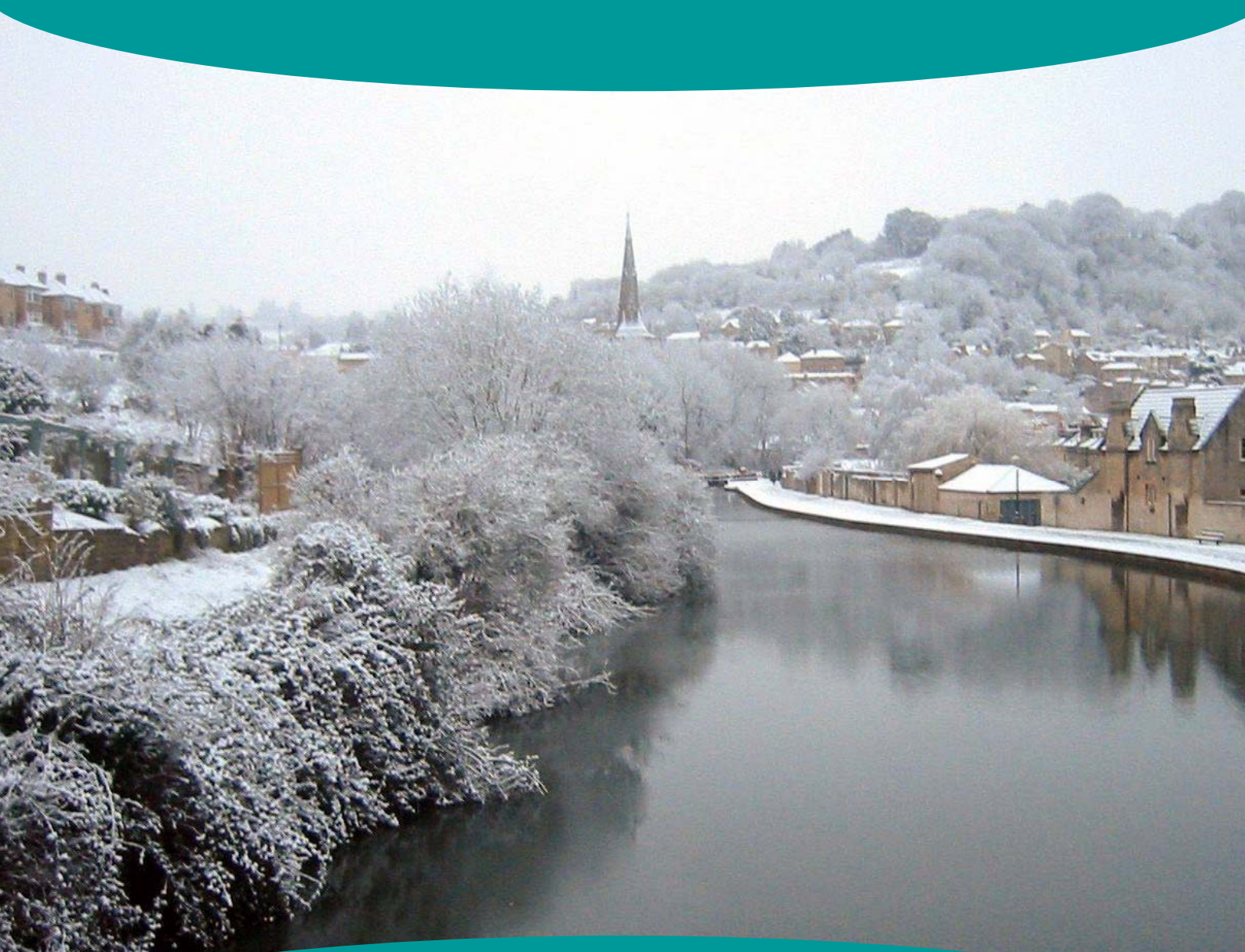


# Local Authority Research Council Initiative

*LARCI – bringing local authorities and the Research Councils into closer partnership,  
leading to better informed research, better informed policy and practice.*

**LARCI Newsletter**  
Winter 2007/08



## Welcome

Welcome to the **Winter 2007/08** issue of the LARCI Newsletter.

This quarterly newsletter is used to raise awareness of research, funded by the Research Councils, of interest and practical use to those working with and within local government. The newsletter also includes details of opportunities to become involved in Research Council programme development and collaborative ventures, and flags-up collaborative funding opportunities. Details of research and events from other organisations relevant to LARCI are also included.

Information has been laid out to align with the Local Government Association's Shared Priorities where possible (identified with an asterisk\*).

For more information about LARCI, visit our website:

[www.larci.org.uk](http://www.larci.org.uk)

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*The Local Authority Research Council Initiative (LARCI) was established in 1997 to bring local authorities and the Research Councils into closer partnership. LARCI aims to facilitate communication between the Research Councils and local authorities at a strategic and operational level, leading to better informed research, policy and practice.*

*LARCI operates through a Steering Group comprising representatives of the following Research Councils, local and central government: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC); Audit Commission; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC); Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG); Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC); Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC); Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA); Local Authorities Research + Intelligence Association (LARIA); Local Government Association (LGA); Medical Research Council (MRC); Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and Research Councils UK (RCUK).*

*Cover photograph: Kennett and Avon Canal, Bath.  
© February 2004, Si Chun Lam*

## \*Raising standards across our schools

### Practical Research for Education

The publication published twice yearly keeps teachers, head teachers and local authority staff up to date with the latest research into all aspects of education, focusing on its practical applications. Providing research projects combined with case studies of small-scale investigations; this publication is especially suitable for local authority staff with responsibility for liaison with schools and for higher education institutions that run teacher training courses or degrees in education.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/topic.cfm>

### Getting to Grips with Assessment

*Primary* is a series of 12 leaflets for teachers and others interested in assessment. This series of leaflets provides information about this high-profile area of teaching and learning, and gives advice from practitioners. Among other things, the leaflets address formative and summative assessment methods, how to handle performance data and teacher assessment of performance, and how to make best use of test and other data. It is proving popular with local authorities.

Further information can be found at: [http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/projects/sut/sut\\_home.cfm](http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/projects/sut/sut_home.cfm)

### Education Management Information Exchange (EMIE)

EMIE at National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), in collaboration with Aspect, announce the publishing of two reports on themes from the IDeA Beacon Scheme Round 8. The two reports; *School Improvement theme* and *Healthy Schools Theme* are now available and are of interest to local authorities.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/emie/>

## \*Improving quality of life of older people

### Living Arrangement, Health and Wellbeing: A European Perspective

Ageing populations are an increasing issue for the Western world. The proportion of people over aged sixty is growing plus there has been a rise in older men and women living alone and a decline in those living with children or relatives. A new study, funded by the ESRC, analysed the impact of living alone, with a spouse or with others on the health and happiness of older people and how it varies within Europe and in England and Wales.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2007/november/living.aspx?ComponentId=24576&SourcePageId=17700>

### International Longevity Centre (ILC-UK)

The ILC-UK is an independent, non-partisan think-tank dedicated to addressing issues of longevity, ageing and population change. On the 28 November 2007 a new policy brief has been launched on 'Successful Ageing and Social Interaction'.

