

<p>Institution: University of Gloucestershire</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA 16 - Architecture, Built Environment and Planning</p>
<p>a. Overview</p>
<p>The Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire houses the whole of UoA 16. The CCRI was originally formed as a distinct research unit in 1986, to undertake research on rural change and policy. Over the quarter-century since then, it has grown to become one of the largest rural social science and policy research centres in the UK, with a total income of around £1m annually and a staff cohort of 16 FTE. Its mission is to be seen as a centre of excellence in research by academic and practitioner communities alike, and to guide and influence rural change through rigorous and theoretically sound research of clear relevance to policy in the UK, Europe and beyond.</p> <p>CCRI positions itself in the rural milieu as an independent and authoritative source of information and ideas, with strong and vibrant networks embracing policy makers, stakeholder groups and other research teams. It aims to learn from the wide range of social science disciplines and academic communities with which it engages, and to maintain a collective overview of the performance of rural policies in a variety of contexts.</p>
<p>b. Research strategy</p>
<p>CCRI's research is inter- and multi-disciplinary in nature, with staff expertise drawn principally from town and country planning, applied economics (agricultural, environmental, ecological, regional and social), human and cultural geography, rural sociology, and political and environmental sciences. The current research portfolio is structured around three inter-connecting and broad themes of long-term rural relevance: Economy and Society; Heritage and Landscape; and Food and Farming. These provide a valuable structure for organising pro-active and reactive research bidding, as well as a coherent external profile for describing CCRI's research. Designated 'subject group leaders' for each theme convene weekly for strategic and operational decision-making to discuss tendering and project management activities.</p>
<p>Key developments since 2008</p>
<p>In response to a rapidly changing applied research context, CCRI undertook a strategic review of its role and operations in 2010-11, to take stock of likely trends in research needs and resource availability over the coming decade. Three main themes emerged, as follows.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The increasing need for evidence-based research to assist decision-making in rural resource management and planning - in the context of climate change and anticipated global population growth - was affirmed in the review. At the same time, a need to engage more actors in working to address these considerable challenges also became apparent, highlighting the increased relevance of truly applied research in which researchers work with different communities of interest in the co-production of knowledge for the direct benefit of society. It was also clear that such work could no longer adequately be driven by a primarily domestic focus, and that in a restricted UK/England funding context, CCRI's work would need to become more EU-and internationally-focused and supported.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. A previous concentration upon servicing the immediate needs of the Whitehall policy community had created a situation of over-reliance upon short-term project funding, which led to concerns over income and staffing continuity. There was a clear need, prospectively, to engage more in long-term research, and to use this as a means of the continuing renewal of research teams by recruiting and training young researchers.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The collaborative approach to CCRI which had been agreed in 2007, in which both the Universities of the West of England and Gloucestershire employed CCRI staff and managed its research portfolio, was proving difficult to operate effectively. This was due principally to the

increased administrative complexity of contract management for public-sector clients, and emerging differences in the sponsoring HEIs' ambitions for CCRI's identity and locus. Whilst the CCRI review was unable to address these issues directly, it was agreed that solutions would actively be sought, in the near future.

The 2010-11 review aimed at refocusing CCRI's portfolio of applied work within an explicitly European, international and diversified arena. Many parts of Europe face consistent and considerable challenges, as economic growth fails to return to the high levels of previous decades and rural environmental imperatives strengthen. Demographic and climate-driven trends indicate increasing emphases upon rural resource management and a need for innovation to successfully combine traditional activities (food production and forestry in particular) with 'new' ones including renewable energy generation and ecosystem services provision. The quest for sustainability, in all its manifestations (economic, environmental and socio-cultural), is key. The capacity of rural governance to cope with this increasingly urgent agenda is clearly highly variable across the EU (and indeed, globally). Governments, commerce and a wide variety of NGOs need sound research evidence and analysis to support effective policy responses. This in turn creates a very rich applied research landscape, in which CCRI has engaged with notable success.

