



**UEA CIVIC
UNIVERSITY
PROJECT**

The Great Yarmouth Book

OPEN SPACE EVENT

April 2022 | The Drill House | Great Yarmouth

The Great Yarmouth Book is a summary of the conversations that happened during the event that took place in the Drill House, where participants explored what “civic” should mean for a regional university.



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PREFACE

If you are reading this document, you have some investment in the idea of universities as institutions that help to nourish and nurture life in their local area. You may have a strong sense of what civic activity should look like and be an active member of the community in which you live. You could also have a Great Yarmouth or East Anglian focus: a keen attachment to the geographical area in question. Most likely, it will be all the above.

We hope that this book communicates some of the intensity, energy and enthusiasm that those of us in attendance, shared at the event that took place on the 30th of April, 2022 in the Drill House, Great Yarmouth. By partnering with Out There Arts, we were able to

gather people together inside a bright, vibrant space to address the question: 'What could a Civic University mean for Great Yarmouth and the surrounding area?' There was no pre-set agenda. We opened with an introductory talk that explained this was an 'open space'; every

voice that cared to speak, and everybody that wanted to be heard, would be and could be. During the day we endeavoured to ensure that everyone's passions and interests were captured, if they chose to share them.



Agenda of the day

The day began with an introductory talk and agenda setting process. We started with a blank slate and our attendees set the agenda, picking the topics for the two discussion sessions that followed. We ended mid-afternoon with a full-group plenary circle. All topics were decided during the event, and we had a full programme of nearly 19 discussion themes, underpinned with a buzzy atmosphere and intense, productive debates. Throughout the event, there was food and conviviality. There was also a determination to take the spirit, and principles generated in the room, out of the room and into the daily activities of the university in a genuine way. This

was reflected in the concluding thoughts articulated in the plenary circle: UEA understands the need to make a long-term commitment to the project and that civic action is only meaningful if it is about long-term partnerships and outlooks. Using these general principles we discovered some overarching themes that we have used to group discussions together.

Throughout the event we kept a record of the conversations that took place in the discussion sessions as anonymous summaries. Our helpful student attendees took notes. This book is the tidied up, written records of the conversations. They have been edited for neatness, accuracy, and grammar. It is

the work of many hands, but any errors are those of the Civic University Team, so please direct any queries to us. This is just the start. This book is joining similar documents that have been created for other events and we will host these books on our website. Finally, we will distil the core civic values emerging from Our Open Space Events, as well as these written books to produce a short statement that will be a Civic University Charter for East Anglia. All participants will be invited to first comment on and then later sign this statement.

Throughout the event we kept a record of the conversations that took place in the discussion sessions – this book is a record of these conversations



CITIZENS, BIODIVERSITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Growing for the future

Plants, people
and places



Plants, people
and places

This conversation highlighted the importance of teaching the community about gardening.

The positive impact it can have on mental health and the emerging importance of growing our own food as food prices continue to rise. Looking forward, it is important to consider this in the light of the climate crisis. Future generations need to be prepared for change and growing and gardening are a great way to

do this. Accessibility and funding for the younger generations to learn to garden is important. UEA could help with organising accessible routes into this kind of horticultural education. UEA and its research can also be used to look at the effects of gardening, and as a result lead the conversation nationally and internationally.

Norfolk and East Anglia used to be a leading figure in the agriculture sector. We need to return to this and UEA can play a part in making this happen. UEA should first use its expertise within different academic schools to conduct research into how gardening is essential for the future of our region.

Accessibility and funding for
young people to learn to
garden is important



REIMAGINING UEA AS A CIVIC EDUCATOR

**Getting education to happen
in the community**

**Research and learning needs to
truly benefit our local communities**

**Education is about the
development of the whole person**

Pluriversity

**Pluriversity is a ‘request for education
to happen in the community’.**

The importance of education was discussed and acknowledged, and there was consensus that learning needs to take place in more varied ways within the Great Yarmouth community. It was recognised that UEA has expertise and knowledge in many areas and across different disciplines. ‘How can this knowledge be shared with the wider community in more effective ways?’ was a question that emerged during this session.

