

**SOUTH EAST COASTAL COMMUNITIES  
PROGRAMME EVALUATION**

**FINAL REPORT**

On behalf of:  
**The University of Chichester  
and Partner Higher Education Institutions**

by  
**STEP AHEAD RESEARCH Ltd**

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# **SOUTH EAST COASTAL COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME EVALUATION: INTERIM REPORT**

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**Prepared for:**

**The University of Chichester and Partner Higher Education Institutions**

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The views expressed in this report are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the **University of Chichester or partner Higher Education Institutions**

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The South East Coastal Communities (SECC) programme was a three year, £3 million HEFCE funded programme to demonstrate the potential value of university-community knowledge exchange (UCKE) and transfer. It involved over 30 community projects across nine universities<sup>1</sup> in Hampshire, Sussex and Kent, focused on a theme of community health and well-being in the South East coastal area.

This is the final report of the SECC programme level evaluation. It represents the summative phase of the evaluation, assessing performance against the programme's success criteria and highlighting learning that might inform future approaches to UCKE.

The evaluation draws on around 150 depth interviews with university staff (at a strategic and project level) and community partners, a contextual literature review, and an assessment of project and programme monitoring reports, where available. The evaluators also attended a number of workshops and programme board meetings as observers.

## The SECC programme

The Business Case for SECC<sup>2</sup> identifies three broad aims for the programme as a whole:

1. To develop a collaborative model of funding which initiates and sustains HEI-community engagement across the South East coastal region, and may act as a demonstrator to other regions;
2. To promote a model of engagement that is essentially demand-side, responsive 'community knowledge exchange and transfer': that is, drawing on the intellectual capital of HEIs to support communities' requests to develop their own capacity to respond to their health and wellbeing needs;
3. To develop the infrastructure and, most importantly, the local relationships that will leverage additional funding and expertise, ensuring sustainability for community knowledge exchange and transfer along the South East coast in the longer term.

These aims were supported by a series of more detailed objectives and nine success criteria that describe what the main outcomes of the programme would need to be in order for the aims and objectives to have been met:

- a) A measurable **improvement in the capacity of the third sector**, including community and voluntary groups, to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their user-groups as a result of the application of the knowledge assets and intellectual capital of HE.
- b) An increase in **high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange** in each of the participating institutions.
- c) Strategic partnerships that **leverage additional funding and other resource** into the university-community projects.
- d) A **robust and well-received evaluation** that both informs wider practice in community knowledge exchange and HEFCE policy in this area.
- e) A **sustainable infrastructure** for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region.
- f) The **effective exchange of good practice** and information on university- community engagement across the South East coastal region.
- g) The **enrichment of curricula and teaching** and learning practice and the **facilitation of new research** opportunities and practice.
- h) The **enhanced status of community knowledge transfer and exchange** in the missions of participating HEIs, and in the strategic plans of local Third Sector partners.
- i) SECC **governance and financial accountability model used as an exemplar** for managing complex, multi-partner projects.

<sup>1</sup> The Universities of Brighton; Canterbury Christ Church; Chichester; Greenwich; Kent; Portsmouth; Southampton; Southampton Solent; and Sussex. Solent Synergy, a not for profit social enterprise support agency was also a partner to the programme.

<sup>2</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007.

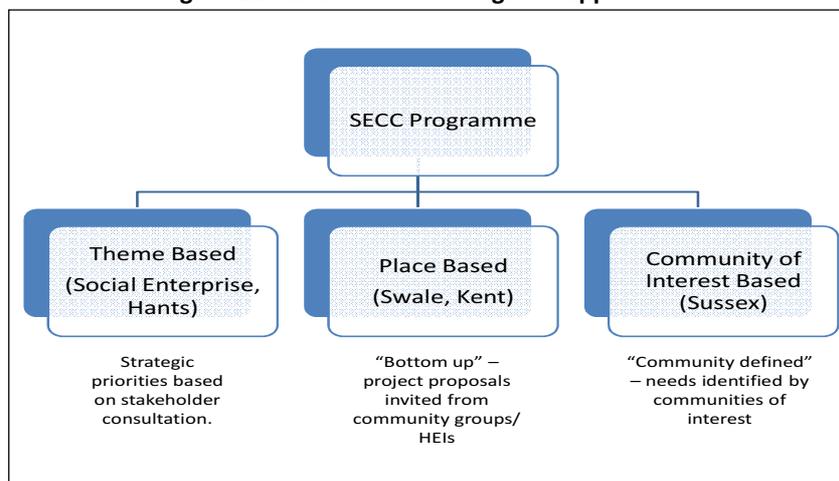
The SECC programme was unusual for a HEFCE funded programme in that, to a significant degree, governance and financial accountability for the programme were devolved to the participating Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The HEIs piloted a collaborative model of self-governance based on peer review through a regional programme board and three sub-regional boards.

The regional board was responsible for the strategic direction of the programme. It had an independent chair and representatives from HEFCE and the lead HEIs in each of the sub-regions. At the end of the first year, two programme level co-ordinators were also appointed to the board to support its work.

Budget and project delivery responsibility was, for the most part, devolved to the three sub-regional boards. Each board had representatives from the three local HEIs, one of whom chaired the meetings (and represented the sub-region at a regional level) on an annually rotated basis. A number of community partners were also invited to join the sub-regional boards.

Each sub-region took a distinctive approach to the SECC programme both in terms of the nature of the communities they focused on and the way they sought to engage them in the design and delivery of projects (Figure E1).

**Figure E1: SECC's three sub-regional approaches**



In Hampshire, a thematic approach, focused on social enterprise, provided the framework for a range of projects carried forward by each individual HEI, raising the possibility of sustained impact through new socially-oriented businesses. Projects were designed following consultation with a number of key strategic stakeholders.

Kent took a place-based approach, focusing on a small area within Kent (Swale) with significant social challenges and little previous contact with Higher Education Institutions. Proposals for projects were invited from community groups and academics and reviewed by the board.

In Sussex, the focus was primarily on communities of interest (people with shared identities not necessarily bound by place) and/or communities of practice (groups with shared experiences and/or purposes). Projects were designed in conjunction with communities that, for the most part, had a pre-existing relationship with the partners.

## Performance against the Success Criteria

Figure E2 (overleaf) provides an overview of our assessment of the performance of the programme against the success criteria identified in the original business case for SECC.

**Figure E2: Performance against SECC success criteria**

Success Criterion	Performance Summary.
<b>A.</b> Measurable improvement in third sector capacity.	There has been a clear improvement in the capacity of a number of community partners as a result of SECC. Some partners have been able to increase the scale of their activities, to access new funding and markets and/or use volunteers and students on work placements for the first time. Many more have made changes to the nature of what they do and how they do it. However, this improvement was not 'measurable' for the programme as a whole, given the diverse nature of project activities.
<b>B.</b> Increase in high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange.	There is good evidence that SECC projects have resulted in an increase in high quality transfer and exchange in each of the participating institutions. There is also some evidence that there has been an increase in wider knowledge transfer and exchange as a result of increasing levels of community engagement, although the extent of this varies from one institution to another. Similarly the sustainability of this exchange post-funding will be stronger in some institutions than others.
<b>C.</b> Strategic partnerships that leverage additional funding and other resource into the projects.	Given the economic environment and the widely reported effects of public sector funding cuts on third sector organisations, the leveraged funding and resource attracted by the programme has been significant. Leverage in the Sussex sub-region, in particular, met its original targets (perhaps reflecting the more advanced nature of many of their projects prior to the programme). However, the majority of match funding and resource has come from the HEIs themselves or other funders of HE.
<b>D.</b> Robust and well received evaluation.	Whilst it is not for us to assess the value of our own programme evaluation, there is evidence that project-level evaluation activities have led to learning about how to engage different communities on an equitable and productive basis which has been used to inform subsequent activities. However, project level evaluations have been inconsistent (and late) in some sub-regions. Some connections were made with national and international audiences interested in knowledge transfer and exchange, although these could have been stronger.
<b>E.</b> Sustainable infrastructure for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region.	The primary infrastructure for governing the programme in each sub-region (sub-regional boards and co-ordinators) did provide a focus for wider community knowledge exchange during the programme. Without further funding, however, neither the boards nor the co-ordinators are likely to be retained. Nevertheless, one or two HEIs have used SECC funding to build and/or improve their infrastructure at an institutional level and these improvements are more likely to be sustained.
<b>F.</b> Effective exchange of good practice across the South East Region.	Despite the efforts of the programme co-ordinators (and the University of Brighton), the exchange of good practice at a regional level was limited. The website and NING social networking site were underutilised. Attendance at regional events was mixed and partners seemed to find it difficult to apply what they had learned. The diversity of projects may have contributed to this as did the timescales (which were especially short for HEIs developing partnerships and projects from scratch).
<b>G.</b> Enrichment of curricula, teaching, learning practice, and research opportunities and practice.	There is strong evidence to suggest that the programme has resulted in a variety of curriculum changes, improvements in the student learning experience, new research outputs and research opportunities in each of the three sub-regions. As might be expected, some projects contributed more than others. As of June 2011, the funded research flowing from the programme has not been extensive, although this may yet change.
<b>H.</b> Enhanced status of community knowledge exchange in HEI and Third Sector partner strategies.	Mission statements, strategies and plans are usually only updated every 3-5 years and in many cases it is too early to estimate the impact of SECC. In interviews, there was some evidence of an enhanced status for community knowledge exchange in some of the HEI and third sector partners. However, the change in HE policy and funding context has made some proceed with caution.
<b>I.</b> Governance and financial accountability model used as an exemplar	How SECC's example is used in subsequent programmes remains to be seen. Many participants felt that completing the programme more or less on time and to budget with the partnerships intact was a significant achievement. The democratic and light touch style of governance was felt to provide valuable flexibility. However, it also had drawbacks in terms of programme coherence and, potentially, strategic impact.

The context for the SECC programme changed significantly since it was conceived. The economic recession in 2008/9 and change of government in 2010 have led to significant budget reductions across the public sector. SECC was originally envisaged as a demonstrator programme that, if successful, could lead to a new HEFCE funding stream for university-community knowledge exchange.

It became clear in the second year of the programme that this was no longer a likely outcome. This effectively places the future of UCKE more squarely in the court of the participating HEIs, who would need to 'top slice' some of their research or teaching funding to continue such activities.

In this context, the most appropriate success criteria for the SECC programme might have been different. Indeed, we suggest that, in addition to the enrichment of teaching and research opportunities, future UCKE programmes or activities also look to benchmark progress against indicators that are more closely aligned to the financial success of an HEI.

These might include measures around:

- Improved **employment outcomes** for students and learners following their study, which in turn would facilitate student recruitment.
- A **rebalancing of the profile of learners**, providing supporting evidence for open access agreements for those HEIs wishing to charge higher levels for student fees.
- An improvement in the **local reputation** of and attitudes towards the university, which should result in
- An improvement in the **ease of recruiting** high quality students and staff.

Our assessment of performance against the SECC business case criteria, whilst based on a significant body of evidence, has been predominantly qualitative in nature. A set of programme evaluation indicators was agreed with the sub-regional boards but, in practice, the projects and/or sub-regional co-ordinators found it difficult to provide quantitative data that was not already being collected.

SECC was a complex programme delivering a diverse range of projects with many different partners in a wide range of community settings. It may have been unrealistic to expect a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation across the whole South East region, particularly when no common approach had been agreed with the project leads at the design or set-up stage.

## Other learning from SECC

In addition to the learning captured through the success criteria assessment, the programme evaluation sought to identify potentially generalizable learning in three areas; how to enable and support UCKE, how to deliver it effectively, and how to evaluate it in order to demonstrate value.

### ***Enabling UCKE***

***Securing strategic level commitment:*** Strategic level commitment within an HEI seems critical for the sustainability of UCKE. Even if continued funding had been secured, it would most likely have been a tiny fraction of the overall budget for an HEI. The SECC programme could have placed more direct focus on widening and deepening the strategic level commitment to UCKE within the partner institutions.

***Embedding sustainable infrastructure:*** Sustainable UCKE needs some level of infrastructure within an HEI that can:

1. Act as a focal point for approaches from community members and provide a continuous flow of opportunities for knowledge exchange,
2. Help community members navigate university structures, and
3. Support academics wishing to undertake community engagement work.

The SECC programme infrastructure (sub-regional boards and co-ordinators) did provide some of these functions but it is not expected to survive without funding. At an institutional level, however, SECC provided some potentially useful examples of sustainable infrastructure (the Hastings and Eastbourne helpdesk, the University of Portsmouth Architecture Projects Office, knowledge-exchange champions at Canterbury Christ

Church University etc). There was also some evidence that shared infrastructure could be a cost effective solution, although this may be more appropriate when HEIs also share many of their community partners (e.g. when they are co-located in a city-region).

**Enabling academics to engage:** Academics also need support in order to enable them to engage in UCKE. To some extent this is in terms of leadership, providing an environment in which such activity is recognised and valued at a conceptual level. However, it is also important that such activity is more formally built into personal reviews, targets, workloads etc. In at least one institution, funding from UCKE was not counted towards research income targets, even where projects involved elements of research. This was felt to be particularly unhelpful to the sustainability of UCKE.

HEIs and their community partners need to recognise that effective UCKE is built on personal relationships that need time and space to develop. Academics may need the freedom to decide how far to engage in particular UCKE activities; their professional success and reputations rely to a significant extent on following their own interests and lines of enquiry.

### **Delivering UCKE**

**Programme coherence and governance:** The combination of a light touch programme management and a very diverse range of projects presented significant difficulties for the SECC programme in terms of programme level learning, evaluation, and, potentially, achieving strategic level impact.

If the primary aim of any future potential UCKE programme is for projects to learn from one another, it would benefit from a much narrower focus (and more similar projects). If the primary aim is to test different models of engagement or compare the benefits from different types of project, then more consistent governance and significant resource may be needed at a programme level.

**Engaging and working with communities:** There are, nevertheless, some identifiable learning points from the SECC programme's three sub-regional approaches to delivering UCKE:

- A thematic approach (such as that taken in Hampshire) can deliver real benefits in terms of cross-institutional learning. The Hampshire partners had productive discussions on the nature of social enterprises and their support needs, particularly in the early phase of the programme.
- A narrow area-based approach to UCKE has the potential to transform community perceptions of HE by delivering a significant level of activity within one locality. There is some evidence that the Kent partners achieved this within Swale (particularly on the Isle of Sheppey). However, the sustainability of UCKE may be greater if the area is also a natural hinterland for an HEI, where staff and students may be more easily engaged and potential reputational improvements could have more direct benefits for the HEIs involved.
- A community of interest and/or community of practice approach (central to projects in Sussex but also to some in Kent) can be very supportive of building more mutual and reciprocal relationships with community partners. Some 5 of the 6 project streams in Sussex expect to continue activities after funding, often with community partners taking the lead.

It is important to note that such approaches are not mutually exclusive and are best viewed as complementary tools for successful community engagement and knowledge exchange. The SECC programme also highlighted that co-developing projects with existing partners was particularly effective in terms of delivering outputs and knowledge exchange in the short term. Where partnerships are at a less developed stage, it can be particularly challenging to design a project that is feasible and locks partners into a relationship for three years.

**Resourcing projects and activities:** Structured projects and budgets may not always be appropriate for UCKE activities. The type and level of resourcing required depends to some extent on the stage of development of the partners and the partnership. A central fund to which partners can apply for small amounts (for room hire, refreshments, travel etc) may be more appropriate for new partnerships and more informal community groups. Established partnerships may be more likely to seek more substantial project style funding for scaling up and/or evaluating their activities.

### **Evaluating UCKE**

**UCKE evaluation frameworks:** The SECC programme success criteria drew on and will contribute to a growing literature on frameworks for conceptualising UCKE and the potential benefits of knowledge exchange and transfer for both universities and community partners. The REAP framework used in Sussex also proved a useful tool for encouraging projects to think about mutuality and reciprocity in partnerships and the benefits UCKE can bring to both HEIs and community partners. It's slightly obscure terminology was perhaps less helpful in engaging partners in the evaluation process, however.

**Outcome and impact metrics:** Quantitative measures for UCKE outcomes and impacts remain problematic. The relative lack of coherence and strong governance of the programme made measurements at a programme level impractical. There were nevertheless some useful developments at a sub-regional and project level, looking at more consistent approaches to measuring leverage (in Sussex) and evaluating social and economic impacts (in Hampshire).

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

The SECC programme has had some significant **achievements** over the last three years, not least the collaborative delivery by 9 universities of a programme of over 30 university-community knowledge exchange projects. Many of the projects have led to an improvement in third sector capacity, some directly helping community organisations to scale up their activities, others through informing the nature of their activities and improving how they operate.

Genuine, high quality knowledge exchange seems to have been quite widespread, although not universal, across the projects and, given the more difficult funding climate, a significant amount of resource has been levered into the projects. The programme has also highlighted up a number of new research opportunities and led to significant enhancements of the curricula and learning experience of students, significantly improving their life skills and employability in some cases.

In addition, there are some signs that university community knowledge exchange and transfer has had and/or will have an enhanced status amongst some of the partner HEIs. It has also provided *examples* of sustainable infrastructure to support knowledge exchange. However, it seems fair to say that in both areas the programme has not fulfilled its potential. Similarly, the exchange of good practice across the South East region has been limited to date.

The **strategic impact** of the programme may have been limited, however, by the decision, for understandable reasons, to concentrate resources at a project level. It is perhaps no coincidence that the success criteria where SECC achieved most were quite operational in nature (increase in high quality knowledge exchange, enhancement of curricula etc.).

A key question for any programme evaluation is what would have happened without the programme funding. Whilst this is difficult to quantify for such a complex programme, the nature and extent of the challenges faced by many of the HEIs in delivering SECC suggests at the very least that the programme offered some level **additionality**.

### **The future of UCKE**

Without funding, it is more difficult to be sure whether HEIs are any more likely to invest in future UCKE as a result of the learning from SECC. Our view is that this would represent a particularly high 'opportunity cost' for society. HEIs, whilst independent, represent a significant public investment within a community and a huge repository of knowledge, experience and talent that could, with relatively little funding, make an even greater contribution to society, whether it be through supporting social cohesion, health and wellbeing, or economic and social regeneration.

The question of why UCKE needs *funding* then remains; if it is valuable to HEIs, why aren't they doing it anyway? With the absence of quantitative indicators, it seems possible that the benefits for HEIs of a more coherent and consistent strategy of engagement might not cover the full costs of that engagement.

This then begs the question of who should fund UCKE. The answer need not necessarily be HEFCE or BIS, other agencies might also have a potential role (i.e. those agencies with statutory responsibility for health and wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic and social regeneration). We recognise, however, that there is a tendency for many potential funders to focus exclusively on projects when funding activities outside of the infrastructure that they 'own'.

This presents real difficulties to those trying to build and maintain sustainable infrastructure for UCKE within universities. We may therefore need to consider tweaks to the mainstream funding mechanisms for HE that at least provide room for HEIs to 'top slice' and develop infrastructural support and small funds for first level engagement activities.

However, the HE policy and funding situation is currently giving mixed messages to HEIs. The changes in student funding are encouraging HEIs to maintain some widening participation activity (which community and public engagement work can support) but the overall influence of HEFCE on the strategic direction of universities has been reduced with the reductions in the teaching grant. The REF 2014 is prioritising research with a social, cultural or economic impact but the HEIF fund is *perceived* to have moved away from more socially orientated projects. The Research Councils do sometimes call for community engagement in research bids or include it in their assessment criteria but they are inconsistent in doing so.

Our first strategic level recommendation is therefore that:

***Recommendation 1: HEFCE should work with national partners to develop a more consistent approach across Government to enabling business, public and community engagement, knowledge exchange and transfer.***

This is partly about ensuring there is an enabling environment for different university models to develop and thrive by giving sufficient weight to community engagement and social impact in the various HE funding criteria, but also about making other government departments aware of and open to the possibilities of encouraging UCKE.

Several interviewees noted some level of dissatisfaction with a perceived 'one size fits all' approach to Higher Education in the United Kingdom. The SECC projects (like their Beacons counterparts) provide potential pieces of a jigsaw from which different models of Higher Education could be formed. However, overemphasising the differences may undermine the goal of ensuring the HE landscape is supportive of such alternatives. The Russell Group, for example, is a clear advocate for policy and funding that supports high quality research. Is there a similar voice for HEIs especially interested in public and community engagement and knowledge exchange?

Our second strategic recommendation is therefore that:

***Recommendation 2: The HEI partners look to facilitate and exchange learning from SECC more widely and work together to provide clearer advocacy for alternative models of Higher Education Institutions.***

This is not to say that more cannot be done within the current funding regime and policy environment. In this context, SECC suggests that some level of supporting infrastructure is probably a fundamental requirement for sustainable knowledge exchange and transfer; The University of Brighton's model is one good example but SECC provided others, including hub and spoke models, project offices within specific disciplines and knowledge exchange champions. All have some level of cost implications but this is not to say HEIs cannot go some way towards an effective infrastructure within current funding regimes.

Our final strategic level recommendation is therefore that:

***Recommendation 3: Committed HEIs should focus what investment is available on developing lean but effective supporting infrastructure for engaging with communities.***

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# 1.0 Introduction

The South East Coastal Communities (SECC) partners commissioned Step Ahead Research Ltd in 2008 to undertake a three year formative and summative programme-level evaluation of the SECC programme. This is the final report of that evaluation and represents its summative phase, assessing the performance of the programme against its stated success criteria and identifying how the learning from the programme might be used to inform future approaches to university-community knowledge exchange at the national, regional, sub-regional and institutional levels.

## 1.1 The rationale for SECC

The South East Coastal Communities Programme was a three year Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded programme to demonstrate the potential value of university-community knowledge exchange and transfer. SECC involved over 30 community projects across nine universities in Hampshire, Sussex and Kent.<sup>3</sup> It was supported by £3 million of HEFCE funding (matched by around £2.8 million of university and community partner funding). An overview of the activities of the programme and the approaches taken in each of the 3 sub-regions (Hampshire, Kent and Sussex) is provided in Section 3 of this report.

The programme was conceived partly as a response to the perception that university knowledge transfer and exchange activities have focused almost exclusively on the relationships between science, technology and businesses.<sup>4</sup> Whilst most universities are also engaged to some extent in university and community knowledge exchange (UCKE), the SECC partners felt that the work was piecemeal and small scale in comparison and/or often undervalued the potential contribution from communities themselves. It was felt that there remained significant untapped potential for UCKE to deliver tangible benefits to both universities and local communities.

Although the South East is a relatively prosperous part of the United Kingdom, there are many areas within it where local communities suffer from severe deprivation. In 2004, there were 271 Super Output Areas in the South East region that were amongst the 20% most deprived in England.<sup>5</sup> These are often concentrated in coastal urban areas with declining ports or tourism resorts. The loss of heavy industry, reductions in naval employment and the decline of domestic seaside holidays have left many of these towns with a weak physical and social infrastructure and an under-developed cultural heritage that makes it difficult for them to respond to the demands of a modern service-based economy. In many coastal communities, employment opportunities can be poor, connectivity and access weak, skills low, and age structures unbalanced.

