

<p>Institution: University of Liverpool</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 17A Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology: Geography and Environmental Studies</p>
<p>Title of case study: Low Carbon Liverpool Knowledge Exchange Partnership</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This is a case study of ESRC-funded research at Liverpool University which enhanced policy making and governance structures around low carbon policy in Liverpool, UK. The Low Carbon Liverpool Knowledge Exchange Partnership explored how Liverpool's economic development agencies can facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy, combining a healthy, vibrant and socially inclusive economy with mitigation of dangerous climate change. The outputs that had a significant impact on policy making in the city included an audit of the city's environmental performance, and an institutional innovation, Liverpool Green Partnership, to carry through the changes in policy identified in the audit.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The need to avoid dangerous climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and concerns about the depletion of fossil fuel reserves are two of the 'grand challenges' facing humanity. While the International Panel of Climate Change has documented the dangers associated with anthropogenic climate change, action to reduce emissions at a global scale has been disappointing. Department of Geography and Planning, Liverpool University-based researchers Peter North (Reader, - PI 2002-13), Tom Barker (Research Associate - 2009-11), Alex Nurse (Research Associate - 2012-13) and Noel Longhurst (PhD student working with North 2007-2011) have been researching the potentials and limitations of action to reduce greenhouse gasses at more local scales (North 2010a): that of (a) citizen based action, and (b) at the urban scale.</p> <p>North and his team's research on community-based action, such as Transition Towns and Low Carbon Communities (North 2011) identified a vibrant and active community of people taking responsibility for their contribution to dangerous climate change, although the capacity of individuals to effect change at a larger scale is limited (North and Longhurst 2013). They have been the source of many creative solutions to the problem of creating a convivial, egalitarian low carbon economy. These remedies have included new locally-based businesses, local food and power production, work with householders on reducing household energy use, and local money networks (North 2013a).</p> <p>If the ability of community action to take significant steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is limited, cities have emerged as central sites for achieving concrete reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, in many ways as a direct response to concerns about the lack of action at the global scale. In some cities, this is not well understood: economic growth is the priority. This was the case for Liverpool, a city that had recently revitalised its image, but still suffered from deprivation. It was not at the forefront of low carbon policy (North 2010b).</p> <p>North's research since 2002 has focussed on how ideas generated by environmental groups and activists which challenge accepted wisdom about how to ensure that cities are prosperous and vibrant places in which to live, work and do business might hold potential solutions to urban problems that accepted paradigms do not address: for example avoiding dangerous climate change or creating socially inclusive cities. A city might be prosperous, but also socially divided. Greenhouse gas emissions might not be coming down. The Low Carbon Liverpool project aimed (a) to use North's research findings on the usefulness or otherwise of ideas developed by the environmental activist groups like Transition Towns such as local food production, local power generation, local currencies and the like to help revitalise parts of Liverpool that the city's revitalised image had passed by and to support the ability of SMEs and social enterprises to take advantage of opportunities from the low carbon economy and (b) to understand if the city had the right policies in place to secure its continued prosperity and do what it needs to do to avoid dangerous climate change (North 2013b).</p>

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3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

These four publications underpin the research problem addressed in the project: the viability of local economic strategies developed by environmentalists.

1. North, P 2010a: "Eco-Localisation as a progressive response to peak oil and climate change – a sympathetic critique" in *Geoforum*, vol 41/4 pp 585-594. **(peer reviewed)**
2. North, P: 2011: "The politics of climate activism in the UK: a social movement analysis", in *Environment and Planning A*, vol 43/7 pp 1581-1598. **(peer reviewed)**
3. North, P. and Longhurst, N. (2013): 'Grassroots localisation: the scalar potential of and limits of the 'Transition' approach to climate change and resource constraint' in *Urban Studies*, vol 50/7 pp. 1421-1436. **(peer reviewed)**
4. North, P.: 2013a, forthcoming: 'Ten Square Miles Surrounded by Reality: Materialising Alternative Economies using Local Currencies' in *Antipode*, published on line doi 10.1111/anti.12039 **(peer reviewed)**.

This publication outlines the situation in Liverpool before the research was undertaken and the need to take action to avoid dangerous climate change was not accepted.

5. North, P 2010b: "Unsustainable Urbanism? Cities, climate change and resource depletion: a Liverpool case study" in *Geography Compass*, vol 4/9 pp 1377–1391. **(peer reviewed)**

This publication outlines the Low Carbon Liverpool research and its benefits.

6. North, P 2013b, Knowledge Exchange, 'impact' and engagement: exploring low carbon urban transitions, in *Geographical Journal*, 179, 3, pages 211–220 **(peer reviewed)**

Funding for the research was provided as follows:

2009-11: ESRC Knowledge Transfer competition: "*Developing the Low Carbon Economy on Merseyside*", £131,824. Pi Dr Peter North **(peer reviewed)**

2012-13: ESRC Knowledge Exchange Follow-On Funding Scheme, "*Developing the Low Carbon Economy on Merseyside: Follow on Funding*": £124,922.45. pi: Dr Peter North **(peer reviewed)**

