

<b>Institution:</b> The Open University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C14 - Geography and Environmental Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Sounding Coastal Change: impact on engagement strategies and practice of environmental organisations		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2014-2020		
<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>
Dr George Revill Prof Joe Smith	Senior Lecturer Professor of Geography	2005-present 1999-2017
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Sounding Coastal Change (SCC) researches the use of arts and social science methods to engage environmental managers, decision makers and publics in climate change mitigation and adaptation. SCC focuses on the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), a 60 mile stretch of environmentally sensitive coast which serves as a bellwether for climate vulnerability. This work to engage diverse 'voices' has had impact in changing organizational practices for voluntary and local government agencies, facilitating new forms of public intervention in coastal planning, informing the development of national coastal strategy, developing creative skills and capacities in local schools and inspired new work by sound artists and film makers.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>SCC experiments with creative and deliberative arts-social science methods for creating better informed environmental decision-making in this age of environmental change characterized by complexity and uncertainty. This research is based on the premise that accounting for the complex causes and consequences of environmental action in the Anthropocene requires new approaches better able to presence in debate and deliberation sometimes hidden or forgotten human and non-human voices.</p> <p>We initially addressed these issues in research concerning public understandings of contemporary environmental challenges and the different ways in which these understandings are imagined, debated, and discussed by lay publics [O1]. Our research works with the assumption that creative media can empower lay publics and professionals alike to recognize, rethink and intervene in environmental challenges in new and innovative ways [O2, O3]. An important component here is the mediation in debate and discussion of a wide variety of human and non-human voices, expertise, understandings and experiences. Project thinking develops 'a more than human' politics bringing together human and non-human voices [O5, O6]. Landscape is understood as a creative and practical terrain in which knowledge and practice can be imagined and refigured for planning and policy [O4].</p> <p>The impact for this case builds on work led from 2000 by Professor Joe <b>Smith</b> and Professor Renata Tyszczyk (Architecture, Sheffield) generated under the umbrella of the Mediating Change Group. This work includes the AHRC funded projects <i>Stories of Change</i> (PI <b>Smith</b>, Co-I Tyszczyk) [G1] and <i>Earth in Vision</i> (PI <b>Smith</b>, Co-I <b>Revill</b>) [G2]. Where <i>Stories of Change</i> showed how storytelling and art practice can help reimagine environmental futures, <i>Earth in Vision</i> explored engagement strategies of co-creation with volunteers and publics [O1, O2].</p> <p>Together these projects provide a grounding in creative engagement as educational policy process feeding directly into the 2016-19 AHRC-funded project Listening to Climate Change: experiments in sonic democracy (PI George <b>Revill</b>) [G3] public title SCC which provides the impact focus for this ICS. SCC was a research and art-engagement project focused on environmental and social change in North Norfolk. It used: "<i>sound, music and different kinds of listening, to explore the ways in which the coast is changing and how people's lives are</i></p>		

*changing with it.*” The underlying conceptual framework connects a social process sonic art methodology to a polyvocal conception of deliberative democratic process grounded in Bruno Latour’s provocation - a ‘parliament of things’. It aims to give a presence in debate and deliberation to the sometimes hidden or forgotten human and non-human voices key to environmental decision making in the Anthropocene [O6]. North Norfolk is at the forefront of coastal environmental changes related to climate change in the UK. In this work it is recognized as a laboratory for national change.

### 3. References to the research

- O1. Smith, J., Revill, G., & Hammond, K.** (2018) Voicing climate change? Television, public engagement and the politics of voice. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 43(4), 601-614. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12250>
- O2. Revill, G.** Hammond, K., and **Smith, J.** (2020) ‘Digital archives, ebooks and narrative space’, *Area*, 52(2), 291-297. <https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12413>
- O3.** Hammond, K., **Revill, G.**, and **Smith, J.** (2020) The Digital Citizen: Working Upstream of Digital and Broadcast Archive Developments, in Eds Popple, S., Prescott, A. and Mutibwa, D. H. *Communities, Archives and New Collaborative Practices*, The Policy Press, Bristol 2020 (Chapter 10, pp 139 – 152). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx1hvvd.16>
- O4. Revill, G.** (2018) ‘Landscape, sound and sonic environments’, in: Howard, P. Thompson, I. Waterson, E. and Atha, M. eds. *Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies* (Second edition). Routledge, pp.264-273
- O5. Revill, G.** (2017) Vocalic space: socio-materiality and sonic spatiality. In M. Nieuwenhuis, & D. Crouch (Eds.), *The Question of Space*, 43-62. Rowman and Littlefield.
- O6. Revill, G.** (2021) Voicing the environment: Latour, Peirce and an expanded politics. *Environment and Planning: D Society and Space*, 39(1), 121-138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820944521>

