Swine flu: advice for staff and students

The University is dealing with the risks of swine flu in accordance with advice provided by the Health Protection Agency (HPA), the Department of Health and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

At present, the advice to public organisations from the HPA is that organisations should be vigilant, but that no additional precautions or changes to normal procedures are required.

The University is monitoring the situation and is in readiness should the circumstances change.

National advice leaflet

Students and staff are advised to read the Department of Health’s leaflet, which is being sent to all households in the UK.

Online information

A downloadable pdf of the Department of Health leaflet, as well as other up-to-date advice and information drawing on HPA and other official guidance, is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/hsa/swineflu

These web pages provide specific advice and support to Sussex students in overseas countries that are particularly affected and for students who are from such countries. There is also advice and guidance for Sussex staff or students who are travelling abroad as part of their work or studies.

Advice on what to look for and what action to take in relation to flu symptoms, drawing directly from HPA advice, is also available on these web pages.

Advice lines

The Government has created a national information line number, 0800 1 513 513.

The University has established its own advice line for staff or students who are looking for information or advice about Sussex-specific issues related to swine flu. You can call ext 6500 (or 01273 876500) or email advice.line@sussex.ac.uk

Tests show no case in IDS

The local press reported on 29 April that there had been a suspected case of swine flu on the campus.

The facts are that a person working in the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) became unwell after returning from travel overseas and then wisely stayed at home. He was tested twice for the H1N1 virus and both those tests proved negative. This does not present a risk to staff or students at the University. In all of this IDS staff followed the advice and guidance of the HPA.

Sussex climbs league table

Sussex is one of the top 25 universities in the UK, according to a new league table.

The Complete University Guide, published on 30 April in association with the Independent newspaper, ranks Sussex fourth in the south-east region (behind Oxford, Southampton and Royal Holloway), and 25th in the UK – up four places on the table for 2008.

The guide ranks Sussex among the top ten universities nationally for American Studies (2nd), Social Work (7th) and Anthropology (8th).

Fifteen subjects at Sussex are in the top 20. Sociology (11th), Chemistry (12th), Drama (12th), Italian (13th), Physics (16th), Neuroscience (Anatomy and Physiology) (18th), Linguistics (18th), Media (18th), Psychology (18th), Philosophy (19th), Mechanical Engineering (20th) and Politics/International Relations (20th) are all ranked among the best 20 of their kind.

Among the biggest improvers are Drama, which jumped 20 places from 32nd to 12th, and Sociology, up from 25th in 2008.

Professor Michael Farthing, Vice-Chancellor, said: “I am pleased that Sussex continues to improve its position. The individual subject scores, alongside our high overall ranking, confirm the depth and breadth in quality at Sussex.”

The table was compiled by giving each of the 113 higher education institutions a score on nine measures: student satisfaction, research, entry standards, student-staff ratio, spending on academic services, facilities spending, percentage of students gaining “good honours”, graduate prospects, and completion rates.

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Sussex researchers raise nearly £0.5m to help save honeybees.
Study reveals crowd co-operation during 7/7 bombings

Sussex psychologist Dr John Drury has published the first social-psychological study of crowd reactions among survivors of the London bombings on 7 July 2005.

Although a number of previous studies have looked at Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and preparedness among Londoners following the bombings, this is the first to look at the behaviours of survivors and witnesses during the explosions and their immediate aftermath.

John and his co-authors, Dr Chris Cocking (formerly at Sussex, now at London Metropolitan) and Professor Steve Reicher, gathered accounts from over 90 survivors.

The researchers' key findings were:

- There was no 'mass panic' and little selfishness, despite the fact that people felt in danger of death, saw little hope of escape and were mostly among strangers.
- Instead, there was widespread mutual concern, cooperation and help in the crowd.
- Given the time taken for the emergency services to arrive on the scene, it was the survivors themselves who were the 'first responders'; they tied tourniquets, constructed makeshift bandages for each other, tried to save each others' lives and gave emotional support.

