

It should be noted that the publication of this report was delayed until after completion of the dialogue and well after the completion of the practical aspects of the dialogue. It has therefore not been possible for BBSRC to take account, during this project, of the recommendations made in the report.



INTERIM REPORT

Prepared for the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and Sciencewise

Evaluation of the Governance of BBSRC's Bioenergy Public Dialogue



January 2014
Collingwood Environmental
Planning Limited

Collingwood Environmental Planning
1E, The Chandlery
50 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7QY
Tel: +44 (0)20 7407 8700
Fax: +44 (0)20 7928 6950
www.cep.co.uk

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared for the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), with co-funding from the Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (Sciencewise). The BBSRC project manager was Emma Longridge.

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1EU
Tel: 01793 411500
www.bbsrc.ac.uk

The report was authored by Paula Orr and Clare Twigger-Ross from Collingwood Environmental Planning Limited (CEP).

Collingwood Environmental Planning Ltd
1E, The Chandlery, 50 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7QY
Tel: +44 (0)20 7407 8700
www.cep.co.uk
Company Registration No. 06600181

Disclaimer

Collingwood Environmental Planning has taken all reasonable care to ensure that the information contained in this report is accurate. However, no warranty or representation is given that the information contained within it is complete or free from errors or inaccuracies. Any opinions in this report are based on the professional judgment of the consultants, taking into account the scope of the work which they were commissioned to do. The contents of this report should not be considered to constitute a legal opinion.

To the extent permitted by applicable laws, Collingwood Environmental Planning Limited accepts no liability for any loss or damages or expenses of any kind including without limitation compensatory, direct, indirect or consequential damages, loss of income or profit, or claims by third parties howsoever arising in connection with use of this report.

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Evaluation Aims and Approach	2
	Overall aims and approach	2
	Conceptual framework for the governance of public dialogue projects	3
	Objectives and governance arrangements.....	4
	Approach to the evaluation of the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue.....	6
3.	Governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue: structures and processes	8
	Objectives of the dialogue process	8
	Governance structures	8
	Governance processes.....	12
4.	Analysis and discussion.....	17
	Roles and responsibilities	17
	Dialogue results in relation to four key Sciencewise principles.....	18
	Consistency and quality control	21
	Governance arrangements and multiple objectives	22
	Role of volunteers in design, delivery and impact	23
5.	Recommendations	24
	What governance arrangements have worked well and could be used in future dialogues.....	24
	What lessons about governance should be considered for the remainder of this dialogue	24
	What lessons should be considered for future dialogues.....	25

Appendices

	Appendix 1: Public Dialogue Evaluation Data Sources	26
	Appendix 2: BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group.....	27
	Appendix 3: Interview Schedule	28

Executive Summary

BBSRC is running a public dialogue on bioenergy in order to understand public views, concerns and aspirations about the science, social implications and ethics of bioenergy research, to raise awareness within BBSRC of the needs and opinions of members of the public, to inform the organisation's strategy and policy setting around bioenergy and to test a novel approach involving a more flexible, distributed dialogue. The process is being supported by Sciencewise.

With the Bioenergy Public Dialogue, BBSRC is taking a new, more flexible approach, which makes it possible to hold dialogue events wherever there is demand, using multiple facilitators and evolving dialogue materials, as well as directly running a number of dialogue events. This 'dispersed dialogue' differs from the usual approach of holding a small number of events in a few locations.

The evaluation of the public dialogue is intended to inform and improve the process and not just form part of a final assessment. This report provides an interim evaluation that focuses on governance, defined as the roles, relationships and processes put in place to make the dialogue happen and achieve its objectives.

Data for the evaluation was collected by observing meetings and dialogue events, reviewing BBSRC documents and minutes of meetings and holding interviews with people involved in the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue.

The analysis of this information illustrated how governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue has been dispersed across BBSRC, with several different bodies having a role in monitoring, steering and supporting the process. This approach has been taken to embed the dialogue within BBSRC and share responsibility for the process. The dispersal of governance roles and responsibilities across BBSRC is balanced by the strong supporting role of the Project Management Team which has a clear vision for the public dialogue and ownership of the dialogue process. Sciencewise's role has been to make sure that the dialogue met Sciencewise's good practice principles for public dialogue, without limiting innovation and creativity.