Further information and publications can be found at: <http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/>

## \*Improving quality of life of children, young people and families at risk

### Mayor's State of London's Children Report 2007

The Mayor has published his latest State of London's Children Report (September 2007). It offers an 'observatory' role on where children's lives are getting better or worse, in national comparison and in relation to data in the 2001 and 2004 reports, and provides a strategic overview on policy issues faced at a pan-London level in children's services.

The report evidences London's high levels of child poverty and inequality as a theme running through every aspect of young Londoners' lives and across the report

themes of education, health, poverty/exclusion, social care, community safety, housing and homelessness, environment, sport/play, culture and transport.

In terms of some good news, the pace of improvement in the educational attainment of disadvantaged children is greater in London, particularly inner London, than in other parts of the country; there has been a reduction of unplanned teenage conceptions; and the rate of child casualties on London's roads has reduced. There is also evidence that London is beginning to take play and recreation seriously.

Yet, major challenges remain in narrowing the gap in education and health outcomes for the most disadvantaged children. In particular, the particularly high child poverty rates in inner London, where around half of all children (51 per cent) live in poverty, are out of place alongside the capital's dynamic economic success.

The report conclusion sets out critical challenges, which focus on tackling inequalities for the most disadvantaged children; reducing child poverty, as the single most important determinant of outcomes for children; ensuring adequate funding for services; and prioritising the issues that matter to children and young people.

The full report – as well as individual chapters, a summary and child-friendly version – can be downloaded via: [www.london.gov.uk/mayor/children/solc.jsp](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/children/solc.jsp)

For more information or printed copies, please contact [Jason.Lever@london.gov.uk](mailto:Jason.Lever@london.gov.uk)

### **Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy – successful bids announced**

The ESRC, Office of the Third Sector in the Cabinet Office, The Carnegie UK Trust and the Scottish Government have announced on the 7<sup>th</sup> November the successful bids to establish the UK's first independent, multidisciplinary and academically based Centre for Charitable Giving and Philanthropy.

The Centre, which sees a total joint investment of £2.2million over 5 years, will support high quality independent research aimed at influencing policy and practice decisions in the UK as well as developing the necessary evidence base to better understand charitable giving and philanthropy issues. It also aims to help third sector organisations, government and business to better understand why and how individuals and businesses can give, helping to increase and target giving to support the public good.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2007/november/ccgp.aspx?ComponentId=24533&SourcePageId=17700>

### **Bridging the Gap between Higher Education and the Public**

Members of the public will soon be able to play a more interactive role in the important work of higher education institutions, thanks to a new £9.2 million initiative – Beacons for Public Engagement.

Funded by the UK Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCE) and Research Councils UK (RCUK), and supported by the Wellcome Trust, it is the biggest initiative ever launched to support public engagement throughout the UK. It brings together a number of different funders with the common goal of achieving a more joined up and embedded approach to public engagement.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/news/beaconsnov07.htm>

### **Guide to Local Authority Surveys of Children and Young People's well-being**

This guide is intended to provide information about the approaches local authorities have taken to gathering information about aspects of the life of children and young people that contribute to their well-being. In particular, it focuses on the various survey instruments being used to elicit children and young people's views directly (the 'pupil voice'). This is a free resource for all local authorities

interested in finding out about children and young people's well-being.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research-areas/projects/eci.cfm>

### **\*Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities**

#### **Bioprocessing Research Industry Club**

Over one third of all drugs now under development by pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies are biopharmaceuticals. The number of licensed biopharmaceuticals is forecast to grow at a rate of around 20% per annum. However, biological products are large and complex molecules which require sophisticated manufacturing methods. The development phase is currently slow, expensive and complicated and, since speed to market is vital, there is a need for new tools and methods, which will contribute to accelerating development. In order to address these research challenges, BBSRC and EPSRC and industry have now launched a Bioprocessing Research Industry Club (BRIC) to support innovative bioprocessing-related research projects to help strengthen, and develop the research community in this areas and improve academic-industry links.

Further information can be found at:  
[http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/business/collaborative\\_research/industry\\_clubs/bric/background.html](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/business/collaborative_research/industry_clubs/bric/background.html)

#### **Developing New Ways of Repairing Bone**

EPSRC funded researchers at Queen's University Belfast and Leeds University are developing biological cements to repair 'burst fractures' of the spine. Bone cements are already used to treat patients who have damage caused by conditions like osteoporosis. However, 'burst fractures' caused by impact incidents such as an accident or fall are more difficult to treat. They need complicated, invasive surgery and a long stay in hospital. The team are examining the effects of novel cement materials for the treatment of this type of fracture. This

could lead to quicker, less invasive surgery with shorter recovery times and reduced costs.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/InTheNews/RepairingBone.htm>

#### **Healthcare Waste Research Project**

Whilst cases of healthcare associated infections such as MRSA and *C. difficile* in the NHS have seen a recent reduction in growth, rates in England are still high. Various studies done outside of the UK, have suggested that the management of healthcare waste could pose a potential danger. However, there has been limited rigorous study undertaken within the UK.

In early 2008, a multi-disciplinary project entitled 'determining the links between healthcare waste management practices and the risks of healthcare associated infections within three case study NHS Trust, in England' will be undertaken to undertake an in-depth study of this issue.

The project will be led by the University of Northampton (with Dr Terry Tudor as the PI), and will also include researchers from Newcastle-upon-Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and the University of Surrey. The study is being funded by the National Institute for Health Research.

It will be a mechanistic study focusing on the spread of healthcare associated infections in the physical environment, using a variety of research methods, including interviews, questionnaires, work-shadowing, and structural systems methods.

For further information about the project please contact Terry Tudor at:  
[Terry.tudor@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Terry.tudor@northampton.ac.uk)

### **\*Creating safer and stronger communities**

#### **Assessing the Viability of Urban Housing Development**

Researchers at Nottingham Trent University developed a system for helping local planning authorities to identify which 'brownfield' sites are likely to be economically viable and potentially

available for housing. Their study found that more than a third of authorities in England made no assessments at all of economic viability, whilst another third relied on basic 'in house' opinions.