ClimateUEA was mentioned as a good example of effective community knowledge sharing. This is an interdisciplinary theme centred within the university that explores narratives around the effect of climate change on people’s lives. It uses the arts and sciences to express and explore sustainability issues through good outreach events and knowledge sharing. As such it provides an excellent example for future educational projects. The value

of some UEA courses such as economics were questioned for their relevance when climate change is considered. This is because students studying these subjects aren’t taught to think in environmental terms. Environmentalism is fundamental to all lives. There was a call for all courses to be future proofed and updated with relevant civic topics such as climate change being embedded within curricula.

There are theatrical companies and literary organisations in the region that specialise in science and environmental humanities, but these organisations tend to hold events that are very Norwich based. So how can wider communities be better engaged in these events and how can UEA enable this? One idea was to create a mobile library or a roadshow that could travel the region, visiting primary schools in local villages and hard to reach communities in the town centre that allows local children to

engage with the science and the humanities, sparking interest and raising aspirations.

Finally, this group discussed the current Conservative policy on education. It is perceived that the A levels that are offered have been stripped back, which has depleted interdisciplinary courses that focus on the humanities such as world development, culture, and communications and this will impact on students in East Anglia, who no longer have access to this ‘wide sky’ thinking. Then there is the fall out of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rise of remote learning. Young people have been particularly affected by the pandemic; they appear apathetic and disengaged – although everyone is a bit traumatised and fatigued. Hopefully as society recovers there will be a bounce back and a pluriversity could play an important role in a brighter future.

Using research and studies to make a difference locally

We need to ensure UEA’s research and learning can truly benefit our local communities.

Teaching and research should be practically focused and reflect on student and community experiences rather than impractical learning. One step towards this kind of change could be including university research in A-levels, such as Sociology, to boost local education. Another idea could be relating UEA research and academic content to relevant and recent developments within our region.

We should be making learning change-based and community focused, linking students with communities. This should be

an ongoing involvement rather than a project with short-term, transient benefit. Projects which are linked to our region raise the aspirations of local community, and this would feed directly back into the university, making it a win-win for East Anglia.

Other ideas were also discussed with the group. There is room for criticisms of local schooling as well as UEA’s education system. No real skills are taught, and skills that are taught aren’t taught in a way where interpreting real life situations comes naturally. For example, UEA should also be supporting

students with unstable home lives, using its resources to impact learning within the local area, we should be encouraging entrepreneurial young people, using anthropology to have local impact. We should also be using UEA’s research to benefit regional mental health. How and where can these beneficial and better connections be made between academics and East Anglian citizens?

Building education of the whole person

A Civic University must be related to the local community and should bring a joyful and even silly approach to education to make it more exciting for people.

Teachers should be able to be themselves without fearing reproach from UEA due to differing opinions or methods and UEA itself should be listening to the needs of the local community more.

Could UEA offer more personal development opportunities

and vocational training for its local region? More interactive education would also be beneficial.

Local pride is also important to the thriving of the local area. Norwich and Norfolk have incredible histories as city and region respectively, and identity

adds to the local area. In order to get young people to stay, long-term engagement policies are needed but these take time to build.

Could UEA offer more personal development opportunities and vocational training?



RAISING ASPIRATIONS AND UNITY

Tackling isolation in Great Yarmouth

A civic university will seek and use the assets already here in the community

Accessibility in education brings people together

Encouraging aspirations

Being civic in a competitive market

Youth outreach

Isolation is a big issue in Great Yarmouth. How can communities that aren't connected to Norwich get engaged with the different events and activities taking place at UEA?

Great Yarmouth, rural communities, and surrounding areas of East Anglia can offer excellent opportunities for public engagement with the university. However, there is still potential to improve the engagement opportunities that UEA offers especially when it comes to targeting young people.

A civic university should invest in the social, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing of local young people. The university has valuable resources in music, art, creatives pursuits and science – things that schools might struggle to find and to fund.

Academic staff could also help young people get connected to their history, wildlife, and culture in order to feel pride for their local community and surrounding areas.

