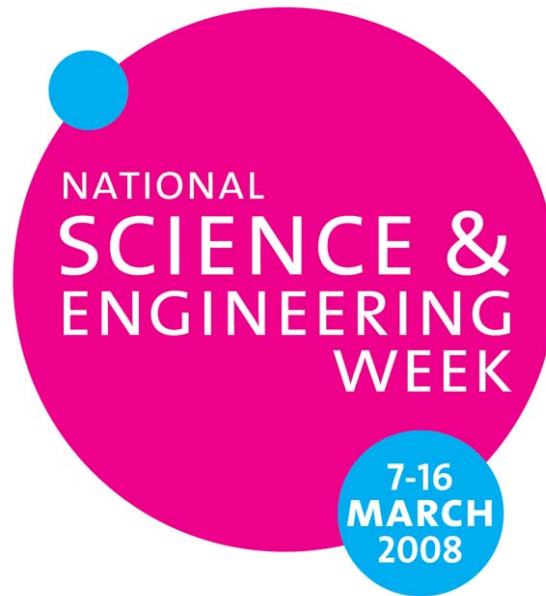


# National Science & Engineering Week 2008

## Evaluation summary

28 April 2008



# NSEW 2008 Evaluation Summary

## Executive summary

Participation in National Science and Engineering Week (NSEW) across the UK increased substantially in 2008; there were over 500 more events than NSEW 2007, with an estimated total participation rising from under 1 million people in 2007 to 1.4 million in 2008. There has been a large increase in the level of national media coverage and in key aspects of regional media coverage (e.g. coverage on national and regional TV more than doubled, regional radio coverage increased by 50%, and national print media increased by 30%). This, together with increased marketing has helped to increase significantly the level of awareness of NSEW amongst the general public.

## Addressing DIUS objectives for NSEW 2008

### ***1) Continue to broaden and deepen NSEW's reach into the public, particularly reaching more young people in difficult-to-reach areas.***

In terms of continuing to broaden and deepen NSEW's reach into the public, the 2008 event was the largest NSEW yet, with the number of events increasing by over 500 events from 2007 (3599 events in total, excluding events being added from the media trawl). There has also been a large increase in the number of attendees from previous years with numbers almost doubling to a baseline estimate of 1.4 million (this is around 560,000 more than in 2007). Focused event types have also seen a healthy increase in numbers with engineering events up by around 120 from last year and school events now accounting for 42% of all registered events.

In particular NSEW 2008 has reached a high number of young people, and people in difficult-to-reach areas. An estimated 24% of all UK schools could be involved in NSEW according to our phone survey. 260,000 pupils are estimated to have attended the 650 known school events but this figure would potentially rise to around 1.2 million if we take into account the high level of unregistered events.

The majority of attendees at NSEW events are 24 years old or younger and the majority of organisers target primary, secondary schools, families, sixth form students, or children outside of school. An estimated 60% of children had not attended a NSEW event before. The challenge packs, a free resource for schools to use to organise school events, were also popular with 29,642 downloads over the year. Overall the majority of attendees are white British, but a higher percentage of ethnic minorities than the national average attend NSEW events (particularly due to the NSEW small grant scheme).

Individual schemes for NSEW this year (including NSEW small grant scheme, The Big Question Challenge and Ready to Learn – The Experiment) have also been very successful in reaching the public; particularly the young and people in difficult to reach areas (see objective 4 and 5 for more detail).

Results also strongly indicate that once people know of and become involved in NSEW they rate their experience positively and would like to be involved again. Organisers show enthusiasm and loyalty for the Week<sup>1</sup>, the majority of presenters would like to present at a future NSEW event<sup>2</sup> and the majority of attendees rate the NSEW events they attended very highly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Indicated by the following results - 1) A significantly important reason why organisers want to get involved is to 'be part of NSEW', 2) over 90% of organisers say they would organise another NSEW event and 3) over 25% of organisers only organise NSEW events.

<sup>2</sup> (93%) of presenters will definitely or probably present at another NSEW event

<sup>3</sup> 87% of adult attendees were 'very' or 'fairly satisfied' with the event and children from schools gave their events an average mark of 8.4 out of 10.