Further information can be found at: [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Plain\\_English\\_Summaries/research\\_methods/quantitative/index254.aspx](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Plain_English_Summaries/research_methods/quantitative/index254.aspx)

### **The Past, Present and Future of Flexible Housing**

Housing is a British national obsession. How are we going to accommodate the changing needs of the population, as higher divorce rates, more single-person headed households and an ageing community all impact on the need to adjust national housing stock?

This Flexible Housing award worked on accommodating new technologies as they emerge, adapting to changes in people's lives. Outputs include a manual for all Registered Social Landlords, funded by the Housing Corporation.

Further information can be found at: [http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/awards/casestudies/flexiblehousing\\_05\\_09\\_07.asp](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/awards/casestudies/flexiblehousing_05_09_07.asp) or at <http://www.flexiblehousing.org/>

### **Centre on Migration Policy and Society (COMPAS)**

COMPAS conducts high quality research to develop theory, inform public opinion and evaluate policy. The mission of COMPAS is to provide a strategic, integrated approach to understanding contemporary and future migration dynamics across sending areas and receiving contexts in the UK and EU. Non-academic users play a central role through informing research design at this ESRC Centre.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/index.html>

### **Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance: Draft for Consultation**

The draft document, which is subject to consultation, provides guidance to local authorities and their partners on creating strong, safe and prosperous communities,

specifically relating to new legislation introduced in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The guidance covers Local Strategic Partnerships, Sustainable Community Strategies, the new duty to involve, Local Area Agreements, the revised best value regime and commissioning. The closing date for responses is 12 February 2008.

For further information and to respond online:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/statutoryguidance>

### **Estimating the Scale and Impacts of Migration at Local Levels**

LGA work programme on migration and its impact on communities and local public services continues to develop. 'Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level', preliminary research commissioned from the Institute of Community Cohesion has been well received, as was LGA's mid September conference 'Talking Sense about Migration'. LGA is currently in discussion with DCLG about future research which will provide a fuller and more in-depth analysis about local impacts on services, working with the Office of National Statistics on possible sources and approaches to improve population estimates, and preparing a paper for the new Statistics Boards on the requirements from local authorities for national statistics. LGA is also undertaking a survey on equality of access of different ethnic groups to social housing.

LGA is eager to hear about any migration research currently being undertaken in universities and other research institutes. This will inform any new research LGA commissions and LGA will also publicise new research on their website: [www.lgar.local.gov.uk](http://www.lgar.local.gov.uk)

For further information please contact Louise Dove: [louise.dove@lgar.local.gov.uk](mailto:louise.dove@lgar.local.gov.uk)

## \*Transforming our local environment

### Climate Change

The EPSRC, ESRC and NERC funded Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research brings together environmental scientists, economists, engineers and social scientists to develop sustainable responses to climate change at international, national and local level.

Research includes how future water availability will affect high-value crops in the East of England and how farmers might respond; detailed simulation of how erosion and sea-level rise affects the Norfolk Coast and assessing the options; an integrated study of the vulnerability of London to climate change now and in the future with policies towards becoming a low-carbon city; what rapid climate change might mean for global rainfall and water resources and the role non-nations such as cities, corporations and carbon-trading companies are playing in developing effective international action.

A new Tyndall project is investigating how people interpret and react to information about the effects of climate change presented as a virtual environment. The system will initially be tested on the low-lying Norfolk coastline around Holme-next-the-sea.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/index.shtml> or [http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/publications/factsheets/t2\\_43.shtml](http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/publications/factsheets/t2_43.shtml)

### Sustainable Technologies

Development and use of sustainable technologies will depend on the attitudes, incentives and capabilities of people and organisations. The ESRC Sustainable Technologies Programme funded research on innovation, spread and use of novel technologies such as wind power, fuel cells and nanotechnology – examining, for instance, how microgeneration might be deployed, and ways of encouraging consumers and energy companies to invest in it.

Further information can be found at: [www.sustainabletechnologies.ac.uk](http://www.sustainabletechnologies.ac.uk)

### Towards Sustainable Energy

The Research Councils' Energy Programme is a major initiative tackling the challenges of supplying energy in a secure and affordable way, while minimising carbon dioxide emissions and contributing to sustainable development. The programme brings together engineers and physical, natural, social and economic scientists, not just to create the technologies but to examine their social and economic consequences.

Further information can be found at: [www.epsrc.ac.uk/researchfunding/programmes/energy](http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/researchfunding/programmes/energy)

### Waste Packaging Research

In October Local Government Analysis and Research (LGAR) released a report for the first wave of the food packaging study. The research was commissioned by LGAR to inform the LGA's 'War on Waste' campaign, which seeks to address the amount of rubbish produced and the way in which it is thrown away. A range of common food items were purchased from eight retailers. The most environmentally friendly retailers have low levels of packaging – a high proportion of which is recyclable: in this respect the market came out best and Marks and Spencer had the lowest proportion of recyclable packaging. The summary of the report, showing 'before' unwrapping and 'after' unwrapping photos of each retailer's basket can be found at: <http://www.lgar.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pagelid=50589> or contact at: [thomas.hulbert@lgar.local.gov.uk](mailto:thomas.hulbert@lgar.local.gov.uk) or 020 7664 3269

### Spin Out Success Beckons

World renowned scientists at Oxford Brookes University and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology have collaborated to launch a spin out company providing products, services and consultancy to global pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries. The backing and business expertise of private investors have enabled the scientists to launch their company into a bigger and wider market.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/press/releases/2007/46-oet.asp>

### Climate Change: a Survey of Local Authorities

LGAR, on behalf of the LGA, have carried out a survey of council action on climate change. There is increasing public and political concern about climate change, and the results from this survey represent a great opportunity to demonstrate the action councils are taking along with the challenges they face.

The research found that 92% of authorities have a climate change strategy or policy, or are currently planning one and the top priorities for council strategies to cut climate change emissions are council's own estate, renewable energy and greener procurement. The full report will be available shortly at:

<http://www.lgar.local.gov.uk/lqv/core/page.do?pagelid=38072>

For more information about the survey please contact Nick Shasha on 020 7664 3290 or at [nick.shasha@lgar.local.gov.uk](mailto:nick.shasha@lgar.local.gov.uk). A summary of results comparing trends between 2004 (when the survey was last run) and this run of the survey are also available.

### Urban River Corridors and Sustainable Living Agendas (URSULA)

The University of Sheffield has been awarded a major grant by the EPSRC, to look at new ways of developing the River Don corridor in South Yorkshire, to create a place where people can live and work safely, now and in the future. The idea of the URSULA project is that there are significant social, economic and environmental gains to be made by integrated and innovative interventions in urban river corridors.