The focus of the programme was therefore on supporting community health and well-being in the South East coastal area, and more specifically on the following three themes:

- **Healthy Environment** – Communities planning and developing health-promoting and safe environments and developing sustainable ways of using their natural resources;

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<sup>3</sup> SECC University partners: Universities of Brighton; Canterbury Christ Church; Chichester; Greenwich; Kent; Portsmouth; Southampton; Southampton Solent; and Sussex. Solent Synergy, a not for profit business and social enterprise support agency was also a partner to the programme and included in the original bid.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the 2003 Government White Paper on HE, *The Future of Higher Education*, Department for Education and Skills (2003).

<sup>5</sup> Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2004) Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions (now CLG).

- **Healthy People** – Influencing the lifestyle and health choices of communities in order to improve the overall health amongst the local population; and
- **Healthy Social Economy** – Supporting communities to develop their economic, political and social capital and to improve access to work.

The programme also sought to test the efficiency of a new devolved, collaborative model of financial control and project governance that saw HEI partners take direct responsibility for the management of the programme at a sub-regional and regional level (as opposed to more direct control from HEFCE).

The Business Case for SECC<sup>6</sup> identifies three broad aims for the programme as a whole:

- To develop a collaborative model of funding which initiates and sustains HEI-community engagement across the South East coastal region, and may act as a demonstrator to other regions;
- To promote a model of engagement that is essentially demand-side, responsive 'community knowledge exchange and transfer': that is, drawing on the intellectual capital of HEIs to support communities' requests to develop their own capacity to respond to their health and wellbeing needs;
- To develop the infrastructure and, most importantly, the local relationships that will leverage additional funding and expertise, ensuring sustainability for community knowledge exchange and transfer along the South East coast in the longer term.

These aims were supported by a series of more detailed objectives.<sup>7</sup> The Business Case then identifies nine success criteria that describe what the main outcomes of the programme would need to be in order for the aims and objectives to have been met:

- A measurable **improvement in the capacity of the third sector**, including community and voluntary groups, to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their user-groups as a result of the application of the knowledge assets and intellectual capital of HE
- An increase in **high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange** in each of the participating institutions
- Strategic partnerships that **leverage additional funding and other resource** into the university-community projects
- A **robust and well-received evaluation** that both informs wider practice in community knowledge exchange and HEFCE policy in this area.
- A **sustainable infrastructure** for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region
- The **effective exchange of good practice** and information on university- community engagement across the South East coastal region
- The **enrichment of curricula and teaching** and learning practice and the **facilitation of new research** opportunities and practice
- The **enhanced status of community knowledge transfer and exchange** in the missions of participating HEIs, and in the strategic plans of local Third Sector partners

<sup>6</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007.

<sup>7</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007 pp17-18

- i) SECC **governance and financial accountability model used as an exemplar** for managing complex, multi-partner projects

Assessment of performance against these success criteria has been central to our programme level evaluation.

## 1.2 Programme evaluation

When the original Business Case was presented to HEFCE in 2007, it was expected that the learning from SECC would “contribute to future HEFCE policy on the community element of the knowledge exchange agenda”<sup>8</sup>. It was a pilot programme that aimed to test different approaches to university-community knowledge exchange, so learning was central to its success. Evaluation was, therefore, central to the programme.

Each project funded through the programme was expected to undertake a project level evaluation co-ordinated at a sub-regional level (Kent, Sussex and Hampshire). In addition, a formative and summative programme evaluation was commissioned to focus on the regional programme as a whole, particularly in relation to the success criteria set out in the business case.

The aims for project and programme evaluation outlined in the Business Case were to:

- a) Ensure reflective development of the project over its initial 3-4 years;
- b) Inform and aid sustainability, as well as disseminating lessons learned, including learning from unsuccessful interventions;
- c) Establish a baseline against which learning can be assessed (e.g: for good practice dissemination to other community-based initiatives); and against which the effectiveness of the interventions can be judged;
- d) Seek to contribute to thinking on effective models or metrics for assessing the impact of community-based initiatives, to inform revisions to plans and the development of HEFCE strategy; and
- e) Assess annually the progress of the project against its initial and emergent objectives, sub-objectives and plans.

The programme level evaluation conducted by Step Ahead Research involved three main stages:

- The **baseline** stage set out the context for the programme, reviewed approaches to and the rationale for university-community knowledge exchange activity and explored options to develop a coherent framework of indicators against which the success of the programme could be measured. This resulted in a baseline report that was produced for the Regional SECC Board at the end of the first year of the programme;
- The **interim** stage involved undertaking a review of progress within each sub-region and, the programme as a whole, against the agreed indicators and success criteria. An interim report was produced for the SECC Regional Board at the end of the second year of the programme; and
- The **final (summative)** stage involved reviewing the programme, particularly against the success criteria and considering the how the learning from it could be used to inform

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<sup>8</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007 pp17-18 p3

approaches to university-community knowledge exchange activities at different levels: national, regional and sub-regional and institutional levels.

At each stage, Step Ahead Research interviewed a selection of university project and strategic leads and community partners. In the interim and final stages a number of strategic HE staff, community organisations and other stakeholders not directly involved in SECC projects were also interviewed to assess the wider impact of the programme. In all, around 150 depth interviews were conducted by the team, each written up individually for analysis.

The researchers also reviewed project and programme monitoring reports, attended a number of sub-regional and regional programme board meetings and several workshops and events to report on progress and identify and share good practice. In addition, Dr. Jonathan Pratt was a member of the regional dissemination working group.

Following consultation with partners and stakeholders in each of the sub-regions, the Baseline evaluation report outlined a set of 27 Evaluation Indicators to be collected at different levels and aggregated to programme level, based on the success criteria that were set out in the original SECC Business Case. The recommended indicators and how they were expected to be collected are set out in Annex I. The indicators were both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

Section 4 of this report provides an assessment of the programme against the success criteria using the interviews conducted and data collected. However, we should note that our assessment is predominantly qualitative in nature. Whilst the indicators were agreed with the 9 HEIs, most were unable to provide sufficient quantitative data for us to show the impact of the programme as a whole to the extent that we had hoped.

SECC was a complex programme, involving 9 universities and more than 30 community partners delivering a diverse range of projects in a wide range of community settings. It may have been unrealistic to expect a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation across the whole South East region, particularly when no common approach had been agreed with the project leads at the design or set-up stage. Relatively little resource was devoted to programme management at a sub-regional or regional level (through a genuine desire to limit bureaucracy and ensure funding was focused on knowledge exchange activity). Projects (and sub-regional co-ordinators) found it difficult to provide quantitative data where it was not already being collected. The changed context for the programme (see Section 2) led to a perception that the success criteria and programme level indicators were less important than project level evaluation to the future of individual projects. Certainly in light of the changing context for the programme, we have tried to make our evaluation as forward looking as possible and capture learning that might be useful in a variety of different contexts.

Another underlying challenge is that no comprehensive baseline assessment of university-community knowledge exchange activity was undertaken by the HEIs prior to the programme. The evidence of need in the business case, at least for Hampshire and Kent, focuses more on the health and wellbeing needs of the coastal communities. However, it was clear from qualitative evidence that the 9 HEIs were at very different stages in the development of University-Community Knowledge Exchange at the start of the programme; some had established infrastructure, strategies and resources whilst others operated at a much more ad-hoc level. Combined with differences in the nature, focus and scale of the partners HEIs, this makes comparison of the achievements of the programme between different HEIs particularly problematic.

It is also worth noting that as a programme level evaluation it was not our intention to assess the relative success of individual projects in any detail but to explore findings which may be generalizable and useful for any future UCKE programmes or activities.

We should also note that demonstrating quantitative impact in terms of community health and well-being was not a primary focus of the programme evaluation, as the programme's success criteria were more focused on capacity building in both HEIs and community partners than health and wellbeing outcomes directly. Furthermore the projects were so diverse in nature that a comprehensive assessment of social impact would have been extremely complex and could have incurred costs disproportionate to the programme's overall budget for activities. In addition, for the kind of activities involved in SECC, impact can take time to manifest itself, perhaps beyond the end of the timeframe of this evaluation, the end of which coincided with the end of HEFCE funding.

In our baseline report we reviewed some of the methodologies for social impact evaluation and recommended that a small number of projects volunteer to take this work forward (with our support if necessary). A number of HEIs did explore the development of social impact measures during the interim and final phase of the programme (see Section 4.4), although these primarily resulted in recommendations for future evaluations rather than social impact assessments of SECC funded activities.

### 1.3 Outline of the rest of the report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

**Section 2** revisits the context for SECC, which was originally devised in a very different policy and economic environment. It also highlights contextual developments in delivering and evaluating university-community knowledge exchange.

**Section 3** outlines the three sub-regional approaches to UCKE in the SECC programme and briefly describes the programmes activities at a sub-regional level

**Section 4** assesses the performance of the programme against the success criteria outlined in the SECC business case.

**Section 5** discusses some of the themes, issues and learning points arising from the SECC programme

**Section 6** outlines our initial draft conclusions and recommendations at a strategic, institutional and operational level.

## 2.0 The changing context for SECC

This section provides an update to the context paper Step Ahead Research produced in the baseline phase of the programme evaluation. The policy and economic context for the programme, in particular, has changed significantly since the business case was written in 2007. SECC was originally designed as a demonstrator programme that, if successful, could lead to a new dedicated funding stream for UCKE within Higher Education. This is no longer likely in the short to medium term.

This fundamental shift has implications for the relative importance of SECC's success criteria (and the likelihood of achieving some of them). It also means that the future of UCKE depends to a far greater extent on being able to demonstrate sufficient added value for universities and/or community partners to justify diverting resources from their mainstream activities to support it. In this context, our review of the literature on UCKE programmes and activities (Section 2.2) suggests some possible additional or alternative success criteria for the programme.

### 2.1 Policy and economic context

When the business case was written in 2007, the UK was experiencing its longest period of economic growth in 200 years, accompanied by a sustained rise in public spending and third sector activity.<sup>9</sup> In 2008, an international liquidity crisis in the banking sector led to the UK government funding a major 'bail-out' of the banking sector, the costs of which are still unclear but could run into hundreds of billions of pounds.<sup>10</sup> Whilst a total financial collapse does seem to have been avoided, the crisis pushed the UK economy into recession in the last quarter of 2008, a recession that lasted for 12 months and has been superseded by a period of slow growth or stagnation.<sup>11</sup>

In order to fund the banking bail-out, the government has been forced to make significant cuts to spending across most areas of the public sector, including Higher Education. By the second year of the SECC programme (2009/10), it was clear that HEFCE no longer envisaged a dedicated funding stream for university-community knowledge exchange in the short-medium term future. The reduction in public spending has also had a significant impact on the ability of many UCKE community partners (including statutory bodies and third sector agencies receiving grants and project funding from the public purse) to engage in non-core activities and provide match funding to SECC projects.

The 2010 General Election saw a new coalition government take office that was committed on the one hand to cutting spending more quickly, and on the other hand to fundamental reforms to the way Higher Education is funded and governed. Proposed changes include a significant reduction in grants for teaching and the introduction of much higher student fees (placing more emphasis on the choices of students), and opening up the HE market to more competition from alternative providers (including private sector providers, Further Education colleges and professional bodies).<sup>12</sup>

#### 2.1.1 Revisiting the SECC Success Criteria (part I)

In this context, the performance of SECC in terms of the original aims of the programme requires some reconsideration. The changed funding and policy context advises against too literal an

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<sup>9</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/pop\\_ups/07/business\\_brown0s\\_britain/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/pop_ups/07/business_brown0s_britain/html/1.stm). Accessed 28/6/11

<sup>10</sup> <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2009/12/04/uk-britain-banks-costs-idUKTRE5B300J20091204> Accessed 28/6/11

<sup>11</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/7846266.stm>. Accessed 28/6/11

<sup>12</sup> BIS, June 2011 'Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System' White Paper.

interpretation of performance with reference to the original Business Case. The project aims, for example, included the development of a collaborative model of funding, anticipating dedicated additional monies to support university-community knowledge exchange in future HE funding settlements. Another aim was that the partnerships established would leverage additional funding in future, not taking account of the radical contraction of funding options which were ushered in in 2010.

SECC's objectives shaped the programme's success criteria, which, in turn, have played a central role in the defining the methodology for this evaluation. Caution is needed (and exercised in this report), therefore, when assessing how SECC has performed against these original success criteria. Figure 2.1 below summarises how the partners' ability to deliver against the original success criteria may have been compromised by changed circumstances.

**Figure 2.1: Prospects for Delivering Against SECC Programme Success Criteria**

Success Criterion	Prospects for Achievement Post-2010
a. A measurable improvement in third sector capacity.	Reasonable to expect this, unless public spending cuts had a countervailing effect in Third Sector the latter stages of SECC (2010).
b. An increase in high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange.	Reasonable to expect this, given that SECC resources were focused specifically on enabling and supporting such knowledge exchange.
c. Strategic partnerships that leverage additional funding and other resource.	Reasonable to expect this before the change of Government in May 2010. Thereafter, much reduced scope for finding public funds which can be "leveraged" seems to be a reasonable assumption.
d. A robust and well received evaluation.	Not affected by policy and funding changes: overall programme evaluation funded and commissioned and sub-regions responsible for their own local evaluation arrangements.
e. A sustainable infrastructure for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region.	Severely compromised post-2010 if the expectation is that additional funds (from HEFCE, for example) would be provided for this purpose.
f. Effective exchange of good practice across the South East Region.	Reasonable to expect this, barring unforeseen logistical or other difficulties.
g. Enrichment of curricula and teaching and learning practice, and the facilitation of new research opportunities and practice.	Reasonable to expect this, especially in institutions which have most taken on board the ethos of engaging the Third Sector to benefit their teaching and research.
h. Enhanced status of community knowledge exchange in the missions of participating HEIs and in the strategic plans of local Third Sector partners.	<i>Ceteris paribus</i> this would be an expected outcome of the successful delivery of SECC projects. However, policy and funding developments post-2010 could easily have a countervailing effect.
i. SECC governance and financial accountability model used as an exemplar for managing complex, multi-partner projects.	While multi-institutional research collaborations are commonplace, inter-institutional arrangements like those required for SECC are less so and could involve many "steps" in decision making processes. Policy and funding changes might also be expected to affect the level of importance attached to projects which might no longer be deemed "priority".

This brief review of the prospects for meeting the programme's success criteria suggests that spending cuts could severely compromise partners' ability to attract extra funding and establish sub-

regional infrastructure to support knowledge exchange. The prevailing funding and policy environment post-2010 could also raise questions for individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) about the desirability of prioritising university-community knowledge exchange. At the very least it places the emphasis more squarely on demonstrating that the benefits of UCKE are sufficient at an institutional level to justify diverting some resources from mainstream funded activities such as teaching and research.

### 2.1.1 Other HE policy and funding changes

Another source of UCKE funding in the past has been HEFCE's Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF). The fund is designed to support knowledge transfer and exchange with both businesses and community organisations and to support a wider public engagement agenda. Given the maturity of KE within the missions of HEIs, HEIF will move away from building capacity to focus on rewarding performance. HEIF's success is now judged primarily in terms of the economic and social impact achieved, rather than in terms of HEIs' internal development.

The fund is formula driven, and HEIs have the flexibility to spend the funding how they see fit. HEFCE has committed to continuing this funding to at least 2015 (at £150 million a year in England). Eligibility for funding allocations from 2011/12 will be more closely related to the generation of external income from previous engagement activity, based on metrics captured in the HEBCI survey (as income continues to remain the best available proxy for the impact of KE activities on the economy and society). HEIs receive no allocation if they do not have external income earnings which generate, by applying the HEIF formula<sup>13</sup>, an institutional HEIF allocation at or in excess of a £250,000 threshold allocation. Where HEIs have demonstrated performance through income metrics, they will continue to have discretion to use funding for the range of KE activities beyond those counted in the formula. However, the importance of income generation to the funding model may encourage a focus on business-related knowledge exchange, where income returns tend to be much higher.

Some other changes in HE policy and funding that could prove to be more supportive of community knowledge exchange. The change in student fees from 2012, for example, has been accompanied by a requirement for HEIs wishing to charge more than £6,000 (up to the fees cap of £9,000) to submit 'Access Agreements' to the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) that demonstrate how they will use some of the extra funding to improve access to HE for under-represented groups.<sup>14</sup> University-community knowledge exchange is one potential first step to engaging non-traditional learners in Higher Education. Initial indications are that the majority of HEIs intend charging above the £6k level and are submitting Access Agreements to OFFA.

In addition, the new Research Excellence Framework (**REF 2014**), places significant emphasis on demonstrating the impact of research. Over the next three years, HEIs will need to collect case study evidence of social, economic or cultural impact beyond academia, an assessment of which (with a weighting of 20% towards the overall score, rising to 25% over time) will inform their research funding allocations from 2014 onwards.<sup>15</sup> The new impact measures could form a significant counterbalance to the 'weight' traditionally attached by HEIs to commercial income from working with businesses.

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<sup>13</sup> HEFCE, May 2011, 'Higher Education Innovation Funding 2011/12 to 2014/15: Policy, final allocations and request for institutional strategies'. [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11\\_16/11\\_16.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_16/11_16.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> OFFA, March 2011. 'How to produce an access agreement for 2012-13'. Guidance, March 2011/01. <http://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/2011-01-OFFA-How-to-produce-access-agreement-2012-13.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> HEFCE, March 2011. 'Decisions on assessing research impact'. ref01.2011. [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/01\\_11/01\\_11.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/pubs/2011/01_11/01_11.pdf)

The implications of these policy and funding changes for UCKE are as yet untested but in the short term they are perhaps unlikely to reverse the need to shift emphasis towards demonstrating the value of UCKE to Higher Education Institutions themselves if UCKE activities are to be sustained and/or increase.

## 2.2 University-Community Knowledge Exchange (UCKE)

In our context paper for the baseline phase of the programme evaluation, we explored the history of UCKE in the UK and internationally, examining the motivations that have led universities across the world to invest in community engagement programmes. We suggested that community engagement is part of an evolutionary change in the nature of universities. Hollander and Meeropol (2006), for example, identify some recent milestones in the history of university-community engagement:<sup>16</sup>

- Mid to late 1980's – the era of student volunteerism, whereby students volunteer to help the community in some way;
- The early 1990s – the rise of service-learning. This is a method of teaching through which students apply their academic skills and knowledge to address real-life needs in their own communities<sup>17</sup>;
- The late 1990s – the birth of the 'engaged campus'. According to Holland (2001)<sup>18</sup>, an engaged campus is one which '*is committed to direct interaction with external constituencies and communities through the mutually beneficial exchange, exploration, and application of knowledge expertise and information*';
- The early 2000s – rapid expansion of the idea of the engaged campus.

The transformative potential of such engagement for local communities has been quite widely noted. Chaskin and Brown (1996) have devised six dimensions that can be used to describe the range and levels of activities within university-community partnerships and engagement:<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 2.2: Dimensions of University-Community Partnerships (Chaskin & Brown)**

<b>Human Capital</b> - improving the assets of individuals within a neighbourhood, such as skill or knowledge through social services, education, training, and leadership development.	<b>Social capital</b> - improved interpersonal networks, trust, coordination, and cooperation for mutual benefit.	<b>Physical Infrastructure</b> - improved housing, transportation, and recreational and open space.
<b>Economic Infrastructure</b> - how goods and services are distributed and how capital flows within communities and between the community and the wider economy. Activities may include improving job opportunities and capitalizing private commercial and financial institutions.	<b>Institutional Infrastructure</b> - improving the scope, depth, leadership, and interrelationships of the community's institutions, including public services, non-profit, and private-sector institutions.	<b>Political Strength</b> - increasing the ability to exert a legitimate and effective voice within and outside the community.

Source: Adapted from Chaskin and Brown (1996), cited in Cox (2000)

<sup>16</sup> Dagne, C. (2007) "Background document for the University of Victoria Task Force on Civic Engagement".

<sup>17</sup> New Horizons for Learning [www.newhorizons.org](http://www.newhorizons.org)

<sup>18</sup> University of Michigan "Defining the engaged campus" [www.umich.edu/~divdemo/Final\\_Engaged\\_Paper\\_kinkos.pdf](http://www.umich.edu/~divdemo/Final_Engaged_Paper_kinkos.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Cox, D.N. (2000). "Developing a framework for understanding university-community partnerships".

As a health and well-being programme, SECC most closely aligns to the human and social capital elements of this model, although individual projects have worked across all six dimensions.

However, Chaskin and Brown's classification only gives a partial picture of the direct and indirect benefits to HEIs as institutions. According to Carr (1999), university-community partnerships did not fully emerge in the United States until urban problems, such as physical decay and rising crime, began to directly affect the universities themselves, particularly in terms of attracting and retaining staff and students.<sup>20</sup> This meant that the benefits of community-university engagement became clearer to the HEIs and the concept of mutuality or reciprocity developed. Reardon (2005)<sup>21</sup> notes that, beyond altruistic behaviour, there are several possible motivations for HEIs to increase their levels of community engagement, which include:

- Universities' ability to attract more public and private sector investment if they can demonstrate their role in developing the economy of their local areas;
- Improving the vitality, attractiveness and safety of an area can help to attract talented students and staff to the university;
- Improving relationships with their communities can mean that there is more local community support for universities' expansion plans;
- Reputational issues, which mean that HEIs need to show that they are responsible actors in their local economies and that they can have a positive impact through development decisions, hiring and purchasing practices and contracting policies.

Buys and Bursnall (2007) add that new insights and learning for students and staff, including improved quality of teaching and learning can also be a benefit. Becoming involved in their local community helps to provide 'real life' experiences and can add to the robustness of learning and teaching experience, providing both life skills and improved employability.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, there remain barriers and/or a lack of incentives to community engagement for many HEIs. Gibbons (2003) highlights that partnership building takes time and that resource does need to be invested into it.<sup>23</sup> Managing relationships can be challenging, where partners are perceived to be unequal. Communities can find universities controlling and over-powering, or engaging in academic pursuits that have little relevance to their local communities. Budget constraints or the impact of short term funding can also cause tensions and challenges<sup>24</sup>, particularly if sustainability is not built into projects at an early stage. The substantial commitment in time and resources that is required early on can seem difficult for HEIs to justify, when the benefits and impacts may seem unclear in the short term.

Ahmed et al (2004) suggest that the benefits of such partnerships may still not be clearly understood or effectively demonstrated by some Deans, Department or Faculty Heads and Committee Chairs, because the activities are not viewed in the same way as 'traditional' university research.<sup>25</sup> Ahmed et al also suggest that academic researchers have traditionally viewed community members as *objects* of research rather than *partners*. This has resulted in community knowledge and the contribution that it can make, as having a low status in the eyes of some academic researchers.

<sup>20</sup> Carr, J.H. (1999) "It's not just academic: University-community partnerships are rebuilding neighbourhoods".

<sup>21</sup> Reardon, K.M. (2005) "Straight A's? Evaluating the success of community university development partnerships"

<sup>22</sup> Buys, N. and Bursnall, S. (2007) "Establishing university-community partnerships: Processes and benefits".

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Suarez-Balcazar, Y. et al. (2005) "An interactive and contextual model of community-university collaborations for research and action".

<sup>25</sup> Ahmed, S.M., Beck, B., Maurana, A., & Newton, G. (2004). "Overcoming barriers to effective community-based participatory research in US medical schools".

### 2.2.1 Revisiting the SECC Success Criteria (Part II)

One or two of the success criteria for SECC outlined in the business case are clearly designed to show the value of UCKE to HEIs (*'enrichment of curricula and teaching and learning practice, and facilitation of new research opportunities'*, for example). However, most are not. They are more focused on demonstrating that an increase in UCKE has taken place, that communities value it, or that HEFCE's money has been spent effectively.

