



Evaluation Of The ESRC/HCA Academy Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Initiative

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Skills & Knowledge for Sustainable Communities (SKSC) programme aimed to develop new insights into how the perceived gap in the skills and knowledge required for the development of sustainable communities could best be addressed, and how new skills, learning and knowledge might be delivered. The initiative was funded under the ESRC 'Ventures' scheme and projects were jointly commissioned and funded by the Academy for Sustainable Communities (now the Homes and Communities Academy (HCA Academy)). The programme ran from April 2007 to January 2009 during which time a total of £746,500 was awarded to 11 projects and a further £92,944 for programme co-ordination making a total investment of £839,445.

The evaluation of the programme has been conducted by the Cities Institute at London Metropolitan University and undertaken by a team comprising Professor Graeme Evans, Sue Bagwell, Dr Jo Foord, Dr Jane Lewis and Antje Witting. The team examined programme documentation from the ESRC, End of Award Reports, the Programme Director's Final Report as well as material from projects and the HCA Academy. Interviews were held with the HCA Academy, the Programme Director and his team, PIs from each project, and a small sample of users. An online user survey was also sent to 185 users/potential users.

Overall the Programme was a mixed success. It was a relatively small initiative and as a result projects were not commissioned to adequately cover all the objectives outlined in the call. In particular it did not directly address the Programme's research questions on future skills needs - and the issue of leadership, whilst touched on by several projects and developed into a policy briefing by the Programme co-ordinators, was not the subject of a specific project, and as a result was not sufficiently covered by the Programme. However in exploring the remaining 3 objectives regarding future strategies, effective professional learning, and stimulating engagement in training and learning relevant to the development of sustainable communities, it has made some important contributions. The Programme has clearly moved the debate from the over simplistic focus on 'skills gaps' and has developed a clearer understanding of how effective learning takes place. It has outlined a synthesised *transformative model*, which embraces a more dynamic relationship between skills, knowledge and learning grounded by leadership and vision. It has shifted the focus away from a deficit model of skills towards one which emphasises the importance of the learning context and the collective experience within teams and organisations. It has also demonstrated the importance of understanding the local or particular circumstances in which skills are being fostered and how this might enhance or create barriers to learning. A clear strategy still remains to be developed however to ensure that these important new insights are taken up by policy makers and those involved in developing future strategies to enhance learning and skills development for sustainable communities.

The academic quality and impact of the projects funded varied tremendously with 70% of the rapporteurs grades being 'Good' and in one case 'Outstanding', but 25% being graded as 'Problematic' and one project not submitting a Final Report. Concerns regarding some of the latter projects were raised by initial reviewers at the application stage suggesting that greater attention should have been taken of their comments and in project delivery and monitoring.

The Programme has resulted in nearly 100 actual and planned publications, including 24 peer reviewed journal articles (most of which are *in press* or *under review*); 5 chapters in edited books; 19 working papers and 44 conference papers and presentations at seminars, workshops and web publications. A programme-wide edited book and special issue of *Town Planning Review* are also under production. Early publications have been disseminated in specialist journals and edited collections in sustainability and related fields, whilst prospective articles are under review in more highly-rated international peer reviewed journals (e.g.

Urban Studies, Environment & Planning, Local Environment). The latter will test the academic rigour of the project outputs and findings and their underlying conceptual and methodological base. Most outputs were local, national (and international) conference and seminar presentations and HEI working paper series. In a few key cases publications attributed to projects were in fact arising from quite separate funded projects. The forthcoming book and special issues and hopefully, project journal articles, will, when published, fulfil the Programme's dissemination objectives in terms of academic impact.

The dissemination of the research to non-academic users has been most active and successful at the project level, with project teams organising stakeholder briefings, policy briefings, community handbooks and practitioner resources such as on-line learning tools. At the Programme level, project summaries, case studies and 5 key policy briefings were developed and circulated to over 100 agencies. These also formed the basis for discussion at a one day Policy Sounding Board event attended by almost 60 agencies from across the voluntary and statutory sector. These resources are now also available on the HCA Academy website and the agency has drawn on several of the research findings to support the development of its learning resources and to inform discussion regarding the development of its Skills Action Plan. Our user survey and discussions with the RTPPI suggested that much still remains to be done to ensure that the lessons learnt from the Programme and their implications for practice are fully developed and made accessible to a wider range of agencies.

The Programme Director and his co-ordination team had a challenging job drawing together a very diverse group of projects and extracting common themes and policy implications from the research findings within a very tight timeframe. Their late appointment (six months into the Programme) was unfortunate and resulted in their inevitably concentrating on dissemination activities rather than facilitating ongoing communication and collaboration across the projects. However they provided many projects with valuable support and helped build the research capacity of individual PIs – especially those with less experience, and this was much appreciated. With the support of an excellent administrator the co-ordination team also managed to draw together key policy themes emerging from the research and organise the collective publications and the Policy Sounding Board mentioned above. However press coverage of the Programme as a whole was minimal, key agencies in the field (e.g. RDAs, BURA, CABE) were not involved in the initiative, and thus the Programme did not develop as high a profile as might have been expected.

Future research priorities need to address some of the gaps identified in the coverage of this Programme - in particular factors affecting future skills demand and supply, and international comparisons. A further key area is issues relating to migration and migrant communities and how the social exclusion that these and other communities face affects the sustainable communities agenda, and skills and knowledge development and needs.

To conclude, the Programme produced some useful outputs, but its small scale and short-time frame coupled with the diversity of projects and the late appointment of the co-ordinator meant that there was little time for drawing out impacts and thus the results have yet to influence future practice.

Our recommendations include:

- The Programme Coordinator needs to be appointed before the Programme begins and be involved in project selection. With a small programme such as this we would suggest that co-ordination is more effectively undertaken from one institution/location so that resources are not diluted.

- The selection of projects within a programme needs to take account of key themes and imperatives (e.g. geographic and beneficiary coverage) rather than focus primarily on 'academic quality'. This needs to be incorporated into the review process
- The ESRC should consider asking PIs to complete a Risk Assessment at the application stage to ensure that contingency plans are developed to deal with any difficulties that might arise.
- Earlier involvement of national policy makers is required and should be maintained throughout the Programme. The establishment of a Programme Steering Group with representatives from End-Users would help in this regard
- In order to be viable and sustainable, Programmes need to be of a critical mass/size and duration in order to develop thematic clusters and allow sufficient time for research development, iteration and findings to be incorporated into more coherent impact plans. RC Impact and Impact Plan requirement in new proposals is clearly of benefit to achieving this from the outset
- The attribution of outputs (i.e. publications) to the funded research needs closer attention and any non-attributed work discounted in promotion and project review. Full acknowledgement of project teams (not just PI) and to co-funders (e.g. HCA) in all publications should be made (including ESRC credit in required format).
- A system needs to be developed for measuring the 'added value' achieved by a project both in terms of advancing knowledge and of developing the PI's personal research skills and profile. Possibly rapporteurs should provide an additional grade for this.
- Projects should be encouraged to make better use of the ESRC website and to upload outputs as they are produced.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

This evaluation of the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme was conducted by the Cities Institute at London Metropolitan University. The Institute's Director Professor Graeme Evans led the research with assistance from Sue Bagwell, Dr Jo Foord and Dr Jane Lewis. Antje Witting provided administrative support.

Our brief for this study required that the Programme evaluation address:

- a) the extent to which it met the original aims identified at the outset of the Initiative
- b) the academic quality and achievements of the research including where appropriate, the degree of innovation, inter-disciplinarity and international focus
- c) the quality and success of dissemination activities
- d) the impact of the research on non-academic users
- e) the value added by concentrating resources and organising projects in an Initiative of this kind, including an assessment of the role of the Co-ordinator and capacity building
- f) the value of the partnership approach to commissioning and managing of the initiative
- g) the contribution of individual projects to the Initiative
- h) the overall successes and weaknesses of the Initiative and its legacy for the research communities involved.

We employed a range of methodologies during the course of the evaluation including:

- (i) Reviewing the following evidence:
 - Project End of Award Reports for each of the funded projects
 - Rapporteurs' Comments on End of Award Reports
 - Publications from the projects and the Programme as a whole
 - The Initiative Co-ordinator's final report
- (ii) Face-to face interviews with:
 - 9 of 11 Principal Investigators (PIs) in receipt of funding from the initiative
 - End-users from three of the projects
 - The Director of the Programme
 - The Homes and Communities Academy (HCA Academy)
- (iii) Telephone interviews with:
 - the two PIs we were unable to meet face-to-face
 - two of the Programme co-ordinators
 - the Head of Research at the RTPi
 - the Chair of the HCA Academy
 - a Deputy Director of the HCA Academy
- (iv) An online survey of users/potential users of the research based on contact details of 185 users (organisations and individuals, e.g. academics) which were provided by the Programme Co-ordinator and individual projects. A total of 16 responses were received (9%) a disappointingly low response rate.

2. ORIGINS AND BACKGROUND TO THE INITIATIVE

The Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities (SKSC) Programme which ran from 2006 to 2009 was one of the first initiatives to be funded under the ESRC 'Ventures' scheme. Such schemes involve the co-funding of a research programme by an external agency with the expectation being that this will generate a greater impact on policy and practice. In this instance the Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC), later to become the Homes and Communities Academy (HCA Academy) within the Homes and Communities Agency, jointly commissioned and funded 50% of the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme.

Concern regarding a shortage of skills required to deliver the governments sustainable communities agenda was first highlighted by the Urban Task Force in 1999, but particularly rose to prominence with the publication of the Egan Review: *Skills for Sustainable Communities (April 2004)* and in Scotland *the Skills and Competencies for Community Regeneration: Needs Analysis and Framework* (University of Glasgow, 2004). The Egan Review highlighted not just the specialist technical skills that were required, but drew particular attention to the key generic skills such as communication, leadership, team-working and project management which were seen as equally necessary for built environment professionals to have. It was Egan's proposal that a national centre of excellence should be set up to drive forward the skills agenda that led to the establishment of the Academy for Sustainable Communities (ASC) in April 2005.

Discussions about potential collaboration between the ESRC and the ASC began shortly after the ASC was established. Early in 2006 the two agencies commissioned the Regional Studies Association to undertake a consultation exercise to identify key research challenges relating to the skills and knowledge needed to develop sustainable communities. Two seminars involving individuals from the research, policy and practice communities were held in March 2006, one in London and one in Leeds. The call built on the outcomes of these seminars by identifying a number of key priority areas from which the Programme's key research questions were developed.

Sustainable communities were defined in the call for proposals as: "communities which balance economic, social and environmental considerations. They are communities that are thriving, socially cohesive, well planned and designed with good local services and a good environment. They are places where people are proud to live and work and to bring up their families". The scope of skills and the occupations covered was taken to be both the 'core' and 'associated' occupations identified by the Egan Review.

A total of £746,500 was awarded to 11 projects with grants ranging in value from £40,000 to £80,000 (average £67,000). In 2007 the ESRC and ASC decided to appoint a programme co-ordinator and expressions of interest were invited from all those applicants to the call for research and other relevant contacts. The contract was subsequently awarded to Dr Roger Rogerson and his team. The £92,944 awarded for programme co-ordination brought the total cost of the Programme to £839,445. Projects ran from between April 2007 and January 2009, with a final event held in June 2009.

3. THE PROGRAMME AND ITS OBJECTIVES

The Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme's objectives were set out in the Programme Specification. They were formulated as five key research questions:

- 1) How can insights from comparative research on the development of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities, help to inform the development of future strategies and policies both nationally and internationally? This includes studies examining different approaches developed in different parts of the UK as well as broader international experience
- 2) How can development in leading edge research on effective professional (& trade skills) learning, help to inform strategies to enhance learning and skills development for sustainable communities? This includes issues such as effective continuing professional development, inter-agency and partnership working, learning amongst communities of interest, local community learning, assessment of learning outcomes, and development of generic/tacit skills.
- 3) What measures are likely to be most effective in enabling motivation, engagement, incentives and participation in training and learning, relevant to the development of sustainable communities? How can barriers to engagement, inclusion and participation in training, learning and knowledge exchange be overcome? How can skills be developed to more effectively support the transfer of knowledge into, from and between communities (including professionals, communities and young people)?
- 4) How could more effective leadership, institutional learning, innovation and change management processes be supported in the development of sustainable communities initiatives?
- 5) What are the key factors likely to affect the future demand for and supply of skills relevant to the development of sustainable communities? What market interventions might be most effective in addressing potential skills shortage? What role could international migration/labour market mobility play in addressing or exacerbating skills shortages?

The Programme had as a requirement that projects should incorporate the involvement of user groups – policy makers and practitioners, at all stages of the research process; applicants were also expected to include a strategy for user engagement and communication within their proposals.

The research was expected to demonstrate relevance to the English context but research within a broader UK and international context was also strongly encouraged

4. APPRAISAL OF THE PROGRAMME

The following evaluation of the Programme is based on three sources of information. One is the evaluation by the Rapporteurs who assessed each project's End of Award Report (Annex 2). Another is a review of each of the project's publications (Annex 3). The third is our own assessment of each project, and the Programme as a whole, based on our interviews with each of the PIs and the Programme Co-ordinators, our reading of the End of Award Report and the Rapporteurs' comments on them, which are recorded in Section 5, Commentary on Individual Research Projects. We will begin by assessing the Programme's work in meeting its objectives. We will then review the academic quality and achievements including the Rapporteur's evaluations, the Programme's publications, degree of innovation, and inter-disciplinarity and international focus. This is followed by an assessment of the quality and success of dissemination activities and the impact of the Programme on non-academic users. We then look at the value added by the initiative and the role of the Programme Director. Finally we assess the value of the partnership approach to commissioning and managing the initiative and the overall successes and weakness of the Programme.

4.1. Meeting the Programme's Objectives

The projects within the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme addressed a number of different aspects of sustainability and professional practice as well as touching on a variety of rural and urban settings. Some worked mainly with built environment professionals and practitioners while others focused on organisations and individuals within local communities (Table 1). The result was a very diverse programme. Drawing out Programme-wide responses to the key research questions presented a particular challenge to the co-ordinating team.

Table 1: Project focus and target groups

Project PI	Focus of 'sustainability' intervention	Locality type	Target group/s	Main Methods
Deakin	Community development in housing-led physical social and economic regeneration	Inner city urban	Mid level regeneration practitioners working for regeneration delivery agencies/NGOs	Literature Review/Case studies/Action Research
Gaffikin	Collaborative planning	Divided cities	Professionals, NGOs and community activists involved in developing community plans in contested spaces	Action Research
Hockey	Virtual learning environment – self assessment and skills development	Any:	Built environment professionals (town planning, housing and regional development)	Survey/ focus groups/ interviews
Kidd	Exploring how appraisal can become an effective tool for learning	Any:	Professional planners in local authorities & wider voluntary sector and consultancies involved in Strategic Environmental Assessments	Case studies
Leyshon	Environmental sustainability	Dispersed rural settings for environmental projects	Activist 'green' youth/coerced young people on youth offending or youth services programmes	Online Survey/ informal interviews/ Action Research
Marsden	Environmental Sustainability/ sustainable lifestyles and sustainable consumption; 'green' notion of sustainable environment	Small town in semi rural setting	Sustainability activists /non-activists in local community:	Case studies/ Participant Observation
Murtagh	Skills for managing spatial diversity	Urban-divided city - Belfast	Professionals in regeneration, planning and the built environment	Survey, interviews
Percy-Smith	Environmental sustainability/role of schools	Rural and urban	Schools	Action Research
Sayce	Generic skills required to encourage stakeholder engagement	Any:	Colleges, professional bodies focusing on skills for built environment professionals	National survey
Selman	Environmental sustainability	Semi rural/urbanised rural communities living in proximity to rivers	Local adults	Action Research/Evaluation
Smith	Situated social learning/Learning in the workplace	Any;	Local authority staff working in regeneration	Case study

The following section draws on interviews with the individual project PIs. It presents a synthesis of the project findings and how they addressed the Programme's objectives. Many project PIs indicated that they felt the nuances of their research findings on skills and knowledge, processes of learning and engaging professionals and communities in sustainability initiatives had not been fully represented in the Programme-wide synthesis, Policy Briefings and dissemination activities. However it was also widely acknowledged that in such a short (12 months) programme there was little time for full consideration and full synthesis of individual project findings. Rather general trends in the research findings across projects were drawn out by the Programme co-ordinators and synthesised in five Policy Briefings. These, and subsequent case studies from a number of projects, have been the main mechanisms, so far, for the dissemination of programme wide research findings to policy practitioners. At the project level, many project teams spent considerable time and effort creating stakeholder briefings (Leyshon), policy briefings (Marsden/Franklin/Newton), practitioner/professional resources (Hockey) and community handbooks (Marsden – Franklin/Newton) for use by non-academic audiences, activists and professionals. Key case studies demonstrated how the research had identified significant and useful changes in local policy and practice (Murtagh, Percy Smith, Marsden/Newton). Likewise some project teams appeared to work closely with local practitioners thus enabling a two-way dissemination-comment process to take place during the research process (Deakin, Gaffikin, Leyshon, Selman). Assessment of the ongoing impact of these local processes of discussion and dissemination was not specifically captured within individual project reports or in the Programme level activities. This could have enhanced the demonstration of impact.

Ongoing academic dissemination is providing opportunities for further debate on detailed project findings. However it is uncertain whether or not this work will be captured, synthesised and reported at a later date.

Each Programme objective is addressed in 1) to 5) below.

1) How can insights from comparative research on the development of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities, help to inform the development of future strategies and policies both nationally and internationally?

Rethinking the skills gap: The research questioned a simplistic notion of a 'skills gap' suggesting a more complex relationship between skills, knowledge and learning. A dynamic social model of skills acquisition emerged from the research moving the focus from linear learning for qualifications to valuing learning as an iterative, practical and situated process both in the professional workplace and in communities. Skills, knowledge and a commitment to sustainability can be developed in professional practice where sustainability appraisals are embedded in local and regional policy frameworks. Likewise transformative and creative approaches to knowledge, skills and learning in schools and communities can develop sustainability attitudes and draw out local expertise.

Changing behaviour: The research suggested that delivering sustainable communities requires acting on the behaviour of organisations, institutions, individuals and communities. Behavioural change is most likely to occur through active engagement in practical projects, through 'learning by doing' and 'learning by seeing' both in professional contexts and in communities. Learning which changes behaviour makes use of experimentation and trust, co-production of knowledge, creative engagement and local and social learning opportunities. Professional behaviour can change where staff are exposed to different professional practices or enabled to learn new skills and knowledge through partnerships between public

officials and other stakeholders. Communities can change how food or transport is provided, how the environment is managed, contested spaces redeveloped and attitudes to living sustainably by using creative and practical activities to facilitate local engagement and manage conflict.

Sustainability Teams: The local authorities with the most successful learning strategies in place using practice based learning opportunities (such as Sustainability Appraisals) had dedicated Sustainability Teams facilitating learning through knowledge and skills transfer.

Sustainability Visioning: Lack of clarity over what sustainable communities could look like is becoming a significant barrier to directing skills policy. The research suggests more leadership from government on defining the key characteristics of sustainable communities.

Evaluation: The research delivered critical new insights and constructive commentary on the development of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities. A key programme-wide conclusion was that a change in the perception of skills and learning environments is required. Policy Briefing 1 drew on the individual projects and offered a synthesised *transformative model* suggesting a three-way relationship between competencies, application and learning for sustainable communities grounded by leadership and vision. It proposes the need for greater awareness and support for alternative forms of learning, enhanced motivation and enhanced leadership learning to link competencies and skills. Dissemination of this Policy Briefing took place at the June event and informed the day's discussion. The *transformative model* has subsequently been taken up by the HCA Academy and fed into discussions in their Skills Action Plan (SKAP) forums.

Further action is required to synthesise, capture and disseminate the detailed and nuanced findings from individual projects in a form appropriate to policy practitioners.

This objective was partially met. It offered examples of different approaches to building sustainable development drawn from contrasting localities however there was no nationwide systematic review and little evidence of robust international comparisons.

2) How can development in leading edge research on effective professional (& trade skills) learning, help to inform strategies to enhance learning and skills development for sustainable communities?

Positive learning environments: Several projects identified the importance of recognising the context of skills development and learning. Support for alternative social learning environments were critical for innovative professional development as were direct links between professional training and practice. Starting from skills and knowledge strengths (not gaps) creates a more positive attitude to mobilising existing and acquiring new knowledge and skills. Research with community based groups and organisations suggested that communities (and individuals) did not acquire skills and knowledge to 'make them more sustainable'. Successful engagement needs a positive local mix of right people, right time, and right place. Active communities and individuals are best developed by building upon their existing skills and knowledge by employing situated informal learning and creative techniques. Learning about sustainability has most potential in positive environments (including schools) where 'learning by doing' is encouraged.

Learning from experience: While formal qualifications, skills and knowledge can be cited in Skills Audits and Mappings to identify where the relevant skills are located within an organisation or community, the research found that this approach could not identify all the required generic skills such as those gained from experience – reflexivity, people skills, patience, confidence boosting, conflict resolution, inclusive decision making. Understanding generic skills and the learning opportunities they provide means recognising ‘experience’.

Support for learning: The research emphasised the importance of recognising and putting in place institutional and political support for social and formal learning.

Cross group skill sets: Most professionals create their own skills sets through formal learning, structured workplace experience and informal exchange of knowledge and skills. Research with professional practitioners and community stakeholders found that to achieve effective multidisciplinary/ multi agency teams members need to be able to identify and communicate all the skills they bring to the group (formal and informal, specific and generic) in clear, non technical, language. There needs to be greater recognition and more effective application of cross group skill sets to support working and learning between and within professional and stakeholder groups. Similarly professional/generic skills would best be seen as being held within the profession or group as a whole and not within the individual.

Assessment tools and on line learning: Formal instruments to embed skills and knowledge in professional practice emerged including the development of a new framework for measuring the competencies required for diversity planning in areas of social, political or economic conflict. Likewise the use of current online technologies to enhance flexible learning opportunities for professionals and practitioners was proposed.

Evaluation: The research provides evidence of shifts in thinking away from a deficit model of skills to one based on the learning context, on working from collective experience within teams, groups or organisations. It therefore highlights the importance of encouraging employers and organisations, including community groups, to develop participative and partnership approaches to learning and skills acquisition as well as drawing out existing skills and knowledge held within and between groups. Policy Briefing 2 summarises the advocacy of these approaches. This briefing was disseminated to participants of the June event and has contributed to the evidence base used in discussions at the HCA.

Further action is required to synthesise, capture and disseminate the more detailed and nuanced findings of individual projects to policy practitioners.

This objective has been met in that the research considered and provided examples of how to enhance an aspect of professional development; provided new examples of innovative inter-agency working; and grounded studies of how communities of interest evolve. The research did not fully engage with how to develop understanding and practice of learning outcomes particularly in relation to so called ‘generic’ skills

3) What measures are likely to be most effective in enabling motivation, engagement, incentives and participation in training and learning, relevant to the development of sustainable communities?

Strength-based approach: Starting from the skills and knowledge already held by an individual, a group or in a community provides better motivation for the process of learning. Achievement is best measured through tasks undertaken not just formal

qualifications passed. The research suggested that this approach is reflective and therefore allows future strengths to be identified and worked towards. This helps to shift the emphasis from identifying the 'gap' in knowledge or a 'failure' of skills to one which focuses on change and effective learning including training for skills and knowledge development.

Reflexive Learning: Continual review and reflection on learning and skills acquisition was found to be the most effective mechanism for developing professional practice and community based abilities. Supportive practices were required to get the best out of reflective learning including skills assessment and use of learning resources to encourage individuals to reflect on their existing knowledge and experience.

Situated learning: The research supported the development of opportunities to learn within local or professional contexts, within organisations and current work practices. Investment in place and context specific training and learning through professional CPD activities and community educational/training outreach was proposed.

Acknowledge relationships: In the community context relationships between people matter most in initiating, delivering and sustaining sustainability. These relationships enable effective transfer of ideas and information on acting/behaving sustainably. Regular contact facilitates sustainable activism and propels the day-to-day work of projects and initiatives. Acknowledging the different capacities of paid and volunteer participants, managing expectations and different personalities are necessary in successful projects.

Interpreting and managing risk: The ability to take risks and manage the consequences is critical in enabling innovative transformation to take place. But this depends on the capacities of the people/organisations/professions/place involved in an initiative evolves to spot and manage risk taking. The more outwardly connected and networked a community; place, organisation or profession is the better it is at taking risks, dealing with uncertainty and mobilising resources.

Learning works: Using evidence from the research case studies have shown how and in what context skills and knowledge development, learning and training have changed both professional practices and community-led projects.

Evaluation: The research demonstrated the importance of understanding the local or particular circumstances in which sustainability skills and knowledge are being fostered and the resource that this often presents for further development. Recognition that the learning context and process is critical, though not original, is novel in its application to sustainable community development. Policy Briefing 3, overlapping with Policy Briefing 1 and 2, focused on the need for transformative learning processes and environments. This briefing perhaps underplayed the evidence gathered on overcoming specific barriers to learning and the importance of relationships and risk management. It was disseminated to participants of the June event.

Further action is required to synthesise, capture and disseminate the more detailed and nuanced findings of individual projects to policy practitioners.

This objective was partially met in that several research project findings began to explore different ways of engaging with different communities and professionals and therefore understand past barriers to inclusion and change (Percy Smith, Murtagh, Leyshon). However this work is at an early stage of development and further work is

needed on how skills can be developed to support knowledge transfer to, from and between communities.

4) How could more effective leadership, institutional learning, innovation and change management processes be supported in the development of sustainable communities initiatives?

Hybrid practitioners and transformational leaders: The research exposed and challenged the silos created in the professions and in community activism. It found that most advances towards sustainable communities were made when silo boundaries were crossed and eroded in the course of practical projects and the development of shared understanding through co-knowledge co-production. Leadership that works across boundaries and places emphasis on vision enables significant change and transformation. The research projects offer a number of models for generating a vision: creative expressions and shared ownership, creating community visions, and socially inclusive visioning.

Inclusive transformational leadership: Leadership needs to be 'transformational' (altering values and cultures of organisations, inspiring others, and encouraging people to be responsible for their own development and effectiveness) rather than 'transactional' (ensuring tasks are completed and teams well managed towards set goals). Transformational leadership implies a more distributive, shared leadership across teams shifting from the professional as leader to professional as facilitator. Two forms of alternative leadership stand out from the research: guiding coalitions and learning organisations. Guiding coalitions differ from the 'single person' leadership roles of the past and include skills to manage cross disciplinary teams, ability to work with productive tension, skills to work across boundaries, skills to develop language or discourse that enables the development of mutual respect and understanding between different professional groups. Learning organisations provide time and space for individuals to reflect on practice. These leadership skills can be developed within professional learning through an appreciation for situated learning, within communities through agonistic debate, within schools as young people are helped to be agents of change, through task-led education or task led learning organisations.

Right roles, right culture: Leadership is required to ensure that individuals are employed in the right roles and are able to use their skills and abilities to the full. However organisational culture is critical as all the skills might be in place but the organisational bureaucracy and culture of the workplace may not let them work effectively. Policy focus on the 'skills gaps' is often incorrect as well as demoralising.

Evaluation: This objective was not adequately addressed by the research conducted under in the Programme. This was largely due to the scope of the projects funded rather than a failure of the research commissioned. Although individual projects offered some insight into the lack of adequate leadership and the consequences for developing sustainable communities (Murtagh, Hockey, Sayce, Kidd) specific study of leadership was not undertaken. Insights from projects on leadership issues were summarised in Policy Briefing 4 and the possible positive influence on leadership of adopting a *transformative model* of development proposed. A new form of leadership built on relationships, partnerships, trust and coalition was suggested however this requires further conceptual and empirical research.

This objective was therefore not met.

5) What are the key factors likely to affect the future demand for and supply of skills relevant to the development of sustainable communities?

Embedded skills and knowledge: There is a wealth of knowledge and understanding embedded within communities, institutions and organisations but that is not in forms readily recognised by professionals, policy practitioners and stakeholders. This knowledge and skill needs to be identified using creative methodologies so that it can be acknowledged and brought to the attention of professionals/stakeholders.

Negotiation skills: Increasingly the use of space and meanings of place are contested. The research highlighted the growing need for sophisticated negotiation skills required to manage contested spaces and places both by professionals and by community stakeholders.

Skills and knowledge balance/mix: The research presented UK and International case studies of projects to change the production and consumption of food, energy, transport and the home as well as engagement in sustainable communities. These highlighted the importance of the particular mix/balance of sector specific knowledge and skills (technical, professional, institutional), professional services skills (legal, management, marketing and communication, financial) and aptitudes/conditions (creative thinking/skills, trust, capacity) underpin successful sustainability initiatives.

Evaluation: None of the funded project specifically focussed on predicting the future demand for and supply of skills. However three aspects of skills and knowledge identified within the research are likely to shape where understanding of future skills might be elicited. The embedded nature of skills acquisition and knowledge transfer in organisations and communities suggests future skills may already be developing, but are unrecognised. The collaborative nature of sustainable development highlighted the growing role of good negotiation skills at all levels. Finally the research suggests that the *mix* of skills might be more important to delivering sustainable communities rather than the development of new skills *per se*. Policy Briefing 5 did not address future skills directly but presented a general approach or vision of sustainable Communities in which the collaborative shared vision of a future communities is seen as paramount,

This objective was not directly met as no project took this theme as its core research area. However insights from the funded projects present pointers for future enquiry.

Summary: To conclude, the Programme has clearly moved the debate from the over simplistic focus on 'skills gaps' to a clearer understanding of how effective learning takes place. Many of the learning theories developed by the Programme's projects are not new and draw on knowledge from other academic spheres, but this type of approach to skills development is perhaps new to many involved in the development of sustainable communities. In highlighting this new focus the Programme has made an important contribution to all of the objectives, but particularly objectives 1, 2 and 3. What is missing at present is a clear understanding of exactly how these new insights should be taken up by policy makers and those involved in developing future strategies to enhance learning and skills development for sustainable communities. Objectives 4 and 5 have also highlighted some important issues, but received less attention from the Programme's projects with none of the projects addressing these issues as their primary objective. Some projects such as Murtagh and Gaffikin addressed the impact of the changing nature of communities but none set out to systematically predict and analyse the new skills and knowledge, which might be needed in the future as a result. The Co-ordinator in his report acknowledged that the

selection of projects resulted in gaps with 'factors affecting future skills demand and supply' being one of them.

Having said this, the research projects have only recently been completed and many of the outputs and outcomes are still in the process of being developed with the result that new insights are likely to emerge for some time to come. It is unfortunate that there is no mechanism within these types of programme that allows for the ongoing monitoring of outputs, impacts, and the synthesis and brokering of findings to the policy and practitioner community to be captured once the Programme has ended.

4.2 Academic Quality and Achievements

4.2.1 Evaluations by the Rapporteurs

For each project the Rapporteur's grades, Outstanding, Good, or Problematic were reviewed together with the overall grade assigned by the ESRC. At the time of writing one project (Smith) had yet to submit an end of project report and thus has no Rapporteur's grades.

The data in Annex 2 show that of the 24 evaluation grades that the Rapporteurs assigned, 1 was Outstanding, defined as an exceptional research contribution well above average. A further 15 grades were deemed Good, defined as appropriate for a project that is fully commensurate with the level of the award and which has addressed its major objectives. One was deemed Outstanding/Good. In sum that is 17 grades of Outstanding or Good (70%), which suggests that the Programme has, in the judgement of the Rapporteurs been a reasonable success, but not outstandingly so. That leaves 6 grades which were Problematic (25%) and one that was Good/Problematic that we suspect is probably a fairly high percentage for an ESRC programme.

Turning to the overall grades assigned we find that 1 was Outstanding, 6 were Good, and 3 were Problematic. There were few discrepancies between the Rapporteurs and we ourselves concurred with the overall grades assigned to each project.

The evaluation procedure seemed to be generally rigorous and fair, however the large number of problematic grades within this Programme is a cause for concern. In looking at these in more detail it is apparent that in the case of several projects reviewers raised concerns at the original project submission stage around methodology, feasibility and the limited literature and conceptual analysis demonstrated. These concerns were subsequently borne out by the comments from the end of project rapporteurs suggesting that greater attention should have been taken of the initial reviewers concerns during the selection process and in project delivery and monitoring. Further analysis of these projects also revealed that all had experienced staffing difficulties, all were unable to, or did not deliver their project as originally proposed, and none were able to recover within the Programme's timescale even when an extension was negotiated. All also suffered from poorly written final reports that demonstrated gaps in analysis, synthesis and weak dissemination. The difficulties experienced by these PIs could also be partly explained by the fact that they were overly stretched with other research, teaching or management responsibilities and were not able to devote the time needed to the project. This contrasts sharply with some of the other teams who were better resourced and thus able to absorb staff changes more readily. Perhaps if the ESRC required applicants to complete a Risk Assessment as is commonly required by public and private sector funded consultancy work some of these potential difficulties might have been considered at the start and more realistic proposals and/or contingency plans developed.

It should also be noted that the evaluation procedure as it stands measures the quality of the research and its outputs rather than the added value of the grant. By this we mean that some very experienced researchers were using funding from this Programme to supplement work already in progress and were thus able to generate a larger number of outputs and impact. In some cases outputs claimed against the SKSC award related to previous projects. For others the Programme was their first experience of a research grant and they were starting from scratch, often also with a limited track record of publication. The current evaluation system does not measure

the extent of the journey travelled by the PI however. Perhaps as well as measuring the absolute quality of the research additional comments and possibly a separate grade needs to be given for the 'added value' achieved by the project both in terms of advancing knowledge and of developing the PI's personal research skills and profile.

4.2.2 Programme Publications and Outputs

In Annex 3 we have assembled information on the Programme's publications. This is organised by individual project/PI. It summarises data found in Section 5. Contribution of Individual Research Projects. This data was compiled by comparing the Award holders' End of Award Reports with Annex C of the Programme Director's Final Report, and the individual project entries on the ESRC and Programme websites as of December 2009. Careful comparison was necessary as none of these sources seemed to be complete. Projects should be encouraged to make better use of the ESRC website and to upload outputs as they are produced.

The data in Annex 3 indicate that the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme has resulted in nearly 100 publications, including 24 peer reviewed journal articles (most of which are *in press* or *under review*); 5 chapters in edited books; 19 working papers and 44 conference papers and presentations at seminars, workshops and web publications. An article on the Programme including selected project findings was published in *Planning* magazine in October 2009: (30.10: 14-15).

In addition to the publications produced by the individual project teams, the Programme Co-ordinators have overseen the production of:

- a book 'Learning and Leading Sustainable Communities' to include a chapter from each project and due to be published by Hertfordshire University Press in 2011
- a special edition of *Town Planning Review* (TPR) with articles from five of the projects is currently out for review
- the production of three types of outputs targeted at the policy community which are listed and discussed in section 4.4 below:

A special issue of *Geografiska Annaler B* relating to the European context of sustainable communities is also a further possibility.

Publications and dissemination have appeared in a range of outlets, including interdisciplinary and thematic journals and mainstream international journals (e.g. *Urban Studies*, *Environment & Planning* - planned). Most publications were co-authored by PI/Co-PI with particular evidence of joint authorship by Hockey et al.

Conference and seminar/workshop presentations were made 'locally' (host HEI and local area) and at national and international gatherings, e.g. USA, Netherlands and Austria. Working papers and student based projects and course module development (RTPI) drawing on the research were also evident (Gaffikin, Kidd) with good examples of end-user dissemination for example to DCLG and DEFRA (Newton & Franklin).

There is however considerable variation between the outputs (quality and quantity) produced by each of the Projects. This is in part likely to be due to the different level

of grant and the number of PIs involved in each case; and new researchers/first grant holders without a 'back list' of research publications/track record in contrast to established research academics with several recent/concurrent grants and wider research resources to draw on.

In a few cases several outputs claimed (and listed in project and/or ESRC websites) against the SKSC award did not relate to the projects but to previous projects (including ESRC funded). This was most evident with Marsden (journal articles, book chapters, conference paper) and also Deakin (journal articles). In other cases the publications referred to other research as well the SKSC project (Hockey) so again attribution needs to be more rigorously applied in monitoring and evaluation (i.e. grading). Authors are also not observing the ESRC grant conditions in terms of citing the grant award and full credit to the HCA's contribution is not clear (e.g. 'ESRC grant, with the ASC and Inspire East' – Hockey article).

4.2.3 Degree of Innovation

A number of projects showed innovation in approach and methodology. Particularly noteworthy are Percy-Smith's work with school children- linking in to existing networks of NGOs who were already working on sustainability in schools and pulling these into the sustainable communities debate. This project demonstrated that children can also be active agents of change in their wider communities if they are encouraged to do so. Selman's use of creative writing as a means of learning about the environment and river management in particular was an especially novel methodology although there were problems in implementing the project due to departure of the proposed user/partner.

At a programme level, as we have already noted in section 4.1. above, the initiative has particularly emphasised the importance of context and process to the acquisition and development of skills. In this respect it has taken forward the findings of the Egan Review and the more traditional linear 'predict and provide' model of skills development. Within the context of community development and learning theory the recognition that process and context are crucial is well established. Bailey (2005)¹ for example, emphasized the importance of situational learning. However this is perhaps a more innovative concept within other professional fields.

As several of the initial reviewers commented on the project proposals, many of the topics/themes addressed were not 'new' and needed to draw on wider literature and evidence in what is a widening field. For example, the growth in toolkits, guidance and models and the experience in fields such as community development and process based evaluation. Individually and collectively the Programme would have benefited from a more comprehensive scoping of literature and perhaps an opening position paper produced at the outset of the Programme (Briefing stage), for example as produced for the ESRC Cities' Programme.

4.2.4 Inter-disciplinarity and international focus

Inter-disciplinary working has been evidenced through the profile of research teams (PI/Co-PIs), collaborating partners and the methods and approaches used, and to a lesser extent in this case, to cross-disciplinary exchange between projects. Annex 4 lists the departmental location of each project. The majority are situated in broadly

¹ Bailey, N (2005) 'The Great Skills Debate: Defining and Delivering the Skills Required for Community Regeneration in England', *Planning, Practice & Research*, 20(3): 341-352

environmental planning/built environment (in HEFCE RAE grouping, under one Panel – H), and also with business, health and education departments. Co-authored publications and other outputs were also the norm (above) in most, but not all projects (i.e. single authored). The wider challenge of achieving inter-disciplinarity has been subject of academic discussion and exchange - including the role of research councils and programmes, and institutional relationships around 'sustainability'². The SKSC Programme might have engaged more directly with this, as it sought to break down barriers between disciplines and professional/practitioner silos.

The Programme did not have a particularly international focus and the Co-ordinator noted in his report that the main focus of the Programme had been on the English context of skills and knowledge for sustainable communities as it reflected the UK remit of the HCA. A small number of projects drew on experience from overseas including Gaffikin (North America) and Kidd who produced case studies in Italy and Germany. Other PIs also participated in and presented at international conferences including Leyshon (USA), Marsden and team (USA, Netherlands, China and Austria), and Murtagh (USA). However a larger number of international comparative projects might have added to the richness of the Programme findings and provided the HCA Academy with some useful examples of good practice from overseas.

4.3 Quality and Success of Dissemination Activities

The Programme's planned communication strategy envisaged a number of different activities designed to ensure dissemination of the research to a variety of different audiences including the various project holders within the Programme, the ESRC and ASC/HCA, the wider academic community and policy makers and users groups. Section 4.4. deals with the impact on non-academic users. We will focus here on the dissemination within the academic community both within and beyond the Programme.

4.3.1 Dissemination within the Programme

Since the Co-ordinators were appointed over 6 months into the Programme there was less opportunity for encouraging dissemination within the Programme's project teams than might otherwise have been the case. The main mechanism used for encouraging the exchange of information across the projects involved in the Programme was a series of 3 one-day meetings at which all the project teams were represented. These are addressed in more detail in 4.5.1 (i) below, but these events brought representatives from each of the projects together and encouraged a sharing of experience and the drawing out of common themes and implications for policy and practice.

It was initially intended that an initiative website would be set up and used as a means of disseminating progress on the Programme and its projects, and of providing information on related topics, publications and developments in the field. In the event the website only went live within the last few months of the Programme, and has been used largely as means of communicating the outcomes of the Programme. Thus the opportunity to use the website as an ongoing communication and profile-raising tool for those involved in the Programme as was lost due to the delay in setting it up. The Co-ordinator felt that developing a website (or intranet) that encouraged dialogue between project teams was not likely to be particularly

² Evans, R. (2003) 'Researching the sustainable city: three modes of interdisciplinarity', *Env & Planning A*, 38: 1009-28; Lowe, P., & Phillipson, J. (2009) 'Barriers to research collaboration across disciplines: scientific paradigms and institutional practices', *Env & Planning A*, 41: 1171-1184

supportive to PIs and could be counterproductive to the completion of the research. He also noted that most teams had their own website. A number of the PIs we interviewed thought otherwise however, and commented on the lack of communication between events. In their view some form of on-line forum would have been a useful way of encouraging a greater degree of exchange across the different projects, whilst the HCA Academy would have liked a website as a point of reference for and a means of raising the profile of the initiative with the media and other external agencies.

Dissemination to the wider academic community

The chief means of disseminating the results to a wider academic community is clearly through academic conferences and publication in journals and books. As noted above the Programme has led to a number of academic publications and has been particularly active in presenting the results at a wide variety of conferences. Many PIs were also active in presenting their research to seminars at their own and other universities. The magnitude and quality of publications arising from the Programme is discussed in 4.2.2. above.

The co-ordination team also used their academic networks to raise the research findings in a variety of different forums including with the RTPi Lifelong Learning and Research committees, the TCPA and the RGS. The Chair of the HCA Academy was also able to promote the research through his academic networks.

Finally the outputs from a number of projects are already being fed into student course material. For example planning students at Anglia Ruskin University are piloting the online skills diagnostic tool developed, whilst those at Queens University Belfast are being directed to case studies developed by the Programme.

4.4 Impact of the Research on Non-Academic Users

The Programme has impacted on a range of non-academic users to date although these impacts appear to have been more effective at the local project rather than the Programme level.

Working with external users was a funding requirement for each project and thus all have worked with external partners or users to varying degrees. We compiled a list of the users associated with each project from the End of Award Report and by asking each PI for a list of users we could contact for our on-line survey. Users informed by the Programme as a whole were largely those who were invited to the Coin Street dissemination event and their names were supplied by the Co-ordinator. The resulting list of users can be found in Annex 4. Overall the list is impressive with over 130 organisations having been involved in or at least received information about the Programme and/or one or more of its projects. For a relatively small programme this is quite an achievement.

Many of the projects organised events for or in conjunction with local users groups. For example, Percy-Smith ran a no-energy day for a whole secondary school, and worked with school children to develop a Sustainable Food Guide. Smith delivered a master class on experiential learning for the HCA Academy. Franklin and Newton (Marsden) presented their Community Guidelines to local activists and practitioners and remain in contact with many local organisations supporting new ways of working together. Likewise Selman organised a local launch of the project's Dearne Anthology with invitees from local authorities and agencies. This was used to raise questions about how rivers are viewed in professional and institutional contexts.

Projects also made their own contact with national government to present and discuss the results of their work. For example Franklin and Newton (Marsden) delivered in house seminars to staff at both DEFRA and CLG. This was followed up with robust non-academic user Policy Briefings and a Virtual Community web resource. Both are housed on ESRC Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability & Society, University of Cardiff and therefore available in the public domain.

The work of other projects is being incorporated into a range of new learning materials. Kidd used the research findings from her project to develop teaching materials to update SA/SEA module that forms part of the RTPI Masters in Planning. Students at the Anglia Ruskin University, many of whom are working for local authorities, are currently using the online tool developed by Hockey to self-assess and support their learning. Whilst Murtagh's work on contested cities has influenced the work of those looking at the skills required to support community cohesion. Some of these local project events and collaborations also attracted significant local media coverage. Press releases featured Leyshon's young people in rural communities project in *The Downside of Countryside Living* (ESRC Society Today, 2008) and again in August 2009 and Percy-Smith's work with schoolchildren in October 2009. Limited media coverage was secured for the Programme as a whole however. The HCA Academy issued press releases about the Programme when it started and the Co-ordinators organised an interview with a journalist from *Planning* which resulted in a 2 page article about the Programme entitled *Sustained Solutions* being published in October 2009 referencing four of the projects, but otherwise we were not made aware of other cases in which media coverage was secured for the Programme as a whole with the result that it does not appear to have developed a high profile. More use of trade journals such as *New Start*, and *Regeneration & Renewal* would have been useful in this respect.

The co-ordinators took responsibility for promoting the Programme and its outputs to key practitioner networks and policy makers. The co-ordinators connections with and involvement in key networks such as the RTPI and Rowntree Foundation helped in this respect.

The key activities undertaken to promote the Programme to user groups and policy makers included co-ordinating the production of:

- Project summaries of each of the 11 projects detailing the key policy implications from each of these
- 5 Policy Briefings exploring the main policy themes emerging from the initiative
- 14 case studies illustrating the key findings from the research.
- An end of project Policy Sounding Board event held at Coin Street in London on 3rd June 2009 to discuss the findings with key agencies and policy makers

These resources have been posted on the Programme website <http://qs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms/>. The Policy Briefings were circulated to those invited to the Coin Street event and the case studies were provided to those who attended.

The Policy Briefings draw out some very important findings (not necessarily new but key to the development of the skills agenda) Being able to identify common threads from such a diversity of projects is quite a remarkable achievement and some useful themes have emerged which have been highlighted in section 4.1 above. However,

there is a degree of overlap in the different policy briefings, although this is not unreasonable since they may have been designed to be stand alone documents. More importantly it is not clear exactly how each policy recommendation should be addressed in practice. It is a pity that the co-ordinator's funding bid was made prior to the recent requirement for all ESRC bids to include an impact plan. Had such plan been produced more thought might have been given to exactly how the results of the research should be taken forward.

The case studies provide for interesting reading although the lessons learnt relate more to how to do sustainable community development rather than how to impart/acquire the skills required to do it. We understand that the case studies are currently being adapted to fit the HCA's case study format and will then be posted on their website as a resource for those working in the field.

A considerable amount of effort went into organising the Coin Street Policy Sounding Board/dissemination day in June 2009 which attracted almost 60 participants from across the voluntary and statutory sector including a number of key agencies involved in the Skills for Sustainable Communities agenda. This event allowed the individual project teams to present their work directly to policy makers. Most of the PIs felt that this had been a successful event and had encouraged a useful dialogue with policy makers on future strategies for developing skills for sustainable communities. In highlighting what was new/added by the Programme, the feedback gathered during the event from the participants by the Co-ordination team suggested that the research had added:

- Legitimacy – the research reflects experience on the ground
- Increased emphasis on learning processes
- Increased emphasis on outcomes and the need for a vision to lead learning and development in sustainable communities
- A recognition of the challenges and complexity of factors involved in sustainable and cohesive communities including multi/cross-disciplinary work; economics, race and segregation
- New methods and approaches to learning
- New roles for people and institutions
- Case studies
- Information and dialogue about gaps in learning opportunities, skills and application in the workplace.

The event also involved a Strengths and Weakness analysis of existing skills policy and an Opportunities and Threats analysis for the Transformative approach, but does not seem to have developed any recommendations on how the latter could be more widely promoted and adopted.

Some key organisations that we would have expected to have been involved in the dissemination activities to not appear to have been. The Regional Development Agencies (Centres of Excellence) were central to the early debate on skills but they were not involved in the Programme and whilst one or two projects mentioned having had some contact with their local RDA they do not seem to have done so. Other practitioner-based organisations such as BURA and RICS, and agencies with initiatives on sustainable communities such as CABE (including Design Quality, SpaceShaper toolkits) might have been engaged in dissemination and knowledge exchange with the Programme. Likewise with national/regional initiatives such as *Living Places* which provides a portal of guidance and case studies under a

(www.living-places.org.uk), and the CLG, for instance around skills elements in regeneration evaluation (e.g. New Deal for Communities).

The HCA Academy has clearly found several of the research findings useful and cited examples of particular projects whose work they had drawn on. As noted above Smith was asked to run a master class on experiential learning, and a video was developed based on Murtagh's work on contested cities which also featured in one of their web based debates. However other projects had no links at all with the HCA Academy outside the organised meetings. The HCA Academy reported that the findings from the research were being fed into the various working groups from their SKAP initiative which has produced their latest skills policy *Delivering Better Skills for Better Places* (June 2009). For example Murtagh's work on cohesion was used to develop a Podcast and has fed into the work of the Cohesion Working Group and others studies have been fed into the group looking at Leadership. The research findings are also being fed into the work of the current skills study being undertaken by Arup to update their earlier *Mind the Skills Gap* research

We had hoped to organise focus groups with each of the project's users, but this proved to be impractical as the users were often widely dispersed or not available or interested in participating. Instead we organised a web-based survey that attempted to capture the views of all users at a project and programme level (see Annex 7). This unfortunately produced a very low response (16 out of 185 surveyed or 9%). This may be indicative of the general low profile of the Programme with national policy makers and user groups. We were also informed by some of the PIs that whilst their user groups might have engaged well with their particular project they did not relate to the Programme as a whole. This poor response rate is in sharp contrast to the good turn out at the Coin Street event and we can only surmise that perhaps those who attended the Coin Street event may have forgotten that it was part of an ESRC programme and therefore did not associate our survey with that event. Alternatively those surveyed may have got all they wanted from their participation in the projects and/or the Coin Street event and not wished to engage any further.

Comments from survey respondents included the following:

"Quite a lot of the research projects presented their findings at the event in London. I was particularly struck by the consistent view expressed by researchers that the learning 'model' informing the Academy's strategy was being challenged by the research findings. That is to say the Academy has adopted a very linear 'predict and provide' model based on supply side activities whereas the research was pointing to a more multifaceted approach which can accommodate demand and, by so doing, take into account macro-economic factors such as the credit crunch."

Participant involved in Coin St dissemination event and one of the projects

Only 10 of the 16 respondents were actually familiar with the findings of the Programme and of these only 6 responded 'yes' when asked if it had informed their work and their responses that are as follows suggest that the impact of the Programme had not been very significant to date

"I have commissioned a book based on them -- I run the University of Hertfordshire Press."

" Useful background information" *Participant at Coin St event*

"I wrote an article for Planning Magazine about some of the reports"

“Not as of yet but information will be useful for future work in this area”

Participant at Coin St event

“Considering the Skills for Sustainable Communities”

“We have referred to them in research reports we have completed”

Responses to the final question, which asked for any additional comments, help explain these somewhat neutral views.

“Overall, I found the findings rather disappointing in that they rarely broke new ground or provided new insights. The skills and knowledge agenda is constantly changing and it's very difficult to go beyond the perceptions of employers as to the scale of the problem and the nature of the skills deficit. It's therefore very difficult to provide hard-edged policy guidance to practitioners and stakeholders. *Participant at Coin St event*”

“The subjects were pretty abstract - and their practical application was not always clear. Where there were possible practical applications, they were poorly presented and the information available was patchy”.

Participant at Coin St event

“Impressive range of valuable / practical outputs”

Representative of Project user group

Following the poor response to the online survey we conducted a telephone interview with the RTPI and their views probably highlight the current status of impact of the research on users. They were keen to hear more about the implications for practice and were waiting for information in a format that would enable them to deal with the implications: “There is a need for a more focussed discussion”.

The HCA Academy too feels that they are only now in a position where they are able to reflect on the findings and consider the best way of taking them forward.

The Coordinators did not feel that they had sufficient time or resources to really draw out the policy implications as much as they would have liked and to ensure that they impacted on practice. In conclusion it would appear that the Programme has provoked some interesting thinking but the true impact will only be seen at some point in the future when the HCA Academy and others have had the time (and hopefully the resources) to take it forward. This includes how far the research findings and approaches adopted can be generalised and operationalised in skills and knowledge practice and provision.

4.5. The Value Added by the Initiative and the Role of the Programme Director and Capacity Building

4.5.1 The Programme Directors Contribution

The Programme co-ordination role was undertaken by a team led by Dr Robert Rogerson of the University of Strathclyde with assistance from Anne Green, University of Warwick and Professor Cecilia Wong, University of Manchester, with project management/administrative assistance provided by Sue Sadler from the University of Strathclyde.

Unusually for this type of programme the decision to appoint a programme co-ordinator was made after the project awards had been made and by the time the Programme co-ordination contract begun on 1st Feb 2008 some projects had already been in operation for 6 months. This inevitably had a significant impact on the contribution the co-ordination team were able to make to the Programme and project delivery and direction. The Co-ordinator's contract was initially for one year to 31st Jan 2009, but was subsequently granted an extension to March 2009.

The Co-ordinator was appointed to undertake the following tasks:

- Networking and coordination of projects under the Initiative
- Leading and facilitating engagement with potential users
- Liaising between the ESRC, ASC and the researchers
- Advising all stakeholders on maximising the impact of the Initiative in terms of research, policy and practice.
- Enhance capacity building by capturing and communicating effectively the cross-disciplinary and cross-cutting dimensions of the research beyond the outcomes of the specific projects

We shall deal with each of these in turn in the following sections.

(i) **Networking and coordination of projects under the Initiative**

The term and concept *Sustainable Communities* encompasses a wide range of issues and imperatives and this was reflected in the diversity of projects funded. The projects also included PIs for whom this was their first research grant as well as professors with years of experience of managing research projects. Furthermore some projects started late and needed extensions (staffing and partner changes), so the group as a whole was not operating to a common time frame. Attempting to draw all these diverse interests under one common umbrella within a 12 month period was clearly a challenging task for the Coordinators. Comments from the PIs illustrate this point:

“There was little resonance with other projects in the Programme”

”It didn't feel like a coherent programme”

“The projects were too diverse and did not have a common understanding of sustainability and skills – even of regeneration”

Three programme meetings were organised by the co-ordination team during the Programme to encourage networking amongst the different PIs and draw out common themes from the projects. All of the project teams were represented at

these meetings. One focused on the aspirations of ESRC/HCA, the second on the emerging initiative-wide themes and their connections with the HCA, the third on dissemination and user engagement strategies.

