UK Climate Resilience Programme Assembly

Online, 23rd September 2021
Summary Report and Forward Plan

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Overview

The Assembly brought together approximately 60 researchers and participant stakeholders from UK Climate Resilience Programme funded projects. The aims of the Assembly were:

- To share knowledge, learning and outputs across the programme
- To expand and consolidate the community of interacting researchers in climate resilience
- To promote programme level synthesis and means of impact

The Assembly took place online and lasted for 3.5 hours. It combined a short update from the Champion team, along with individual tasks using a Google Jamboard, small group breakout sessions, and plenaries.

The UKCR Programme: New, interesting and surprising

Prior to the Assembly, the Champion team created a visual summary of each of the projects on a Jamboard by clustering a small number of icons and key terms around the project name (see the Jamboard saved separately). In the first session of the day, the Assembly participants first reviewed and added to their own project using sticky notes, and then reviewed the visual summaries of other projects. The participants were asked to look for themes and connections across the projects. In small unrecorded breakout groups, they were then asked to share their reflections on what was 'new, interesting or surprising' about the programme's outputs so far, in preparation for a following open-format plenary. Across the discussions, the following themes emerged.

Importance of collaboration now and in the future

The amount and variety of work being produced across the programme was noted, with participants commenting on both the many similarities and overlaps across projects, as well as the diversity between them. It was agreed that there is huge opportunity for UKCR researchers to further collaborate, and some suggestions were made as to how to do this. For example, the Champion team could convene subject or skill specific working groups. Further, there was considerable enthusiasm for finding ways to maintain the resilience research community after the programme ends in 2023. Suggestions were made as to whether this could be formalised through an existing body such as Defra or the Climate Change Committee.

Value of synthesis and impact

Due to the impressive amount of work available, the participants agreed that the programme, led by the Champion team, should now be focusing on synthesising the many outputs into useful resources for the intended audiences. While this should include peer-reviewed journal articles, participants also wanted to see other tools and formats used. In terms of how best to group the projects, several approaches were suggested: by subject e.g. extreme weather events; by their contribution to an end-to-end process starting with climate information through to use of climate services; or by collecting and comparing differing approaches to the same challenge. Further, it was thought that the synthesis should include consideration of skills and learnings, such as how best to undertake meaningful co-production or community participation, and not just scientific findings.

Focusing on the audience

There was strong agreement that the synthesis process needs to focus on the intended audiences and understanding what information they need to contribute to resilience efforts.

How to synthesise and maximise impact

In the second half of the Assembly, the participants were asked to work in small breakout groups to discuss opportunities to strengthen connections and build synergies 1) between projects, 2) across the programme and 3) beyond the programme. After discussing their ideas, the groups added sticky notes to the Jamboard, in preparation for a second open-format plenary.

All of the three themes outlined above returned as principle topics during this session. However, discussions regarding the audience and means of synthesis were extended as detailed below.

Understanding the audience

Feedback from the participants during this session re-emphasised that UKCR's synthesis plans should be led by audience need. The value of really understanding audiences and their diverse requirements was raised with the example of 'policy makers' given, often considered as a single group but who differ in their requirements between government departments and within. Emphasis was also placed on understanding the needs of those who deliver resilience whether that be sector specific practitioners and/or those who are tasked with delivering government policy.

Within the discussion on messaging, it was argued that there is an opportunity to better and more loudly communicate the many benefits of undertaking adaptation to build resilience, including the likely co-benefits to social and economic wellbeing.

Delivering effective synthesis and impact

The current means of sharing information used by the UKCR programme, including the website, twitter and fortnightly webinars, were considered very beneficial in building the resilience network and sharing work across the programme. However, as above, there was further enthusiasm for

building stronger connections between projects and across common themes. Many participants were keen for the Champion team to help facilitate connections through, for example, workshops.

Likewise, participants wanted to see UKCR increasing its impact beyond the programme, both in terms of sharing scientific findings and practice learnings. The participants suggested a large number of ways this might be done including, amongst many others: journal articles, animations and infographics, online and social media content, case studies, policy briefs and interactive engagement sessions such as walking tours.

Some challenges were raised for the UKCR programme to consider as the synthesis plans develop over the coming 18 months. These were the time constraints on many of those working on UKCR projects, particularly for those working outside of academia. Additionally, there are time and other resource constraints on many of the intended audiences, further emphasising the importance of effective, targeted synthesis. While the programme has strengthened the UK resilience research network, it should also be mindful of ensuring that there are 'ways in' for those earlier in their career, from other disciplines and/or working outside of academia. Many projects within the programme, and likely outside of it, have made differing uses of the same or comparable tools, for example climate projections, and addressed the same or comparable real world challenges in differing ways. There is a need to ensure that the collated findings are clear, accessible and useful for the end user.