This is not surprising, given that the programme was initiated by the universities themselves. Their buy-in to the concept and potential value of UCKE was perceived to be a given. However, in reality there were different levels of buy-in across the 9 partner universities and, critically, between senior staff within institutions. Even the most committed of the partners were struggling to justify diverting *more* resources to UCKE activities from their teaching and research funding.

From an HEI's perspective, success criteria that would demonstrate more clearly how UCKE contributes to the financial success of the institution would therefore perhaps be of value. These might include:

- Improved **employment outcomes** for students and learners following their study. Being able to demonstrate this could have a significant impact on the ability of the HEI to recruit learners in the more competitive market place envisaged in the HE white paper.<sup>26</sup> Measures might include the proportion not in employment or underemployed (not in higher level occupations). It could also include the number of students and learners setting up or leading small businesses or social enterprises. Destinations surveys could ask alumni to rate the perceived importance of UCKE to their employment outcome.
- A **rebalancing of the profile of learners** (widening participation/fair access). In so far as UCKE facilitates or enables the HEI to meet the terms of its access agreement, it can demonstrate a financial value to the institution. Measures might include the number of learners from under-represented groups who first came into contact with the university through UCKE activities.
- An improvement in the **local reputation of and attitudes towards the university**. Given that an empathetic local community is more likely to be supportive of plans for expansion and more likely to make students feel welcome (often noted in 'alternative' prospectuses), a first step measure of the value of UCKE and wider community engagement might be to monitor local attitudes towards an HEI over time.
- An improvement in the ease of **recruiting high quality students and staff**. Measures might include the length of time vacancies are open, or the average qualifications of applicants. Successful applicants could also be asked to rate how important they perceived the HEI's community engagement activities to be in choosing to apply.

Obviously change in these indicators would take time (possibly more than the 18 months or 2 years that the SECC projects were delivering in) and the attribution of improvements in any such indicators to any specific project programme would be challenging. Nevertheless collecting this kind of data over time could provide evidence that the pursuit of a more open or engaged university model was paying dividends.

Whilst the specification for the programme evaluation did suggest that the evaluation should try to take on emergent aims and objectives of the programme, there was not time or resources to devise and collect quantitative data around these issues in the final phase of the programme evaluation.

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<sup>26</sup> The 2011 Higher Education white paper also suggests that HEIs will be required to provide more detailed statistics and benchmarks on employment outcomes for their students on a course by course basis.

We did, however, explore some of them in our qualitative interviews with stakeholders and these discussions have informed our exploration of key themes, issues and learning points from the programme (Section 5).

### 2.2.2 Parallels with the Beacons Project

It is also worth noting that, in terms of HEI motivations for community engagement and knowledge exchange, the **Beacons Project** has focused more squarely on strategic level change within HEIs. Together with Research Councils UK and the Wellcome Trust, HEFCE and the other UK higher education funding councils have funded a £9.2 million *Beacons for Public Engagement* initiative that includes a wide range of projects to engage specific communities and general members of the public. The six beacons are in Manchester, Newcastle, Norwich, London, Cardiff and Edinburgh with a national co-ordinating centre based in Bristol.<sup>27</sup> The aim is to establish a coordinated approach to recognising, rewarding and building capacity for public engagement. Whilst public engagement and university-community knowledge exchange are not the same thing, there are clear overlaps; Beacons project activities include, for example, efforts to involve the public as researchers, to work with the public to inform policy and to create opportunities for the public to inform the research questions being asked.<sup>28</sup> The findings from the Beacons programme evaluation should perhaps be reviewed in parallel with our own.

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<sup>27</sup> HEFCE. "Bridging the gap between higher education and the public: beacons for public engagement".

<sup>28</sup> National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement NCCPE 2010 'The Beacons for Public Engagement'.

## 3.0 Delivery of the SECC Programme

This section briefly outlines how the SECC programme was delivered and how the partners responded to some of the challenges that arose during its delivery at a regional and sub-regional level. That the programme experienced a wide range of challenges is perhaps to be expected given the pilot nature of both the way the programme was structured and governed and of many of the projects themselves. The focus of this section is primarily on *what* happened, further discussion of the issues raised and potential learning from the programme can be found in Sections 4 and 5 of the report.

### 3.1 Programme governance and co-ordination

The SECC programme was unusual for a HEFCE funded programme in that, to a significant degree, governance and financial accountability for the programme were devolved to the participating HEIs. The HEIs piloted a collaborative model of self-governance based on peer review through a regional programme board and three sub-regional boards.

At regional level, the programme board was responsible for the overall strategic direction of the project. It met twice a year and was attended by designated representatives from each of the sub-regions rotated each year, each speaking on behalf of the three HEIs in their sub-region. Some level of continuity was provided by a neutral (not directly involved in the programme) chairperson and a representative from the University of Chichester (the accountable body for the programme) who were not rotated.

Each sub-regional board had rotating Chairs to ensure equal representation of the three HEIs in each sub-region. The Chair of the sub-regional board each year was also the designated representative at regional board meetings. Each of the participating HEIs had at least one representative on the sub-regional board and a number of stakeholder organisations were also invited to attend in order to provide community representation.

The sub-regional boards provided an opportunity for partners to exchange information and provided the link between projects and the regional programme board. The precise focus of the sub-regional boards and the regularity with which they met differed between the sub-regions, however. The Kent Board met most regularly (15 times) as it had a more hands on role in reviewing, approving and monitoring projects. In both Hampshire and Sussex, the SECC projects had been determined at the beginning of the programme (although some had to subsequently change their focus), so their functions were more immediately concentrated on monitoring and reporting and their meetings were less frequent. Hampshire initially met four times a year but this became less frequent as the programme progressed. The Sussex sub-regional board met twice a year.

All the sub-regional boards were also responsible for collating financial and monitoring information (there was a lead institution in each sub-region), which then reported into the University of Chichester, which was the accountable body for the SECC programme. The University of Chichester was responsible for providing reports to both the Regional Board and to the principal funder, HEFCE.

### 3.1.1 Regional level activities

Whilst the majority of programme activities were undertaken at the sub-regional level, a small number of activities were undertaken on behalf of the region as a whole, including:

- The design, population and hosting of a programme level website ([www.coastalcommunities.org.uk](http://www.coastalcommunities.org.uk))
- A social networking site (NING) for programme participants to share materials
- Two regional workshops for participating HEIs and community partners to identify and exchange good practice
- A formative and summative programme level evaluation
- A series of programme level dissemination activities
- The preparation of programme reports for HEFCE

From the beginning there seems to have been a strategic decision to keep the costs of administration for the programme to a minimum, particularly at the regional level which initially passed more or less all the funding to the sub-regions. However, this provided some challenges. The regional board had no secretariat or formal administrative support and it soon became apparent that it needed some (in order to chase monitoring reports, prepare regional monitoring reports, commission and manage the programme evaluators, arrange networking events and prepare programme level dissemination materials). In the first year of the programme some support was provided at no cost by a representative of the University of Brighton involved in the initial bid. However, when she left the university, the board had to ask the sub-regions for funding to pay the expenses of and buy time from two Kent academics (familiar with but no longer directly involved in the programme) in order for them to act as programme co-ordinators. Even then, some of the more routine administration was undertaken by the PA of one of the academics without funding.

In the final year of the programme, the sub-regions were again asked to provide funding for the preparation of programme-level dissemination materials (partly in recognition of the increased importance of this activity in the new policy and funding context). This was delivered as a mini-project by the University of Brighton who in turn commissioned third parties to prepare a promotional video (and three short sub-regional films) and a series of 5 briefing papers before undertaking a (e)mailshot and promotional campaign.

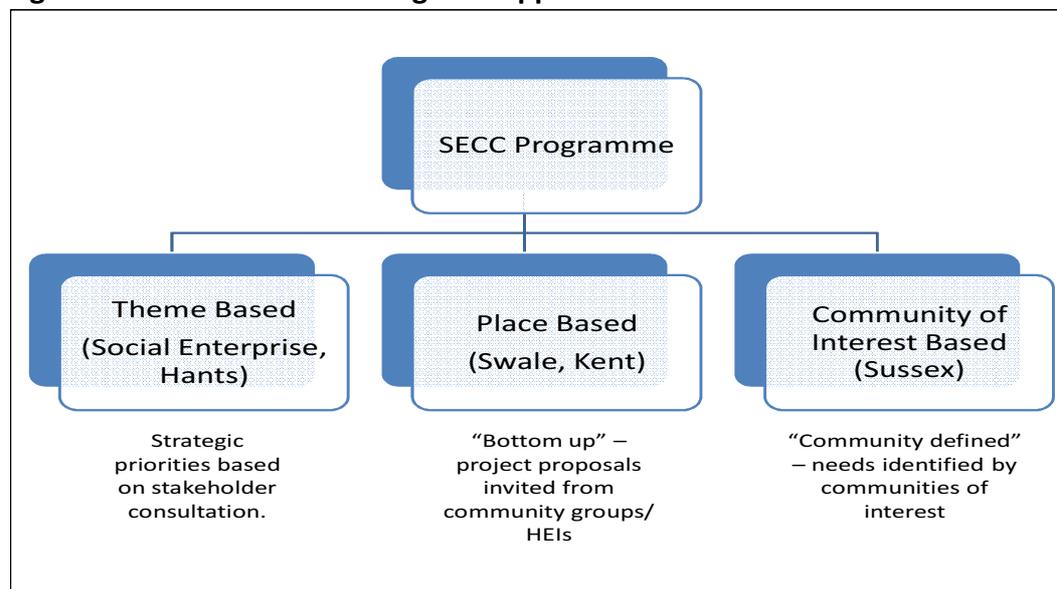
This 'bottom-up' approach to programme level support did have the advantage that regional level administration costs were not built-in and incurred simply because there was budget available; the regional board effectively had to convince partners of the need for resources at each stage. However, even at the end of the programme opinions between and within the participating HEIs were split as to whether the programme would have been more coherent with a stronger regional administration or whether SECC was in effect three programmes because the approaches, activities and learning was so different in each sub-region. Certainly, many interviewees suggested that the two regional workshops, whilst interesting, struggled to find common ground for meaningful discussion (see Section 4.7).

### 3.1.2 Sub-regional approaches

Whilst the programme as a whole sought to minimise administration costs and bureaucracy, the administrative support that did exist was concentrated at sub-regional level. In Hampshire the support and co-ordination function was provided by Solent Synergy, a Southampton-based social enterprise. In Kent, a SECC project office with two staff provided the co-ordination function and the secretariat for the Sub-Regional Board. In Sussex, the programme also funded two full-time staff and received additional support from the University of Brighton's Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) office.

To a significant extent the three sub-regions took different approaches to both the process of community engagement and the communities they sought to engage (Figure 3.1).

**Figure 3.1: SECC's three sub-regional approaches**



In Hampshire a thematic approach, focused on social enterprise as a subset of the business community, provided the framework for a range of projects carried forward by each individual institution, raising the possibility of sustained impact through new socially oriented businesses. Projects were designed following consultation with a number of key strategic stakeholders. Kent took a place-based approach, focusing on a small area within Kent (Swale) with significant social challenges and little previous contact with Higher Education Institutions. Proposals for projects were invited from community groups and academics and reviewed by the board. In Sussex, the focus was primarily on communities of interest (people with shared identities not necessarily bound by place) and projects were designed in conjunction with communities that, for the most part, had a pre-existing relationship with the partners.

The remainder of this section provides more detail on the main programme activities in each sub-region and participating HEI. A review of the successes and limitations of the three approaches to community engagement can be found in Section 5.1.

## 3.2 The Hampshire Sub-Region – A Thematic Approach (Social Enterprise)

### 3.2.1 The Hampshire Approach

The Hampshire sub region focused on the development of social enterprise to improve health and well-being in deprived parts of South Hampshire. In the Business Case, partners saw SECC as an opportunity to deploy their intellectual capital for the benefit of local communities and to provide students and staff with “excellent opportunities for personal and professional development”<sup>29</sup>. The Hampshire projects had four main objectives:

- To develop the intellectual capital of HEIs and to assist communities to develop new mechanisms to deliver enhanced health and well-being;

<sup>29</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007 p22

- To explore and develop the Social Enterprise model in relation to improving health and well-being as a means to build sustainability;
- To identify the optimum structures that would facilitate the commissioning of new mechanism to deliver health and well-being services in the medium term and to develop the local skills needed to make implementation possible; and
- To make greater use of the knowledge base for the benefits of the target communities, involving students as well as academic staff.

There were three HEIs involved in the Hampshire SECC programme, Portsmouth, Southampton, and Southampton Solent.

### 3.2.2 University of Portsmouth

In the SECC Business Case, the University of Portsmouth proposed three themes for its projects:

- To develop a pool of specialist project development expertise that would be made available to local voluntary and community sector organisations to help develop or secure assets through social investors or through asset transfer opportunities;
- To design and implement a health and well-being social enterprise programme led by social entrepreneurs and the Portsmouth Business School, providing targeted social enterprise business support in the health and well-being field; and
- To promote an action learning and impact research approach to community action by developing high quality toolkits, protocols and seed resources to improve the activities and value of community engagement and investment activities.

There was a strong focus on community assets, rather than addressing deficits. A number of community partners were identified in the original Business Case and a potential £600,000 of match funding had been identified<sup>30</sup>.

The Portsmouth SECC project Mid-Point Project Review<sup>31</sup> sets out the principles that were used for project development in Portsmouth:

1. Adopt a social enterprise based approach/focus for all interventions in local communities;
2. Ensure additionality (differentiation) to publicly funded activities; and
3. Target areas of disadvantage, or social enterprises explicitly working in areas of disadvantage, to facilitate community-based asset development.

The University of Portsmouth already had established relationships with some of the community groups that it subsequently worked with. For example, the asset development projects built on joint work that had been undertaken previously between the University and the Diocese of Portsmouth through the Rapid Parish Development Programme.

A main focus of the University of Portsmouth's SECC activities was utilizing the expertise of postgraduate architecture students to produce designs and exhibition materials for a range of development sites in disadvantaged areas within and around the city. These were mainly, but not exclusively, assets that were owned by the Diocese of Portsmouth. Projects were organised through the Project Office in the School of Architecture and involved students engaging with local communities to consult on and present design proposals for the identified sites. In 2009 and 2010

<sup>30</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007

<sup>31</sup> Source: Rampton L (2009) Portsmouth SECC Project – Mid Point Project Review

students undertook summer internships within community groups to create design ideas for buildings and sites for a range of community clients.

The model that was used in this project provided students with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to real-life practical projects and to work with disadvantaged communities, taking into account their aspirations and views in the development of their designs. In addition to the designs, the project also resulted in the production of a Sustainable Community Assets business planning guide<sup>32</sup>.

A second dimension of the Portsmouth SECC programme involved promoting social enterprise using the expertise within the university's Centre for Enterprise. The university had established links with a non-aligned business school in Denmark, the KAOS Pilot, and used SECC resources to fund a group of social entrepreneurs to undertake a three-day study visit to explore new ideas to managing third sector organisations. A follow-up visit is planned for 2011, with the aim of developing a closer partnership that will involve KAOS Pilot staff returning to Portsmouth to support delegates to take forward their project ideas.

The University of Portsmouth also used SECC funds to undertake a study into the impacts of a range of social enterprises in the city<sup>33</sup>. This was more of a project activity than an evaluation as such, although it did draw on learning from the SECC programme in Portsmouth. It focuses on the role of social enterprises in regeneration; the impact of developments and the potential for collaboration between higher education and social enterprises; and the potential role for social enterprises in the future. The report focuses more on social enterprise than on community-knowledge exchange per se and uses case study examples and financial proxies to monetise impacts of volunteering and savings to the public purse of interventions by community organisations.

As with the other projects in Hampshire, a significant legacy from the Portsmouth project is the relationships between organisations that may not have had strong links previously. Two community organisations, supported by the University of Portsmouth, have invested in a Joint Venture to develop projects similar to those that have been undertaken through the SECC programme; the exchange between the social enterprise community and the KAOS Pilot in Denmark will continue following the end of SECC funding; and there is a pipeline of projects that student interns can continue to work on in the community through the Project Office in the School of Architecture. Effective intermediaries, who were able to broker relationships and interpret language between the community and the university, appear to have been important to the project in Portsmouth, whilst regular, monthly meetings of local SECC partners established equality in the relationships that enabled common goals to be identified and pursued.

### **3.2.3 University of Southampton**

The original focus of the University of Southampton's project was to work primarily to improve budgeting and commissioning and to develop enterprising solutions to meet the needs of social care individual/personal budget holders in the Central and Thornhill areas of Southampton. Delivery of the project was largely devolved to two community groups, with the university having an advocacy, brokerage and project co-ordination role.

The project depended heavily on the successful 'roll out' of the personal/individual budget policy that was being developed to deliver social care across the UK. Neither the University of Southampton nor the community partners had control over policy implementation, which was the

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<sup>32</sup> Moobela C & Rampton L. (2009) Sustainable Community Assets: Business Planning for the (re) Development of Community Buildings

<sup>33</sup> Rampton L (2010) Impacts and Prospects

responsibility of a third partner, Southampton City Council. The project evaluation report<sup>34</sup> suggests that, ideally, there would have been a sufficient volume of personal/individual budget holders in the target areas to have supported the development of social enterprise solutions that would have contributed to social and economic regeneration within the target communities. However, the volume of budget holders was “extremely low”, such that even the extension of the target area so that it covered the whole of the city, did not yield a sufficient number of individual/personal budget holders to pursue the project in the manner that had been anticipated.

The focus of the project was, therefore, extended further to involve Hampshire County Council, who were piloting personal/individual budgets in Basingstoke, located on the fringes of the coastal communities that had been the original focus of the SECC programme. The challenges associated with the progress of personal budgets meant that the partners adopted a different approach to delivering the project that centred on three main strands:

- Advice and support for social enterprises that aim to deliver services to personal/individual budget holders in the future;
- Working with budget holders to help them conceptualize and understand their well-being needs and the services that they need to respond to these; and
- Raising awareness of the personalisation agenda and the opportunities and challenges it presents amongst individuals, partners and stakeholders within the community.

The project engaged with 35 social enterprises over the three year period, mainly providing information, advice and guidance, developing business plans and providing assistance with funding applications. A key feature of the University of Southampton project was the delivery model. The project was mainly delivered through two community organisations. . This delivery model is perceived to have resulted in an equal relationship between the partners, with each bringing distinct expertise. The University was able to gain much wider access to community organisations, through its partners’ networks, whilst the partners were able to develop relationships with both the university and the local authority in ways that had not hitherto existed. The community organisations were able to provide feedback on how the policy was being received ‘on the ground’, whilst the university was able to demonstrate the value of research and a broader perspective to approaches to community empowerment projects.

In terms of tangibles, the Southampton SECC project resulted in the development of a conceptual process map that outlines the relationship between individual needs, the market and the social enterprises and a ‘copy-lefted’<sup>35</sup> tool that enables individuals to identify their needs and possible ways in which these needs can be met. Partner feedback suggests that the key legacy from the project is the relationships that have been established that are expected to be maintained following the end of the SECC project. The project evaluation identifies a small number of metrics, including levered funds and project activities, but there are no metrics attached to the indicators that were used to assess the impact of the programme according to the other Business Case success criteria.

Like Southampton Solent (see below), the University of Southampton had to change the focus of its activities quite significantly from its original ideas. The lack of personal/individual budget holders meant the project developed an awareness-raising, conceptual focus in the development of social enterprise rather than the practical support for developing social enterprises originally envisaged. The project evaluation report suggests that the university has gained from its enhanced access to community networks, more student placements and an increase in the contribution of social entrepreneurs to curricula in the business school. However, the scale of the project within the

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<sup>34</sup> University of Southampton (2011) –Final Report for the South East Coastal Communities Programme

<sup>35</sup> Copy lefted means that the toolkit can be used and distributed at no charge

context of the university (the largest of all participating HEIs) was such that it may have been ambitious for it to lead to strategic changes across the University as a whole.

To some extent, the timing of the project may have been premature. The personal/individual budget policy was not at a sufficiently advanced stage to enable the original project idea to be developed in full. This highlights the challenges of developing projects in emerging policy areas, particularly where the university has only limited control.

### **3.2.4 Southampton Solent University**

The Business Case outlined the university's aims to add value to the co-ordinated development of existing and planned health and well-being activities in Thornhill, developing sustainability through social enterprise.

Initially, the University worked with four local community organisations: It provided:

- Business mentoring advice and support to the Chief Executive of Southampton Action for Employment (SAFE) providing business support and advice to the organisation's Chief Executive
- Marketing for the Sprint Start health promotion programme to schools and helping the organisation to gain access to health professionals;
- Advice and support to Health Kicks, an organisation that was set up to promote health and well-being to unemployed people, using sport and competitive play; and
- Training in governance to the Thornhill Health and Well-Being Network.

The Southampton Solent SECC project evaluation<sup>36</sup> is frank about the effectiveness of its initial approaches. One project partner withdrew from SECC at an early stage after it became under the umbrella of the City Council; another ceased working with the university partly as a result of differences relating to intellectual property issues; and one project was curtailed when it did not secure funding for their activities from schools and colleges as originally planned.

The initial activities envisaged seem to have reflected a more traditional approach to university-community engagement, with the university using its expertise to support a small number of community groups, with the aim of them developing into sustainable social enterprises. Even then, the specific added value that the university was providing, compared with what could have been (or was) provided by other organisations may not have been transparent. Indeed, the Southampton Solent evaluation report suggests that the original approach involved the university "buying in" expertise from other organisations to provide social enterprise support. Not only did this approach limit the extent of reciprocity in the relationship, but it seemed to result in community groups not always benefitting from the expertise within the university.

This resulted in a significant change in approach at Southampton Solent University and in 2010 led to a proposal to develop a jointly-funded Social Enterprise Hub in James Street, with the university contributing £20,000 from SECC funds. Identifying and supporting individual community groups had proved to be a risky strategy, with the benefits to the university and the distinctiveness of its offer to community groups unclear.

The change of approach involved focusing on growing social enterprises from within the university, with the support of community partners, such as the Social Enterprise Foundation and a local community trust. The rationale for the change of approach seems to have been that an internal

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<sup>36</sup> Source: Payne N (2011). South East Coastal Communities Project at Southampton Solent University

focus would help to embed social enterprise both within the university and develop a pipe-line of social enterprises within the community that would, in turn, help to shape curriculum and provide support to social enterprise start-ups developing out of the university.

The James Street Hub was key to this approach. It opened in 2011 and provides a physical location where social enterprises (and their representatives), university staff, and students can develop an on-going virtuous circle of knowledge exchange. The eleven-day Social Enterprise training programme that has been developed by Southampton Solent University is delivered at the hub, which provides support for social enterprise; practical work placement opportunities for university students; and enables social enterprises themselves to contribute to the curriculum offer for students.

The aim is to provide a sustainable legacy from SECC to support Southampton Solent University's knowledge exchange activity, but in a way that was removed from what had originally been planned. The project evaluation report (and stakeholder interviews) suggest initial activities may have not had sufficient clarity; had insufficient focus on reciprocity; and may not have been clearly delineated from other social enterprise business support activity that was available.

The change of approach has demonstrated a capacity for reflection and adaption; has put the relationship with community partners on a more equal footing; and through a physical space provided a tangible asset that may provide a sustainable legacy that will integrate university-community knowledge exchange within the university.