The people interviewed made clear that they felt a strong sense of camaraderie, unity and togetherness with the rest of the crowd; indeed, their 'common fate' had brought them together and motivated mutual aid.

Based on this study and on other studies of emergencies such as the Hillsborough disaster, John and the team have drawn the following conclusions:

- Crowd in emergencies need to be viewed as a social psychological resource instead of a psychological problem.
- The 'collective resilience' that can arise in crowds in emergencies can enhance the chances of survival.
- The emergency services need to harness this phenomenon rather than inhibit it through excluding the crowd from its own self-protection and safety.

The report's findings and implications have already been included in recent NATO guidelines on psychosocial care for people affected by disasters and major incidents.

'The nature of collective resilience: Survivor reactions to the 2005 London bombings' is published in the April issue of the world's leading journal of disaster research, the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters.

New insight into addictive behaviour offers treatment hope

Addictive behaviour is determined by conscious and often rapid thought processes rather than, as previously believed, the content of visual stimuli, according to new research led by the University of Sussex.

Psychologist Professor Theodora Duka, together with colleagues at Cambridge and Nottingham universities, found that although attention to visual cues related to addictions, known as 'attentional bias', may be linked with bad habits, it does not control the decision to follow through with that behaviour.

She said: 'We have shown that individuals only need to look at a cue representing the substance they are addicted to for a fleeting moment, perhaps in their peripheral vision, to want to act on it.

"For example, instead of the sight of a pub triggering the addictive behaviour in an alcoholic, our research shows that the momentary sight of a pub leads the brain to make rapid, conscious decisions about going in for a drink, which is what the alcoholic values."

The finding, that the visual cues offer only information about availability of the bad habit but do not determine the behaviour to get it, could help to develop new, more effective treatments, such as training the mind to modify expectations about drugs and cigarettes.

Many previous explanations for addiction make reference to Pavlov's classic experiments in which conditional stimuli become capable of producing the same responses that are produced by the reward themselves.

Some evidence shows that drug addicts who show a greater attentional bias for drug-related cues are more likely to relapse following treatment, suggesting it may be possible to treat addictions by removing the visual triggers.

However, these results suggest that while attentional bias can be used to indicate drug motivation, it does not provide a credible target for the treatment of addiction. Instead, treatments designed to modify the expected value of the drug or food type may prove more effective.

The research, funded by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), is featured in the April edition of Business, the BBSRC research highlights magazine.

China can achieve low carbon growth, say Sussex researchers

China's economy could grow more than 10 times by 2050 yet its emission growth can stay consistent with intergovernmental targets, according to University of Sussex researchers.

China can also reverse its emissions growth as early as 2020, conclude Dr Tao Wang and Dr Jim Watson from the Sussex Energy Group in their latest report on China's energy transition. The report was launched in Beijing on 29 April.

Tao and Jim's analysis shows that decoupling the growth of carbon emissions from economic development is challenging but achievable in China. It reveals the various pathways that will lead to low carbon development in China.

The report comes at a time when the world is trying to reconcile the twin imperatives of both fighting against global recession and climate change. As world leaders are talking up the possibility of investing in low carbon industries to create jobs and pull the global economy out of recession, this research shows how to connect these two targets into an integrated strategy for the energy and economic development of China.

"There are some common conclusions arising from the analysis," said Tao. "For example, it is vital for China to start slowing its emissions growth immediately."

Far-reaching changes in economic structure towards more innovative and higher value sectors is critical to halt China's energy-intensive economic growth.

Tao said: "Given the unsustainable growth that China is having now, the transition to low carbon development is an imperative and our research shows it is also possible. It also offers the green opportunity for Chinese economy to recover and boom again by investing in a low carbon future."

The full report is available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/spru/environment/CET.pdf
Update on national pay bargaining

National pay negotiations are under way for staff in higher education, with the current three-year national pay settlement for universities due to end in July.

National negotiations between employers (UCEA) and trades unions started in March, with the expectation of a new pay settlement for 1 August.

In 27 April, UCEA tabled a "realistic, responsible and credible pay offer" to the trade unions of 0.3%. The offer has been made following extensive consultation with the institutions that UCEA represents, including Sussex.

