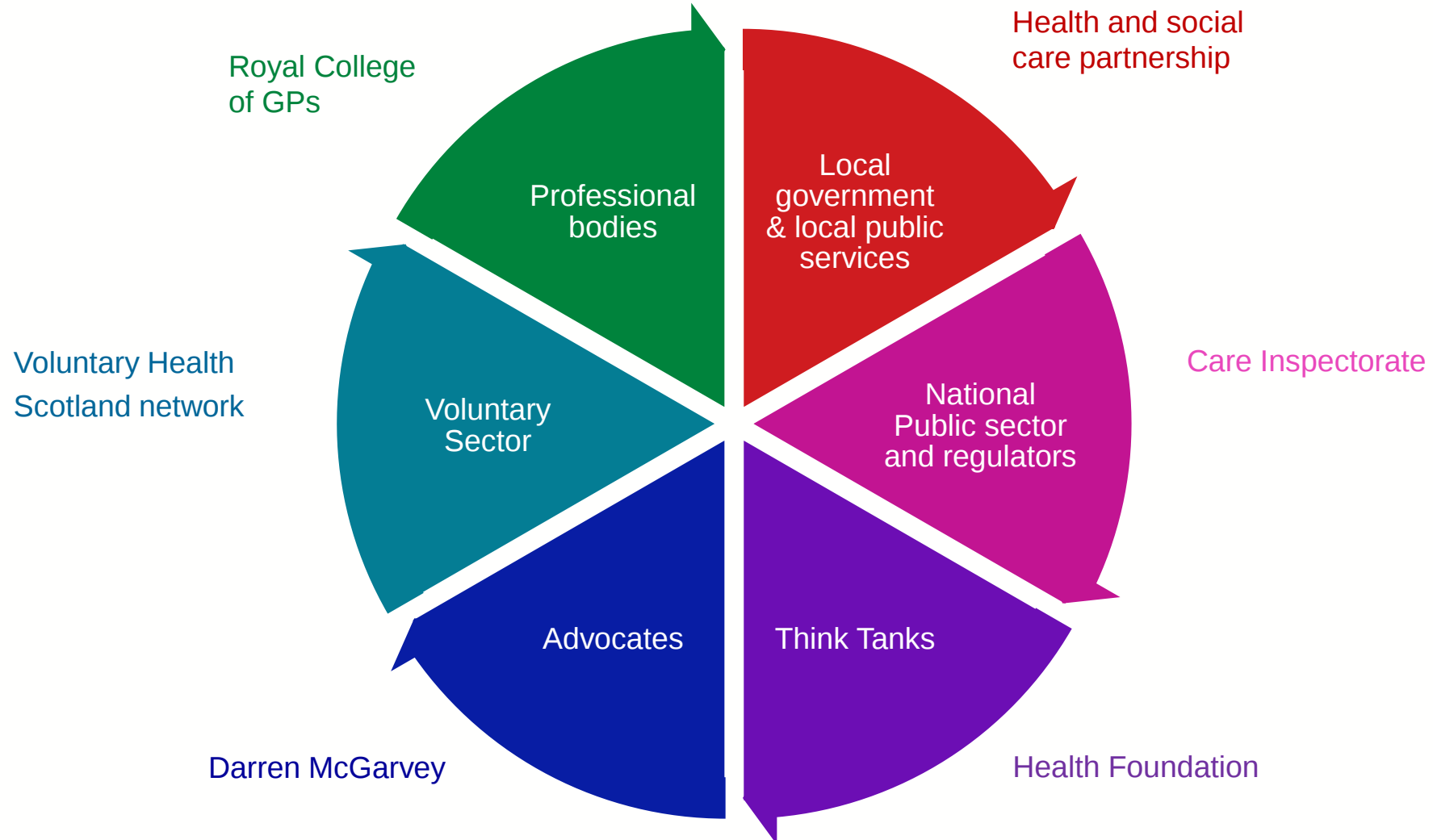
Tip:

- Get to know the Committee's workplan (online)
- Make yourself known
 - Check Committee inquiry calls for evidence
 - Contact the Committee Clerks
 - Sign up for SP Committee weekly bulletins!
 - [UK Parl Cross-Committee Newsletter](#)
 - [Sign up to Scottish Policy & Research Exchange network for live inquiries weekly email](#)