#### Grants:

- G1.** Stories of Change: Exploring energy and community in the past, present and future, AHRC GBP1,169,421 (2014 - 2017) awarded to Joe **Smith**.
- G2.** Earth in vision: BBC coverage of environmental change 1960 – 2010: AHRC, GBP359,847 (2013 - Sep 2016) awarded to Joe **Smith**.
- G3.** Listening to Climate Change: experiments with sonic democracy: AHRC, GBP505,772 (2016 - 2019) awarded to George **Revill**.
- G4.** Sounding Out Wells: sonic postcards of heritage and environment. AHRC, GBP78,523 (2020 - 2021) awarded to George **Revill**
- G5.** Making Sand Dunes Public: involving communities with living sea defences: AHRC, GBP24,176 (2020 - 2021) awarded to George **Revill**.

### 4. Details of the impact

SCC has delivered impact by embedding arts-based methods in the strategies and engagement practice of environmental and conservation stakeholders in Norfolk, principally: Norfolk Wildlife Trust (**NWT**), Norfolk County Council Environment Team (**NCCET**), and the Norfolk Coast Partnership (**NCP**). SCC works with these organisations as live interventions in management and policy and as practice-based research:

#### 1) Impact on Organisational Practice

SCC impacted future strategy and public engagement for **NWT**, the UK’s oldest Wildlife Trust with 35,000 members and over 50 nature reserves. NWT’s People and Wildlife Team is responsible for Norfolk’s regional response to the national strategy initiative *Towards a Wilder Britain* (TWB) (The Wildlife Trusts, 2018). NWT asked SCC to help them incorporate the research-based sonic arts methods [O6] in their delivery of TWB. The Head of NWT People and

Wildlife team said: *“This provided opportunities for us to both listen to and engage this audience in new ways”* [C1].

SCC provided advice and facilitation, heavily shaping NWT’s new strategy, in terms of the question: *“What does it mean to speak up for wildlife; to be a voice for nature?”* [C1]. In reporting SCC impact on the NWT, the Head of NWT People and Wildlife Team said this *“has helped shape our thinking around effective ways to engage the wider public with a national Wildlife Trusts’ campaign for A Wilder Future supporting strong environmental protection in a future Environment Bill”* [C1]. The strategy event was attended by 10 NWT officers who took away ideas including *“thinking about methods which are actually effective in moving forward and making a change’ and being able to unpick how [TWB] might be implemented and know what messages to communicate”* [C1].

**NCCET** asked the SCC team to collaborate around public engagement relating to coastal environmental management projects and longer-term strategic thinking. In November 2018 SCC ran a day long stakeholder event for the NCC ENDURE project team. ENDURE is a European based initiative which examines the role of coastal sand dune systems for climate change resilience. The event adopted a methodology based on “making things matter” involving publics in co-producing knowledge and managing key sites [O6]. Working with twelve key stakeholders, it identified research sites for the ENDURE project [C2]. The Senior Projects Officer (NCCET) said *“We therefore worked together to give the dunes a voice in our project work [...] the idea of audiences, speakers and listening was very instructive and helped us reach far better outcomes than expected [...]. This has since helped shape our communications campaign which will form the backbone to our physical implementation work at 4 dune sites in Norfolk. [...] [SCC] has had a strong impact on the ENDURE project”*. In Sept. 2020 SCC received AHRC follow-on funding, working with NCCET and NCP conducting ‘Parliament of Things’ style public engagements to develop public understanding and involvement with the implementation and sustainability of ENDURE’s coastal dune systems.