The latest inflation figures (for March 2009) show that the Retail Prices Index (RPI) is down to minus 0.4%. RPI is currently forecast to be negative for most of 2009.

The pay offer is additional to incremental payments, which apply to the majority of staff and which have a value in the region of 3%. One of the trades unions, UCU (the lecturers' union), submitted a pay claim in December 2008 for 8%. The other unions, including Unite and Unison, submitted claims in March 2009 covering a range of issues, but without specifying a particular increase.

UCU has called a national ballot for industrial action on the basis that the employers had made no offer by 20 April. They are also demanding that UCEA reach a national agreement on the avoidance of redundancies. The ballot opened on 1 May and closes on 22 May.

Jane Summerville, the Director of Human Resources, said: "The University's view on this matter is that any call for industrial action is premature, with negotiations having only just started and with more meetings and discussions to come before 1 August 2009.

"In addition, the mandate for the national negotiating machinery covers pay bargaining only - they do not have a role in negotiating nationally on job security.

"The University will continue to handle these matters in the best interests of all staff and students at Sussex."

Staff are encouraged to read the more detailed briefing notes on all of these issues, which are available online at www.sussex.ac.uk/hr/unirelations/1-2-21.html

Tough financial times ahead

Increased costs in the sector and tight public spending in the current financial climate mean that there are tough times ahead for higher education. Sussex is not immune from the financial squeeze.

Michael Farthing, Vice-Chancellor

The national economic picture set out in the last budget is a bleak one. The government has revised its economic forecasts and now expects the economy to shrink by over 3% through 2009. The UK will be in a position of high levels of unemployment coupled with negative price inflation.

For 2009–10, the national funding council (HEFCE) has not confirmed the settlement to universities and has reserved the right to review its allocations to all universities, including Sussex, if required to do so by government. That could result in Sussex not receiving the full amount of grant that HEFCE announced earlier this year.

For the year 2010–11, the lead government department for universities – the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) – has been asked to find £400m of additional savings, which amounts to around 5% of national public funding for higher education and further education.

There is no indication that 2011 or beyond will be any better. Universities can expect to receive less public funding as government spending budgets are cut. The institutions that thrive will be those most financially sustainable in their own right, and least dependent on public funding.

Sussex is not currently in that strong financially sustainable position. We are heavily reliant on public funds: 40% of our income come from HEFCE grants, 10% from publicly funded research and 1.5% from UK and EU fees.

There are also significant local factors at play for Sussex. We have not benefited from the results of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which saw research quality sustained but stand-still in volume, with growth at other universities. While we had allowed for this in budgets for 2009–10, this has had the effect of removing any surplus and reducing us to break-even. We now know which units have suffered RAE losses and are working with them on action plans to reduce their deficits.

The University has also not yet fully addressed the cost pressures from last year's exceptional 8% pay rises, the last slice of a three-year deal. While managers have managed to find in-year savings for 2008–09, the ongoing cost of this rise in salaries has not yet been budgeted for on a sustainable basis across the University. Ongoing savings to bring budgets back to break-even still have to be found.

In addition, we have to deal with increasing costs of pensions across the board. Employer contributions to the national pension scheme (USSS) will increase by 2% for autumn 2009. The local pension scheme for Sussex (USPAS) will be revalued as at 31 March 2009 and, while results will not be known for some time, market conditions mean it is highly likely the University will have to increase its payments to cope with an increasing deficit. And staff participation in local pension arrangements is expected to increase with the introduction of the new Sussex Group Stakeholder scheme: a positive move, but one that will have further cost for us as an employer.

All of these factors mean that currently we face a substantial deficit in 2009–10 unless we take significant action, planning for which is in hand. We are working now with managers across our new schools and departments, and with managers in the Professional Services, to put in place sustainable plans and budgets.

This will almost certainly include the need to reduce costs. This reinforces once again the importance of the agenda for growth in earned income, which is set out in our strategic plan.
Although it is the Press Office's great joy to promote the marvellous work and achievements of staff and students at the University, it is not what we spend most of our time doing.