## ***2) Raise the profile of NSEW at a national level.***

One of the main aims for NSEW 2008 was to raise the profile of the event itself and there is evidence that this has been achieved. This can be shown by the results from the GFK NOP Consumer survey which is carried out each year, which asks 1000 adults (over 16) before and after NSEW 'Have you heard of NSEW?' and if so 'When is NSEW?' Awareness of NSEW has increased by 45% since 2007 (from 11% to 16% of the population). Importantly, awareness also increased from before to after NSEW (a 20% increase) and the percentage of people who gave the correct timing for NSEW more than doubled. An increase in awareness (proven to be accurate due to correct dates) has not been seen in previous years and strongly indicates the impact of increased national and regional media coverage and increased NSEW marketing in 2008.

Alongside this a large percentage of attendees, presenters and organisers who got involved in NSEW 2008 had not heard of, been to or organised a NSEW event before<sup>4</sup>. This means that the NSEW celebrations have increased awareness directly, involving many thousands of new people in the Week.

An additional survey which asked "Have you heard of National Science Week?" was also carried out and indicated that 36% are aware of the old name for the Week. This indicates that many more people are aware of the Week, but refer to it by its former name.

## ***3) Gain more extensive national and local media coverage.***

The number of items of national and regional television coverage more than doubled (13 items in 2008, compared to 5 in 2007). Significantly there were 4 high profile items on national television compared to 1 in 2007, as well as 5 Teachers TV programmes. BBC Breakfast featured two NSEW stories – in particular a major segment on Friday 7 March where Professor Robert Winston was interviewed about the Big Question Blog. This was mentioned throughout the programme, with promotional spots and a phone-in. It also then featured as the primary item about that day's show on the BBC Breakfast online 'watch again' facility. Coverage was also achieved on a mainstream daytime television show on ITV, The Alan Titchmarsh Show, enabling NSEW to reach a wide audience, with varied demographics. As a result, the ITV website carried a NSEW reference and URL throughout the week.

National radio coverage increased from 2 brief listing mentions in 2007 to 10 items, of which 8 were very substantial as they included interviews with scientists involved with the week. In particular, the BA's President, Sir David King, took part in BBC Radio 4's Today Programme on the first day of NSEW, answering listeners' Big Questions. NSEW-related interviews were also broadcast on BBC Radio Five Live's Morning Report, BBC Radio 2 news, BBC Radio 4 news and on Independent Radio News.

Regional radio coverage went up by 50 per cent, increasing from 30 items in 2007 to 45 this year. The number of different stations around the UK reporting on NSEW increased from 21 to 24. The Big Questions Blog was a very popular topic and was mentioned in at least 15 interviews broadcast on regional stations all around the UK at the start of NSEW – from Jersey to Scotland. The increase in regional radio coverage was largely due to BA Press Office initiative.

In total, 10 different national newspapers (6 broadsheet, 4 tabloid) carried 22 items in 2008, compared to 9 newspapers (5 broadsheet, 4 tabloid) and 17 items in 2007. This is a 30 per cent increase in the number of articles this year. Overall, the articles this year were also longer, with a higher profile, and 60 per cent of the items classed as news/features, compared to 53 per cent in 2007.

A number of major features were run during the week in national newspapers. In particular, the Times ran a substantial feature focusing on the UK's 'Big Questioners' in their Saturday Magazine (8<sup>th</sup> March). It was the cover story (and thus also promoted within the newspaper) and comprised a seven page feature. This has an estimated media value of approximately £737,500 (calculation based on a full page

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<sup>4</sup> 36% of organisers had not organised a NSEW event before, 61% of presenters had not presented at a NSEW event before, 55% of adult attendees said they hadn't heard of NSEW before the event, 78% of adult attendees thought they had not been to an NSEW event before, 66% of child attendees had not heard of NSEW before, and 30% of child attendees thought they had not been to a NSEW event before.

advertising rate at £35,000, plus cover, worth £50,000, and using a standard multiplier of 2.5 to calculate the relative PR value).

A major article in the Daily Telegraph on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March, based on the popular Big Question 'Is there life on other planets' covered two-thirds of a page and led to a related piece highlighting National Science and Engineering Week events, with information about where to find out more about the week. Based on current advertising rates, it carried an approximate media value of £83,750 (an average full page mono advertising rate for a specified day costs £50,600 – therefore an article that covers two-thirds of a page article would cost more than £33,500, plus the standard multiplier of 2.5).

