



# Climate policy: from academic knowledge to impact

Andy Jordan

Tyndall Conference Masterclass, 9.9.25

[www.brexitenvironment.co.uk](http://www.brexitenvironment.co.uk);  
[@BrexitEnv](#)



# Contents

- What is Impact (or 'knowledge/evidence use') and why engage in it?
- What is policy? Different steps and stages.
- Theories and models of evidence use
- The REF – the research evaluation framework
- 'How to' achieve policy impact
  - A case study – Informing Policy for a Greener Brexit (2013-20)
- Tips for communicating to policy makers
- Resources, further reading etc.

# What is Impact?

*"an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, **beyond academia**".*

REF-Research

England

*"The **demonstrable** contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy"*

UKRI

**Impact = Demonstrable change beyond academia.....**

# Academic motivations to generate impact

- Its part of being an academic (REF etc.)
- Research funders increasingly require it
- Desire to better understand policy making
- Personal motivations – to change the world? Salary enhancement (consultancy)?
- Other things?

# What is (public) policy?

A complex phenomenon consisting of *numerous decisions made by many individuals and organisations inside government, while these decisions are influenced by others operating within and outside of the state. Public policy is, at its simplest, a choice made by government to undertake some course of action*"

*Howlett et al. (eds) (2022) Dictionary of Public Policy. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham. p195*

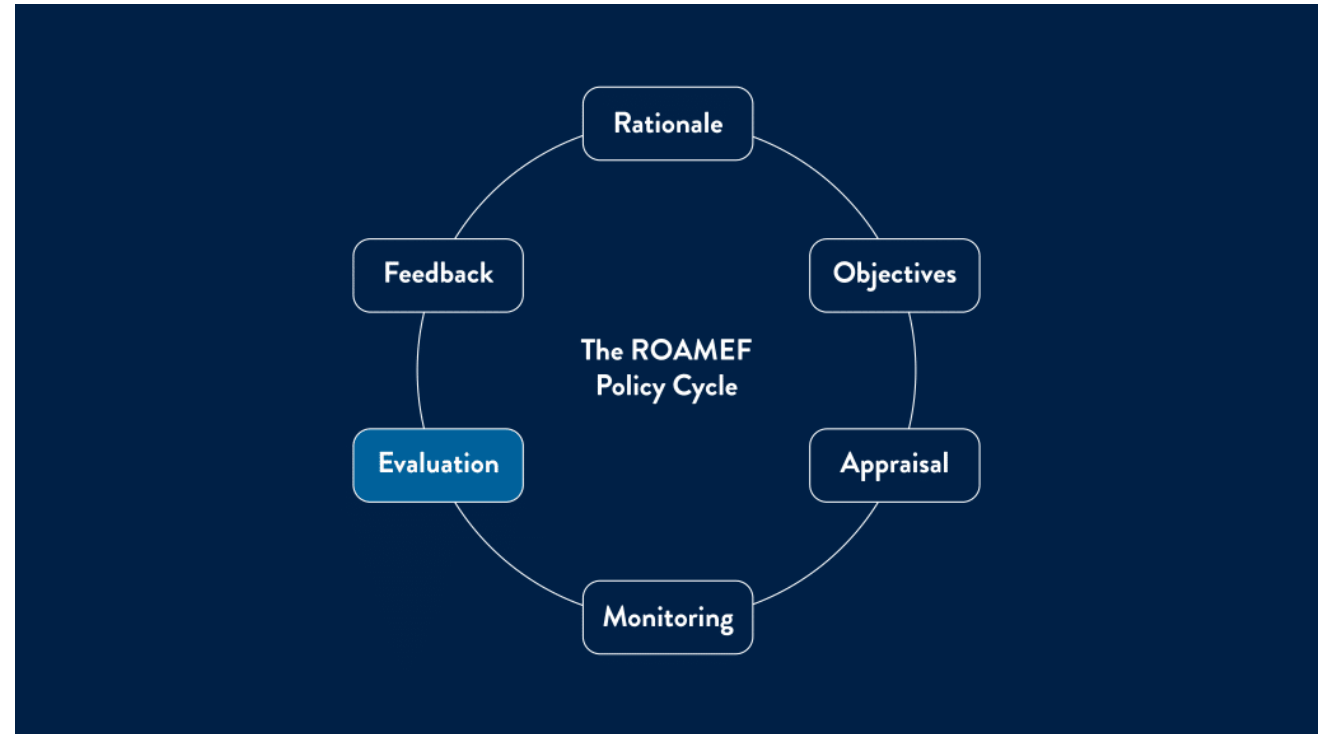
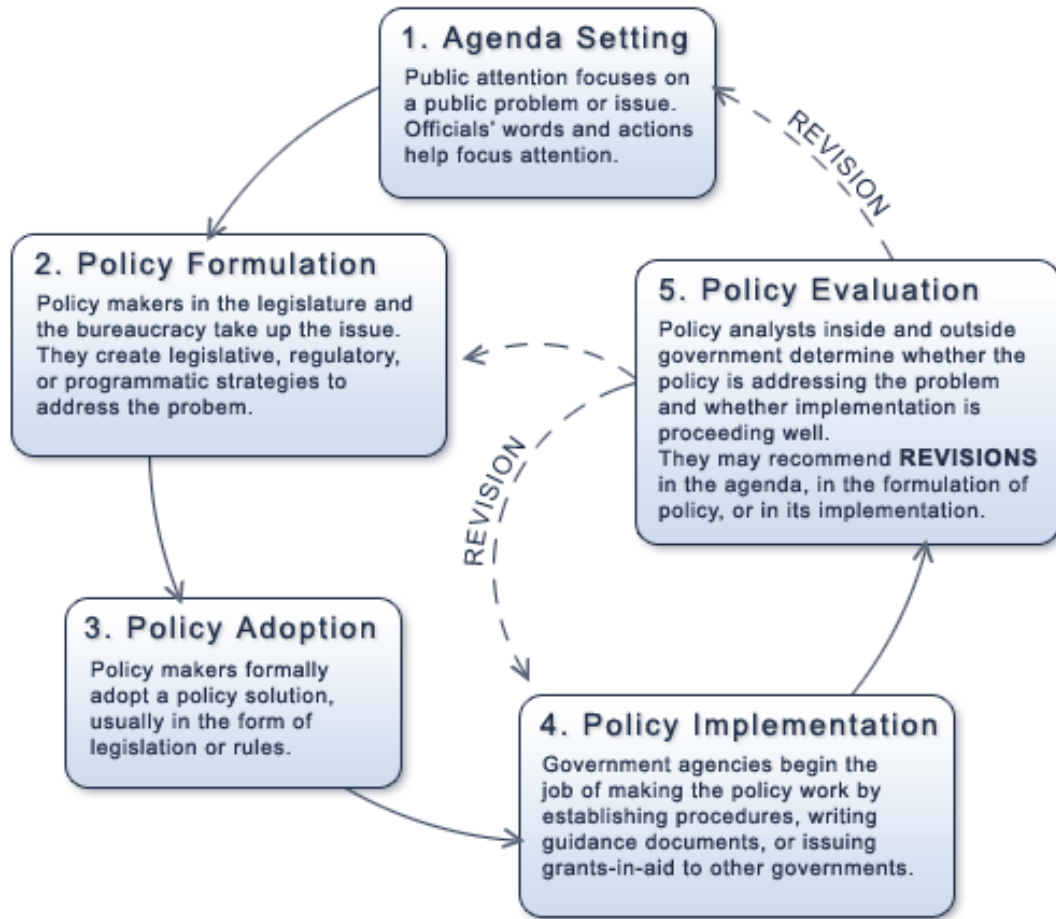


