



**catalyst**  
science discovery centre



# Annual Newsletter 2019

Season's greetings everyone!



[www.catalyst.org.uk](http://www.catalyst.org.uk)



I am looking forward to continuing the good work done already over the past few years by the Catalyst team which not only includes a small but dedicated workforce but an able group of volunteers and a truly committed group of Trustees. We are also fortunate to have many local and regional companies and individuals who support us with grants, donations or sometimes their time or advice. We are indebted to you all.

I do have to say the successful bid for funding from Inspiring Science Fund (ISF) has been a 'game changer'. Wellcome Trust, UKRI and the many organisations who have supported our match funding requirements are allowing us to set a new path for Catalyst, to future proof our success, a once in a decade opportunity. Our community links need to be stronger and the work done over the last 18 months has made an excellent start on

this, something I am personally committed to uphold. Before I arrived the Studios had been refurbished, new front doors installed (thank you Halton Borough Council), Changing Places installed (HBC again) and the Theatre upgrade was well advanced (now complete of course). What a great new asset for Catalyst. Without this support and that from many others, we would find our financial position a challenge each year. We rely on two income streams: Grants / Donations and what we can self generate (from admissions, Cafe, Gift shop takings, School visits and our Observatory Sleepovers at weekends). We will look to secure a longer term grants / donations strategy in the coming years and uplift our self generated income. But of course, we will have to earn it. The general public don't part with their hard earned cash unless we offer something they want and is in keeping with where society has moved too. This will undoubtedly mean change for Catalyst in 2020 in being able to respond to that challenge. I have no doubt we will be successful as I have seen already the sheer determination to succeed in everyone I have met. We will make changes that offer something different whilst maintaining our principles of the past. Whether that be how we welcome people into our building, what we offer through the Cafe and Gift shop, what our Education team offer and how innovative we are about bringing new groups to Catalyst, we will develop together with strong input from our partners and most importantly from our customers.

So what will 2020 bring. I hope it will bring the first Premier League title in 30 years for my beloved football team, it's not too much to ask! It will also bring a refurbished entrance at Catalyst, Cafe layout and offer, Reception area, Gift shop position and offer, an under 5's area within the Cafe and some exhibition space on the ground floor that will allow us to show temporary and community exhibitions. The current Scientific will be completely transformed with new exhibits (25 off) that will provide a space that will inspire, allow problem solving, team working, solo working, inquisition to thrive, will cover all age groups and has been designed for full access for all groups. We will also offer for the first time, a Planetarium show. Our Observatory now has air conditioning so on a hot summers day (please, please), remember we are the 'coolest place to be'!

I don't anticipate 2020 will be any quieter than 2019 but then we wouldn't have it any other way. May I take this opportunity to wish you and those around you a very happy festive period and healthy and prosperous new year. Thank you for your support during the last year and I look forward, with the team, to working with you in the years to come.

**Martin Pearson** CEO of Catalyst



## Trustee and Patrons news

Update from **Dr Diana Leitch MBE**, Chair of Catalyst Trustees

In 2019 we appointed three new trustees. Professor David Hornby is a professor of Biochemistry at the University of Sheffield, Vicki Richardson is an HR Manager for Americhem Europe Ltd and Kerry Bibby is a Chartered Accountant for Brothers of Charity Services.

Trustees John Roche and John Bush both retired from the board and Director Jayne Edwards left Catalyst in March 2019. We thank them all for the contributions they made and we wish them well for the future.

In July we welcomed Martin Pearson as Chief Executive Officer on a part-time basis. Martin brings over 35 years' experience across the engineering, business and science sectors having previously held roles as Managing Director of a large UK based science company and Director of Dungeness B Nuclear Power Station in Kent.

We also welcomed three new Patrons to Catalyst this year; Dame Mary Archer, Sir Hugo Brunner and Peter Gossage.

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*Professor David Hornby*



*Vicki Richardson*



*Kerry Bibby*



# Sponsorship and support



## Inspiring Science Fund

Last year we announced that we had been successful with a grant application of £754,600 from the Inspiring Science Fund (£330,000 match to be raised by Catalyst). The ISF scheme, co-funded by UKRI and the Wellcome Trust, supports science centres across the UK to re-think what they do and what they offer to the public. 2019 has therefore been an extremely busy year as we have progressed with this project, in fact, there is so much happening that we have created a new page to report on our ISF update!

