

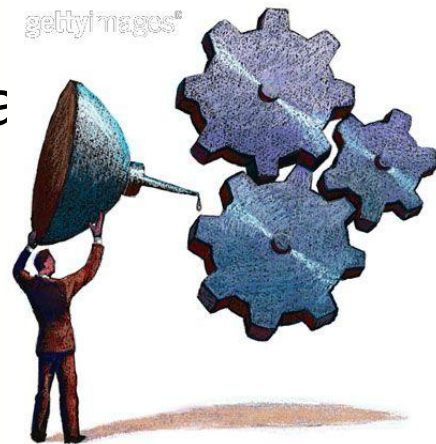
Enhancing the impact of social research on policy

1. Overview of social research in Defra – how we use evidence (Tony Pike)
2. Overview of social research in Defra - examples of on-going planned work (Simon Maxwell)
3. Policy impact of research (Jane Gregory)
4. Effective working with the research community (and key evidence challenges) (Rachel Muckle)

Social Research and Policy in Defra

- Key principles

- ✓ Always draw on the best research, evidence and knowledge (academia, consultancy or agency / lab)
- ✓ Commission to meet current or future policy need (strategic, to develop evidence base and responsive, to specific policy questions)
- ✓ Use 'in-house' professional expertise (GSR) to undertake secondary analysis, be an intelligent customer and policy advisor
- ✓ Critically, what matters is policy impact (but not at expense of research excellence)!



Research into policy – the policy cycle



Research should impact throughout the policy cycle...