The £2.5 million project is supported by Sheffield City Council and the Environment Agency and many non-governmental organisations. It aims to identify the social, economic and environmental gains to be made from innovative interventions in urban river corridors, using the River Don and its tributaries as a case study. The research will be based around four main themes: 'People', 'Design', 'River' and 'Values'.

The project, which will run over four years, will be led by the Catchment Science

Centre at the University. The CSC is a collaborative research initiative, established jointly by the University of Sheffield and the Environment Agency. It draws expertise from multiple academic departments at Sheffield, incorporating a real mix of disciplines from engineering through to ecology, planning and the social sciences.

You may like to come and learn more at the Catchment Science Centre's annual conference, which will be held at the University of Sheffield on 6 February 2008.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.ursula.ac.uk/> or <http://www.shef.ac.uk/csc/news> or contact Jenny Chambers at: [j.a.chambers@shef.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.chambers@shef.ac.uk)

### NERC funds urgency grant to survey the exceptional bloom of jellyfish off the coast of N. Ireland

Recent concerns that jellyfish populations are increasing have stimulated speculation about possible causes including climate change, eutrophication, over-fishing and invasions. Distinct regime shifts have occurred in recent years and jellyfish have now succeeded fin fish as the predominant zooplankton predators in many coastal food webs. For example, in the Bering Sea the biomass of jellyfish increased more than 10-fold during the 1990s.

Such community level shifts have obvious ecological and economic consequences given that both larval and juvenile fish often feed upon the same prey as jellyfish. This scenario was alarmingly demonstrated in November 2007 by the sudden appearance of an exceptional aggregation of oceanic jellyfish *Pelagia noctiluca* along the Northern Irish coast causing dramatic fish kills and the potential collapse of salmon aquaculture in the region. The scale of this event was unprecedented and has caused significant concern that it may herald a major regime shift within the Irish Sea with disastrous consequences for Irish and Scottish salmon producers.

In the North Atlantic there is a significant link between climate and jellyfish abundance. However, modelling the effects of climatic drivers on *P. noctiluca* is not possible as baseline data are simply



not in place. Nor is the seasonality of the species well understood. The super aggregation therefore presented an excellent opportunity to gather vital data in an exceptional year. NERC granted urgency funding to ensure that the opportunity was not lost before the jellyfish super-aggregation dissipated.

For further information please contact Caroline Culshaw at: [ccul@nerc.ac.uk](mailto:ccul@nerc.ac.uk)

### **Performance Management of Councils' Waste Services – Theory and Practice**

Performance management has been increased airplay in the public sector over the past few years.

This article describes an extended piece of practitioner research investigating (i) whether Best Value and performance management had introduced culture change within councils' waste services, and (ii) if so, whether they had used performance management frameworks to structure this change.

#### *Setting the scene*

Initially, considerable Best Value guidance was issued by Government and other agencies, such as the IDeA. In order to get a handle on what was being recommended, the research project commenced with a substantial literature review, looking at aspects such as the Local Government Modernisation Agenda (LGMA), performance management frameworks and tools (such as the Balanced Scorecard and Investors in People), and barriers and enablers. In the waste management context, it explored the driving force of the EC Landfill Directive and its regime of restrictions and possible fines.

It was clear that strong, consistent leadership would be needed to address all these challenges, and that behaviour change could be expected within councils and their waste services.

#### *Case Studies*

Once completed, the review informed a conceptual model, which was then applied to five UK case studies (comprising four English 'Beacon' Councils plus Belfast), and subsequently refined. Amongst the findings was that councils' waste services were focusing explicitly upon the

requirements of the Landfill Directive, to the virtual exclusion of many other Government initiatives. The cases chosen appeared to be out-performing other councils' waste services, largely down to their hands-on leadership approach.

#### *Single-issue focus*

Generally, Government has been promoting a performance management perspective of "*what gets measured, gets done.*" Donnelly and Mackenzie (1998) commented upon the LGMA and the tensions it had created between councils and Government over differing priorities and outlooks. They also highlighted that Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was forcing councils to consider how to "*do less, better*", and there was "*now a noticeable trend of councils retreating into their statutory shells, focusing on what is required by statute, being less creative...*".

#### *Whole-systems approach*

The contrary 'whole-systems' approach of operations management seeks to embed operations within corporate strategy, bringing them under a corporate performance management framework which is informed using a bottom-up approach.

In the cases studied, waste services had risen up the corporate agenda as a direct result of the emphasis upon national and international legislative compliance, but managers had yet to expand their horizons beyond the specific requirements of their own service. However the elevated priority now accorded to waste means that in the longer term, a more holistic approach to waste management may evolve, with greater corporate engagement and understanding at all levels.

#### *Conclusions*

Two opposing philosophies of performance management are both illustrated by the case studies in this piece of research. There is a possible emergent conflict here between councils' aspirations for a corporate performance management framework, and their waste services' focus upon avoiding fines in the face of rising standards and expectations.

For further information contact Tim Walker at: [WalkerT@BelfastCity.gov.uk](mailto:WalkerT@BelfastCity.gov.uk)

Tim Walker gave a presentation at the LARCI Household waste seminar on the 26 October 2007, further information can be found at:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/partnership/larci/events/archive/07oct.htm>

### **\*Meeting local transport needs more effectively**

#### **Accessibility and User Needs in Transport**

This research integrates the expertise of the research centres and project partners in transport policies and planning, design, operations and evaluation. The shared vision is to produce rigorous methodologies for sustainable policies and practices that will deliver effective socially inclusive design and operation in transport and the public realm from macro down to micro level. Three Core Projects are developing decision-support tools that will establish benchmarks and incorporate inclusion into policies, and support the design and operation of journey environments and transport facilities. Four Plus Projects are developing tools to consult socially excluded people, capture 'emotional' data for evaluation of micro-level design, evaluate socially inclusive design initiatives, develop an integrated information system, and produce designed solutions to barriers caused by personal security concerns.

This research is funded by EPSRC, and project partners include Bristol City Council, London Borough of Camden, Transport for London, Hertfordshire County Council, London Borough of Tower Hamlets and Brighton and Hove Council.

Further information can be found at: <http://gow.epsrc.ac.uk/ViewGrant.aspx?GrantRef=GR/S90867/01>

### **\*Promoting the economic vitality of localities**

#### **A 3D look at the world beneath our feet**

Scientists at NERC's British Geological Survey are developing the next generation of geological maps of the UK - three dimensional visualisations of the world beneath our feet. Using geological mapping and information from boreholes,

they are constructing detailed 3D geological models of parts of London, Glasgow, Manchester and Salford.