Up to 2010, the majority of CCRI's research funding came from agencies and government departments in the UK, particularly England, and underpinned by funding from the research councils. After a difficult two years of economic crisis in 2008-10, in which research income fell significantly, the new Strategy has enabled a return to a high level of success. The funding portfolio now includes a much more significant share of multi-annual research projects, providing a level of income security and enabling the recruitment and training of new young researchers. New projects from EU sources (most notably under Framework VII (8 grants), but also studies for the European Commission and Parliament) have been especially positive, providing a considerable body of work for the CCRI team up to 2018. In addition, CCRI staff are supporting rural governance and capacity-building in new EU Member States and candidate countries including Malta and Serbia, and in the global arena through sustained engagement in the International Association for the Study of Commons (IASC).

For most of 2008-13, CCRI operated as a collaborative institute representing a partnership between four HEIs: the University of Gloucestershire (UoG), the University of the West of England (UWE), the Royal Agricultural College (now Royal Agricultural University) and Hartpury College. Whilst all four institutions originally came together to help steer CCRI at a strategic level, its core staff were drawn from just two: UoG and UWE. In 2011, a significant change in the strategic leadership and management of the University of Gloucestershire stimulated a re-think of this institutional model. The UoG's new Strategy was agreed in 2012, and presents a vision for the Institution in which active and engaged research, serving the wider community, is viewed as an essential component of its identity and *raison d'être*. This change provided an opportunity for CCRI to seek to address concerns identified in its strategic review. Following discussion and reflection by senior management at UWE and UoG, all CCRI staff were consolidated into one University (Gloucestershire) in 2013, as part of a clear investment priority by the UoG executive. The change has enabled CCRI to make a unified and coherent submission into the Research Excellence Framework.

2013 and beyond – consolidation, embedding excellence and ensuring relevance

The new leadership team at the UoG has identified the work of CCRI as a flagship example of research excellence and income generation, which is key to maintaining the University's distinctiveness and its corporate commitment to sustainability, over the next 5 years. The UoG's strategy has provided a welcome opportunity for CCRI to engage more with other academic colleagues to strengthen the research profile of the University and to develop and enhance the postgraduate research experience. CCRI is a key and driving partner in the University's Environmental Dynamics and Governance (EDG) initiative, which is one of six institution-level thematic research areas receiving targeted RAE2008 funding, as part of the University's wider strategy to invest in areas of research excellence.

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The EDG initiative will play a significant role in the CCRI's research strategy over the forthcoming period. It will provide a firm basis for CCRI to develop cross-disciplinary activities combining natural and social science knowledge in sponsored research. Whilst natural science has made important progress in understanding the sustainability challenge facing current and future generations, the real need for innovation is anticipated to be in social science, especially in planning and governance. As developed societies face the prospects of low and no-growth trajectories and an increasing need to change behaviours, nuanced understandings of nature-people relations and resilience will become paramount. As such, the CCRI anticipates increased involvement in a broader spectrum of both social science and interdisciplinary research.

Today, UK Government cuts and regional restructuring, as well as shifting priorities at EU level, are creating a new rural institutional landscape with increased opportunities for CCRI to pursue 'delivery through research and research through delivery', emphasising the applied nature of its mission. The institute has played a key role in planning the rural component of Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) strategy, and is actively engaged with a developing knowledge exchange centre at Harnhill, on a site belonging to the Royal Agricultural University (a collaborating partner in the CCRI). These initiatives build upon a suite of existing 'research through delivery' projects including work with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) on Integrated Local Delivery; assessment of Intermediate Biodiversity Areas; regional catchment management planning with the Environment Agency; a South-West 'proving our value' study for voluntary sector groups, and evaluations of regional advisory, generational renewal and training initiatives in land-based and food sectors. It foresees a continuing strategic focus of its work upon rural innovation and effective governance, investigating how best to combine global understandings with local action.