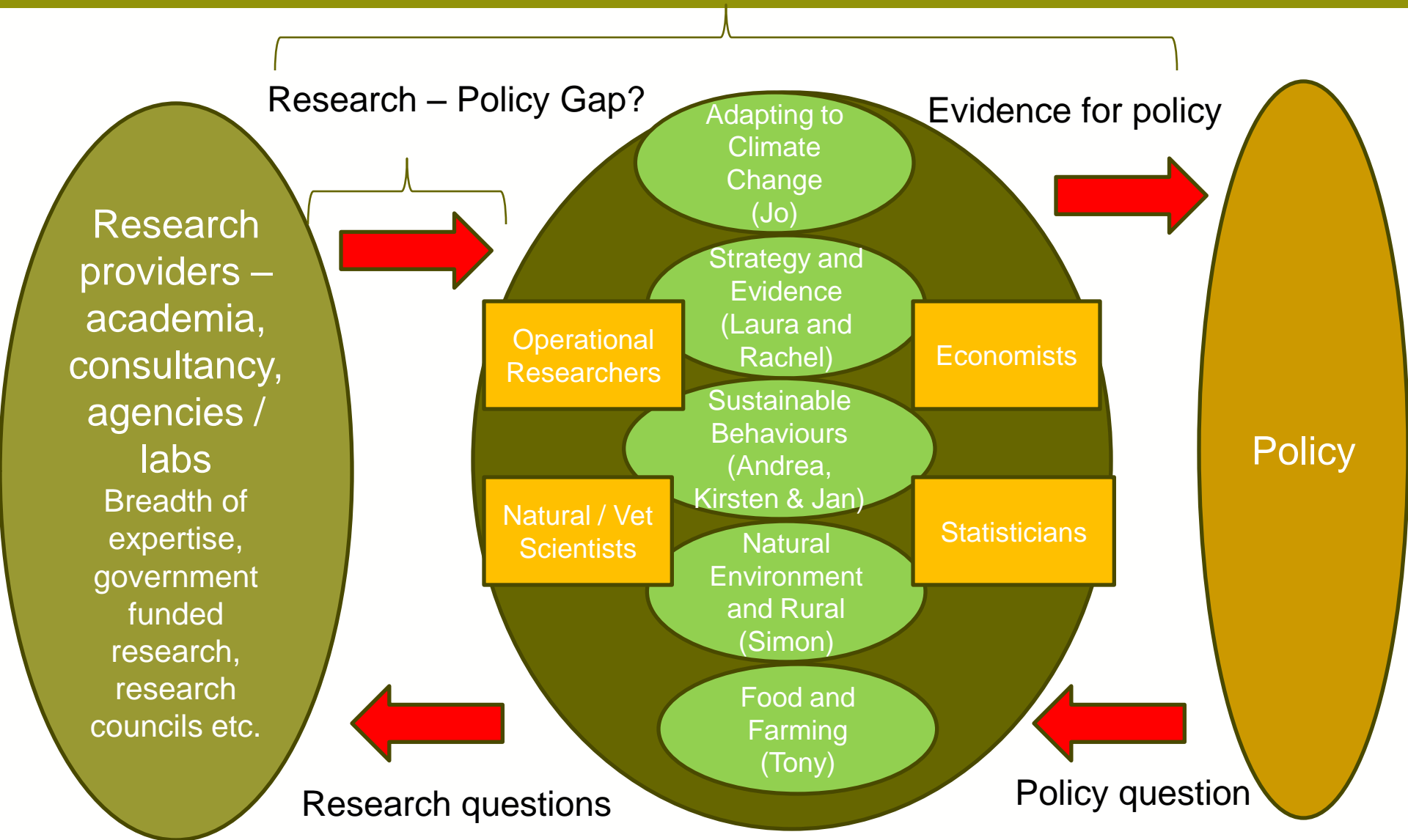
Research into Policy

The role of social researchers



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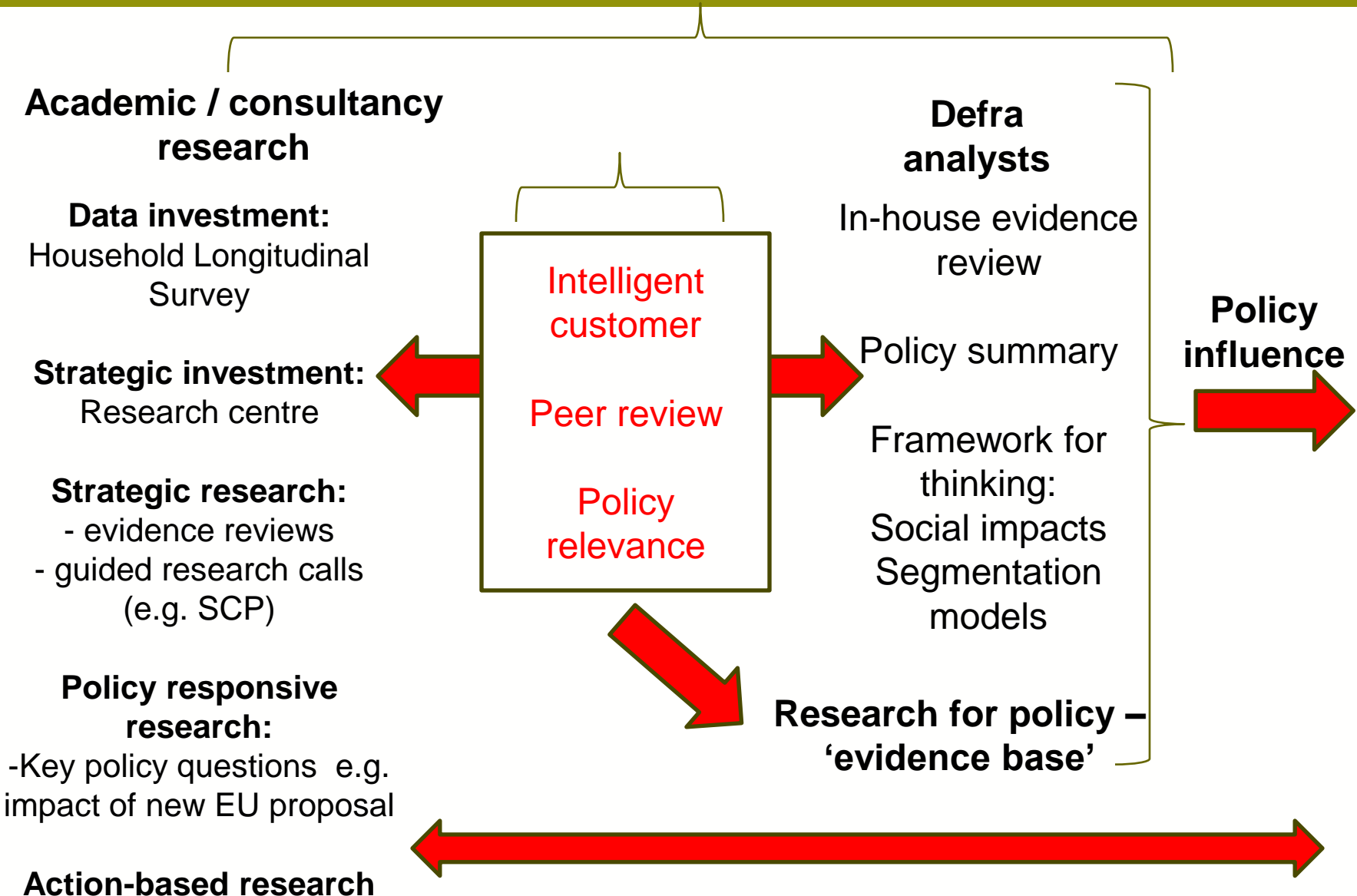
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Working together to deliver robust evidence - The role of social researchers



