Mapping the Big Green Challenge

Executive Summary

Fred Steward, Sonia Liff
& Marilyn Dunkelman

With support from Jayne
Cox and Sara Giorgi

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This report maps all applications made to the Big Green Challenge from 3rd sector organisations suggesting ways to achieve a low carbon future. The report analyses the different dimensions of their applications including the carbon reduction measures targeted, their innovation goals and processes. It groups the applications into 9 broad proposal types and identifies some key capabilities they were seeking to engage in making their contribution.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Challenge approaches seek to focus on outputs rather than inputs and offer a distinctive way to stimulate innovation towards a particular goal. Current UK government policy as expressed in *Innovation Nation* makes clear that innovation needs to be understood more widely than previously including the transfer of ideas between sectors and practices as well as products. Innovations can arise from the 3rd sector and the public sector as well as from the private sector.   Innovation of all types is seen as key to achieving low carbon goals. The mapping exercise is located within this framework with its aim being to identify what can be learnt from the Big Green Challenge about the nature of community-based innovation and how such innovation can be supported and expanded.

Chapter 2: The Role of the 3rd Sector in Low Carbon Innovation

The innovative potential of the 3rd Sector is often underestimated. Despite acknowledged problems of resources which may affect the sustainability and transferability of new developments, the sector has distinctive strengths that provide innovative potential. These focus on both strong ties to existing community members and the ability to create distinctive spaces to support communities based on new values and relationships.

The former capabilities are particularly important for supporting regime innovation (finding ways to reduce carbon emissions within the current carbon-based socio-technical regime) which is acknowledged to be the focus for climate change mitigation up to 2020. The latter capability is particularly relevant for the development and support of niche innovations which can provide part of an alternative to the current carbon-based socio-technical regime. This is the focus for achieving 2050 goals. Both types of low carbon innovation can be identified currently within the 3rd sector but there is concern that it is concentrated in those organisations with an explicit environmental focus and needs to become 'mainstreamed' throughout the sector.

Chapter 3: Mapping the Challengers

The BGC was successful in attracting both established formal organisations and a sizeable number of (usually relatively young and small) un-constituted groups, showing that an interest in low carbon innovation is not just confined to parts of the sector. While the majority of pre-existing groups already had some interest in the environment and / or energy use, around a third of applications came from groups without a primary prior focus in this area, in contrast to the findings of previous studies. Different types of groups are likely to have distinctive advantages to bring to 3rd sector innovation around climate change. Environmentally-orientated and well-established groups have the advantage of relative experience and knowledge but small, informal grassroots groups are likely

to bring experience of working with a specific community on other issues such as regeneration or education. Challengers were widely dispersed geographically but particular clusters (and absences) of applications merit further investigation.

Chapter 4: The Big Green Challenge and UK Climate Change Policy

Challengers' carbon reduction goals have been benchmarked against the frameworks provided by the Committee on Climate Change and Defra to provide a way of relating 3rd Sector priorities to those defined nationally. This shows Challengers acting across the range of identified measures in a way generally in line with their identified significance nationally – i.e. with the focus on energy use in buildings and transport. Challengers were distinctive in the weight they gave to waste reduction and eating local food in season. Proposals were in general willing to tackle 'difficult' issues – for example many proposals featured micro-generation despite Defra seeing this as one of its least feasible key behaviour goals – and many included technologies the CCC assesses as not currently technically or economically feasible for widespread adoption. However measures including the adoption of low impact diets and the reduction of short haul flights which have been absent from Government campaigns also received limited attention by Challengers. Notable characteristics of Challenger approaches included a tendency for proposals to include multiple goals and for these to cross conventional categories such as transport and residential energy use. This finding combined with the high level of attention given to 'lifestyle' measures suggests that Challengers may be taking a more integrated perspective on low carbon goals than that suggested by more mainstream ways of thinking about the problem.