Investing in the excellent researchers of the future

Another key focus of activity under the EDG research theme is the encouragement and training of a new generation of rural planners and researchers, well-equipped to tackle future societal needs. In 2013, CCRI recruited two new part-time research assistant / PhD students using EDG funding. These talented young researchers will work for 0.6 of their time providing research assistance support to on-going EU-funded framework projects on food (GLAMUR) and sustainable soil management (Smartsoils, RECARE and Valorie) respectively, and 0.4 of their time designing and conducting their PhDs. Fostering the next generation of rural researchers also extends to CCRI involvement in taught postgraduate provision. A new masters course on 'Sustainable Environments', directed by CCRI was launched in 2012 and has recruited well. In addition, a suite of largely online postgraduate provision on the topic of international commons management in partnership with the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) and Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico with funding from the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) will launch in 2014.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) represent another mechanism through which CCRI has built applied research expertise and capacity among stakeholder communities. The CCRI has successfully collaborated in two KTPs over the past six years, focused upon improving the efficiency of public-sector management and supporting agri-tech innovation in the private sector. In the context of a more focused and ambitious KTP funding programme, priority will be given in future to proposals more closely aligned with the institute's mission, supporting innovation for sustainable management and rural governance.

The increasing European focus of CCRI research has led to the Institute being regularly asked to host visiting research fellows and students. In a strong spirit of partnership, it has welcomed and hosted many such visitors in recent years. In 2012 the CCRI hosted visiting research fellows from Italy and Poland, and provided a base for UK field research by three young PGR students from AgroParisTech in France, and one from INEA in Rome. CCRI regularly recruits and supports a whole-year internship programme for one UK undergraduate, an offer which is popular and well-received, and a number of work placement students have subsequently pursued successful careers in the sector.

A reflexive research community, responsive to and engaged with rural stakeholders

The intellectual vibrancy of the CCRI is actively maintained through a programme of academic portfolio development, and a commitment from all staff to the pursuit of research excellence. The current 'benchmark' for the programme is the criteria that have been defined for ESRC Research Centre status, which resonate well with established activities within the CCRI and help it to keep them under continuous review. Regular events include: the annual CCRI 'Winter school' for postgraduate rural research students across the UK; a yearly 'away day' for all staff where research strategy is reviewed and developed; and a weekly series of research events including public seminars covering rural research topics and the evaluation and review of research methods, including a 'PiP' (academic Papers in Progress) peer-review programme. These help CCRI to foster a truly reflexive research identity, consolidated and strengthened through collective endeavour and discussion involving rural practitioners.

Communication and dissemination of research findings remain central to the activities and mission of the Institute. The publication of a CCRI 'Briefing' has been a core element of dissemination over the past 20 years (the most recent briefing was in 2012), as well as the maintenance and growth of a mailing list of external contacts receiving a regular newsletter of CCRI activities. Policy conferences have also been a feature, with the most recent in 2010 and 2012. During the current period, the effective use of modern and varied social media has become an increasing stimulus to the institute's work. The CCRI's own dedicated website has been re-designed, accommodating a Blog and active Twitter Feed. Social media publicise CCRI activities and research findings with communications at least twice-weekly. A dedicated 'communications' working group within CCRI is continually reviewing and developing communications and marketing, ensuring the widest possible awareness of the CCRI's work and its relevance among a diverse community of associates, sponsors and collaborators. Novel use of social media also enriches the CCRI's methodological toolkit – for example, via development of social profiling alongside online interaction to increase the capture of evidence concerning changing behaviours and values.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The CCRI is managed by its Director, Professor Dwyer who bears responsibility for management, reporting, resources and staffing, and the strategic development of the CCRI. Academic line management is shared with another member of the Professoriate (Courtney) who oversees all staff at Research Fellow grade and below. The CCRI's projects and financial manager, (Rayfield), manages the administrative team. All staff at research fellow level and above bear some of the responsibility of strategic management (e.g. visiting fellow management, seminar series organisation). This approach has been highly successful in fostering a strong collective ethic and commitment to CCRI's mission. In the 2013 UoG staff satisfaction survey, to which 70% of CCRI staff responded, the CCRI was notable for the high level of overall job satisfaction of respondents (at 100%), compared to average levels within the Faculty of Applied Sciences (80%) and across UoG (70%). CCRI staff also scored 100% in respect of expressing personal motivation to do well, feeling a strong sense of satisfaction from their job, and feeling valued by their colleagues. Career development and progression within CCRI are supported by staff development reviews and a commitment to enable all to participate within their chosen academic and/or practitioner research community (attending and giving papers at conferences and undertaking short courses most relevant to their portfolio – e.g. project management, methodological development and professional qualifications). The review process sets clear annual targets for days of income-generating research work, journal publication, internal management responsibilities, and 'public duties', agreed as appropriate for each individual. Management thereby aims to embed an ethic of excellence in research and professional development across CCRI.