## Baker Gallery opening event



In May we were thrilled to officially open a new gallery funded by AIM Biffa Award under a scheme called History Makers which enables museums to recognise remarkable people that helped shape our world. Our gallery celebrates the work of Dr Harry Baker, a pioneer in the development of chlorine production at the Castner Kellner factory in Runcorn from 1897 onwards. It was opened by Chris Tane, CEO of Inovyn who now own the site, members of the Baker Family and pupils from Weston Point Community Primary School who created a newspaper which was given away at the event and created a song which they performed at the opening ceremony.

## HBC Support

This year we were grateful to have fantastic support again from Halton Borough Council who refurbished the scenic glass lift, installed automatic front doors and, installed a Changing Places facility in reception complete with a hoist and changing bed. We are extremely proud to say that this was the first such facility in Halton and has already made a huge difference to many of our visitors.



## Air Conditioning

Thanks to a private donation, we were able to install air conditioning units in the Observatory gallery this year. It is now a fabulous place to hold a corporate event!

## Periodic Table Launch



2019 was designated as the International Year of the Periodic Table by the UN and in October we held a celebration to launch a unique Interactive Periodic Table Exhibit which was supported by the Royal Society of Chemistry, RSC CICAG and Less Common Metals from Ellesmere Port who supplied a whole host of element samples for the exhibit. This is the very first exhibit to be installed as part of the ISF redevelopment!

Alongside the exhibit, pupils from Cowley International College, Lunts Heath Primary School and ladies from the Runcorn WI created an exhibition of Periodic Table themed artwork which will be on display at Catalyst until Christmas.



## Small Science Stories

For 2020 we will be working on a new interactive science-inspired storytelling programme for the under 5s supported by a Public Engagement Grant from the Institute of Physics.

## RSC IYPT Project

Also in 2019 the Royal Society of Chemistry awarded Catalyst a grant of £1500 to work with two local primary schools (Widnes Academy West Bank and Runcorn All Saints Primary) on a project to celebrate the International Year of the Periodic Table.

Catalyst would like to thank the following for their support this year;

2M Holdings  
Agility  
AIM Biffa Award  
Ames Goldsmith  
Arts Council England  
Ashton Chemicals  
BYK  
Ceimig Limited  
CF Fertilisers  
Chemical Industries Association  
Development Chemicals  
Dr Diana Leitch  
Dr Graham Jones  
Dr Ingeborg Buschmann  
Dr Jenny Clucas  
Emerald Kalama  
FMC (now called Livent)  
Foyle Foundation  
Friends of Catalyst  
Halton Borough Council  
Hawks Chemicals  
HFL Consulting  
ICE NW  
Innospec  
Inovyn  
Less Common Metals  
Meade-King Robinson  
Mersey Gateway Crossings Board  
MIND Halton  
Mr David Yaxley  
Mr John Blewett  
Mr Roy Coldwell  
Mrs Nicola Davies  
Novelis Recycling  
Perstorp  
Professor Alan Dronsfield  
Royal Society of Chemistry  
RSC CICAG  
Stephenson Group  
STFC Daresbury Labs  
Syntor  
The Brunner Family  
Victrex plc  
Wellcome Trust  
WREN



## Two Centuries of Stink!

Catalyst are thrilled to have received Arts Council England funding to support a new community-led project 'Two Centuries of Stink: Smell Mapping Widnes, Past and Present'. We have commissioned world-renowned artist and researcher Kate McLean who has spearheaded the practices of 'smellwalking' and 'smellscaping', to work with our collection and local community to explore the smells, scents and stinks of Widnes from the 19th century up to the present day. This will culminate in an exhibition over Summer 2020 in the newly refurbished reception as part of the ISF project.

# Sponsorship and support

## Inspiring Science Fund



As mentioned earlier, there has been so much happening with the Inspiring Science Funded project that we have dedicated a whole page to the update.

Highlights to date have included:

- Removal of the Pearn Pump from the reception area. This has been in place since that part of the building was added in 1994 but it has now been relocated to a new home at the Anson Engine Museum to make way for our new reception area.
- Redevelopment of the two education studios which included a new dividing wall, new porthole windows, new storage cupboards and a fresh coat of paint all round.
- Complete refurbishment of the theatre which included total strip out of the old seating, screens and projection equipment, complete re-wiring, redecoration and installation of new, moveable tiered seating, remote controlled blinds and a brand new projection system. This has had an incredible effect, providing a light, airy, multi-use exhibition space and a theatre that can now accommodate up to 80 people!