### 3.3 The Kent Sub-Region – A Place Based Approach (Swale)

#### 3.3.1 The Kent Approach

The original SECC Business Case set out the reasons for the sub-regional partners' focus on the Borough of Swale: its geographical proximity to the Medway campus which the three universities shared; the relative absence of an HE presence in Swale; and the local combination of regeneration opportunities and challenges, indicative of need and demand for university-community partnerships.<sup>37</sup> The very specific focus on Swale was also chosen to maximise local impact and allow significant tailoring of activities to local needs.

The Kent partners were not prescriptive as to which projects would be taken forward at the Business case stage. Instead, they would set specific and coherent aims, and then invite project proposals which would be considered for approval by the sub-regional Board:

*Our strategy comprises a number of interrelated elements, including using academic/public health expertise to support live development projects, the development of training modules to build public health capacity, ongoing community engagement, co-ordinated management and evaluation and dissemination... We will work with local community groups to establish a simplified bidding process to draw down funding. University staff will give their (costed) time to support community groups in drawing up appropriate bids. These bids will be scrutinised and approved by the Project Steering Group, which will include stakeholder representatives. We would anticipate that between six and ten projects will be funded during the three years.*

*SECC Business Case, August 2007: 46*

This less prescriptive approach meant that project ideas would be identified, elicited or developed by the three universities, working with community groups, often with the active support of the sub-

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<sup>37</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007 pp23-32

regional project manager. It also meant that the detail of the Kent SECC project did not have a pre-determined shape; instead a sub-regional programme evolved as projects were approved. This did provide significant challenges for the coherence of the programme in the sub-region, challenges that were not fully overcome (see Section 5.1).

Much of the partners' focus in Swale was upon the Isle of Sheppey, which could be considered a strong community of place, given the island's relative isolation and limited inward migration. Although Ray Pahl's seminal study of Sheppey in the early 1980s highlighted that the closure of the Naval Dockyard at Sheerness in 1960 reduced the sense of community local people felt, a sense that had come in part from having a single large employer dominate the local labour market.<sup>38</sup>

The very specific geographical focus of the Kent projects brought the challenge that there were few existing partnerships and activities that could be built upon, and one of the key learning points was that it takes time to develop such relationships. This, along with the relative lack of prescription as regards the kind of projects being sought, meant that Kent took longer, compared with more established sub-regions like Sussex, to identify opportunities, develop project ideas, and deliver and complete projects. While some projects started quite quickly, others took longer, and the fact the end of the sub-regional programme was put back twice, the emergence of a sub-regional underspend, and delays in project evaluation reporting suggest that too little time was available. 15 projects were taken forward by the Kent partners, a large number of individual projects in a small geographical area, compared with the other sub-regions, further increasing the complexity of delivering SECC in the area.

The Kent SECC projects should not only be considered in terms of their focus on a specific geographical location. Individual projects worked with specific sections of society and/or communities of interest (young people, carers, gypsies/travellers, older people, people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds etc).<sup>39</sup> In this sense, the Kent approach has similarities with the communities of interest and/or practice approach taken in Sussex.<sup>40</sup>

The following sub-sections provide more detail on the Kent projects, drawing on project end reports (when available), provided by the Kent project manager in May 2011.

### 3.3.2 Canterbury Christ Church University

Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) was one of the most active partners in Kent, leading 8 of the 15 projects, and getting projects approved and started relatively quickly. The university's projects were:

- Community writers (001): involved Sheppey residents in exploring the themes of health, wellbeing and resilience through stories, poems and photographs capturing their experiences or those of others. The project also developed a mental health toolkit, which was used initially by 15 voluntary and community sector organisations. Funding £108,800, of which £51,000 provided by SECC.
- Adult Carers (003): devised a programme of support for adults with care responsibilities to improve the health of carers and they people they care for. 50 people involved directly in piloting and a further 150 benefited from a toolkit developed as part of the project. Funding £18,782, of which £11,000 provided by SECC.

<sup>38</sup> Pahl, R.E. (1984) *Divisions of Labour*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

<sup>39</sup> For a full breakdown of the projects see the baseline report or visit <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/projects/secc-project/projects.asp> Accessed 22/7/10

<sup>40</sup> Conversely, a significant proportion of the project activities in Sussex are also within the relatively small geographical area of Brighton & Hove (although the city has a population of over 250,000, roughly double that of Swale).

- Young Carers (004): developed a programme to develop young carers personally and in terms of their care skills, delivering to 112 young people and produced toolkits for trainers and participants. Funding £93,445, of which £51,000 provided by SECC.
- Gypsy and Traveller Support Group (006): recruited and developed 9 health care trainers, who undertook and health needs assessment for the community and the promotion of better health. Two trainers went on to be employed by the NHS. Model now being considered for implementation elsewhere in England. Funding £148,100, of which £93,000 provided by SECC.
- Singing for mental Health (008): 11 mental health service users took part in an extension of a scheme started in another part of Kent to engage people in group singing sessions and public performances, forming part of an initial cohort showing a significant improvement in mental health, as measured by GPs. May be followed by larger scale randomised trials. Funding £42,822, of which £12,214 provided by SECC.
- Swale Seniors Transport Group (012): developed research skills of seniors group, enabling them to analyse transport issues faced by older people through a survey completed by 219 people, focus groups and a conference. Funding £86,658, of which £33,000 provided by SECC.
- Healthy Relationships Toolkit (014): worked with Swale Domestic Violence Forum to develop a toolkit for 16-24-year-olds focused on healthy relationships. Toolkit used by professionals in Swale and attracting interest from outside the area. Funding £34,588, of which £18,900 provided by SECC.
- Swale Ethnic Minorities Homestart (015): project to improve access to Homestart services by minority ethnic communities. Involved developing a database of families and funding of a project worker. Funding £26,216, of which £14,500 provided by SECC.

### 3.3.3 The University of Greenwich

The University of Greenwich led 4 projects, 3 focused on Sheppey and another on developing understanding of the health needs of minority ethnic communities:

- Young Fathers (002): the largest single Kent SECC funding commitment (over £100,000), which was ended prematurely after differences of opinion and concerns about performance. When SECC funding ended the University funded activities to meet the original aims of the project, focused on the health and wellbeing of young fathers and their children.
- Diversity House (005): established a BME Special Interest Group to strengthen the capacity of the BME voluntary sector and volunteers in community based research to develop knowledge and capacity to inform health and social care policy in Swale. Funding: £142,206, of which £50,050 provided by SECC.
- Cultivating Lives (010): supported the development of a “grow your own” club linked to improvements in the natural environment and a community café. Original project plans were amended due to difficulties recruiting volunteers and changes to the university’s level of committed support for the project. Funding: £45,609, of which £24,679 provided by SECC.
- Sheppey Matters (011): researched drug and alcohol abuse problems on Sheppey, and ran public health workshops. Findings may be taken forward by local health services, but funding may be an issue. Funding: £131,295, of which £53,735 provided by SECC.

### 3.3.4 The University of Kent

The University of Kent had three projects, focused on developing mediation services, building upon Ray Pahl's seminal Sheppey study, and increasing participation in sport:

- Swale Mediation (007): developed the knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers at Swale Mediation and other Third Sector organisations, improving people's performance and motivation by developing skills like empathy and mentalisation. Training materials produced will enable the learning to be shared further in future years.
- Living and Working on Sheppey, Bluetown (009): used community researchers to document the heritage and history of Bluetown, and engage young people in imagining the future of the area. Funding £145,337, of which £85,806 provided by SECC.
- Swale Community Leisure (013): involved a survey of sports club activities and capacity and the development of new clubs and services to address gaps and increase participation in sport.

## 3.4 The Sussex sub-region – A communities of interest approach

### 3.4.1 The Sussex Approach

The SECC business case outlines that the three universities in the sub-region (Brighton, Sussex and Chichester) set out to develop mechanisms to 'ensure effective entry for community groups into the universities', enabling a sustained flow of new community contacts and ideas, whilst simultaneously building on existing links and projects to demonstrate the value of demand-led knowledge exchange.<sup>41</sup> The Universities of Brighton and Sussex have also sought to demonstrate the potential of collaboration at a project activity level. Academics from both institutions were involved in all of their project streams.

In terms of 'effective entry' mechanisms the approach of the Universities of Brighton and Sussex was to develop a shared community helpdesk function for Hastings and Eastbourne, building on their collaborative work on an existing helpdesk in Brighton. The University of Chichester sought to develop a 'hub and spoke model' helping key figures and groups in the West Sussex coastal area to understand the structure of the university and support others in navigating it.

The community projects developed by the three HEIs were broadly focused on communities of interest, i.e. groups that might be expected to have a degree of shared perspective that is not simply a result of co-location. Whilst communities of interest can be based on almost any shared interest, the perspectives of most relevance to this programme are those most likely to be related to relative disadvantage in terms of health or wellbeing through some degree of social and/or economic exclusion (e.g. people with mental illness, lone parents, older people, black and minority ethnic residents etc).

The four project strands supported by the Universities of Brighton and Sussex focused more specifically on 'Communities of Practice':

*'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly'.<sup>42</sup>*

<sup>41</sup> South East Coastal Communities Business Case, August 2007 pp53-61

<sup>42</sup> Etienne Wenger, June 2006 'Communities of practice; a brief introduction.  
[www.ewenger.com/theory/communities\\_of\\_practice\\_intro.htm](http://www.ewenger.com/theory/communities_of_practice_intro.htm). Accessed 22/7/10

The term Community of Practice was first coined by anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. Wenger was invited at an early stage of the programme to meet the Sussex partners and outline his ideas in more detail. Whilst communities of interest and Communities of Practice (CoPs) are related concepts, there are two key distinctions:

1. CoP members are active members of a community; they know and interact directly with one another and aren't part of the CoP by default (i.e. simply as a result of a socio-demographic grouping).
2. CoP members are practitioners, people attempting to resolve the same issues and working together to share learning.

The projects specifically focused on building, facilitating and supporting Communities of Practice. In a sense the CoPs aimed to give wider communities of interest a voice in designing and developing services. SECC project activities therefore were as much about forming these groups, and facilitating meetings and opportunities for interaction (e.g. through web interactions), as the particular activities the CoPs then chose to undertake.

The two SECC projects led by Chichester did not explicitly seek to use the concept of Communities of Practice to *design* the projects but nevertheless involved working with and learning from specific groups of people within communities of interest over some time.

The Sussex HEIs also collaborated on a joint approach to project level evaluations, agreeing to pilot the use of REAP, a framework for UCKE project design and evaluation tool first developed by the University of Bradford. The REAP framework, whilst not without limitations, did embody a focus on reciprocity and equal partnerships. The collaboration also appeared to encourage the partners to consider outcomes in relation to the programme success criteria (see Section 4.4).

### 3.4.2 The Universities of Brighton and Sussex

The University of Brighton has a well-developed community interface known as CUPP (the Community University Partnership Programme) developed before SECC but enhanced through SECC programme funding. The CUPP helpdesk, whilst hosted by the University of Brighton, works closely with the University of Sussex and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS). It consists of a staffed telephone line, email address, website and marketing literature.<sup>43</sup> SECC funding has extended this helpdesk function to Hastings and Eastbourne.

The **helpdesk** was designed to help community partners navigate the universities. It would have been impractical for helpdesk staff to have a detailed understanding of what academics are doing throughout the University and which queries might be relevant to them. If the query was not a straightforward one, the helpdesk manager recorded details and submitted it to the CUPP Senior Researchers Group. The Group was a collection of senior academics from across both universities. They met regularly and discussed how to respond to queries and take opportunities forward.<sup>44</sup> If appropriate, senior researchers were assigned to work on the queries (between one and five researcher days), resolving them or at least taking them to the next stage (student or postgraduate projects, funding bids etc).

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/helpdesk/index.htm> accessed 22/7/10.

<sup>44</sup> Hart, Northmore, Gerhardt & Rodriguez (2009) 'Developing Access between Universities and Local Community Groups: A University Helpdesk in Action' Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement, Volume 13, Number 3, p. 45. <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/JHEOHelpdesk.pdf> accessed 22/7/10.

The Sussex sub-regional evaluation<sup>45</sup> highlights that the helpdesk has had some significant level of success in facilitating new contacts with the community leading to a number of follow-on projects (see also Section 4.5). The two partner universities have signalled that they intend to continue running the desk after the SECC programme funding ends.

The four Community of Practice project streams developed in Sussex were centred on practitioners interested in:

- Improving the health and wellbeing of older people. The CoP worked on a variety of projects (under the title **Activity Buddies**) to bring together older people and student health professionals through voluntary work on health promotion.
- Supporting families with children with special needs. The CoP worked on a range of activities (under the title **Bouncing Back**) to develop and use Resilience Therapy (RT) to improve the ability of families to cope under pressure.
- Improving services for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) community. The CoP designed, analysed and disseminated research on LGBT community needs and interactions with public services (through a project known as **Count Me In Too**).
- Promoting well-being amongst the deaf and hard of hearing community. The CoP worked on exploring shared histories and developing community identity as a means of improving wellbeing (through a project known as **Our Space**).

Each CoP was a group of 10-20 core members including academics, health professionals, third sector stakeholders and 'regular' members of the community of interest. Three of the CoPs were led by the University of Brighton and one (Our Space) by the University of Sussex. However, academics from both universities were recruited to each of the four CoPs. Key community partners in each of the University of Brighton's CoPs were already known to and/or working with the university on previous projects. The Our Space CoP, by contrast, was initiated through open public meetings and developed more or less from scratch.

There have, of course, been a number of challenges to overcome within each project stream. The project level evaluation for Bouncing Back, for example, highlighted that the CoP may have tried to do too many things (e.g. learning about Resilience Therapy whilst also trying to apply and critique it from a practitioner, parent and child's perspective and provide support to group members) and this learning has been carried into two further RT based Community of Practice projects. The Activity Buddies project stream included six projects that had varying levels of success in terms of student engagement, although one project noted its relative success by working with the University's careers service volunteering programme rather than through faculties and departments.

The issue of representation was also sometimes a challenging one. An interesting dimension of the work in Sussex has been that the academics (and for the most part the participating health professionals and community leaders) involved in each CoP were also members of the community of interest themselves (e.g. older people, hearing impaired or members of the LGBT community). The participating academics noted that whilst their 'membership' of the community of interest enabled them to engage with the wider community, to work with empathy and to better understand some of the issues, they could not 'speak for' the community. Similarly, the CoP as a whole was not a representative body in any democratic sense.

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<sup>45</sup> CUPP 2011, Sussex Region Coastal Communities Programme: Final Evaluation Report

The CoP approach does seem to have had some success in embodying a strong sense of reciprocity in the relationships between the universities and their community partners, however, and the sub-regional evaluation highlights quite impressive levels of community engagement (82 key partners and over 3,800 community/public participants, for example).<sup>46</sup>

The relative success of the projects is also highlighted by the fact that project activity is expected to continue beyond the end of the SECC programme in each of the four of the CoP project streams. Both the Bouncing Back and Our Space projects are exploring the development of a social enterprise to continue activities, where community partners are taking the lead and academics are providing more of a support role.

### 3.4.3 The University of Chichester

In Sussex, the University of Chichester trialled a **'hub and spoke' model** of engaging potential community project partners, with the SECC programme co-ordinator forming the central hub and a range of community contacts acting as spokes. The co-ordinator's role was to take queries but also to educate the community partners about the structure of the university and introduce them to key contacts within it. The co-ordinator's time and a number of community outreach activities were built into project funding. This appears to have worked well, particularly in terms of bringing new contacts for the two Chichester based SECC project streams but may have been challenged by the departure of the co-ordinator some 6-9 months before the programme ended. A strategic level staff member at Chichester was committed to continuing to build the links with spoke contacts in the co-ordinator's absence. The sustainability of the system without funding remains unclear, although, as the smallest of the partner HEIs, it could be argued that the university is easier to navigate than most.

The two SECC project streams led by Chichester were:

- The **Older People as Researchers** project – this trained two groups of older people (with an average age of around 75) to undertake social research. The aim of the project was to develop a cadre of older people who can undertake research with their peers and help to improve public and commercial health and wellbeing services for older people. The underlying assumption (strongly endorsed by both the participants and academics involved) is that the quality and practicality of research can be greatly improved by using practitioners who are also members of the wider community of interest and that this approach can help give older people a 'voice' in the design and delivery of services.
- The **Lifemusic** project - this looked to develop and disseminate a form of community music workshop (with perceived benefits in terms of well-being) to a variety of community groups, including; children with special needs, mental health patients, and refugees and asylum seekers. The project has effectively 'trained the trainers', focusing on people working in communities rather than professional musicians. The project has trained 56 people to be able to lead Lifemusic sessions (Lifemusic Practitioners) and helped a number of community partners to develop their own capacity to run Lifemusic sessions with different client groups.

The achievement of the two projects simply in terms of outputs noted in the Sussex sub-regional evaluation has been quite significant given that both projects started more or less from scratch.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> CUPP 2011, Sussex Region Coastal Communities Programme: Final Evaluation Report. P1

<sup>47</sup> CUPP 2011, Sussex Region Coastal Communities Programme: Final Evaluation Report. Appendix

The Older People as Researchers project suffered something of a setback when its lead academic became ill and had to leave the project in 2009. However, another academic involved in the project took over its management. This helped ensure the project was completed and indeed the older researchers group have undertaken a well-received piece of research for a patients representative group (LINK) in West Sussex (leading to a second phase project). Sustainability of the project remains a challenge, however. Whilst the group were able to deliver research for which there is a market and value, the nature of the community of interest is such that a constant flow of newly trained researchers would be needed for the group to continue in the medium term. This represents a cost that competitively won research contracts are unlikely to be able to cover.

The Lifemusic project, however, is in the process of setting up a social enterprise to continue to develop and deliver the project with support from the University of Chichester.

## 4.0 Performance against the SECC Success Criteria

This section considers the impact of the programme in relation to the indicators and success criteria outlined in the business case for the SECC programme. It draws on interviews that were undertaken with stakeholders and partners; published data and materials, including project evaluation reports, where these are available; and has been informed by the findings from the baseline and interim evaluation reports that have already been produced as part of the programme evaluation.

There were nine success criteria set out in the SECC Business Case and 27 performance indicators underpinned our original Performance Framework (see Annex I). In the event, there was not a consistent approach to collecting data (see Section 1). This does mean that there is a lack of aggregated quantitative data to inform the evaluation of the programme as a whole. However, there is substantial qualitative evidence of both programme successes and shortcomings.

### 4.1 Overview

Figure 4.1 provides an overview summary of our assessment of the evidence outlined in more detail throughout the rest of the section.

**Figure 4.1: Performance against Success Criteria – at a glance**

Success Criterion	Performance Summary.
<b>A.</b> Measurable improvement in third sector capacity.	There has been a clear improvement in the capacity of a number of community partners as a result of SECC. Some partners have been able to increase the scale of their activities, to access new funding and markets and/or use volunteers and students on work placements for the first time. Many more have made changes to the nature of what they do and how they do it. However, this improvement was not 'measurable' for the programme as a whole, given the diverse nature of project activities.
<b>B.</b> Increase in high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange.	There is good evidence that SECC projects have resulted in an increase in high quality transfer and exchange in each of the participating institutions. There is also some evidence that there has been an increase in wider knowledge transfer and exchange as a result of increasing levels of community engagement, although the extent of this varies from one institution to another. Similarly the sustainability of this exchange post-funding will be stronger in some institutions than others.
<b>C.</b> Strategic partnerships that leverage additional funding and other resource into the projects.	Given the economic environment and the widely reported effects of public sector funding cuts on third sector organisations, the leveraged funding and resource attracted by the programme has been significant. Leverage in the Sussex sub-region, in particular, met its original targets (perhaps reflecting the more advanced nature of many of their projects prior to the programme). However, the majority of match funding and resource has come from the HEIs themselves or other funders of HE.
<b>D.</b> Robust and well received evaluation.	Whilst it is not for us to assess the value of our own programme evaluation, there is evidence that project-level evaluation activities have led to learning about how to engage different communities on an equitable and productive basis which has been used to inform subsequent activities. However, project level evaluations have been inconsistent (and late) in some sub-regions. Some connections have been made with national and international audiences interested in knowledge transfer and exchange, although these could have been stronger.

**Figure 4.1: Performance against Success Criteria (continued)**

Success Criterion	Performance Summary.
<b>E.</b> Sustainable infrastructure for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region.	The primary infrastructure for governing the programme in each sub-region (sub-regional boards and co-ordinators) did provide a focus for wider community knowledge exchange during the programme. Without further funding, however, neither the boards nor the co-ordinators are likely to be retained. Nevertheless, one or two HEIs have used SECC funding to build and/or improve their infrastructure at an institutional level and these improvements are more likely to be sustained.
<b>F.</b> Effective exchange of good practice across the South East Region.	Despite the efforts of the programme co-ordinators (and the University of Brighton), the exchange of good practice at a regional level was limited. The website and NING social networking site were underutilised. Attendance at regional events was mixed and partners seemed to find it difficult to apply what they had learned. The diversity of projects may have contributed to this as did the timescales (which were especially short for HEIs developing partnerships and projects from scratch).
<b>G.</b> Enrichment of curricula, teaching, learning practice, and research opportunities and practice.	There is strong evidence to suggest that the programme has resulted in a variety of curriculum changes, improvements in the student learning experience, new research outputs and research opportunities in each of the three sub-regions. As might be expected, some projects contributed more than others. As of June 2011, the funded research flowing from the programme has not been extensive, although this may yet change.
<b>H.</b> Enhanced status of community knowledge exchange in HEI and Third Sector partner strategies.	Mission statements, strategies and plans are usually only updated every 3-5 years and in many cases it is too early to estimate the impact of SECC. In interviews, there was some evidence of an enhanced status for community knowledge exchange in some of the HEI and third sector partners. However, the change in HE policy and funding context has made some proceed with caution.
<b>I.</b> Governance and financial accountability model used as an exemplar	How SECC's example is used in subsequent programmes remains to be seen. Many participants felt that completing the programme more or less on time and to budget with the partnerships intact was a significant achievement. The democratic and light touch style of governance was felt to provide valuable flexibility. However, it also had drawbacks in terms of programme coherence and, potentially, strategic impact.

## 4.2 A measurable improvement in the capacity of the third sector (A)

Most stakeholders who were interviewed for the evaluation suggested that the SECC programme had had some success in improving the capacity of the third sector to meet the health and well-being needs of its user groups. The impacts have been both in the scale and nature of third sector partner capacity. There were some examples where the programme had involved student volunteering and others where community organisations were successful in securing additional funding, perhaps as a result of their involvement with SECC. However, few projects were able to *evidence attributable impact quantitatively* in terms of indicators like organisational turnover or number of beneficiaries. More significant impacts sometimes seem to have been in the development of intellectual, rather than physical capacity. In other words, SECC has resulted in community organisations changing the way that they do things and/or engaging in new partnerships and collaborations that will make them more sustainable and/or improve the services that they provide to their client groups.

#### 4.2.1 Impact on the scale of third sector activities

There is some evidence of improvements to third sector capacity in some projects through **student volunteering** and **work placements**. In Portsmouth, Architecture postgraduate students were central to the community assets project. In both 2009 and 2010, students undertook 10 week internships with community organisations to develop design ideas for community owned sites and buildings. In Sussex, the strands delivered under the Activity Buddies project included significant student involvement: Physiotherapy students; pharmacy students; occupational therapy students; social work students; podiatry students; and social science students were all involved in activities that aimed improve the quality of life of older people. Some of these student volunteers were recruited directly from their courses, others through the University's volunteering centre. Whilst there was certainly some additionality, as with other projects it was difficult to determine the extent to which the volume or depth of student volunteering increased across the University as a direct or indirect consequence of SECC.