# What is (public) policy?

“the sum total of government action, from signals of intent to the final outcomes”

*Policy in 500 Words: what is public policy and why does it matter? | Paul Cairney: Politics & Public Policy. 28 April 2016.*

# The policy stages – or cycle



HMG - The Green and Magenta books



# Why do policy makers seek evidence?

- They seek a better course of action – a guide to improvement
- They distrust information fed to them by other sources – a corrective
- They seek legitimacy for their policy actions – a source of integrity
- They want material that supports their *a priori* position – a source of ammunition
- They want to appear ‘modern’ – a source of expertise
- They want to know how much things cost – what is cost effective?



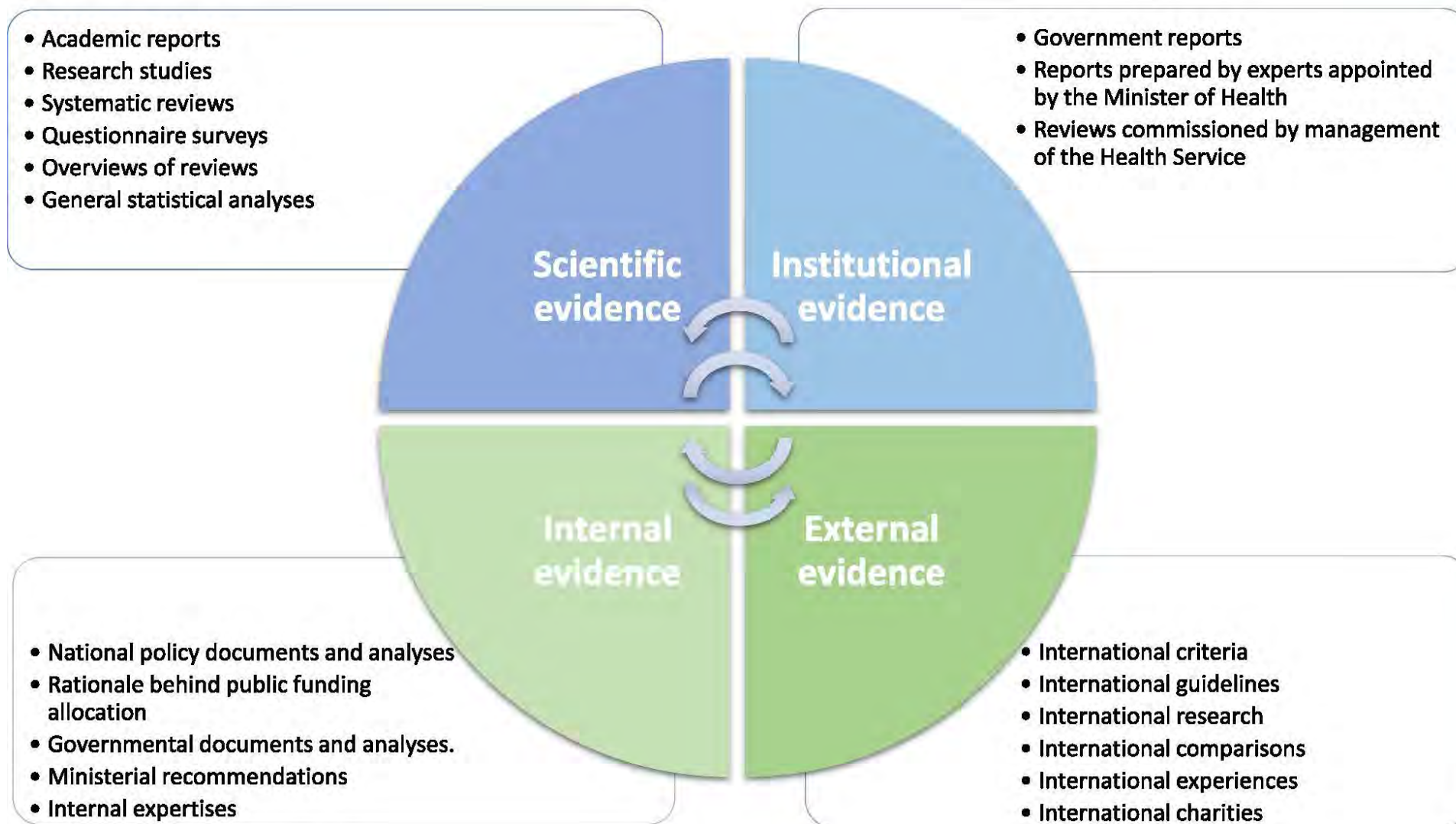
**Carole Weiss (Harvard)**

The ‘grandmother’  
of evidence-based policy?