Our interviews with the PIs suggested that most had found these meetings to be useful and they had provided the opportunity for a useful exchange of ideas. Some projects had been able to draw on the work of others to help develop their own theoretical insight into debates around the connection between knowledge, learning and skills. Murtagh for example found discussions with Smith and Percy-Smith very helpful in this respect. Whilst Hockey drew on Smith and Marsden to develop intellectual and theoretical ideas for her project. A few of the PIs developed ongoing links with each other as a result of these events, but this tended to be the exception rather than the rule. The workshops were only for a day and thus allowed little time to encourage a greater degree of dialogue and a cementing of relationships. Some of the more experienced PIs did not find the meetings to be particularly useful at all and felt that they had gained few new insights from the Programme.

Comments from some PIs suggested that there was felt to be a great deal of potential for collaborative learning, but that much of the potential for this and pulling out the policy implications was lost. One suggested that collaboration was not funded or built into the Programme and that the Coordinators did not have expertise or skills in collaborative learning.

The Programme meetings were the main forums for communication and at least three of those we interviewed commented on the fact that there was little communication outside of the meetings. A number even struggled to remember the names of the other PIs in the Programme. The website was set up late in the Programme and then not designed to be used as a tool for communication or offer a source of information on relevant policy initiatives and publications as promised in the funding bid. Had some sort of web-based forum or even an E-newsletter been set up, this might have provided a useful means of stimulating on-going debate and established a sense of ownership of the Programme amongst the PIs between meetings, as well as raised the profile amongst potential end-users. However, because the co-ordinators were appointed late they inevitably focused more on outputs and dissemination.

The net result was that the Programme managed to enhance the context of some of the individual research projects by exposing researchers to wider/different areas of research, and it created 'loose synergies' between some of the researchers, but it did not lead to any ongoing collaboration.

Despite the above limitations the Programme did manage to draw out some cross-cutting themes that clearly impacted on some of the PIs research and were used as a basis for the policy briefings and the Coin Street policy sounding board and dissemination event.

(ii) Leading and facilitating engagement with potential users

The task of engaging with potential users was largely left to the individual projects. Working with user groups had been a requirement of the funding for each project and thus each had their own set of users and potential users related to the particular issues being addressed by their project.

The Programme co-ordinators however attempted to draw out common themes from the various research projects that were pertinent to the development of the skills for sustainable communities agenda nationally. These were promoted through their

professional networks including bodies such as the RTPI. As noted above the Coin Street dissemination event was the chief mechanism used to facilitate engagement between the project holders and potential users. This was designed to promote the research findings and policy implications from each project and the Programme as a whole. Over 80 people attended this event including nearly 60 external agencies. This event was considered very successful by most of those we interviewed and many of the PIs obtained useful feedback on their project.

(iii) Liaising between the ESRC, HCA Academy and the researchers

Less experienced PIs, for whom this was their first grant, particularly appreciated the Co-ordinators role in liaising with the ESRC on their behalf. This included negotiating time extensions, and dealing with the bureaucratic issues relating to personnel and financial management.

“the Programme co-ordinators were helpful, especially in bridging the relationship with the HCA.” *PI*

The Coordinator reported that four briefing meetings were held with the HCA Academy to keep them abreast of developments, and regular email and telephone discussions were also held with them and the ESRC. Our discussions with the HCA Academy suggested there were differing expectations on what was an appropriate level of communication. The HCA Academy being more used to dealing with consultants than academics would have appreciated more frequent briefings which would allow them to be kept up to date on developments such as the proposed book.

(iv) Advising all stakeholders on maximising the impact of the Initiative in terms of research, policy and practice.

Each member of the coordination team was designated as first point of liaison for 3-4 individual projects and the Co-ordinator reported that telephone and face-to-face discussions were held at least twice with most project teams. A research assistant, appointed to the coordination team for the last 8 months of the co-ordination contract, played a vital role in gathering the research output material and ensuring consistency of presentation and that planned outputs were delivered on time.

The PIs were encouraged to present and publish by the co-ordination team and several of those we interviewed reported that they had been given useful advice and guidance on appropriate outlets for publication. One PI outlined the support that had been provided.

“She was able to give good substantive feed back on what we were doing. She was very challenging. Outside events she was able to feed in what other projects both in and outside the Programme were doing and what was happening in the ASC. She helped keep us connected in the Programme – helped us think about the generic learning for the Programme. She helped us choose the best case studies to choose as she could see them in the context of the total ... She was a good critical friend.”

As noted above, Robert Rogerson and co-Coordiators Anne Green and Cecilia Wong are co-editing a book due for publication in spring 2011, with a chapter contributed by each of the eleven PIs and Introductory and Conclusion chapters by the co-editorial team. Dr Rogerson has also negotiated a special issue of the *Town Planning Review* journal.

However, several PIs felt that more could have been done to maximize the impact of the research. Few projects felt that co-ordinators helped them develop links with others working in the field beyond the Programme: “they were supportive rather than useful“. In the view of another PI: “the Programme Coordinators were not taking the lead in developing an impact strategy and forcefully/confidently promoting the Programme to agencies/ministries”.

(v) Capacity enhancement

For a significant number (over 50%) of the PIs, this Programme was their first experience of managing and delivering an ESRC grant (although some had held EU and EPSRC awards) and as noted above the Co-ordinators played a key role in helping many of these negotiate their way through some of the bureaucratic hurdles and dealing with the problems that arose. The Programme will have undoubtedly helped develop their research management and research capability through the transfer of skills and experience across the different projects and through the input and guidance of the Co-ordinators themselves.

The Programme administrator at Strathclyde also provided the PIs with vital support in translating their research findings into a format that was more accessible to practitioners and policy makers. Having someone like her with experience of both the academic and practitioner/policy environment was a huge asset.

4.5.2 Value Added by the Programme

The feedback obtained from the PIs suggested that there were differing views on the extent to which they felt the Programme had added value to their project. Four PIs were very positive and felt that they had got a lot out of the Programme in terms of contacts, cross-disciplinary links, and useful exchanges with other PIs.

“The project meetings were useful for the exchange of ideas and mutual support”

“The Programme Coordination team helped develop links to other projects, other research, and the HCA.”

A further 3 PIs could be described as having more neutral views regarding the Programme. They had benefited from the support provided by the Coordinators and contact with other PIs, but felt that with such an eclectic grouping of projects more clustering of projects covering similar ground would have been useful.

“There were some useful exchanges with the Programme Coordinators, but there was no attempt to link us up with similar projects”

No one argued that grouping projects into programmes was a bad idea, however the remaining five PIs did not feel that this particular Programme had added significant value to the individual projects. One suggested that:

“This Programme could be summed up by a series of ‘missed opportunities’. It did not get the group of projects together early enough, there were few opportunities to present and discuss on going work, and no opportunity to interact with other projects. It did not develop a synergy.”

Again, the late appointment of the Coordination effort and the funding process - from brief/objectives to project selection - have together limited the scope for Programme - wide value added and impact, which are now been partially mitigated by dissemination activity by both the HCA Academy and Coordinators (post-award).

4.6 The Value of the Partnership Approach to Commissioning and Managing of the Initiative

A partnership involving an external agency is designed to help ensure that the research has a strong impact on policy and practice and this was clearly the rationale for the ESRC/HCA Academy co-financing of the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme. This partnership has had a positive impact on the Programme, but for a number of reasons its full potential was not realised in the case of this particular Programme.

The involvement of the HCA Academy in the selection of projects and with it the focus on end user engagement meant that a number of planning schools who were predominantly practice based and thus generally found it difficult to get research funding were able under this initiative to secure a research grant for the first time.

As noted above useful collaborations were formed between the HCA Academy and some of the projects. The HCA Academy was also for example involved in helping Murtagh promote the need for a Skills Academy in Northern Ireland. The focus at the end of the Programme on producing outputs, particularly the case studies that the HCA Academy could use also ensured that the outputs were produced in a practitioner friendly format.

However, it would appear that once the Programme got underway both the ESRC and the HCA Academy reverted into their usual mode of operation. There was clearly a culture difference between the two organisations way of working with the ESRC more used to funding exploratory and 'academic' research, and the HCA's expectation of concrete outcomes being delivered within much tighter timeframes. The fact that the HCA Academy was undergoing a major internal re-organisation at this time, as the ASC became part of the Homes and Communities Agency also meant that staff were inevitably focused on internal changes for some of the time. Whilst fortunately the staff team involved in the initiative remained intact, and ongoing support was provided throughout by them and the HCA Academy chair, the format in which they wanted the outputs (especially the case studies) changed during the course of the Programme as the HCA Academy clarified its new structure and objectives.

In the view of some of the PIs and from our own assessment it was not clear how project findings will feed into the HCA Academy policy and those of other key end-users, and there was a feeling amongst some of those we interviewed that the HCA Academy should have provided clearer guidance on what they expected from the Programme at the start and then ensured that this was followed through during the course of the Programme.

4.7 Overall Successes and Weaknesses

The Programme has produced particular achievements, as follows:

4.7.1 Successes

- From a theoretical and policy perspective, the importance of the acquisition of skills and knowledge as process and through continual embeddedness (workplace, community) - and away from codified skills/training
- Cross-disciplinary thinking, literature and cross-fertilisation between other research (including overseas) and projects (e.g. BRASS)
- Novel research and engagement methods
- Local collaborations, creative learning
- Support of new researchers/first grant holders; funding of a range of projects which might usually fall outside of ESRC support, e.g. action and social learning projects
- Academic quality (although not universal)
- Outputs relative to timescale and funding

Several weaknesses have however been observed:

4.7.2. Weaknesses

- Small number of projects covering very diverse areas and topics made it difficult to cluster around meaningful themes
- Mismatch between HCA Academy objectives and spread of projects – not all objectives were able to be covered
- Low visibility of the Programme (and Projects) amongst key end-users, stakeholders and media
- Co-ordinators appointed after projects awards had been made – no programme ‘brand’ established (it would have been better to have the Coordinators in place before projects started and to have funding for co-ordinator for several months after projects finished, e.g. Co-ordinator had to find additional funding to keep the administrator on to do the dissemination work and deliver all the project briefings)
- Limited communication between award holders between programme events – an online forum might have encouraged greater communication
- Results of project and Programme only just beginning to emerge, but no funding now to take them forward
- Not enough time to follow through on impact – no ‘feedback loop. The ESRC’s new final reporting process adopted in November 2009, includes extending the timing of evaluations from 3 to 12 months after awards end to allow for more outputs and impacts to emerge and capturing more project output and impact evidence through the ESRC website. So hopefully this will enable a better recording of this type of data for future projects.
- Limited funding (small, fec grants) and timescale

From the view of one Project PI: “project partnerships with local communities were invaluable, but the costs of this for research were unrecognised by the funding model. In the future, collaborative research with communities needs to recognise the ongoing cost of time/money incurred by communities..”

One PI felt that what is not in place are the mechanisms for the HCA Academy and other relevant policy and practitioner organisations to take on the deeper messages from the project

Some projects were of course a success in their own terms, but the overall Programme was seen as not having taken advantage of the opportunity to develop a strategic approach to policy impact.

5. THE CONTRIBUTION OF INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS TO THE INITIATIVE

This section outlines each of the eleven projects and summarises their outputs, including our assessment set against each project Evaluation grade. Outputs reflect those listed on Programme and ESRC websites and in End of Award Reports. These have also been summarised in Annex 3 with adjustment for publications we have reviewed that do not arise from the SKSC project.

(1) The Challenge of Learning from what works in the Development of Sustainable Communities: Closing the Skills Gap by Raising Competencies

Mr Mark Deakin, Napier University

Description: This project identified the need for better understanding of the ‘generic skills’ identified in the Eagan Review. It sought to explore these skills through a re-examination of the literature on current approaches to and case studies of sustainable community development in the UK and North America; and through an exploration, simulation and evaluation of socially inclusive visioning with communities. It aimed to produce a ‘state of the art’ literature review and a set of guidelines for professional bodies to adopt when engaged in community based regeneration and who wish to use a socially inclusive visioning technique. The literature review, case studies and empirical research in this project were muddled with questionable outcomes. The literature review was ‘thin’ and case studies empirically weak. The simulation model was confusing and overly complex, its evaluation scant and the methodology unexplained. The guidelines for professionals were not produced nor were the planned dissemination activities with core regeneration professionals. Although some theoretical merit was recognised by one referee the remaining two raised doubts about this project’s quality.

Highlights: One referee suggested that the project’s identification of a ‘transect’ model of urban intervention as an alternative to ‘village’ or neighbourhood models may have conceptual potential. Remaining referees failed to identify highlights.

Project Evaluation Grade: Problematic

Further Comment: Agree with the grade. The material provided on this project was very poorly written and produced. It was exceptionally difficult to follow. The methodology and results of any substantive research are obscured by verbose text. Despite longstanding working relationships within the project team, conceptual and operational differences hindered the initial stages of the project. It was unclear what new work had been undertaken. Only one (of 3 planned) simulation evaluation exercise appears to have been undertaken and the participants in this exercise were not made clear. Dissemination to professional bodies was abandoned. It was also unclear how much this work relied on material already assembled for EU funded

programmes or for an on-going EPSRC project (SURegen) – some Project outputs cited the latter project. One of the claimed outputs (a journal article) directly cites an EU programme (LUDA) in the title. This project seems to have been poorly connected to the Programme.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 2 journal articles, 2 book chapters

Academic Output (ESRC Website): None

User Output: None

**(2) Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities in Contested Space
RES-182-25-0037**

Dr Frank Gaffikin, Dr Ken Sterrett, Queen's University Belfast

Description: This action-research project addresses the relevance of Belfast's experience of building community capacity amid inter-communal strife for the English challenge of creating sustainable social space, rooted in greater inter-culturalism and 'community cohesion'. The project worked in partnership with local organisations in 4 selected communities (2 Catholic and 2 Protestant), sited in problematic interface areas involved in neighbourhood renewal and which reflected different levels of organisation and competency. The methodology used a participatory planning approach and involved a baseline assessment of existing community infrastructure, the development of sustainable community plans and an evaluation of the project's impact. Semi-structured interviews with leading community development and community relations activists, senior planners, government officials and others involved in regeneration were also undertaken. The project sought to internationalise its work through links with universities in N America, the UK and.