In other projects direct student involvement seemed to be much more limited and in a number there was no student involvement at all. However, a consistent message from stakeholders is that a key legacy from the SECC programme is the development of much better relationships between HEIs and community organisations that may provide greater opportunities for student work placements in the future. There may be real potential benefits in providing students with opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge to 'real-life' situations, particularly in terms of future employability. Links that have been established between HEIs and community organisations may enable this to become more prevalent in the future.

There are also a few examples of where SECC has enabled community organisations to successfully **access resources and funds** to scale up activities that would not have happened without the support of the SECC programme. Research undertaken through the Count Me in Too project led the Terence Higgins Trust to receive funding from the Brighton & Hove Primary Care Trust to employ British Sign Language Interpreters; according to the Our Space evaluation report, the project has enabled "increased participation"; and the University of Southampton project resulted in one community organisation being supported to make a successful £30,000 funding application. It was reported that one project in Kent was able to secure £100,000 for capacity building activity through its involvement with SECC, whilst another was "transformed" because they were able to leverage additional funds to appoint a part-time worker who was able to build links with other organisations within the community.

#### 4.2.2 Impact on the nature of third sector activities

The SECC programme has delivered clear examples of where community organisations have adopted new approaches to how they run their organisations as a direct result of their involvement with SECC. These include developing new collaborative partnerships; reviewing their business models; developing a better understanding of impact measurement; developing new approaches and ideas; and making better use of the expertise that the university can offer.

The Diocese of Portsmouth is a good example of this. SECC has resulted in a greater understanding within the Diocese of how to manage assets more efficiently and effectively. The establishment of a Joint Venture between the Diocese and South Coast Money Line (a link that was created as a direct result of SECC) to take forward projects initiated through SECC, provides a further example of organisations taking a fresh approach to business development.

'Developing Capacity' does not just refer to physical or tangible assets: it also refers to the development of intellectual capacity and SECC is seen by many partners to have been largely successful in achieving this. Again, the University of Portsmouth's involvement with the KAOS Pilot in

Denmark enabled participants to spend an intense three days both in reflective learning about how they run their organisations and in developing new partnerships, such as those that led to investment in the Joint Venture.

The value that universities could bring to community groups was often acknowledged in interviews. One community representative who was interviewed for the evaluation suggested that they had greatly benefited from its input both in terms of understanding approaches to evaluation and in how to use research and wider contextual understanding to inform approaches to organisational development and service delivery. Another partner suggested that if they wanted their members to address an issue in depth, they would host events on university premises or involve the university in such events in some way, because this encouraged greater questioning and a more robust analysis of situations.

The Life Music project in Chichester is a good example of how the SECC programme has resulted in changes in how community services are delivered. As a result of the project, Community Music has been incorporated into community support programmes for a wide variety of different groups. It is being used by Age Concern in West Sussex to develop music making activity in residential homes; by Chichester Festival Theatre with the migrant community; by Littlehampton Academy with young people and by Wenford Day Centre with people with learning disabilities, for example.

The Singing for Mental Health project in Kent is also perceived to have had significant impacts on participants. The community partner is committed to keeping the project going after SECC in order to bridge the gap between Primary Care Trust support and potential funding from new GP consortia. They are also seeking to develop randomised trials to demonstrate its impact quantitatively.

The Gypsy and Traveller project in Kent resulted in a new sustainable community group being established that meets every three months and can work on behalf of the community and engage with public sector organisations, such as the local authorities, Primary Care Trust and national Government departments. The Swale community project led to the creation of a new company to organise and deliver triathlon activities and a number of new sports clubs and activities that are being taken forward by the community.

The Swale Mediation project reported significant changes in both the scale and nature of their activities following work with their academic lead:

*The training on working with young people and families really helped build the capacity of the organisation. It helped to motivate and retain volunteers, attract new volunteers, and made them all more skilled and knowledgeable. Volunteers and staff now have new ideas and approaches based on child and brain development, and the development of empathy, which not only makes mediation more effective, but can also help the person being counselled to overcome issues that they may have had since childhood.*

Kent project stakeholder

In highlighting an impact on the number of non-student volunteers this project also illustrates that the boundaries in capacity building between scale and nature can be blurred.

### 4.3 An increase in high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange (B)

There is good evidence that SECC has resulted in an increase in high quality university-community knowledge transfer and exchange. In nearly all the projects across all three sub-regions there were significant knowledge exchange and transfer activities that would not have occurred without SECC funding. The exact nature of the activity was not always the same as had been anticipated, possibly because the level of community engagement at the project design stage had not been sufficiently deep.

Whilst we collected examples of knowledge exchange and transfer occurring at a project level, our original evaluation framework indicators were focused, perhaps a little unfairly, more on evidencing an increase in activity over and above that directly funded by the programme. Our recommended indicators included the number of approaches made to HEIs by community groups, the resources dedicated to knowledge transfer and exchange and the importance placed on it in strategic plans. We took the view that the programme could and should act as a catalyst for wider university-community knowledge exchange in the participating institutions. There is some evidence that it did, although the sustainability of this without continued funding for the sub-regional boards and co-ordinators is less clear.

#### 4.3.1 SECC based knowledge transfer and exchange

An interesting dimension is the extent to which knowledge was transferred or exchanged between the university and the community. To some the focus on exchange and mutuality was perceived to be central to the 'quality' aspect of this success criterion. There was a perception amongst some partners that poor quality work in the past had focused too much on the academic as 'expert' and one way transactions, either using the community as research guinea pigs or giving the benefit of their expertise whether the community asked for it or not.

At a glance, some of the projects in Hampshire appear to have been more focused on a traditional notion of knowledge transfer. Indeed, there were some issues with community engagement within the sub-region, suggesting that the value of mutuality and equal partnerships were not fully grasped at least at the start of the programme. As we noted in Section 3.2.4, Southampton Solent identified that there had not been sufficient community (or statutory sector) buy-in to their projects in the first year, which led to an alternative strategy of developing a jointly funded social enterprise incubation unit which could provide space for social enterprises developed by students and staff (amongst others).

However, it would be wrong to characterise knowledge transfer as necessarily in opposition to the concept of mutuality or as being inevitably poor quality. The University of Portsmouth's work with the Diocese of Portsmouth led to a transactional style of knowledge transfer (where students work with churches and congregations as architectural clients) but the project was designed with the Diocese to ensure that it met their actual needs.

It would also be wrong to characterise all the Hampshire projects simply as knowledge transfer activities. In providing students with experience and academics with case study knowledge the University of Portsmouth architecture project also provides an example of knowledge *exchange*. This may not be of the depth that makes a fundamental contribution to the academic body of knowledge but it was nevertheless high quality and valuable to both sides.

Somewhat ironically, the delay to the introduction of individualised care budgets in the University of Southampton's project also led to the academics and community partners spending more time on

developing a conceptual model of the relationship between individual needs, the market and social enterprise. This both informed academic outputs and led to a diagnostic tool for potential social entrepreneurs.

Many of the Sussex projects focused more explicitly on knowledge exchange and the concept of mutuality and equality in partnerships. The Communities of Practice (CoP) model adopted by the Universities of Brighton and Sussex formalised this in bringing together groups of community members and academics who identified the needs, designed the projects and undertook the activities on a collaborative basis. As we noted in Section 3.4.2, academic leads in the Sussex Communities of Practice were also members of the community. The approach was felt to be very successful, although not without its challenges.

In the Bouncing Back project, for example, a key aim was to critique and refine Resilience Therapy in a way that would also take forward academic understanding of the concepts behind it. Initially, parent community members found it difficult to be openly critical, given the differing levels of experience of the people in the room (which included academics, social workers and health managers). In subsequent projects (not directly funded by SECC), new CoPs have been formed which spend much more time learning about the RT concepts at the start to get people up to a level where they feel they understand it enough to trial it and critique it. The original CoP is also continuing to meet, beyond the timeframe of the project, and positive critique is reported to be more forthcoming as their familiarity with materials has increased.

In the Activity Buddies CoP project stream on foot care (podiatry) in East Sussex, the academic and students involved initially sought to respond to the health issues of older people in the CoP by designing a training course and materials on the physiology of feet and why treatments and foot care were necessary and/or worked. Following a workshop with members of the community, they realised that the main issue from the community members' perspective was around understanding the directions on the medicines and treatments available. This prompted the academic and students not only to radically change their educational materials but also to embark on research into older peoples' understanding of product labelling, which they then presented to several pharmaceutical companies.

Other projects sought to build a more equitable knowledge exchange through the use of community intermediaries. In the Kent gypsy and traveller project, for example, the gypsy and traveller community (the largest ethnic minority group on the Island of Sheppey) had resisted previous approaches by statutory bodies relating to health and remained suspicious of their motives. This had resulted in a number of health problems going unchecked and some potentially harmful misconceptions within the community about how to deal with some conditions. The project consciously took a different track and asked for volunteers to learn about health improvement and become advocates for health and well-being within the community. This is perceived to have been very successful and has attracted national attention within the gypsy community, the health profession and academia as a successful model of delivering public health initiatives in relatively closed communities.

#### **4.3.2 Approaches to HEIs from Community Groups**

In Sussex, as we saw in Section 3.4.1, SECC funding was specifically used to develop infrastructure to support a stream of activity in addition to the directly funded projects. The Hastings Helpdesk, based on the model that already existed in Brighton, took 198 new enquiries from May 2008, leading to researcher involvement in 64 of these, and 25 directly funded or supported (mostly small) projects. The Chichester Hub and Spoke model also led to a number of approaches to the university, including

new groups wanting to work with the Life music project but also enquiries leading to new activities, such as working with a community football group to bring a former playing field back into use.

The model that was established in Kent was quite different from those in Hampshire and Sussex. The spatial focus was in an area (Swale) where there had previously been little HEI presence. The lack of pre-determined projects meant that Kent's approach involved project proposals being developed during the first 1-2 years of the programme. These were appraised by the Kent Sub-Regional Programme Board and almost certainly resulted in an increase in the number of approaches to HEIs from community groups in Swale. The extent to which this will be maintained when the SECC programme ends, is less clear.

In Hampshire, too, awareness of the universities' role in knowledge exchange activity was reported by stakeholders to have spread within communities – there are examples of community groups becoming involved in SECC-funded activities after learning of other organisations' involvement. At the University of Portsmouth, the Project Office in the School of Architecture now has a pipeline of community projects that its architectural students can work on; there are more community groups wanting to sign up for the second round of visits to the KAOS Pilot; and towards the end of the programme, South Coast Money Line organised a Portsmouth SECC conference, which brought together a range of statutory, private and voluntary sector partners to explore new ideas for developing social entrepreneurship within the city.

The relationship building that has taken place at Southampton Solent University has “set the groundwork” to enable a more collaborative approach to university-community knowledge exchange to develop; and the co-financing of a social enterprise hub between the university and local community organisations represents an opportunity to further embed knowledge exchange activity between the university and the community.

The devolved model that was used to deliver the project at the University of Southampton resulted in closer links between the university and networks of community groups and the community partners have become advocates of the role that the university can have in improving the capacity of community groups within Southampton.

#### **4.3.3 Increase in HEI resourcing for University-Community Activity?**

We also sought to identify whether there was evidence of an increase in the resources for UCKE in the participating HEIs (again above and beyond that invested in SECC projects) and/or evidence of an increase in the strategic importance of this activity (for the latter see Section 4.9). SECC certainly involved a significant commitment of staff time to UCKE, although academics could not always provide this and sometimes consultants were used, and committing staff time as matched funding proved to be difficult in some cases. No baseline was available to establish the level of resources that were dedicated to university-community knowledge exchange activities within HEIs at the start of the programme. Therefore, even if involvement in SECC had resulted in a significant investment in university-community knowledge exchange activity, it would not have been possible to determine the extent of this increase quantitatively.

The significance that is attached to university-community knowledge exchange activities is not uniform across the participating HEIs. The University of Brighton had a well-established infrastructure (the Community University Partnership Project) well before the SECC programme started and it enabled the university to further embed its approach. In many other participating universities the infrastructure is not so developed and university-community knowledge exchange may have less significance than some competing university priorities.

The prevailing Higher Education funding environment and the introduction of a new student fee framework in 2012 changes the context for university-community knowledge exchange activity again. Discussions with stakeholders suggest that whilst there is broad support for this type of activity within the partner universities, it is more difficult to see that this will convert into greater financial investment unless, or until, it is seen to provide sufficient market differentiation in terms of the student experience. Where the infrastructure is well established and is central to the identity of the university, this is likely to continue. However, where it is a more marginal activity, it seems unlikely that SECC will have changed this and growth in university-community exchange activity may continue to be done on an ad hoc, or at best school by school basis, rather than being core to activities across the university.

#### 4.4 Strategic partnerships that leverage additional funding and other resources into the HEI-Community projects (C)

##### 4.4.1 Levered Funding

There is a widespread view that the changed economic and public spending environment impacted significantly on the ability of the programme to achieve this. The programme was designed in a period when there were higher levels of public spending but was delivered in one of significant restraint.

There are clear examples of where SECC has been successful at leveraging additional resources. The table below sets out the match and in-kind funding that was levered in each sub-region:

**Figure 4.2: Levered and In-Kind Funding**

	HEFCE funded expenditure (£)	Levered and In-Kind Funding (£)	Variance to original match budget (£)	Variance %
<b>Kent</b>	910,000	936,000	+194,000	+26%
<b>Hampshire</b>	912,000	593,000	-435,000	-42%
<b>Sussex</b>	977,000	1,252,000	-28,000	-2%
<b>Central programme management</b> (including sub-regional dissemination projects)	292,000	31,000	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	3,091,000	2,812,000	-269,000	-9%

Notes: Taken from the SECC Year 3 monitoring report for HEFCE (draft as at 6 July 2011). Figures have been rounded to the nearest £1,000.

Attribution of leverage specifically to an individual factor like the SECC programme can, of course, be problematic: if matched funding would have been available anyway, for example, considering it to be “levered” (as opposed to “matched”) by SECC may not be appropriate. It has not been possible to unpack this issue of attribution on a project by project basis, so our analysis should be considered with some caution.

In Hampshire, there was a strong emphasis on sustainability at the outset and the focus on social enterprise may have meant that identifying different sources of income at the end of the SECC programme, was an important feature of many of the projects. The asset transfer project has resulted in the development of an infrastructure that is expected to generate income in the future. South Coast Money Line, the Diocese of Portsmouth and the University of Portsmouth have all invested resources to establish the Joint Venture, which aims to become commercially profitable over a 2-3 year period, directly building on projects that have been funded through SECC. Furthermore the KAOS Pilot programme that was funded through SECC in 2010 will be funded through a combination of community and university investment in 2011 and may become self-

sustaining over a longer period. However, the University of Portsmouth Mid-Term Review notes that “when it came to implementation the level of resources that were actually available were more limited than those originally envisaged”<sup>48</sup>

The change of focus of the Southampton Solent University project has also resulted in tangible evidence of leveraged funding, which seemed less likely to happen through the original approach. The James Street social enterprise incubation centre is a joint investment between the university and a local social enterprise, the West Itchen Trust. The University of Southampton project was successful in securing a small amount of additional funds (£10,000) through Business Link to hold two training events on personalisation to local community groups and social enterprises; whilst one social enterprise was supported to develop a successful funding application of £26,000.

In Kent, the original business case for SECC suggested a lower level of levered and in-kind funding than in the other sub-regions, reflecting the relative early stage in development of the partnerships with community organisations and representatives. In the event, some projects in the sub-region were able to lever significant contributions from partners and the sub-region as a whole exceeded its target by 26% (around £194,000).

The Sussex sub-regional evaluation report identifies £1,252,000 of match and in-kind funding levered against a target of £1.28m, but the breakdown of this and the activities that it supported are not clear. The same evaluation summary provides examples of where funds have been levered to support Sussex projects, but these are not all quantified. The University of Brighton provided additional funding for a new Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) project through CUPP and a number of Sussex projects received additional funding support from the Brighton & Sussex Community University Knowledge Exchange (BSKE) initiative. Some projects managed to secure unspecified additional funds from organisations, including local authorities, whilst research funding awards were also used to support projects.

In Sussex, some projects sought to become sustainable through developing tradable services. The Training Older People as Researchers (TOPAR) project managed to secure two small projects, but not at a value that would make the project sustainable; Bouncing Back is currently in the process of developing a Community Interest Company (CIC), although it is not yet clear whether this will enable it to become sustainable. The Life Music project may be able to develop into a sustainable social enterprise, able to sell its product to a range of community and commercial organisations.

#### **4.4.2 Strategic partnerships and leverage**

It should be noted that across the programme as a whole the majority of the resources leveraged were apparently from the universities themselves, or from ‘traditional’ sources of Higher Education funding such as the Research Councils. Notwithstanding the more restricted economic climate, some stakeholders were unclear as to whether the type of activities SECC focused on would lead to significant future investment. A couple suggested that they may have contributed more resources to SECC projects had they been better aligned with agreed local health and well-being priorities and had they been more involved from the outset.

However, there are legitimate risks associated with aligning too closely with priorities that have primarily been set by the statutory sector. The SECC programme was intended to be about working with local communities to help them to identify and develop innovative responses to opportunities and challenges that they face. The potential to lever additional resources needs to be balanced against the risk of substituting activities that are already or should be funded through existing resources. Nonetheless, as a primarily publicly funded sector, it is not HE that has a ‘Duty of Well-

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<sup>48</sup> Source: Rampton L: Portsmouth SECC Project: Mid Point Review (2009)

Being' or which is responsible for the health of residents in local communities. Leveraged funds may be a reasonable indicator of the extent to which partners see universities as having a valuable role in contributing to local strategic priorities.

Strategic partnerships that act as a conduit for identifying, communicating and influencing responses to local community priorities exist, to a greater or lesser extent, in all local areas. The success in universities' ability to align their expertise with local priorities may depend on the extent to which they are linked into these partnerships.

As a demonstrator programme, SECC provided examples of where universities can make a unique contribution. However, it may continue to be a challenge to attract external resources for these kinds of projects without robust evidence of social value that is widely recognised by service commissioners and contractors. Evidence that, for the most part, the programme has been unable to provide.

#### **4.5 A robust and well received evaluation that both informs wider practice in community knowledge exchange and HEFCE policy in this area (D)**

Evaluation was central to the SECC programme. It was a pilot programme that aimed to test different approaches to community-knowledge exchange, so learning was central to its success. A formative and summative programme evaluation was commissioned to focus on the regional programme as a whole, particularly in relation to the success criteria set out in the business case. The sub-regions were also expected to evaluate their activities at a project and sub-regional level.

It is not really our place to assess how well received or informative the programme level evaluation has been and it would in any case be too early to say in terms of the final summative phase (we do note, however, that the regional briefing papers produced for programme level dissemination drew heavily on our interim report). We therefore focused our assessment of this criterion on the sub-regions and project level evaluations; how they have captured learning and how this has been used to inform wider practice.

The Sussex sub-region took an active approach to evaluation at the outset. A common approach to evaluation was seen as a way of binding the diverse range of projects in the SECC programme together. An event on evaluation was held at an early stage of the programme to share ideas on approaches to evaluation and to generate awareness of the REAP framework<sup>49</sup>. The Sussex sub-region also established an evaluation working group so that approaches to evaluation could be shared across the projects in the Sussex sub-region.

The Sussex sub-regional final report to HEFCE identifies a range of quantitative output indicators, including a few basic measures that are consistent across projects. The summary of performance against the programme success criteria also lists a wide range of outcomes for each project although it does not attempt consistent quantitative measures.<sup>50</sup>

The approach that was taken to evaluation in the other sub-regions was less consistent, however, and left to the individual projects and/or HEIs leading projects. This does not mean that reflective, formative learning did not take place – far from it, but approaches were not always aligned to success criteria set out in the SECC Business Case. At the University of Portsmouth, there were

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<sup>49</sup> The REAP acronym stands for Reciprocity, Externalities, Access and Partnerships

<sup>50</sup> Source: Step Ahead Research: South East Coastal Communities Programme Evaluation: Interim Report (2010)

monthly project meetings, and an interim review; and a social enterprise impact report was produced as part of the University of Portsmouth's project. In both the University of Southampton and Southampton Solent University projects both circumstance and reflective practice led to significant changes in approaches. In Kent, too, there are examples of reflective practice that led to a re-focusing of projects. Nevertheless, a lack of early thinking on approaches to evaluation has resulted in some concerns about how the effectiveness and impact of the programme will be captured robustly. No individual project evaluation reports or the overall sub-region evaluation reports were available to inform the writing of this report.

The Kent sub-regional final report identifies eight 'outcomes' from the SECC process. These include the number of meetings with community groups and their representatives; the number of meetings of the SECC Kent & Medway Board and Management team; details of a project public presentation; media coverage of and additional resources secured by one project; SECC website presence; and the enrolment of a community researcher on a PhD programme at the University of Greenwich. However, there is no reference to the success criteria set out in the SECC Business Case.

At the time of writing, the Hampshire sub-regional report has not been produced.

#### **4.5.1 'Robustness' and social impact measures**

It is worth noting once again that the circumstances within which projects were delivered were vastly different to those within which they were conceived. When it became clear that there would not be a dedicated income stream for such activity, this may have reduced the perceived pressure to collate quantitative metrics and evidence. It certainly may have contributed to a lack of response for data to support the agreed programme level metrics.

However, it is arguably now more important to be able to demonstrate value at an individual project or institutional level, either to convince university senior staff of the value of university-community knowledge exchange or to convince other external potential funders of the value of their health and well-being activities. In respect of the former, the Sussex sub-regional evaluation report represents an example of good practice, with clear reference to the programme success criteria and the development of some metrics around them. With reference to the latter, it is quite a lot to expect the sub-regional or project evaluations to produce the kind of social impact measures that would be required by potential funders and by statutory authorities in particular.

If statutory bodies were expected to make significant investments in projects they may well expect to see either randomised trials or some level of monetised cost benefit impact analysis (such as Social Return on Investment (SROI)). Such evaluations are often costly to undertake and would have taken a disproportionate amount of the project funding. If it had been clear such evidence was needed at the start of the programme, fewer, larger projects would have been advisable and/or if a programme level assessment were necessary, they would have needed to be less diverse in nature. Nevertheless, some progress has been made in learning how to evaluate both university-community knowledge exchange and social impact (and this is an issue we shall return to in Section 5.3).

#### **4.5.2 Understanding How to Engage with Different Groups**

Leaving social impact measures aside for the moment, there is some evidence at the sub-regional and project level that the evaluations and/or project leads have captured learning about how to engage different communities and that this learning has been used to inform subsequent UCKE activities.

The main themes that seem to have emerged include:

### **1. Mutual, equal and reciprocal partnerships**

As we saw in Section 4.2, projects that were truly developed in close partnership with community members or organisations had significant success in delivering activities that were of benefit to both HEIs and the third sector, regardless of whether they were focused on knowledge exchange or transfer, and were more likely to be sustainable as a result. Many of the relationships that have been established through SECC are expected to continue beyond the programme and there are a number of examples of SECC funded projects that are expected to be sustained.