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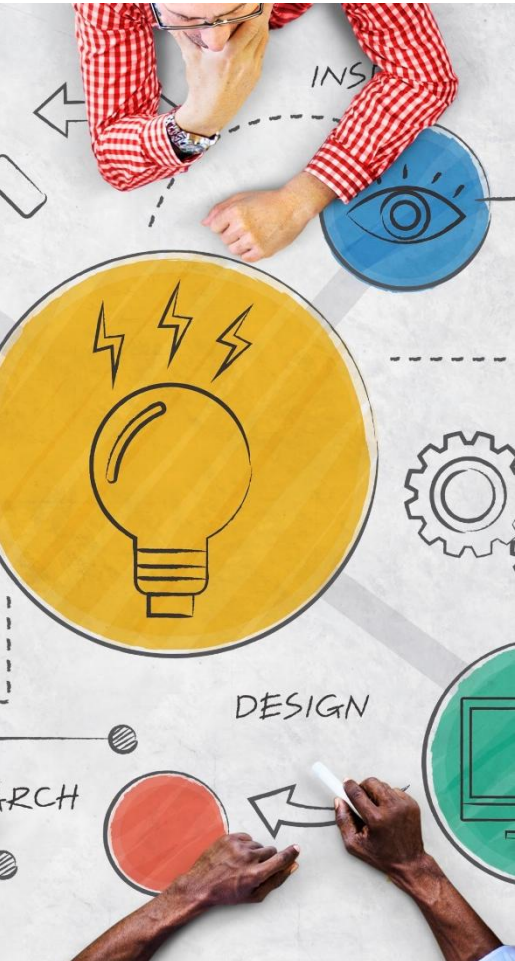
Beyond Government and Parliament: Developing your policy network –





Mapping stakeholders

- **Identify** and understand significant stakeholders who could influence the project's success
- **Categorise** stakeholders based on their roles and potential influence in the project to tailor effective methods of engagement
- Create a **proactive plan** for continuous stakeholder engagement throughout the project lifecycle, allowing for responsive and adaptive interactions





Activity 1: Identifying your stakeholders

We are going to take **5 minutes** to create a mind map of your stakeholders

Who do you already know, or have a connection with?

Start by considering all individuals and groups who may:

- Be **relevant to** your project
- Potentially **affected by** your work
- Hold **influence in** the change you want to make
- Have an **interest in** the outcomes of your research





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Break



How: Building Partnerships and Relationships

- **Why partner for policy engagement?**
- **Map your stakeholders:** organisations and people (!)
- **Do your homework:** what are these partners working on right now or delivering where your expertise can fit in?
- **Design engagement for mutual benefit:** for impact and engagement work, this isn't about extracting research data, it's about working towards the same goal
- **Reach out (with something to offer them)**

How?

- Go to their events and invite them to yours
- Invite on advisory boards for your research projects, or as project partners
- Partnership for smaller projects that may lead to future policy engagement (e.g. Coast-R Flexible Fund)
- Keep them updated on outcomes of your research/projects as **they relate to their mission or interests**

What is a Policy Brief?

