

<p><b>Institution:</b> Cardiff University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 16A</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>As a large research-intensive and policy-focused school, the Cardiff School of Planning and Geography seeks to engage with a wide range of research users. The main beneficiaries of the School's research span the full spectrum of spatial scales, from the local to the global, and include: local government and the devolved administrations in the UK; planning, environmental and development agencies in the EU, including the European Commission; and bodies with an international remit including the United Nations, World Food Programme and UN-Habitat.</p> <p>The main types of impact associated with the School's research range from policy and process impacts, to more subtle changes in public understanding of major planning decisions. Policy-related impacts are most clearly associated with the School's research on sustainable food systems, where award-winning research on school food reform has helped to change the design and delivery of the school meals service in and beyond the UK, while research on rural development and regional competitiveness has transformed the way that policy-makers frame public policies in these fields. Process-related impacts have been associated with research on carbon footprinting of large popular events such as cup finals. Public understanding of major planning decisions has been enhanced by research on renewable energy, where research on community-based energy schemes has helped demonstrate that wind power is publicly acceptable with community involvement.</p> <p>The types of impact identified have been rendered possible by the range of research activity that the School has consciously sought to nurture. The common thread in this research is a mutual interest in trying to understand the scope for, and barriers to sustainable development in the built and natural environment, be it the spatial planning research on the Wales Spatial Plan, or international development work which has informed the UN-Habitat's initiatives designed to create more sustainable street trading environments. The School has sought to enhance its impact capacity both <i>directly</i> by creating critical mass clustered in key research themes – notably the design and delivery of sustainable places, urban food security, rural development, the role of the planning system in shaping development, and the governance and resilience of cities, regions and city-regions, and <i>indirectly</i> by creating and/or playing a major role in multi-disciplinary research centres (detailed below) where all research is designed to have an impact in the worlds of policy and practice. Through its innovation and engagement activity, which involves close iterative relationships with a wide range of policy-makers and professional practitioners, the School sets a high premium on translational research, with impact pathways woven into the design of its research activity.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The School sets a high premium on a pro-active approach to impact. This is defined by three key characteristics: (i) the value of forging close and durable links with enlightened users in policy and practice; (ii) the commitment to a robust evidence base for policy-making and corporate strategy; and (iii) the design of innovative spatial development tools that bring analytical rigour to the framing and evaluation of urban and regional development policy options. The infrastructural mechanisms underpinning this approach include the following:</p> <p>(a) <b>Innovation and Engagement (I&amp;E) Unit:</b> The primary aim of the I&amp;E Unit is to organise a programme of public lectures and seminars through which the School's academic staff, its students and wider community of policy and practice citizens can come together and debate pertinent issues and policy challenges in sustainability. A notable and highly successful example of this was the event led by Kevin McCloud on the development of sustainable building design. Lectures are</p>

typically filmed or recorded and made publicly available via the School's I&E web pages.

(b) **Research Group Seminar and Dissemination Activities:** Each research group is encouraged to organise an annual seminar series for interested academics as well as relevant policy and practice audiences and users. This is intended to help researchers frame research questions that are more robust analytically and more policy-attuned, as well as to support research dissemination. Support for identifying interested users is provided by the I&E Unit, which advertises seminars through its wider network. Several research teams and individuals also make use of social media including blogs, LinkedIn research groups and twitter feeds to disseminate their research. The School also actively promotes other user-engagement and knowledge exchange mechanisms for individuals, including: *secondments* to policy-making institutions (such as Enticott's secondment to the Welsh Government) and *advisory* roles (such as Morgan's membership of the Welsh Government's City-Regions Group and the European Commission's Smart Specialisation Group).

(c) **Research Centre Engagement Activity:** The School has been very pro-active in the creation of collaborative cross-departmental and interdisciplinary research centres – including the ESRC-funded centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS), the Centre for Local and Regional Government Research (CLRGR), the Sustainable Places Institute (PLACE), and the Welsh Institute for Social and Economic Research Methods and Data (WISERD). These specialised research centres have the closest and most durable relationships with key users. For example, the Wales Rural Observatory (WRO), funded by the Welsh Government and European Commission, was established to inform evidence-based rural policy-making and produces a series of regular research briefings, statistical summaries and reports for its policy and practice audiences. Similarly the Sustainable Places Institute engages in widespread collaboration with a range of organisations working in the field of sustainability. A weekly electronic newsletter keeps all users and beneficiaries informed of the Institute's key events and research developments.

