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Hundreds of scientists, thousands of people, one event: how do you do it?

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Opening up the world of science, its facilities, and its people to the general public and schools on the largest scale has the potential to be a truly inspiring experience that lives long in the memory and promotes a really positive perspective of the science and technological world. In the last two years, in addition to our regular programmes of public engagement, STFC has run four large scale open days at our national facilities, attracting more than 25,000 visitors and some 1,000 staff members. These events open the doors to our experimental facilities and the amazing stories that they yield - from astronomy technology facilities, thermal vacuum chambers, and high performance computing to state-of-the-art engineering facilities, high powered lasers, and particle accelerators. Public Engagement is part of the STFC Royal Charter: we have some incredible stories to tell and a unique way of doing this is by involving our scientists and engineers. For the Open Days scientists and engineers were involved from concept through to project delivery and the resulting ownership of the event by staff ensured their commitment and motivated them to encourage colleagues to engage with a large and diverse audience during some truly vibrant events. The public engagement team support staff in events, making sure that logistics are in place, the right training and guidance has been provided, and staff are confident in their roles. In this manner we maximise the development and delivery time making more effective use of staff time. Staff feedback from such events is overwhelmingly positive, one STEM Ambassador commenting that involvement in the Open Day "...built a team spirit across STFC that I have never felt before, the camaraderie was amazing." The success of the open days was the result of thorough engagement with our staff and paying close attention to these simple but critical details.

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