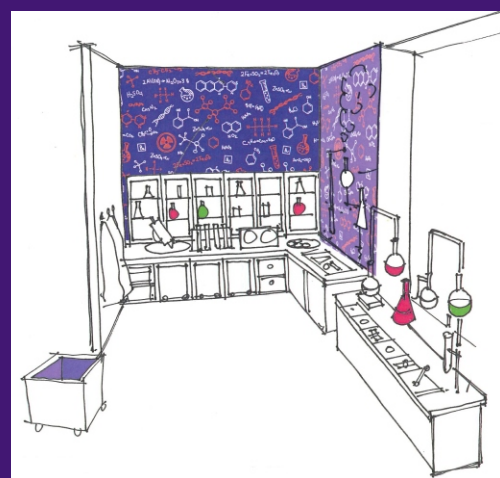
In January we will begin a six week programme of change as we transform the Reception, Shop, Cafe (with an under 5s area) and Foyer, then between February and the Summer we will completely refurbish our ground floor gallery with 25 stunning new interactive exhibits.



Removal of the Pearn Pump



Refurbished theatre



Artists impression of the reception, foyer and under 5s area



## Community engagement



A huge part of our ISF project has been to engage more with the local community on a wide range of projects which has been amazing! This work has been coordinated by Jade French and has included:

- Working with Halton MIND on a programme of well-being for their users (more about this on the next page)
- A community-led exhibition to celebrate World Down Syndrome Week
- The commission of a poster to raise awareness of HIV
- Working with Bright Sparks to 'Kite Mark' Catalyst as an accessible venue
- Taking outreach activities to the 10 most disadvantaged schools in Halton
- And last but not least, arranging 'One Small Step, One Giant Celebration', a HUGE event which celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing with lots of activities and an exhibition of Moon Memories. The event was supported by Daresbury Labs, Mako Create, Institute of Physics, The Studio Widnes, WSO Brass Quintet, Widnes Libraries and Halton Borough Council and artist Emma Curd. We even had a visit from trainee astronaut Dr Jackie Bell, star of the BBC Programme 'Astronauts, Do you have what it takes?'.



Dr Jackie Bell having her photo taken at the green screen provided by Mako Create

# Education News

## Science Capital in Practice



This year we were delighted to announce that we have been selected as one of 15 science centres and museums nationally to deliver a programme to increase diversity and inclusion in science. This initiative is part of the UK Association for Science and Discovery Centres and the Science Museum Group's Science Capital in Practice. It will see Catalyst create family science boxes to support science learning at home.



*Jade and Lucinda at the Training Academy*

## Sponsored school visits

This year we have worked with a number of local industry partners to enthuse and excite young people about STEM subjects. Agility Chemical Logistics, CF Fertilisers, Emerald Kalama, Livent and Hawks Chemical Company all sponsored school visits to Catalyst this year which funded the cost of coach transport, admission to Catalyst, hands-on workshops and science shows for schools from their local communities.

*We thank you all for your support for Catalyst and for the pupils in your communities.*



*Visit sponsored by Agility*



*Visit sponsored by Emerald Kalama*

## Out and about



It has been great fun again this year taking Catalyst out on the road to various events. The education team were supported by staff, trustees and volunteers at events such as ;

- The Big Bang events in both Birmingham and Liverpool
- Science under the stars on the Wirral
- Science of the Circus in Runcorn
- The Annual ASE conference
- SEERIH's Annual Primary Science Conference
- Salt Sunday at the Lion Salt Works in Northwich
- The Great Get Together in West Bank
- Walton Disability Awareness Day
- STFC Talking Science Lectures
- Various summer events such as Penketh Carnival, Stockton Heath Festival and Lymm Historic Transport Festival.



*At the Big Bang Liverpool*

## Education staff changes



This year we said a fond farewell to Education Assistant, Ellie Horner and three of our weekend presenters Liz, Patrick and Rebecca. In their places, we have welcomed new Education Officer, Heather Wark who has just finished her PhD in Particle Physics and Saturday Science Presenters Amy Lunt, Pascale Cook and Oliver Macaulay.

We look forward to working with our new Education Team!



*Heather*



*Amy*



*Oliver*



*Pascale*

## ISF Education Projects

As part of the ISF project we have been working on a number of community education projects. We have taken workshops out to ten schools in the most deprived areas of Halton. Lucinda and Jade delivered a combination of the Bee Discovery Workshop, Glorious Gases and the Light Fantastic Show.



We also worked with MIND Halton to deliver a programme of well-being and development sessions for service users experiencing mental health problems. These sessions included hands-on activities ranging from making fizzy fragranced bath bombs to yoga sessions in the Observatory gallery!



Finally, we are just about to take delivery of a brand new, inflatable Planetarium and from March next year we will be adding planetarium shows to our education programme. These sessions will be delivered in our newly refurbished theatre. Keep an eye on our website for more news.