(d) **External Advisory Boards:** the School works in partnership with a number of key professional bodies in the fields of planning and sustainability, notably the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). These partnerships are influential in helping to develop and refine research agendas and in providing potential research partners and avenues for dissemination.

These infrastructural mechanisms provide the fora through which researchers learn to build their relationships with key users. To resource its user engagement activity, the School uses a combination of dedicated funds from its own budget and from the University's Innovation and Engagement programme. These institutional funds are designed to complement the individual funds that researchers are encouraged to accumulate through the School's generous return on overheads policy. Through these mechanisms, the School provides an encouraging and enabling environment in which researchers are able to develop the impact potential of their research as a matter of routine.

### c. Strategy and plans

The School's strategy is informed by, and builds upon Cardiff University's high level commitment to realising the impact potential of its research, as enshrined in its Strategic Plans for Research and Innovation and Engagement. This University-wide commitment is also embedded in, and delivered through, the School's Strategic Plan. The impact strategy of the School is designed and delivered in a number of different ways, including:

- Engagement and impact criteria are considered as part of the School's appraisal and promotion criteria (with the School securing one of the first chair appointments in Cardiff through this new impact route when Alison Brown was promoted);
- The School's workload model includes a weighting for innovation and engagement activity to ensure that these tasks are viewed and valued in a way commensurate with the School's

strategic plan;

- A senior member of staff (Kevin Morgan) was appointed as Director of the School's Innovation and Engagement (I&E) Unit and he has also been made Dean of Engagement for the whole university as a result of the School's successful innovation and engagement record.

The School's future plans are predicated on the belief that its core research themes – notably the design and delivery of sustainable places, urban food security, rural development, the role of the planning system in shaping development, and the governance and resilience of cities, regions and city-regions – are themes that resonate deeply in the worlds of policy and practice in and beyond the UK, and the School is firmly committed to the development of these core research themes. As these core themes span many disciplines, the School is actively involved in ambitious proposals to develop a new social science research park (SSPARK). This is an institutional innovation that will enable researchers, policy-makers and professional practitioners to be co-located, in the belief that this clustering will enable multi-disciplinary teams to co-design and co-produce translational research that addresses the societal challenges of the twenty-first century.

This inter-disciplinary ambition also informs the School's active involvement in designing the Cardiff University Innovation System, where social scientists will be co-located with natural and physical scientists in a new nine-acre Innovation and Enterprise Campus in the heart of the city. Among other things, this campus will host a new generation of University Research Institutes in fields such as sustainable water management, renewable energy and big data, fields in which the School can make an important contribution. To this end the School will further enhance support for researcher engagement with key plans including seed corn funding and the development of staff seminars, advice, mentoring and support in the development of policy and practice relationships and research impact.

#### **d. Relationship to case studies**

The submitted case studies reflect the strongest examples of the School's impact with respect to reach and significance and exemplify the three key characteristics of the School's approach to impact (outlined in Section b). The first of these - the School's commitment to building close and iterative relationships with key stakeholders in policy and practice - is best exemplified in the case study on school food reform. This case study demonstrates that the impact potential of academic research is in part a function of the quality of the relationship with policy-makers from local authorities to the World Bank, as well as professional practitioners such as school food services and campaign groups. The second – the provision of a robust evidence base for policy-makers and corporate strategists - is evident in the rural policy case study. This research has played a transformational role in helping policy-makers develop more sustainable and integrated forms of rural policy. The third aspect of the School's approach to impact – the provision of innovative spatial development tools – is exemplified in the case studies on regional competitiveness and the network analysis tool for evidence-based urban planning. As well as influencing policy-makers and planners at multiple spatial scales, these tools are increasingly utilised by private management consultants internationally to benchmark city and regional economic performance and evaluate the impact of alternative urban configurations.