Highlights: The project raises important issues regarding the nature of sustainable communities in the context of contested areas, in particular whether communities can be sustainable if they are racist, secretarian or otherwise segregated and separatist. The relevance of this project extends well beyond Northern Ireland to communities in conflict around the world.

Project Evaluation Grade: Good

Further Comment: We agree with the evaluation grade. The project was very ambitious but managed to achieve most of its objectives in a relatively short period of time and the research has made an important contribution to the Programme.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): Two journal articles, 4 consultancy/community reports, 2 working papers

Academic Output (ESRC Website): 1 journal article, 4 consultancy reports

User Output: The results and issues arising from the research have been discussed with the Northern Ireland Department of Regional Development, Community Relations Council, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and the Department of the Environment's Planning Service and preliminary findings have been presented at 8 conferences/seminars.

**(3) SAKS: Skills and Knowledge Builder for Sustainable Communities
RES-182-25-0009**

Ms Ann Hockey, Anglia Ruskin University

Description: The research addresses the Egan Review's finding that there is a shortage of generic skills and knowledge among built environment professionals. The project aimed to develop a suite of web-based resources in order to support and enhance learning and skills development amongst this group, initially targeting practitioners in the East of England. The methodology included a review of existing on-line learning materials in the sphere of sustainable communities and generic skills, focus groups and interviews, and the design and development of web resources based on the results. The web-based tool developed enables participants to self-assess their skills and knowledge and access online study materials to address gaps.

Highlights: The importance of organisational context to the acquisition of skills and knowledge. The idea of linking self-assessment of skills and knowledge to relevant learning resources

Project Evaluation Grade: Good

Further Comment: We agree with the evaluation grade awarded. This was a sound, project that delivered its objectives and has produced a useful online resource, although this seems to be mainly benefiting the university's students rather than the wider professional community at present.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 1 practitioner's conference presentation, 3 academic conference papers

Academic Output (ESRC Website): 1 journal article

User Output: The research has been discussed with 4 professional networks, the RTPI, the Regional Centre of Excellence and other professional bodies including the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Chartered Institute of Housing, RIBA and the Chartered Institute of Building. The University's students, many of who are working for local authorities, are currently using the online tool.

(4) Developing the Learning Potential of Appraisal in Spatial Planning

Ms Sue Kidd, University of Liverpool

Description: The project aimed to examine and develop the learning potential of appraisal in spatial planning. Under the European Union Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, Sustainability Appraisals are now required for regional and district plans and for small area plans. This is entailing considerable time and resources from public, private and voluntary sectors but the project team concern was that government guidelines while important were encouraging a 'tick the boxes' formalistic and legalistic response to the process with consultancies often called in to do the work all of which was missing the space for dialogue and sustainability which appraisal potentially provides. The project examines the learning potential of sustainability appraisal through examining 3 models of good practice in local authorities in Germany, Italy and England (Southampton). The project findings highlight the potential for learning from appraisal and points to the importance of the organisational context of learning especially to the importance of wider organisational and political support for sustainability. The project questions the focus emanating from Egan of just identifying skills and emphasises the importance of learning and the process of learning. In particular, it identifies that in the most successful case studies, Sustainability teams were in place to support planning officers in carrying out appraisal.

Highlights: One of the key highlights was the breadth of engagement of the project with users and the wide-ranging dissemination programme. The project held workshops both during and towards the end of the projects with keynote speakers and around 40 participants to engage with the dialogue. Papers have also been given to a variety of national and international audiences and the findings published or planned to be published in a wide range of academic and practitioner journals. The key findings of the project were also significant emphasising the importance of the organisational context and support for sustainability and for learning. A key highlight was also the framework developed to better understand learning in appraisal.

Project Evaluation Grade: Good

Further Comment: We agree with the evaluation grade. The project achieved its objectives, made some interesting observations and the findings have been widely disseminated.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 1 published journal article, 2 papers submitted to peer reviewed journals and 1 close to submission, 3 papers in preparation. Further papers planned over next 12 to 18 months.

Academic Output (ESRC Website): Case study on website – Southampton LDF – Developing the Learning Potential of Sustainability Appraisal.

Academic Output (own website): Project and published article listed on www.liv.ac.uk/civdes/staff/kidd

User Output: Material emanating from project to form part of update of SA/SEA module which forms part of RTPI online master of Planning developed jointly by UWE and Dept. Civic Design, University of Liverpool.

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

Dr Michael Leyshon, University of Exeter

Description: The purpose of this project was to critically examine how opportunities to engage in voluntary/unpaid rural conservation and environmental projects are planned for and experienced by young people (14-25 years) in the South & West of England. It questioned young people's motivation, the efficacy of conservation and environmental groups in enabling young people's participation, and examined the skills, capacities, attitudes and values cultivate by such activities. The work involved an online survey of environmental and conservation groups, interviews with those responsible for the design, delivery and involvement of young people in rural environmental projects and focus groups with young participants. The research found that the majority of young participants do not live in rural locations and there were multiple routes into participation (family, friends, school encouragement; supported learning for those with learning, mental health or disability needs; and enthusiasm for conservation activities). It identified a significant number of coerced or mandated young people sent to specific 'green ghetto' projects because of issues of behaviour or offending. These young participants' experience of the environmental project increased their sense of marginalisation and exclusion. Few projects were specifically design with young people in mind. Organisations were predominantly passive recipients of volunteers/participants. Opportunities for skills development often remained specific to the environmental sphere and did not map onto wider social/employment worlds. Young people were often used as unskilled labour accruing few perceived benefits in terms of skills, knowledge or esteem. Most individuals running projects were not equipped to facilitate environmental knowledge or skills learning amongst young people. The full benefit from rural environmental projects requires focussing on young people's needs for social/personal skills development.

Highlights: The understanding of 'youth work process' enhanced the analysis and insight from this research. Action research with marginalised young people had a positive impact both on individuals and on the way projects were conceived and run in the study area. Applied and practical nature of the research enabled strong stakeholder engagement. The research challenged the intellectual boundaries between youth work and environmental conservation. It exposed the unsatisfactory and potentially damaging way in which marginalised young people are enlisted on environmental projects in the name of skills development.

Project Evaluation Grade: Good

Further Comment: We agree with the grade. This project was a first award to a relatively 'new' researcher. The significant amount of empirical research and analysis were diligently executed within the 12-month timetable and all the objectives were met. Formal dissemination included a Stakeholder Briefing and Report; 5 conference papers with 2 journal articles planned. Informal formative feedback to participants and organisations took place throughout the research. Media interest was generated through an ESRC press release leading to broadcast and print media interviews. This was a successful project in its own right. It engaged directly with skills acquisition in a particular rural/youth context and has the potential to deliver both ongoing academic outputs and practitioner engagement. However there were under developed synergies with other projects in the Programme (e.g. Sheffield).

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 5 Conference Papers (2 International), 1 Departmental Seminar Presentation

User Output: 1 stakeholder briefing, 1 stakeholder reports

(6) Motivating, Engaging, Leading and Supporting Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities - Applying Models of Sustainable Localised Economies

Professor Terry Marsden, Cardiff University

Description: The purpose of this research was to review the skills and knowledge required and used in the creation of sustainable communities. The study focused on community members who are actively engaged with local sustainability initiatives. The research sought to explore how communities can become engaged and motivated to participate in community level sustainable activity (specifically around energy, food, transport and community engagement); to examine demands on existing skills and knowledge as sustainable practices increase; and to address how communities identify their own skills and knowledge. This work challenged existing policy concern with identifying 'skills sets' for sustainable communities that are universal and can be embodied within codified formal learning. This research found that the development of skills and knowledge are 'place based' and embedded in the activity of participation – 'learning by doing' and 'learning by seeing'. Skills and knowledge cannot be imported from elsewhere and need to be negotiated within the specific local context. The research findings suggest that policy need to move from skills sets to processes of learning in which time, people and place are the critical components. The research developed a Web-based Virtual Sustainable Community featuring 12 national/international case studies of good sustainable community practice; undertook in depth field work in a community renowned for its sustainability activism; and developed a pilot skills and knowledge model for communities.

Highlights: Wide range of case studies; identification of informal channels for skills transfer in building sustainable communities; research creates valuable synergies and connections between community groups, policy makers and academics through grounded approach to the research; high levels of sensitivity in developing the research methodology which enhanced the quality of the results.

Project Evaluation Grade: Outstanding

Further Comment: Agreed the grading subject to the 'inflation' of research outputs/publications claimed by Marsden (see below). This project benefited enormously from being undertaken by experienced researchers within a Research Centre environment. Changes in staffing could be accommodated with relative ease and additional support of staff time and resources could be mobilised in this research rich environment. This enabled the project team to deliver outputs and dissemination activity far over and above what was in the proposal – despite significant reservations of reviewers about the quality and feasibility of the proposal at the bidding stage.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 2 working papers, 4 journal articles in press/preparation, 2 journal articles 'published' **but not based on SKSC project**, 1 edited book, 2 book chapters, 8+ conference papers (again some not relevant to the project award).

Academic Output (ESRC Website): as above

User Output: policy briefings, 2 policy seminars (DEFRA and DCLG)

(7) Skills for Managing Spatial Diversity RES-182-25-0019

Dr Brendan Murtagh, Geraint Ellis, Queen's University Belfast

Description: This study aimed to evaluate the relevance of the Egan Review for Northern Ireland; and to evaluate the relevance of experience in the management of ethno religious conflict for the wider community cohesion debate. The research developed a specific skills framework for managing spatial diversity, which highlighted the importance of local power circuits, the value of agnostic practices, the link between skills and the co-production of knowledge and the need to establish and support communities of learning practice. The methodology included analysis of 11 best practice case studies, semi-structured interviews with 38 policymakers, practitioners, and professional bodies and an e-survey of 253 individuals active in the arena of sustainable communities in NI.

Highlights: An important analysis of the skills required for managing spatial diversity. The application of the findings to the development of learning and research tools including an HCA Academy video and web discussion

Project Evaluation Grade: Good

Further Comment: We concur with the rapporteurs grading for this project. The research was well organised, achieved its objectives and led to a large number of dissemination activities. The researchers were also able to maximize the opportunities the Programme offered for developing links with agencies in mainland UK. The research findings have been used by the ASC in the development of training videos and have also featured in one of their web based debates.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 5 conference/seminar papers, 2 journal articles submitted

Academic Output (ESRC Website): 2 discussion papers, 2 research papers, 5 working publications

Academic Output (own project website): Project outputs posted on own website <http://www.qub.ac.uk/ep/research/level1/index.htm>

User Output: Meetings held with HCA Academy and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to look at the implications of the work for faith and community cohesion. Links developed with the Department for Social Development (NI) have led to the research contributing the proposed new regional skills strategy, the Housing Executive (NI) work in interface areas, and the development of Groundwork (NI)'s new skills resource centre. Information leaflet sent to all those who participated in the research.

(8) Exploring the Role of Schools in the Development of Sustainable Communities

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

Description: The aims of this project were to explore the role of schools in developing sustainable communities. The project worked with 6 schools and 3 NGO's (Peacechild International, ECO Schools and the WWF) all of whom had been involved in the Sustainable Schools Strategy (DCSF 2006) Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The project builds on work with children and action learning carried out previously by members of the project team. The project brings together recognition of learning being key to sustainable communities and the importance of moving beyond simple knowledge acquisition to deeper and more transformative learning and recognition of children as active agents of change. The project involved developing a number of action learning initiatives with each of the schools including the sustainable food guide. The key findings from the project were that children are key agents of change but that new approaches to learning need to be developed in schools incorporating action-based learning across the school curriculum.

Highlights: Collaborative project engaging with schools and children –action 'doing' based research engaging children and staff and sometimes wider community. Findings emphasise importance of children as agents of change and of 'action based' learning in sustainability in schools spilling over into community and importance of different approaches to learning in general.

Project Evaluation Grade: Good

Further Comment: We agree with the grade.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 3 academic journal publications in progress. Also planning articles for professional periodicals and conference presentations.

Academic Output (ESRC Website): Learning from the research has been posted on the ESRC website and includes case studies (Connecting school based sustainability initiatives with community action and Exploring the role of schools in the development of sustainable communities – case study on sustainable food).

Academic Output (own project website): Learning from research posted on SOLAR (www.uwe.ac.uk/solar) and the Institute for Sustainability, Health and Environment (www.uwe.ac.uk/ashe) at UWE including links to articles and case studies.

User Output: 2 workshops run as part of action learning during and at end of project. Sustainable Food Guide produced by children. Community Group newsletter produced. Findings will help inform Continuing Professional Development (CPD) with schools and NGOs.

**(9) Enabling Sustainable Communities: Supporting Effective Skills Development for Current and Future Core Built Environment Professionals
RES-182-25-0024**

Professor Sarah Sayce, Kingston University

Description: This research aimed to identify the skills and attributes most useful and effective in ensuring positive stakeholder engagement and whether built environment professionals are currently appropriately prepared for this. The multi-method approach included literature reviews, two on-line national questionnaire surveys and follow-up interviews, four case studies of engagement in practice, and a review of existing initiatives.