One of the biggest regeneration initiatives in the UK has commissioned BGS to model the geology of Scotland's Clyde Gateway area in 3D. The Clyde Gateway Partnership\* is taking place in the east of Glasgow and South Lanarkshire and will be developing vacant, derelict and contaminated land to improve people's well-being, the area's economy, and to create new facilities for the Commonwealth Games in 2014. These new models explain features using both geological and engineering language which help planners, engineers and developers to understand the different soil and rock layers beneath the city. This will help them determine how best to use the land and address the many complicated environmental issues resulting from the area's industrial heritage such as shallow mining, drainage problems and contamination.

The key to the models' success is in understanding how planners, engineers and regulators work, and producing a product which is tailored to their specific needs.

For further information please contact the BGS Central Enquiry desk [enquiries@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@bgs.ac.uk)

\*the partnership includes Glasgow City Council, South Lanarkshire Council, Scottish Enterprise and Communities Scotland

#### **New radon data from the British Geological Survey and the Health Protection Agency**

The NERC's British Geological Survey and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) jointly launched a new radon dataset for England and Wales on 12th November 2007. This much improved digital database provides detailed information on radon affected areas and can be interrogated at property level.

Radon enters buildings from the ground beneath them and indoor levels vary depending on several factors including the underlying geology, the method of building construction and the way a building is heated and ventilated. The new dataset combines the latest results of

measurements in over 450,000 homes and takes account of the local geology. This provides a more informed estimate of the probability of high radon in a dwelling than was previously available although a measurement will still be needed to determine the level of radon.

For local authorities the radon affected area status of a property is an important tool in programmes to control and reduce the exposure of the population to this known cause of cancer. These data can be accessed by local authorities from BGS in digital map format ([iprdigital@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:iprdigital@bgs.ac.uk)) for GIS application or through the HPA's web site ([www.ukradon.org.uk](http://www.ukradon.org.uk)).

The new dataset will provide essential information to those dealing with land charges, building control and environmental health. The new dataset will answer the CON29 question relating to radon affected areas and indicate the level of protective measures required for new build and extensions as set out in BRE's BR211(2007) guidance on protective measures for new buildings.

For further information please contact the BGS Central Enquiry desk: [enquiries@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@bgs.ac.uk)

## Collaborative Funding

### New Opportunities for Collaborative Research and Development

The Technology Strategy Board has issued calls for proposals to carry out collaborative research in the areas of materials for energy, high-value manufacturing and cell therapy. There are three phase for the competition, which represents a government investment of around £100 million and covers eight technology areas.

Proposals must involve two or more UK collaborators, at least one of which is from industry. Projects with applications across several business sectors, which build on links between academic and business research and which involve Small and Medium-sized enterprises are especially welcome.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.technologyprogramme.org.uk/>

### MRC Studentship Placement Schemes

An opportunity is available to enable 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year MRC-funded PhD students to undertake a three month fellowship at either Parliament, the Welsh Assembly or the Scottish Executive to develop awareness of government policy-making environments and processes.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/NewsViewsAndEvents/News/MRC004309>

### Placement Fellowship Scheme

As part of its Placement Fellowship Scheme the ESRC welcomes applications from academics interested in working with the LGA. The Scheme encourages social science researchers to spend time within a partner organisation to undertake policy-relevant research and to develop the research skills of partner employees. The placement will be jointly funded by the ESRC and the LGA while the fellow will remain employed by his/her institution.

The closing date is Monday, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008. For an application form e-mail: [lesley.lilley@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:lesley.lilley@esrc.ac.uk).

Further information can be found at: [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/current\\_funding\\_opportunities/LGA.aspx](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/opportunities/current_funding_opportunities/LGA.aspx)

### Visiting Fellowships available for Local Government

Funding is now available for local government staff for short Visiting Fellowships to the UK Research Councils' Rural Economy and Land Use Programme (RELU). The scheme funds the expenses of staff to visit a RELU research team or group of teams with a view to exploring the implications of the research for their work. Visiting Fellowships for local government are funded by LARCI, and administered by RELU.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.relu.ac.uk/funding/Visiting%20Fellowship.htm>

Only a simple one-page application is needed which should be emailed to [relu@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:relu@ncl.ac.uk) before **31 March 2008**. The funding limit is £2,000 per placement.

A description of RELU projects can be seen at:

<http://www.relu.ac.uk/news/briefings/BRIF7.pdf>.

Examples of projects include: The Sustainability of Hill Farming; Sustainable Uplands: Learning to Manage Future Change; Social and Environmental Inequalities in Rural Areas; Impacts of Increasing Land Use Under Energy Crops; Energy Production on Farms Through Anaerobic Digestion; Testing a Community Approach to Catchment Management; Integrated Management of Floodplains; Sustainable and Safe Recycling of Livestock Waste; Assessing and Communicating Animal Disease Risks for Countryside Users; Reducing E coli Risk in Rural Communities; etc.

Local government practitioners can be matched up with an academic team by RELU. Contact [relu@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:relu@ncl.ac.uk) / tel. 0191 222 6903 for specific queries.

#### **KT-EQUAL Call for Expressions of Interest**

KT-EQUAL, as part of the Extending Quality of life (EQUAL) initiative supports new knowledge transfer activities. EPSRC is seeking to fund KT-EQUAL as a single consortium grant and expressions of interest for roles within KT-EQUAL are invited from individuals who are interested in the positions of consortium director, network leader or KT leader.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/CallsForProposals/KTEQUALCallEol.htm>

#### **Case Study: Providing Academic Insights at the Heart of Government**

Dr Dirk Haubrich, of the University of Oxford's Department of Politics and International Relations, took part at the ESRC's Placement Fellowship Scheme, spending time in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. He produced a new guide to the commissioning of public services to private and voluntary organisations.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/seminars/commissioning.aspx>

## **Events**

### **LARCI Events**

#### **LARCI Seminar Series**

LARCI seminars are open to all, and are usually free. Full details, programmes and booking information can be found on the Events Diary page of the LARCI website: [www.larci.org.uk/diary.html](http://www.larci.org.uk/diary.html) or <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/partnership/larci/events/archive/default.htm>

#### **Recent LARCI Events**

##### **LARCI Summit**

LARCI organised a high-level summit event on 28 November in London, to bring together current and potential stakeholders to shape the future development of this initiative. Chief executives from the Research Councils, central and local government pledged support and proposed steps to work more closely through LARCI.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/partnership/larci/events/archive/07nov.htm>

#### **Other Events**

##### **30th January 2008, London Migration Matters: planning for future population change**

This conference will focus on future trends in international migration to and from the UK, the different emerging demographic profiles of communities within and between regions and the ways leading local authorities are planning for future service and community cohesion issues in their localities. Liam Byrne, minister of immigration, will provide the keynote speech. There will also be an expert panel made up of representatives from DCLG, the Institute of Community Cohesion, and the Commission of Equalities and Human Rights who will debate future approaches to cohesion with conference delegates. For more information contact: [louise.dove@lga.local.gov.uk](mailto:louise.dove@lga.local.gov.uk) or visit <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/events/display-event.do?id=28468>

**13 February 2008**

**GLA Workshop: Differentiated Inequality in London across time and space**

This workshop aims to demonstrate the changing nature of inequality across the last 60 years and the value of longitudinal data for understanding it, with the emphasis on the impact on individual lives. Who remained locked into a cycle of poverty and disadvantage? Whose situation improved over time?