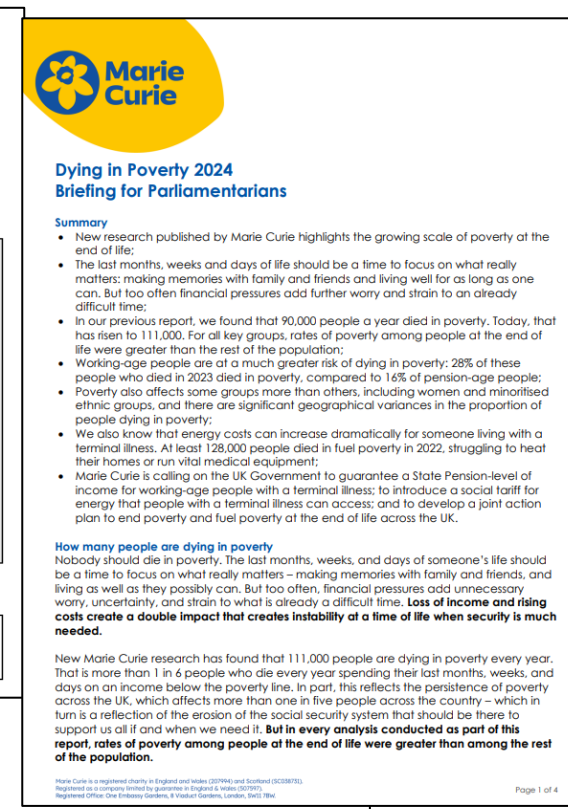
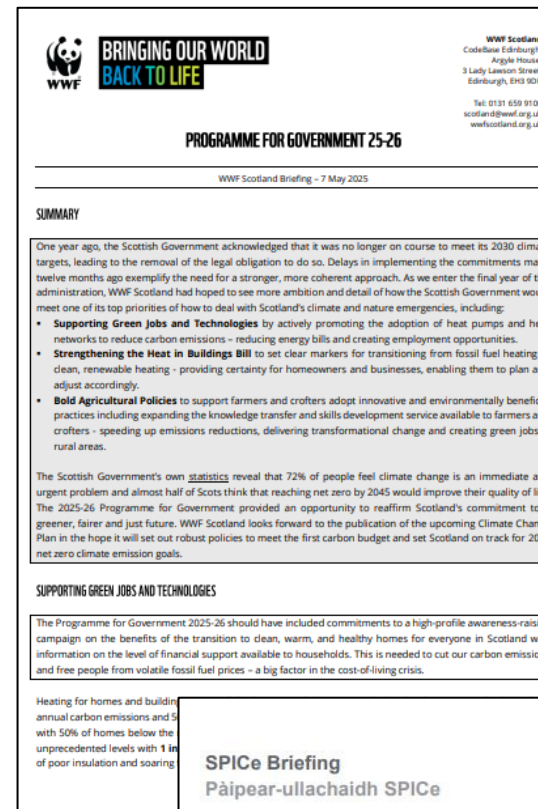
Policy brief is a concise, stand alone publication with a specific purpose to inform/advise a non-academic external audience of an issue that requires policy attention.

2-4 pages written in professional style easy to understand, jargon-free

These can be:

- Summaries of reports or detailed summaries
- Consultations/call for views responses
- Campaign call for change/action
- Briefings ahead of meetings and events

Resource: [European Commission, 2025. Sharing Scientific Evidence with Policymakers](#)



A review of inter-governmental cooperation and communication during Ukraine resettlement efforts in Scotland

Dr Dan Fisher (Centre for Public Policy)

This briefing examines the collaboration and communication that took place between the Government of the United Kingdom, the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and Local Authorities in the implementation of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme. It draws together the learnings to inform the response to future migration crises that require inter-governmental



Top Tips for Writing for a Policy Audience

- **Increase your visibility:** via blogging, social media and other open-access publications.
- **Frame your evidence:** connect your work to a live policy issue, or one specific to that actor or time
 - Should be a problem that can be solved by policy action, ideally with ideas about choices they can make (e.g. what's worked elsewhere?)
- **Translate your findings effectively and consider:**
 1. What do we know
 2. What don't we know
 3. What do we (as a field) have disagreements on/different approaches to
 - Be clear on where your work adds to this topic
- **Concise and jargon-free:** include graphs or charts too if appropriate



How: Common methods of engagement

1. Working with Committees: Responding to formal inquiries or consultations (find out via Scottish Policy and Research Exchange)
2. Connect with a Cross Party Group in Scottish Parliament, All Party Parliamentary Group in UK Parliament (open to all)
3. Connect with broker orgs within Parliament (POST, SPICe)
4. Connect with UK govt dept by responding to an Area of Research Interest (ARI); Scottish Govt ARIs
5. Send an intro email (but be clear on why)

More!

Connect with **Scottish Policy & Research Exchange** to join The Brokerage academic network • GO-Science Routes to Academic Engagement page (UK level) • **Events/Exhibitions:** in Parliament, in constituencies, at the University, with research partners in communities
• **Meetings with individual policy professionals**

Outputs to have at hand

- Research summaries
- Blog posts
- Policy briefs



UK Govt Areas of Research Interest

- Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) are specific topics or issues that the UK government is interested in.
- Tells researchers exactly what the government wants to know
- ARIs are wide-ranging:
 - Each UK govt department is required to write one, covers a 5-year period (e.g. **DEFRA**)
 - Scottish Govt is rapidly developing ARI portfolio
- A searchable database that includes Scotland ARIs



ARI Database
now live!