### **2. Clarity and Added Value**

Projects need to be clear about what they are trying to achieve and to communicate their aims in a way that is understandable to both an academic and non-academic constituency. The role of intermediaries and brokers may be important in developing communication channels between universities and community groups. Successful SECC projects often seem to have been driven by committed individuals who are able to operate comfortably within both a university and community setting. Furthermore, universities need to be able to offer added value that cannot or is not being provided by other organisations, so that the distinctiveness of what the university provides is clear. In most cases, but not in all, this seems to have been apparent.

### **3. Time**

Several stakeholders observed that it took a significant investment of time to develop relationships to a level at which it was possible to take forward projects productively and that a three-year programme may have been insufficient to embed real change. Projects that were starting from scratch, without pre-existing relationships, may have had particular challenges in getting established and delivering within the timeframe of the programme.

#### **4.5.3 Lessons incorporated into new activities**

Some SECC projects will continue following the end of the SECC programme, whilst others will cease, either because they had a natural end or because they have no means of becoming sustainable without additional investment.

The University of Brighton is leading on the dissemination strand of the SECC programme that aims to influence approaches to university-community knowledge exchange both within universities and at national and sub-national levels. Tangible learning has been captured in academic research papers; presentations and speeches at conferences; booklets, guides and toolkits; and films.

It is too early to know precisely how the learning from SECC will be taken forward at different levels. However, the University of Portsmouth has engaged the Minister of State for Higher Education with the aims of SECC, and consultations with stakeholders have identified a number of ways in which both HEIs and community organisations may approach knowledge exchange differently as a result of their learning from SECC.

The Project Office model in the School of Architecture at University of Portsmouth may be replicated in other schools within the university; and the Diocese of Portsmouth and its partners have identified similar projects to work on in the Church of England outside the city through the Joint Venture, for example. The credibility of the universities in providing expertise is better recognised and understood by many community groups that have engaged in projects and, in some universities, SECC has led to the adoption new approaches to engagement that are based on a greater respect of the value of non-academic knowledge and expertise.

## 4.6 A sustainable infrastructure for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region (E)

If the sub-regional boards and co-ordinators were intended to be a model for establishing a sustainable infrastructure for university-community knowledge exchange, then it is unlikely that this will be achieved. None of the SECC Boards is expected to continue beyond the end of the SECC programme in their current form. Indeed, towards the end of the programme, particularly after it became apparent that continuation funding would not be forthcoming, attendance at some sub-regional board meetings seems to have become inconsistent. Had SECC been able to attract additional funding, continuation in some form may have been more likely.

However, the question of whether there is now a sustainable infrastructure within each sub-region is, perhaps, more complex than this. There were already examples of good collaborations between universities within each sub-region prior to SECC and this is likely to continue. SECC seems to have enhanced these links, particularly between the individuals who were involved in the programme. Furthermore, there are some examples of sustainable infrastructure at an institutional level that was created or improved by the SECC programme.

### 4.6.1 Sub-regional infrastructure

In Sussex, there is a history of good collaboration between the universities of Sussex and Brighton on community engagement and this is manifest through their joint approach to the Hastings helpdesk and other UCKE projects outside SECC, including working with Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club. This provides some evidence that a collaborative approach to university-community engagement that may be sustainable. Bouncing Back, Count Me In Too, Our Space and Life Music are all examples of SECC funded collaborative projects where activities are expected to continue, driven by the Communities of Practice as a whole rather than the universities or their academic leads. However, relationships with Chichester, whilst good, have not been formalised to the same extent or resulted in shared infrastructure.<sup>51</sup>

In Hampshire, SECC has helped to establish good personal relationships between partners involved in the projects. Whilst the sub-regional board was seen as a useful information exchange forum and has been effective at developing relationships between individuals across the universities, it has not led to discussions about establishing a formalised joint sub-regional infrastructure. Relationships between the universities appear to be largely good, but they were before SECC and projects in Hampshire seemed to operate largely at institutional, rather than at sub-regional level.

Kent had a dedicated SECC office, employing two staff that, theoretically, could have acted as a prototype for developing a joint approach to community engagement between the universities in Kent. However, this has not happened and the SECC office appears unlikely to be replaced by anything equivalent, even on a small scale.

The approach that Kent took meant that there was on-going engagement between the partners on a regular basis through the Sub-Regional Programme board, which, unlike the other areas, met to approve projects on an on-going basis. Again, theoretically, this Board could have formed the basis of a steering group to establish an on-going joint approach to university-community engagement activity, but it does not appear that this will happen.

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<sup>51</sup> In a paper we co-wrote for a special issue of Gateways, the International Journal of Community Engagement, we suggest that the overlap in potential community partners might make city-regions a more effective scale for future attempts at collaborative working on university-community knowledge exchange.

In Hampshire and Kent, in particular, there may have been missed opportunities. The Boards focused on financial and operational issues, but perhaps could have had a more strategic role, focusing more on establishing how a sustainable infrastructure for university-community knowledge exchange activity could be developed between the participating universities. This does not mean that they won't work together in the future (indeed, the universities already collaborate across a range of areas outside the SECC programme). The personal relationships between people who were involved in the programme are now such that, in many cases dialogue is better than it had been. However, of itself, this probably does not constitute a sustainable infrastructure in the way envisaged by the Business Case success criteria.

#### **4.6.2 HEI level infrastructure**

At Southampton Solent University, the approach of the SECC projects changed mid-way through the programme. This led to a joint investment in a social enterprise incubation space between the university, West Itchen Trust and the Social Enterprise Foundation (SEF). Its aim is to develop social enterprises from within the university that are supported by the SEF and existing social enterprises, who will provide input into curricula across the university. SECC has resulted in internal changes within the university which aim to make engagement and social enterprise a feature across schools and departments.

At Portsmouth the Architecture Project Office was already established as an external facing consultancy, but this model now has a higher profile within the university and could be applied to other schools and departments. The Joint Venture that has been established between South Coast Money Line and the Diocese of Portsmouth, supported by the university is an example of how an infrastructure for a particular type of project has been established. This may provide the vehicle for a continuation of university involvement in asset transfer and development projects. The University of Portsmouth also appears to have been successful in creating a critical mass of interested partners to develop and promote social entrepreneurship within the city, with the university being a partner in this. However, it is questionable as to whether this is a sustainable infrastructure for knowledge exchange per se rather than an emerging model for developing social enterprise.

The institutional infrastructure within the University of Brighton was already strong and SECC has probably enhanced this over the past three years. The University of Sussex too, has an established Centre for Community Engagement (CCE). In Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University has established community engagement champions in its faculties that may form the basis of a nascent infrastructure at the university in the future.

### **4.7 The effective exchange of good practice on HEI community engagement across the South East coastal region (F)**

If the aim here was to develop an exchange of good practice across the South East coastal region as a whole, then it is difficult to conclude that SECC was successful in achieving this. There were a number of 'conferences' and 'events' and the University of Brighton led on the development of the SECC website, programme dissemination and the social networking site (NING).

Despite this, regional level engagement was limited. Attendance at events was mixed and partners often seemed to find it difficult to apply what they had learned into what they were doing in their own projects. There was only partial engagement in the NING and the SECC website was not always kept up to date with new materials.

There were a number of issues that made the effective change of good practice at a regional level difficult. Firstly, the programme was set up to be highly devolved, so approaches that were taken in Kent, Sussex and Hampshire were vastly different. The theme of 'Health and Well-Being' was interpreted very broadly and whilst Coastal Communities were identified as having common issues in developing the Business Case, it was not clear what these were and how they were used to inform common approaches to project design.

There is a tension between devolution and coherence, and SECC seemed to lean more towards the former. This had many benefits, but it made it difficult to identify common programme themes. Much was achieved at project level, but it is not clear that this added up to a coherent programme. There was limited strategic guidance and little consistency in the collection of monitoring and performance data relating to the success criteria in the Business Case. The lack of programme coherence meant that regional events were often seen as opportunities to showcase and disseminate rather than to learn.

Many consultees cited the short timescale – to go from conception to set up, delivery, close down and reporting in a three year period in a programme that was intended to result in a strategic impact was ambitious. It may have been difficult to identify the common themes that would bind the programme together early enough for best practice to be shared during this timescale. Indeed, it may only be now where the common themes can more easily be shared.

The University of Brighton identified this as a risk to the programme at an early stage and sought to promote a common approach to evaluation at the outset. However, this did not successfully transfer across to the other sub-regions. At that stage, Kent did not have any projects established, so it may have been difficult to think in these terms and REAP was not seen by all partners to be appropriate for their projects.

Much of SECC may have become more focused on the content of projects, rather than the overall aim of the programme. This meant that events focused on *what* was being done with whom, rather than a reflection on *how* things were being done. Projects were often referred to in terms of their theme: The Asset Transfer project; the Young Fathers' Project; Bouncing Back; Health Kicks, rather than through approaches to engagement. This may have taken the programme away from the central purpose identified in the Business Case. With hindsight, perhaps sharing best practice could have focused more strongly on approaches to university-community knowledge exchange, delivered through a series of masterclasses on issues such as:

- Communities of Practice as a method of engagement;
- Designing an effective internship programme;
- Securing sustainability, including through social enterprise;
- Establishing partner readiness; and
- Working with statutory sector partners.

An alternative may have been to have looked at approaches that universities were taking to work with different groups: young men; older people; families; social enterprises, for example. Such an approach may have helped to bind some of the projects more closely together and to have given the exchange of best practice greater focus.

Several people suggested that there was little regional coherence – the South East Coast was not really seen as a region. At operational level, communities operate at quite local levels and, therefore, opportunities for regional collaboration at the project level were limited. However, there are examples of where best practice was shared and of collaboration between projects within the

SECC programme. The Mediation Project in Kent is collaborating with the Bouncing Back resilience project in Sussex; the Universities of Kent and Southampton are partners in the Blue Town Heritage project in Kent; and the social enterprise business model is being taken forward by the Life Music project following learning exchange with projects in Hampshire. However, examples of regional collaboration appear limited, given the scale of the programme.

Academic papers and conference presentations were produced and delivered as a result of SECC, but these were often disseminated through existing academic networks outside the SECC infrastructure. In addition, best practice was shared through partner organisations' own networks both locally and nationally. The Gypsy and Traveller project in Kent is a good example of this, whilst the Architecture project in Portsmouth has been communicated nationally through the networks of the Diocese of Portsmouth.

#### **4.8 The enrichment of the curricula and teaching and learning practice and the facilitation of new research opportunities and practice (G)**

There are significant tangible examples of where SECC activities have resulted in curriculum changes, and improvements in the learning experience, whilst it also led to a significant range of research outputs. Changes included:

- Students working on real-life projects and learning to work and communicate with people that they would not have otherwise come into contact with;
- The development of social enterprise modules within the business school at Southampton Solent
- The involvement of the social entrepreneurs in designing and delivering social enterprise modules at both Southampton and Southampton Solent
- Production of research reports based on SECC funded activities;
- Production of tool-kits, guides and resource packs to inform future practice (in the case of asset development and social enterprise development, for example)
- Significant curriculum changes, such as incorporating resilience training into nursing courses and a proposal develop Life Music Training into an accredited Post graduate diploma; deaf awareness has become part of the BSc/MSc Occupational Therapy course

Where community work placements were supported through SECC (for example in the Activity Buddies and Architecture projects), these have become a sustained part of the curriculum. In these projects, students were able to apply their academic knowledge to real-life situations.

In other areas, learning was incorporated into existing programmes. For example, Bouncing Back led to 'resilience therapy' being incorporated into undergraduate nursing and social work programmes at the University of Brighton and into the postgraduate (MSc) Occupational Therapy programme. Through the Our Space project, Deaf Awareness has also been incorporated into the BSc and MSc Occupational Therapy courses. The Life Music project at the University of Chichester has led to a new community music route in the university's BA Music programme and there are proposals to develop Life Music into an accredited Postgraduate Diploma. The development of the Hastings Research Helpdesk and Coastal Regeneration Research Centre has provided volunteering opportunities for students from a range of undergraduate programmes. In Kent, the Gypsy and Traveller project has resulted in new diversity training modules being delivered as part of teacher training and social science courses at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Social enterprise has become much more integrated into Business School curricula in the Hampshire universities, with new social enterprise start up models developed. Stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation reported that there was now a greater understanding of the business model amongst academics.

Discussions with stakeholders also suggest that SECC has contributed indirect impacts on the student learning experience, with external partners contributing to the design and delivery of social enterprise units in university business schools; research outputs being used to inform student projects; and the experiences gained from SECC enhancing knowledge and understanding of academics, particularly in relation to the practical application of academic learning.

It may be too early to assess the full extent to which the programme has resulted in sustainable curriculum changes. Several projects do not yet appear to have had such an impact, particularly those where there was no direct student involvement in SECC activities.

There are examples of where SECC projects have led to additional research funding, but these seem limited: The Bouncing Back project at the University of Brighton received additional funding from the Research Innovation Award and the ESRC Follow on Fund; and Count Me In Too won the first prize at the Beepurple Research Innovation Awards in May 2010, for example. However, SECC activities may provide further research opportunities in the future

The Sussex sub-regional evaluation identified 12 academic publications and a number of others in preparation produced as a direct result of the SECC programme. In the other sub-regions, the number of research papers that have been produced as a result of SECC is less clear, although some are mentioned. However, a wide range of publications have been produced that capture the learning from the SECC programme, even if these are not always peer reviewed academic publications.

#### **4.9 The enhanced status of community knowledge transfer and exchange in HEI and Third Sector partner strategies (H)**

Discussions with partners suggest that SECC has contributed to raising the status of university-community knowledge exchange, but the extent to which this has extended beyond the partners who have been involved in the programme may still be limited. The starting points for the universities (and the community partners) were not uniform across the programme. As has been indicated earlier, university-community knowledge exchange is central to the University of Brighton's mission, but has a lower profile in many of the other universities that participated in the SECC programme.

Despite this, university-community knowledge exchange has existed for many years in most universities, but has often been dependent on the interests and motivations of individuals, rather than being central to the aims of institutions. Equally, community organisations have not always appreciated how universities can be partners in helping them to achieve their objectives. The SECC programme provides some good examples of how partnerships have changed perspectives towards university-community knowledge exchange, even if this is not yet reflected in strategic plans. In Hampshire, joint infrastructure investments are testament to this; whilst many of the organisations that have worked with the universities for the first time report that they would do so again.

There remains a prevailing view that there is still scope for universities to become more engaged in their communities, providing a consultancy or co-ordination role to support regeneration. However,

from a university perspective, there remain challenges with changes to university funding meaning that there will be a greater pressure to focus on activities that demonstrably generate income in a way that is more difficult to evidence in SECC-type projects.

#### **4.9.1 Profile of University-Community Knowledge Exchange Activity**

It is probably too early to assess the extent to which the profile of university-community knowledge exchange activity is cited in university plans. At university level many of the current corporate plans were developed between 2006 and 2009 and are due to be updated over the next couple of years. Perhaps a better assessment of the profile of university-community knowledge exchange activity will be when this has been done.

It is informative to review the current Corporate Plans, many of which were developed before the SECC programme started. Any changes in the profile of university-community knowledge exchange activity within participating institutions needs to be set within this context.

The emphasis on university-community knowledge exchange is explicit in the **University of Brighton** Corporate Plan (2007-2012). It sets out an objective to agree and implement an institutional strategy for economic and social engagement that is reflected in faculty, department and operating plans, incorporating both quantifiable targets and qualitative evaluation. There is a clear emphasis on embedding such activity across all “major subject areas of the institution” and of developing “mutual benefits between economic and social engagement, research and the curriculum”. Its success indicators include a baseline and subsequent audit of community engagement and the benefits, thereof; and an increase in the number of students taking modules that involve “learning in the community”.

The **University of Sussex** Corporate Plan (2009-2015), which was developed more recently than those of many of the other participating universities, emphasises a focus on “engagement with business and the community” and suggests that it will “consider” incorporating business and community engagement activities as part of the University’s internal promotion and reward mechanisms. The **University of Chichester** 2010-2013 strategy has ‘Responding to Local and National Agendas’ as one of its five strategic priorities.

The **University of Southampton** has a key strategic aim to achieve “significant social impact locally and globally through public debate, community outreach and cultural engagement”. Its strategy has an explicit section on “Making an Impact on Society and the Economy”. This refers to the University as a “focal point for social and community engagement” and commits the university to support its staff and students “to participate in a wide range of community projects, outreach activities and business partnerships” to influence decision-makers and to strengthen relationships with local, regional and national policy and practice.

Reference to university-community knowledge exchange is less explicit in the Corporate/Strategic Plans of the other universities involved in the SECC programme. The **University of Portsmouth** Corporate Plan (2007-2012) refers to the development of a “knowledge based society through student achievement, pure and applied research, and engagement with the community and employers” and commits the university to “contribute to sustainable economic, social, cultural and community regeneration and development”. The **Southampton Solent University** plan (2008-2013) “knowledge creation and exchange that fuse academic rigour and professional practice” is identified as one of eight strategic objectives.

**Canterbury Christ Church University** Corporate Plan (2006-2010) commits the university to “work with employers and with local regional and national organisations to realise mutually agreed

objectives” and to ensure that the knowledge and expertise of its staff benefits both its students and the wider community. It refers to the “mutual transfer of knowledge and expertise” to improve the quality of community life and recognises knowledge transfer as a “core function”. It sets out an aim for each faculty to do more in this field by establishing networks and communities of interest; and suggests that it will develop a “reward framework” for staff involved in knowledge transfer activities.

The **University of Greenwich** Corporate Plan 2006-2011 focuses on employability as being an integral part of all learning programmes and includes work experience, student volunteering and community work as ways of delivering this.

The **University of Kent** Plan (2009-2012) highlights that over 1000 students had engaged in voluntary activities in the previous three years and that the university was engaged in a “comprehensive range of community involvement”. It identifies the need to improve the physical infrastructure of its campuses for the benefit of the local community, as well as its staff and students.

Feedback from interviews suggests that, in some cases, SECC has contributed to corporate thinking around how university-community knowledge exchange activity can become more strategically embedded in university activity. There are now explicit references to community engagement in Canterbury Christ Church University’s Research and Knowledge Strategy, for example, and according to some participants, SECC has laid the ground for a more outward-looking and community responsive university model. The extent to this is realised may become clearer when new university corporate strategies and plans are produced.

#### **4.10 A governance and accountability model used as an exemplar for managing complex, multi partner projects (I)**

As we saw in Section 3.1, the SECC programme had a democratic governance structure that provided significant autonomy to the sub-regions and individual HEIs, so that resources were spent on delivering projects that were relevant and appropriate to local circumstances. Many interviewees felt that completing the programme more or less on time and to budget with the partnerships intact was a significant achievement.

Few felt that SECC had provided an exemplar governance and accountability model for managing complex projects, however, although the ‘light touch’ approach enabled projects to develop iteratively, without onerous accountability arrangements. It is important to recognise that, as a demonstrator project, SECC was experimental and establishing robust governance structures may have taken up valuable time that was spent setting up, delivering and adapting projects on the ground.

The governance structure was effective in ensuring that HEIs were represented equally at different levels of the programme. However, the rotating representation may have led to a lack of continuity and a democratic approach that focused on “whose turn” rather than on more salient issues, such as how to share learning on engagement and knowledge exchange mechanisms effectively within and beyond the programme. Furthermore, the understanding of the wider programme philosophy by people working on individual projects may not have been particularly strong. This is not uncommon in complex programmes.

Programme coherence has already been discussed, but whilst feedback from the Regional Board to the Sub-Regional Boards appears to have been effective, many people involved in delivering projects

had few or no links to the regional board and sometimes only a limited understanding of the programme's strategic aims.

The democratic and devolved governance arrangements were deliberately designed to reflect the differences in approach and experience between HEIs and between sub-regions. This was largely welcomed and may have enabled projects to set up more quickly than might otherwise have been the case. However, the leanness of the Regional Governance structure may have compromised programme coherence and strategic guidance. The importance of this was recognised late in the programme when additional resources were found for dissemination and co-ordination. SECC was fortunate that the University of Brighton had an established infrastructure that enabled it to take a leading role in much of the programme co-ordination.

There were suggestions that the accounting arrangements had too many reporting layers, despite the leanness of the structures. Sub-regional boards may have focused too much on operational and financial reporting, when there could have been a greater focus on learning and partnership development.

There was evidence of slippage in projects and a significant under-spend in one sub-region, that was redistributed to boost dissemination and sustainability activities in other projects. The Kent sub-region experienced particular challenges around accounting and payment arrangements, which did not align with procedures within the HEIs and were sometimes seen to be complex to small community organisations.

The governance and accountability arrangements in many cases seem to have been effective at strengthening relationships between HEIs at sub-regional level, but it may have been more difficult to ensure that community representation was maintained at this level. Meetings at sub-regional level were sometimes seen to be driven by HEIs timetables and agendas and there was no community representation at the Regional Board level. This appears to have been less of an issue at project level where there was a strong emphasis on equality of engagement and good examples of where genuinely equal partnerships were established.

## 5.0 Learning from SECC

This section outlines some of the key learning points from the SECC programme not directly captured by our discussion in the previous section on performance against success criteria and/or builds on some of the learning points that were identified in the section. Obviously, learning took place within the programme at many levels. Here, we focus on learning that may in some sense be generalizable in terms of informing future knowledge transfer and exchange programmes and activities.

We have tried to group this learning into three areas;

1. How to enable and support UCKE
2. How to deliver it effectively and;
3. How to evaluate it in order to demonstrate value

### 5.1 Enabling UCKE

The learning we have captured in this area can in turn be grouped into two areas; securing strategic level commitment, embedding and sustaining infrastructure, engaging academic staff and students,.

#### 5.1.1 Securing strategic level commitment within the HEI

The SECC programme could be viewed as a change management programme, seeking to change the relationship between a university and the communities around it. It is clear from the SECC experience, that a fundamental shift in this relationship is only possible with high level strategic buy-in to the concept. It is not simply enough to let project activities run. This buy-in is necessary to secure additional resources, to create the infrastructure to support knowledge exchange, and critically, gives ‘permission’ for staff at all levels to devote time to community engagement and knowledge exchange. It also makes it more likely that different activities from different funding sources can ‘play off one another’ and work together to make the whole more than the sum of its parts. Whilst a £3 million programme sounds significant, when you consider this against the overall resources of a university it is relatively small (Figure 5.1), assuming that each institution generates an average income of £100,000 per year from SECC.<sup>52</sup>

**Figure 5.1: SECC funding as a proportion of HEI income.**

	Annual Income	SECC as a % of Income
University of Southampton	£418,784,000	0.02
University of Greenwich	£190,876,000	0.05
University of Kent	£173,027,000	0.06
University of Portsmouth	£169,494,000	0.06
University of Sussex	£165,997,000	0.06
University of Brighton	£163,097,000	0.06
Canterbury Christ Church University	£113,392,000	0.09
Southampton Solent University	£97,584,000	0.10
University of Chichester	£37,538,000	0.27

<sup>52</sup> Source: Table 1: Income and Expenditure by HE institution 2009/10: Higher Education Statistics Agency

There are two important issues to emerge from this table. Firstly, it demonstrates the diversity of the universities participating in SECC. By income measure, the University of Southampton is more than twice the size of any of the other participating universities and more than ten times the size of the smallest participating university (the University of Chichester). Secondly, SECC funding contributed only a small proportion of the participating universities' annual income (between 0.27% and 0.02%). It is not surprising, therefore, that SECC funded activities may have had a greater impact on some universities than others and perhaps the expectation that SECC would embed *strategic* changes to the way the universities operated through project activities alone was over-ambitious.

While all SECC institutions are broadly supportive of university-community knowledge exchange and the profile of UCKE has increased amongst all the participating HEIs, the level of strategic buy-in continues to differ. The University of Brighton continues to show the most specific strategic commitment. The University has, for example, set one of its six key aims as being recognised as a leading UK university for the quality and range of its work in economic and social engagement and productive partnerships<sup>53</sup>. As we saw mentioned Section 4.9, interviews with stakeholders suggest there is evidence of increasing strategic commitment to UCKE in some of the partner universities, including Canterbury Christ Church, Chichester and Portsmouth. Elsewhere, it remains embedded in, and sometimes overshadowed by, other strategic aims. Whilst one or two senior level people may be committed to a concept, the senior management team as a whole may not be.

SECC suggests that strategic level commitment matters at an operational level as well: its presence can drive effective community partnerships, while its absence can be a major hindrance:

*"Relationships that could be of value in future have been established between institutions, with good individual working relationships now in place. However, there have been instances when joint working between (sub-region) universities have been stopped 'from on high'."*

*University Staff Member*

Interview evidence also suggests that securing strategic level commitment to the type of activities promoted by SECC has been significantly complicated by the strategic repositioning promoted by Government policy and funding changes taking place within each SECC institution. If, pre-2010, the expectation was that a new dedicated funding stream for university-community knowledge exchange might become available, post-2010 the activity needs to be accommodated within broader plans for teaching, research and knowledge transfer activities.

### **5.1.2 Embedding and sustaining infrastructure**

The effectiveness of most activities is often dependent on the commitment of individuals and their capacity to develop productive partnerships, regardless of structures that exist. However, the time that it takes to develop such relationships from a standing start can be underestimated by people designing and delivering short-term funded projects and programmes, and developing sustainable structures can make initiatives less vulnerable to personnel changes.

Academics have always been involved in university-community knowledge exchange when this has reflected their interests, or has built on established relationships that they already have. Equally, individual community groups that have links with universities can often find ways of accessing expertise within them for mutual benefit. However, this is often done on an ad hoc basis. A key aim of the SECC programme, based on the success criteria in the original business case, was to change this, so that an infrastructure could be established that would enable a more consistent approach to university-community knowledge exchange that was less 'personality dependent'.

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<sup>53</sup> *Corporate Plan 2007-2012*, University of Brighton (2007), p13.

There is also an issue around providing an interface that enables the community to come to the university rather than it always being the other way round. As we noted in our article for the special issue of the Gateways Journal, universities tend to present a complex and divided face to community partners.<sup>54</sup> There is often a confusing array of faculties, departments, schools and individual academics, all operating quite independently of one another. An interface that helps cut through this complexity would seem essential to the long-term sustainability of university-community knowledge exchange. It builds trust, raises awareness and provides a flow of potential projects and/or knowledge exchange activities for the future.

This suggests that effective and sustainable university-community knowledge exchange requires an infrastructure that:

1. Acts as a focal point for communities to contact the University
2. Helps formulate a response to such enquiries, drawing in expertise from across the university
3. Provides support to those academics wishing to engage with communities and undertake knowledge exchange and transfer

We noted one or two examples of this kind of infrastructure being created or improved at an institutional level and in a sustainable way through SECC in Section 4.6 but would perhaps have expected to see more.

Despite the importance of sustainability and infrastructure to the programme success criteria, the SECC programme was also designed to maximise the amount of funds that was spent on project activity, rather than governance structures. Whilst the focus on project activity is understandable, strategic changes in approaches to university-community knowledge exchange activity are likely to require some resource to support an enabling infrastructure either at individual institution, sub-regional or regional level. The challenges in securing academic staff time for university-community knowledge exchange activity where the supporting infrastructure is weak have been well documented in the past.<sup>55</sup> It is possible that too much focus went on the content of projects, such that the sustainability of knowledge exchange more generally was partly lost.

### ***Shared infrastructure?***

Universities are already highly connected nationally and internationally, sharing expertise and knowledge and working on jointly funded projects. This is nothing new for universities. The question remains whether there can be a sustainable model of collaboration between universities at a local level for university-community knowledge exchange. It potentially could be a cost effective way of providing such infrastructure in the current policy and funding environment.<sup>56</sup>

This arguably existed prior to SECC in some parts of the region. CUPP and the University of Brighton and CCE at the University of Sussex already had close links, but the involvement of both universities in the Communities of Practice and the joint approach to the Hastings Helpdesk may have helped to embed these further. Equally, the relationships between the universities in Hampshire were recognised to be strong before the Hampshire Sub-Regional Board was established. In Kent, the three universities are co-located on the multi-university campus at Medway, so again, extensive links between the universities already existed.

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<sup>54</sup> Pratt J. et al (forthcoming) 'Collaboration Between Universities: An Effective Way of Sustaining Community-University Partnerships?' Gateways, The International Journal of Community Research and Engagement

<sup>55</sup> Silka et al: Community-University Partnerships: Achieving Continuity in the Face of Change' Gateways: The International Journal of Community Research and Engagement vol 1p.128

<sup>56</sup> Pratt J. et al. op. cit.

However the interviews with partners suggest that the more strategic collaboration between the Universities of Brighton and Sussex in terms of infrastructure is unlikely to be replicated elsewhere in the short to medium term. The collaborative approach of SECC has helped to develop relationships between universities, but this may not readily translate into a sustainable infrastructure at sub-regional or regional level. This may have been a missed opportunity.

### 5.1.3 Enabling academics to engage in UCKE

Even where such infrastructure exists, it can still be difficult to secure academic time for university-community knowledge exchange activity, because it tends not to be recognised in incentive and reward schemes within universities. Academics often engage in university-community knowledge exchange in their own time.

SECC has important lessons for other institutions wishing to develop university-community engagement through knowledge exchange, including the challenges of securing academic and student engagement. The extent to which academics and students engaged with Third Sector organisations varied significantly. At one extreme, the engagement was significant and sustained, yielding tangible benefits for both the community group and the university. One academic noted how the programme and the change in philosophy within his university had given him the 'permission' to unlock his potential, to do the kind of things he really wanted to and could only previously do in his spare time.

Another university's SECC strategic lead noted that many academics at their institution engaged in knowledge exchange went on to join local organisation boards and partnerships, or were involved in community activities as volunteers. In the most extreme and positive cases, it was also suggested that the boundaries between "community" and academe can become blurred, with people from each side "having a foot in the other".

Successful engagement, in the best cases, can also be closely associated with what appears to be real innovation at the service of disadvantaged communities:

*"Following SECC, we have established a university-community research group to be a critical friend for regeneration initiatives in (town)...The enthusiasm has been astonishing, and we have 15 senior academics and similar numbers of local people involved. It has the potential to move into completely different ways of working with local communities and the statutory sector, away from 'critical hostility', and focusing on asset based community development away from the typical model of gentrification and inward investment."*

*University Staff Member*

Academics in some institutions were more likely to note that, whilst they would like to undertake more community engagement work, there were significant barriers to them doing so. Some suggested that universities, perhaps especially the more research intensive ones, can struggle to accommodate this type of work alongside their mainstream work commitments:

*"Currently, such projects can appear to be relatively marginal when compared with Research Council funded activities...The project involved a significant time commitment, despite the amount of funding being relatively small compared with other potential sources. Research Council funding, for example, is fully economically funded, covering all costs, while also bearing considerable kudos."*

*University Staff Member*

These comments also highlight the importance of academics' activities being adequately funded and recognised. In one or two institutions there was a strategic decision not to classify any of the SECC

funding as research (in terms of academic targets) and to offer all academic time on SECC as 'match'. This caused significant problems, sometimes to the extent that full-time academics did not or could not engage and external consultants and project managers were commissioned to help deliver the projects, arguably fundamentally undermining the concept of knowledge exchange based on universities' key asset, the knowledge and expertise of their full-time staff.

*"Offering staff and student time on an entirely voluntary basis proved to be a commitment that was impossible to deliver. This may have been otherwise if the activities had been more closely matched to the coursework requirements and assessments of the students, but such a linkage had not been established...It did not prove possible for the relevant university departments to deliver what was promised, meaning that the community group felt 'let down'."*

*Community Organisation Representative*

One university staff member was able to offer as many as five reasons why engaging academics had proved to be problematic in their institution:

1. Academics are not used to working with outputs-based funded projects, and more used to taking their own independent decisions about their activities: "it's all about them".
2. If staff are not funded to undertake activities, SECC can look marginal.
3. Academics tend to be working at full capacity anyway, so taking on further commitments is difficult.
4. Not being part of mainstream teaching and research means that programmes like SECC can lack obvious links to established patterns of career advancement for individual academics.
5. It can be difficult to "unpick" an academic's particular expertise and its specific relevance to a SECC project requirement, and their experience of practice in the field may not be the most recent.

Another university staff member suggested that poor project management skills on the part of some academics can be another barrier to effective engagement.

The systems of funding and recognising achievements within an institution clearly need to be aligned with the philosophy of university-community knowledge exchange. Here there is obviously important interplay with the idea of securing high level strategic commitment across the senior management team of the university.

### ***The human factor***

It is somewhat stating the obvious that effective partnership working and community engagement is the relationships between individual people as much as between organisations. In interviews we heard many examples of good personal relationships that had enabled projects to develop and thrive but also a few where personal frictions had undermined them. One university staff member described some inter-university strategic level relationships as "dysfunctional" on occasions. The evaluators also witnessed a significant difference of opinion at one sub-regional meeting, which ended in some Board members walking out.

This highlights the importance of allowing partnerships time to develop and paying attention to the personal aspects of community engagement. Just because a particular partnership or project looks good on paper does not mean that it will necessarily work in practice if the personal relationships aren't right. This is particularly important for HEIs, which are not very hierarchical organisations. Academics are fairly autonomous professionals whose success often depends on them following

their interests. Senior level staff need to allow academics the freedom to decide whether to become involved and to what extent.

Community organisations and members also need to remember that effective UCKE sometimes depends on academics using their expertise in areas that develop their own knowledge and understanding. This means there will always be a tension between a desire to focus very narrowly on the strategic priorities of community organisations (especially statutory partners) and the very specific expertise and interests of individual academics. More specifically, academics are as likely to be interested in groups that don't currently have a voice and potential priorities that might have been missed as they are in priorities outlined in local strategies.

## 5.2 Delivering UCKE

### 5.2.1 Programme coherence and governance

To the extent that there may at some time in the future be programmes to encourage university-community knowledge exchange (or public engagement or other related activities), SECC has a number of potential lessons for their structure and governance.

Whilst the SECC programme had the theme of health and well-being in South East Coastal Communities, in reality it was extremely diverse. This diversity had a number of advantages. It enabled all the 9 HEIs to feel that they could contribute. It demonstrated the potential variety of ways in which knowledge exchange and transfer can occur and the many different types of outputs and outcomes that can result from it. However, it posed significant challenges for effective knowledge exchange, even at a sub-regional level as participants struggled to find common ground with each other. The diversity and relatively small scale of the projects may also have reduced the programme's potential to demonstrate its value in a quantitative fashion in terms of costs, benefits and social impacts.

The potential of South East Coastal Communities theme was also perhaps not fully explored. Some participants perceived it to be an artificial construct. Certainly the South East coastal strip is not one community, or even a set of tied communities. To travel from Southampton to Swale it is easier to go up to London and out again than travel along the coast. However, as the business case noted, there are similarities between many of the urban centres on the south coast in terms of socio-economic disadvantage (ageing populations, high proportions of young people not in education, employment or training etc) that could have provided a narrower theme for the programme within health and well-being. It is not that these themes were not covered by SECC but if one or more of them had been the core focus within and across the sub-regions, it could have facilitated both knowledge exchange and evaluation.

It could also have helped projects align more closely with the strategic priorities of a local area (or at least the priorities as perceived by key stakeholders).

*There should have been a conference at the start of the programme for the universities to identify which community partners should be involved and what the focus of "health and wellbeing" should be for [sub-region]. The approach that emerged was much more ad hoc and not all important community groups were involved. As a result, the approach taken was not strategic.*

*University staff member*

Tied to the idea of coherence is the learning that governance of a 'change' programme needs to be sufficiently strong to ensure that the philosophy of the programme is maintained and translated into activities. We suggested in section 4.10 that the democratic, rotating chair nature of SECC's

governance at a regional and sub-regional level may have made this difficult. Again, it was possibly a necessary step to get the partner HEIs to engage in the programme in the first place. Having the two tiers was sometimes important in terms of mediation and the sub-regional boards did provide a level of governance that ensured projects were either delivered or redesigned in a way that could be delivered or that resources were reallocated. However, there were cases where the projects were delivered in ways that seemed at odds with the principles of SECC, using consultants instead of academics, for example, and monitoring and evaluating projects with little reference to the programme's success criteria. Furthermore, the boards and co-ordinators did not seem to fully realise their potential role in knowledge exchange or, so far at least, in the dissemination of learning from the programme as a whole. If there were future programmes across some or all the same partner 9 HEIs, more consistent roles and clearer authority to underline the programme philosophy would be preferable.

### **5.2.2 Engaging and working with communities (the three sub-regional approaches)**

We outlined in Section 3 how the SECC programme piloted three different approaches to knowledge exchange; an area based approach, a community of interest approach and a social enterprise thematic approach. In reality, there was significant overlap between the area based and the community of interest approaches, as many of the communities of interest were place-bound, and many of the area based projects also dealt with specific communities of interest.

Kent's area based approach did, however, have clearer potential to achieve a significant change in community perceptions of HE and the specific HEIs involved, given the relatively small area of focus. Indeed, a number of stakeholders interviewed felt that the profile and potential of HE had been raised significantly in Swale as a result of the programme. However, there were some concerns that the level of knowledge exchange activity would not be maintained, not just because of changes in funding but also because Swale is not the immediate hinterland for any of the partner HEIs. Some interviewees noted that projects had difficulties encouraging students (and some academics) to engage in projects in Swale because of the travel requirements and its perceived isolation from the places where staff and students work, study and live. We also noted in our Gateways Journal article that the reputational spill-over benefits of UCKE are likely to be stronger in areas immediately surrounding University campuses. It could be argued that the democratic nature of the programme design led to a focus on a 'neutral' area, although there were also clear socio-economic arguments for focusing on Swale.

An interesting dimension to the communities of interest (and CoP) approaches adopted in Sussex and Kent, is that where things worked well and partners felt there was a value in the activities continuing, the communities themselves started to drive the project. Indeed, there are expected to be continuing activities in at least 5 of the 6 project streams in Sussex post-funding. This is not to say that only projects expecting activities to continue were successful. Some projects were always meant to be time-bound and could finish when the funding ended having met the demand for their activities. Others had objectives that were naturally more continuous in nature. In the Activity Buddies project, for example, there will always be a supply of new health studies students who can benefit and learn from partnering with older people and vice versa.

At least 4 or 5 Sussex and Kent projects were also investigating or in the process of setting up social enterprises to continue activities when interviewed in the final phase of the evaluation. It is too early to say how significant or successful these enterprises are likely to be. However, they are interesting social enterprises in that they are potentially knowledge based businesses (as opposed to community café's etc) where HE has provided at least part of the intellectual capital. This could suggest that there is significant untapped potential for (social) enterprise spin-outs in the arts and social sciences than may previously have been recognised. An open question remains, however, as

to what would be the most cost effective way of unlocking this potential. Clearly, a £3 million knowledge transfer programme would not be cost effective if it produced just 4-5 small social enterprise start-ups, although SECC obviously did many other things.

The social enterprise thematic approach in Hampshire seemed to facilitate quite a high level of discussion (and tacit knowledge exchange) between partners in the early days of the programme about the nature of social enterprise and their needs. However, the two Southampton based universities ran projects that were so different in nature it did not seem to facilitate collaborative working beyond this, despite their geographical proximity. Like the Universities of Brighton and Sussex, they share many of the same community partners. As we noted in Section 4.X the Hampshire projects were more likely to be on the knowledge transfer end of the scale than knowledge exchange (in terms of extending the body of academic knowledge at least) but this is not to imply that the transfer cannot be high quality or valuable, as long as it plays to the specific strengths and knowledge base of the HEI. The Architecture Office projects in the University of Portsmouth would seem a good example of this.

### **Co-development**

The sub-regions also piloted different approaches to working with communities at the design and set-up stage of the projects. Although there were some exceptions, Hampshire went for a consultation with identified potential and/or existing partners approach, Kent for an invitation to tender and bidding approach, and Sussex for a co-design with existing partners approach. In terms of consistently delivering outputs and knowledge exchange, the co-design with existing partners approach seems to have been the most successful. Indeed co-design with existing partners was also a key element of project successes in the University of Portsmouth. Of course this assumes there are existing partners; community engagement has to start somewhere.

One of the reasons the Kent approach sometimes struggled with delivery and deadlines was precisely that suitable partnerships (within the small area of Swale) did not exist prior to the programme. Southampton Solent University had similar issues with its initial projects. It would seem particularly challenging for a new group of partners to design a project that is both feasible, given their lack of shared experience and understanding, and locks them together for three years in the early stages of the partnership. That many of the Kent projects did deliver is in this context quite an achievement. The bidding approach may therefore be more appropriate for universities that are seeking to deepen their engagement and knowledge exchange activities with particular areas or communities rather than kick start it. Although, even then such an approach may not fit well with a programme that seeks strategic impact:

*There will always be a tension between “top down” and “bottom up” approaches, but, if an on-going engagement is expected, the “let a thousand flowers bloom” approach is not right. Any future projects would need to be more strategic and scrutiny would have to be more rigorous.*

*Stakeholder, Kent*

The bid methodology in Kent may also have led to a focus on spending money rather than achieving strategic impact in the universities themselves:

*Presenting SECC as a funding opportunity to the third sector mitigated against the money being used strategically, and the “strategy” that emerged may have been mainly based on preconceptions and preferences... SECC has perhaps also shown that people in universities will be driven by the subjects, unless a more strategic approach is taken, which is also when impact might be expected to be greatest.*

*University staff member*

The consultation with partners approach seemed to work best where there was a well-established relationship with those partners, preferably in terms of relationships between individuals as well as the organisations involved. In some of the Hampshire projects that did not progress past the first year of the programme this may not have been the case.

Interestingly, whilst three of the Communities of Practice (CoPs) in Sussex were built around established partnerships and groups that had worked together, the Our Space CoP was not. The Our Space model provides a potentially valuable example of partnership building by moving from open meetings to smaller self-selected groups of individuals who are committed to a common purpose or activity. A model that may be particularly useful for engaging with communities that do not feel their interests are already represented by formalised groupings or organisations. It is, nevertheless, only one potential model amongst many for developing close partnerships based on mutuality.

Southampton Solent University's social enterprise incubation space, which aims in part to support spin-outs from the university itself, should perhaps be seen more as an additional tool than an alternative to other forms of community engagement. It has different kinds of potential benefits for the HEI (in terms of reputation, learning, effects on widening participation and student employability) from projects that focus on helping communities to articulate their needs, or buddying medical and health students with older people, for example.

Indeed, a more general point from the programme as a whole is that the sub-regions sometimes saw themselves as delivering mutually exclusive alternative approaches to community engagement and knowledge exchange, when they are better seen as approaches, techniques and tools that could be productively applied in combination.

### **5.2.3 Resourcing projects and activities**

A number of tensions in terms of resourcing UCKE projects were highlighted by the SECC programme. In some cases, there were worries that project funding was too large and the responsibilities in terms of financial accountability and reporting too much for some community groups and members. There were also concerns that any programme presented as a bidding opportunity encourages new partnerships to focus too much on the financial side of things, designing and funding project activities rather than working to get the partnership right and ensure that what's delivered meets programme and strategic aims.

Others felt that projects were too small financially to have a significant impact on either the university or partners or to conduct sufficient research and evaluation to demonstrate that impact quantitatively.

The lesson is probably that there is no 'one size fits all' approach. For projects that aim to work with small community groups that do not have formal organisations (writers groups, for example), then funding requirements may be very modest. Not having *any* funding in terms of hiring meeting rooms, paying travel expenses could prevent the partnership developing. The opportunity to apply to a central fund for small amounts of money as and when they are needed might be more appropriate than a 3 year proposal that outlines all the funding that might possibly be needed.

For established partnerships and projects where some level of proof of concept has already been achieved and the project is moving to the next stage in terms of demonstrating value (perhaps including quantitative measurement) then the opportunity to apply for more substantial medium term project funding would be ideal.

The use of resources to ‘buy’ academic time, providing cover for some of their other duties in order for them to engage in community activities was noted by a number of projects. Indeed in one case, generating income for this purpose is the primary aim of the social enterprise being set up to support the continuation of SECC project activity. The SECC Dissemination Briefing Paper 2 suggests that “money does not in itself ensure successful partnerships” and that the conditions and monitoring requirements that are generally attached to public funding can actually be a barrier.<sup>57</sup> The paper suggests that it is “staff time, reward and recognition that are the main inhibitors”.

### 5.3 Evaluating UCKE

Whilst the SECC programme has not altogether been that successful in terms of its evaluation activities, particularly in terms of quantitative measures, it has supported significant learning in this area. In particular it has looked in some depth at a number of different frameworks for thinking about the value of knowledge exchange and undertaken some exploratory work towards developing quantitative metrics, including social impacts.

#### 5.3.1 UCKE evaluation frameworks

There are good examples of how SECC has contributed to a better understanding of approaches to evaluating university-community knowledge exchange projects.

Following discussion between the partners and building on a review of evaluation frameworks that members of the University of Brighton’s SECC team had undertaken for the Beacons project<sup>58</sup>, the Sussex sub-region decided to adopt a common approach to evaluation, using the REAP model.<sup>59</sup> This approach, which was developed at the University of Bradford, is based on the following four principles:

**Figure 5.1: The REAP framework for UCKE evaluation**

<p><b>Reciprocity:</b> There is a flow of knowledge, information and benefits in both directions between the University and its community partners in activities</p>	<p><b>Access:</b> partners have access to the University facilities and resources, as opposed to receiving a one-off provision of goods and services</p>
<p><b>Externalities:</b> There are benefits outside of those accruing to the partners and these should contribute to building social trust and social networks in the District and through these to enhanced sustainability, wellbeing and cohesion <u>locally</u> in the Bradford District and <u>nationally</u> to the building of a learning and knowledge based society</p>	<p><b>Partnership:</b> Partnerships deepen and develop through the extended reciprocity and improved access. They are an output and outcome of CE activities, which should eventually also become key inputs to improving and enhancing those activities</p>

Although it is primarily a qualitative tool, it does provide the framework for partners to agree objectives, to agree the expected value of interventions; and to monitor and review progress on a systematic basis. It strongly embodies the concept of mutuality and reference to the framework at the design stage can help to ensure that clear mutual benefits are built into the project.

<sup>57</sup> Source: Mulvihill N. et al. 2011. SECC Dissemination Paper 2: Models of Partnership Working in University-Community Engagement

<sup>58</sup> Hart A; Northmore S; and Gerhardt C (2009) Auditing, Benchmarking and Evaluating Public Engagement. National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement Research Synthesis 1.

<sup>59</sup> Source: Pearce J; Pearson M; and Cameron S (2007), The Ivory Tower and Beyond: The University of Bradford at the Heart of its Communities – the University of Bradford’s REAP Approach to Measuring its Community Engagement. Bradford ICPS-University of Bradford

The Sussex sub-regional report reflects the importance that was attached to evaluation in the sub-region but also identified some difficulties in using the REAP framework. A little ironically, given the framework's focus on mutuality, its complexity in its use of language was seen by some as a barrier to community organisations engaging effectively in the evaluations. It also seemed to embody an almost binary distinction between the 'university' and the 'community' that may not be appropriate where the boundaries become blurred (with academics as members of the community and community members acting as part-time researchers and/or undertaking further study).

REAP is not prescriptive in terms of measures. Whilst it therefore provides the flexibility for projects that are diverse in nature to have a common framework for evaluation, it doesn't necessarily lead to aggregate measures of outcomes or impact.

### 5.3.2 Outcome and impact metrics

Step Ahead Research wrestled with the approach to take in applying metrics to the SECC programme outcomes during the baseline phase of the project. Our baseline evaluation phase context paper reviewed a number of frameworks and provided the AUCEA Classification<sup>60</sup> as an example of metrics that could be used to measure different types of interventions in university-community knowledge exchange. The original Business Case also provided examples of indicators that could be used to measure the impact of the programme against its objectives. We therefore devised an evaluation framework around the business case success criteria identifying a series of quantitative and qualitative indicators for each success criterion (Annex I).

Establishing baselines against which improvements can be measured proved challenging. Theoretically, baselines should have been contained within the Business Case, since it was this that provided the evidence and the rationale for the investment. Evidence of need should precede investment decisions, not be established after resources have been allocated.

Furthermore, as we noted in Section 1, we were unable to collect consistent data for most of the quantitative indicators. This may have been because of the change in policy and funding context, the democratic nature of the way the programme was run (with a disjoint between the sub-regional governance mechanisms, who agreed the indicators, and the projects who were expected to collect the data) or the fact that these indicators were not in place at the design and set-up stage of the programme. The sheer number of indicators may also have been an issue (and for that matter, the number of success criteria). Nevertheless, we believe the indicators proposed and outlined in Annex I could be valuable reference material for any future UCKE programmes or projects at the design stage.

It should, however, never be forgotten that some of the most important outcomes for programmes like SECC are intangibles, like relationship and partnership development; and increases in capacity and knowledge, where simple quantitative measures may be less appropriate. Indicators also seldom capture impacts completely; they are an *indication* of impact and need to be used in conjunction with a fuller qualitative assessment. In our own framework, for example, the volume of new partnerships or relationships may be a poor indicator when compared with their quality, which is more difficult to measure. Equally, the number of community groups reporting improvements in their capacity to deliver support to their client group may not be related closely to the level of improvement in the nature of the support. It is quite possible that one organisation whose capacity increases substantially could have a greater impact than several whose capacity had increased more marginally.

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<sup>60</sup> Source: Langworthy, A. (2007) "The Challenge of Benchmarking Community Engagement: The AUCEA Pilot Project".

Furthermore, metrics that we have been able to provide some data for (such as leverage) are not without their problems when it comes to comparability and aggregation across different projects and organisations. A working group from the Universities of Brighton, Sussex and Chichester sought to develop a common approach to capturing outcomes from SECC using financial multipliers. As a first step they looked to establish a method to fully measure the leverage from the programme, converting matched and leveraged time and non-monetary resources to financial values in a consistent way to show the multiplier effect of SECC's project funding.<sup>61</sup> However, their conclusion was that the methods used in year one varied so much between institutions (and even between projects within each institution) that it would be very difficult to go back and recapture the data in a consistent fashion. However, the University of Brighton is piloting the standardised methodology they developed with a number of small non-SECC funded projects that have started since the working group discussions.

### ***Social outcomes and impact measurement***

We noted in Section 1.2 that social impact was not a success criterion for the SECC programme directly but obviously of key interest to it. The issue of quantitative social impact measurement remains particularly problematic. There is still no proven and accepted universal model. It is not easy to identify the right indicators; there can be a risk of 'over-claiming' and under-estimating the social impact of market actors; and the use of subjectivity in determining value compromises consistency and generalizability.<sup>62</sup>

However, a number of tools have been developed nationally and internationally in order to address this, including:

**Social Return on Investment (SROI)**, devised by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), applies financial proxies to outcomes and social impacts and applies standard accounting tools to calculate discounted cash flow and the net present value of investments. A key element of SROI is applying financial proxies to outcomes that do not have a transparent tradable value. The aim of this is to ensure that value is attached to what matters, rather than what is relatively easy to count.

A similar approach is used in **Social-Economic Reporting**, which maps and then costs public sector interventions that are needed to support an individual or a group requiring support. The value of a project is then calculated by the savings that are made from its success in reducing the need for support, based on these costs.

**Local Multiplier 3 (LM3)** is a technique, again developed by NEF, for measuring the local economic development effect of an investment by tracing how an investment is spent at three different levels: the initial recipient; the people who they spend the investment on; and who they, in turn, spend the investment on.

**Social accounting** has been commonly used across Europe and involves identifying stakeholders' expected benefits from interventions and tracking these against the perceived benefits that have accrued during projects.

The robustness of the programme evaluation depends on the quality and accuracy of the monitoring information that is collected at different levels. However, it is important that the monitoring requirement is proportionate to the scale of the project or intervention. For some universities SECC

<sup>61</sup> Source: CUPP (2010) Developing a Metric for Community Engagement: The Experience of Sussex Coastal Communities Region (unpublished discussion paper)

<sup>62</sup> Source: DIESES for the European Union: Learning for Change: A Better Future for the Social Economy Baseline Study

was only a small source of funding, used to fund innovative, pilot projects with limited budgets. At this level, social impact evaluation was not always seen to merit a significant investment.

The University of Portsmouth used SECC money to fund a study aimed at assessing the impact of a number of social enterprises in Portsmouth. This was not a direct evaluation of the SECC projects in Portsmouth, but it drew on learning from the programme. It used both qualitative and quantitative approaches and, in line with the approaches outlined above, used financial proxies to attach a monetary value to the non-market contributions of a number of social enterprise service interventions in the following ways:

- The value of volunteering time was calculated by multiplying the total number of volunteer hours by the upper quartile of hourly earnings in the local area.
- The value of a neighbourhood transport service was calculated by applying the cost of missed outpatient appointments to the number of journeys that the service provided to people who needed to attend hospital<sup>63</sup>.

This approach, whilst not new, has been useful in highlighting the need for community organisations to better understand the costs and benefits associated with their activities.

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<sup>63</sup> Source: Rampton L. Impacts and Prospects – Developing Social Enterprises (2010)

## 6.0 Conclusions and recommendations

In the previous section we highlighted a number of key learning points for universities and others interested from SECC and outlined some pointers to potential good practice in enabling, delivering and evaluating UCKE. In this section we summarise the overall achievement and impact of the SECC programme as a whole before exploring what could be done at a local, regional and national level to help realise the potential of university-community knowledge exchange and transfer in the future.

### 6.1 Achievements and impact

The South East Coastal Communities programme has had some significant achievements over the last three years, not least the collaborative delivery by 9 universities of a programme of over 30 university-community knowledge exchange projects. Many of the projects have led to an improvement in third sector capacity, some directly helping community organisations to scale up their activities, others through informing the nature of their activities and improving how they operate. Genuine, high quality knowledge exchange seems to have been quite widespread, although not universal, across the projects and, given the more difficult funding climate, a significant amount of resource has been levered into the projects.

The programme has also highlighted up a number of new research opportunities and led to significant enhancements of the curricula and learning experience of students, significantly improving their life skills and employability in some cases. In addition, there are some signs that university community knowledge exchange and transfer has had and/or will have an enhanced status amongst some of the partner HEIs. It has also provided *examples* of sustainable infrastructure to support knowledge exchange. However, it seems fair to say that in both areas the programme has not fulfilled its potential. Similarly, the exchange of good practice across the South East region has been limited to date.

#### 6.1.1 Strategic impact

It is possible that the potential for strategic impact were somewhat limited by the programme's design and governance arrangements, particularly after the change in the policy and funding climate.

We mentioned earlier that SECC could be viewed as a change management programme. Figure 6.1 (overleaf) attempts to show the SECC programme in these terms, grouping its success criteria into the three categories of strategic, organisational (or institutional) and operational change. Reviewing this in light of our assessment of performance against the success criteria, it could be argued that the SECC programme has performed best at the operational level (leaving aside the question of *measurable* improvement in third sector capacity for the moment) whilst performance at the institutional level has been more patchy and at the strategic level has been relatively weak.

SECC was a demonstrator project but it was always meant to demonstrate more than that high quality knowledge transfer can be beneficial. Indeed it is interesting to note how many of the SECC criteria are *not* at the operational level.

**Figure 6.1 Dimensions of change and the SECC programme**

Dimension of change	SECC Success Criteria
<b>STRATEGIC</b>	University-community knowledge exchange and transfer is recognised and supported as integral to the work of Higher Education, locally, regionally and nationally. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enhanced status of community knowledge exchange</li> <li>▪ A robust and well received evaluation</li> <li>▪ Governance and accountability model used as an exemplar</li> </ul>
<b>ORGANISATIONAL</b>	The HEI partners have developed their capacity to engage in efficient and effective UCKE and transfer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A sustainable infrastructure for community knowledge exchange</li> <li>▪ Strategic partnerships that leverage additional funding and other resource</li> <li>▪ Effective exchange of good practice across the South East Region</li> </ul>
<b>OPERATIONAL</b>	The HEI partners are engaged in knowledge exchange and transfer that is bringing benefits to both HEIs and community partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An increase in high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange</li> <li>▪ Enrichment of curricula, teaching, learning and research</li> <li>▪ Measurable improvement in third sector capacity</li> </ul>

To some extent, the success of the programme at an operational level is not surprising given the decision to devolve as much funding as possible to the sub-regions (and in turn to individual projects). However, once the funding and policy climate changed, it could be argued that the strategic and organisational dimensions became *more* not *less* critical to the sustainability of UCKE. The strategic and organisational focus changed, sustained impact had to be achieved without significant further funding and, as we suggested in Section 2, the strategic level audience for the programme became more focused on the universities themselves.

There were significant discussions about this change in focus at board meetings and at a regional workshop on sustainability during the second year of the programme. Nevertheless, the devolved and democratic structures with minimal bureaucracy meant that the focus of activity remained at the project level. It was perhaps too late in the programme to fully respond to the challenges of building infrastructure that could be core funded by HEIs themselves, and there seemed little appetite for further best practice sharing activities across the programme as a whole (in order to identify good practice HEIs could still implement in the new funding environment), although this may yet change as dissemination activities (both formal and informal) continue.

### 6.1.2 Additionality

Publicly-funded programmes and projects, including SECC, need to be able to demonstrate 'additionality' to truly justify the investment in them. A key question for SECC is whether what SECC achieved would have happened anyway, without the funding. We noted in Section 4.4 that additionality is difficult to estimate on a project by project basis. However, there are some signs that the programme did provide significant additionality.

The approaches taken in each of the sub-regions and the knowledge exchange starting points were different between participating universities. Some projects, such as Count Me In Too and Activity

Buddies were already established and SECC funding was used to extend activity that had a history of success. Other projects, such as the University of Portsmouth's Asset Transfer project, built on existing relationships between the university and community groups. This is not to suggest there was not additionality in these projects, only that the existence of partnership working alone does not provide evidence of it. However, in many other projects, SECC supported new projects between partners who had not previously worked together and in many partner HEIs SECC's activity represented a step-change in the level of formalised community engagement activity.

SECC was an ambitious programme that stretched HEIs and sometimes took them beyond their comfort zones. Perhaps the Kent sub-region had the biggest challenge – supporting new projects in a geographic area where universities had had little previous involvement. There were certainly examples of where projects were not successful and where relationships became strained. However, there were also several examples of where the universities had made positive contributions within communities with which they had not previously worked.

For many participating universities, SECC represented a new approach to working with communities and the challenges that a number of projects had both at designing deliverable projects and in the early stages of engagement may have reflected this. Furthermore, the added complexities of working within the political and organisational decision-making frameworks of Local Authority and Primary Care Trust partners also provided new insights into how to work effectively with local communities.

Had the programme duplicated existing activities within HEIs, it may not have presented such challenges. Stakeholder interviews suggest that there have been significant learning outcomes from the programme, particularly relating to the value of developing more equality-based models of knowledge exchange between universities and their communities. Whilst the extent to which these will be sustained beyond SECC is still unclear, there is good evidence within each of the sub-regions to suggest that some parts of participating universities and some community organisations have a better understanding of how to engage with each other than existed prior to the SECC programme.

## **6.2 The future of UCKE**

The SECC programme has illustrated a number of positive impacts at project level. There are good examples of organisations working more effectively together; operating in different ways; and of new approaches to health and well-being support for particular groups. Without SECC funding these would not have happened, yet it is more difficult to be sure whether HEIs or other potential funders are any more likely to invest in similar projects in the future as a result of learning from SECC.

Arguably, the emerging 'market-led' approach to Higher Education means that it needs to demonstrate value to senior managers within HEIs (probably in terms of financial returns, but possibly also in reputational terms). However, these returns may be more difficult to establish than other competing activities that require university investment. This could limit the extent to which many universities are prepared to invest in university-community knowledge exchange activity in the future.

Our view is that this would represent a significant 'opportunity cost' for society. Higher Education Institutions, whilst independent, represent a significant public investment within a community and a huge repository of knowledge, experience and talent that could, with relatively little funding, make an even greater contribution to society, whether it be through supporting social cohesion, health and wellbeing, or economic and social regeneration.

The question of why UCKE needs *funding* then remains; if it is valuable to HEIs, why aren't they doing it anyway? Of course to some extent universities across the country are engaged in UCKE but at in a more ad hoc and limited fashion (as was noted in the business case for SECC). With the absence of quantitative indicators, it seems possible that the benefits for HEIs of a more coherent and consistent strategy of engagement might not cover the full costs of that engagement.

This then begs the question of who should fund UCKE. The answer need not necessarily be HEFCE or BIS, other government departments (e.g. the Cabinet Office, DCLG, the DoH) and Local Authorities might also have a potential role (i.e. those agencies with statutory responsibility for health and wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic and social regeneration). We recognise, however, that there is a tendency for many potential funders to focus exclusively on projects when funding activities outside of the infrastructure that they 'own'. This presents real difficulties to those trying to build and maintain sustainable infrastructure for UCKE within universities.

There is also a question of how much funding is required to develop UCKE. As we noted in previous sections, the necessary interface and support infrastructure mechanisms do have cost implications. There is also a need for small amounts of project and support funding for working with new community groups and engaging in proof of concept work (possibly less than SECC provided in some cases). More established community groups and partnerships may only need the support necessary for them to put strong applications in for funding from other sources.

If we conclude that university-community knowledge exchange is a worthwhile then, we may need to consider tweaks to the mainstream funding mechanisms for HE that at least provide room for HEIs to 'top slice' and develop infrastructural support and small funds for first level engagement activities.

### 6.2.1 Mainstreaming UCKE?

This is consistent with the view of the policy environment that appeared to be emerging in interviews: that it will be challenging to secure additional dedicated funds for university-community engagement, but working engagement into the mainstream of a university's activities could offer some prospects for success.

However, the HE policy and funding situation is currently giving mixed messages to HEIs. The Access Agreements with OFFA are encouraging HEIs to maintain some widening participation activity (which community and public engagement work can support) but the overall influence of HEFCE on the strategic direction of universities has been reduced with the reductions in the teaching grant. The REF 2014 is prioritising research with a social, cultural or economic impact but the HEIF fund is perceived to have moved away from social and cultural projects. The Research Councils do sometimes call for community engagement in research bids or include it in their assessment criteria but they are inconsistent in doing so:

*"The Research Councils do recognise that they ought to include engagement but are not sure how to do it yet. At the moment, funding structures fit into impact analysis and there is a bit of funding for this, although there could be more. At the moment, the link to application is not there, but, if you engage communities at the start, academic research would get much more translation into practice and would be much less likely to result in academic articles and little else."*

*University Staff Member*

Combined with the wider economic uncertainty and changes to student funding, some interviewees suggested they are no longer clear what the Government expects from universities:

*“For decades HEIs had an understanding of what Government and society wanted from them. That seems to have changed radically; it is now not clear what they want. This makes it much more difficult for HEIs to invest in partnerships. Most HEIs are also in some financial difficulty and are therefore naturally being more cautious.”*

*University Staff Member*

Our main recommendation for HEFCE is therefore that they work together with relevant government departments and agencies and with other HE funding and regulatory bodies to develop a more consistent approach to business, public and community engagement and to knowledge exchange and transfer in order to give HEIs the opportunity to mainstream these activities alongside research and teaching.

***Recommendation 1: HEFCE should work with national partners to develop a more consistent approach across Government to enabling business, public and community engagement, knowledge exchange and transfer.***

This is partly about ensuring there is an enabling environment for different university models to develop and thrive by giving sufficient weight to community engagement and social impact in the various HE funding criteria but also about making other government departments aware of and open to the possibilities of encouraging UCKE.

### **6.2.3 Building on SECC**

Changes in student funding and an increasingly competitive environment could encourage market differentiation with some universities using their community engagement as a recruitment tool. However, it may also encourage a much stronger focus on the bottom line, potentially cutting all activity not seen as core to teaching or research.

Several interviewees noted some level of dissatisfaction with a perceived ‘one size fits all’ approach to Higher Education in the United Kingdom. The SECC projects (like their Beacons counterparts) provide potential pieces of a jigsaw from which different models of Higher Education could be formed. However, overemphasising the differences may undermine the goal of ensuring the HE landscape is supportive of such alternatives. The Russell Group, for example, is a clear advocate for policy and funding that supports high quality research. Is there a similar voice for HEIs interested in public and community engagement and knowledge exchange?

The SECC programme has demonstrated that there are opportunities for useful collaboration on university-community knowledge exchange, as well as potential cost efficiencies. There is also much to gain from learning from other HEIs experiences both within SECC and further afield, including the Beacons project and HE community engagement programmes overseas. Our main strategic recommendation for the SECC university partners interested in continuing to pursue a more systematic approach to UCKE is therefore:

***Recommendation 2: HEI partners should look to facilitate and exchange learning from SECC more widely and work together to provide clearer advocacy for alternative models of Higher Education Institutions.***

This is not to say more cannot be done within the current funding regime and policy environment. Some HEIs have shown real commitment to UCKE at an institutional level in their strategies and plans and their core funding of support infrastructure at an institutional level. A key activity in

support of future UCKE will need to be shaping strategy at an institutional level in order to secure discretionary commitments to UCKE:

*“It is likely that what funding is available for this work will be more at the discretion of individual universities. Therefore, the prime audience of dissemination is likely to be more within HEIs. Initial regional board member responses to the new dissemination films seem to support this.”*

*University Staff Member*

In this context, SECC suggests that some level of supporting infrastructure is probably a fundamental requirement for sustainable knowledge exchange and transfer; providing communities with a clear point of access, ensuring that there is a flow of opportunities for UCKE and supporting academics in their community engagement work. The University of Brighton’s model is one good example but SECC provided others, including hub and spoke models, project offices within specific disciplines and knowledge exchange champions. All have some level of cost implications but this is not to say HEIs cannot go some way towards an effective infrastructure within current funding regimes.

Our final strategic level recommendation for SECC’s HEI partners is therefore:

***Recommendation 3: HEIs should focus what investment is available on developing lean but effective supporting infrastructure for engaging with communities***

## Annex I: Planned Programme Evaluation Framework

### a) A measurable improvement in the capacity of the third sector, including community and voluntary groups, to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their user-groups as a result of the application of the knowledge assets and intellectual capital of HE

SA1:	Number of <b>additional</b> student volunteer hours spent in community organisations as a direct result of SECC activities.	Project level and aggregated
SA2:	<b>Additional</b> increase in turnover of third sector organisations involved with SECC in terms of income, client contact and volunteer hours as a direct result of SECC.	Project level and aggregated
SA3:	Examples of sustainable changes in approach and activity that have occurred within voluntary and community organisations as a direct result of SECC activity.	Project level and aggregated

### b) An increase in high quality community knowledge transfer and exchange in each of the participating institutions

SB1	Increase in the number of approaches to the HEI from community groups for research/consultancy or support as a direct result of SECC activity.	HEI level
SB2	Number of community organisations who say that they are now doing something differently as a direct result of their involvement with SECC.	Project level and aggregated
SB3	Increase in the number of academics and students involved in university-community activities.	HEI level
SB4	An increase in the share of resource dedicated to university-community activities within HEIs after the end of the SECC programme.	HEI level
SB5	Increase in the profile of university-community activity cited in departmental plans.	HEI level

### c) Indicators for strategic partnerships that leverage additional funding and other resource into the university-community projects

SC1	Amount of <b>additional</b> funding levered into university-community knowledge exchange in the last 12 months.	Project level and aggregated
SC2	Amount of <b>additional</b> funding committed to university-community activities from other organisations over the next 12 months.	Project level and aggregated
SC3	The amount of additional external funding committed to university-community activities beyond the life-time of the SECC programme.	Project level and aggregated

### d) A robust and well-received evaluation that both informs wider practice in community knowledge exchange and HEFCE policy in this area.

SD1	A better understanding of how to engage with different groups amongst HEI staff.	Interviews with HEI participants
SD2	A better understanding of how to evaluate different types of university-community knowledge exchange projects amongst HEI staff.	Interviews with HEI participants
SD3	Lessons learned from SECC taken forward locally, regionally and nationally in developing and designing new community-HEI knowledge exchange activities.	Interviews with project leads and academic staff

**e) A sustainable infrastructure for community knowledge exchange in each sub-region**

SE1	The continuation of the local sub-regional SECC board structure (or equivalent structure).	Evident only after the programme
SE2	Increased HEI representation on strategic partnerships that aim to improve the health and wellbeing within their target communities.	Interviews with project board members and strategic partners
SE3	HEIs better recognised by strategic partners as having a distinct and valued contribution to improving health and wellbeing in their areas.	Interviews with strategic stakeholders and review of partnership membership

**f) The effective exchange of good practice and information on university- community engagement across the South East coastal region**

SF1	Number of participants accessing SECC website and participating in SECC social networking activities.	SECC programme level
SF2	Number of lessons that have been learned from other parts of the SECC area that have changed approaches to university-community knowledge exchange.	Interviews with academic and community partners
SF4	Number of participants reporting new links and enhanced understanding of community-HEI knowledge exchange as a result of knowledge exchange events.	Interviews with academic and community partners

**g) Indicators for the enrichment of curricula and teaching and learning practice and the facilitation of new research opportunities and practice**

SG1	Improvements in the teaching assessments in departments involved the SECC programme over and above previous trend improvements.	Evident only after the programme
SG2	Specific examples of <b>sustainable</b> curriculum changes that have occurred as a direct result of SECC.	Project/departmental level and aggregated
SG3	Additional research funding that has been secured as a direct result of SECC.	Departmental level and aggregated
SG4	Number of research papers that have been produced as direct result of SECC.	Departmental level and aggregated

**h) The enhanced status of community knowledge transfer and exchange in the missions of participating HEIs, and in the strategic plans of local Third Sector partners**

SH2	Increase in the number of references to university-community knowledge exchange in strategic and departmental plans.	HEI level
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**i) SECC governance and financial accountability model used as an exemplar for managing complex, multi-partner projects**

SI1	SECC cited as an example of good practice by HEFCE.	Evident only after the programme
SI2	SECC management model replicated in future similar programmes.	Evident only after the programme