

**ESRC NEW OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAMME  
ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN BEHAVIOUR**

**REPORT OF THE FIRST PROGRAMME WORKSHOP**

February 11<sup>th</sup> 2003, PSI

by  
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**1. ATTENDANCE**

All projects were represented except for that entitled 'Listening to Children', led by Robert Barratt of Keele University, who had been injured in a car accident. The workshop expressed its sympathy and best wishes for a speedy recovery.

(Note: it seems that RB's injuries are extensive and it is unlikely that his project will be able to start before September 2003. PE)

Attendees at the Workshop were:

1. Nigel Arnell: Exploring Vulnerability to Rapid Climate Change in Europe
2. Clare Johnson, Edmund Penning-Rowsell, Sylvia Tunstall: Crises as Catalysts for Adaptation: Human Responses to Major Floods
3. Mark Pelling: Rapid Climate Change in the UK: Towards an Institutional Theory of Adaptation
4. Judith Petts, Simon Niemeyer: Predicting Thresholds of Social Behavioural Responses to Rapid Climate Change
5. John Ingram: Integrating Social Vulnerability into Research on Food Systems and Global Change
6. Stephen Potter, Ben Lane: Taxation Futures for Sustainable Mobility
7. Heather Chappells: Future Comforts: Re-conditioning Urban Environments
8. Jeremy Keenan: Indigenous Peoples, Environmental Change and Tourism in Extreme Environments
9. John Foster: Natural Capital: Metaphor, Learning and Human Behaviour
10. Unrepresented (see above): Listening to Children: Environmental Perspectives and the School Curriculum
11. John Benson: Tilting at Windmills? The Attitude-Behaviour Gap in Renewable Energy Conflicts
12. Robert Blackburn, Andrea Revell: UK Small Firms and their Response to Environmental Pressures



13. Emma Mawdsley, Glyn Williams: Middle Class Environmental Values in India: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue
14. Susan Owens, Tim Rayner: Appraisal, Institutional Learning and Sustainability: Defining a New Agenda
15. Jake Elster: Environmental Issues and Human Behaviour in Low-Income Areas of the UK

(Note: The above numbering scheme will be used to refer to projects throughout the programme, where appropriate and where a shorthand is convenient. It is the same order as that listed in the brochure, although the numbers are not given there. PE)

## 2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Paul Ekins (PE) welcomed the researchers. Lisa Hill (LH) gave a brief introduction to the programme from an ESRC perspective. Paul Ekins then introduced some of the Programme's main themes, with a presentation based on his Introductory Paper to the Programme and on the Communications Plan.

The principal points from the presentation were as follows:

- The need for the Programme to be more than the sum of its parts
- Publication of the Programme Brochure
- Launch of the Programme website in the next few weeks (thanks to all the projects for submitting the required information)
- The need to produce the first external newsletter in April. Researchers were asked to send any news about their projects to the programme office by the end of March.

**Actions:**        **Researchers to check their project's entry on the website (now accessible on [www.psi.org.uk/ehb](http://www.psi.org.uk/ehb)) to see that it included all the desired details.**  
**Researchers to send PE towards the end of March news about their project. PE would send out a reminder about this.**

## 3. EXTERNAL IMPACT AND COMMUNICATIONS

Iain Stewart (IS) from ESRC's External Relations Division gave a presentation on the importance of communicating research results to appropriate audiences and the support which ESRC can give to projects and researchers to do this. A Communications Audit of the Programme had revealed that a number of the projects had considerable media potential. There was interest from researchers in both the Programme Training Days, and Senior Researcher Training which ESRC organises, and IS said that he would let researchers know the next possible dates for such training.

However, a number of researchers commented on the difficulty of finding enough time for communicating research results, as this activity is not well recognised in academic assessment exercises. Others stressed:

- The complicated relationship between research, knowledge and policy

- The need for researchers to retain control over the ‘message’ of the research. In this context, IS stressed the need to researchers to try to simplify their messages for the media themselves, because otherwise the media would do it themselves, and would be likely to get it wrong.
- The need to stress the people-environment connection: ‘environmental change is a people issue’
- The need to regard communication of the research as part of the project while it was being carried out, rather than an add-on at the end, and to engage with prospective ‘users’ of the research for its whole duration.
- The need to resonate with current issues and to be aware of the appropriate timing for contacts with the media.

IS announced that he was currently in negotiation with two journalists to help with media outputs and outreach for the Programme. It was likely that the Programme could have up to 40 days of this kind of support. Further details of this would be given to researchers as it became available.

IS mentioned the ESRC’s Social Science Week, to take place in the week beginning June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Some ideas were mentioned as possible foci for the Programme during the week:

What does ‘the environment’ mean to people?

Why do they behave towards it the way they do?

Adapt or die OR Adapt and prosper

More carrot, less stick

**Actions:**        **IS to let the Programme Co-ordination Office have further details of Training Days, how researchers apply for these, and journalistic support, once they become available.**  
**PE to try to work up with researchers ideas for a Social Science Week event**

#### 4.        **PROGRAMME THEMES**

A number of the Programme’s cross-cutting themes were presented by researchers as follows:

Emma Mawdesley: Values and Attitudes

Mark Pelling: Context, Cultures and Institutions

Susan Owens: Information, Communication and Participation

Stephen Potter: Incentives and Sanctions

At several points in the rich discussions that followed these presentations, researchers expressed their desire to interact with each other on these and other themes more interactively than their current project budgets allowed. PE said that he would see whether it might be possible for a further budget to be made available from ESRC for this interaction.

Some the themes on which a desire for further interaction was expressed were:

- Rapid climate change

- Theoretical approaches to environment and behaviour being employed by the projects
- Citizenship and the environment
- Ownership/property rights
- Private pain and collective benefits
- The *scale* of behaviour change required
- Social/institutional/policy learning

PE noted that the Programme was committed to producing a number of Research Briefings and that these subjects might be suitable topics for some of these Briefings. He also expressed his hope that the Programme might generate a more substantial collective output, such as an edited book or special issue of an academic journal. There was enthusiasm from researchers for these options.

**Actions:**        **PE to investigate the possibility of a bid to ESRC for a budget extension to facilitate inter-project networking**  
                      **PE to explore with researchers possible cross-cutting themes both for the Research Briefings and to provide the framework for a more substantial collective output.**

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