The above work convinced NCCET they needed to embrace the SCC research as a whole organisation. SCC were invited to work with senior managers in NCCET. SCC ran a strategy event in which senior managers rewrote the NCCET mission statement (“Plan on a Page”) using SCC insights to more fully account for both active public involvement in environmental issues and the complexity and vitality of nature itself. This mission statement now guides everything NCCET does shaping environmental policy and management undertaken by Norfolk County Council. A user pack was created for individual managers to run with their own teams [C5]. The event was rated 4.7/5 for Usefulness and 4.9/5 for Interest and take always included: *“how best to improve our internal and external communications”*; and *“Using the Plan on a Page to structure future projects”*, *“having an Environment Plan structured web pages, include ‘communication’ as a column on the Plan on a Page”* [C5].

The officers attending asked to take the same event to their own teams (five teams totaling 76 staff members) and requested an SCC Resources Pack. The Resources Pack gives detail of the workshop structure and examples used at the event. The Head of Environment (NCC) stated that this work: *“helped us understand how we communicate and how often we communicate”* [C5]. *We also explored tools to analyse best practice, [the SCC team] also gave context to how we could use the ‘Plan on a Page’ to tackle a specific issue, applying it to projects or concrete topics and using it when developing new funding bids. [...] [this] [...] has had a strong and positive impact on our team.”* In Nov. 2020: SCC were asked by the Head of Environment (NCC) to run a second strategy event for his Senior Environment Managers team around implementing the NCC 25 Year Environment Plan [C5].

**NCP** SCC worked with NCP to change public engagement strategy for the quinquennial statutory planning document for the Norfolk Coast AONB. NCP is a forum for relevant statutory authorities, agencies, organisations and local publics, as key stakeholders in coastal management. SCC had the following impact [C3]:

(1) a day strategy event (March 2018) attended by fifteen NCP partner organizations used SCC's methodologies to devise and set priorities to structure the forthcoming 5-year AONB management plan.

(2) Aug. – Oct. 2018 SCC collaborated with NCP engaging publics with future coastal planning and collect qualitative data to inform the planning process. This included a public event at the Wells Maltings Theatre run by SCC using creative outputs from the project to generate discussion feeding directly into the forthcoming 2019 AONB management plan.

Together (1) and (2) form a major component of the NCP public engagement strategy in relation to the 2019 AONB plan and feed into developing concern with hidden and unheard voices as a primary theme for their engagement over the next 5-year cycle of implementation and review [C5]. The Manager, NCP said:

*"[...] [SCC] facilitation of the extensive community engagement work has been invaluable, enabling us to explore a totally different approach to involving the community in developing the [AONB] management plan and at a much earlier stage in the process. Whereas in the past we have consulted the community late in the process, [...] SCC has enabled the community to be much more engaged in coming up with the ideas that feed into the revisions of the management plan. This increased ownership has been hugely valuable, and we look forward to assessing its role in supporting increased community commitment to the management plan and closer community working in the future" [C3].*

## 2) Impact on National Policy

SCC speaks directly to current UK Government concerns regarding public trust and participation in issues of coastal change flooding related to climate change. Insights from this work formed three submissions of evidence (two invited as requests) to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Coastal Flooding and Climate Change 2019. **Dr Revill** was quoted in the interim report (Oct. 2019) [C6] and SCC evidence argued that; *"respect, transparency, understanding, mutual knowledge and ultimately trust will best be built if such public and stakeholder engagement is: Early, Appropriate, Specific, Responsive, Constructive, Transformative and Facilitated."* The Select Committee responded by recommending under point (1) in their conclusions and recommendations that:

*"In their response, the Government and Environment Agency should explain: How to ensure meaningful long-term engagement with the communities affected by coastal change is at the centre of local strategies so that wherever possible local approaches to adaptation have the consent and support of the people affected" [C6].*

The Government Response was received 9/03/2020. Points 3 and 8 under the overall heading Future Policy and Strategy show that the Government has taken on board the SCC-guided recommendations as follows:

*"3. Our strategies are most effective when government, local authorities, communities and the private sector, work together to ensure there is a shared understanding of future risks and who is best placed to manage them. [...]*  
*8. We recognise that meaningful long-term engagement with communities affected by coastal change can have significant and positive impacts in encouraging local communities to consider possible approaches which are right for their place. The government's future policies will consider ways to promote the benefits of long-term engagement to support coastal communities in the development of local strategies" [C6].*

## 3) Impact on Cultural Practice

SCC produced over thirty outputs working with creative practitioners and publics of all ages. SCC shaped nature of creative practice and created a regional legacy. Work with the four primary schools in Norfolk's Pilgrim Federation provided students with new media and music skills in addition to an interdisciplinary educational experience. Their work featured in public performances at Blakeney Parish Church, Norwich Science Festival and the 24-Hour Radio Broadcast. The Executive Headteacher of the Federation said: *"The children used equipment and had experiences that as a school we would not have been able to offer them. [...]* It was a

*privilege for us all to work with professionals who we could not have afforded to pay ourselves for the experience” [C7].*

Regional legacy is ensured through the ‘sonic postcards’ commissioned by NWT for their visitors centre at Cley and by Wells Maltings Heritage Centre as a contribution to a new Coastal Futures public environmental forum in the region [C1, C4]. The Director of Wells Maltings Cultural and Heritage Centre said: *“the presence of the [sonic postcards] as part of your visit to us at the end of last year, and the supporting information, caught the imagination of visitors to the centre, promoted the evening showing and debate, [...] [adding] value to our existing cultural heritage offer within our new building.’* They provide: *‘an accessible platform for local people to explore and reflect upon the huge changes that are in play along the North Norfolk Coast, environmentally, economically and socially, and gives further opportunity for awareness raising and action planning, which in turn empower local communities to take control of the issues that affect their own lives” [C4].*

NWT hosted the travelling SCC exhibition (Soundings film and Blakeney sonic postcards) at their Cley Marshes Visitor Centre (Feb. 2019) (110,000 visitors pa.) this became a model for their sound-art installation ‘With the Birds’ (Oct. – Dec. 2019). The Engagement Officer NWT said: *“working alongside digital artist Saffron Summerfield, we created an audio-visual exhibition using the structure of the Sounding Coastal Change exhibition. We even bought the exact same plinths to house our sound recordings! [...] We were incredibly pleased with the results and look forward to working in this medium in the future” [C1].* Sonic postcard methodology is currently being trialed with the Chilterns AONB.

SCC also worked with creative practitioners influencing and changing their practice. This led to national recognition. The 24-Hour Radio Broadcast from Blakeney was featured on BBC Radio 4 Today Programme. Sonic works were featured on BBC Radio 6 Cerys Matthews Programme and PI **Revill** was the subject of a documentary about sound and politics on the arts radio station Resonance FM (09/08/20). The project film ‘Soundings’ was shortlisted for the AHRC Film Prize 2019. Award winning filmmaker Gair Dunlop said: *“A film led by sound, rather than the usual process of assembling visuals to be complemented by the soundtrack, has meant adaptability, inventiveness and willingness to slow the pace [...]” [C7].*

In summary, national policy impact is based on Norfolk as a bellwether laboratory for UK future adaptation to coastal change. Our sustained user engagement in Norfolk, has built impact on organizational and cultural practice at local and regional levels. Key to such impact has been building long term trust with regional project partners. Testimony to that trust, SCC has gained four further tranches of follow-on funding during 2020 to engage with existing partners and partners in other regions. Together these further develop creative imagining of environmental futures and involve publics in deliberative environmental management.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- C1.** Testimonial letters, facilitated events and other event details from Norfolk Wildlife Trust.
- C2.** Testimonial letters facilitated events and project details from Norfolk County Council ENDURE.
- C3.** Testimonial letter and event details- Norfolk Coast Partnership (NCP).
- C4.** Testimonial letter and event details - Wells Maltings (WM) Heritage and Arts Centre.
- C5.** Testimonial letter, facilitated events details and resource pack- Norfolk County Council (NCC) – Senior Environment Officers Group.
- C6.** (EFRA) Select Committee: Inquiry into Coastal Flooding and Adaptation to Climate Change
- C7.** Testimonial letters and evidence relating to programmes and films.