Development of early career researchers and on-going career progression are core elements of CCRI's staffing strategy. In addition to the new junior research posts and the 'appointment' of staff transferring from UWE in 2013, UoG has invested in three new permanent fte posts within CCRI as an outcome of the 2010-11 strategic review, in order to fill skills gaps, maintain a diversity of grades, and ensure capacity to deliver our growing EU-funded portfolio. Looking ahead, we anticipate no immediate need for further expansion in permanent staff but will consider new fixed-

term appointments where success in research bids makes this advantageous.

Fostering research excellence

Maintaining standards of research quality and integrity on an on-going basis remains a crucial function of the CCRI. Quality Assurance, benchmarked by reference to the standards applied by sponsors including Defra and the European Commission, is built into every competitive tender and project management process, with all bids and research reports edited and signed off by a senior member of staff (SRF grade and above). Reports to sponsors are generally first-authored by those individuals responsible for project management, a role allocated by reference to a combination of appropriate subject expertise, management experience and seniority. Assurance of high standards of research ethics is provided at University level, with relevant items (e.g. surveys) requiring discussion and approval by the University Ethics Committee or the Faculty Research Ethics Panel (FREP), depending on their significance.

In the interests of maximising the quality and rigour of academic outputs, the authorship of peer-reviewed publications is a process which, although not compulsory, is supported through a healthy allocation of time in the UoG Work Allocation Model (at least 25 days p.a pro rata, for all staff). It is monitored and encouraged through individual staff development reviews and supported collectively through the CCRI's calendar of activities (see the research strategy section). All academic staff within CCRI publish their research findings in a wide variety of formats, including research notes, reports, papers and presentations at academic and policy conferences. However, in preparing its REF submission the CCRI has subjected this varied portfolio of outputs to a rigorous selection process designed to identify only those of the 'highest quality' (as interpreted by the REF) to put forward for assessment.

ii. Research students

Maintaining an active PGR community with high quality research degree supervision and training is an integral element of CCRI. In 2008-2010, the support of four ESRC CASE studentships in CCRI made an important contribution to the PGR culture and research environment. However, in 2010 the UoG lost its ability to secure further ESRC CASE studentships as a result of the changing external framework. In response to this anticipated loss, in 2008 CCRI secured UoG agreement to employ two combined RA/PhD (0.5/0.5, 5-year fixed-term) posts (Kubinakova and Fisher), who have proven their value to CCRI and to the University. Of these two, one has successfully completed her PhD, secured full-time employment as a Higher Education lecturer and maintained an active research link with CCRI through engagement in a long-term evaluation study funded by Defra. The other took time out from study for maternity leave, and is writing up her thesis for submission in 2014. The two new RA/PhD appointments (Affleck and Bundhoo) look to sustain this tradition.

This funding model to support PhD students provides a vital research assistant capacity whilst maintaining momentum in CCRI's postgraduate training provision. It provides an excellent platform for early-career researchers, who gain valuable research experience alongside a Higher Education qualification. Beyond these posts, the CCRI PGR community is now largely self-funded and part-time. Among external partners we perceive a lack of recognition of the extremely good value for money which funding a PhD can offer for a wide range of public and voluntary sector bodies, and a reluctance to commit to such a multi-annual relationship. Therefore in time, successful PhD outcomes from our part-time RA/PhD model will be used to encourage other organisations to consider a postgraduate funding package.