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Drawing on existing evidence to inform policy



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Understanding Behaviours in a Farming Context: Bringing theoretical and applied evidence together from across Defra and highlighting policy relevance and implications for future research (**November 2008**)

Public Attitudes to Agriculture, the Farmed Landscape and Natural Environment: Drawing on published surveys to provide some observations about public priorities, concerns and implications for policy making (**May 2009**)



On-going cross-cutting work:

- **Social impacts:** Developing a framework to assess the impacts of policy on different groups in society
- **Social capital :** Importance for sustainability appraisal (opportunity for social research to link with economics)
- **Understanding behaviours:** Suite of work to strengthen the people-focus within policy

Illustrative exemplars of Policy-influencing research



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- **Policy review research:** Social justice in the context of flood and coastal erosion risk management: a review of policy and practice.
- **Customer insight (segmentation models):** Farmer (developed 2008); Fishing (developed 2009); Environmental behaviours (public) (developed 2007); business (in development).
- **Evidence base research (building the research base):** SCP / SBU research programmes e.g. testing behaviour theory (habits; catalyst behaviours) and public understandings series.
- **Policy-focussed research (responding directly to policy need):** public understanding of sustainable clothing (secure 'buy-in' for priority actions within policy 'roadmap'); farming in the uplands.



Research within Natural Environment and Rural (Simon).....

Outline of ongoing / planned social research in ERG

- Environment and Rural Group (ERG) policy areas include: biodiversity; domestic climate change adaptation; ecosystem services; flood risk management; marine and fisheries; people and landscapes; rural affairs; water availability and quality ...
- Ongoing / planned social research includes:
 - ACC awareness surveys and CCRA
 - Social impacts of fishing
 - Participatory approaches to ecosystem services decision-making
 - Social research evidence reviews to inform natural environment policy
 - Advice and other support, e.g., Social capital in rural areas, REACH evaluation

Adapting to Climate Change awareness surveys

- The aim is to obtain evidence on awareness of climate change adaptation and track change over time
- The objectives are:
 - To establish a quantitative baseline of organisational awareness, understanding and motivations in relation to climate change adaptation
 - To undertake qualitative research and establish a qualitative baseline of awareness to supplement quantitative data
- The surveys will target organisations, regional and local government, other public sector, private sector and third sector organisations

Social impacts of fishing

- The aim of the study is to assess the social impacts of the fishing industry and the values and meanings attached to it by a range of stakeholders. The research will also assess the possible social impacts of a range of future management options
- The study will focus particularly on inshore or small scale coastal fisheries and is intended to inform the SAIF policy project
- For the fishing industry as it is currently organised and future scenarios, the study will assess:
 - What are the social impacts?
 - Who experiences the social impacts, positively and negatively?
 - Where and when do social impacts occur, and what are the variations in different areas and at different times?
 - In what circumstances and why do social impacts occur?

Participatory approaches to ecosystem services decision-making

- Joint NESU/NEE project in part following an action identified in ‘Securing a healthy natural environment: an action plan for embedding an ecosystems approach’ (Defra, 2007)
- The project aims to review participatory approaches to ecosystem services decision-making and produce guidelines to help decision-makers and analysts use appropriate methods
- The project will seek to establish the contribution that participatory techniques can make to improve the way in which non-monetary costs and benefits are taken into account in valuation and appraisal
- The study will focus on key points in policy and decision-making processes that impact on ecosystem services

Social research evidence reviews to inform natural environment policy

- Aim is to ensure that key social research findings from a broad evidence base are accessible to natural environment policy and decision makers in ERG
- Research team will conduct a brief overview of social research in ERG policy areas, then determine 2-3 key areas and/or challenges on which to focus, which may be cross-cutting
- The review will include social research which focuses directly on the policy issues and challenges identified, and draw on social research from other policy domains where this will improve understanding of key aspects of programme design and delivery

Some observations ...

- High interest in social research - but potential for lots of small projects, and fragmented approach
- Opportunities?
 - Integrated and holistic approach where appropriate, esp for complex analytical problems, involving collaboration within government and between academic disciplines
 - Public understanding, and citizen and stakeholder engagement
 - Implementation and delivery - working with stakeholders
 - Evaluation, e.g., process and outcome evaluation; what works, for whom, in what circumstances and why?

Conclusions and next steps

- Balance between reactive and proactive, and between externally commissioned research and internal analysis
- Make good use of existing external evidence and expertise, e.g., expert workshops, REAs, systematic reviews
- Interdisciplinary approach where appropriate, collaboration with other analysts and natural scientists, with external research community, across policy areas, OGDs etc
- We'd welcome comments and ideas ...