Highlights: The research has highlighted the importance of the language used to describe skills. It found that the language in which subject benchmarks are couched does not provide an easy fit to the Egan Generic Skills. Similarly different professions attach different interpretations to key terms. The research also highlights the difference between skills that can be taught and 'soft' skills and personal attributes that require the development of self-awareness rather than formal teaching.

Project Evaluation Grade: Problematic

Further Comment: We concur with the rapporteurs in finding that the analysis of the results has lacked rigour and the dissemination to date has been limited. The grade of problematic therefore seems appropriate in this case.

Academic Output (End of Award Report): 2 conference presentations, 2 journal articles submitted

Academic Output (ESRC Website): None listed

User Output: Discussions held with professional body and RTPPI

(10) Engaging with Rivers in a Period of Uncertainty

Professor Paul Selman, University of Sheffield

Description: This project looked at the connections between people and rivers in the context of developing sustainable communities. Its starting point was the current and diverse understandings of rivers, flood risk, draining and water quality within professional and local communities. The proposition was that people living alongside rivers increasingly have limited knowledge of river dynamics and professionals often adhere to unsustainable conceptualisation/methods of management. The project aimed to examine the interface between professional ('hard engineering') notions of flood management and multiple popular understandings of river environments. Reconnection people to their river environments through a creative activity was proposed as a mechanism for raising questions about the process of public participation in river/flood planning and management. A creative writing group of local residents was used to explore local interpretations of rivers. This project used action research around an arts based project to explore environmental knowledge and attitudes to river management. It was an ambitious project given the limited timescale of the Programme

Highlights: Hard to establish without full write up and publications.

Project Evaluation Grade: Problematic

Further Comment: Agree grading but recognise that the PI had particular difficulties to overcome at the outset. His efforts to maintain the project and keep both the Programme directors and the ESRC informed must be acknowledged. Although the work undertaken was largely within the scope of the proposal the research was considered very broad and ill defined methodologically both at the proposal and rapporteur stages. The novelty of the research findings were also challenged and it was suggested that similar work/findings were already in the public domain. There were considerable problems with staff moving between institutions/out of academia and with gaining promised access to the Environment Agency. This hindered key aspects of this project's work, particularly relating the creative writing group activity to an ongoing river management scheme. Delays in starting the project also limited the quality of the final report and the outputs produced from the research. An anthology of the creative writing project's work has only recently been supplemented by research commentaries on the project's host institution website. .

Academic Output (End of Award Report): None

Academic Output (ESRC Website): None

User Output: Creative Writing Anthology, Project Website hosted by Sheffield University

(11) Assessing the Practice and Potential of Situated Learning in the Work of Building Sustainable Communities

Dr Ian Smith, University of the West of England

Description: The aims of this project were to assess the practice and potential of situated social learning in multi-disciplinary work teams working on building sustainable communities. The initial proposal was to carry out three case studies however in practice this proved unrealistic and one case study was completed – a Growth Point Initiative in Cranbrook, east Devon. The case study examined how individuals learn in the workplace among a multi-disciplinary group of staff working on building sustainable communities, and involved 31 participants. The research focussed on the importance of the wider social context of learning emphasising the importance, for example, of high-level champions of learning for sustainable communities and supportive line-managers within the organisation.

Highlights: Highlighted importance of broader processes of organisational and social context of learning.

Project Evaluation Grade: None as yet.

Further Comment: None

Academic Output (End of Award Report): No End of Award Report available. Academic papers proposed have yet to be written.

Academic Output (ESRC Website): Project description available on ESRC website.

Academic Output (own website): www.bne.uwe.ac.uk/cities/sustcomm.asp gives details of project and provides link to Collaborative Working Group website set up for participants of the case study in east Devon.

User Output: Research findings fed into an HCA Academy master class on experiential learning run by the project team following request by HCA. Research findings to be fed into on-line teaching resources for UWE planning masters. Project referenced in *Planning* article, October 2009.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusions

As the Coordinators noted in their final report, the initiative - as conceived and implemented - funded a selection of stand alone research projects which sought to address the aims outlined in the brief, but 'this approach inevitably leads to uneven coverage of the priority research areas originally identified' (July 2009: 8).

In particular, gaps identified included:

- i. Addressing what are 'sustainable communities'
- ii. Factors affecting future skills demand and supply
- iii. International comparisons

i. This is of course fundamental and the opportunity to address it more directly amongst projects and during exchanges between Coordinators and Project teams might have benefited and distinguished the whole Programme. In hindsight, a scoping exercise and position paper at the initiative briefing stage would have helped clarify aims and objectives and perhaps would have helped to situate the projects (and their expectations) within the Sustainable Communities and related Skills & Knowledge debates and literature (as noted by several reviewers). Sustainable Communities as a meta-theme is perhaps too broad for a programme of this limited size to draw out a critical mass of people working on a particular sub-theme. On the other hand, more access to evidence rising from cognate research programmes (e.g. ESRC Cities Competitiveness & Cohesion; EPSRC Sustainable Urban Environments) and arising discourses around inter-disciplinarity would have demonstrated a sounder knowledge base for the projects and for the Programme as a whole.

ii. 'Skills as a process' is a key finding from the project, but this has not been highlighted prominently by the Programme so far. How the research and findings can and will inform current and future policy and practice, and in particular, approaches to learning and skills development and to knowledge acquisition and 'transfer' - remains the most unanswered aspect of the Programme. The challenge of how the HCA Academy and other intermediary organisations might operationalise the findings is not clear, and how future supply and demand might be affected and predicted, given the specific findings concerning situated learning. These are issues that perhaps need to be taken up with the support of the ESRC's Follow-on Funding Scheme. Again in hindsight (five years on) how far 'Egan' is and was a valid starting point for a research-based investigation into skills & knowledge is questionable, and certainly not one that serves as useful departure point or base for future research in this field.

iii. The use of international evidence and comparisons generally did not feature in the majority of the research undertaken. The extent to which international models and practice is transferable to the UK situation is questionable in some respects. However the systemic 'structural weakness' in built environment/regeneration processes and structures (cf. CABE Urban Design Skills Deficit) warrants international evidence and input, particularly in the areas of community planning and visioning as considered in some SKSC projects.

As noted by the Coordinators, 'uneven coverage' extended to the geographical and range of sustainable communities that were able to be the subject of the eleven funded research projects. These and the case studies were clustered in a few

regions (e.g. N.Ireland, South West) leaving no research that focused on prime housing growth (and decline) and regeneration areas and their host communities, notably Thames Gateway and other housing growth areas (Milton Keynes, East & West Midlands and Eastern regions). This was perhaps a missed opportunity to address and work with particular skill challenges in these scenarios (e.g. new and extended urban village, 'eco-villages', London2012/Lea Valley) and to widen and raise the profile of the Programme. This would have required a more targeted approach to the selection process, based on 'themes' (e.g. typologies of sustainable communities and skills) made explicit in the call for proposals, with some weighting used in project assessment. It also needs to be acknowledged particularly in dissemination and toolkits' etc. that different communities in different settings have different needs and responses to skills development and interventions, that 'one size does not fit all'. Research findings may not necessarily be directly transferable and may need wider validation and testing in different scenarios or be conditional upon specific contexts in which they have been created.

The operational challenges created by the retro-fitting of a programme onto an initiative represented by eleven stand alone projects have been reflected in the limitations to the impact and inter-disciplinarity achieved during the Programme. The opportunity to develop strong links between projects was missed - but with the Coordinators only funded for a year and appointed six months into inception of projects with varying start and end dates, the strategy to exploit and disseminate findings was reasonable and is starting to bear fruit as the HCA Academy and hopefully other end-users benefit from the findings.

Finally, the individual projects have produced valuable and in several cases useful results which will no doubt benefit academic, policy and practitioner audiences and public, commercial and third sectors. New grant holders have particularly added value in terms of improving research capacity, with the development of novel methodologies and approaches, particularly in community engagement. The range and number of outputs relative to resources (grant values and timescales) has been significant (certainly above-average) and this will expand as planned outputs are realised during 2010/11 and HCA Academy dissemination incorporates the material produced in its various forms.

Working with and engaging communities does however take time and requires recognition of the resources required by those beneficiary communities. As Rydin observed: 'creating new institutions of knowledge generation means developing networks of knowledge generation that transcend existing institutional boundaries, It means going beyond the idea of researchers connecting with users on an occasional basis, whether during research design, data collection or dissemination. Rather, all those staking a claim to relevant knowledge need to be embedded together into networks that are dense, strong and effective' (Editorial, *Env & Planning A* 38:1007, 2006).

6.2. Recommendations

Recommendations arising from this Programme Evaluation and the evidence provided during our review are as follows:

- Programme Coordinator needs to be appointed before the Programme begins and ideally needs to be involved in the selection of projects
- Dividing Coordination across institutions/locations is not effective – this dilutes the core resource and reduces the coordination impact and benefit to projects/Pis

- The selection of projects within a programme needs to take account of key themes and imperatives (e.g. geographic and beneficiary coverage) rather than focus primarily on 'academic quality'. This needs to be incorporated into the review process
- The ESRC should consider asking PIs to complete a Risk Assessment at the application stage to ensure that contingency plans are developed to deal with any difficulties that might arise.
- In the case of End-User oriented research, earlier involvement of national policy makers is required and should be maintained throughout the Programme. The establishment of a Programme Steering Group with representatives from End-Users would help in this regard (e.g. as required under EPSRC Sustainable Urban Environments programme)
- In order to be viable and sustainable, programmes need to be of a critical mass/size and duration in order to develop thematic clusters and allow sufficient time for research development, iteration and findings to be incorporated into more coherent impact plans. RC Impact and Impact Plan requirement in new proposals is clearly of benefit to achieving this from the outset
- The attribution of outputs (i.e. publications) to the funded research needs closer attention and any non-attributed work discounted in promotion and project review. Full acknowledgement of project teams (not just PI) and to co-funders (e.g. HCA) in all publications should be made (including ESRC credit in required format).
- A system needs to be developed for measuring the 'added value' achieved by a project both in terms of advancing knowledge and of developing the PI's personal research skills and profile. Possibly rapporteurs should provide an additional grade for this.
- Projects should be encouraged to make better use of the ESRC website and to upload outputs as they are produced.

6.3. Potential Research Areas for Development

As noted in terms of gaps between the scope of the funded projects and Programme Objectives, key areas not covered included:

- International comparisons
- Migration and the impact of migrant communities

The use of a position paper and scoping paper addressing the key issues - definitional, conceptual and applied - may well have benefited the Programme from the outset, as we have suggested. This may still be of value *post-hoc* as a review of the Projects and Programme findings - for example see Fainstein, S. on ESRC Cities, Competitiveness and Cohesion programme ('Competitiveness, Cohesion, and Governance: Their Implications for Social Justice', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25(4) 2001). Placing this in an international context may be a useful contribution, perhaps steered by the Coordinators in a journal special issue.

A separate scoping study commissioned as a first step towards international comparisons and evidence would also identify areas for further research. Engaging international researchers from overseas as part of future research programmes, e.g. on steering committee (above) and through Project peer review would also assist in this goal. International experience was touched upon in the SKSC Belfast-based study but this was not really addressed by the Programme, so again arrangements for engaging international research as part of the Programme might be made more explicit in Coordinator activity and project deliverables.

Migration as a theme also needs addressing, but also clarification and 'unpacking'. The skills and knowledge needs and issues arising from migrant communities and the relationship between incumbent and new residents (where learning and knowledge exchange are important to social cohesion) - but also the contribution migrants and minority ethnic communities in particular can make to skills development and knowledge transfer at a local level. This also links to the wider theme of social exclusion and the aspirations of inclusive Sustainable Communities - and skills and knowledge issues arising. Research particularly focusing on the place and experience of migrant communities within Sustainable Communities - what Sustainable Communities actually means for these and 'mixed' communities and neighbourhoods - and how exclusion affects skills and knowledge development and needs, may warrant prioritisation since this has not been addressed substantially in the SKSC Programme.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 Research Projects

ID	PIs	Discipline	Grant Name	Duration	Grant
1	Deakin	Area and Development Studies	The Challenge of Learning from What Works in the Development of Sustainable Communities: Closing the Skills Gap by Raising Competencies	May07-Jun08	£78,873
2	Gaffikin	Belfast Environmental Planning	Capacity Building for Sustainable Communities in Contested Space	Apr07-Sep08	£47,925
3	Hockey	Environmental Planning	SAKS: Skills and Knowledge Builder for Sustainable Communities	Oct07-Nov08	£79,489
4	Kidd	Environmental Planning	Developing the learning potential of appraisal in spatial planning	Sep07-May08	£60,197
5	Leyshon	Human Geography	Environmental Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Rural Communities: Problems and Prospects for the Inclusion of Young People	Jun07-Sep08	£57,720
6	Marsden	Human Geography	Motivating, Engaging, Leading and Supporting Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities - Applying Models of Sustainable Localised Economies	Oct07-Sep08	£79,700
7	Murtagh	Environmental Planning	Skills for Managing Spatial Diversity	Jul07-Jun08	£39,556
8	Percy-Smith	Education	Exploring the role of schools in the development of Sustainable Communities	Oct07-Jan09	£67,116
9	Sayce	Environmental Planning	Enabling Sustainable Communities: Supporting effective skills development for current and future core built environment professionals	Jul07-Jun08	£80,657
10	Selman	Environmental Planning	Engaging with rivers in a period of uncertainty	Nov07-Nov08	£76,605
11	Smith	Environmental Planning	Assessing the Practice and Potential of Situated Social Learning in the Work of Building Sustainable Communities	Jun07-Sep08	£78,662

