

sciencewise NEWS

March 2010

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Community led learning Low Carbon Communities Challenge launched!

Communities across England, Wales and Northern Ireland are now beginning to plan how to use the £10 million funding awarded to them by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) as part of the Low Carbon Communities Challenge (LCCC).

The 'challenge', which was first announced in September 2009 as part of the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan, will see 22 test bed communities trialling low carbon technologies and initiatives, ranging from solar panels and hydro turbines to energy saving insulation.

The project directly builds on the success of an earlier Sciencewise-ERC co-funded project - the Big Energy Shift. Also commissioned by DECC, this project saw communities across the UK learning

about low carbon technologies and efficiency measures through site visits and information sessions with experts. Participants were then invited to take part in dialogue sessions to discuss their impressions of the technologies they had been introduced to. The findings from the dialogue showed that there was huge potential for people to change their energy behaviour and that attitudes towards improving energy efficiency were extremely positive. However, the results also demonstrated that individuals alone

were not likely to initiate change, but that integrated community-wide approaches involving householders, businesses and Government are needed to stimulate a Big Energy Shift. Leadership from the Government in particular was highlighted as a key mechanism to change.

The LCCC therefore aims to deliver this support and funding so that these test bed communities can explore a range of low carbon technologies and opportunities in an applied way, while ensuring that...

Sciencewise-ERC is now part of the virtual world

Join us online on Facebook, Twitter and our blog where we will update you on the latest activities, events and information about the programme and associated projects.

Our blog is an area for our Programme Director, Alan Mercer, to post thoughts about recent activities. Keep visiting to see guest bloggers each month who will share interesting ideas and experiences while working with Sciencewise-ERC.

Our profiles on Facebook and Twitter provide updates on current news, events and activities that we are involved with. We are also linked with other key organisations, so we hope this will be a good source of communication for you to find out more about science and technology activities. We look forward to adding new followers and friends; you can find us here:

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sciencewise>
- Facebook: www.facebook.com and search for Sciencewise-ERC
- Blog: www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/blog



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the findings from communities during the project are fed back into Government to inform and shape policy. Speaking at the launch event on 8 February 2010, both Joan Ruddock, Minister for Climate Change in DECC, and Jane Davidson, Minister for the Environment, Sustainability and Housing in the Welsh Assembly Government, emphasised the importance of community led learning from the challenge. Joan Ruddock also spoke of a 'sea change' within Government, whereby policy makers must champion projects such as this one - to highlight the importance and value of public opinion in the development of new policy.

The launch, which took place at the Royal Horticultural Society in central London, demonstrated the enthusiasm and dedication of not only the communities that have been awarded funding, but all those involved in the challenge, from the facilitators who will be mentoring the communities to the support services who will be on hand to offer more expert support and guidance.

Delegates were given the opportunity to consider what most excites them about the project, as well as what the biggest challenges might be. Not surprisingly, the aspects which excited people included the chance for applied learning to be used across policy and having defined funding over a fixed timescale. Some of the challenges which might be faced were cited as the motivation of others within communities, as well as how to fairly distribute funds.

It is specifically the public dialogue and co-inquiry element of the project that Sciencewise-ERC is co-funding and which will form a vital element of the challenge. Over the two year duration of the project, at least three public dialogue sessions will be facilitated in each community, where a range of community members will be given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and experiences of the low carbon initiatives trialled.

The findings from these sessions will be fed back into Government throughout the course of the project, with the objective of informing and developing policy in a more 'real-time' way.

What next?

The 22 communities that have been awarded funding will now start work on their individual low carbon ideas and plans. Each community has been appointed an independent facilitator from Dialogue by Design (commissioned to deliver the co-inquiry and shared learning strand of the LCCC) and these facilitators will work with the communities to help explore how best to go forward with the challenge.

Sciencewise-ERC will follow the challenge closely, particularly to discover how the co-inquiry and shared learning within and between local communities can inform policy on how to achieve low carbon living.

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/low-carbon-communities-challenge/

Synthetic biology: an update

Workshops have now begun in the participatory phase of the public dialogue on synthetic biology, commissioned by BBSRC (Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) and EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) and supported by Sciencewise-ERC.