In addition to the winter school, which is organised and led by postgraduate researchers, research students are formally represented on the CCRI Strategic Management Group (which meets monthly) and regularly consulted on academic and institutional issues. Postgraduates attend and lead seminars, participate in PiP discussions and engage in commissioned research and the publication of related outputs in peer-reviewed journals. A number of high quality publications has been co-authored between students and their supervisory teams. Seven research students (4.5 FTE) are currently registered on Doctoral programmes and the two new RA/PhD recruits will register in February 2014. Over the period, 6 Doctoral degrees have been awarded. A number of

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submitted staff are involved in the oversight of the PGR community (Kirwan) and supervisory teams of current and completed Doctoral programmes (Courtney - 3 current, 2 completed; Ilbery - 3 completed ; Jones – 2 current; Curry 1 completed; Maye – 1 completed; Kirwan - 2 completed.)

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Notwithstanding the impacts of Government spending cuts on research commissioning in the period 2010-11, income from CCRI research won through competitive tendering during the period has been substantial. Detail is provided in REF4b, and shows that total income earned over the period 2008-13 amounts to £3,319,000 (HESA data). When total funding is taken into account, including all that won through consortia, the figure rises to over £5m. Main income sources include Research Councils and Societies (8%), UK central government bodies (32%) and EU government bodies (35%). Income earned through EU sources over the period has been significant, with 2 EU FP7 projects (RuDI, CAPRI-RD) now completed and a further 6 secured (Solinsa, Smartsoils, Valorie, Recare, Glamur, Supurbfood). Research funding underpins not only the financial sustainability of the CCRI but also the breadth and quality of research outputs. In addition to submitted research outputs that draw on work funded through these main income streams, there has been an increasing trend for joint publications with policy experts arising through UK Government research in particular (See for example Courtney *et al* 2013; Kirwan *et al* 2013).

Core strategies of generating grant income are integral to the above research strategy. The CCRI's reputation and identity in the marketplace is very strong. One central focus for future income growth will be continuing to secure Defra and UK agency Framework contract funding in rural policy evaluations, as well as targeting those research council initiatives where the CCRI has a distinctive 'niche' offer to make (such as AHRC-funded projects under the 'connected communities' fund). Most importantly, CCRI will build on its successes in EU funding through new collaborations, responding to anticipated calls for research under the Horizon 2020 framework. In addition, increased funding will be sought from international sponsors such as OECD and IUCN, and target new 'research through delivery' work in the UK and with developing and transition countries.

CCRI's core office space is in an open-plan purpose-designed building at the UoG's Oxstalls campus, to which it moved in 2011. The office facilitates both good internal networking and communications on our 'core' office days, and features equipment such as laptops with docking stations, rather than standard PCs, to enable staff to work flexibly from both office and home, and whilst travelling. The Director implements a family-friendly and flexible policy on work location and working hours – a high level of trust between team members ensures that people can fit in their conditioned hours around sometimes complex home commitments, as long as project deadlines are adhered to and work is completed to a high standard. The CCRI thus strives to enable a healthy work-life balance for all its staff members.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Aside from formal collaboration as part of the institutional structure of the CCRI, staff within the Institute collaborate often with a wide range of other research and delivery bodies in the sphere of rural research, practice and policy. This includes inter-disciplinary collaborations within the UK and across Europe with natural and environmental scientists (e.g. FERA), crop scientists (e.g. Warwick and Cranfield Universities) and soil scientists (e.g. University of Leeds and Aberdeen, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences and ADAS). Within the sphere of social and political science and economics the CCRI have forged many long established partnerships with colleagues at other HE institutions with whom it actively tenders for a variety of research grants. Principle examples in the UK include the Universities of Exeter, Cardiff, Reading, Greenwich, Swansea, Nottingham, Warwick, Newcastle, UWE, Brighton, Middlesex, Bangor and the James Hutton (formerly Macaulay) Institute; and across Europe Wageningen, Alterra, Madrid, Florence, Copenhagen, Baastel, Pisa, Ghent, Rotterdam, Warsaw, Hungary and Groningen. The success of the CCRI in securing £1.18m in European funding over the period is testament to the quality and depth of these collaborations. Collaborations with high level consultancies and industry bodies are also central to the CCRI's mission and success in securing commissioned research and notable examples include the new economic foundation (nef), Gibran UK Ltd, IPSOS Mori, Ricardo AEA, ADAS, Oreade-