For further information contact John Bynner at [johnbynner@longviewuk.com](mailto:johnbynner@longviewuk.com)

**25 February 2008- 26 February 2008  
Achieving Carbon Reduction in Local Authorities**

The University of Bath, EPSRC/ ESRC 'lowcarbonworks' Action Research program is holding a workshop to explore about exciting new research focused in this area and to develop ideas and actions that build on success. This event is endorsed by I&DeA.

The event is almost full, but further information can be found at:

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/lowcarbon/mags/index.html> or  
[http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/lowcarbon/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/lhworkshop\\_further\\_details\\_v1.pdf](http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/lowcarbon/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/lhworkshop_further_details_v1.pdf)

**7 March 2008- 16 March 2008  
ESRC Festival of Social Sciences**

The ESRC Festival of Social Sciences will give a fascinating insight into some of the country's leading social science research and how it influences social, economic and political lives.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/FSS/default.aspx>

**7 March 2008- 16 March 2008  
National Science and Engineering Week**

'A week of science events for everyone!' National Science and Engineering Week (formerly National Science Week) is an opportunity for people of all ages, areas and organisations to take part in science, engineering and technology activities.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.the-ba.net/the-ba/Events/NSEW/index.html>

**30 June 2008- 1 July 2008  
WARMNET & Resource Efficiency Knowledge Transfer Network conference**

The Resource Efficiency Knowledge Transfer Network and WARMNET (Waste and Resource Management Network) are pleased to invite contributions of papers and posters to their first combined conference to be held at the University of Nottingham on the 30th June and 1st July 2008.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.warmnet.org.uk/> or contact [resource@ctechinnovation.com](mailto:resource@ctechinnovation.com)

**LARCI seminar programme**

We are currently working on our seminar programme. If you have ideas for 'hot topics' that you feel we should be addressing let us know:  
[andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk)

**Focus on....LARCI**

LARCI is undergoing an exciting period of change, precipitated by Clive Grace's December 2006 report:  
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/innovation/larci/gracereport.pdf>, and formalised on 28 November 2007 at the LARCI Summit in London.

One of our first actions will be to commission a series of research overviews covering 'hot topics' of key relevance to local government decision-making. We are inviting colleagues with an interest in local government research to help us identify the top three priorities, either from the list emerging from the November 2007 LARCI Summit:  
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/partnership/larci/events/archive/07nov.htm>, or by proposing additional topics.

Please e-mail your comments and 'top three' candidates for research overviews to [andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk) by **31 January 2008**.

### **New alliance will ensure effective local government research – Press release from 28 November**

Local people are set to benefit from improved government services as a result of a new strategic alliance between Local Government and the UK's Research Councils.

The Local Authority Research Council Initiative will bring together a wide range of groups whose aim is to develop groundbreaking technologies that will deliver more efficient council services while at the same time making people's lives easier.

Examples of previous work include:

- Research into climate change which saw CO2 emissions drop by 2,000 tonnes in one week in Birmingham after the implementation of the findings.
- Research for Brighton and Hove City Council which improved access to public transport for disabled people across the city.
- Portsmouth City Council worked with Southampton University on household waste collection, sorting, recycling which saved the council taxpayer money and made the council more efficient at delivering services.

Speaking on behalf of Research Councils UK, Professor Ian Diamond said: "Greater knowledge exchange between local government and the UK's world class researchers is especially important in meeting the critical challenges that face all of us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The new concordat will not only help local governments to deal with local issues arising from problems such as climate change, crime and disease but will enable local communities to influence aspects of the UK's research agenda."

Chief Executive of the Local Government Association, Paul Coen, said: "This Concordat is a landmark in bringing together researchers and local government to bring more invention, more innovation and more creativity to the work that local authorities do in delivering the best services for local people. "We want to put people first and will work hard to ensure that research is passed on to those who can deliver better areas and services."

Steve Bundred, Chief Executive of the Audit Commission, said:

"Today's commitment gives local government an even stronger voice in the direction of our research. This in turn will ensure our auditing work best reflects the local priorities and needs of local people. 'Whether it be issues tackling climate change or local anti-social behaviour, we are committed to refining our audit programme to reflect changing local concerns. We therefore welcome this concordat and the better outcomes for local communities that it will help to deliver.'

Further information can be found at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/partnership/larci/events/archive/07nov.htm> or contact Nick Mann at 0207 664 3187 or Julia Short at 01793 444435

### **LARCI – website of the month**

LARCI is the 'Website of the Month' in the latest Government Social Research bulletin.

Further information can be found at: [http://www.gsr.gov.uk/new\\_research/bulletin/2008/0801.asp#wom](http://www.gsr.gov.uk/new_research/bulletin/2008/0801.asp#wom)

### **Focus on.... local government**

#### **Ethical governance toolkit**

The purpose of the toolkit is to help local authorities assess how well they are meeting the ethical agenda and to improve further their arrangements.

The toolkit is badged jointly by the Standards Board for England, the Improvement and Development Agency and the Audit Commission. The Standards Board for England has supported the development of the tools with the other bodies.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=1115850>

#### **Warwick Consortium**

A unique partnership between the Local Government Centre at Warwick Business School, and around 20 UK local authorities, the Warwick Partnership is a

unique ten year partnership, to carry out joint research and best practice development.

Further information can be found at: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wbs/research/lgc/research/consortium/>

### **Working together: delivering the sub-national review**

Association of Regional Observatories/ESRC Conference, 5-6 December 2007

Full proceedings, presentations and background information are available online at:

<http://www.regionalobservatories.org.uk/details.asp?key=DD221|0|70217944141337|p|1794|0&parentkey=DD221|0|70217944141337|p|1794|0>

### **Watchdogs join forces to push for better local services**

The first independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there has moved a step closer. On 19 November 2007 was the release of the first stage of joint consultation on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA is about people and places. It will give people an annual snapshot of life in their local area and help local services to improve their quality of life. It will also provide an independent view of whether people are getting value for money from their local services.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/caa/consultation.asp> or <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgovernment/useofresources/consultation2009.asp?CategoryID=english%5E576>

### **'The Audit Commission on commissioning'**

In light of the recent tight financial settlement and the new local government bill, councils need to consider different approaches to the commissioning of services to improve value for money. The Audit Commission has recently published its findings from two national studies

examining different aspects of commissioning by local government.