Synthetic biology is an emerging area of science that applies engineering principles to biological systems. While many scientists believe that this approach will ultimately result in the design of systems that may help us address major challenges of the future, there are also social, ethical and regulatory issues that are raised by the science and its applications. Synthetic biology is beginning to attract interest from the wider public and it is now important to engage with them through a public dialogue to ensure that future Research Council and wider Government policies can reflect the public's views.

BMRB (British Market Research Bureau), that is delivering the dialogue, has conducted a series of in-depth interviews with individuals with a range of different viewpoints of, and interests in, synthetic biology. It has been working closely with an expert oversight group to plan workshops that enable members of the wider public to explore synthetic biology and their views, concerns and aspirations for this emerging area of science. Four groups will each meet three times at locations around the UK. There are gaps of several weeks between workshop meetings, allowing participants time to reflect and develop their views. The first two sets of workshops were successfully completed in January and February, with workshop three to follow in March. Publication of a final report with findings and recommendations is anticipated in summer 2010. Laura Grant Associates has been contracted to evaluate the project and from the outset it has been working closely with Sciencewise-ERC, BMRB and the oversight group. As well as working towards producing a final report, it is also contributing to the iterative nature of the project by providing regular feedback on both the workshops themselves and the processes of the oversight group.

New report available: Sustainable Participation?



The field of public participation in issues relating to science, technology and the environment is booming. To date, much effort has gone into developing new participatory approaches and their evaluation, while most of what we know comes from individual case studies of engagement. This report

builds on one of the first ever studies of public participation experts, their networks, roles and relations, to present a broader analysis of the UK public dialogue field as a whole. It draws on a recent project that involved 21 of the UK's leading thinkers, practitioners, and policy makers in this area reflecting on the following critical questions:

- What is the nature of participatory governance networks and the roles and relations of different actors within them?
- Who counts as an expert on public participation and how are these meanings changing over time?
- What are the implications of increasing institutionalisation, commercialisation and professionalisation of public dialogue?
- To what extent are UK science and policy institutions learning about and learning from public dialogue?

Taken together, these insights indicate that the field of public dialogue on science and technology has reached a critical moment and highlight a series of challenges and recommendations for its future sustainability.

The full report is available on the Sciencewise-ERC website: www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Geoengineering - the big debate

Delivery of the Sciencewise-ERC co-funded geoengineering public dialogue, led by NERC (the Natural Environment Research Council), is set to take place this month and next. Ipsos MORI will be leading on the delivery of the dialogue with support from Dialogue by Design and the British Science Association.

Geoengineering is described by the Royal Society report (Geoengineering the climate: science, governance and uncertainty¹), as 'the deliberate large-scale intervention in the Earth's climate system, in order to moderate global warming'. It includes technologies which could either remove CO₂ from the atmosphere or reduce global temperatures by reflecting sunlight back into space.

A series of public dialogue sessions will take place at science centres, in Cornwall, Cardiff and Birmingham, followed by a series of open events in the same locations. The public dialogue sessions will involve members of the public recruited to represent a range of backgrounds and will explore people's attitudes towards potential geoengineering methods. Participants will also discuss the ethical, moral and social issues associated with the use of geoengineering to alter our climate. While the recruited sessions

will feature a representative range of the public, the open events will enable other members of the public and stakeholders, who have not been specifically recruited for the dialogue, to contribute their views.

In addition to the recruited public dialogue and open access events, an online consultation with the public has been set-up. This forum will allow an even wider range of people to contribute their thoughts and opinions on the topic of geoengineering and future research on the subject.

It is hoped that this public dialogue will inform future NERC geoengineering research activity and strategy, and that it will identify particular areas of public concern on the subject to ensure that new research takes account of the needs and concerns of society. Further details of the dialogue can be found at: www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/geoengineering/

The online construction is now open at <http://geoengineering.dialoguebydesign.net>

Geoengineering events

In addition to the public dialogue with Sciencewise-ERC, NERC is sponsoring two complementary events on geoengineering to engage the public.

The Science Museum Lates programme on 31 March will have a range of activities to introduce different aspects of geoengineering. There will also be a debate on future geoengineering technologies and policies at the Cheltenham Science Festival in June.

New head of public dialogue at Sciencewise-ERC: Lindsey Colbourne



New in the post as head of public dialogue at Sciencewise-ERC, I wanted to explore the rationale for the Sciencewise-ERC - and how to make sure that it remains up to date with both the public and policy landscape.

