

People

Success in delivering world-class science depends on the skills, knowledge and dedication of everyone in the NERC community



Nobel Peace Prize awarded to climate researchers

In 2007, the Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to US politician Al Gore and the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 'for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundations for the measures that are needed to counteract such change'.

Many UK scientists funded or employed by NERC have contributed to the UN panel and its four landmark reports.

NERC Chief Executive Alan Thorpe, said, 'This award is a tribute to all the scientists and others whose research has produced the evidence that human actions are changing the climate.'

'All our staff can take pride in the fact that we, along with the Met Office, Defra and others, have supported many of the researchers honoured,' he added.

Jonathan Gregory from the National Centre for Atmospheric Science played a significant role as a drafting author on the latest report and also lead author on two of the eleven chapters. He said, 'I'm thrilled. Working as part of the IPCC has been a great privilege for me – I feel honoured to have been able to serve the public good in this way.'

'The IPCC assessments have involved a massive effort, literally from thousands of scientists. It has certainly been a tremendous opportunity for us all to exchange scientific knowledge and ideas across the international science arena,' he added.

Climate modeller Chris Huntingford, from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, is one of a team whose work is cited in the fourth assessment. He said, 'The IPCC process produces well-balanced and methodical reports, free from the emotion that so often surrounds the issue of climate change. The process has allowed policy-makers and politicians access to key scientific information on the connection between human activities and global warming.'



Nobel Peace Prize winner Rajendra Pachauri, the UN climate panel's chief scientist, holding his medal and diploma. Many scientists funded or employed by NERC contributed to the panel's landmark reports.

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Next generation polar scientists for planet Earth

Attracting the next generation of polar scientists starts young with Ice Station Antarctica – a major new interactive exhibition developed in partnership between the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and the Natural History Museum in London.

Ice Station Antarctica is aimed at families, especially with children aged seven and over. The exhibition challenges kids to survive the extreme conditions faced by scientists researching the frozen continent, and to find out how Antarctica affects the rest of the planet.

Ice Station Antarctica opened in May 2007 and ran until April 2008, before embarking on a world tour. Over 200,000 visitors saw the exhibition during its 12-month run in London.

Classrooms get their own earthquake monitoring systems

UK schoolchildren now have their own earthquake monitoring system set up in their classrooms, thanks to British Geological Survey (BGS) staff.

Paul Denton from BGS said, 'The project has the wow factor. The sheer destructive power of earthquakes has always held a fascination for children and the detector is sensitive enough to record signals from large earthquakes on the other side of the world.'

During 2007-08, the project installed 60 seismometers, costing about £300 each, in secondary schools across England, with financial support from industrial sponsors and NESTA (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts). In 2008-09 the project is working with university earth science departments to put seismometers in

more schools and to provide a wider support network. Universities involved include Leicester, Leeds, Liverpool, Open University, Imperial, Royal Holloway, Durham, Oxford, Cambridge, Keele and Southampton.

■ www.bgs.ac.uk/schoolseismology

Training

NERC is supporting joint interdisciplinary research studentships with the Economic and Social Research Council to foster greater interaction between the social and environmental sciences. The scheme will fund about 20 studentships a year and will help develop capacity for the Living With Environmental Change programme.

Beacons for public engagement

In partnership with other research councils and funders, NERC has helped launch the Beacons for Public Engagement to help change attitudes to public engagement within the academic community. The six beacons and one national coordinating centre will create an environment where public engagement is a valued part of an academic's promotion criteria.

Training senior policy-makers

The Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research hosted a training week for 14 senior policy-makers from the Department for International Development on adaptation to climate change. The week was organised by Tyndall's Overseas Development Group at the University of East Anglia.

Descartes Prize for ice core scientists

Ice core scientists from the British Antarctic Survey, led by Dr Eric Wolff, were joint winners of a major European science prize awarded by the European Commission. The European Project for Ice Coring in Antarctica (EPICA) – which retrieved two deep ice cores that have revealed how Earth's climate behaved over the last 800,000 years – was one of three projects to be awarded the 2007 Descartes Prize for excellence in collaborative research. Three winning trans-national research teams shared the €1.36 million prize.

Prizes

Professor Brian Hoskins from the University of Reading received a knighthood.

Professor Michael Bickle from the University of Cambridge became a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Dr Philip Donoghue was awarded the Bigsby Medal by the Geological Society.

Ice sculptures and SERPENTs at the Royal Society

The prestigious Royal Society Summer Exhibition hosted two exhibitions from the NERC community: International Polar Year and SERPENT – a partnership that gives scientists access to remotely operated submersibles owned by industry.



Staff, students and fellows

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Directly employed staff*	2,727	2,736	2,659	2,573
Staff in HEIs**	690	1,216	1,227	1,300
Fellows	84	98	97	100
PhD	1,042	1,032	996	969
Masters***	325	335	383	371

Notes:

* Total number of individuals

** Staff in higher education institutions employed on research grants.

*** These data are based on numbers of students directly funded by NERC. They do not include studentships funded through cross-council programmes where another research council administers the award.