

Energy and communities research and practice: future challenges and opportunities

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Economic and Social Research Council

UK's Research Council's Energy Programme



'To position the UK to meet its energy and environmental targets and policy goals through high quality research and postgraduate training.'

- Launched with investment announced in 2002 and continues to be a major investment strand (£540m over 4 years from 2011-15 Spending Review period).

Key UK Targets:

- 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- 15% of energy from renewable sources by 2020.
- Increases in energy efficiency.



Drivers:

- Tackling climate change by reducing carbon dioxide emissions both within the UK and abroad.
- Ensuring energy security.
- Ensuring energy affordability.



Opportunities and Challenges for Research Funders

Why?

- Communities are at the heart of solutions to (all?) energy agenda

Challenges

- Relationship and consortia building
- Strategic alignment of interests in order that research is appropriately directed and useful to communities.
- Developing understandings of needs and benefits of engagement
- Funding rules and regs
- Identifying appropriate communities and bodies to work with
- Developing direct partnerships or partnerships through intermediaries
- Communities capacity to engage (their time, resources etc) and ours.



Challenges for Researchers and Communities



- Developing understandings of needs and benefits of engagement (both between and within communities, the academe and other stakeholders)
- Funding rules and regs
- Identifying appropriate communities and bodies, who should we work with?
- Communities capacity to engage (time, resources etc)
- Ensuring what is done is salient, useful and practical, and delivered in appropriate ways
- Evolving methods, concepts and theory

So, perhaps not so different?

The challenges of interdisciplinarity and whole systems



From a research council's perspective

- ☞ Social scientists reluctance ?
- ☞ Epistemic differences
- ☞ Practicalities – language, methods, RAE, peer review, publication and other measures of esteem, time and resources
- ☞ Identification of expertise of researchers (as energy or wind, PV, nuclear or social policy, political science or psychology etc)
- ☞ 7 research councils

Future opportunities for international research support



- Increasing research council funding flexibility
- Future Earth – will pay particular attention to communities in co-design and production
- Horizon 2020's 'Secure, Clean and Efficient Energy' objective specifically includes communities and cities. 60% of the total budget will be related to sustainable development
- Belmont Forum – potentially
- The Energy Programme Road map

Further information or advice?



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RCUK Energy Programme

The Research Councils UK Energy Programme aims to position the UK to meet its energy and environmental targets and policy goals through world-class research and training. The Energy Programme is investing more than £530 million in research and skills to pioneer a low carbon future. This builds on an investment of £360 million over the past 5 years.

Led by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the Energy Programme brings together the work of EPSRC and that of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), and the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC).

A video providing an introduction to the RCUK Energy Programme, and how it is helping the transition to a low-carbon economy is available [here](#).

Further information on the programme can be found via the links below:

- [About the Energy Programme](#)
- [Why energy research matters](#)
- [Energy Funding Opportunities](#)
- [Further information about the Programme](#)
- [Impact of energy research and capacity building](#)
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For further information on the programme please see our [contacts page](#).

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