WHEN: The policy process is layered, multicentric and non-linear

- Sometimes a topic is 'hot' and sometimes you work on a wicked problem that is longer term (more likely!)
- **Engage early:** interim findings or at early stage of a particular project is welcome so you could get a heads up on the landscape
- Sensitivity to the **temporal nature** of stakeholders and their work
 - Parliamentary Considerations: Committees, Ministers, elections, budgets
 - Other partners: funding, campaigns, programmes they are running

Policy cycle



Policy spirograph

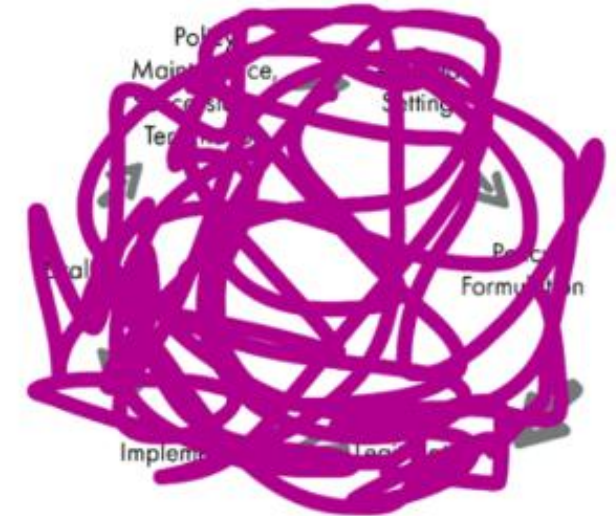


Image: Prof Paul Cairney, What does policymaking look like?



Take Home Activity: Elevator Pitch to Policy Actor

- You have 15 minutes to craft an elevator pitch to a policy actor you are interested in engaging with. It needs to be short, clearly written. Consider them a well-educated semi-specialist audience

Things to include:

- **Who you are**, (role), (institution) and contact details
- **Why you are contacting them** - be specific as possible
- Briefly outline your **area of expertise** or your relevant research
- What does your evidence show - **what are the implications for this policy actor**
- What action do you think needs to be taken – what are some **recommendations** (understanding nuance)
- Provide links to online profile, **open access/publicly available** published papers and blogs; if unpublished note 2/3 key findings and explain research is ongoing



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Reaching out

- Have a reason to reach out that is mutually beneficial – responding to a POSTNote opportunity, inviting them to an event in their constituency (Monday or Friday), a new blog on a topic of interest
- Note why you are reaching out, expertise areas, 2-3 key findings, open access links and (ideally) invite to engage more

Introduction: POSTnote example



Hello,

I'm Jane Flowers, a researcher at Alphabet University.

I would like to contribute my research to the POSTnote on food resilience.

Specifically, my expertise lies within reducing crop failure through engineered rapid root growth even in poor climate conditions (publications: 1, 2 and 3).

I would be happy to discuss my (below) main findings at your convenience:

- Incubating seeds dipped in alpha X substance for 3 days at 40°C before planting creates 50cm root growth within 7 days (usually this takes 2 months).
- Liaising with the Met Office farming officer to determine the best time to plant resulted in a statistically significant higher crop yield for 69% of famers in the sample.

I have written a blog on the impact of challenging climate conditions within farming here.

You can contact me on

Best wishes,

Jane



Resources

Scotland

- **Scottish Policy and Research Exchange:** guides, network, inquiry roundup)
- **Scottish Parliament Information Centre** academic engagement work in Scottish Parliament, research unit for Parliament

UK Government and Parliament

- **Knowledge Exchange Unit** at Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology: contribute to research papers, calls for evidence, fellowship and advisor opportunities
- **House of Commons Library**
- **Areas of Research Interest** database

Universities Policy Engagement Network: webinars and resources, particularly useful to see Regional policy theme and local gov.



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Discussion and Questions

Slides will be circulated in PDF to those attending

Get in touch:

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#UofGWorldChangers



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Your feedback

We really welcome your feedback on this session, in order to further refine our training provision in future.

Please take a few minutes to fill in our evaluation form:

[Coast-R Foundations of Policy Engagement Feedback – Fill out form](#)

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