For me this involves understanding the history. Pre-2000, interactions with the public focused primarily on 'public understanding of science' (PUS): the deficit model where experts produce knowledge and the public are passive recipients. But in 2000, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee published their report on science and society. It suggested public dialogue should become a 'normal and integral part of the process' of science based policy making.

A few dialogues then took place, including the GM nation dialogue, and September 2004 saw the launch of Sciencewise as a systematic new approach to upstream public engagement, in response to the Government's 10 year Science and Innovation Investment Framework².

In 2006, following recommendations from the Council for Science and Technology³ to reflect the increasing importance and significance of dialogue, Sciencewise evolved further into an expert resource centre to build capability across Government on the use of public dialogue.

Sciencewise-ERC has supported 20 dialogue projects to date, more and more departments are seeking advice and support, and there is a wider community looking to understand how they can benefit from a dialogue approach. Sciencewise-ERC continues to evaluate dialogue and gather evidence of the benefits for policy making. For example:

The hybrid and chimera embryos project states its impact as 'there was a clear line from the conclusions of the public in the deliberative events to the wording of the HFEAs final decision.'

The Stem Cell Dialogue project describes its impact as 'a very positive example of public engagement between scientists and the public,

providing qualitative data on the high levels of public support for stem cell science and technology.'

So where are we now? For me, the rationale for Sciencewise-ERC is as strong as ever. The issues of science, society and trust are increasingly in the media - witness the Nutt and the climate gate stories and many would say that the potential of the emerging technologies is such that the need is even greater. Sciencewise-ERC's role in supporting policy making on science and technology issues is well established. There is more to be done including support to the delivery of the recently published 'Science and Society expert group action plans'⁴. For the coming year, Sciencewise's objectives are to: [continued on p6...](#)

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1. Support the current dialogues and stimulate new flagship public dialogue projects of different types, to inspire and inform policy making involving science and technology.
2. Become an opinion leader and trusted source of information in the role of public dialogue in evidence based policy making involving science and technology.
3. Have started to embed appreciation of public dialogue in the day to day work of Government through provision of a range of tailored support.

This is undoubtedly an exciting and challenging time for Sciencewise-ERC that has the opportunity to change the relation between science and society. But this is a big task, and will require much more interaction and involvement of you, our key stakeholders in shaping what we do, and ensuring that what we do has a significant impact.

Please do get in touch with your ideas - and engage in the programme.

² Science and Innovation Investment Framework - www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/spending_sr04_science.htm

³ CST report - Policy through dialogue - www.cst.gov.uk/reports/#Dialogue

⁴ Science and Society expert - <http://interactive.dius.gov.uk/scienceandsociety/site/>

Support packages available from the Sciencewise-ERC

The Sciencewise-ERC can support you in developing and executing public dialogue activities to inform policy involving science and technology through a number of support packages:

- Advice and mentoring
- Targeted workshops
- Co-funding of dialogue projects

The packages are available to Government departments and agencies, and executive, advisory and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs).

Advice and mentoring

Perhaps you are considering whether or how to use public dialogue to inform policy, or you may have a current engagement process and you would welcome advice on some aspect of it. The Sciencewise-ERC can provide one-to-one consultancy on dialogue for policy makers by a team of 18 internationally renowned specialist advisers who provide advice, training and mentoring on design, commissioning, delivery, evaluation and funding for dialogue processes.

Workshops

These provide training and mentoring for Government departments and others as an introduction to dialogue and/or around specific dialogue activities.

Co-funded dialogue projects

The Sciencewise-ERC has funds available for projects that feature public dialogue to inform policy making that involves science and technology. Grants are available to Government departments, agencies and NDPBs for dialogue projects that fit with the Sciencewise-ERC 'Guiding Principles'⁵. Projects are commissioned directly with policy makers in line with organisational and government priorities. Grants are awarded to 'commissioning agents', to procure and manage their own dialogue projects, with support and guidance from the Sciencewise-ERC.

Projects can involve Sciencewise-ERC funding from £10-20k for a short concise dialogue, to projects with Sciencewise-ERC funding of £300k or more. Grants are provided for a proportion of the total project cost and, typically, there is a financial contribution and active commitment from the commissioning department.

Are you developing policy involving science and technology issues?

Could a dialogue project help you in the development of that policy? We would like to hear from you to discuss your ideas for dialogue projects. Please contact the Sciencewise-ERC helpline on **0870 190 6324** or email enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk.