Campus protests, student deaths and deadly contagious diseases are what the media find more interesting, and so our tiny team can be dealing with journalists' demands for sensitive information from dawn 'till dusk.

Last week was a case in point. The tragic death of Molecular Medicine student Hester Stewart, allegedly linked to the drug GBL, was carried by all the national and regional media. Camera crews and photographers arrived on campus to talk to students, staff and members of Hester's family. It is the Press Office's role in circumstances such as these to try to prevent unwanted media intrusion.

At the same time last week, there were reports of a suspected case of swine flu on campus. Blood tests proved negative, but this was only after the Argus had run it as a front-page story (29 April), which led to a mass of inquiries from local radio, regional TV and the national press.

Indeed, whenever a new crisis emerges, we often have to postpone or abandon our efforts to garner some positive coverage in order to mitigate the negative.

On the flip side, of course, many of our researchers help to fuel bad news stories, simply because they often carry out research on the world's ills.

Dr Stefan Elbe's research in pandemic preparedness turned him into our swine flu expert for Radio Sussex (28 April), Southern FM (April 28), Sovereign Radio (April 30) and the Argus (29 April).

Professor Graham Davey talked to the Independent (21 April) about why we're all more anxious, and Professor Jennifer Temkin talked to The Times (20 April) about the connection between drunkenness and rape.

Professor Francis Ratnieks is continuing to seek funds for dying honeybees (BBC 'World at One', and ITN, 21 April), and Mike Barrow used his academic expertise in economics to reaffirm to Radio Sussex listeners (23 April) that we are still in a financial quagmire.

Perhaps good news is extinct.

2009: A campus odyssey

Artists, performers, musicians and schoolchildren from Brighton and surrounding areas led visitors on an 'island-hopping' tour of campus in April, in a new artistic collaboration with the University.

Based around the theme of Homer's Odyssey – the epic tale recounting the adventures of Odysseus as he island-hops his way home to Ithaca after the Trojan War – the tour led the audience on a journey across campus, accompanied by a chorus of children from Carlton Hill Primary School in Brighton. It then paused at six 'islands' created by staff, students and local artists, who used word, image and sound to recreate different aspects of the story.

The idea behind the event was to use parts of the campus that are not normally used for arts events: corridors, bridges and walkways were reinvented as creative spaces and backdrops to movement and image.

The event included a grass labyrinth, a shipwrecked raft, scientific siren songs, underworld poetry, strange 'soundscapes' in unexpected locations, performances on viola, and a mysterious structure near Library Square.

Julian Broughton, Convener of Music in the Centre for Continuing Education and one of the organisers, was excited that so many people with no previous connection to the University had been involved.

He said: "We're particularly pleased that the event brought in so many people from different 'islands' within and beyond the University. While the idea began in the Centre for Continuing Education, it quickly blossomed, and was 'owned' by everyone involved."

The organisers hope that the event will be the first of a series, and that, at least once a year, the fabric of the University will resonate with the creative collaborations of the broadest possible range of individuals and groups.
Support for students affected by the death of Hester Stewart

Sussex staff are providing personal support to the friends and classmates of undergraduate Hester Stewart through the University’s network of academic and student support services.

Students and staff were deeply saddened to learn of Hester’s death on the weekend of 25/26 April.

Dr John Armstrong, Hester’s academic advisor, said: “Hester was in the second year of a degree in Molecular Medicine. She was an outstanding and talented student, on track to get a first class Honours degree, and was preparing to apply to medical school. She also found time to act as a mentor for younger students.

“She was outgoing, charming and universally popular, and she will be greatly missed by many in the University community.”

Investigations are still on-going, but Hester’s death has been widely reported in the media and linked to the drug GBL.

The University is in touch with Hester’s family, who are keen to ensure that students have information about GBL and support to make safe choices around drugs and alcohol.

