



# Impact Report | Y3+4

Jan 2021-Jan 2023

**Universities  
Policy  
Engagement  
Network**



**Prof Matt Flinders,  
UPEN Chair 2021-2023  
University of Sheffield**

They say that 'time flies when you're having fun' and that certainly seems to be the case in relation to my time as chair of UPEN. Can it really be two years since I took over from Stephen Meek and Kayleigh gave me a specially brewed bottle of beer to mark the occasion?

The last two years have certainly seen a lot of changes as UPEN has gone from strength-to-strength. When I came into this role my 'pitch' to members was based on the need to build some stronger internal governance structures, while at the same time externally promoting the role and capacity of UPEN. All of this was to be done, if I remember correctly, with an emphasis on stability strategy and success.

Looking back I think we can all be collectively proud of what we have achieved, and confident about the future.

UPEN now has:

- More members than ever (110+) and an increasingly diverse range of organisations wanting to join;
- A clear and inclusive governance structure based around an executive committee, six vice-chairs and eight sub-committees;
- A recognised and respected position and role within the wider research, development and innovation ecosystem;
- An established annual conference and annual lecture which showcases the role of UPEN while also shaping debates and introducing new strategic partners;
- Several strategic partnerships that increase capacity, reach and relevance into other sectors (Institute for Government, Times Higher, etc.);
- An increasingly clear and visible reputation at the sub-national, devolved and international levels;
- An evidence-based blueprint for future reform and development awaiting discussion and implementation in the form of the Sealey Report;
- Achieved a degree of financial stability with assets and new income streams
- A position at the very heart of the ESRC's public policy strategy and funding calls, notably but not exclusively in relation to the planned LPIP's Co-ordination Hub; and
- A brilliant new set of Co-Chairs – Sarah Chaytor, Andy Brown and Chris Hewson - ready to lead UPEN through its next phase.

I take no credit for these achievements. The foundations had already been put in place and the positive momentum generated by the time I joined the team. This is a critical point. UPEN is a genuinely collective and collegial endeavour and this inclusive culture is arguably its biggest strength. The past two years have been defined by a focus on continuity and change and I am grateful to everyone within the UPEN community for all the support, enthusiasm and energy they have given me. Special mention must also go out to Kayleigh Renberg-Fawcett, Alex Clegg and Laura Bea who have at different points during the last two years supported me as UPEN managers. Their dedication and professionalism were undoubtedly central to everything that has been achieved.

---

*" Working with UPEN over the last few years has been excellent. UPEN offers a crucial leadership role and service in the UK's research and innovation system, increasing the impact of research on public policy. UPEN is very well connected across both universities and the policy world and is therefore extremely well placed to act as a broker, spotting opportunities for research to have impact. UPEN leadership is, for this reason, well respected across multiple levels of government. UPEN also houses a treasure trove of expertise that I draw on regularly in my role to improve ESRC schemes that aim to better connect research and policy. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with UPEN. "* -  
**James Canton, Deputy Director of Public Policy and Engagement, ESRC UKRI**

UNIVERSITIES

UPEN

POLICYMAKERS

# 2021-23 AT A GLANCE

8

New Sub-Committees

6

Vice-Chairs Elected



3

UPEN published reports



4

New Strategic Partnerships

250

Opportunities advertised



New UPEN Members

35

Blogs published & including THE Campus Articles

70

24

UPEN Events

New Annual Conference and Annual Lecture

Increased international recognition and activity

Financial stability and new income streams



3,900 followers



121 followers

## UPEN SUB-COMMITTEES

Areas of Research Interest

Arts and Humanities (NEW!)

Communications and Engagement

Devolved and Regional Policy Engagement

International Policy Engagement

Professional Development

UPEN Futures  
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion