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**HCA Academy<sup>1</sup>/ESRC Sustainable Communities  
Initiative –  
Co-ordinators' Final Report**

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<http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms>

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<sup>1</sup> Since the Initiative was established in 2007, the Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) has become the skills arm of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), now known as the HCA Academy. For the purposes of this report, the ASC will be referred to throughout as HCA Academy.

## **Executive Summary**

The UK government has been central in leading the debate on the delivery of 'sustainable communities' as part of the wider goal of sustainable development. Within the UK, such communities are currently defined as "places where people want to live and work, now and in the future" but understanding of how they can be conceived, and how they can be created remains embryonic. One dimension of this has been an appreciation, identified most clearly in the Egan Report of 2004<sup>2</sup>, that there is a lack of skills and more widely an understanding of which skills are necessary to deliver such sustainable communities. This Initiative adds to an understanding of how such skills deficiencies may be addressed, and assesses different ways in which skills, learning and knowledge for sustainable communities is and might be delivered.

### **The Initiative**

The targeted Initiative, located under the ESRC Venture Research Fund, was jointly funded by the HCA Academy and the ESRC. Individual research projects were commissioned to provide specific case studies and local examples of how ideas, knowledge and practice can assist in the development of skills for sustainable communities. At its heart, the Initiative has focused on exploring how generic skills, as outlined in the Egan report, and specific skills within communities can be fostered more effectively. Each of the projects has offered insights from their own local contexts on the specific challenges, approaches and practices faced in enhancing the skills base of sustainable communities, and together provide practical and policy related outcomes. These were supported by a team of coordinators led from the University of Strathclyde.

Eleven grants were made to academic research teams, ranging in value from £39k to £80k, with each involving external partners and community organisations. The projects are drawn from across the social sciences, including planning, geography and education, and have adopted a variety of different approaches, with some focusing on local, spatial communities, others on sectors, and some on skill bases specifically. Together the projects have:

- illustrated the importance of inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary working in conducting research on sustainable communities;
- contributed empirically on the ways in which skills and practice in the sustainable communities field are being developed innovatively within a variety of contexts; and
- advanced wider conceptual knowledge of what makes sustainable communities.

This diversity has also offered interesting research findings for the many stakeholders and interested parties associated with the Initiative and a key role in the coordination has been to make the connections between the project research and wider debates and discussions on skills policy, approaches to learning, and the creation of sustainable communities.

### **Key research contributions**

The research conducted under this Initiative has advanced understanding of different ways in which key skills and learning associated with community building, regeneration and sustainability can be delivered. In so doing, the research projects have highlighted different approaches to:

- enhancing learning and skills development – through effective CPD and training, to new ways of inter-agency partnership working, and learning amongst communities of interest;
- skills transfer between communities, including young people, professional working environments and divided communities; and
- generating more effective engagement and motivation for learning.

In addition, the research across the projects and the Initiative offers different ways to approach policy in this area, relating to:

- skills and learning to build cohesive communities;

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<sup>2</sup> The Egan Review: Skills for sustainable communities, ODPM London, April 2004

- moving the focus of skills policy from learning for qualifications to valuing other forms of situated learning; and
- developing leadership and vision in creating sustainable communities.

The Initiative research therefore contributes to academic debates on valuing different forms of learning and skill acquisition, and in particular the role of situated learning and the processes of learning, as well as the significance of the local environment and working practices in shaping the transfer and application of learning and skills. In policy areas, the research offers important insights to (i) developing skills policy beyond a focus on skills deficits to emphasis existing skill strengths, (ii) identifying different ways of learning and embedding generic skills in those engaging with sustainable communities and (iii) an approach which moves away from a toolkit and skills acquisition focus to give greater value to effective partnership working.

### **Developing skills and knowledge**

The research emphasises the social perspective of learning and explores new ways of learning which can be supported – co-production of knowledge, creative engagement, social learning opportunities through the workplace, and supporting staff to take on brokerage/translation roles. It also highlights the significance of the role of organisations to create motivation for continual learning, providing a purpose to learning and training, and opportunities for putting learning into practice.

In making such learning effective, however, skills need to be viewed more widely than currently. The conventional emphasis on the measurement of skills through qualifications, and the valuing by employers to skills of immediate utility, undervalue other competencies - including those which arise from learning and experience beyond training. Together these competencies need to be judged by the efficacy of skills in the workplace – by evaluating the change or transformation that occurs rather than the number of boxes ticked.

### **Initiative research output**

Under the Initiative, the research has been widely disseminated both to the academic and policy communities. Individual academic and policy papers have been written by the project teams, and special issues of journals and an edited collection of papers will emerge in 2010-11. Case studies which illustrate the key findings from the research have also been written for the HCA Academy, enabling specific examples of good practice to be highlighted. Project summaries detailing the key policy implications, as well as the research methods and main conclusions, have been published by the Initiative coordinators.

Five policy briefings, exploring the main policy themes emerging from the Initiative, have been published and these and further details of the research and copies of the main reports can be found at the Initiative website developed through this programme (<http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms>). This site also provides links to the more detailed websites and output from the individual research projects.

## Part 1: Co-ordinators' Role

The coordinators were asked to address four main objectives under their role:

- adding value to the research;
- providing a lead on engaging with potential users
- providing a channel of communication between the ESRC/HCA Academy and researchers
- providing advice to research teams, ESRC/HCA Academy to secure the greatest impact from the initiative.

### *1. Adding value to the research*

Whilst an important role of the coordination team was guiding and assisting the individual researchers to link their specific projects into wider contexts – ensuring that they are aware of other research being conducted within and outside of the Initiative – the coordinating team aimed to add further value through (i) developing further relationships between these projects and other research within the UK and internationally and (ii) broadening the engagement with practitioners and policy-makers beyond those linked with specific projects (covered in section 2 below).

The coordinators have drawn out key themes emerging from the project research. An initial set of cross-cutting themes was discussed at the second project meeting (see Annex B) and these were subsequently revised and updated for the final meeting. These themes were used by the coordinators to a) identify publication outlets for the Initiative, including special issues of journals, and b) as guides in the production of the research summaries (see Annex C).

These summaries enable a wide range of individuals and organisations to better understand the research connections between the projects, the crossover of approaches and methods between some of the projects, and more importantly, the emerging cross-cutting themes. Through these, a more robust theoretical generalisation has been achieved by bringing together the findings of the independent research projects to contribute to both academic and policy debates.

### *2. Providing a lead on engaging with potential users*

Each project had, as part of their terms of reference, local partners from outside of the research community and each made good use of local and/or policy connections with potential users of the research. It was important that the coordinators complemented, rather than disrupted, these relationships.

The coordinators sought to support projects to achieve a balance between maintaining their specific local relationships and making links with other bodies/organisations in three ways:

- a) informing key external policy and user agencies of the Initiative and updating the coordinators of changing priorities and relevant actions of these agencies. These included the Learning and Skills Council, the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Scottish Centre for Regeneration;
- b) providing an Initiative contact point and as the research results emerged, an Initiative website to ensure user communities could communicate with the coordinators. Those using these channels were kept informed of the outcomes of the research, and were invited to participate in the policy sounding board (see c below). Inquiries were also received through some of the project teams; and
- c) a policy sounding board event held to an invited audience of c80 relevant policy and community users to contribute to the policy output from the Initiative.

Together, these enabled the coordinators to keep abreast of the main policy action in relation to the development of skills and learning and sustainable communities, and to inform the wider communities of the research outcomes emerging, and to inform the publication of the Policy Briefings emerging from the Initiative.

### *3. Initiative wide communication*

Coordination between the funders and the project teams was managed through different communication strategies:

a) liaison with ESRC/HCA

The lead coordinator held four briefing meetings with the HCA Academy during the life of the Initiative beyond the joint meetings with the project teams. In addition, discussions were held by email and telephone on key points and contact with the ESRC was maintained primarily through these media. These formed the main channels of communication with the project researchers although most teams indicated that the face to face discussions with the HCA representatives at meetings helped them to address the policy agendas.

In the initial stages of the Initiative, communication largely focused on reporting progress and offering reassurances of individual projects meeting their own timescale and objectives. The delays in some projects were noted and action was agreed on how to accommodate the differentiated rate of progress. Following the second research team meeting (Annex B), the communication focused on the emerging themes and their connections with the developing HCA priorities, which facilitated more constructive joint working. The third meeting enabled the HCA Academy representatives to explain the HCA objectives in greater detail so that the research teams could help address these through the Initiative.

b) communication with project teams

Each member of the coordinating team was designated as a first point of liaison for individual projects, and telephone and face to face discussions were held at least twice during the period with most project teams. In addition, liaison between the PIs and the ESRC was managed through the lead coordinator, covering issues such financial reporting and possible extensions. For the first part of the Initiative collective meetings of all the project teams ensured shared working, with exposure to the methods and emerging findings of other projects in the Initiative. In the latter part, Sue Sadler, the coordinating Research Assistant was very active in gathering and liaising with research teams in the production of research output. This was effective in ensuring that all planned deliverables were achieved in the lifetime of the Initiative.

c) communication with policy community and practitioners

During the funded period, contact by the coordinators was made with users involved in the area of skills and learning and community regeneration. Updating meetings in particular were held with the Scottish Centre for Regeneration (as the equivalent agency in Scotland covering the work of the HCA Academy) and briefings were provided for others including the Learning and Skills Council. The main communication was the Policy Sounding Board event towards the end of the period, when users were invited to contribute to the publications and conclusions emerging from the research. The briefing policy papers have been disseminated to interested user groups and copies have been made publicly available from the website.

d) Initiative website

Recognising the importance of continuing dissemination of progress on the Initiative and providing up to date information on related topics, the coordination team have developed an Initiative website which includes information on each project (and links to their own websites where relevant) as well as the research reports, policy briefings, and case studies. There are also links to other relevant sites.

#### 4. *Providing advice*

a) to the PIs and research project teams

The coordinators interpreted this role as primarily one of (i) assistance to enable the smooth completion of the individual funded projects, and assistance in resolving issues when these arose (eg through ill health of the PI, gaining time extensions as required from

the ESRC, commenting on draft output) and (ii) ensuring that Initiative-wide opportunities and themes were supported by the project teams.

This latter role was achieved through:

- assisting the project leaders (as appropriate) in developing explicit links between their own projects and the wider research base;
- helping identify cross-cutting themes linking between projects;
- enabling contact to be made with key research stakeholders outside of the Initiative (with the intention of involving them later in communicating the outcomes of the Initiative); and
- providing a platform for Initiative-wide academic publications (journal and book)

b) to users and policy communities

This role has been seen as ensuring that the research is as accessible and relevant as possible to a wide range of interested parties and users. The advice provided is divided into those illustrated by the individual research projects (available through the research summaries and the set of 'case studies' – see Annex C) and the policy development and application dimensions of the Initiative as a whole. This latter advice is contained within the five specific 'policy briefings' which address key dimensions of current and future areas of skills and learning, transformational learning, leadership and vision, and sustainable communities.

## Part 2 Scheme Objectives

The overall aim of the Initiative was to link new thinking, ideas and knowledge to the development of skills and practice in the sustainable communities field. As a whole, the Initiative has explored new thinking and approaches in education, community engagement, urban design and regeneration; worked directly with practitioners in the field; involved members of communities directly in the research; and generated evidence and policy papers for the professional and policy communities.

Five possible priority research areas were identified in the original specification. Through the selection process, the 11 projects have made contributions in the majority of these areas:

- a) informing future strategies and policies through comparative research
  - different approaches to skills for social cohesion in England/Northern Ireland (Murtagh<sup>3</sup>)
  - revision Strategic Environmental Appraisals to assist learning and skills (Kidd)
- b) enhancing learning and skills development
  - effective CPD and professional learning (Sayce, Kidd, Hockey)
  - Inter-agency/partnership working (Smith, Gaffikin, Selman, Percy-Smith, Murtagh)
  - Learning amongst communities of interest (Leyshon, Murtagh)
  - Assessment of learning outcomes (Marsden, Deakin)
  - Development of generic/tacit skills
  - Across the Initiative, case studies generated rich and deep insights into learning in specific contexts
  - Policy briefing papers on 'Skills and learning'
- c) more effective working, barrier removal, skills transfer
  - effective motivation/engagement – (Marsden, Percy-Smith, Selman)
  - overcome barriers – making space for learning (Smith); agonism & co-learning (Gaffikin)
  - skill transfer within communities – young people (Leyshon, Percy-Smith), community-community (Murtagh, Gaffikin)
- d) leadership and change management
  - addressed through an Initiative Policy Briefing on leadership
- e) meeting future skills demand and supply
  - demand/supply of skills (Murtagh)
  - partially addressed through an Initiative Policy Briefing on 'New approach to skills for sustainable communities'

The selection of projects was such that the role of international migration was not directly addressed. During the life of the Initiative, the economic and migration policy contexts have been changing markedly in any case.

### *Limitations*

In terms of meeting the overall aim of the Initiative and the priority research aims, it is important to note that the co-ordinating team were commissioned after funding decisions were made for the projects. In addition, funding decisions were based on the merits of individual research projects, rather than to fill all the priority research areas set out in the original research brief of the Initiative.

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<sup>3</sup> All of the 11 research projects were conducted by research teams. Reflecting ESRC conventions, the names of the Principal Investigators are used here to refer to the specific projects. Details of the full project teams are listed in Annex A.

This approach inevitably leads to uneven coverage of the priority research areas originally identified and leaves gaps in the areas covered by the individual projects, including in this instance:

- i) addressing what are 'sustainable communities';
- ii) factors affecting future skills demand and supply;
- iii) international comparisons

The coordinators have noted these in the briefing papers, addressing the need for greater definition, leadership and vision about what are sustainable communities, and making suggestions for alternative approaches to enhancing skills. These topics and international comparisons form the focus of several of the academic outputs being prepared on the basis of the grant – including special issues of *Geografiska Annaler B* and *Town Planning Review*.

Additionally, the maximum possible grant size of £100k and the timescale of the projects meant that each project was conducted at a relatively small scale with the consequence that no significant large scale macro or quantitative research was undertaken. Despite such factors, some projects have obviously stretched their capacity to deliver much more than expected from such a limited budget.

#### *Selected examples of key research findings*

The following have been selected to show the diversity of topics and approaches which have been covered within the Initiative. Details of each project can be found in Annex B.

### **1. Skills towards creating cohesive communities – Gaffikin and Murtagh**

These two projects offer differing approaches towards an understanding of how communities can be skilled and enabled to achieve greater cohesiveness; a key characteristics of contemporary debates on sustainable communities. Both projects are based on Belfast case studies, recognising that whilst in some respects the tensions experienced in communities in this city are 'extreme' examples of community fracture, the research has been connected with other examples in the UK and internationally of divided communities seeking cohesiveness.

**Gaffikin's** study focuses on the co-production of knowledge as the basis for conflict resolution. Working with four local organisations, the researchers and local community leaders generated strategic development plans for their areas. The process emphasised learning and empowerment for ALL participants and required planning groups to acknowledge links between reconciliation and regeneration; the connection of broader community goals to spatial planning & design; the need to see each community within a broader geography, and each community's role within an open and connected city.

Through this process, the researchers tested a process of 'agonistic collaborative planning'. This approach is based on the belief that people are not simply rational, but may be passionate, emotional, intuitive and prejudiced. They will often hold conflicting values and ideas. The process recognises that participants' views are not always open to rational argument, that social harmony is not the norm and there will always be inequalities in power relations around any table. It also recognises how statistics and other evidence may be interpreted in contrasting ways by different groups. During the generation of the plans, participants were required to show respect for one another's views when they could not be reconciled. The process accepts the rather messy social reality of incremental agreements, continued dissent and persistent conflict.

The case studies in Belfast revealed that the collaborative planning process helped to create links between urban regeneration and peace-building, encouraged a concept of civic capacity and equipped participants to use 6 forms of capital: intellectual, social, physical, financial, natural and political.



More widely, the study indicated that

1. The process of agonistic collaborative planning holds more scope for addressing differences in power and contention than traditional approaches that stress the need to reach consensus. The process allows difficult and contentious issues to be acknowledged and put on the agenda.

2. Although there were some issues and skills specific to the Belfast situation such as exploring the potential for paramilitaries to transfer their organisational and leadership skills to community development, the broad conclusion from discussion with colleagues from England and the USA is that the process has considerable potential for use in most situations, particularly where there is any level of conflict (eg as between different ethnic groups in some cities in Great Britain).

([http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061402\\_%20gaffkinproof.pdf](http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061402_%20gaffkinproof.pdf) )

**Murtagh's** research on the Belfast context of regeneration and community rebuilding offers a contrasting perspective. Drawing on interviews with representatives from the public, professionals, and the private and public sectors in Northern Ireland, as well as government bodies and skills centres in the rest of the UK, the researchers explored the role and functions of those engaged in the built environment, their views on skills availability, excellence and strategies.

The researchers presented *ten case studies* exploring the development of technical skills in a range of interventions in communities dealing with conflicts. A further *four* case studies focus on the development of generic skills in the context of project management or the policy process.

Through these lenses, Murtagh's research offers two key conclusions. First it highlights the key skills currently needed in building communities - **Analytical skills** can assist in mapping power relations and the dynamics of community changes; **Planning skills** can integrate evaluative techniques to weigh up the costs/benefits associated with conflict resolution and ethnic mediation strategies; and **Delivery skills** can attract cross-community support and establish durable governance structures.

Second, it suggests that the achievement of more cohesive and sustainable communities may be overly optimistic using conflict resolution, consensus and collaborative planning approaches in contested communities. The approach calls for yet higher skills levels among planners, but suggests that it provides a pragmatic way forward with benefits for both individuals and communities. The research proposes a skills framework for diversity planning around which a more active learning culture could develop, building the capacity to share skills, experience and learning both within Northern Ireland and beyond.

([http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061406\\_murtaghproof.pdf](http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061406_murtaghproof.pdf) )

## 2. Creative engagement – Selman & Percy-Smith

Learning is seen as key to creating sustainable communities (Sterling 2001). A key challenge is how to move beyond the simple acquisition and transmission of knowledge to learning that challenges and transforms thinking, practice and systems. These two projects offer different ways of imaginative engagement of groups in learning about the environment, and in turn how they are agents of change.

**Selman's** study – into community understanding of and engagement with flood risk and river management – illustrates how alternative techniques of learning (in this case creative writing) can be deployed to tackle complex environmental issues.

With the support of the Environment Agency, the researchers recruited a local writing group through stakeholder networks and advertisements in community buildings. The creative writing programme included six two-hour workshops and additional masterclass tutorials at the

request of the participants and concluded with an event which combined research dissemination with a celebration of the anthology produced by the writers.

The workshops were led by an expert in creative writing, who spent considerable time familiarising herself with the area beforehand. Practical investigation of the Dearne Valley from source to confluence was augmented by library research and discussions with an amateur local historian. Each session was evaluated by the participants and supplemented with surveys to profile the lifestyle, behaviour and perceptions of participants, their general environmental and river-management knowledge and whether/how these changed.

Through these challenging forms of creative expression, participants realised the existence of the different views and associations that each person had concerning rivers, and the environment more generally. Exploring this gave them insight into their own and other people's feelings, knowledge and personalities. In several cases this triggered changes such as an increased interest in and appreciation of the environment and environmental issues; greater evaluation of decisions, and greater awareness of opportunities for local participation.

Imaginative engagement had varied impacts on participants with regard to some of their work practices, recreational activities and professional development. Changes included walking the river banks for the first time, with increased frequency; or engaging with environmental planning and with an environmental organisation.

([http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061402\\_%20gaffkinproof.pdf](http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061402_%20gaffkinproof.pdf) )

**Percy-Smith's** research focussed on children and young people, and the role of school education for sustainable development (ESD), their learning and the changes they bring about. Through four half day action research sessions, the children explored the issues, and designed actions that they felt would have an impact on sustainability. School ESD tutors supported children to carry out activity between the action research sessions. Impacts of these actions were reflected upon and new inquiry and action pursued in each subsequent meeting. Parallel inquiry groups were held with parents and adult community members. These were supplemented with reflective dialogues with Heads, Teachers and NGO practitioners. Further reflective learning was undertaken in two research workshops with school staff, NGO practitioners and 'invited experts' from the field. The research explored with children whether and how their learning was acted on outside of the classroom, gaining insights into the role of children as agents of change as well as factors that influenced whether their learning 'spilled' over into community action and sustainable behaviour change.

Importantly, this research indicates that children have the potential to do more than educate or initiate minor behavioural changes in the home. They can also be active agents of change in their wider communities; a role which is strongly influenced by: an approach to learning that goes beyond simply acquiring knowledge; the opportunity for children to take on leadership roles; active encouragement and sustained support from adults; and adult-child relationships that recognise the capabilities of children.

([http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061407\\_percysmithproof.pdf](http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/5061407_percysmithproof.pdf) )

### **3. Reflective practice - Sayce**

Academic and policy reports, including the Egan Review (2004), have underlined that in order to increased public participation in spatial planning and achieve more sustainable developments, professionals have to adopt different working practices and behaviours and in turn new knowledge and generic skills are required. Most professionals working in the built environment field acquire skills and knowledge throughout their lives through courses at under-graduate and post-graduate establishments, through the process of professional registration and through ongoing continuing professional development and lifelong learning.

**Sayce** and her research team adopted the Egan Review as their primary point of reference and used subject benchmarks to generate a skills matrix highlighting the generic skills offered at each level of education within the architecture, planning, surveying and construction professions. They also studied the process of entering the building environment professions,

looking at skills and knowledge acquired at higher education institutes and entrance to the profession. Subject benchmarks were assessed for inclusion of generic skills at graduate level. The system of viva voce examination or professional interview as a qualification for entry to the profession was also scrutinised for its strengths and weaknesses in covering and testing these generic skills.

Through specific case studies, the research explored a range of public engagement methods, highlighting skills development in a range of locations, policy environments, development types and scales, and examined views from both professionals and community stakeholders of the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement processes and the skills of participating professionals. Questionnaire surveys and interviews were used with core built environment professionals and firms offering community consultation services. The surveys identified differences in views associated with varying levels of experience and professions that were further explored through interviews.

The findings showed little evidence of the explicit inclusion of the Egan generic skills into discipline or professional body requirements. However, emphasis on the development of generic or transferable skills is evident in Higher Education curricula and professional and occupational standards, albeit that these skills are contextualised within the discipline or in relation to inter-professional interaction.

Three important contributions emerge from this research, relating to Higher Education and to the types of skills including leadership which have to be fostered through lifelong learning.

First, support is essential to stimulate significantly more actions and to increase the number of situated learning opportunities in the delivery of professional education curricula. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) would need to provide appropriate, flexible physical learning environments. Professional bodies could encourage inter-professional and stakeholder engagement by facilitating collaborative learning partnerships with HEIs, practitioners and local authorities. This supports the conclusions of the Leitch Review (2006) which emphasised the need for greater employer (and individual) responsibility for developing 'world class' skills.

Second, the research pointed to a developing distinction between skills which can be taught and assessed on the one hand, and 'soft' skills and personal attributes on the other, which, whilst they can be fostered through teaching and learning strategies, do not lend themselves to formal training and/or assessment. This reinforces the need for education and practitioner mentors to encourage self-awareness and self-development alongside technical skills training.

Third, the empowerment agenda requires a range of adapted and new skills. Facilitation, listening and effective dialogue skills, combined with the ability to work with people to develop a vision - rather than impose one - is critical. There needs to be a shift from the 'professional as leader', to 'professional as facilitator', able to learn from and respond to others, both from within the team and beyond. Leadership skills remain important, but are not in themselves sufficient. Skills developed for professional and inter-professional situations, such as conflict resolution, need to be reframed when applied to community engagement. However, as long as the total advisory team is appropriately skilled, it is not necessary for each member to have full command across the skills; instead mutual support and respect with appreciation for each others skills, is key.

([http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/506108\\_sayceproof.pdf](http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/images/stories/pdfs/506108_sayceproof.pdf) )

### *High impact activities*

#### **Policy sounding board event, London, 3 June 2009**

This one-day conference, organised by the Initiative coordinators, was held to engage with representatives from across the user and policy communities and through the discussion sessions to explore new ideas for improving the skills and knowledge needed to create and maintain better places. Although the focus was to inform the participants of the emerging outcomes from the 11 research projects, the event was also designed to gather feedback and ideas from the participants on the wider themes and policy briefings being developed by the Initiative coordinators.

The day was divided into 3 sections, designed around a series of interactive workshops that enabled participants to discuss the conclusions from the individual projects under the Initiative with members of the research teams, and to debate the policy implications arising from the Initiative as a whole. Participants each received draft policy papers, a full set of research summaries and case studies in advance and selected their own choice of project and topics to discuss.

The format of the event was:

- an introduction which set the context of the Initiative – with inputs from the coordinators, Chair of the HCA Academy, Prof Peter Roberts, and the ESRC Impact Team Manager, Vicki Crossley;
- small group, round table discussions exploring themes emerging from pairs of research projects, eg planning and regeneration (Deakin & Sayce), learning at work (Smith & Kidd);
- a discussion session on key policy themes – with an introduction by the coordinators of their thoughts and small group feedback on draft briefing papers.

Invitations were sent to a wide variety of organisations involving built environment and regeneration professionals, community organisations, strategists, analysts and policy makers who had influence over the skills agenda for sustainable communities. Nearly 60 participants attended from across the voluntary and third sector, statutory sector at local and regional scale, and representative from community groups. In addition, members of each of the project teams, the HCA Academy contacts and ESRC representatives contributed to the workshops, making for 80 participants overall.

The sessions were held at the Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre, which provided an excellent exemplar of a contemporary purpose-built meeting centre within a neighbourhood designed around sustainability principles.

This event proved to provide a significant contribution to the Initiative, with the interactive format enabling:

- feedback to the PIs and teams on their projects and requests for additional information to ensure wider application of lessons;
- engagement with wide cross section of user community and raised profile of the Initiative;
- immediate feedback on the emerging policy elements of the Initiative for the coordinators; and
- an opportunity for ESRC and HCA Academy to illustrate the impact of the Initiative and the Venture Research programme.

Since the event, the coordinators have received further comments and advice from some participants and this along with the feedback from discussion groups during the event has resulted in revisions to the policy briefings.

### **No energy day, Crispin School, Street, 26 June 2008.**

This event was one part of an action research project undertaken by Barry Percy-Smith and his project team from the University of the West of England exploring the capacity for schools to drive changes in sustainable behaviour within and beyond school. It has been selected as an example here to illustrate how a high profile event (such as a 'no energy day' can have an important impact on a whole school community, with spillover effects beyond). The School in question was a secondary school in a small rural town with a strong history of sustainability work. The school had a longstanding relationship with the WWF (World Wildlife Fund). One aim of the project was to build on the work that practitioner organisations had done in schools.

The structure was to have four half day inquiry meetings facilitated by the researchers between which action would be carried by young people – supported by the teacher. In addition a questionnaire on sustainability issues was given to children in classes, to teachers and to parents who attended events at a sustainability week.

In a preliminary session which explored the nature of research and sustainability, the idea of a 'no energy day' emerged, within the context of a sustainability week. This was real action research because the group were able to reflect on the issues, plan the day, implement it and then reflect on the unexpected things that emerged.

The school management team supported the no energy day and it went ahead on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2008. Assemblies were held to show a power point presentation and explain the importance of supporting the day. Amongst the measures that were taken, the energy group along with some helpers went around the school and taped on to all of the light switches the message: "Please DO NOT use this light switch. To-day is Reduce Energy Day." A kettle amnesty was called and all kettles were collected and catalogued and returned the following day.

#### Lessons learned

Pupils recognised that they had very little power to influence, so needed to develop strategies to try and get around this. Nevertheless one young person stated: "it still angers me that you have to do it in that way because it's not fair." The 'no energy day' took a significant amount of time and energy, some of which was diverted from other potential projects. Young people reflected that: "we became distracted and absorbed into the no energy day. We hadn't realised what a big job it was to organise so it was natural to switch our efforts".

#### Key issues emerging from the inquiry process

While the original focus of the research was on the ways in which education for sustainability can spill over and impact on family and community, there was also a reframing process that took place. Members of the inquiry group were concerned about making the school more sustainable. They felt that in order to achieve change there had to be a momentum built within the school. In other words the link between school, family and community would only be credible if the school modelled the changes it was teaching.

Over time a considerable amount of the discussion was focused on the role of the school itself as a catalyst for change. In other words it had power not only as an educator, but also as an institution which had authority. Students felt that this should be used to support the sustainability agenda.

### **Part 3 Scheme Activities**

A key role of the coordinators has been to ensure that there has been positive networking between the projects involved in the initiative. It is through such connections and exchange that the Initiative has achieved greater policy impact and a higher quality research impact than the individual projects would have achieved on their own.

#### *Networking*

During the 12 months of the Initiative, there were 3 key stages where the coordinators believed they could provide important assistance collectively to the project teams to enhance synergies between projects and create added value for the Initiative:

Stage 1: in the design and conduct of the empirical dimensions of the projects

Stage 2: analysis and interpretation of the evidential base gathered through the empirical research

Stage 3: the production of key dissemination reports and other activities

Three coordinating meetings were held during the period of the research at which all the project teams were represented. Each meeting focused on a specific theme - the aspirations of the ESRC and HCA Academy at the first session; the emerging Initiative-wide themes at the second; and their connections with the HCA Academy priorities, dissemination and user engagement strategies at the third.

These sessions also enabled the project teams to learn from each other as well as presenting their own research in relation to methods and approaches, early results, and final conclusions. We found that they welcomed informal face to face discussions to share information and opportunities. In addition, the co-ordinators, the HCA Academy, the ESRC and the project teams held a final session which was open to built environment professional bodies and the policy community to discuss the outcomes of the Initiative and their policy implications.

Beyond these group meetings, one to one support was provided by the coordinators to each project team, with the allocated member of the coordinating team having some expertise or interest in the project topic. Face to face and/or telephone meetings were held with each project leader or team representative, and continuing support and advice provided electronically. Through these channels, it was also possible for the coordinators to monitor progress, and where necessary to advise on problem solving. The precise nature of support provided varied between projects

In the last 6 months of the funding period, at a stage when most projects were nearing completion, contact was facilitated by the coordinating research assistant. All the project teams were very helpful and cooperative in ensuring that the Initiative published material was available within deadlines; as coordinators we are very grateful for this, especially as much of this input was beyond the end of their awards.

Beyond this organised networking, exchanges between project teams were encouraged by the coordinators. In the group meetings, some time was used to facilitate such exchanges. As a result, sharing of ideas, approaches and research outcomes occurred between different projects – for example, between the team at Brass (Marsden) and Selman; between Murtagh and Gaffikin at QUB.

#### *Scholarly exchange*

To maximise the research impact of the Initiative, the coordinators have sought to draw together the diverse set of projects which were supported. To this end, they have engaged with the research team at each of the joint meetings to share ideas about the emerging cross-cutting themes and lessons from the projects. Initial themes were identified and then re-examined and once agreed these became the basis for discussions with publishers for dissemination. The publications which are currently being pursued reflect these themes and emphasise the connections between projects.

#### *Cross disciplinary learning*

#### i) Strategy

From its outset, this Initiative has been designed to be cross-disciplinary and to engaging with academic and user communities. The project teams cover disciplinary expertise in education, sociology, geography, urban planning, built environment, civic design, environmental science, and architecture. The co-ordinating team comprised members from a range of disciplines and with experience of working with different policy communities. As a result, the strategy of the coordinators has been to ensure that they create space and dialogue across all the projects engaged in the Initiative, with opportunities for each research team to offer a summary of their aims, approach and initial results to share with other project teams.

#### ii) Actions and achievements

The Initiative-wide meetings held in London (the most feasible location to bring together personnel from Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, Essex and other parts of England) thus provided important exchanges of knowledge and expertise between the researchers and to ensure that different disciplinary perspectives could be brought to bear on each project. Cross-disciplinary discussions at the second of the initiative meetings for example resulted in alternative perspectives being suggested, and project teams adjusting their approach as a consequence.

This cross-disciplinarity was reinforced by the structure of the Sounding Board event in June 2009 where project teams were paired to present from different disciplinary perspectives their research to the policy audience. From the feedback it was evident that this format ensured that participants were made more aware of the research differences arising from different perspectives adopted by the research teams, and enabled the researchers to illustrate the synergies between these different perspectives to provide insights into skills and knowledge for sustainable communities.

#### *Building research capacity*

##### i) Strategy

There were limited opportunities for the Initiative to build research capacity directly because of the restricted funding available and thus the size of projects (the funding ceiling was £100k per project). Nevertheless, each project had to include a partnership with external, non-academic users.

##### ii) Actions and achievements

The requirement to include an external partner was beneficial for the Initiative, but was in some cases a difficulty for the PIs. This was largely because of changes in the personnel and structure of the external organisations or other partners. The most severe impact was on Selman's project where all of the original co-investigators left their posts. Despite this, the project was re-conceived and the support from the external partner (the Environment Agency) was retained and realigned. In Leyshon's project, their partner, Worcestershire Youth Service – went through a major reorganisation and key contacts were lost, with replacement having to be established during the time of the project.

In other cases, changes in personnel realigned the expected research capacity. In the case of the BRASS project, the co-investigator was replaced due to the original partner leaving their position, whilst in Sayce's research team, a key member unexpectedly left their position.

Such changes can be resource intensive and have implications for project timetables. It is to the credit of each of the PIs that all the projects completed within the agreed timescales, and within budget.

Despite the restricted funding – less than a standard ESRC small grant - many of the PIs were able to utilise the funding to add research assistance to their project team.

#### *Linking the Initiative beyond the UK*

##### i) Strategy

This Initiative was specifically focussed on England and the English context of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities. Its origins reflected the remit of the HCA Academy

(as the ASC) and the call for proposals emphasised this geographical focus, although as was reflected in the funded projects, building on learning from elsewhere encouraged.

Recognising this, the coordinators sought to widen the international relevance of the research by linking the Initiative with policy and skills development experience in other parts of the UK (especially Scotland which as other ESRC research from SKOPE has illustrated differs in emphasis from England) and European and North American experiences.

ii) Actions and achievements

Despite the English-policy context, several of the projects sought to make explicit comparisons with other national and international settings. First, both projects based in Belfast (Murtagh and Gaffikin) made links with the English context from outside of that national setting. Gaffikin also made contact with comparable contexts in England to illustrate the transferability of the project's conclusions. Second, several projects (e.g. Marsden and Deakin) had strong links to international practice, drawing on case studies from outside of the UK, and others include elements of generic/universal practice (e.g. Percy-Smith focus on school-based sustainability education). Only one project (Kidd's study of learning through strategic environmental assessment) drew explicitly on case studies from Europe.

Across the projects, there have been a number of academic and policy conference presentations to international audiences, including: Murtagh and Ellis presenting at the ACSP conference Chicago and then by invite at the US Urban Affairs Association in Illinois on skills; Marsden and Newton's presentations at the Association of American Geographers Conference, Boston in 2008 and the Governance by Evaluation, Easy Eco International Conference in Vienna, Austria in 2009; Hockey at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) International Conference, Manchester in 2009.

The coordinators have further enhanced the international dimension by:

- proposed special issue of *Geografiska Annaler B* relating to the European context of sustainable communities
- presented on at American Geographers Annual Conference, Boston 2008 on the theme of 'Building sustainable communities'; this is a forthcoming chapter in an edited volume on 'Contradictions of Neoliberal Planning' (Springer Press).



## Part 4 Publication and outputs at scheme level

This Initiative's impact and thus the publications is divided into three categories, relating to the (i) specific projects, (ii) jointly published material between project teams and the coordinators, and (iii) those which are derived from the Initiative as a whole. Further, the publications are divided between those aiming at an academic audience and those for the policy and user communities.

This strategy to publication was agreed at the start of the Initiative and all the project teams have assisted in ensuring that by the end of the funding period, there are publications to meet the needs of each audience, as well as others which will be published over the next 12-18 months.

By producing a coherent set of project summaries and similarly styled case studies, the coordinators created an identity for the research Initiative and a means for readers to make links between and across projects. Awareness and use of HCA case study guidance ensure that case studies will fit equally into material from the Initiative and into the HCA wider case studies, generating greater access to the material.

The full list of current publications and those in preparation is provided in Annex C.

Across the Initiative, the main *research and academic* publications are/will be:

- a) an edited book - ***Leading Sustainable Development: learning in communities*** (contract being negotiated with Hertfordshire University Press). It will explore some of the findings from the initiative, looking at methods and practice, and leading toward conclusion on vision and leadership. All project teams are contributing.
- b) two special journal issues  
***Skills & Planning for Sustainable Communities*** (Special issue of *Town & Planning Review* agreed for 2010) – the focus is on knowledge, skills & learning for planning professionals delivering the government's agenda of sustainable communities

***International dimensions of Sustainable Communities*** (Special issue of *Geografiska Annaler B* being negotiated) - exploring new angles on sustainable communities debate, highlighted through the work on this targeted initiative, particularly on achieving changes in behaviour

Additional academic output has been delivered by the individual project teams.

In relation to *policy and user output*, several of the projects have produced their own 'Working Papers' and comparable publications related to the research. The coordinators have published three main types of outputs for the policy community:

*Case Studies* – 11 x 4 page summaries of the main examples of good practice or local working associated with the 11 projects. These have been selected on the basis of evidence to support the conclusions from the projects.

*Research project summaries* – a 4 page outline of each project, signalling the key policy implications, the approach adopted in the study, the findings and details of where to obtain further information.

*Policy briefings* – 5 short papers exploring some of the key cross-cutting themes and topics emerging from the Initiative as a whole. These refer to enhanced knowledge and understanding derived from specific projects where relevant but also the gaps in knowledge which remain to be explored.

## Part 5 Management

There were no major difficulties associated with the management of the Initiative. However, some minor changes were made to the original specification proposed when the grant was awarded. These primarily focussed on the timing of different activities and roles – with more of the coordinators time, effort and resources being allocated towards the end of the grant – and completion of the Initiative which was extended for 3 months.

This change reflected in part the time of the appointment of the coordinators and the expectations by the funders (especially the HCA Academy) and the project teams. When all the PIs submitted their proposals and indeed when they were awarded funding, there was no coordination team proposed and in place. Consequently, most of the project teams were well advanced in their planning and research development before the appointment of the coordinators. There was therefore less of a requirement for the coordinators to ‘steer’ the development of the programme; it having been defined by the project funded. In contrast, more time and input was required in the latter stages to assist the project teams to make the research findings have wider relevance and impact than they had originally planned in their own submissions.

It was also evident to the coordinators that developing an Initiative website that encouraged dialogue between project teams was not likely to be particularly supportive (to the PIs) and could be counterproductive to the completion of the research. Less emphasis was thus placed on the early development of the website for this purpose, and more effort directed to supporting the project teams in their own projects.

This need was further evident as many of the projects were anticipating considerable research effort (and output) within the funds they were awarded. As a result, more support was given by the coordinators to enable the project teams to meet collectively and generate the collaborative and team working which had been part of the coordinators own bid for funding.

### *Variance and issues with budget*

In order to accommodate the different completion dates of the projects, including those with late starts and those granted extensions, and to maximise the impact of the research for wider user communities, the coordinators were granted a no-cost 3 month extension which finished at the end of June 2009.

During the funding period, the main change to the original budget was increased funding allocated to the employment of a research assistant. This reflected the high quality calibre and experience of the appointment to this post in engaging with policy communities. We were very fortunate with this appointment and as a result there were two main changes in their role:

- (i) the provision of policy briefing materials, originally planned as a sub-contract expense; and
- (ii) more direct provision of project material for non-research communities derived from the individual projects, including case study material for the HCA (increasing the support for the project teams).

The employment of an excellent research assistant to support the coordinators in this way has, in our view, been a key component in maximising the impact of the Initiative.

As a consequence of the RA taking on the composition and production of the policy dissemination, money was vired from the sub-contract budget line to cover additional salary and to cover additional expenditure on printing and in-house production of these materials.

A second change was in relation to policy community engagement. The original proposal was to hold a dissemination event for policy and community users focused on the outcomes of the research projects. In light of the more significant but wider policy implications arising from the Initiative as a whole, this was replaced with a more intensive and interactive engagement event with the policy and other user communities. The one day session was more expensive than budgeted because it was held in a central London location (to be more accessible to the

participants we needed to attract); required the engagement of professional event organisers (to ensure effective promotion to a relevant population and smooth organising at a distance) and incurred additional travel costs to enable each of the project teams to be represented at the event. Costs of this were offset by the reduction in expenditure associated with face to face meetings with the project teams and funds were vired between these budget lines.

The provision of an Initiative website was an important element of the proposal. This was developed later than originally planned and for a different purpose. The original intention was to alert external agencies etc to the presence of the Initiative and to channel communication to those involved in the research or the Initiative. As most research teams had already developed their own related websites (in some cases part of their initial research brief) the communication function was less essential. Instead, the website was developed later in the Initiative and was conceived as a means to communicating the outcomes (rather than presence) of the research. This has enabled regular updates to be made and to encourage audiences to react/respond to the findings. The website will continue beyond the funding period of the Initiative and will also be a repository of related research material. It has links to individual project websites as well as ESRC and HCA Academy. The costs associated with the maintenance of the website are greater than anticipated, reflecting the greater policy dissemination that is being undertaken through this medium. This has been funded through money vired from reduced expenditure in liaising with the PIs.

#### *Co-funding secured*

Under this Initiative, the coordinators did not seek any further co-funding beyond that already provided by the HCA Academy. They did, however, get in kind support from Scottish Centre for Regeneration (now part of the Scottish Government) for engagement with policy community in Scotland. This enabled us to fulfil part of the original brief which was to liaise with the devolved government in Scotland.

#### *Challenges and unexpected events*

1. As noted above, the relatively late decision to employ Initiative coordinators had an impact on the form of the relationships with the project teams – in our view this was not detrimental but one that could have been managed more effectively if the coordination role (and remit) had been identified prior to the grant allocations and ideally prior to the call for proposals. This would have ensured that each project team could have identified their own strategies for utilising the support from the coordinators and also allocated resources (especially team member time) to working with coordinators. In this Initiative considerable goodwill was shown by the project teams to enable the coordinators to meet the wider Initiative objectives.

Many of the projects were already working within tight financial budgets, and any additional effort placed additional burden on them. Managing the relatively small grants made to many of the projects in this Initiative was more challenging because of their need to work with the coordinators.

This was further exacerbated by the lengthy delay in agreeing contracts for the coordinators; arising largely from meeting the different expectations of the funders over the degree to which the coordinators had the necessary skills and expertise to manage the output for the policy community.

2. The Initiative was conducted at a time of change for the ASC as its operations were relocated under the HCA, albeit continuing under the title of the HCA Academy (the move was completed in December 2008). This relocation created its own challenges for the Initiative for in common with any substantial re-shaping, organisations tend to look inward rather than outward. Fortunately for the individual research teams, the relocation was at a time when most project teams were more concerned with meeting their completion deadline. The impact was, however, on maintaining regular communication with the coordinators, and in the production of output from the Initiative on all project teams. The change impacts too on the process of getting final agreements on the precise nature of the desired outputs, enabling quick responses to deadlines in the signing off of the production of policy documents.

3. The main challenge faced by the coordinators relating to the timing of the research projects. Although the original planning of the Initiative envisaged common start and end dates for all projects, events intervened. Actual start dates varied from April 2007 (Gaffikin) to November 2008 (Selman); with projects finishing from September 2008 to June 2009. Progress on individual projects was also delayed due to unforeseen and unfortunate issues amongst the researchers. In the case of two projects, the PI had health issues, resulting in an extension in one case and in the other, members of team taking on more principal roles.

In order to draw together the research findings and add maximum value to the individual outputs, the coordinators were reliant on the majority of projects finishing. It was difficult to design outputs such as research summaries and impossible to make connections between projects and draw conclusions, and generate draft policy briefings, until all the research teams had at least reached their outline findings.

## Part 6 Reflections on scheme and coordinators role

### *Feedback to ESRC on Initiative process*

The coordinators have been pleased to have had the opportunity to be involved with the Initiative and have increasingly seen the value of their role as the Initiative progressed during the funding period. Two of the coordinators were involved in the initial assessment and selection of the projects to be funded and this has assisted us in appreciating the expectations of both the HCA Academy and the ESRC from the Initiative.

#### a) grant size

One of the strengths of the Venture Research fund is that the academic research is making strong connections with external partners to deliver high impact research. This Initiative placed significant demands on research teams to deliver not only high quality individual research projects but also to ensure liaison with external partners for the project and coordinators for the Initiative. All of this was to be achieved with less than average small grant funding and in a short time period. The time pressure was evident in the extensions requested when events (some of which could not have been predicted in advance) impacted on the projects.

#### b) meeting the Initiative's original goals

It has not been possible to meet all of the original objectives of the Initiative have been able to be met. This was inevitable for, as with any open call for proposals, there are likely to be some areas where expressions of interest are absent or weaker. In terms of commissioning, projects in this Initiative were selected on individual merit, without reference to whether all objectives of the research were covered or the degree of coverage of each objective. This has an impact on ability to meet all the Initiative objectives; if this is a priority (for example for the non-ESRC partners) then an alternative process of eliciting proposals may be necessary.

#### c) coordinator role

As noted elsewhere in this final report, the coordination role was agreed late on in the Initiative process – after the projects had been commissioned. This was unfortunate, not so much for the coordinators, but for developing a working relationship with the project teams at the outset. The PIs had started their projects without any expectation of necessarily having to liaise with coordinators (or each other). As a result, the coordinators had to build trust, avoid disrupting relationships already built with other partners and find ways to show that they added value for all participants.

#### d) timing of the coordination roles

The need for 3 months no-cost extensions requested for some projects meant that it was difficult for the coordinators to have complete overview of research from which to draw their own research and policy conclusions. Their own time extension reflected this in part. We suggest that in future, such Initiatives should envisage coordinators roles to continue for a short time period after completion of the research. Much of the added value of the coordinators role is end-loaded and to some extent co-ordinators' activities are governed by the speed of the 'slowest' project.

#### e) funding partner relations

We have been pleased that the ESRC Office has offered strong support – Tim Wright as case officer was extremely supportive and offered sound advice and assistance as necessary. We also appreciated the input from the communications and impact team in ensuring that the policy community were actively involved in the research. In this respect, we have benefitted from the positive interest and involvement of the HCA Academy chair, Professor Peter Roberts.

As coordinators, we had anticipated that there would have been greater ESRC/HCA Academy liaison beyond the initial stages. The ESRC set out more clearly at the start of the process their expectations, and as with small grants scheme, the coordinators and project investigators were encouraged to contact them if difficulties arose but otherwise to manage the research process. The HCA Academy's approach was less clear at the start and priorities emerged during the period. This undoubtedly reflected in part the changes underway and associated uncertainties as the ASC became part of the HCA, but also less familiarity with the standard

research project process. Whilst this was not problematic for the operation of the Initiative, the coordinators were required to be more adaptive and this discouraged the production of output in the earlier stages of the funding period.

## **Annex A**

### **Projects and their progress**

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0004**  
**Dr Mark Deakin, Napier University**

**Award: £78,873.28**

*The Challenge of Learning from What Works in the Development of Sustainable Communities: Closing the Skills Gap by Raising Competencies*

#### Aims and methods:

Urban design, architecture and surveying professionals have a long tradition of mastering technical and specific skills. This project focuses on a further challenge introduced by the Egan Review (2004) - the need for a range of generic skills meeting the planning, property development and design requirements of sustainable communities. Across North America and Europe, the new urban village and neighbourhood renewal models of urban regeneration have argued for more inclusive visioning.

In the past 'visioning' has been criticised for being 'unrealistic', 'idealist', or 'utopian' and pushing a limited set of interests. 'Inclusive visioning' has involved more stakeholders, but equally been criticised for its tendency to rest on overly cultural and economic representations of community. Consequently, although supportive of the need for visioning to be socially-inclusive, the professions have lacked the confidence required for them to believe communities can be properly represented as equal and active partners in shaping the urban regeneration process.

This research studies the emerging literature on socially-inclusive visioning and examines how communities in Chicago, Vancouver, Edinburgh and Birmingham have put theory into practice. Each case study offers critical insight into how the community-based approach developed by these cities has sought to empower them as key stakeholders in the urban regeneration of their villages and neighbourhoods.

Each is examined with respect to:

- the development of their community-based approaches,
- the processes by which stakeholders engage in urban regeneration
- the techniques employed in the village and neighbourhood renewal models of their urban regeneration process
- the step-wise logic and stages of the urban regeneration process
- the measures by which communities become involved with and participate in the process of urban regeneration.

#### Assessment of progress:

The research concludes that:

- ❖ planning professionals need to collaborate with other stakeholders in the diagnosis of social need and to start building consensus over the community-based approach
- ❖ planners and other professionals need to learn new skills to be competent in inclusive visioning and these can be best drawn from case studies of 'what works' under a community-based approach
- ❖ drawing on these skills and competencies, professionals can illustrate how working with communities, it becomes possible for them to approach urban regeneration as a process of sustainable development.

Importantly, the study argues that such skills are currently being learnt through practice. It also suggests that by 'learning from what works', it becomes possible for practitioners to use these competencies in ways which help communities sustain urban regeneration. The case studies in this research help to identify the steps communities can follow in searching out ways to sustain urban regeneration. Learning from What Works have compiled a set of guidelines for professional bodies to consult when putting the theory of socially-inclusive visioning into practice as part of a community-based approach and step-wise logic of the urban regeneration process.

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0006**  
**Prof Paul Selman, University of Sheffield**

**Award £76,605.50**

(with Dr Anna Lawrence and Dr Claudia Carter, Forestry Commission and Dr Clare Morgan, University of Oxford)

*Engaging With Rivers in a Period of Uncertainty*

Aims and methods:

The central aim of this project is to conduct action research into the ways in which methods of 'imaginative engagement' can contribute to participatory river basin planning. It is reasonable to assume that most people see 'river' issues in very local ways and have little comprehension of the wider ecology and hydrology of water catchments. This is also typical of other environmental issues where the temporal and spatial scale is too large to be readily grasped. Lack of understanding of the wider framework may limit people's appreciation of problems and their potential solutions. Drawing upon wider experience of environmental management, it seems likely that methods based on 'creativity' (such as exploration of scientific knowledge through story-telling and arts) can help stakeholders to make sense of problems and thus contribute more effectively to their solution. These methods also enable inquiry into a range of factors that affect people's understanding, such as information, experience and personal psychology.

By applying this approach to the River Dearne in South Yorkshire through the medium of creative writing, the essential research question is "what difference does the creative/imaginative process make in the social/ institutional learning process?"

Assessment of progress:

Imaginative engagement through the creative arts was identified as a way of achieving social learning and understanding complex sustainability problems. The practice of story-telling was identified as particularly relevant, particularly in exploring situations of uncertainty. Imaginative engagement had varied impacts on participants with regard to some of their work practices, recreational activities and professional development. Changes included walking the river banks for the first time, with increased frequency; or engaging with environmental planning and with an environmental organisation.

Of wider significance, the research shows that:

- imaginative engagement through creative writing can be a positive and valued experience for all participants
- such experiences can lead to changes in work practices, recreational activities and professional development
- there is a role for a programme of effectively evaluated, sustained and embedded use of imaginative engagement methods in expert-public engagement



**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0007**  
**Dr Michael Leyshon, University of Exeter**  
(with Dr Robert Fish, University of Exeter)

**Award: £57,720.58**

*Environmental Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Rural Communities: Problems and Prospects for the Inclusion of Young People*

Aims and methods:

Managing the countryside for the purposes of environmental sustainability is one of the few sectors of the rural economy that can offer young people from rural areas the opportunity to live and work locally. It is also a means by which young people can be engendered with a sense of responsibility for, and involvement in, their locales. Harnessed correctly, it is therefore a sector that has the potential to have a measurable effect not only on the environmental health and well-being of rural areas, but also on its social fabric and economic prosperity. Yet, how are community engagements being fostered through this sector, and how does it relate to a future for young people in rural areas? The purpose of this research is to provide some answers to these difficult questions. In particular, through a combination of extended survey and in-depth qualitative research in two contrasting landscape regions the project aims to assess how, and with what effect, young people between the ages of 16 and 25 are being engaged in the environmental sector through programmes of voluntary work. It considers the roles that environmental organisations play in enabling young people to develop environmental skills and knowledge, and how these are mediated through the work of other groups at the heart of sustainable community networks. It considers the extent to which synergies and partnerships between organisations (and their objectives) are being effectively realized, and the problems and constraints that shape and limit their work. It examines the motivations and disincentives of young people to participate in these activities and how experiences translate into aspirations to live and work in the countryside..

Assessment of progress:

The research results suggest that young people are a highly visible presence in rural environmental conservation, though the majority of young people who participate in conservation activities do not live in rural areas, but travel significant distances from town and cities to do so.

The issue of youth involvement in environmental conservation is less about how to foster greater numbers of young volunteers into these activities than how to structure these activities in more productive ways. Environmental education for the sole purpose of the external governance of youth through self-improvement and discipline does not work for young people. Crucially, the success of the sector is dependent upon building effective working partnerships between both youth development networks and environmental practitioners. The key message of the research is that a shift away from instruction and coercion of young people toward opportunities for personal and social development can build capacity in the environmental volunteering sector and produce aspiring life-long environmental participants.

Wider lessons include:

- Participants in unpaid environmental conservation activities develop a range of skills and knowledge that can help foster the development of sustainable communities in rural areas
- Partnership working between environmental groups and youth services often leads to good practice in environmental learning among young people and development of the sector
- Accreditation for the achievements of young people in ways that enhance employment prospects and future learning opportunities should be more widely available and less ad hoc
- Structured programmes of activity for young people should be based on young people's personal and social development
- Not all young people engaging in the sector are 'willing' and 'aspiring' participants in these activities. Many are 'cajoled' and 'coerced' into participation and as a result achieve less for themselves and their communities.

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0009**  
**Ms Ann Hockey, Anglia Ruskin University**  
(with Ian Frame, Anglia Ruskin University)

**Award £79,489.44**

*SAKS: Skills and Knowledge Builder for Sustainable Communities*

Aims and methods:

The research responds to Egan Review's conclusion that there are significant gaps and shortages in some generic skills and knowledge amongst built environment professionals (planners, architects, urban designers etc) and decision makers in local government, by investigating and developing a set of skills assessment and learning materials to help people working in built environment and community-related professions improve their generic skills and knowledge, and enable them to work together effectively to build better places. It targets practitioners in local government in the East of England, which is experiencing a range of sustainability issues, from high levels of growth to profoundly rural areas presenting different challenges. The research will identify the extent and nature of the generic skills and knowledge gaps amongst this target group today, how they interact to share knowledge and skills across professions, what learning resources and materials they would find most useful, and how they can track their progress. It will also outline ways in which these resources might be extended to a wider group of organisations, communities and individuals.

This comprises three main stages, linked so that participants contribute to the development and validation of the project outcomes. First, local government staff in relevant occupations, identified via publicly available sources and invitations circulated to regional professional organisations, will be asked to take part in an e-survey and focus groups. The information gathered will be used in stage two to design an online self-assessment toolkit which will help practitioners to identify gaps in their generic skills, knowledge, and understanding of the contributions of different professions to delivering sustainable communities. Linked to this will be a set of learning materials, covering such generic skills as leadership, communication, project management, and partnership working, to which users will be guided in order to help them enhance their ability to contribute to the delivery of sustainable communities. Focus group participants will be invited to help test the assessment and learning materials, and to provide feedback for the third stage of the project. This will concentrate on transforming the pilot system into a prototype for launch to the wider local government community, with potential for expansion beyond the period for which funding is being sought.

The main project outcome will be the prototype self-assessment toolkit and learning materials, enabling different professional groups to work effectively and collaboratively to deliver sustainable communities.

Assessment of progress:

This research has considerable practical and wider policy implications. Some of the key lessons are:

- An on-line learning environment can provide opportunities for self-directed learning that works even within the contemporary pressured workplace
- Skills-assessment and learning resources must encourage individuals to reflect on their existing knowledge and experience
- A 'toolkit' approach is too simple to meet the complex needs of learning for sustainable communities
- Leadership is required to ensure that individuals are employed in the right roles and able to use their skills and abilities to the full
- Permanent forums for discussion could build confidence and bring out knowledge and skills, building up a shared knowledge base arising from practice
- Focussing on skills gaps (deficit model) is demoralising
- Skills taken out of context are just courses that do not connect with practice

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0012**  
**Prof Terence Marsden, Cardiff University**

**Award £76,699.95**

(with Dr Alex Franklin, Dr Julie Newton and Dr J Middleton, Cardiff University)

*Motivating, Engaging, Leading and Supporting Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities – Applying Models of Sustainable Localised Economies*

Aims and methods:

This research proposal aims to provide an innovative and interactive approach to identifying skills and training needs to build effective sustainable communities. While a lot has been written and said about the needs of skills for individuals and organisations to pursue community based sustainability objectives, especially around the issues of community participation and engagement, the need for effective leadership and support, the resolution of issues causing barriers to development and change for sustainability, and the need to identify needs for the future sustainability of communities, there is less work that has been done on the theoretical and applied modelling approach.

The researchers used a dual strategy. The first stage involved revisiting eight existing case studies exploring various aspects of sustainability. The second stage involved undertaking new research exploring various sustainability initiatives in Stroud in Gloucestershire, resulting in four additional new case studies.

Fieldwork extended over three months, and included in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus groups to discuss emerging research findings, allowing the researchers to test a skills and knowledge model developed and consolidated from analysis of the 12 case studies and relevant literature. The researchers built a 'virtual community' on-line that gives access to case study material on sustainability focused on the themes of food, transport, energy, home and community engagement. Community Guidance will be issued to assist communities to reflect on their own levels of skills and knowledge in the context of their own particular settings.

Assessment of progress:

This project has provided an in-depth and local case study of the skills and knowledge challenges. As well as the specific lessons from the Stroud context, the research has also illustrated that the skills and knowledge debate needs to be much more closely related to both the process of creating sustainable communities, and the everyday lives of people in place. The development of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities has to happen at a local level. Furthermore, the process of learning is highly significant. Skills and knowledge cannot simply be imported from elsewhere through formal education channels alone. The transfer of skills and knowledge is dependent upon '**learning by doing**' and '**learning by seeing**'.

Wider policy implications include:

- Local level development of skills and knowledge for sustainability is essential
- Skills and knowledge for sustainable communities need to be situated in the everyday lives of people, involving the right combination of **time, people, and place**
- 'Sense of place' is significant in the creation of sustainable communities and in supporting skills and knowledge for sustainable communities
- Trainers and professional bodies need to create opportunities and support for situated learning on sustainability
- Policy makers need to incorporate a more contextualised understanding of time and people in place
- Support should be made available to assist communities build confidence and motivation to become involved and engaged in sustainability initiatives

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0018**

**Award £60,197.33**

**Ms Sue Kidd, University of Liverpool**

(with Dr Thomas Fischer, Ms Deborah Peel and Ms Umila Thakur, University of Liverpool)

*Developing the Learning Potential of Appraisal in Spatial Planning*

Aims and methods:

The appraisal of policy actions to identify potential impacts and promote more sustainable patterns of development has become an increasingly important feature of government. Over time, a range of scientific and more participatory approaches to appraisal have developed. There has also been growing recognition that appraisal could play a valuable learning role, not only leading to more sustainable public plans and programmes, but also helping to transform individual and organisational attitudes and working practices in support of sustainable development. However, to date the learning aspect of appraisal is not well developed.

The research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the learning issues raised by appraisal in the context of spatial planning and to recommend measures to improve practice in the UK and elsewhere. The research will start by examining how ideas related to individual and organisational learning may be applied to appraisal. This thinking will then inform the analysis of three case study local development plan appraisals. These will be based in the UK, Germany and Italy and have been selected as they exhibit very different approaches to appraisal. The findings from will provide a closer insight into the how different appraisal methods and contextual factors may affect learning experiences. They will also help to identify the skills, knowledge and further research needed to improve learning outcomes associated with appraisal of spatial plans.

Assessment of progress:

The researchers found different learning styles to be dominant in different case study areas and suggest that learning may be maximised by designing Strategic Environmental Appraisals (SEAs) in ways that cover all learning styles. The organisational context was also found to be important in facilitating learning. Whilst SEA is of potential significance in promoting more sustainable communities because of its basis as a legal requirement, but found that the focus of attention at present emphasised instrumental or single loop learning associated with making modest adjustments to plans. Nonetheless, they believe that could change and that the learning potential of SEA could be increased by using the above framework in developing appraisal methodologies that are more supportive of individual, organisational or social learning and transformational or double-loop learning. Such methodologies would incorporate learning through all learning styles, including experience, observation, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation.

For policy makers, the research also illustrates the potential learning benefits to be derived from this form of assessment:

- The statutory requirement to undertake SEA creates significant potential for change
- SEAs currently achieve modest adjustments/modifications to plans, but could achieve more fundamental/transformational change
- Professionals involved in Strategic Environmental Appraisal might learn more (and the SEA achieve more) if the SEA process incorporated opportunities to learn using a full range of learning styles
- The establishment of multi-disciplinary teams can also enhance learning in SEA.
- There is a need to further experiment and be creative with SEA methodologies to maximise the benefits for sustainable development.
- More time is required to build experience of SEA before judgement can be reached on its efficacy.

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0019**  
**Dr Brendan Murtagh, Queen's University of Belfast**  
(with Dr Geraint Ellis, Queen's University Belfast)

**Award £39,555.84**

*Skills for managing spatial diversity*

Aims and methods:

This research aims to examine the relevance of the Egan Review to Northern Ireland and the extent to which experience in planning in a divided society could sharpen the skills set around community cohesion across the UK. Drawing on *interviews* with representatives from the public, professionals, and the private and public sectors in Northern Ireland, as well as government bodies and skills centres in the rest of the UK, the researchers explore the role and functions of those engaged in the built environment, their views on skills availability, excellence and strategies.

The researchers presented *ten case studies* exploring the development of technical skills in a range of interventions in communities dealing with conflicts. A further *four* case studies focus on the development of generic skills in the context of project management or the policy process.

Demand for skills was ascertained through an e-survey of people leading or actively involved in regeneration policies or practices across the public, private and voluntary sectors in Northern Ireland. The market supply was mapped against the National Qualifications Framework, provision in the community, college and university courses relevant to community development, social entrepreneurship, sustainable communities and spatial regeneration.

Assessment of progress:

This project offers insights both to the wider debate over cohesive communities, and lessons on the learning cultures between professionals and communities.

The research found both skills gaps and examples of good practice. The skills gaps included strategic management and development skills as well as in operational aspects of intervening in ethno-religious conflict. However, the research also identified good practice where regeneration and local planning integrated with community mediation processes. Problems such as territoriality, interface between communities and enclaves within communities were seen to be addressed and progress made through 'agonistic' collaborative planning, albeit at times onto alternative or unanticipated development routes.

Of wider significance, the research has shown that there are key implications to be learnt:

- A lack of connections/understanding across professions and between professions and community may be as important as skills deficits as a barrier to achieving sustainable communities.
- A learning culture in professions (and/or community) is vital for lessons to be shared between practitioners and across disciplines
- Diversity Planning requires Analytical, Planning and Delivery (APD) skills
- 'Knowledge brokers' may be useful in translating between the many perspectives in communities.
- A centre comparable with the Regional Skills Centres dedicated to ethno-religious diversity would help to capitalise the experiences of Northern Ireland on a more global scale.

*Assessing the practice and potential of situated learning in the work of building sustainable communities*

Aims and methods:

The 'sustainable communities' agenda presents challenges that both cross geographic, organisational and social boundaries and require solutions that blend past experience with new ways of working. The implication for those practitioners identified in the Egan Review is that they need to learn to work differently not only as individual practitioners but also within broader 'communities'. Whereas the Egan Review concentrated for the most part on the learning needed by individuals, this work explores the degree to which individual learning is situated in social settings.

The three basic propositions for this research are that: learning processes in the face of the challenges of sustainable communities cannot be distinguished from everyday work activity; there is an inter-relation between learning by/between communities of practice and learning by individuals in the workplace (i.e. there is situated social learning); and the process of learning and change can be captured by Engestrom's conceptualisation of activity. The key questions are:

- What is the relationship between individual learning in the workplace and communities of practice?
- What is the potential for embedding individual learning in communities of practice? ,
- What are the research methods through which one might diagnose learning issues in collaborative working settings?

The focus of the research work is on collaborative work on growth point management in England. The research strategy is based on a single in-depth case study of a growth point management partnership in the South West of England.

Assessment of progress:

A key lesson emerging from this project is about the crucial role that a 'hybrid practitioner' can play in effective working practices. These key individuals made links between the increasing number of stakeholder agencies by getting to know and talking to a wide range of practitioners; their roles being evident in the emergence of particular forms of brokering and policy-delivery. Often this work involved gaining trust and being proactive when problems emerged (such as around negotiating infrastructure agreements). The most common example of a hybrid practitioner was a planning practitioner who was juggling the achievement of local planning policy objectives and a financially viable planning scheme that would be built.

More widely, this research also offers insights into how organisations can support and motivate best working practices:

- In thinking about setting the right conditions for motivated practitioners to learn and adapt to changing demands of producing sustainable community, the learning agenda has to focus more on the creation of learning organisations.
- Learning organisations can support the emergence of learning and the adaptation of practice through strategic and line management styles that facilitate intuitive learning by individuals through building confidence.
- If adaptation is to depend more upon intuitive learning scenario, there will be a need to re-stress the importance of values and ethics in the practice of practitioners.
- Learning how things get done in specific places amongst particular groups of people is important. Practitioners need situated knowledge as well as generic and technical knowledge to build sustainable communities.

**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0024**  
**Prof Sarah Sayce, Kingston University**  
(with Judith Farren-Bradley, Kingston University)

**Award £80,656.62**

*Enabling Sustainable Communities: Supporting Effective Skills Development for Current and Future Core Built Environment Professionals*

Aims and methods:

The challenge to deliver sustainable communities is placing new pressures on professional practitioners and local communities alike. The requirement that new developments and master plans are subject to a public consultation process has become a central tenet within spatial planning policy and regulation. This process is considered an important element in achieving sustainable communities; it is the major forum through which local communities can have a direct input into a process that influences the environment within which we spend our lives.

Research has been carried out that identifies the particular skills needed to deliver sustainable communities. This work will take that process a stage further and identify from the perspective of the practising built environment professional and the local community stakeholder, what skills are the most useful and effective in ensuring positive stakeholder engagement. The results of this process will be cross checked against the skills delivered in professional courses to determine the extent to which they are being delivered through undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, and the skills available within the local community. Where clear gaps can be identified recommendations will be made as to the types of skills that should be delivered through higher education programmes and through community action initiatives.

Assessment of progress:

The findings showed little evidence of the explicit inclusion of the Egan generic skills into discipline or professional body requirements. However, emphasis on the development of generic or transferable skills is evident in Higher Education curricula and professional and occupational standards, albeit that these skills are contextualised within the discipline or in relation to inter-professional interaction. This research confirms a disparity of views as to the general skill levels among practitioners. Whilst there are reported deficiencies within the practitioners, nearly half the survey considered that their *profession* – rather than individuals - possessed appropriate skills.

The research also pointed to a developing distinction between skills which can be taught and assessed and 'soft' skills and personal attributes which, whilst they can be fostered through teaching and learning strategies do not lend themselves to formal training and/or assessment. This reinforces the need for education and practitioner mentors to encourage self-awareness and self-development alongside technical skills training.

Such reflective practices have wider implications too:

- Language is key in developing mutual respect and understanding between professionals of different disciplines and in their relationships with the wider stakeholder community
- Higher level skills and attributes will be required in order to deliver on the empowerment agenda
- Skills and attributes lend themselves to different styles of learning and development
- Professional bodies should be encouraged to test attributes for community engagement at the point of entry into the profession
- Professional bodies should encourage situated learning in education and Continuing Professional Development, particularly in collaborative and cross-disciplinary settings

*Skills for Sustainable Communities*

Aims and methods:

Good community living in our cities is about dealing with diversity and difference. This is the particular focus of this research project. It identifies the priority skills, knowledge and abilities needed to make communities thriving and safe in themselves, while at the same time connected to other parts of the city that are different to, and may be even hostile to, them. To examine these issues, it takes the example of Belfast. This research identifies good and bad practice in community building in divided cities.. Working closely with the communities concerned from the very start, the project builds on their native know how and talent to develop further skills, and an ability on their own part to measure their progress. In this way, the intention is for the communities to 'learn by doing'. As we work with them to help create long-term plans for their well-being, they will be honing old skills and acquiring new ones.

Through this process, the researchers tested a process of 'agonistic collaborative planning'. This approach is based on the belief that people are not simply rational, but may be passionate, emotional, intuitive and prejudiced. They will often hold conflicting values and ideas. The process recognises that participants' views are not always open to rational argument, that social harmony is not the norm and there will always be inequalities in power relations around any table. It also recognises how statistics and other evidence may be interpreted in contrasting ways by different groups. During the generation of the plans, participants were required to show respect for one another's views when they could not be reconciled. The process accepts the rather messy social reality of incremental agreements, continued dissent and persistent conflict.

Assessment of progress:

The agonistic approach allowed spirited debate that led to recognition of some of the hard choices that have to be made where consensus is not reached, whereas a more conventional approach adopting conflict resolution approaches would be unlikely to confront the consequences of failing to achieve consensus.

Skills among **community participants** that were enhanced by participation in the project included strategic thinking, developing civic responsibility and the use of evidence-based research. Skills enhancements among **professionals** included the art of engagement and understanding such themes as community, identity and mental mapping. The researchers identified a productive role for those adept at bridging disciplines and proposing 'new scripts for development'.

The research also offers insights into wider discussions on cohesive and fractures communities, and the ways of achieving cohesion through spirited debate:

- Planning cannot operate neutrally in a divided society where space lies at the heart of conflict
- Agonistic collaborative planning holds more scope for addressing power and contention than deliberative approaches that stress consensus
- Policy making processes need to accommodate the co-production of knowledge through partnerships of public officials and other stakeholders
- Exploration of different perspectives on the meaning of sustainable communities is useful at a local community level and as part of the collaborative planning process
- The general approach to collaborative planning adopted here is applicable to other places and circumstances
- The same skills sets and processes are required both in the Belfast context and elsewhere



**Award Reference No: RES-182-25-0038**

**Award £67,116.29**

**Dr Barry Percy-Smith, University of the West of England**

(with Danny Burns, University of the West of England)

*Exploring the Role of Schools in the Development of Sustainable Communities*

Aims and methods:

This research will explore the extent to which schools have the capacity to be the drivers of SCP behaviour change and the transition to sustainable communities across the UK. No other institution, common to all communities, has a similar capacity to absorb information, develop strategies for community training and information dissemination, or to implement those strategies with their student cohorts.

A central question is: what constitutes effective practice in linking school-based learning to behaviour change within communities? The answers will be drawn from the experience of NGO practitioners of Sustainability Training funded by Defra's EAF programme.

Research took place in six schools (three primary and three secondary) in England in a range of rural and urban locations. All of the schools had a history of ESD and had worked with either EcoSchools, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) or Peace Child International. In each school four half day action research sessions were facilitated over a year. The action research groups explored the issues, and designed actions that they felt would have an impact on sustainability. In this way children themselves were involved in inquiry, analysis, planning, decision-making, taking action and evaluating action – all within the same research process. School ESD tutors supported children to carry out activity between the action research meetings. Impacts of these actions were reflected upon and new inquiry and action pursued in each subsequent meeting. This process was supported by detailed research notes and flip chart materials which provided a continuous stream of data for collective group analysis.

Parallel inquiry groups were held with parents and adult community members. These were supplemented with reflective dialogues with Heads, Teachers and NGO practitioners. Further reflective learning was undertaken in two research workshops with school staff, NGO practitioners and 'invited experts' from the field. The research explored with children whether and how their learning was acted on outside of the classroom, gaining insights into the role of children as agents of change as well as factors that influenced whether their learning 'spilled' over into community action and sustainable behaviour change. The research investigated the role of children and that of the school in enabling sustainable communities.

Assessment of progress:

Children have the potential to do more than educate or initiate minor behavioural changes in the home. They can also be active agents of change in their wider communities. Four factors strongly influenced children's ability to act on their learning:

- An approach to learning that goes beyond simply acquiring knowledge
- The opportunity for children to take on leadership roles
- Active encouragement and sustained support from adults
- Adult-child relationships that recognise the capabilities of children.

Schools can play an important **leadership** role as catalysts of learning and action in the community, encouraging involvement and stimulating sustainable activities. Apart from acting as a physical hub this research suggests a wider role for schools as **sustainable community learning and development centres**, role modelling and sharing good practice, providing information, supporting innovation and using their authority to connect and coordinate community initiatives.

**Annex B**  
**Coordinators activities**

2007	3 July	Initiative Meeting (1)	London – ESRC, HCA Academy, Coordinators, PIs
	28 November	Interim progress report to HCA Academy	Lead coordinator and HCA Academy team
2008	1 January	Start date of Coordinator Grant Award	
	19 February	Meeting HCA Academy, Leeds – progress and initial themes	Lead coordinator and HCA Academy team
	21 February	Invited contribution to Scottish Centre for Regeneration symposium 'Skills for regenerating communities', Glasgow	Lead coordinator
	10 March	Initiative Meeting (2)	Coordinators, project teams
	May	1:1 discussions + circulation of initial themes for comment/fit	
	16 June	Initiative Meeting (3)	Coordinators, project teams, HCA Academy team
	29 July	Coordinators Meeting, Preston	
	October	First ESRC Project Report received	
	1 November	Research Assistant appointed	Sue Sadler
	December	Meeting with HCA, Leeds	RA, Lead coordinator, HCA team
2009	January	Project Meetings 1:1	Coordinators and RA
	February	Co-ordinators' Meeting	
	May	Research summaries for all 11 projects printed & published at <a href="http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms">http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms</a>	RA
	May	10 case studies printed for the event & published on Initiative website	RA
	June	5 policy briefings printed for the event & published on Initiative website	RA
	3 June	Interactive Event with 80 participants in central London	ESRC, HCA Academy, PIs, Coordinators, RA
	June	Event presentations and workshop feedback published on Initiative website	

	20 June	Final ESRC project report received	
	29 June	Final co-ordinators' meeting	Coordinators and RA

## Annex C Initiative's publications

### Research project summaries

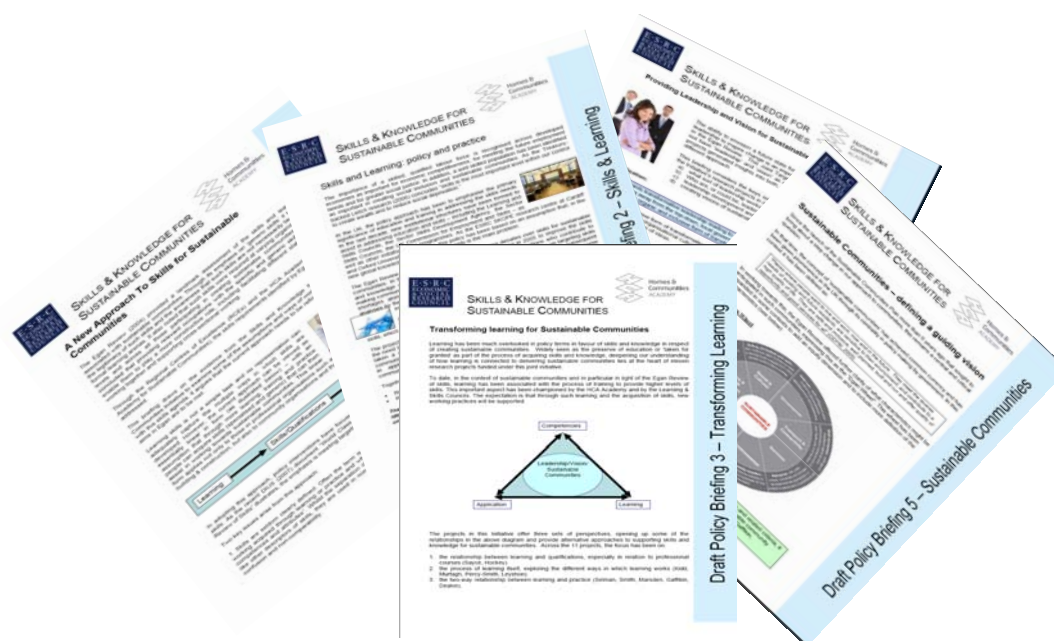
(Copies of Initiative publications can be found on the website [www.gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms](http://www.gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms) )

- “*Socially-inclusive visioning*” – Learning from what works in sustainable community development (Deakin)
- “*Professional and personal growth through creative engagement*” – Engaging with rivers (Selman)
- “*Achieving more with young people*” - Environmental skills for young people in rural areas (Leyshon & Fish)
- “*Social learning on-line*” – Skills and knowledge builder for sustainable communities (Hockey & Frame)
- “*Processes of learning are as important as skills*” – Motivating and supporting skills, knowledge and learning for sustainable communities (Marsden, Franklin, Newton & Middleton)
- “*Creating space for reflective learning*” – Learning through appraisal in spatial planning (Kidd, Fischer, Peel & Thakur)
- “*Listening, understanding, translating*” – Skills for managing spatial diversity (Murtagh & Ellis)
- “*Learning and working across professions*” – The practice and potential of situated social learning (Smith)
- “*Reflective practice at work*” – Skills development for built environment professionals (Sayce & Farren-Bradley)
- “*Achieving cohesion through spirited debate*” – Building capacity in divided communities (Gaffikin & Sterrett)
- “*Developing 'learning for change' in school and community*” – The role of schools in developing sustainable communities (Percy-Smith & Burns)



## Policy Briefings

- A new approach to skills for sustainable communities – Policy Briefing 1
- Skills and learning: policy and practice – Policy Briefing 2
- Transforming learning for sustainable communities – Policy Briefing 3
- Providing leadership and vision for sustainable communities – Policy Briefing 4
- Sustainable communities: defining a guiding vision – Policy Briefing 5



## Case Studies

- Action research at Crispin School, Street (Percy-Smith)
- Attwood Green (Deakin)
- Communities in Transition Model (Murtagh)
- Community Land Trusts in the context of affordable housing – Cashes Green (Marsden)
- Connecting school based sustainability initiatives with community action (Percy-Smith)
- Engaging local communities in the sustainable planning and management of rivers (Selman)
- Southampton local development framework – developing the learning potential of sustainability appraisal (Kidd)
- Stroud sustainable integrated transport – Stroud Valleys Community Car Club (Marsden)
- Suffolk-Lenadoon Interface Project, West Belfast (Murtagh)
- Sustainable food action research inquiry (Percy-Smith)
- Stroud community support agriculture: a model of sustainable agriculture (Marsden)
- Visioning Craigmillar, Edinburgh (Deakin)
- The EU Urban II community initiative in North Belfast (Murtagh)

## Forthcoming academic publications

- “Skills and planning for sustainable communities” Special issue of *Town Planning Review* (2010)
- “Leading sustainable development: learning in communities” edited book, Hertfordshire University Press (2010)
- “International dimensions of sustainable communities” Special issue of *Geografiska Annaler B* (2011)

### Current Project Publications (July 2009)

Deakin, M. and Allwinkle, S. (2008) "A community-based approach to sustainable urban regeneration: the LUDA project", *International Journal of Inter-disciplinary Social Sciences*, vol. 3, (5): 181-191 (in press).

Deakin, M and Allwinkle. S. (2008)"Definitional components of Sustainable Communities: the Net effect of a Realignment and Cross-sectional Representation", *International Journal of Design Principles and Practices*, vol. 3 (in press).

Deakin, M and Allwinkle, S. (2008) "A community-based approach to sustainable urban regeneration", in Lombardi, P., *The Reuse of Land and Buildings*, Empirica Publications, Milan (in press).

Deakin, M (2008) "The search for sustainable communities: ecological-integrity, equity and participation", in Vrekeer, R., Deakin, M. and Curwell, S., *Sustainable Urban Development: Volume 3 - The Toolkit for Assessment*, Routledge, Oxon (in press).

Fish, R. and Leyshon, M (2008) "Environmental skills and knowledges for sustainable communities; problems and prospects for the inclusion of young people" Stakeholder Briefing Report, May University of Exeter

Fish, R and Leyshon, M (2008) "Voluntarism and young people" Stakeholder Report, September University of Exeter

Franklin, A; Newton, J; Middleton, J and Marsden, T (under review) "Reconnecting skills for sustainable communities with everyday life" *Environment and Planning A*.

Gaffikin, F. and Sterrett, K. (2009) "The Role of Community Capacity in Negotiating Territorialised Identity" QUB Working Paper No 1

Kidd S, Jha-Thakur U, Peel D, Fischer T, Gazzola P (2008) "Developing the Learning Potential of Strategic Environmental Assessment", In: eds. *Strategic Environmental Assessment*. CoastNet, The Resource Centre. London: CoastNet, pp.1-13.

Kidd, S. et al. (under review) 'Learning through SEA in spatial planning? Some evidence from the Brunswick Region in Germany', *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*

Kidd, S. et al. (under review) 'The influence of internal context conditions for facilitating organisational learning and appraisal effectiveness' *Planning Theory and Practice*

Kidd, S. et al. (under review) 'SEA effectiveness – The significance of learning'. This is an invited contribution for a special issue on SEA effectiveness in *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*

Middleton, J; Newton, J; Franklin, A and Marsden, T (under review)"Time is the ultimate resource": Time, everyday life and skills for sustainable communities", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*.

Marsden, T.K and Kitchen, L (accepted with revisions) Creating more sustainable rural development through stimulating the eco-economy. *Sociologia Ruralis*.

Marsden, T.K (in press) Mobilities, Vulnerabilities and Sustainabilities: exploring pathways from denial to sustainable rural development. *Sociologia Ruralis*, March 2009.

Marsden, T.K and Sonnino, R (2008) Rural development and the regional state: denying multifunctional agriculture in the UK. *Journal of Rural Studies* 24,422-431.

Marsden, T.K, Franklin, A, Newton, J and Middleton, J (*in preparation*) Building sustainable communities: re-localisation and the new eco-economy. *Local Environment*.

Marsden, T.K. (2008) (Eds) *Sustainable Communities: New Spaces for Planning, Participation and Engagement* London: Elsevier

Marsden, T.K (in press) Nature/Environment: Sustainability. Chapter in Kitchen, R and Thrift, N (eds) *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Elsevier.

Marsden, T.K and van der Ploeg, J.D (2008) Some final reflections on rural social and spatial theory. Chapter 11 in van der Ploeg and Marsden. T.K (eds) 2008. *Unfolding Webs: Theoretical Understanding of Rural Development*. European Rural Development Series, Royal Van Gorcum, The Netherlands.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (2007) "Summary of project initiation seminar" SPACE Working Paper 1, QUB.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (2008) "Literature review on skills, learning and planning for cohesive communities" SPACE Working Paper 2, QUB.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (2008) "Case studies of skills development in Northern Ireland" SPACE Working Paper 3, QUB.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (2008) "In-depth interviews" SPACE Working Paper 4, QUB.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (2008) "Skills for sustainable communities: demand and supply analysis for Northern Ireland" SPACE Working Paper 5, QUB.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (under review) "The skills agenda and the competencies for managing diversity and space" *Town Planning Review*.

Murtagh, B and Ellis, G (under review) "Skills, conflict and spatial planning in Northern Ireland" *Planning Practice and Research*

Newton, J; Marsden, T; Franklin, A; & Collins, A (2008) Supporting Skills and Knowledge to Deliver Sustainable Communities: An Exploration of the Conceptual and Policy Context BRASS Working Paper Series N.45

Newton, J; Franklin, A; Middleton, J; & Marsden, T (2008) Understanding the Role of Skills, Learning and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities BRASS Working Paper Series N.51

Sterrett, K. (2009) The role of the community in regeneration of Donegall Pass" QUB Working Paper No 2

## Annex D Initiative Budget

	Budget	Expend
<b>Directly allocated costs</b>	<b>30766</b>	<b>30766</b>
Strathclyde	15542	15542
Manchester	8376	8376
Warwick	6848	6848
<b>Indirect costs</b>	<b>31081</b>	<b>31081</b>
Strathclyde	23779	23779
Manchester	4283	4283
Warwick	3019	3019
<b>Budget B – Travel &amp; Subsistence</b>	<b>6750</b>	<b>2859.44</b>
Liaison with Initiative team	1200	312.87
RA meetings with Project Leaders	3300	2140.12
Liaison meetings ESRC/HCA Academy	2250	406.45
<b>Budget J - Directly Incurred Staff</b>	<b>17558</b>	<b>22986.60</b>
Research Assistant	14985	20413.60
Technician	2573	2573.00
<b>Budget Q – Other directly incurred costs</b>	<b>30026</b>	<b>28474.91</b>
Laptop	800	939.00
Policy briefing sub-contract	7000	0
Telephone, website, printing	2850	9176.37
Academic conferences	3600	24.79
Policy dissemination	4500	10739.33
Academic communities	6857	4048.31
PL Meetings	4419	3547.11