

**Institution: University of Gloucestershire**

**Unit of Assessment: UoA 16: Architecture and Built Environment**

**a. Context**

The impact of the Countryside and Community Research Institute's (CCRI's) research on its policy and practice communities has been central to its core mission since its inception in 1986: to guide and influence rural change through rigorous and policy relevant research. As well as undertaking research for all of the bodies noted in REF 3b and 5 (for example Defra, Natural England, English Heritage, the Forestry Commission and various agencies of the European Commission), impacts have been particularly significant in two core areas of work over the last two decades: *Economy and Society* and *Heritage and Landscape*. The examples detailed below provide a historical context for how CCRI research has consistently maintained a strong impact on its stakeholder communities, both in terms of reach and significance.

In the research area of *Economy and Society*, *Village planning* was significantly improved with the CCRI's *Village Appraisals software* (1994), developed for the Rural Development Commission and used in more than 3,000 village communities in the development of appraisals, parish plans and village design statements. The process has made a direct contribution to the development of rural Neighbourhood Planning. *Rural economies* also benefited through the CCRI's *Rural Enterprise Software* (1995), produced for Training and Enterprise Councils who used it to develop economic inventories for rural areas and market towns. *Planning education in Hungary was restructured* by CCRI staff through a TEMPUS grant in 1995 and they were awarded the Hungarian Government's Pollack Gold medal for this Work. *The LEADER + European rural development programme was formulated* with assistance of CCRI staff membership of the LEADER Expert Advisory Group in Brussels (1996). *The Dartmoor National Park Local Plan* (2004) was developed with active involvement of a CCRI staff member who was Secretary of State Appointee to the Park. And internationally, *Rural Development in Vietnam* was enhanced through the development and delivery of a series of training manuals for the Vietnamese Government (2004 – 2006), funded by the Jardine Matheson Group.

In the research area of *Heritage and Landscape*, *National countryside recreation policy* (1998) was developed with the aid of CCRI staff secondments to the Countryside Commission. The *Quality European landscapes* was influenced by CCRI staff membership of the European Commission's Advisory Committee on the European Landscape Convention (2000). *The quality of historic farm buildings* has been sustained and improved with advice from CCRI staff (between 2000 and 2013) to Defra, the Countryside Agency, Cadw and English Heritage on environmental and agri-environmental scheme impacts. *Recovery from foot and mouth disease in Northumberland* (2002) was developed through a CCRI staff member Chairing the Government's foot and mouth enquiry and producing the recovery plan for the county. *Legislation on hunting with dogs* (2004) was formed through CCRI staff secondments to the *Committee of Inquiry into Hunting with Dogs in England and Wales* (Burns Commission, 2000). From the mid-2000s, the implementation of the Rural Development Regulation in the south west, the development of Millennium greens and community woodlands, the management of private woodland for public use, the development of food markets and the adaptation of historic farm buildings, have all benefited from research undertaken through ESRC CASE awards. *Part two of the Commons Act 2006* was formulated with the help of CCRI staff, seconded full time to Defra for the duration of the drafting of the Bill

In recognition of their services to rural development, one CCRI staff member was awarded a CBE in 1996 and a second an OBE in 2005.

**b. Approach to impact**

The UoAs approach to impact between 2008 and 2013 has been embedded within its core research strategy as detailed in REF5, recognising that pathways to impact can be diffuse and non-linear, and that the policy environment is constantly shifting in response to new evidence, priorities and debates. The CCRI 2010 strategic review resolved to work with communities of interest in the **co-production** of research for the benefit of society and government. It also recognised a growing need for its research to become increasingly targeted at the European and

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international level, whilst maintaining its reputation in localism debates and micro-level delivery. In light of this, the CCRI has resolved a number of actions. Members of staff have engaged more deeply with key users, beneficiaries and audiences in order to **anticipate** the potential impact of their research, and to ensure that client groups are better able to target the evidence required to achieve this impact. This has been undertaken at an individual and collective level, building stronger relationships with project commissioners and steering groups to help mobilise this impact, and making policy evidence more accessible to end users through the production of Research Summaries and other media releases for completed projects.

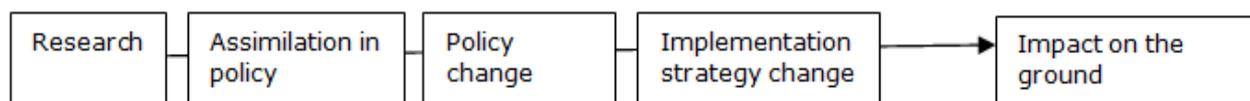
In parallel, the first biennial CCRI Policy Conference was held in 2009, which has engaged fully with end users, and disseminated findings in a way that is considered valuable by the client community. Three such conferences have been convened in the period, attracting over 300 users and beneficiaries from across the public, voluntary and third sectors, and around 20 Research Summaries for projects have been completed since 2008. These are freely available on the CCRI website.

The CCRI has substantially developed its overall dissemination strategy and public profile over the period. Dissemination through social media is described in REF 5. Staff have also been more frequently approached by the mainstream media and policymakers to make a distinct contribution to debates based on its research portfolio, for example through Radio 4's Farming Today programme, giving evidence to Parliamentary Select Committees, being members of national policy groups (for example the National Trust) and advising on policy development (for example the CPRE).