UNISEX, which offers advice on all matters related to sexual health, drugs and alcohol, has produced some information about GBL along with further information about keeping safe, which is available online at www.unisex.org.uk/

Any students who have been affected by Hester’s death and want to talk with someone confidentially are advised to contact their Student Advisor, who can help to locate appropriate support. Students can also talk to someone from the University’s Psychological and Counseling Services.

Hester had been a member of the ‘Wavettes’ cheerleaders. Her friends wore black armbands and observed a two-minute silence as a mark of respect at their annual varsity matches against rivals from the University of Brighton on 29 April.

News in brief

Ramada Hotel competition

The latest in the University’s series of hotel competitions gives you the opportunity to win a night’s stay at the Ramada Hotel. The prize is for two people sharing a double room, includes breakfast and is valid until 31 August. To enter, just answer this question: What is the University of Sussex rate to stay at the Ramada Hotel? The answer is in the list of University-approved hotels and guest houses at www.sussex.ac.uk/about/hotels. Send your answer with your name, status (e.g. member of staff/student/alumnus) and contact details by 29 May to hotelcompetition@sussex.ac.uk

The special University of Sussex rate to stay in the approved hotels is available to Sussex students, staff, alumni and family. Sarah Kitchener, Human Resources Assistant, won the previous hotel competition for a night’s stay at the Uni Hotel.

New expenses claim form

A new travel & subsistence claim form is now available at www.sussex.ac.uk/finance/documents/expense_form.pdf

Please start using it with immediate effect for any claims for travel, subsistence or other out-of-pocket expenses.

Annual Sussex Lecture in London online

On 22 April, over 200 Sussex friends and alumni gathered at the Royal Society in London to enjoy the annual University of Sussex Lecture. This year’s lecture, entitled ‘Deciphering the Universe’, was given by Professor Andrew Liddle, Professor of Astrophysics and Director of Research in the School of Science and Technology. The lecture is now available online as part of the Sussex Lectures archive at www.sussex.ac.uk/newsandevents/sussexlectures/annual.php

Laptop lock anchor points installed on Library desks

The Library has installed anchor points that allow users to secure their laptop computers. The anchors are currently on all new desks, which can be identified with blue sides and backs and are mainly on the first floor. To use them, users need a lock that can be threaded through the anchor to secure the laptop to the desk.

Sussex goes close in varsity competition

Sussex teams pushed their University of Brighton competitors close in the annual varsity sports tournament last week, winning five games.

Strong favourites Brighton eventually won 8–5, but the competition on 28 April – billed by the Students’ Union (USSU) as a ‘David and Goliath’ battle – was the closest it has been in recent years. Sussex won two matches in the 2008 contest and four in 2007.

This year, Sussex enjoyed victories in men’s badminton, women’s badminton, ultimate Frisbee, skiing and, for the fourth year running, women’s basketball.

Dave Owen, USSU Activities Officer, said: “Varsity this year was a big success, with all the games being played in a good competitive spirit. Results wise we did really well, improving upon last year.

“A special mention has to go to the women’s basketball team who won their game with the last shot.”

A tribute to Sussex student Hester Stewart, who died last month, took place at the start of the tournament. Competitors and spectators observed a two-minute silence and many players wore black armbands as a mark of respect.
Neil Bone, who worked as a researcher in Biochemistry for 20 years, died on 23 April after a long battle with cancer. Faced throughout with courage and his distinctive sense of humour.

Neil studied in Edinburgh, and worked there and in Cambridge, before moving to Sussex in 1989 to work with Dr Julian Burke in the Biochemistry division.

In 1992 he joined my group, and worked there for a series of projects supported by the Cancer Research Campaign, the Wellcome Trust and the Medical Research Council.

Neil’s original background was in molecular biology, but he also became an expert in microscopy and helped pioneer the use of advanced techniques in the School. He taught undergraduate and postgraduate students in these fields by Neil, indoctrinated in his mantra of “an experiment is only as good as its controls”.

They were also bemused by his elliptical references to the sinister conspiracy that prevented Heart of Midlothian from achieving their rightful honours in Scottish football. Indeed, it was in their strip that he impressed fellow players with his unusual, but generally effective, techniques on the Uinnich pitch.