Chapter 5: Expected Innovation Goals

The conclusions reached in the previous chapter through an examination of the detailed carbon reduction measures which Challengers proposed to target are reinforced by looking at proposals in the round. Both regime and niche approaches to 3rd sector low carbon innovation were evident and there was a balance between proposals which focused on areas which were currently feasible (in technical, economic or behavioural terms) and thus appropriate to wide scale take up, and those which were seen to be feasible only in the near to longer term. This reinforces the view that the 3rd sector is not making a contribution in relation to a particular type of low carbon goal but rather has the potential to contribute widely. In the round BGC proposals can also be seen to be aiming at systemic change and involving a mixture of product and practice. This shows a holistic approach to the innovation goals which can address climate change issues. The finding that systemic change is most likely to be addressed at the community level suggests that 3rd sector organisations are playing a distinctive role in their approach.

Chapter 6: Proposed Innovation Processes

Considering the innovation processes proposed by Challengers provides another window into the way in which 3rd sector approaches are distinctive. Considered in the light of the innovative potential of the 3rd sector discussed in Chapter 2, the evidence suggests that Challengers were playing to their strengths in terms of proposals that envisaged working closely with communities (either directly or via intermediaries who had such close relationships) and with rich approaches to trying to change behaviour in most cases involving using action approaches often in combination

with approaches to target understanding. The proposals show many Challengers engaging in an open innovation process and, in a significant number of cases, creating on-going relationships which should maintain the changes. In these ways Challengers can be seen to be proposing intensive and sustained approaches to the problem of changing lifestyles as a route to low carbon goals. This area of behaviour change has proved particularly difficult for conventional public policy to influence and 3rd sector innovation could have a very significant contribution to make. Where new approaches are arising there is a danger that they will not be taken up as widely as they deserve due to the relatively undeveloped models most Challengers proposed for passing on their ideas.

Chapter 7: Categorising the Challengers' Proposals

Nine proposals types were identified which characterise the way Challengers engaged their communities in achieving low carbon goals. They have parallels with common 3rd sector approaches but are distinctively applied to a low carbon agenda. *Zone* proposals broadly targeted people within a geographical area on a wide range of systemic goals; *Local Projects* were also geographically bounded but more focused in their carbon reduction goals and activities to achieve them; *Youth Schemes* worked with young people through formal institutions often with outreach to the wider community; *Public Buildings* proposals centred on carbon reduction in a building with meaning within a community; *Enterprises were* promoting a product or service within a social economy framework; in contrast *Services* were offering free advice or support to a target audience; *Connections* proposals were working with a specific community of interest; and *Inventions* were focused on a novel product at the research and development stage. As befits a classification of innovations the final category *Originals* did not have *one* focus but did include proposals whose novelty consisted of crossing some of the already identified types. The first 6 categories (Zones to Services) each accounted for 10-15% of proposals. Connections and particularly inventions were smaller groupings.

Proposals within each type are analysed in terms of the concepts introduced in previous chapters and are shown to represent distinct groupings in terms of the types of groups involved, the innovation goals and processes. So, for example, informal groups were most likely to be found in the locally based proposal types in contrast to those delivering services or working with young people. Those proposing Connections or Public Buildings proposal types were least likely to come from an existing environmental focus in contrast to those proposing Local Projects.

Zones and Services were most likely to have systemic goals – although zones targeted far more specific measures. In contrast Inventions and Enterprises were more likely to be product focused and singular in their goals. Services and Youth Schemes were most likely to concentrate on regime innovations; Zone proposals often featured a mixture of regime and niche measures; and Inventions, Enterprises, and, more surprisingly, Public Buildings were most likely to be niche focused.

Most proposal types had a strong focus on lifestyle changes and engaged rich approaches and multiple measures to target them as detailed in the previous chapter. Of the less common types of approaches and initiatives Connections was the proposal type that gave greatest emphasis to changing behaviour by targeting values, followed by Youth Schemes and Zones. In all these cases there was a strong social identity focus to their approaches. Public Buildings were most likely to use exemplifying initiatives when they acted as a demonstration of the value of certain approaches.

Connections had a distinctive take on positive encouragement initiatives in the form of sector awards and peer recognition. Initiatives incorporating negative ways of directing behaviour (e.g. naming and shaming) were not common in any of the proposal types but were present in a number of Youth Scheme proposals.

