Global reach, local impact

60,000 people attend University public lectures, events, or visit our museums every year.

Our Public Lecture series, seminars, talks and annual children’s lecture are delivered to packed audiences by our academics and researchers who are keen to share their expertise with a wider audience.

The University also provides speakers off-campus on a wide range of topics to local organisations and works with groups such as the British Science Association to run Café Scientifique sessions in Reading.

The Friends of the University’s most recent event focused on the work of the Institute of Education at the University’s refurbished London Road campus and provided an opportunity to explore parts of the campus not normally accessible to the public.

Our three museums, the Museum of English Rural Life, which houses the national collection of rural history and artefacts, the Cole Museum of Zoology and the Ure Museum of Greek Archaeology are all free to visit. There are numerous activities on offer, many of which are organised by volunteers for parties of schoolchildren or individual visitors. The Museum of English Rural Life was recently shortlisted as one of the country’s most child-friendly museums.

Every summer the University’s Department of Archaeology organises the excavation of the Roman town of Silchester, just south of Reading. Visitors can see the excavation in progress and special open day events can attract up to 1,000 people a time.

Whiteknights campus is also contributing to the richness and variety of cultural activities by hosting Reading Film Theatre, an independent cinema club, as well as evening classes run by Oxford University.

The University is preserving the architectural heritage of the town by restoring and maintaining its listed buildings, such as Foxhill House on Whiteknights campus, the original home of the architect, Alfred Waterhouse, Wantage Hall in Upper Redlands Road and the Great Hall at our London Road campus.

‘It’s fantastic to see so many people, of all ages, take an interest in and enjoy visiting what is a site of great historical importance.’

Professor Mike Fulford
The University enriches the cultural and recreational opportunities that can be enjoyed by local people.

The University SportsPark is open to students, staff and members of the public. It boasts modern state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor facilities including a two-floor fitness studio, studios for dance, yoga and martial arts, a large multi-purpose sports hall, squash courts, as well as outdoor sports pitches.

Whiteknights campus is also a place of leisure and recreation for visitors. Three-quarters of the 130 hectare Whiteknights campus consists of meadow, woodland, lawns, playing fields and a lake. The main woodland area, known as The Wilderness, is a designated Wildlife Heritage Site.

Since acquiring the estate in 1947, the University has continued the tradition of planting both native and exotic trees. Within the central campus area are some of the country’s best specimens of Cretan Maple and fine examples of Swamp Cypress, Tupelo Tree and the Kentucky Coffee Tree. The University’s Harris Garden has recently been reworked and enjoys the benefits of a strong, committed Friends group.

Long recognised by students and staff as an attractive environment in which to work and study, and by local residents as a lovely green space in which to walk, Whiteknights campus received a Green Flag under the national scheme in recognition of the effort put in to maintain the quality of the grounds. The campus subsequently came fourth in the country in the Green Flag People’s Vote.

Aside from the public right of way across the campus, local residents enjoy the permissive access offered by the University to the lake and other parts of the campus. There are organised weekly health walks and a printed Tree Walk guide to showcase some of the lovely and unusual trees. Each year the Reading Half Marathon route takes in the campus at about the four mile stage and is a popular stretch for well-wishers who come to offer their encouragement to the runners.

The University is delighted to play an integral part in the lives of many people living in the area and welcome local users of our facilities and events.