Neil also had a remarkable parallel career in astronomy, writing and contributing to several books and many periodicals, giving popular talks around the country and informing the media about astronomical events.

In recognition of his substantial contributions, in February 2009 the International Astronomical Union conferred the major honour of naming an asteroid after Neil. Minor planet (7,102) Neilbone, to give it its new name, will be a lasting memorial. The colour of this celestial object is not known, but it would be nice to think it is Heart of Midlothian maroon.

Dr John Armstrong, Biochemistry

Professor Tom Whiston, who died on 11 April, was an advocate of interdisciplinarity who started his academic life as a chemist moved to cognitive psychology and then became a respected expert in science and technology policy.

He took the position that “academic disciplines are arbitrary and misleading” and that “we impose mental structures which are artificial, indeed arbitrary”.

Tom left Manchester University in 1976 to take up a Senior Research Fellowship at SPRU – Science and Technology Policy Research.

Much of his work at SPRU was concerned with critiques of social, educational and global forecasting and he edited the text Uses And Abuses of Forecasting.

Tom published over 150 books, book chapters, monographs, research council and government reports, journal articles and conference reports on a wide variety of topics – especially education policy, environmental policy and systems structures.

Among some of the more important work, he was asked to research and develop a completely new higher education and research policy agenda for South Africa following the fall of apartheid. This was published in 1994.

In 1992 Tom led a large international collaborative research endeavour sponsored by the European Union, which addressed global sustainability and the combined technological, educational and political agenda that the world should address. This work was published in 23 volumes as Global Perspective 2010 tasks for science and technology.

In 1998 he was appointed to the chair of environmental regulation at Roskilde University in Denmark, which he occupied for the next decade. He became an honorary professor at Sussex.

After being diagnosed with cancer last autumn, Tom had been trying to finish three books. Professor Gordon MacKerron, director of SPRU, said: “He was a specialist in many different fields. He had tremendous energy and vigour right through his illness. It is a very substantial loss. Had he lived he would have made many more contributions.”

Elisabeth Brana, a Physics and Astronomy student who receives a sports bursary from Sussex, finished first in a BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) cycling event in Oxford on 25 April. She won the 10 Mile Time Trial Championships with a time of 24 minutes and 25 seconds. Elisabeth, a triathlete, will compete in the Ironman World Championships in Hawaii this October after winning her age group in the half Ironman triathlon in Monaco in summer 2008.

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing, has been elected as the new chair of the Health and Social Care Policy Committee of Universities UK (the Reconciliation representative body of executive heads of UK universities). He will take up his two-year appointment on 1 August.

A Sussex student won a gold medal at the BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport) Equestrian Championships at Arena UK, in Lincolnshire. Emily Llewellyn (SPRU), who receives a Sussex sports bursary, came first for three-day eventing at the national competition, from 15–17 April. Luke Ternill, Sports Development Officer, said: “This is an awesome achievement and the first BUCS individual winner that we have had for five years.” This latest success crowns what has already been a very successful 12 months for Emily, after winning two gold medals in the Young Rider European Championships last summer and being named the 2008 Sussex Young Sports Personality of the Year.

The University of Otago in New Zealand is to confer the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity on the Revd Canon Paul Oestreich, an Otago graduate who is now Quaker chaplain to the University of Sussex. He is also Canon Emeritus of Coventry Cathedral and a retired director of its Centre for International Reconciliation, and has held a number of other leading positions in church and peace movements. Paul will receive his degree at a graduation ceremony on 23 May. He will also deliver the graduation address.

The University of Manchester is to give the OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) to Dr Ann Parker, a Sussex graduate who is now Vice-Provost at the University of Manchester, for services to higher education and to women. Dr Parker was awarded a BSc in Mathematics in 1972, an MA in Mathematical Statistics in 1973 and a PhD in Numerical Analysis in 1980.