Breche, Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and Environment Systems. A significant proportion of research income has been secured in collaborative partnerships, which is a strong indicator of the success of these collaborations. In addition the CCRI (led by Jones) has recently been leading a successful £1.47m research bid in Hydro Citizenship from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) through its Connecting Communities, programme in collaboration with both academic and non-academic partners.

In addition to providing a service to UK and EU research users through commissioned research, the CCRI regularly participates in collaborative work with these users through committees, forums and advisory boards, as well as panels providing evidence and consultation (both formal and informal) and co-production of research. Notable examples include Defra, Natural England, South West RDA and Government Office, Welsh Assembly Government, English Rural Parliament, the Rural Services Network, Royal Society for Wildlife Trusts, South West Forum, Government of Malta's Agriculture Ministry, The National Trust, LEAF, The European Court of Auditors and OECD. Over the period the CCRI has worked on four ESRC CASE Studentships in collaboration with the Forestry Commission (Courtney), Association of Chief Estate Surveyors (Ilbery, Maye and Kirwan), National Association of British Market Authorities (Ilbery and Maye) and National Trust (Courtney), the latter also being secured during the period. The CCRI has also continued to be strongly embedded locally in order to deliver expertise and research impact to its stakeholder communities and has worked consistently with organisations in the voluntary, third and policy delivery sectors including Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary Action (GAVCA), Gloucester City Centre Partnership, Gloucestershire Community Land Trust, Cotswold Water Park and a number of AONB groups, locally, regionally and nationally.

All forms of collaboration help the CCRI to achieve its core mission of guiding and influencing change through research excellence, not only through securing grant income and enabling tangible non-academic impact to be felt, but also through various forms of knowledge transfer and contributions to policy, practice and societal debates. Academic and disciplinary development is especially pertinent to HE collaborations, and a total of 8 higher degree external examinations at Newcastle, Cambridge and Wageningen Universities (amongst others) exemplify this. As such the encouragement and facilitation of collaboration is very much a part of how the CCRI operates. All research and admin staff are allocated specific time in their workload allocation to fostering and developing external links at all geographic and governance levels, and this is engendered in the way that the institute presents and markets itself to its client, stakeholder and Higher Education communities.

Other ways that the CCRI contributes to its discipline and research base is through the provision of expertise, assessment and peer review across the external academic and research environment. Jones is a core member and application advisor of the AHRC Northern Peripheries Research Network, and has been appointed to the AHRC peer Review College (Academic) from April 2012 – December 2015. In addition Jones is currently a member of the ESRC Peer Review College (until 2014), is committee member of the Royal Geographic Society (RGS) Social and Cultural Research group and was Chair of the RGS Children, Youth and Families Research group between 2009 and 2012. Ilbery is a member of the BBSRC, Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel and Bioenergy Outreach Group. All research staff regularly peer review papers for high quality international journals especially across the geography, political and environmental science, and sociology disciplines (examples include Journal of Rural Studies, Cultural Geography, Geoforum, Environment and Planning A, Land Use Policy, Regional Studies) and some staff (Dwyer, Ilbery, Maye Jones and Curry) sit on the editorial boards of a range of journals, e.g. *Economie Rurale* (Dwyer), *Journal of Rural Studies* (Maye), *British Food Journal* (Ilbery), *Children's Geographies* (Jones) and *Leisure Studies* (Curry). These and other staff have also reviewed a plethora of European research proposals (including Teagasc RERC, ESRC, EU ESPON) and beyond Europe some staff act as external assessors to the Australian Research Council (Maye) and the Humanities Research Council of Canada (Curry). The majority of staff are Fellows of their respective academic societies and regularly make contributions to international conferences, including RGS, Agricultural Economics Society and European Society for Rural Sociology.