Early career researchers

In the afternoon, a separate session was held for ECRs connected to the programme. This short, informal session was intended principally as a networking opportunity. The attendees agreed that they would like to further establish a network and develop a series of events. Since the Assembly, the group has set up monthly 'coffee chats', as well as longer, quarterly meetings to share research. To join this network please contact r.s.harcourt@leeds.ac.uk

Beyond the Assembly: moving forward with synthesis and impact

For the remaining 18 months of the programme the Champion team will focus on leading efforts to synthesis the research produced by the programme and to extend its impact with the target audiences.

Target audiences

National
government
Devolved
governments,
sector-based
researchers,
practitioners and
stakeholders

Place-based
audiences,
communities, local
authorities

General public

Figure 1: Key audiences for synthesis outputs

While the UKCR projects have many audiences, the synthesis efforts will focus particularly on producing outputs to share with national government, the devolved administrations, and sector researchers, practitioners and stakeholders, as shown in the two inner circles in Figure 1. This aligns with the aims of SPF-funded research to link up effectively with government priorities and opportunities, and with the programme's ambitions, as stated in its Science Plan, to develop useful and useable research for end-users.

Synthesis outputs

Since the Assembly, the Champion team and the Met Office have been planning the synthesis outputs of the programme. These will include (see Figure 2) a short policy brief summarising the overall contributions of UKCR targeted at high-level government audiences, as well as a peer-reviewed journal article capturing key learning and findings to inform particularly the academic community. We also intend to produce a programme report to provide a 'one stop' location for the programme's principle achievements and contributions, which will be a useful reference for academics and practitioners. All of these activities will happen from mid-2022 and in to early 2023. Over the next 12 months we will work with the UKCR community to gather and prepare the material needed to deliver the final synthesis outputs.
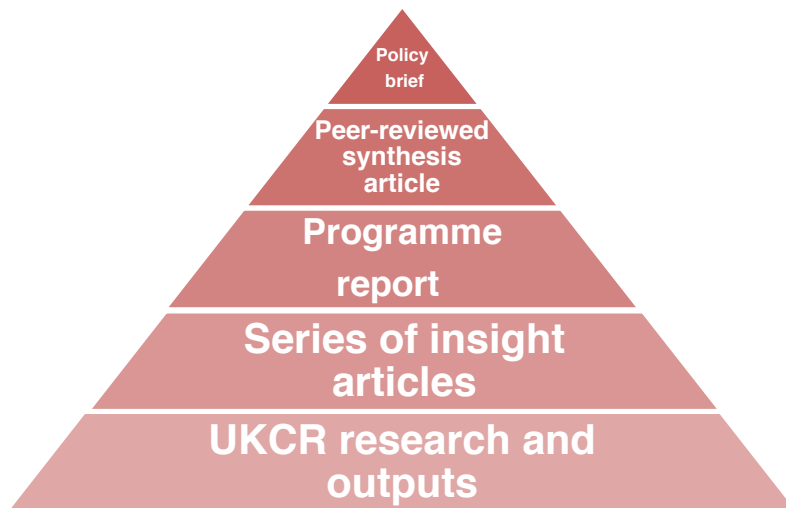
Figure 2: Synthesis outputs

Insight articles

During 2022, we will also engage UKCR researchers to develop a series of insight articles that gather key findings and learning from across the programme to address questions of common interest for climate resilience researchers and practitioners. These short papers (approximately 3,000 words), aimed at an informed audience, will focus on the progress achieved by the programme, its significance, and what needs to be done next. Each article will be linked to an event, such as a webinar or 'think tank' discussion, to share and develop the findings.

The list of topics will likely include the following:

1	National framework for climate services
2	Climate services: scaling up promising practice
3	Managing climate risks
4	Improving physical understanding and confidence of risk
5	From hazards to risks
6	Hazards metric synthesis
7	Future climate information needs
8	Communications mechanisms

9	Decision support tools
10	Improving knowledge systems to enhance policy and practice
11	Stakeholder informed research – a non-academic partner perspective
12	Putting resilience into practice

If you would like to contribute to one or more of the proposed insight articles please contact r.s.harcourt@leeds.ac.uk. Briefs for this work are now being prepared but we would be happy to receive expressions of interest for the above list or other topics.

Additional outputs

As described in more detail above, additional principal challenges coming from the Assembly are: how to better share project information across the programme; how best to ensure that UKCR researchers collaborate for the duration of the programme; and how to maintain the resilience community after the programme ends.

To help address these questions, the Champion team will collaborate with the wider UKCR community on the below:

- A continuation of the fortnightly webinar series, including subject specific sessions drawing on several projects
- A continuation of the virtual fora every two months
- Improving how project updates and highlights are shared within UKCR
- Improved repositories for tools and data on the UKCR website
- A learning-based workshop on co-production
- An end of programme conference or festival

Asks

Given the considerable achievements of the programme so far, our emerging synthesis and impact plans are ambitious and delivering them will be a group effort. We are thus keen to continue to get your views and input on synthesis and impact. Additionally, if there is any synthesis or impact work happening in your project(s) please keep us updated via champion@leeds.ac.uk

The next Virtual Forum is scheduled for **30th November, 11.00-12.30**. Please get in touch if you haven't received the invite.

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