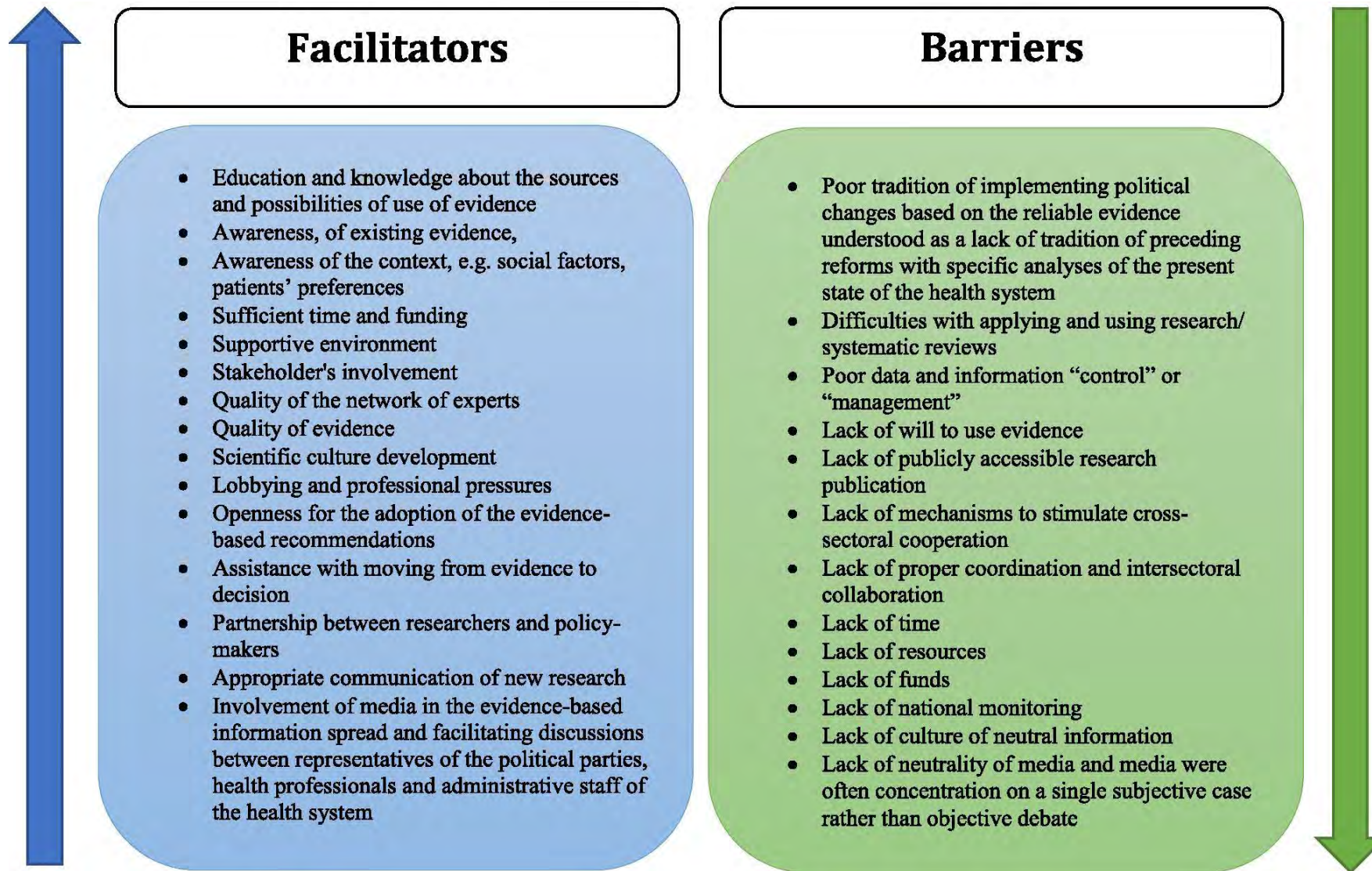
Weiss, C. (1999) The Interface Between Evaluation and Public Policy, *Evaluation*, 5, 4, 468-486.







Zdunek, K., Alexander, D., Schröder-Bäck, P. et al. Factors influencing the uptake of evidence in child health policy-making: results of a survey among 23 European countries. *Health Res Policy Sys* **19**, 136 (2021).



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# The rise of evidence-based policy making

## Chief Scientific Advisers

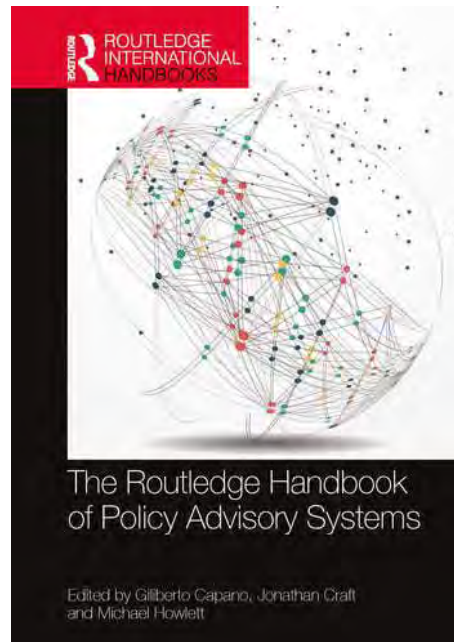
Most government departments have a Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) to provide scientific advice.

### Contents

- Role
- Membership
- Guidance

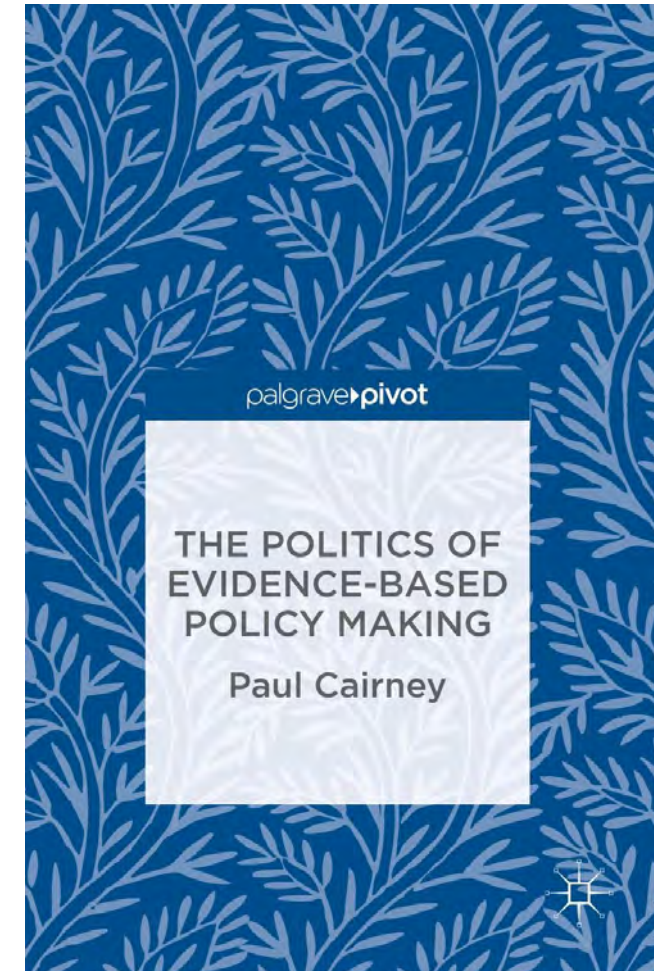
Departmental CSAs work together under the leadership of the [Government Chief Scientific Adviser](#) to support each other and to resolve cross departmental problems.

They do this primarily through the CSA network.



## What Works Network Strategy

Evaluation Task Force

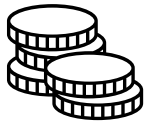


# Increasing research-policy activity

“a vast and increasing mass of rudderless activity, which is *busy rather than effective*. Without clear goals, and without strategic coordination, it is impossible to pick out any signal over the noise. Worse, *without clearly collecting and building on existing evidence about these... interventions, or a well-founded understanding of the decision-making context, there are almost certainly harms being inflicted ... wasted time and resources, reduced goodwill and interaction, and increased inequalities in terms of participation in evidence production and use*” (Oliver et al. 2022: 704)



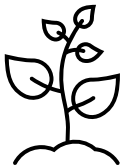
# REF: Purposes of the Assessment



- 1) To inform the **allocation of block grant funding** based on research quality (c.£1.6 billion each year in block grant funding across the UK).