Approaches to work directly with target communities in contrast to via intermediaries were more closely related to the nature of the Challenger group rather than the proposal type. This distinction between grassroots groups working directly with a community in which they are embedded and professionally-led groups external to the community and often working via intermediaries was seen to cut across the Zones, Local Projects and Youth Schemes types in particular. These models offer different opportunities in terms of the strength of existing relationships, in-depth understanding of context, wider experience that can be drawn on, and ability to transfer approaches. Enterprises and other types with links to conventional business forms came closest to addressing the general weakness of the sector in terms of how to diffuse approaches.

Chapter 8: 3rd Sector Capabilities with Value for Low Carbon Innovation

It is important to distinguish the ways in which the 3rd sector can make a distinctive contribution to the achievement of low carbon goals rather than simply replicating the approaches of the other sectors. Understanding the 3rd sector's strengths and the ways in which they relate to the identified problems in achieving change can ensure that this contribution is maximised. Capabilities are identified relating to engaging people in community action; reaching people on the basis of shared characteristics; creating groups where shared commitments can be made, supported and monitored; treating issues in the round and in ways that engage with everyday life; developing structures that allow for peer learning; and facilitating the development and demonstration of new approaches. Realising these capabilities and through them a distinctive contribution to low carbon goals often requires balancing issues such as breadth of reach versus the depth of engagement. The Big Green Challenge generated applications which proposed innovative ways of utilising these capabilities and resolving the issues they raise.

Chapter 9: Lessons for the Future - Conclusions and Messages for Stakeholders

Third sector groups were contributing to all areas of carbon use (e.g. domestic energy, waste, transport) so their distinctiveness should not be sought in relation to any particular carbon reduction measures. Instead their distinctiveness can be seen in the *way* they approached the problem of carbon reduction. Here they were seen to be drawing upon different dimensions of 3rd sector capabilities in order to address both niche and regime innovations. They were promoting systemic approaches that linked well to way people lived their lives and they focused on changing behaviour in relation to lifestyle issues in rich, multiple and on-going ways. Acting at a 'community' level (be that geographic or interest-based) outside the 'private' world of the family but still on a meaningful scale they were making a distinctive contribution to that of actors in other sectors.

Few of the proposals involved simply disseminating existing innovations in ways that mirrored public or private sector campaigns. As such they deserve to be considered as developing innovative approaches to achieving low carbon goals. Openness was a significant feature of their innovation

processes in terms of bringing together different types of expertise and allowing for a continuing sense of local (or other community) ownership and engagement. Ability to innovate in this way was not straightforwardly linked to particular types of groups but rather was something which characterised the stronger proposals.   Even the more feasible regime innovation involved novel modes of interaction, engagement and local adaptation. However, the significantly new network relationships needed to realise the benefits of specific projects on a wider scale, be they regime or niche, were a feature of only a minority of proposals across all types.

The analysis of Big Green Challenge applicants has identified a range of issues which have implications for stakeholders and their engagement with 3rd sector innovation. Specific issues are identified for delivery agencies (such as the EST, Carbon Trust and energy suppliers); policy makers (at all levels); the 3rd sector itself; academics and researchers; and NESTA and other funders. In the round these focus on the way in which actors from other sectors can best engage with 3rd sector groups and ensure that they are able to make an effective contribution to low carbon innovation overall. Issues here relate to the need to frame engagement in ways that allow for the distinctive approach that the 3rd sector takes to low carbon innovation. This includes seeing issues from an end-user perspective and often in a holistic way.   It also involves finding ways to relate to the often small, informal groups who are active in this area. Government, delivery agencies and funders can play an enabling role by sending clear messages about priorities which will support the activities of 3rd sector groups. However the strength of many of the approaches identified lies in local ownership of initiatives and adaption to local circumstances, so it is important not to treat 3rd sector groups as simply actors through whom top down initiatives can be rolled out. All stakeholders, including larger players within the 3rd sector can also contribute to strengthening the sector, particularly in relation to peer learning and the development of models for scalability, replicability and transferability. This could include support for learning networks, the clearer identification of diffusion routes through the sector and in general support for the development of a community of practice around 3rd sector innovation for low carbon goals.

Comparative data relating to Chapter 7 and a full Classification Schema can be found in separate appendices.