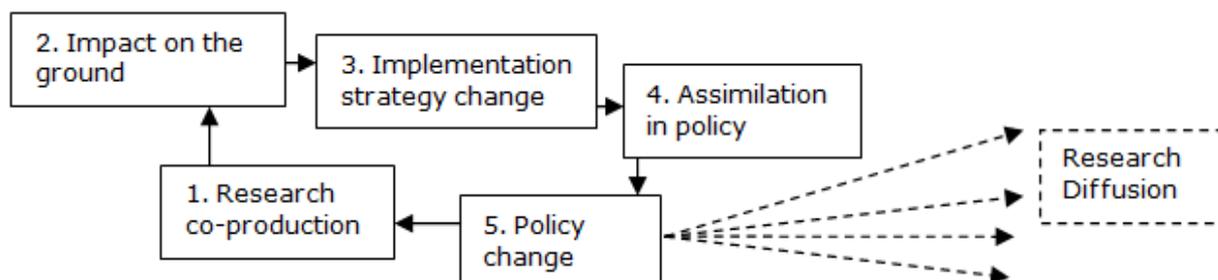
A central way in which the CCRI has fostered its non-academic impact has been through its own methodological and academic development. Innovations in methodological development and application, for example the use of Social Return on Investment (SROI) in programme evaluation, have been specifically commended by Government Departments and have assisted the public and voluntary sectors to evidence the impact of their own policies and programmes. Through commissioned research the CCRI has also actively built a suite of knowledge exchange and 'research through delivery' projects, including work for the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) on Integrated Local Delivery, regional catchment management with the Environment Agency and developing the rural component of Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Strategy.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The CCRI will embellish its impact strategy from 2014, through its existing Impact Working Group by pursuing a gradual migration from a conventional 'top down' linear impact model:



To one of research based more around *co-production* with its client community. This will allow more iterative 'bottom up' impact on the ground that will subsequently feed into policy and practice, and thereby will be diffused more effectively.



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This strategy will further strengthen partnerships between CCRI and its client and stakeholder communities through, for example, two way secondments, further co-authoring of research papers with policy makers and practitioners (building on the five papers already published since 2008) and an increased volume of joint bidding for research council grant funding. In turn this will allow the setting of research questions and the influencing of research methods to produce findings that are of maximum benefit to end users. Indeed, CCRI is already applying this model in its recent successful AHRC research bid under the Connected Communities programme of which Jones is Principal Investigator and to the development of the Rural Evidence Exchange with the Rural Services Network, the membership body of rural local authorities, led by Curry.

The Environmental Dynamics and Governance (EDG) initiative (described in REF5) will also provide a firm basis for the CCRI to develop cross-disciplinary activities and related innovation and co-production of research, supported and enhanced through two new PhD programmes. The EDG will broaden the scope of opportunities for impact through its goal of developing closer links with industry bodies (particularly agriculture and food); enhancing the current promotion and dissemination of research findings through press releases and social media; and expanding public engagement work into natural science and cross-disciplinary arenas where new forms of impact and diffusion of research should take shape.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

The selected case studies reflect the approach to impact detailed above and have informed its development. The CCRI's investment in understanding and evidencing its impact is therefore considered to be longer term, and one which has resonated well with its core function of delivering research excellence to a wide community of end users and stakeholders. In particular, both case studies have revealed the reach and significance of the CCRI's contribution to policy and practice to be varied, cross-sectoral and non-linear. They have also shown the need for continuous monitoring in order to inform priorities for policy that are constantly changing. Perhaps most significantly, the case studies reflect the solid reputation of applied research that the CCRI has built up over the past 27 years - in academic, policy, practitioner and wider stakeholder communities throughout the UK and in Europe.

**Impact case study 1:** *Evaluating policy instruments for rural development and agri-environment.* This exemplifies the success of the CCRI in undertaking extensive, conceptually grounded evaluations of UK and EU rural policies that have proved invaluable to project commissioners in designing rural policy and advisory mechanisms for the 2014-20 programming period. It also reflects its commitment to public and end-user engagement, innovative and mixed methods approaches and the substantial reputation that the CCRI has engendered in deriving policy evidence through commissioned research. In particular, the focus on engaging more deeply with stakeholders (especially in the uplands of England) in order to anticipate the potential impact of research, and the commitment of the CCRI to developing its conceptual and methodological tools in the sphere of policy evaluation, has proved integral to its ability to affect tangible change in the rural policy arena.

**Impact case study 2:** *Developing Community Capacity and Innovation in Sustainable Food Chains.* This case study again highlights the CCRI's considered understanding of the relationship between policy, the economy and society – in this case centred around short food chains. The ongoing engagement of the CCRI with communities of place and interest is exemplified through its ability to help bring people together in new and innovative ways to build their capacity whilst simultaneously contributing to high level policy as exemplified through reference in Parliamentary Committees and policy documents. The increasing emphasis that the CCRI has placed on using social media to publicise its work – and the practical application of this work – has proved especially crucial in this case study.