Top marks for Crèche

Staff in the University Crèche are celebrating the results of their latest inspection by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

In its report, Ofsted awarded the Crèche the highest possible marks for its standard of care in providing an “excellent and varied range of play and learning activities” in which children’s progress is “shared and successfully used to support inclusive practice”.

They also observed that the “planning and presentation of the setting’s early learning programme is exemplary, with all children’s achievements well observed and their next learning steps successfully promoted.”

The full report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk and www.sussex.ac.uk/childcare/1-2-2-2.html

The Crèche is owned and managed by the University. It provides full day care for the children of staff and students.
Funding for Sussex to help save the honeybee

Almost half a million pounds is coming to Sussex to fund research on how to help the British honeybee.

The British honeybee is under threat from pests, diseases and a loss of flowers in the countryside. Research at Sussex, led by biologist Professor Francis Ratnieks, focuses on breeding strains of 'hygienic' bees, which swiftly remove diseased larvae and so reduce the spread of the disease within the hive.

Close collaboration between Francis - the UK's only Professor of Apiculture - and colleagues in the Development and Alumni Relations Office has resulted in donations of over £450,000 being pledged to fund his Sussex Plan for Honeybee Health and Wellbeing.

Donations have come from private individuals (including a nine-year-old schoolgirl), companies such as Rosew Honey and charitable organisations including the Nineveh Charitable Trust.

And thanks to a generous donation from local benefactor Michael Chowen, the University has been able to engage the services of a leading public affairs consultant, Weber Shandwick, to lobby Parliament to support calls for increased public funding for honeybee research.

Francis has met with more than 10 MPs and peers, both in Westminster and on campus. During a debate on 29 April in Westminster Hall, Edward Vaughan MP described Francis as "the man of the moment" and Ian Gibson MP said: "Taking on such a subject is a real initiative by the University and should be complimented."

This campaign, added to pressure from beekeepers and other groups, was instrumental in the government's recent decision to fund research into honeybees and other pollinators.

On 21 April the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) announced an extra £1.0 million of funding for research into honeybees and other pollinators, to be administered by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).

The lobbying by Weber Shandwick has added to an already highly successful campaign by the University of Sussex Press Office, which has established Francis as the UK media's preferred honeybee expert, Press Officer Danielle Trenor says: "The media work has in turn attracted funders to the cause and will have caught the attention of political researchers, if not politicians themselves."

It will be some time before the DEFRA/BBSRC funding becomes available to researchers and in the meantime Sussex will maintain pressure on the government to prioritise the honeybee and continue to raise funds from other sources.

Discussions are ongoing with other companies and organisations and it is hoped that a significant proportion of the £1.0 million funding needed to get the Sussex Plan for Honeybee Health and Wellbeing under way will be raised from philanthropic sources.

£240,000 ideas fund launched

Sussex has launched a new Enterprise Fund providing funding and support to help staff get new products, solutions and creative industry ideas off the ground.

The money, channelled from the government's Higher Education Investment Fund (HEIF), will encourage collaboration across campus to bring more ground-breaking and enterprising ideas to fruition.

Projects will be assessed on their overall market potential, their risk and ability to pay back the initial investment, their ability to encourage other commercial activity and other indirect benefits to the University.

The £240,000 funding will develop prototypes, kick-start product manufacture and launch projects that would be helped to transfer quickly to sustainable operations.

Projects will be assessed at a monthly panel chaired by Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research), Professor Bob Allison, who said: "This fund will help bolster the development of ideas and inventions with great potential that might not normally find funding."

The Enterprise Fund is open to applications from non-academic, academic and postdoctoral research staff.

After initially lodging their idea with the Director of Research and Enterprise, Dr Ian Carter, the staff member would be allocated support from the Research and Enterprise team and the Sussex Innovation Centre to get the project ready to present to the panel.

For more information on the scheme and how to apply, go to www.sussex.ac.uk/res/documents/enterprise_development_fund.pdf

A walk on the wild side

The new pond set in the small woodland behind Engineering is beginning to take on a much more settled and mature appearance.