How can studying be provided more flexibly for young people? A very expensive, three-year commitment is too much for some young people. Could UEA deliver degrees in a more flexible way, perhaps with a more modular approach? Can UEA explore how it can offer more than just traditional, straight-line, three-year degrees for students who have other requirements?



How can a civic university take and bind the assets already here?

This group started off discussing the tendency of politics to divide people instead of bringing them together, despite most people wanting the same things in life and having similar views in many areas.

Party politics tend to divide people in order to win votes, and this is made possible by the electoral system.

However, the group mostly spoke about education in general, and how positive encouragement is crucial from early on and throughout life to encourage continual learning. Communities and the university need to work together to provide more active learning opportunities to help boost the economy and encourage more pride in local community.

Students studying at university also need to have more experience in grass roots politics to better understand their surroundings whilst at UEA.

UEA should take opportunities to venture out into the local region, rather than inviting people onto campus and into their spaces, which can feel limited. Venturing into the local community doesn't have to be expensive but opportunities to go out and about should be sought out and prioritised.



Bringing people together, not driving them apart

A theme that was raised was around the visibility and accessibility of the executive team including the Vice Chancellor. There was a strong desire to seek assurance that this project is a key priority for the university (even those in senior positions). The Civic

University Project is about making sustainable long-term commitments to the region. It is important that this project makes positive changes that last. One recommendation that came out of this group discussion was that the politics department at UEA should also do more

to encourage participation from students outside of the classroom, and that lecturers could play a bigger role in local politics too.

Lifelong learning – pulling people together who may have had a negative experience of education

Organisations that are running services – including UEA – need to understand what is needed by the communities they serve and ensure longevity in what they are creating, producing and delivering for their service users. People within our local

community understand what they want, but it's hard to communicate these needs with UEA. How do we improve this communicative barrier so it's more accessible in the future?

Working with a company/ organisation like Dial to give clinics like UEA's law student advisor clinic further reach to places like Great Yarmouth would be a great example of effective collaboration that has a direct positive impact.

Education and Aspirations

Some UEA students need to live in Great Yarmouth, but there needs to be better transport options and arrangements to support this happening.

UEA should be actively involved in helping disadvantaged pupils within schools in Great Yarmouth and there are a few ways they could get involved in doing this:

- Giving scholarships to disadvantaged students
- Doing workshops and speaking to whole schools
- Using student ambassadors at UEA to do workshops and outreach within regional schools
- Setting up a ‘Parent’ ambassador scheme, where a student ambassador is assigned to look after a particular child

- Supporting community activities encouraging educational aspiration (Cubs, Scouts, Guides, DofE, CCP).
- Encouraging regional health and civic pride

Advantages of students going to UEA could include access to facilities and ability to experience a workplace environment. Would there be any opportunity for students to be involved in the LEP? Could Great Yarmouth set up its own Chamber of Commerce?



Is it possible to be civic in a competitive market?

What is UEA for? UEA should be considering the civic agenda above league tables, as a Civic University would naturally do well in a competitive market.

Strategic priorities should include financial sustainability, academic excellence and local empowerment.

Quality student education should also be, of course, what UEA stands for. The East Anglian region and UEA can provide better student educational

experience by continuing to produce world-leading research, connecting them to the local community and encouraging climate action and creative pursuits. They should also be encouraged and supported to lead healthy lives, enjoy their degrees, and become independent.

Finally, UEA needs to remember that quality of education should always trump the need for academic elitism.

Students should be encouraged and supported to lead healthy lives, enjoy their degrees, and become independent



INCLUSIVITY AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Re-establishing civic pride

Creating belonging in diverse communities

Inclusivity is key

Supporting neurodiversity

Communication and community

Encouraging healthy communities

Civic Pride

The perceived decay of the ‘Great’ in Great Yarmouth was greeted with some dismay.

There was a discussion around how tourism and the ‘right people in the right place’ could help locals to re-establish a positive image of Great Yarmouth.