4. Details of the impact

With partners in the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, the city's economic development company, Liverpool Vision, and environmental NGO Groundwork Merseyside, Liverpool University researchers North, Nurse and Barker established the ESRC-funded Low Carbon Liverpool Knowledge Exchange Partnership as a "*focussed attempt to shift the framework of public policy and shape the terms of public debate within Liverpool around the challenges of climate change and the need for cities to embrace a low carbon approach to sustainability*"⁽¹⁾. The Partners worked together to develop common understandings of the issues through secondments of university researchers to the partners, through participant observation of the policy making process, and through action research. Results were published in a report (North and Barker, 2011 available at www.lowcarbonliverpool.com) and presented to an audience of some seventy local policy makers in February 2011. The report's recommendations were welcomed by our local partners ^(1, 3, 4) who felt it and associated consultations provided a "*strong evidence base*"⁽¹⁾ which "*helped catalyse a coalition that is determined to ensure that Liverpool creates the conditions that enable the city to reap the rewards from such an approach*"^(1,6). The report provided options for stakeholders to explore and action, benchmarking the current status of activity and setting quantifiable measurements from which future progress can be charted. This independent external assessment was welcomed by Liverpool City Council in informing local policy on environmental change and climate issues ^(1,5,7) Research findings framed a new understanding on the need for Liverpool to develop on a more sustainable approach, which were written into local strategic documents

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including Merseyside's Local Transport Plan⁽²⁾:

"The project helped to provide a platform for taking forward key themes around reducing carbon emissions from transport whilst supporting sustainable economic growth, where walking, cycling and public transport are the modes of transport of choice, and where long distance trips by motorised transport are minimised."

The Primary Care Trust provided funding for a Strategic Policy Officer based at the Chamber of Commerce. This integration had significant impact on cementing the partnership of the key project stakeholders, and on policy formation and strategic planning to improve the city's environmental performance⁽⁶⁾.

After the launch a wider range of partners emerged who established a new multi-agency Green Partnership which was formally launched in July 2013 and which *"gave the project an immediacy and potency it would otherwise have lacked."*⁽¹⁾ This wider group continued to use processes of co-production to research the advantages of the European Green Capital bid process to catalyse low carbon policy making at the urban scale. The bid process *"became a motor for focussed action and engaged a whole range of institutions and public and private bodies with the project"*. Our research included an analysis of the experiences of previous Green Capitals and other examples of good urban practice. It included an audit of Liverpool's environmental performance, which was presented in March 2013 and identified four areas of poor performance (recycling levels, cycle lanes, use of green cars, and water metering) which were widely discussed in the city.^(5, 6) The partnerships work and the associated debate influenced the establishment of a Mayoral Commission to accelerate progress and performance in this area^(5, 6).

Thus impact can be demonstrated through:

(1) Catalysing local discussion, public understanding and debate reported in the local media, including eight events involving between 50 and 100 delegates from the public, private and community sectors which discussed and analysed the issues^(1,5) in a city where climate change had not been a priority and in a sceptical political environment with the result that:

"socially innovative approaches to the creation of sustainable economies and communities have not been side-lined but have retained strength and potential as a pathway to growth and economic opportunity."⁽¹⁾

(2) Improved partnership working and stimulating policy debate. The report's key recommendation, that Liverpool look to *"improve the alignment of programmes, processes and awareness"*^(1, 5) was accepted. The co-production process has been owned by partners in what they saw as an *"interesting and innovative journey"*^(3,4, 5). The impact of Low Carbon Liverpool has not just been excellent university research accepted by and then adopted by partners: they have welcomed the ability to explore new ideas that at first felt uncomfortable, which challenged conventional wisdom. Low Carbon Liverpool has provided a *"trusted, neutral space for the improved alignment of programmes, processes and awareness"*⁽⁵⁾ with the university fulfilling the role of facilitator and trusted arbiter, Partnership working

"has helped break down silos and bureaucratic boundaries which hindered a holistic approach. There is now greater possibility of 'joined-up' thinking and compatible and coherent action with more intellectual 'osmosis' between institutions, especially through the engagement of the public sector with the private and academic knowledge base within the city."⁽¹⁾;

(3) The adoption of the project's proposals, including the methodology for working up a bid to be a European Green Capital (b) the audit of the city's environmental performance and (c) the creation and launch of the Liverpool Green Partnership to take these issues forward in concrete ways⁽⁶⁾.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. The Entrepreneurship Manager at Liverpool Vision has provided a statement to corroborate the impact of the project on creation of sustainable economies with a strong evidence base and catalysing joined up engagement with public, private and academic partners.
2. A Strategic Policy Advisor from Merseytravel has provided a letter of support to corroborate that

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research undertaken at Liverpool directly informed the Merseyside [Local Transport Plan](#).

3. Liverpool Vision has provided a letter of support to corroborate the impact of the first tranche of ESRC funded research on policy making in the city.
4. Groundwork Merseyside has provided a letter of support to corroborate the impact of the first tranche of ESRC funded research on policy making in the city.
5. Corroboration from the Senior Environment Development Manager, Liverpool City Council of the 'tangible outcomes', and benefits in policy areas such as joint working, external assessment, enhancing local capacity, long term public engagement and *establishment of a formal City Mayoral Commission to review and accelerate progress and performance*.
6. The Director of the NHS Liverpool Clinical Commissioning Group has provided a letter of support to corroborate the work of the Low Carbon Liverpool and the impact of policy formation and improving environmental performance in Liverpool.
7. The website for the project, which includes policy papers and reports which form part of the pathway to impact, is www.lowcarbonliverpool.com