Information on past and current Sciencewise-ERC dialogue projects can be found at www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/projects/



Departmental Dialogue HM Treasury

HM Treasury is the latest Government department to benefit from a departmental dialogue session from Sciencewise-ERC.

This recent session, hosted at HM Treasury, attracted over 25 attendees keen to learn the role and value of public dialogue, and how Sciencewise-ERC specifically can contribute by helping to integrate public dialogue into Government policy making.

Those who participated raised issues such as the expected length of a typical dialogue process, the strength of dialogue evidence in comparison to other types of evidence in policy making, and the challenge presented by using dialogue in quick response to a crisis situation.

Feedback from the session was very positive, many participants commenting that the session had given them an understanding of the role of Sciencewise-ERC and ideas on how dialogue can be used in policy making.

'Our session on public dialogue certainly raised a lot of interest, we identified a number of potential areas from within Treasury, and hope we will be able to take these forward with Sciencewise'



Could your department benefit from a departmental dialogue session?

Dialogue sessions have been designed specifically for those with a responsibility for, or involvement in, national science and technology policy making. This includes central Government and its agencies, and executive, advisory and non-departmental public bodies.

Held in any department, these free sessions help policy makers to identify areas for public dialogue and overcome challenges faced in the dialogue planning process. Sessions can be held on a date and time to suit, and delegates can also make use of one-to-one time with one of our Dialogue and Engagement Specialists after the session has ended.

If you are interested in us visiting your department, please contact chloe.huggins@aeat.co.uk

Further information about the Sciencewise-ERC can be found at www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

The Times Cheltenham Science Festival



BIS
Department for
Business Innovation
and Skills

Described by Professor Lord Robert Winston in 2008 as 'unquestionably the leading science festival in the country', The Times Cheltenham Science Festival is now proud to be generally recognised as one of the premier science engagement events in Europe.

The Festival's unique format, with its intimate venues, allows policy makers, scientists, research funders and the media to interact with the general public, and themselves, in a five-day celebration of science and engineering.

Guest Directors Heston Blumenthal - recently voted 'Chef of the Decade' - and physicist and BBC presenter Brian Cox have collaborated with Festival Directors Mark Lythgoe and Kathy Sykes to programme a range of fantastic events, giving festival-goers access to some of today's greatest scientific minds.

Over 100 thought-provoking and innovative events will cover a wide range of topical issues, including the future of science funding, building public trust in science and much, much more.

Join the Festival on 9-13 June 2010 - the full programme will be announced in late March 2010, when tickets will also go on sale. For the latest details, visit www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/science or contact stephen.burgess@cheltenhamfestivals.com

Sign up for the festival's free newsletter to stay up to date: <http://cheltenhamfestivals.com/subscribe/>

Sciencewise-ERC will be holding **two public dialogue sessions on 9 and 10 June** focusing on the Low Carbon Communities Challenge - drop in and see us!

Upcoming events

Edinburgh International Science Festival



The Edinburgh International Science Festival will be bringing the very best of popular science and a stellar line up of entertaining scientists and thinkers to the city. This year's programme will engage with new audiences, offering over 200 events encompassing comedy, film, music and drama, as well as experiments, activities, workshops, exhibitions and talks. The Festival takes place from 3 to 17 April 2010 in 30 venues around the city. For full details and to view the programme, visit www.sciencefestival.co.uk

Science Communication Conference



The British Science Association is working in partnership with the Wellcome Trust to organise the 2010 Science Communication Conference, which will take place on 24 and 25 May in central London. The Conference addresses the key issues facing science communicators in the UK and each year brings together people who are involved in public engagement - a diverse group of people from a broad range of backgrounds. The theme for the Conference will be 'Audiences for engagement' and can involve experts from other disciplines who have engaged successfully with certain audiences, not necessarily about science. Further information about the conference can be found at:

www.britishtscienceassociation.org/ScienceCommunicationConference

The Sciencewise-ERC, funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), helps policy-makers commission and use public dialogue to inform policy decisions in emerging areas of science and technology. It consists of a comprehensive online resource of information, advice and guidance, together with a wide range of support services aimed at policy-makers and all the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public. The Sciencewise-ERC also provides co-funding to Government departments and agencies to develop and commission public dialogue activities. For further information please log on to:

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Email: enquiries@sciencewise-erc.org.uk

Helpline: 0870 190 6324

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