The native marginal plants that have been introduced around the marshy edges include Marsh Marigolds, now in full flower. With its large glossy golden-yellow petals and big, round leaves, this has to be one of our most spectacular and showy spring flowers, its popularity being enhanced by its habit of brightening up the rather dark and damp places in which it often grows.

In addition to its familiar alternative name of Kingcup, it has accumulated about 90 other vernacular names over the years, a total exceeded only by Lords and Ladies or Cuckoo-pint, also now flowering profusely in woodland glades around campus.

For such an obvious plant, it is surprising that it doesn't seem to have been associated with more in the way of folk-lore traditions and neither does it feature much in works of the early apothecaries. However, in Ireland, where one of its names is May-flower, it was associated with the May Day fertility festival when witches and fairies are abroad. Until recently, it was still hung in bunches over doors to avert their influence and to protect the fertility of the cattle.

Rowan and Hawthorn are two other species that performed a similar apotropaic (for Scrabble enthusiasts!) function in other parts of the country.

We have received many records of a dark comb-footed spider called Steatoda nobilis (right) from all over campus (and nearby urban areas).

It is a glossy, robust spider with a body up to 1.4 mm long. The abdomen resembles a little dark grape with a narrow pale band around the front and a vaguely face-like pattern on the back.

The tabloid press adores this spider because it is a recent arrival to the UK and can inflict a painful bite on humans.

It is a native of the Canary Islands and Madeira, sometimes imported with bananas. Although recorded in the UK since 1879, it was not until the 1990s that flourishing populations were found in Sussex.

These spiders generally hide away during the day in dark places. Their habit of hiding in boots, gloves and bags means that they sometimes bite people in self-defence. The bites are more painful than wasp stings, with intense pain radiating from the two punctures. A few unlucky victims suffer anaphylactic shock.

Bites are rare: these spiders have thrived in the JMS building for at least a decade, and we know of only one victim. You are far more likely to be stung by a bee or wasp than be bitten by a spider on campus.

Please send your sightings to david@sussex.ac.uk We are urgently interested by reports of dark spiders with orange or red markings from Bramber House, but please do not touch them.
Academic events ↓

TUE 12 MAY
1pm Development seminar: Joy Moncrieffe and Joanna Wheeler (IDS). Insecurity, urban violence and 'distorted' agencies. IDS 221.

1pm Development seminar: David Ockwell (Sussex). Technology transfer in adaptation and mitigation of climate change. IDS 121.


7pm Archaeology talk: Sarah Green (Southampton). Animal bones: Use, refuse or no use? Arts A1.

THU 14 MAY
4pm History lecture: Jim Collins (Sussex). Conceptualising the Early Modern French state. Arts A155.

5pm Education seminar: Diana Leonard (London). The doctoral experiences of (early) career academics. Arts D110.

TUE 19 MAY

1pm Development seminar: Naomi Hosssain (IDS) and Munshi Sulaiman (LSE). Crime and punishment in Bangladesh. IDS 221.

WED 20 MAY
1pm Development seminar: Tom Mitchell (IDS). Adaptation financing. IDS 121.

2pm SEI seminar: Dan Keith (Sussex). Organisational change in west European communist parties. Arts C233.


7pm Physics lecture: Rois Reynolds (Reading). The science of extreme weather. Pevensey 1A7.

THU 21 MAY
11am Maths seminar: Nello Cristianini. Mapping the media system. Russell 22.

1pm Development seminar: Dan Hugland (Bath). Organisational learning and institutional change in Zambia’s privatised copper sector. IDS 120.

2pm English lecture: Kimberley Springer (Kings College, Can). Young and Anna McCarthy (New York). Neoliberalism and the aesthetic. EDB 121.

5pm Migration seminar: Magdalena Barros Nock (Sussex). The case of migrant Mexicans in rural California. Arts C233.

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The fortnightly Bulletin is written and produced by Alison Field and James Hainer. The next issue will be out on 22 May, with a copy deadline of 1pm on 15 May. We welcome any letters from staff and students of the University and can advise you on ways to tell people about your news or story ideas. Please contact us on ext. 8888 or email internalcomms@sussex.ac.uk

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