

The LWEC newsletter will be published approximately every two months and more frequent updates are on the web site (www.lwec.org.uk). This edition highlights a variety of developments since the Partner's Board meeting in November 2009. Please let us know if there are specific LWEC activities that you would like to be covered in the next edition.

Andrew Watkinson

LWEC Director

Delivering the science for Copenhagen

The AVOIDing dangerous climate change programme, sponsored by DECC and Defra, brought together the Met Office with the Grantham Institute, Tyndall Centre and Walker Institute to address scientific questions related to policy issues discussed in Copenhagen. AVOID results (see www.avoid.uk.net) were the basis of ministerial briefings, and influential at the pre-CoP 15 event in Barcelona as well as CoP 15 in Copenhagen. AVOID findings underpinned Stern's analysis of 2020 emissions and were presented to the US National Academy of Sciences committee on stabilisation. A meeting was recently held to discuss how to involve more partners in the AVOID programme as it moves forward.

Driving forward the adaptation programme

Co-ordinating research to address the policy and delivery needs in adaptation is a considerable challenge, touching on virtually all aspects of policy and delivery. Following the AEA report on adaptation, commissioned by Defra on behalf of the LWEC partners (to be published shortly), LWEC is working with UKCIP to ensure a strong link between research, policy and delivery. Defra's Strategic Evidence Fund has awarded money for a new climate adaptation programme (ACC) and invited LWEC to its kick-off meeting to present on the importance of knowledge exchange and to promote the LWEC context as a route to effective knowledge exchange.

Developing the ecosystem approach

Following the lead from policy (Defra, DFID) and delivery organisations (EA, SEPA, NE), a range of new programmes has adopted an ecosystem services approach. These include: Biodiversity for Sustainable Ecosystem Services, the Changing Water Cycle, Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation, the National Ecosystem Assessment and the Virtual Observatory.

National Ecosystem Assessment reaches first milestone

The National Ecosystem Assessment (<http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org>) co-funded by Defra, NERC, ESRC, and SG and WAG, has reached its first milestone with the production of first drafts of the ecosystem chapters. LWEC partners are well represented on the Expert Panel, User Group and Client Group. ESRC have recently joined other partners in funding this important multi-disciplinary activity.

Launch of major new development programme

The joint DFID, NERC and ESRC programme 'Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation' (ESPA) was launched with a press release on the 4 December 2009 (www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/espa). This £40 million programme will provide the knowledge needed to develop resilient ecosystems and help to reduce poverty in developing countries. The call for proposals follows a rigorous period of co-design during which six situation analyses were commissioned to inform the call.

Future cities

CLG has been drawing on the work of the EPSRC/ESRC Adaptation and Resilience to a Changing Climate (ARCC) programme, co-ordinated by UKCIP, to inform its current work on planning (www.ukcip-arcc.org.uk). The first ARCC Stakeholder Forum will on 16 March 2010. Members of ARCC and the Tyndall Centre have also been discussing a potential new initiative with partners on using engineering-enabled transitions to sustainable infrastructure.

Reducing flood risk

The reduction of flood risk is core business for EA and SEPA. With two major research council initiatives on flooding coming to end over the next year there have been a number of discussions and activities involving LWEC partners (e.g. EPSRC, NERC, Defra, EA, LGA) in this area. The Environment Research Funders Forum (ERFF) has been asked to take a long term strategic view, while LWEC is looking to align activities and promote new research areas.

Innovation at the heart of LWEC

Since joining LWEC a year ago the Technology Strategy Board has vigorously promoted innovation platforms in the environmental change area (www.innovateuk.org/ourstrategy/innovationplatforms.ashx), with the aim of improving co-ordination between the key players from industry, academia and government, opening up new opportunities for business. The platforms accredited to date involve a range of LWEC partners and include the detection and identification of infectious agents, intelligent transport systems, low carbon vehicles and low impact buildings. Partners should consider the implications and opportunities arising from these TSB activities.

Analysing the policy-research interface

The LWEC Directorate and partners have been working with John Holmes from the University of Oxford over the last three months to evaluate the effectiveness of LWEC's approaches to generating policy value. John has been assessing how LWEC can improve its science to policy processes. A full report will be available next month. Ken O'Callaghan has been discussing with government colleagues approaches to effective knowledge brokering, for example, the potential role of short, expert fellowships deployed into the science-policy interface to improve co-operation between policy, science and business.

Business on board

Colin Drummond, Chief Executive of Viridor, Executive Director of Pennon Group plc and Chair of the Environmental Sustainability Knowledge Transfer Network, took up the position of Chair of the LWEC Business Advisory Board in November 2009. The first Business Advisory Board meeting will be in April; full membership of the board will be announced soon. The activities of the Board include providing advice to the LWEC partners on priority sectors and areas for engagement, early business input into the design of new programmes and activities, and working with partners to understand how policy and regulatory developments can provide greater opportunities for UK business.

Third sector: key to delivery

The third sector plays a key role in the delivery of services such as health, welfare and conservation and LWEC is now engaging with a range of organisations on how climate science information is used.