- 2) To provide **accountability for public investment** in research (not just in terms of funding investment)..



- 3) To provide **insights into the health of research in the UK** (the REF is a hugely important source of data about how the research system is performing).

# Impact = 25% of the REF outcome

66. A schematic to illustrate the relationship between submissions and assessment is provided below



In REF2021 Impact was weighted at 25% and a 4\* case study was worth on average £58k - £113k/year to an institution\*\*.

A 4\* ICS is worth 4x as much as a 3\* ICS.

For REF2029 each Unit of Assessment (UoA), the Impact component is made up of:

- **Impact case studies**
- **An impact evidence statement (NEW)**

\*\*Range in values of a 4\* case taken from: <https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/post/how-much-are-ref2021-4-impact-case-studies-and-4-outputs-worth>



# Examples: different impact types

## **Impacts on commerce and the economy**

- A spin-out or new business has been created, established its viability, or generated revenue or profits.
- Contributing to innovation and entrepreneurial activity through the design and delivery of new products or services.
- Gains in productivity have been realised as a result of research-led changes in practice.

## **Impacts on public policy, law and services**

- Policy debate has been stimulated or informed by research evidence, which may have led to confirmation of policy, change in policy direction, implementation or withdrawal of policy.
- Risks to the security of nation states have been reduced.
- A policy has been implemented (including those realised through changes to legislation) or the delivery of a public service has changed.

## **Impacts on the environment**

- The environment has been improved through the introduction of new product(s), process(es) or service(s); the improvement of existing product(s), process(es) or services; or the enhancement of strategy, operations or management practices.
- New methods, models, monitoring or techniques have been developed that have led to changes or benefits.
- The management or conservation of natural resources, including energy, water and food, has changed in a developing country.



# Anatomy of an ICS

Impact case study (REF3)

REF2021

Institution:		
Unit of Assessment:		
Title of case study:		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Period when the claimed impact occurred:		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? Y/N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)		
4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)		
5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)		

## ICS = 5 Pages total

### Research

- Impacts must be **underpinned by research undertaken at submitting institution.**
- Research from **c.2008**

### Evidence

- Case studies must provide **evidence to support impact claims & link claims back to the research**  
e.g. testimonials, guidelines/policy/independent reports citing research by submitting institution.

### Impact

- Impact from **c.Aug 2020/Jan 2021** (TBC)

# Starred quality levels

**Table A3: Impact sub-profile: Criteria and definitions of starred levels**

**The criteria for assessing impacts are 'reach' and 'significance':**

- In assessing the impact described within a case study, the panel will form an overall view about its 'reach and significance' taken as a whole, rather than assess 'reach and significance' separately.

Four star	Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Three star	Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Two star	Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
One star	Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance.
Unclassified	The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit.

Table from Annex A of the REF21 Guidance on Submissions: <https://2021.ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/guidance-on-submissions-201901/index.html>

# ‘How to’ achieve policy Impact

- Do high quality research
  - Understand the policy process
- Make your research relevant and readable
- Be ‘accessible’ – engage routinely, flexibly and humbly
  - Build relationships and ground rules
- Decide your role – an ‘issue advocate’ or an ‘honest broker’?
- Build relationships (and ground rules) with policy makers
- Be entrepreneurial – invest for the long term
  - But look for windows of opportunity
- Reflect continuously and critically
  - Keep track of what you do

**‘Influencing policy is a specialist, time consuming activity’ that takes huge cognitive and emotional labour, often requiring community and institutional support’ (page 9)**

Cairney and Oliver (2020) How Should Academics Engage in Policy Making to Achieve Impact?, *Political Studies Review*, 18, 2, 228-244. (Systematic review, n=86)

Government

## Eight Tips for Communicating Ideas to Busy Policymakers

How foundations, nonprofits, and others can effectively convey—and convince policymakers to support—their programs and proposals for social change.

CITE

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PRINT

ORDER REPRINTS

By [Lisa Witter & Odette Chalaby](#) | Dec 3, 2018

It's easy to forget that a lot of policy decisions aren't made by the politicians we see in the press every day. Often the real power to implement new ideas lies below the radar—with

Chalaby, O., & Witter, L. (2018). Eight Tips for Communicating Ideas to Busy Policymakers. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*



# Eight tips for communicating ideas ...

1. Policy makers are time poor
2. Process, timeliness and scalability matter
3. Be upfront about risks, uncertainties and challenges
4. Focus on concrete results, and ideally solve multiple problems
5. Avoid factual overload
6. Need to do new research? Make it clear which partners you need and what it will cost
7. Bolster your case with existing 'real world' implementation examples
8. Stay as apolitical as possible

Chalaby, O., & Witter, L. (2018). Eight Tips for Communicating Ideas to Busy Policymakers. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*



# A Case Study of Impact – Greener Brexit



# Phase 1 – pre-Referendum

- A Review of the Balance of Competences exercise – led by the Cabinet Office
- Cameron promised to hold an in out referendum – then unexpectedly won the 2015 General election.

 **GOV.UK**

[Home](#) > [Government](#) > [Europe](#) > [European Union laws and regulation](#)

Guidance

## Review of the balance of competences

The review of the balance of competences will be an audit of what the EU does and how it affects the UK.

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From: [Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#)  
Published 12 December 2012  
Last updated 18 December 2014 — [See all updates](#)

 [Get emails about this page](#)





# Phase 2 – the 2016 Referendum

- The environmental movement sided with Remain, citing a range of expert reports; Leave said nothing.
- The referendum itself was emotional and values based; experts were dismissed.

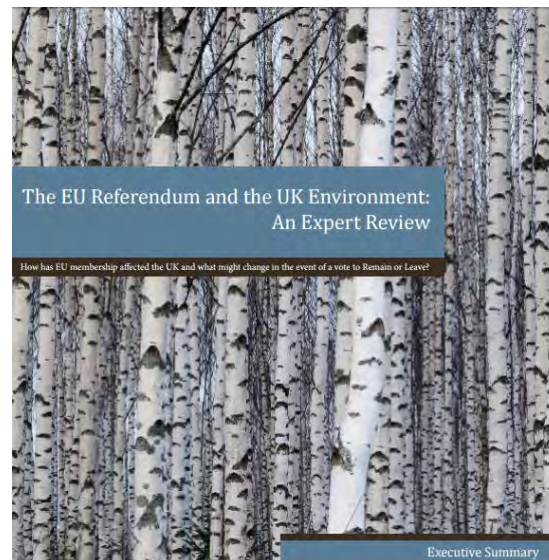


March 2016

**The potential policy and environmental consequences for the UK of a departure from the European Union**

Prepared by:  
Institute for European Environmental Policy

In collaboration with:



## *Phase 3 – The Brexit years*

- B&E network ('think tank')
- Greener–UK
- Parliamentary work (4 nations)
- Advisory work (DEFRA, EEA etc.)
- Consultancy work – Friends of the Earth, TCPA, Soil Association etc.





