



Addressing evolving evidence needs: sustaining engagement and application by coordinating consecutive research programmes

July 2013

THE ARCC COORDINATION NETWORK

The performance of UK buildings and infrastructure is critical to our national well-being and the EPSRC is investing heavily in research to improve resilience in the urban environment. This includes the Adaptation and Resilience to a Changing Climate Coordination Network (ARCC CN) and associated research projects. By engaging both researchers and stakeholders, the ARCC CN maximises the use of outputs from across the academic community to inform the development of a sustainable built environment. Crucially, the ARCC CN builds on achievements and lessons learnt from previous programmes: Building Knowledge for a Changing Climate (BKCC) and Sustaining Knowledge for a Changing Climate (SKCC). This evolution of three consecutive research programmes, driven by evolving stakeholder needs, has been a key aspect of promoting the uptake of outputs arising from EPSRC-funded projects.

EVOLVING PROGRAMMES: FROM BKCC VIA SKCC TO ARCC

In 2001, EPSRC and UKCIP recognised the need for a joint initiative to stimulate research on the impacts of climate change in the built environment and infrastructure sectors. The nine projects funded under the resulting BKCC programme (2003-6) provided evidence to inform stakeholders of potential adaption options in these areas.

Recognising that the value of research does not end when a project or programme finishes, EPSRC established the follow-on SKCC initiative (2006-8) to sustain the researcher and end user community established during BKCC. Work continued on summarising and disseminating BKCC research results and on strengthening links between academia, policy and practice.

One aim of SKCC was to identify and prioritise emerging challenges and knowledge gaps in these sectors. As a result, 6 new projects were funded under the ARCC programme which were combined with 8 existing projects and provided with a dedicated coordination unit to form the ARCC CN (2009-2013). This Network is itself now part of the broader Living With Environmental Change (LWEC) partnership. The ARCC CN has now expanded to include a rolling programme of coordinated stakeholder-led research projects to deliver salient evidence to inform local and national decision-makers.

[Building Knowledge for a Changing Climate. Final report, 2007](#)

[Adaptation and Resilience to a Changing Climate, Annual Report 2012](#)

[Living with Environmental Change](#)

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THE BENEFITS OF SUSTAINED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The BKCC programme led the way in establishing a new collaborative approach of researchers and decision-makers working together to produce credible evidence to inform adaptation strategies. It allowed an understanding to develop of the value of research and its direct use in policy and practice which in turn convinced stakeholders to invest time and resources. An integrating framework was established to help foster these links and coordinate the research and a stakeholder forum was created to ensure users were fully engaged at all stages of the research-dissemination-application process.

SKCC built on BKCC, working to sustain the community of multi-disciplinary groups of researchers and stakeholders. SKCC synthesised results from across the earlier projects, so key messages were more effectively disseminated to industry and other end-users. Through stakeholder and researcher workshops, SKCC was also able to develop a user-led plan for future research themes. This provided an informed basis for consideration of potential research activities by EPSRC to meet identified stakeholder needs.

Experience gained through BKCC and SKCC showed that sustained stakeholder involvement and coordination, both in terms of research efforts and through end-user engagement, enhanced the value and reach of the research and promoted uptake and use. As a result of this experience, a dedicated Coordination Unit was established within the ARCC programme with the remit to enhance and broaden the existing community, and to work with this pool of experts over longer periods of time to ensure results continue to inform policy and practice into the future. This coordination has helped ensure the co-production of timely outputs, enhanced reach and sustained impact.

THE VALUE TO RESEARCHERS, STAKEHOLDERS AND FUNDING AGENCIES

Experience from this sequence of three related programmes has demonstrated that end-users can be engaged over an extended period of time through facilitating networks. As a result, end users are more informed and therefore better able to contribute to current research, better able to understand the utility of research produced, and more willing and able to exploit research results. Through this extended experience, they become more capable and are likely to be involved in further development and dissemination of research results arising within their respective communities.

EPSRC has benefitted from a continuing and facilitated dialogue between researchers and stakeholders to ensure that research outputs deliver maximum impact. An informed network of researchers and end-users has been better able to identify and prioritise knowledge gaps and challenges thus helping to shape future investment in research programmes to meet national strategic needs and clearly-defined sectoral requirements. Researchers have benefitted from this continuity too. They have been able to share knowledge across projects and programmes, contribute to cross-project activities, and gain access to a broader stakeholder community able to play an active role in the design, monitoring and dissemination of results. Beyond this, having a central coordination unit has helped ensure the legacy of research outputs has been sustained beyond the lifetime of individual projects or phases of a research programme.

FOR THE FUTURE

Learning from this process of sequenced and coordinated funding continues. Evidence gaps remain and new policy and practice questions emerge but the value of a sustained and engaged community means that existing research can be better exploited to respond to new requirements and appropriately framed new research questions can be communicated to funding agencies in a timely manner.