The first of these, *Healthy Competition*, explores councils' use of competition and contestability. The study report presents findings on:

- the potential for councils' use of competition and contestability to generate cost savings and service improvements;
- practical examples of councils successfully using competition and contestability; and
- the pre-conditions that councils must have in place to make effective use of competition and contestability.

The second report, *For Better, For Worse*, takes a more detailed look at one procurement model, the strategic service-delivery partnership. These are long-term public-private partnerships designed to deliver services. They are defined as partnerships because they seek to overcome some of the adversarial aspects of traditionally-specified contracting. The report sets out:

- the nature and extent of the use of strategic service-delivery partnerships;
- the extent to which they have delivered benefits; and
- how councils can manage these arrangements in order to optimise these benefits.

Both reports highlight common themes. Although the effective use of different market mechanisms can deliver real benefits, there is no universal solution that can deliver improvement for all councils. Each authority therefore needs to make decisions about commissioning based on objective assessment of the costs and benefits associated with different options in their local circumstances. And the importance of skills and capacity are also paramount. For example, in strategic service-delivery partnerships, councils need to put in place effective management arrangements not only during procurement but also to ensure effective ongoing contract management.

The Audit Commission's studies team intends to draw together the findings from these and other studies related to commissioning and will be presenting on

this subject at a series of seminars and events throughout 2008.

For further information contact Stuart Deaton at [s-deaton@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:s-deaton@audit-commission.gov.uk) or 0844 798 2337 or Nigel Terrington at [n-terrington@audit-commission.gov.uk](mailto:n-terrington@audit-commission.gov.uk) or 0844 798 2439.

### Local Government Analysis and Research Bulletin

LGAR's monthly bulletin highlights the latest key issues, developments, research and statistical findings impacting on, or of interest to, local government. The bulletin brings together the work of the LGA and all the central bodies and information is grouped under themed areas. The bulletin is published on the 28th of each month and can be found at:

<http://www.lgar.local.gov.uk/lgv/core/page.do?pagelid=11191>

To register for the bulletin please visit:

<http://lgar.local.gov.uk/lgv/reg/user-register.do>

### West Midlands Regional Skills Assessment 2007

Skills are at the centre of the national and regional policy agenda. There is increasing recognition that increased investment in training and development by employers and raising the skill levels of individuals are the key to improving economic performance and tackling deprivation and exclusion.

The West Midlands Regional Skills Assessment gives an overview of the key issues facing the West Midlands economy with regard to the skills agenda. The report is produced annually and aims to inform the work of key stakeholders to align the supply of training and related business support with the current and future demands of employers and individuals. The following highlights have been identified in the report.

#### Employers

In order to develop and grow, employers require a workforce that is more highly qualified, with a better mix of 'employability' skills and with improved management & leadership capabilities. However, only 56% of employers in the West Midlands have invested in training

for their staff in the last year – the lowest proportion in England.

#### Individuals and communities

The rates of skills and qualification attainment by individuals lag behind national trends. In 2006, the proportion of the Region's working age population with no qualifications (17.5%) was the highest in England. The proportions qualified to at least level 2 (64%) and at least level 3 (42%) were the lowest in England.

A lack of investment in skills is acting as a barrier to participation in employment, particularly in urban areas of the Region. While 80% of working age people in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are in employment, in Stoke-on-Trent and the Black Country the employment rates are 70%, and only 63% of people in Birmingham are in employment.

#### Demographic change

These issues need to be set in the context of demographic change for the region.

Demographic trends indicate that older people and those from the longer established minority ethnic communities represent another growing, but hitherto under-utilised, source of labour and skills. Between 2001 and 2025 the region is forecast to see increases of:

- 120,000 in numbers of 55-64 year olds (from 640,000 to 760,000)
- 90,000 in the Region's Asian communities (from 370,000 to 460,000)
- 30,000 in the Region's black communities (from 95,000 to 125,000)
- 30,000 in numbers of people of mixed heritage.

The full report is available for download at:

<http://www.wmro.org/p.asp/RSA2007>.

For further information contact Andy Phillips at: [andy.phillips@wmro.org](mailto:andy.phillips@wmro.org) or 0121 202 3251.

### Focus on .... the Research Councils

#### Analysing and using population data – Funded secondment opportunities

ESRC wants proposals for *User Fellowships*. Their aim is to develop capacity in secondary data analysis and promote the use of large-scale data sets,



both qualitative and quantitative. The programme is for 'non-academic' researchers working in organisations that use social science data. The ESRC will provide funds of up to £50k to support each Fellowship. The funding is for secondment to an academic centre of excellence (such as an ESRC Research Centre or an individual department with ESRC accreditation) for 6-months full time or 12-months part-time. Funding includes employer costs, specialist training in secondary analysis, and mentoring and supervision. Fellowships will run during 2008/2009. Closing date for application is Tuesday 22 January 2008.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.uptap.net/index.html> or contact Jennifer Edwards at [Jennifer.edwards@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:Jennifer.edwards@esrc.ac.uk) or John Stillwell at [j.c.h.stillwell@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:j.c.h.stillwell@leeds.ac.uk)

### Evidence Network

The Evidence Network is supported by ESRC to bring social science research much nearer to the decision making process. Their aim is to provide a focal point for those who are interested in Evidence Based Policy and Practice to access useful information and resources (EBPP), to provide a forum for debate and discussion on EBPP issues, to contribute to capacity-building in the skills required for EBPP and to explore issues through research and consultancy activities for researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.evidencenetwork.org/>

### Next Generation Science for Planet Earth 2007-2012

On November 15 2007, NERC launched its new strategy, *Next Generation Science for Planet Earth*, which sets out an overview of how NERC, in partnership with others, will respond to the critical issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – the sustainability of life on Earth. The strategy was developed with the UK's environmental research users, funders and providers, and sets out the challenges for both our science and how NERC manages their activities.