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ANALYSING HOW  
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@BrexitEnv



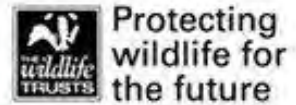
## *Phase 3 – The Brexit years*

- Established the B&E network ('think tank')
- Aligned with/advised Greener–UK
- Parliamentary work (acrees 4 nations)
- Advisory work (DEFRA, EEA etc.)
- Consultancy work – Friends of the Earth, TCPA, Soil Association etc.



# Greener UK

<https://greeneruk.org/>





# Phase 4 – post Brexit

- Informed the post Brexit landscape – the Env Act; the REUL Act; the OEP etc.
- Advised on post Brexit governance – the OEP and the ‘Gravey review’ of governance in NI



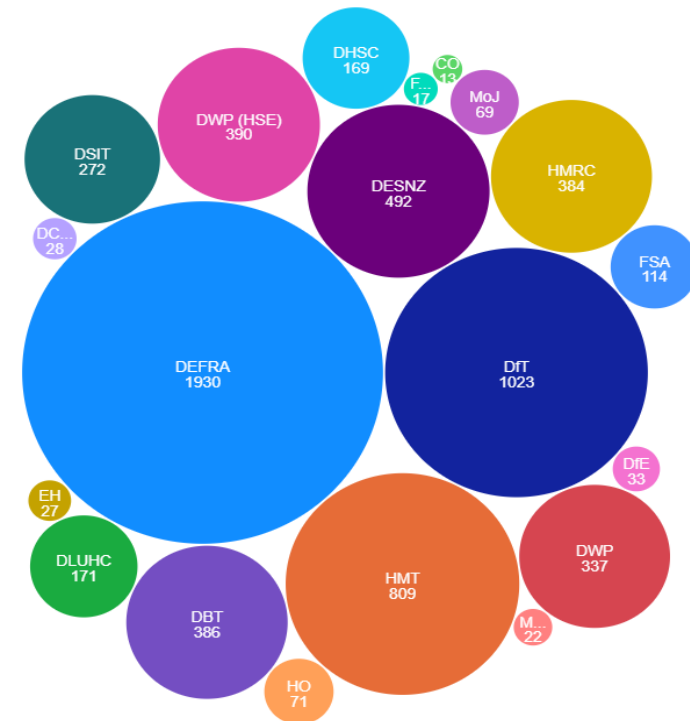
# The 2023 Retained EU (Revocation and Reform) Act

[Guidance](#) [REUL Map](#) [REUL Explorer](#)

This page contains a map of retained EU law (now known as assimilated law). You can hover over the department name to view details.

**Interactivity:** Click on an area of a visualisation to highlight that selection in both charts. CTRL+ left click to select multiple objects. To clear your selection(s) either click the selection again or click in the white space of the selected chart.

Lead Department	Department Name	Number Of REUL
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	1930
DfT	Department for Transport	1023
HMT	HM Treasury	809
DESNZ	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero	492
DWP (HSE)	The Health & Safety Executive	390
DBT	Department for Business and Trade	386
HMRC	HM Revenue and Customs	384
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions	337
DSIT	Department for Science, Innovation and Technology	272
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Commu...	171
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care	169
FSA	Food Standards Agency	114
HO	Home Office	71
MoJ	Ministry of Justice	69
DfE	Department for Education	33
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media & Sport	28
Total		6757





## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of East Anglia		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 7 – Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Informing Policy for A Greener Brexit		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 1/1/2000 – 31/12/2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Andrew Jordan	Professor	1992 – present
Tim Rayner	Research Fellow	1/6/2006 – present
Brendan Moore	Senior Research Associate	1/8/2018 - present
Viviane Gravey	Research Associate	1/1/2015 – 31/9/2016
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1/8/2013 – 31/7/20		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		

# Examples: different impact types

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- New methods, models, monitoring or techniques have been developed that have led to changes or benefits.
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# Impacts (pre and post referendum)

- Policy – 2018 EUWA; 2021 Env Act
- New institutions – the OEP etc.
- Parliamentary work (4 nations)
- NGO tactics, strategies + targets



are transforming the landscape of UK environmental policy and governance. According to the *Chair of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, Jordan* “undoubtedly shaped the post Brexit environmental regulatory environment at the highest levels of parliament and government ... through a tumultuous period of British political life” [S2a].



# Power List 2025: Dr Viviane Gravey

ENDS

22 May 2025

Senior lecturer in European politics, Queen's University Belfast



# ‘How to’ achieve policy Impact

- Do high quality research
  - Understand the policy process
- Make your research relevant and readable
- Be ‘accessible’ – engage routinely, flexibly and humbly
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‘Influencing policy is a ‘specialist, time consuming activity’ that takes huge cognitive and emotional labour, often requiring community and institutional support’ (page 9)

