

# What kind of green infrastructure do we want? Building better bridges between research and practice

## the Academics summary (13 responses )

This briefing paper crudely summarises and reflects on the responses received to the PART 1 material. I had a mountain of material so please excuse my cherry picking.

### 1. Expertise

Rather than capture all the disciplines mentioned under research expertise I have done my own crude assessment of the participants based on their submissions. We have a mix of academics but dominated by environmental scientists .

Social scientist	4
Environmental scientist	6
Economist	2
Impact scientist	3
Interdisciplinary scientist	3
Practice based academic	4

### 2. Research Projects

There was a diversity of research projects captured here but perhaps the hidden aspect was the number of "research" projects with GI input being undertaken by the practice community. I have included these figures in brackets. This raises an important issue and opportunities for connection with such research and whether/how it can be combined with academic work to maximise impact. In some cases this was highlighted.

Landscape scale/city scale	4 (1)
Tools/toolkit	5 (5)
Citizen led	2 (1)
Nature base solutions	2(3)
Trees	2 (1)
Suds and blue infrastructure	3 (3)
Coastal Estuarine and Marine	
Natural capital and ecosystem services	4 (9)
Financial markets for GI	2 (2)
GI and economic/environmental growth	4 (3)
Co-designed	13 (10)
EU	4 (10)
NERC funded (full and part)	12 (0)

### 3. Impact pathways

These are summarised below and reveal more "outputs" than actual impact. Many were short submissions so it might be useful to put flesh on the bones in discussions where it might be useful to identify the specific and **high priority** impacts research projects want to create

- Policy briefs 3
- Detailed case studies and guidance 3

- Training stakeholders 2
- CPD courses 4
- Guidance for professional bodies to use in decision making. 5
- Influencing the planning process (masterplans and development management) 5
- Working with industry and stakeholders as part of the research 6
- Influence the work practice of a particular agency 7
- Policy relevant papers 6
- Academic papers 7

One interesting response talked about the need to have an impact pathway bid requirement for an educational dimension that require a justification of how the project will create a shared and accessible knowledge base.

In terms of **key audiences involved** I thought I would cover those who were not explicitly mentioned in the returns. 1. Councillors, 2. Planning Inspectors, 3. Building Control Officers, 4. MHCLG, 5. BEIS. Of those groups mentioned the town planner, architect, NHS and MPs were only mentioned in a minority of cases.

#### 4. Other comments

I have captured some of the key points made in the submissions. Many reveal difficulties and challenges in delivering the proposal as originally written. This has implications for the flexibility of the funder to allow adaptation strategies.

- That interdisciplinary research is easy to write in applications but difficult to operationalise in practice.
- That many stakeholders who are key to the success of the research are often very or too busy to engage in the way that was originally envisaged. Some do provide more time as well
- A feeling that successful research impact is secured through early engagement with stakeholders at or even before the bid stage in defining the research questions.
- However research impact can be very opportunistic and depend on luck and chance encounters
- Impacts take time to occur so difficult to say projects were successful (relates to recent evaluation study)
- Importance of investing in stakeholder relationships that go beyond the tick box syndrome given time and resources for all parties.
- Cross disciplinary working is key for successful research on GI
- I am flabbergasted by the number of research projects on GI but who is coordinating and ensuring that these studies fit together. There is a sense of potential duplication eg the number of nature based solutions studies.
- Are we siloing research on GI from the wider built environment. There is danger or need to embed GI into other research projects. The Urban living programme is a case in point.
- Really important to have built in flexibility to move in response to policy changes in research.

Looking at the responses there is a set of research challenges that often occur during the course of the research but equally there are some points that relate back to the research councils and their flexibility and bid processes. In particular, there are some messages about the need for greater coordination of the field of GI research (pun intended). There is a view that project teams rarely talk across projects and there is some real value in that perhaps in order to maximise impact across different areas. VNN perhaps offers a model of good practice here.