- LWEC is currently examining how knowledge exchange operates in the area of biodiversity conservation and is developing strong interactions with conservation NGOs in the National Ecosystem Assessment. LWEC has also established a dialogue between Defra, through the Chief Scientific Advisor, and a range of conservation NGOs in the Cambridge Conservation Initiative.
- We are currently working with the ESRC Third Sector Research Centre to establish a discussion with the third sector on adaptation through increasing resilience.
- On the humanitarian front, UKCDS is facilitating discussions on how research could improve prediction, management and recovery of communities affected by environmental disasters. We are also exploring the potential of the ELRHA network to connect with humanitarian agencies (www.elrha.org).

Engaging the public

Engagement with the public is critical to the delivery of the LWEC agenda, especially in the current climate of climate change scepticism, freedom of information issues and behavioural responses to climate change.

The third meeting of the LWEC Public Engagement Strategic Advisory Group in January agreed the strategic focus for LWEC's public engagement. This follows the review of 'Public Attitudes to Environmental Change' (www.lwec.org.uk/about-living-environmental-change/public-engagement). A basic package of support material around public engagement is being developed for everyone carrying out engagement in an LWEC-accredited activity.

Geoengineering dialogue

Following the recent Royal Society report on geoengineering, NERC on behalf of LWEC is leading a series of workshops with members of the public to explore people's attitudes towards various potential geoengineering methods. The results are expected in April 2010 (www.nerc.ac.uk/about/consult/geoengineering.asp).

Developing relationships with the media

Dan Osborn and Ruth Welters (and press officers from the partner organisations) met news and programmes staff from the BBC at the start of the BBC buddies programme. The buddy scheme aims to open up the coverage of research from a focus on reporting results to more detailed programming, allowing the audience to follow the process of research and see how research is used.

Adding international value

The research within LWEC sits within an international context; international links are critical in developing our programmes and allow us to learn from knowledge exchange in other countries. RCUK India is helping to develop co-funding for the Changing Water Cycle programme, while RCUK China is taking a keen interest in promoting the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation programme.

Andrew Watkinson recently addressed the Belmont Forum (an international group of environmental research funders) in London and will be travelling with Dan Osborn on 8 February to Washington in order to explore research linkages and experience of knowledge exchange with NSF, NOAA, NIH, the State Department and others.

HEIs and Research Council Institutes aligned to LWEC

A number of universities and research institutes have requested presentations and discussions to identify how they can best help address the LWEC agenda. Recent visits have been made to the University of York, BBSRC John Innes Centre, the NERC Proudman Oceanography Laboratory and ESRC Third Sector Centre.

ERFF and LWEC

ERFF and LWEC have been working together in a number of areas including the identification of priority research areas on the basis of gap analysis and horizon scanning. Discussions have also been taking place as part of the ERFF review on a clear articulation of the differences between ERFF and LWEC.

LWEC reports to BIS

Dan Osborn with Andrew Watkinson provided an update to the Director General Science Research, BIS in January 2010. Progress on partnership working was highlighted together with priorities over the next six months: increasing opportunities for research and business, adaptation, water, environment and health, strengthening engagement with research institutes, exploring new web technologies. The presentation was well received; DGSR welcomed the increased engagement with business, stressing the need for strong knowledge exchange.

LWEC reports to NERC Open Council meeting

Dan Osborn presented an update on LWEC to the NERC Open Council Meeting. NERC's Chairman, Ed Wallis, referred to the LWEC partnership as 'inspirational'.

Addressing the House of Lords Select Committee on research funding

Andrew Watkinson, together with representatives from UKERC and OSCHR, presented evidence to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee on research funding priorities, focusing on the added value that partnering brings to research.

Update on recent LWEC-accredited activities

The last three months has seen, with the Directorate in position, a period of catch up in relation to accreditation together with a range of new activities coming forward for accreditation. Partners are encouraged to identify opportunities for their involvement; please contact S.Bentham-Green@uea.ac.uk for more information. Here is a summary of recently accredited activities; the full list can be found at www.lwec.org.uk/activities.

•Integrated Climate Programme

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/icp

•Designing a Programme to Address Evidence Gaps in Greenhouse Gas and Carbon Flux from UK Peatlands

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/peatlands

•Detection and Identification of Infectious Agents Innovation Platform

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/infectious-agents

•Intelligent Transport Systems and Services Innovation Platform

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/itss

•Low Carbon Vehicles Innovation Platform

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/low-carbon-vehicles

•Low Impact Buildings Innovation Platform

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/low-impact-buildings

•Cross-government Biofuels Executive Research Board

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/08/01/2010-biofuels

•Social and Environmental Economic Research (SEER) into Multi-Objective Land Use Decision Making

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/seer

•Adapting Rural Living and Land Use to Environmental Change (RELU Phase IV)

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/relu

•ESRC Climate Change Leadership Fellowships

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/esrc

•Land Based Renewables

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/land-based-renewables

•Demonstration Test Catchments

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/demonstration-test-catchments

•Reducing Uncertainty in Models for Environmental Decision-Making

www.lwec.org.uk/activities/reducing-uncertainty-models-environmental-decision-making

Getting the balance right

With 20 partners and a range of interests it can sometimes be difficult to get the balance right. The research councils continue to have a strong influence on the LWEC agenda, through new funding initiatives, but recently we have been trying to focus more on government (e.g. BIS, Defra, DFID, SG) and delivery agencies (e.g. EA, LGA) and also on the business agenda with TSB to ensure strong knowledge exchange.

Please feel free to get in contact to discuss any LWEC activities

www.lwec.org.uk/contact