Currently there tends to be a lot of focus on some key societal issues that includes drug addiction, lack of aspiration and poor educational attainment. There are also concerns regarding the high levels of crime. The participants emphasised that this image of the town had not been there historically. In fact, it was once the wealthiest town in England!

Re-establishing a good image should be a key focus on for reviving the fortunes of this town. Cultural tourism could help re-establish this image or at least make it appealing.

Recommendations included having adverts about Great Yarmouth within the university, as even if people have heard about Great Yarmouth, they may not know about all the positive things it has to offer as a tourist destination. Free trips or societies’ involvement with Great Yarmouth could help bring in some tourists. Increasing cultural tourism would benefit towns such as Great Yarmouth, and maybe learners who are passionate about history could be amongst those who may show interest in a visit. Facilitating transport to Great Yarmouth from UEA as well as from the centre of Norwich could be another way to enhance visits and trips.

Out There Festival in Great Yarmouth – cultural events like this play a part in developing local tourism



Engaging diverse and migrant communities

Great Yarmouth has a rich history of migration. A key theme that emerged from discussions was around the hostility that migrant families can encounter within the community, with many lacking a sense of belonging within the communities they encounter within their environment.

It was acknowledged that there is no such thing as a ‘textbook’ student, and not all students should be expected to either be or study the same thing. With that in mind, more can be done to improve engagement with potential students from diverse communities. UEA should rethink and perhaps re-evaluate what a UEA campus might be like so that it is more welcoming

to diverse communities. UEA should also consider what it can do to encourage a more diverse attendance at UEA events (such as today’s Open Space). A first step would include working specifically with migrant families, encouraging access to university, and improving transport links to UEA for poorer communities outside Norwich.

Finally, UEA should be doing more to bring the University to Great Yarmouth instead of expecting Great Yarmouth residents to commute to the campus for events and engagement activities



Cultivating communities and creating community belonging

What makes people happy? Currently there is a restrictive method of measuring success in our local community, and success should not just be measured financially.

We need to create community belonging as people are currently defined by their problems rather than their strengths. A sense of belonging and friendship are what get people through tough times. Local people should be identified by what they are and not what they are not.

There is also an issue with short-term projects that eventually expire. We need to create meaning in any projects working with the local region so that they become long term commitments instead. Communities should be enabled to flourish and “encourage to flourish”. UEA should be encouraged to stop thinking of people as clients and consider people more as members of

their community. Events such as this Open Space event should be regular occurrence, with plenty of opportunities to check in afterwards and not just one offs.

University should also be social, catered around community and not just about education. Clarity is needed regarding funding opportunities, and resources so that there is more transparency between the university and the region. UEA should be investing in people over institutions and systems. There is a Five Ways Theory: connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, and give. This comes from the new NEF ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ report.

UEA should be more than just education and schooling. It should be about: ongoing/

regular conversations within the community, longevity, development, and evolution. We need to make it dynamic and increase sustainability in all projects we support and deliver. Cultivating community conversations is so important, we should ask provocative and powerful questions – personal, ambiguous, even anxiety inducing and creative questions. This will enable UEA to discover what really matters to local communities. UEA should hold Open Spaces like this regularly and people will care enough to support and develop this dialogue.

What can we do together that we cannot do alone? It takes a village to raise a child.

Inclusivity

Making university-related language more accessible is important – no jargon. The easier language is to understand, the easier the university will be to access for the wider region.

Charities also need things like law services and volunteers. UEA and local professionals could play a very valuable role in helping meet these needs. Student involvement would also be mutually beneficial, by taking part in community based activities, students would encounter practical learning opportunities.



How can UEA's expertise be shared with the wider community?

There needs to be better community engagement/visibility outside of the immediate Norwich area – we need to take UEA out to rural communities. Could this be done in the form of a UEA roadshow and what would this include?

Neurodiversity

This group shared their own personal experiences of neurodiversity and emphasised the importance of creating positive affirmation within students with different needs.

Young people with autism or dyslexia should not grow up thinking that their condition is a negative. It is really important to engage people in different ways because of different needs. UEA will not get everyone engaged by offering everyone the same thing. This would not be equitable.