## Support for Education

Catalyst would not be able to provide our award-winning education programme without valuable support from the following companies; **Inovyn** support the main education programme; **Innospec** support the Showering with Surfactants Workshops; **Stephenson Personal Care** support the soap workshop; **ICE** support the Bridges to Schools workshop; and **Perstorp** support the Plastics workshop.

*We thank you all!*



## Friends of Catalyst

This year the **Sci Bar** events have continued to be a very popular monthly event. Our thanks go to Bob Roach, Friend and Trustee of Catalyst who organises these events.

After many years service, Ian Campbell retired as Secretary of the Friends. This role has been accepted by Bill Ireland, who has worked in the local chemical industry for 37 years. We thank Ian for his hard work and dedication over the years and wish Bill luck in his new role.

## Adult Group visits

Visits to Catalyst for adult groups such as U3A, Probus and WI groups have increased again this year, largely due to the promotion of Catalyst by our Chair of Trustees Dr Diana Leitch when she delivers external talks at various venues across the North West. In 2019 she will have delivered a staggering 81 external talks!

## Award success

Celebrations were in order in March when Catalyst was awarded Charity of the Year at the glittering Chemicals Northwest Dinner held at the Imperial War Museum North!



*Dr Diana Leitch and Bryan Davies accepting the award from Valtris, the award sponsor*

## Heritage Highlights

- Catalyst opened its doors for free in September as part of the National Heritage Open Days event. Almost 600 people visited Catalyst over the two day period.
- To date, Judith and our archive volunteers have scanned an amazing 11,948 ICI photos, 13,416 Brunner Mond photos, 1,249 magazines, 16,320 workers records, 1,349 Brunner Mond reports and have transferred the contents of 342 boxes of ICI reports into new archive boxes. *Well done and thank you!*

## Sir John Brunner Exhibition

In July we were thrilled to welcome Sir Hugo Brunner and many members of the Brunner family who were celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the death of industrialist, Sir John Brunner. The visit to Catalyst included a guided tour, a buffet lunch and the opening of the Sir John Brunner Exhibition.



*Sir Hugo Brunner opening the exhibition*

The exhibition charted the life of Sir John Brunner, his meeting with Ludwig Mond in our building in the 1860s and the formation of Brunner Mond and Company in Northwich. Also included in the exhibition was a display about the building of the Runcorn to Widnes Transporter Bridge which was opened by Sir John Brunner on 29 May 1905 as Chairman of the Widnes & Runcorn Bridge Company.

## Thank you to our volunteers



Once again, we would like to extend a huge thank you to our wonderful team of volunteers who give their time, energy and skills so generously to Catalyst. We really could not survive without their help.

In Education we would like to thank Jonathan, Beth, Liz, Stuart, Catherine, Rebecca, Rosemary, Linda, Jennifer and Jane, who all help out with the school workshops.

In the Archives we are grateful to Sharon for continuing to be our Museum Mentor and to Billy, Kathy, Peter and Tim who have continued the massive job of scanning the ICI negatives. Pat, Jonathon, Alex, Linda, Carol, Jean and Scott have also helped Judith, in her role as Catalyst Archivist.

To our maintenance team Colin & Tom we say thank you for all the painting, mending, fixing and organising you have done throughout the year - your support has been amazing. This year we were also helped by Mike and Peter who offered their technological expertise, for which we are extremely grateful.

We'd also like to thank Andy, Barrie and Bob for their assistance, guiding lots of adult groups around the galleries.

Last but by no means least, we say a huge thank you to Mary and Peter who give so much of their time to Catalyst, not only in our Education department but also leading guided tours for our adult group visitors and going out and about to various external events to promote Catalyst.



*We thank you all for your fantastic support!*

## HLF Resilient Heritage Project

Thanks to a grant from HLF, Catalyst was able to commission a review of our interpretation and collections, looking at new and creative ways of making these more available and accessible. This enabled us to appoint a Heritage and Interpretation Officer, Claire Teague, on a temporary contract, to implement some of the recommendations. As part of the project, Catalyst produced an advocacy booklet which tells the story of Catalyst and highlights the many and varied artefacts we have in our collection.

## And finally . . .

As always, we'd like to say a HUGE Thank You to all of our supporters, volunteers, trustees, patrons, sponsors and friends. We could not continue to provide such an outstanding experience for our visitors without your help, it is greatly appreciated!

**We wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous New Year!**



*Please note : Catalyst will be closed from 23rd - 26th and 31st December and 1st January*