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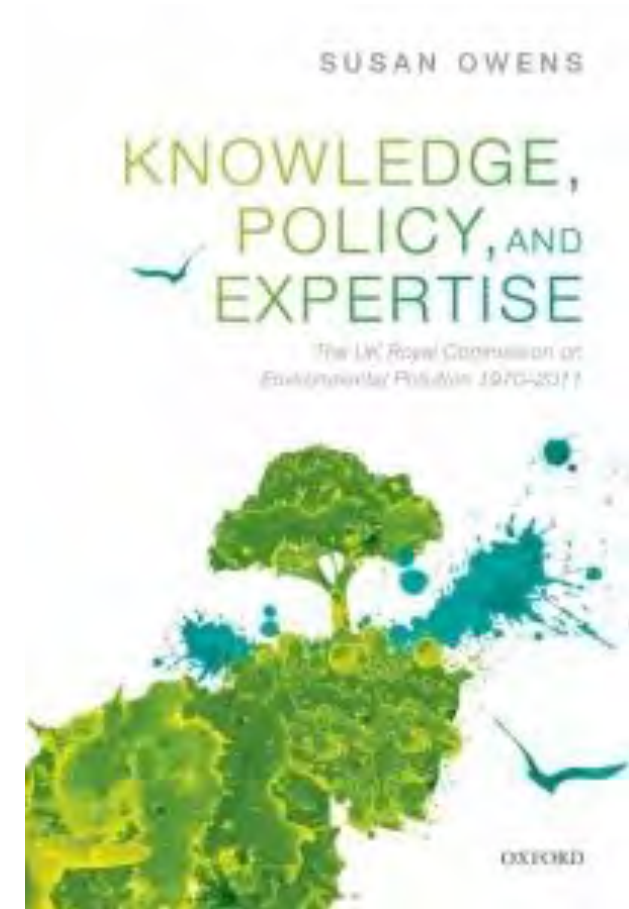
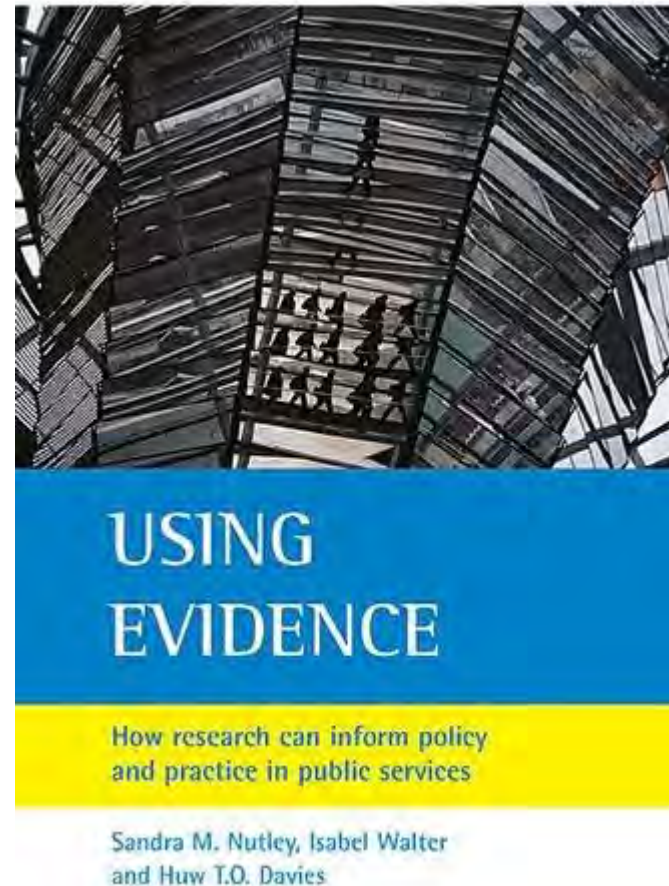
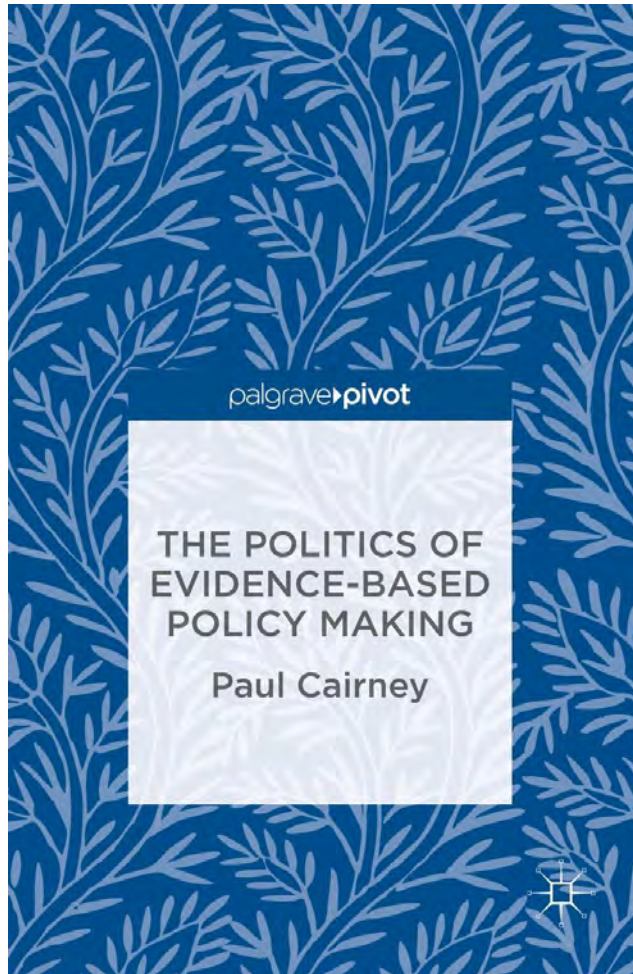
# Conclusions

- ‘Impact’ (or ‘knowledge utilisation’) is here to stay ....
- Academics seeking policy impact are not short of advice ...
  - There are lots of guides and handbooks .... and some pointed critiques.
- But there are no silver bullets
  - the process is complex and political; impact requires long term commitment; there are moral and ethical dilemmas to be negotiated; and there are structural inequalities – on both sides
- Hence: (1) think before you impact; (2) engage with the policy process that exists, *not* the process you wish existed.
- Take time to understand: the importance of how, for whom, when and how public policy is made (the ‘public policy 101’), all within complex ‘ecosystems’ of knowledge use.





# Academic studies



# ‘How to’ guides

[Home](#) > [Economic and Social Research Council \(ESRC\)](#) > [Impact toolkit for economic and social sciences](#) > [How to influence policymakers](#)

## How to influence policymakers



### Contents

- **Introduction**
- Why public affairs are important
- Social science and public affairs
- Presenting your case
- Different types of policymakers
- Working with parliament
- Building and maintaining contacts
- Support from specialist agencies

### Introduction

This guidance covers public affairs – the process by which you can influence



# Impact case Studies from REF21



- Searchable Database (no scores):  
<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/impact>
- Top scoring institutions in each UoA can be explored here:  
<https://www.stephenckemp.co.uk/ref2021-top-5-impact-case-studies/>

# Academic accounts of Brexit

- Burns, C., Gravey, V., Jordan, A.J. and A. Zito (2019) De-Europeanizing or Disengaging? EU Environmental Policy and Brexit. Environmental Politics 28, 2, 271-292.
- Gravey, V. and A.J. Jordan (2023) UK environmental policy and Brexit: simultaneously de-Europeanising, disengaging and (re)-engaging? Journal of European Public Policy, 30, 11, 2349-2371.
- Abbott, C. and M. Lee (2021) Environmental Groups and Legal Expertise: Shaping the Brexit Process. UCL Press, London.







# Climate policy: from academic knowledge to impact

Andy Jordan

Tyndall Conference Masterclass, 9.9.25

[www.brexitenvironment.co.uk](http://www.brexitenvironment.co.uk);  
[@BrexitEnv](https://twitter.com/BrexitEnv)





## Box 2.1: Seven different 'meanings' of research use

### (1) The knowledge-driven model

Basic research identifies knowledge of potential value to the policy or practice community. Applied research tests this knowledge out in real-world contexts, research-based technologies are developed and implemented and research use occurs.

### (2) The problem-solving model

Research helps policy makers find a solution to a particular problem. Researchers and policy makers agree about the nature of the problem and the goals to be achieved, and social science provides evidence and ideas to help clarify a way forward – drawing on existing research or commissioning new work.

### (3) The interactive model

Policy makers actively and interactively search for knowledge to help support their work, drawing on multiple sources of information – including their own experience – alongside research. The relationship between policy and research is typically iterative, messy and dynamic, and progress is gradual, involving 'mutual consultations' between policy makers, researchers and other players in the political process.

### (4) The political model

Where political opinions are long standing and fixed, or where interests have firmly coalesced, research is unlikely to have a direct influence. Instead it may be used politically, to support a particular stance, or else to destabilise opposing positions.