Apprenticeship degrees are a perfect example of providing for people who learn in different ways to the traditional university curriculum. It is important to make young people feel like they are engaged in these activities and that they have value. Positive affirmation for these students from a young age can be so important so that they see their condition as a positive “superpower” rather than a

negative which is what classically happens. UEA should be in a position where they can say that they are the most Neuro-diverse university in the country: wouldn't that be brilliant?

To start tackling this, UEA should begin from within by asking the students who have these conditions what needs to be done to better engage and support them. This would make sure the process is democratised and not top-down, which could come across as patronising. Once UEA is getting it right, they can disseminate that knowledge across the community.

We should also make sure teachers – the ones we train and the ones we work with in

the local community – get the training and expertise that is so important when accommodating all students, including those with specific needs. Creating a revolution in the way we think about education is what needs to happen to properly accommodate neurodiversity. Going back to earlier examples, an apprenticeship degree which accommodates people who learn better when they are working can be far more practical for some students. Building programs for mentorship for these students would also be beneficial. Open-source tools reduce the barriers to entry and UEA should be using them.

Bringing students and the local community together to reduce student turnover

The campus is removed and somewhat isolated from the city. This means that many students only see Norwich city centre as a place for shopping and entertainment. This makes them customers of the city, not citizens. As a result, they don't see it as a place for a career after graduation. To counteract this, UEA should try to build engagement with the city into the curriculum in all subjects.

As an example, why not require every politics student, as part of their course, to spend time (maybe only a day or two) accompanying party canvassers and attending a constituency party meeting, to understand what politics is like on the ground, and get to meet voters in places they would not normally visit. This would widen their horizons, give them a more grounded sense of real politics, and potentially begin to build connections with the city which would encourage them to remain after graduation.

Steampunk

Steampunk can be explored through many different creative outlets. It's a great way to cope with and stay in tune with your mental health. Most conversations come back to communication and community, which can be aided through common interests such as steam punk, and these groups – and others like them – should be supported by enabling them to use public spaces for meet ups and events. UEA should consider using student accommodation to organise events and should aim to organise more events like these in Norfolk.

Health and healthy communities

The conversation gravitated towards health, in all its different forms.

Poor nutrition and a lack of exercise are two significant factors that negatively impact physical health. Although the results of this lifestyle are not apparent whilst people are young, at a later stage in life, it may threaten health to the point that it can shorten lifespan. Drug use, including alcohol and tobacco, should be monitored more effectively: one of the issues is that both alcohol and tobacco use are socially accepted. Vaping campaigns and minimising alcohol use would be a good start. However, other unhealthy addictions discussed were caffeine and gambling. Unprotected sexual intercourse and its consequences were also discussed.

UEA could propose community runs, providing good rewards, motivating both students and Norfolk locals to have regular walks and runs in parks and across the county, motivating groups to remain active. Nutrition and general food intake require education, something that this university could provide and discourage the normalised use of alcohol daily. Drugs should be looked at from another angle and efforts should be made to try to help rather than criminalise those who consume them. A smoking ban on public spaces could help diminish the user base considerably and helping those addicted to nicotine quit may also be another feasible idea. The idea of caffeine as a 'coping tool' should be minimised, and

although UEA does not present this image of caffeine, perhaps it can encourage a few different and healthier ways to consume coffee, e.g. 'The caffeine helpdesk'.

Gambling harms many people; not only is it bad for people's mental health, but it also harms financially, which can affect people's finances and relationships deeply. Casinos or houses that hold bets should also be brought into key conversations as stakeholders to prevent gambling addiction from spreading. Perhaps UEA could contribute to mediating the issue.

Unprotected sexual intercourse should always be discouraged. UEA provides free contraception for students, but could this be made available to East Anglian citizens too?



A concluding thought
to the day:

**Collaboration and communication
are the keys to success. Open Space
between UEA and the community
should be a regular occurrence.
Together, we can make long-term
commitments to help Great Yarmouth
and East Anglia flourish.**

**Find out more about
UEA's Civic University Project:**
www.uea.ac.uk/civic
or email civic.university@uea.ac.uk



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