ANNEX 2 Evaluation of Research Projects

ID	PIs	ESRC Project Number	Overall Evaluation Grade	Number of Rapporteur Comments	Grade Assigned By Each Rapporteur
1	Deakin	RES-182-25-0004	P	2	P, P
2	Gaffikin	RES-182-25-0037	G	3	G, G/P, G
3	Hockey	RES-182-25-0009	G	2	G, G
4	Kidd	RES-182-25-0018	G		G
5	Leyshon	RES-182-25-0007	G	2	G, G
6	Marsden	RES-182-25-0012	O	2	O, G
7	Murtagh	RES-182-25-0019	G	3	O/G, G, G
8	Percy-Smith	RES-182-25-0038	G	4	G, G, G, P
9	Sayce	RES-182-25-0024	P	2	P, P
10	Selman	RES-182-25-0006	P	3	G, P, G
11	Smith	RES-182-25-0021	N/A	N/A	N/A
Key: O = Outstanding, G = Good, P = Problematic					

ANNEX 3 Publication Data (*in press/under review*)

ID	Project	Book Chapter*	Journal Article	Working Paper	Conference, Seminar & Workshop presentations/papers (inc web)	TOTAL
1	Deakin	2	1	1		4
2	Gaffikin		1	6	7	14
3	Hockey		1		3	4
4	Kidd		8		3	11
5	Leyshon				7	7
6	Murtagh		2	7	9	18
7	Marsden	3	4	4	8	19
8	Percy-Smith		3	1	1	5
9	Sayce		2		2	4
10	Selman		2		4	6
11	Smith					
	Total	5	24	19	44	92

* Plus edited book in preparation – 11 Project + 2 Coordinator chapters

Source: ESRC and Project websites and Project End of Award Reports (Reports excluded from above Publications)

ANNEX 4 Project Research Teams and Departments

ID	Name	Mentioned in Proposal	Mentioned in End of Award Report	Institution/ Department or Faculty
1	Allwinkle	x	x	Napier, Lifelong Learning Services
1	Curwell	x	x	Salford, Inst for the Built and Human Env
1	Deakin (PI)	x	x	Napier, School of Built Environment
1	Powell	x	x	Salford, Research & Graduate College
2	Gaffikin (PI)	x	x	QUB, School of Environmental Planning
2	Mawson	x		University of Warwick, Business School
2	Sterrett,	x	x	QUB, School of Environmental Planning
3	Frame	x	x	Anglia Ruskin University, Fac of Science and Technology
3	Hockey, (PI)	x	x	Anglia Ruskin University, Fac of Science and Technology
4	Fischer,	x	x	University of Liverpool, Civic Design
4	Kidd (PI)	x	x	University of Liverpool, Civic Design
4	Peel	x	x	University of Liverpool, Civic Design
5	Fish	x	x	Ormi Consulting Ltd
5	Leyshon (PI)	x	x	University of Exeter, Geography
6	Franklin		x	Cardiff University, BRASS
6	Hines	x		Cardiff University, Business School
6	Marsden (PI)	x	x	Cardiff University, City and Regional Planning
7	Ellis	x	x	QUB, School of Environmental Planning
7	Murtagh (PI)	x	x	QUB, School of Environmental Planning
8	Burns	x	x	UWE, Health and Social Care
8	Percy-Smith (PI)	x	x	UWE, Health and Social Care
9	Cowling		x	Kingston University, Fac of Art Design and Architecture
9	Ellison	x		Kingston University, Sch of Surveying
9	Farren-Bradley	x	x	Kingston University, Sch of Architecture and Landscape
9	Harris	x	x	Kingston University, Sch of Surveying
9	Lewis	x	x	Kingston University, Sch of Surveying
9	Morad	x	x	London South Bank University, Fac of Arts and Human Science
9	Neenan		x	Kingston University, (no info on web)
9	Sayce(PI)	x	x	Kingston University, Sch of Surveying
9	Shechter		x	Kingston University, (no info on web)
9	Toogood		x	Kingston University, Sustainability Hub
10	Carter		x	Forest Research
10	Lawrence		x	Forest Research
10	Morgan		x	University of Oxford, Continuing Education
10	Selman (PI)	x	x	University of Sheffield, Landscape Architecture
11	Bryan	x		UWE, Built Environment
11	Griffiths	x		UWE, Built Environment
11	Smith, I (PI)	x		UWE, Built Environment

Source: Funding Proposal and End of Award Report

ANNEX 5 Non-Academic Organisations Advised By The Programme

Key:

P	Programme
1	Deakin
2	Gaffikin
3	Hockey
4	Kidd
5	Leyshon
6	Marsden
7	Murtagh
8	Percy-Smith
9	Sayce
10	Selman
11	Smith

Organisation	Project ID
Academy for Sustainable Communities	3,7
Asset Skills	P
Banbridge District Council	7
Barnsley Borough Council	10
Belfast City Council	7
Belfast Healthy Cities	7
Bowbridge Primary School	P
Bowbridge Primary School	8
BPLN North West Region	P
Brabins Endowed School	8
BURA	7
Catalyst Housing Group	P
Centre for Aging Research NI	7
Centre for Cities	P
Centrepont	P
Chartered Institute of Building	3
Chartered Institute of Housing	7,3
Cities Programme	P
Clapham Park Homes	P
CLG	6
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE)	P
Communities and Local Government	7
Community Cohesion, NI Housing Executive	7
Community Development Foundation	P
Community Dialogue	7
Community Empowerment Partnerships, OFMDFM	7
Community Places	7
Community Relations Council (Northern Ireland)	2, 7
Comune di Ravenna (Italy)	4
Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations (CEMVO)	P
Creating Excellence	P
C-SCAIP	9
DEFRA	6

Department for Agriculture and Rural Development NI	7
Department for Environment NI	7
Department for Social Development (Northern Ireland)	7
Department of Architecture and Spatial Design	P
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (Northern Ireland)	2
Department of Geography and Sociology	P
Department of the Environment (Planning Services – Northern Ireland)	2
Eco Schools	8
EDI Group Scotland	1
EnCams	P
English Partnerships	4
Environment Agency	4,2
Experian Public Sector	P
Faculty of Science and Technology	P
First Minister and Deputy Minister NI	7
Forest Research	P
Friends of the Earth NI	7
FThomson@educ.somerset.gov.uk	8
Gallions Housing Association	P
geoffrey146@talktalk.net	2
Global to Local	8
Green Collar Limited	P
GreeNet	7
Greenwich Council	P
Groundwork	10
Groundwork NI	7
Hammersmith and Fulham Homes	P
HCA Academy	P, 4
Homes & Communities Academy	P
Housing and Growth Programmes	P
Housing Regeneration, NI Housing Executive	7
Inclusion	P
Institute for Employment Research	P
Institute of Conflict Resolution (ICR)	7
Islington and Shoreditch Housing Association	P
Keep Britain Tidy	8
LANTRA	5
Larne Borough Council	7
Lifeworlds Learning	P, 8
Local Natural England	10
London Borough of Camden	P
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham	P
London Technology Network	3
LSX	P
Millfields Community School	8
MVCDF	2
Newlodge Empowerment Project	2
NHS	2
NI Environment Link	7
NI Local Government Association	7
NICVA	7
Northern Belfast Partnership	7
Notting Hill Housing Trust	P

Novas Scarman Group	P
Office of Rt Hon Barry Sheerman MP	P
Passmore, RegenWM	7
Peacechild International	8
Planning Aid for London	P
Planning Appeals Commission	7
Planning Consultant	P
Planning Delivery and Performance	P
Planning Service	7
Policy and International Affairs	P
Review of Environmental Governance, NI	7
RICS	7
RISE	3
Rotherham Borough Council	10
Royal Institute of British Architects	3
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)	7, 3
Royal Town Planning Institute	3
RSPB	4,2
RTPI Northern Irish Branch	7
Science and Technology	P
Scott Wilson Group plc	4
Scottish Regeneration Centre	7
SEEDA	P
Sir John Lawes School	8
Social Enterprise Coalition	P
South Belfast Partnership Board	2
Southampton Council	4
SPACE	P
Sustainable Communities	P
Sustainable Development Commission	8
Sustainable Development Commission, NI	7
Sustainable Development Foundation	P
Sustainable NI	7
The Development Planning Unit	P
The Environment Council	P
The RSA	P
Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)	6
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society	7
Urban and Economic Development	8
Urban Design London	P
URBED	P
Waste Watch	P
West Midlands Regional Observatory	P
Wirral Council	P
Work2Work	P
WTA Education Services	5
WWF Panda House	8

N.B. This list does not include individuals for whom we had no organisational contact details

ANNEX 6 Commissioning Panel

The members of the commissioning panel were

In attendance:

Professor John Field (Chair), University of Stirling
Professor Peter Roberts, HCA Academy
Ms Judith Stead, HCA Academy
Professor Amanda Coffey, Cardiff University
Mr Gordon Dabinett, University of Sheffield
Dr Ann Green, University of Warwick
Professor Graham Haughton, University of Hull
Professor Ade Kearns, University of Glasgow
Dr Robert Rogerson, University of Strathclyde
Mr Adrian Passmore, RegenWM
Ms Sue Percy, RTPi

ESRC

Mr Gary Grubb
Ms Leah Bevan

Apologies

Mr Jin Carruth
Dr Jemma Basham
Ms Ilona Murphy
Ms Debbie Watson
Ms Katharine Knox

ANNEX 7 Award Holder And Research User Questionnaires



SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME EVALUATION INTERVIEW CHECKLIST: PROJECT LEADER (PI) INTERVIEWS

1. Why did you apply for funding under this initiative? Did the project build on existing work or present new opportunities? Why did you apply to this small grants programme and not a response-mode or other funding stream?
2. Tell us a bit more about your project. How did it go? To what extent have you been able to meet the original objectives?
3. To what extent do you feel that it has contributed to one or more of the priority research areas/questions identified in the Programme's call for proposals?
4. Can you describe your dissemination strategy and how it was developed or chosen? Were there any tensions between the requirements for 'academic' as opposed to end-user and policy outputs?
5. What dissemination activities has the project been involved in? What has been the reach and scope of these? i.e. events held, media used, impacts, feedback etc.
6. How have end users and external partners been involved in the project? What have been the advantages and disadvantages of their involvement? (Can we have contact details (email + tel no.) of all end users?)
7. From your perspective, what has been the impact of a) the project and b) the programme - on policy and practice? What evidence can you provide of this?
8. In what ways are the Housing & Communities Agency (HCA) able to make use of the findings of your project and the Programme as a whole?
9. What were the advantages and disadvantages of being part of a programme as opposed to a stand-alone project? How did you feel about becoming part of a programme as opposed to initially being part of themed initiative (with no programme co-ordinator)?
10. How much did your research project benefit from Programme Co-ordinator input?

11. If your research did benefit from inputs from the Programme Co-ordinators, which aspects of your research were enhanced?
12. How much did your research benefit from communication and input from the other award holders under the SKSC Programme?
13. If your research did benefit from input from the other award holders, which aspects of your research were enhanced?
14. How much help did the Programme Co-ordinator team or other award holders provide in helping you identify links with other research being conducted within and outside of the initiative? What has been the impact of these links on your work?
15. How much help did the Programme Co-ordinators or other award holders provide in linking you with user groups for your research? What has been the impact of these links on your work?
16. How useful did you find the Programme's three joint meetings? How useful were these meetings in encouraging cross-disciplinary or other exchange?
17. How useful have you found the Programme's website <http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms>
18. Are there any other means of communication that might have enhanced the operation of the Programme?
19. How useful do you feel the Programme's final conference event on 3rd June was?
20. What role do you think you played in shaping the overall direction of the Programme and Programme-wide activities?
21. How are you planning to build on the research undertaken by your project and the contacts developed through the Programme? e.g. any further work with end users, joint bids or papers with other award holders, research projects or bids planned?
22. Do you have any other information or reflections that might be helpful, or comments that you would like to make towards this Evaluation?

ON-LINE USER SURVEY

RE: Evaluation of Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Initiative

Dear {Name}

The Cities Institute has been commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to undertake a review of its Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities (SKSC) Initiative that was supported jointly by the Homes and Communities Academy (HCA) - formally the Academy for Sustainable Communities.

The Initiative was established to support the development of independent, high quality research that linked new thinking, ideas, and knowledge to the development of skills and practice in the sustainable communities field. The focus was on enhancing the skills and knowledge that are needed to create and maintain better places, now and in the future. Eleven distinct projects across the UK received funding through the initiative.

The programme has sought to disseminate its ideas and findings in the form of briefings, guidance, workshops, articles and reports to potential users in governmental and non-governmental organisations, to academics, to journalists and to the general public- see project website: <<http://gs.strath.ac.uk/suscoms>>

As part of the evaluation we want to understand how users and potential users have been involved in the programme or its projects and how they may have benefited from it. We would therefore be very grateful if you could spare a few minutes of your time by visiting <http://www.citiesinstitutesurveys.org/skscusersurvey.htm> and completing a very brief questionnaire to let us know your views on the initiative.

Many thanks

Sue Bagwell
Project Manager



Evaluation of the ESRC Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Initiative: Users and Potential Users Survey

We would like to ask for your views on the programme, as follows:

1. Have you been involved with the programme, any of the events it has organised, or any of the projects it has funded?

- Yes
 No

2. What was the nature of this involvement?

3. Are you familiar with any of the findings/outputs of the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Initiative?

- Yes
 No

4. Which findings/outputs are you familiar with?

5. Have these findings/outputs informed your own work or the work of your organisation in any way?

- Yes
- No

6. How have they informed your work or the work of your organisation ?

7. Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Programme

Thank you very much for providing this information and for helping with the evaluation.