### (5) The tactical model

Sometimes, the findings from research are irrelevant: what matters is that research is being done. Funding or conducting new research can be a way for policy makers to avoid taking action. Researchers may be blamed for unpopular policy outcomes; or else research 'experts' can be drafted in to give legitimacy to an agency or its policies.

### (6) The enlightenment model

Over time, research will have a gradual and cumulative influence on the public policy sphere. Ideas, theories and ways of thinking that derive from the broad body of research-based knowledge gradually seep into the policy-making process through diverse and indirect routes, such as interest groups, journalists and the mass media. Research can thereby shape the ways both problems and their solutions are framed and can ultimately lead to fundamental shifts in the prevailing policy paradigm.

### (7) Research as part of the intellectual enterprise of society

New policy interest in an issue may be stimulated by a wider social concern, and policy makers offer funds for its further research. Researchers are thereby drawn to study it, and may develop and reconceptualise the issue. This in turn shapes ways of thinking by both policy makers and at a broader societal level as well. The process is one of mutual, ongoing influence between policy, research and the social context within which both are embedded.

Source: Adapted from Weiss (1979)



# USING EVIDENCE

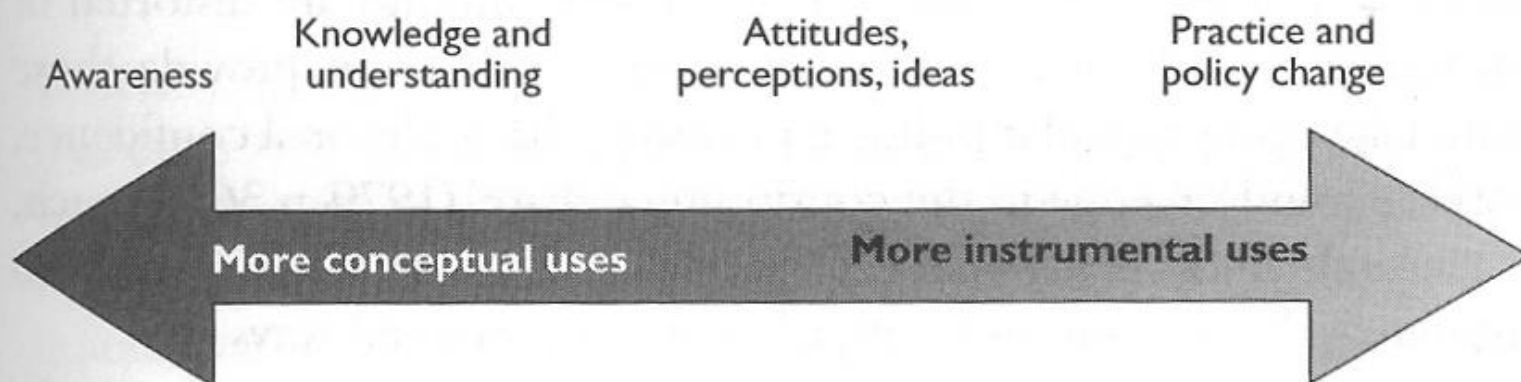
How research can inform policy  
and practice in public services

Sandra M. Nutley, Isabel Walter  
and Huw T.O. Davies





**Figure 2.1: A continuum of research use**

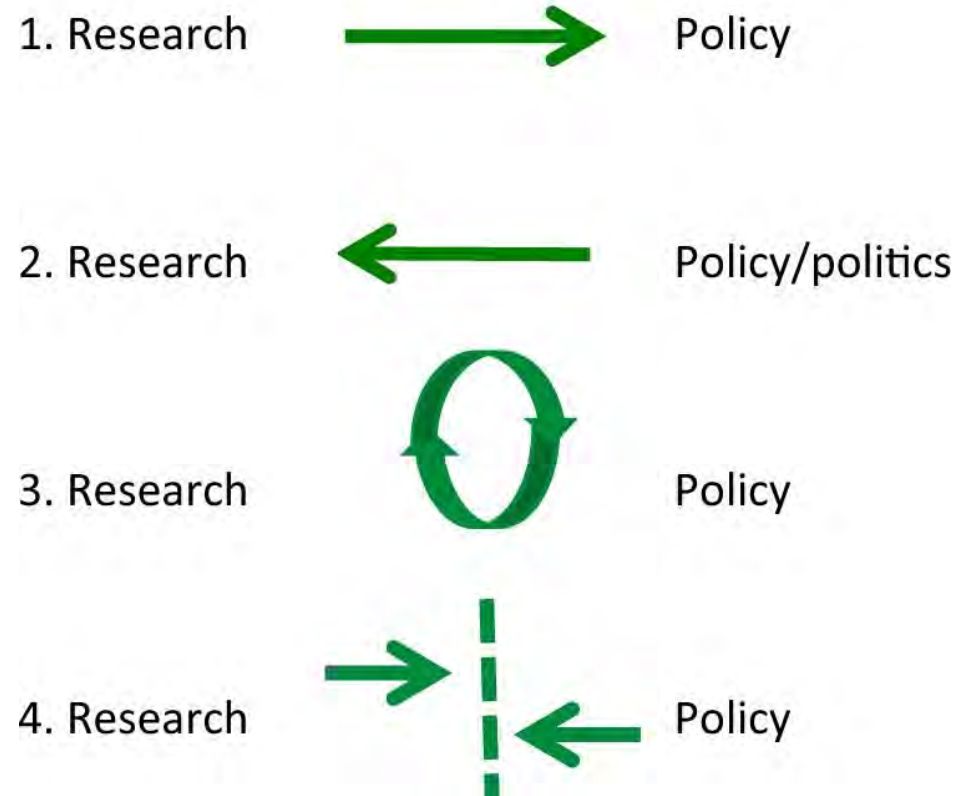


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and Huw T.O. Davies

## Research-Policy Relations



Boswell, C., Smith, K. Rethinking policy 'impact': four models of research-policy relations. *Palgrave Commun* **3**, 44 (2017).

# What is the Research Excellence Framework (REF)?

- The **Research Excellence Framework (REF)** assesses research quality of all UK HEIs. based on **outputs, impacts** and **environment** (with new names for REF29).
  - **Impact & Engagement** will be worth **25%** of the overall REF score in REF2029.
  - Contribution to knowledge is 50%
  - People, culture and environment is weighted at 25%
- The next REF submission will be late **2028**, with results in 2029.

# How are REF ICS Scored?

- **ICS assessed via peer review and user reviews**
- Assessed on the **reach** and **significance** of the impact.

## Reach

The extent and/or diversity of the beneficiaries of the impact, as relevant to the nature of the impact.

Reach will be assessed in terms of the extent to which the potential constituencies, number or groups of beneficiaries have been reached; it will not be assessed in purely geographic terms, nor in terms of absolute numbers of beneficiaries. The criteria will be applied wherever the impact occurred, regardless of geography or location, and whether in the UK or abroad.