Further information can be found at: [http://www.nerc.ac.uk/publications/strategy\\_cplan/documents/strategy07.pdf](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/publications/strategy_cplan/documents/strategy07.pdf)

### Excellence with Impact

The Research Councils have recently outlined their plans to demonstrate increased economic benefits for the UK economy and society. *Excellence with Impact*, published in October 2007:

- gave examples of how the Research Council's annual investment of around £2.8 billion of Government funding translates into world-class research, leading to profitable breakthroughs, improved health and public policy, and a better quality of life for British people.
- reported the findings of a User Satisfaction Survey that probes the expectations and experiences of users, including individuals from the public, private and voluntary sectors that have worked closely with Research Councils.
- included an independent review of Research Council Knowledge Transfer Schemes.
- provided an analysis of how peer review decision making could reflect economic impact considerations.
- Outlined plans for a strategic alliance with the Technology Strategy Board, creating exciting opportunities to support collaborations between research and business.

*Excellence with Impact* also looks forward, describing how Research Councils plan to deliver improved knowledge transfer in the future.

Further Information can be found at: <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impact/default.htm>

### Proposals sought for New Centre for Third Sector Research

ESRC, Office of the Third Sector (OTS) in the Cabinet Office and The Barrow Cadbury Trust have announced the call for proposals to establish a new independent, multidisciplinary research centre for the Third Sector.

Bringing together a critical mass of research expertise, resources and intellectual leadership, the centre will

support research of the highest international standing, provide top quality analysis and strengthen the evidence base on the sector and its impact, to underpin policy and practice. Developing partnerships between researchers and research users will be at the heart of the new Centre in order to increase knowledge and expertise about, with and for the Third Sector, to include the voluntary and community sectors as well as social enterprise.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2008/january/thirdsector.aspx?ComponentId=25232&SourcePageId=20654>

### **New Research Centre to look at Spatial Differences in Economic Prosperity**

ESRC, Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), DCLG and the Welsh Assembly Government have today (14<sup>th</sup> January) announced the successful bid to establish an independent Centre for Spatial Economics.

Economic prosperity in the UK is unevenly distributed. The Centre, which sees a total joint investment of £2.4million over an initial three years, will support high quality independent research to further understanding in why some regions, cities and communities prosper, whilst other don't. Research will focus on why there are disparities in economic growth at all spatial levels including regional, city-region, local and neighbourhood.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/PO/releases/2008/january/thirdsector.aspx?ComponentId=25232&SourcePageId=20185>

### **Research Councils' Bulletins**

Each of the Research Councils' produces bulletins summarising research outputs, consultations and other information of interest to stakeholders. To register, go to:

AHRC:  
<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/news/>

BBSRC:  
<http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/news/email.html>

EPSRC:  
<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/MediaEnquiries/default.htm>

ESRC:  
[http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index\\_press.aspx](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/index_press.aspx)

MRC:  
<http://www.mrc.ac.uk/NewsViewsAndEvents/News/SubscribeToNews/index.htm>

NERC:  
<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/news/rss/>

STFC:  
<http://www.so.stfc.ac.uk/rss/rss.xml>

RCUK:  
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/aboutrcuk/publications/default.htm>

### **Britain in 2008**

The 'Britain in 2008' publication showcases the diversity of ESRC-funded research around the state of the nation in 2008. It offers a concise analysis of research and topical issues concerning Britain today.

Further information can be found at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/about/CI/CP/britaintoday/index.aspx?ComponentId=20890&SourcePageId=20656>

### **Useful links**

Contact details for LARCI Steering Group members and their organisations can be found at: [www.larci.org.uk/steering.html](http://www.larci.org.uk/steering.html)

### **Technology Strategy Board**

The Technology Strategy Board is a business-focused organisation dedicated to promoting technology-enabled innovation across the UK.

Several of the fields on which the Technology Strategy Board is focusing – and where it is investing – relate directly to challenges and issues faced by local authorities.

Established as an executive body at arm's length from Government in July 2007, the organisation is sponsored by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

Among the organisation's activities are investing in research and development; building partnerships between business, research and Government to address major societal challenges; and running a wide range of knowledge exchange programmes to help innovation flourish.

The Technology Strategy Board works particularly closely with local government on the development of new Innovation Platforms. An Innovation Platform is a new approach to a major policy and societal challenge, focusing on a specific area of opportunity and aligning policy, regulation, business and government procurement. The platform brings together Government stakeholders and funders, business and researchers in support of innovative solutions.

Four Innovation Platforms have been launched by the Technology Strategy Board to date, focusing on Intelligent Transport Systems, Network Security, Assisted Living and Low Carbon Vehicles.

A short film explaining the work of the Technology Strategy Board and Innovation Platforms in particular was shown at the SOLACE conference in 2007 and can be viewed on the Local Government Channel website at:  
<http://www.localgovernmentchannel.com/index1.php?page=2&cat=19&sub=32&vid=142>

For further information on the Technology Strategy Board please visit:  
[www.innovateuk.org](http://www.innovateuk.org).

### **MSc in Evidence for Public Policy and Practice, EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education University of London**

The MSc will equip you with conceptual and practical skills for conducting and appraising systematic reviews and evaluating the potential for the use of research evidence to inform policy and practice. Students will study theory, empirical research, and practical examples of all types of research evidence to synthesis, models of research use, research questions, study types and types of data.

The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) is part of the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, which is supported by ESRC.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms> or contact  
[p.rose@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:p.rose@ioe.ac.uk)

### **Analysis, Intelligence, Research**

The Analysis, Intelligence and Research community site supports the sharing of information about analysis, intelligence and research either undertaken by or of interest to Scottish local government.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.improvementservice.org.uk/air/>

### **Centre for Market and Public Organisation**

The Centre for Market and Public Organisation (CMPO) is a leading research centre, combining expertise in economics, geography and law and is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Leverhulme Trust.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/CMPO/>

The CMPO Bulletin can be found at:  
<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/CMPO/bulletin/index.htm>

### **Government Social Research (GSR)**

GSR draws on the discipline of social science to provide analysis for policy, using data to inform policy debate.

Further information can be found at:  
<http://www.gsr.gov.uk/>

The GSR Bulletin can be found at:  
[http://www.gsr.gov.uk/new\\_research/bulletin/index.asp](http://www.gsr.gov.uk/new_research/bulletin/index.asp)

### **Collaboration Opportunities**

LARCI provides a brokering service for local authorities interested in collaborating with academics on research projects, and vice versa. If you have a query, contact:  
[andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk).

### **Your Ideas**

Do you have any suggestions for LARCI: future seminar topics, comments on seminar structure? Would you like to host a joint seminar workshop, or present your work at a LARCI seminar? Let us know and we will use your views to provide a better service.

To contribute to this newsletter, comment on the content, or join the mailing list, contact the LARCI Research Coordinator by e-mail [andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.turner@esrc.ac.uk) or telephone 01793 413121.



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