The Daily Mail also ran a full-page feature generated by the National Science and Engineering Week team towards the front of their weekend magazine (8<sup>th</sup> March), on page 18. News items appeared throughout the week and shortly afterwards in the Sunday Times, the Times, the Daily Express, the People, the Guardian and the Mirror.

Print media coverage for the month of March is still arriving from the monitoring company. Analysis of the number of articles in regional newspapers up to the end of NSEW currently stands at 265 for 2008, compared to 630 for 2007. However, a count of the articles seen during the week and for the subsequent seven days suggest that this difference will reduce once all the coverage has arrived as there is currently a smaller difference for this period (152 articles in 2008, 223 in 2007). Regional print coverage is largely achieved as a direct result of individual events. While support and guidance is offered to event organisers about generating publicity for their events it seems that increasing this support may be necessary to help boost regional print coverage.

***4) Drive forward and promote the theme agreed with DIUS (A Question of Science), supported by exciting and engaging mass participation activities.***

### **Ready to learn – The experiment**

Teachers TV teamed up with the BA to bring schools the opportunity to take part in a nationwide experiment being run during NSEW 2008. The project aimed to involve school children from the ages of 5-16. Children took part in an online test to analyse the factors which may affect their readiness to learn – with the test concentrating on what they had for breakfast and how much sleep they had the night before.

This mass participation research project was very popular and was enthusiastically welcomed by teachers. In total 682 schools and 78,431 pupils took part, a massive number for a schools event.

The activity was clearly defined for teachers, with support available from TV programmes on Teachers' TV and personally from both the BA and Teachers' TV staff. The project only took 5-10 minutes for pupils to complete and the test was tailored for different ages and available online. This meant that it was relatively easy for teachers to become involved and encouraged many schools not previously involved in NSEW to become part of the Week. Importantly, for a mass participation activity, it will also produce statistically meaningful results that may help pupils and parents with readiness to learn in the future. Results will be announced in the summer term.

### **The Big Question Challenge**

During NSEW 2008 the BA challenged the UK public to pose the most difficult, unusual, profound or perplexing questions they can to the UK's leading scientists and engineers. This Big Question Challenge was very popular, with over 2000 Big Questions submitted (over 500 of those questions were from children aged 5-14).

These questions were displayed and answered online via an interactive Big Question website (<http://bigquestion.wordpress.com>) and also featured on the main BA website (<http://www.the-ba.net/thebigquestion>). This blog site received double the number of visits compared with the BA NSEW

site (over 35,000 visits). Hundreds of scientists and engineers answered the questions on the Big Question website from across the country. A large number of these scientists and engineers had not been involved in science outreach activities with the BA before.

This mass participation project received much interest from the national and regional media. It was mentioned in at least 15 interviews broadcast on regional radio stations all around the UK at the start of NSEW. It also resulted in a slot on BBC Breakfast TV in which Professor Robert Winston answered viewers' Big Questions, with promotional spots throughout the programme, and Sir David King answered listeners' Big Questions on BBC Radio 4's Today Programme.

The Big Question worked very well and was extremely popular. It allowed scientists and engineers (many of whom are very busy) to communicate directly with the public without having to find the time to organise or make a presentation at an event. This meant many scientists who had not worked with the BA before or had not been involved in science outreach generally were very happy and able to be involved. This project was also of interest to adults and children of all ages. It offered the opportunity for people in difficult-to-reach areas or those who were not able to attend or organise events, to be a part of NSEW online.

***5) Continue to provide grants to enable black, minority ethnic and disadvantaged school groups to run a science and/or engineering based event and to increase those groups participation in NSEW.***

The NSEW Small Grant Scheme for Schools was first operated in NSEW 2007 funded by DIUS. The aim of this relatively new scheme is to provide small amounts of money to schools, with either a high proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds or from ethnic minority communities, in order to run an event for NSEW.

The NSEW small grant scheme in 2008 supported a total of 189 significantly underprivileged schools to organise NSEW events. Through this scheme a total of 44,300 pupils attended events organised by their schools. Of these children 41% were from ethnic minority backgrounds and 31% were eligible for free school meals. Many of these disadvantaged schools had also not organised NSEW events before. It is often more difficult to encourage schools to get involved for the first time, as they lack experience and often need extra support. These funds helped encourage many new (and disadvantaged) schools to be a part of NSEW, and gave them the support they needed to organise events.