## Significance

The degree to which the impact has enabled, enriched, influenced, informed or changed the performance, policies, practices, products, services, understanding, awareness or wellbeing of the beneficiaries.

## Rigour (new to REF29)

To ensure that appropriate focus is placed on the process of delivering impact, alongside its outcomes (expect this to be important in the impact statement).

## Scoring:

- U (little or no impact),
- 1\* (recognised but modest impact),
- 2\* (considerable impact),
- 3\* (very considerable impact),
- 4\* (outstanding reach / significance)

## Evidencing the link between research and impact

Case studies must link impacts and activities to underpinning research. Case studies must provide evidence to support impact claims.



# Evidence of impact

*“Each case study must provide a clear and coherent narrative that includes an account of who or what audiences, constituencies, groups, organisations, places, publics, sectors and so on, have benefited, been influenced, or acted upon. The sub-panels will use their expert judgement regarding the integrity, coherence and clarity of the narrative of each case study, but will expect the key claims made in the narrative to be supported by evidence and indicators.”*

*“In assessing impact case studies, sub-panels will consider both the evidence linking excellent research and bodies of work within the submitting unit to the impact(s) claimed, recognising that this relationship can be indirect or non-linear, and the evidence of the reach and significance of the impact. Within their narrative account in the case study, submitting units should provide the indicators and evidence most appropriate to support the impact(s) claimed.”*

'Panel criteria and working methods' REF21 guidance: <https://2021.ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/panel-criteria-and-working-methods-201902/index.html>

# Good impact evidence

## Good evidence of research impact will demonstrate:

- 1.) The **specific *change* or *benefit*** that has occurred (the *what?*)
- 2.) **Who** has been affected/benefited (the *who?*)
- 3.) **Attribution to you research**
- 4.) The **reach and significance** of the impact within the **context**

## Indicators of research impact should be:

- **Timely** e.g. within a reporting period for your funder/REF window, while any relevant external stakeholders are in post, in time to correct your course of action should things not be working as you'd hoped.
- **Robust and credible** e.g. from the appropriate credible third party, external to the submitting institution.
- **Linked to clear targets or baselines** to allow you to demonstrate the importance of a change within the context of the problem (e.g. a before and after comparison).

## A NETWORK OF ACADEMIC EXPERTS ANALYSING HOW BREXIT IS AFFECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

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Dr George Asiamah

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## **‘Deeply concerning’: Government slammed by OEP as on track to meet just 10% of green targets**

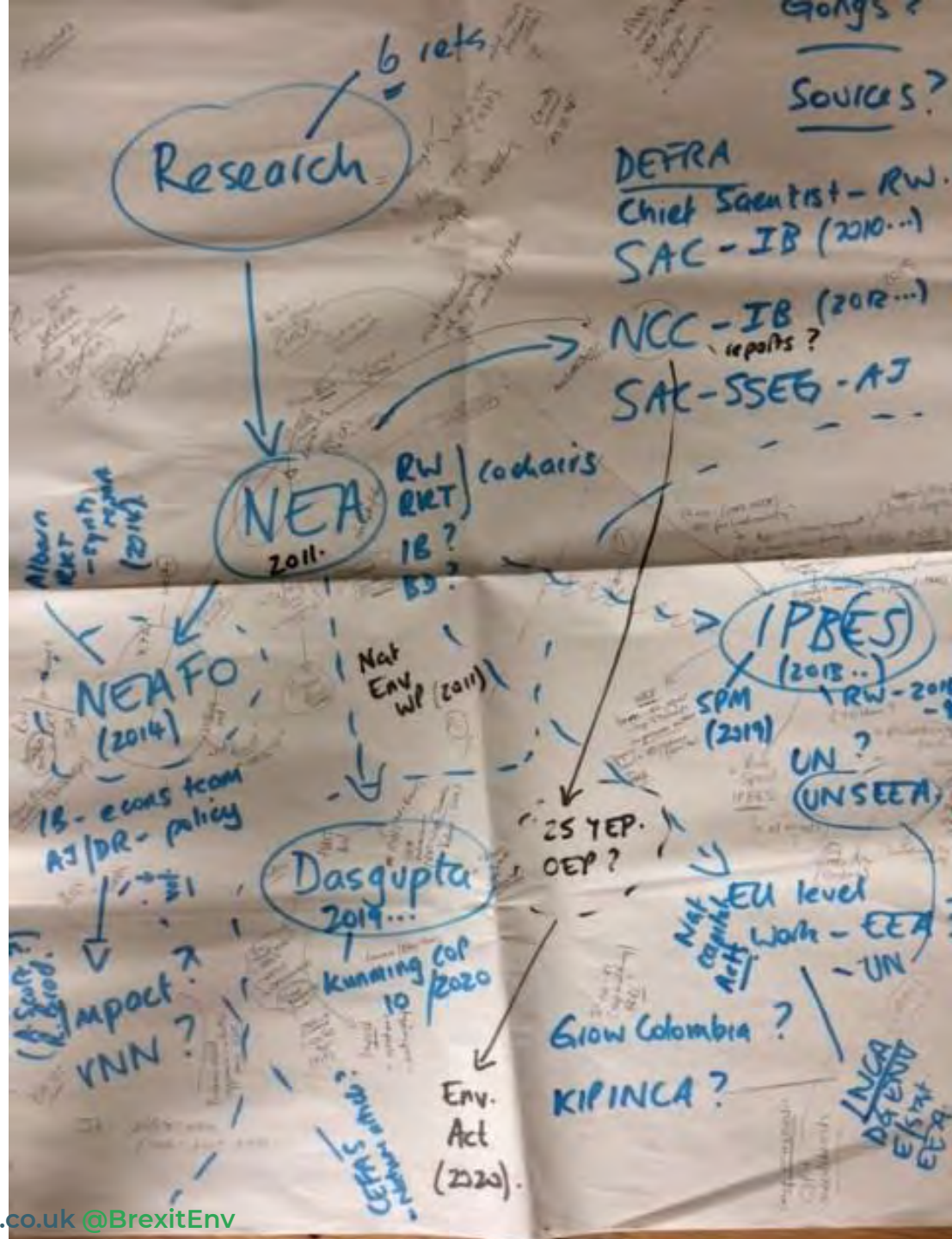
Tess Colley

18 Jan 2024

Green watchdog the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) has published a damning report in its first major review of the government’s 2023 Environment Improvement Plan (EIP).







# The academic ‘policy entrepreneur’

To be a ‘policy entrepreneur’ is to *find out where the action is, learn the rules of the game, form alliances, frame your evidence in relation to the dominant language of policy debate, and respond to socioeconomic context and events* which help create windows of opportunity. However, to be a reflective scholar is to recognise that *few entrepreneurs succeed, and relative success results more from societal structures and the policymaking environment than simply from skilful entrepreneurship.*

Cairney and Oliver (2020) How Should Academics Engage in Policy Making to Achieve Impact?, *Political Studies Review*, 18, 2, 228-244. (Systematic review, n=86)