A significant feature of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue affecting governance is that the dialogue is delivered through an internal project manager supporting people round the country (mainly researchers and public engagement) who come forward to organise events, rather than through external contractors.

Some of the issues emerging from the analysis of governance structures and processes are:

A significant feature of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue affecting governance is that the dialogue is delivered through an internal project manager supporting people round the country (mainly researchers and public engagement) who come forward to organise events, rather than through external contractors. BBSRC has also run a number of dialogue events.

Some of the issues emerging from the analysis of governance structures and processes are:

- Clarity about roles and responsibilities: the involvement of a number of BBSRC groups and panels who share ownership of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue appears to be achieving the objective of getting the dialogue process to be seen as part of the BBSRC landscape. At this interim stage, however, some of those involved are not yet clear about the ownership of the project and their own roles.
- There is an ongoing challenge to change institutional cultures to get public dialogue influencing the functioning of the BBSRC and not just its structures.
- Representation: some external stakeholders are involved in the Bioenergy Public Dialogue governance structures, and these external members tend to have a similar science background as

other group and panel members. Experience suggests that creating an opportunity for wider stakeholder involvement in one or more of the governance bodies could allow a broader range of themes to be considered in the dialogue and could potentially act as a catalyst for reaching out to wider publics to participate in the dialogue.

- A dialogue process being delivered by researchers and science communicators on a voluntary basis needs to be monitored and reviewed in a different way from processes run by a professional contractor, as there is a different relationship between the programme manager and volunteers than there would be with contractors. Some of the people running these dialogue events have no specific role in the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue, although some are members of groups or panels.

The main recommendations for improving the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue are to:

1. Bring out more clearly the roles and responsibilities of BBSRC groups and panels, to ensure active ownership of the dialogue.
2. Consider including wider external stakeholder involvement in bioenergy dialogue governance bodies, to bring in more perspectives from outside BBSRC.
3. Put structures and mechanisms in place to encourage people to come forward to organise events, to ensure that they are supported in this activity and to give them a role in the project governance. Consider including some of the researchers and experts who are running bioenergy dialogue events in governance of the dialogue.

Recommendations for the governance of future dialogue processes focus on:

1. Where dispersed models of governance are used, provide opportunities for those involved in different ways to contribute to discussion of the development of the overall dialogue process.
2. Be clear about roles and responsibilities: Host organisations will need to establish clear governance roles and be able to explain to their own members and stakeholders and to public participants how governance structures ensure that the results of the dialogue are used effectively.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report is an interim product of the evaluation of BBSRC's Bioenergy Public Dialogue and focuses on governance. The public dialogue is being part-funded by the Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre¹ (Sciencewise) for the period October 2012 – October 2013 and the evaluation is being carried out during and after this period, to be completed in early 2014. Sciencewise requires the independent evaluation of the public dialogue projects it co-funds. This interim review assesses the effectiveness of decision-making in terms of achieving the objectives of the dialogue.
- 1.2 Collingwood Environmental Planning with Dr Jeremy Woods² were appointed by BBSRC to carry out that evaluation.
- 1.3 This report presents:
- Evaluation aims and approach
 - Description of the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue
 - Governance structures
 - Governance processes
 - Discussion:
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Findings in relation to four key Sciencewise criteria
 - Consistency and quality control of the dialogue process
 - Recommendations

¹ Sciencewise is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and aims to improve policy making involving science and technology across Government by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate. For more information see: <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk>

² Imperial College London

2. Evaluation Aims and Approach

Overall aims and approach

- 2.1 The BBSRC Bioenergy Public Dialogue is intended to be a new, more flexible process³ which enables a large number of people to have a say on how research on bioenergy should be developed. The objectives of the public dialogue are:
- i) To facilitate discussions between the BBSRC scientific community involved in bioenergy research and members of the public
 - ii) To identify public views, concerns and aspirations about the science, social implications, and ethics of bioenergy research
 - iii) To raise awareness within BBSRC of the needs and views of the public in relation to bioenergy
 - iv) To inform BBSRC's strategy and policy setting around bioenergy
 - v) To disseminate findings to key stakeholders, for example, the government
 - vi) To develop and test a novel, flexible model of dialogue for discussion of complex issues that enables engagement with a large group of people nationwide
- 2.2 The characteristics of the dialogue process model include: flexibility, multiple entry points, multiple facilitators and evolving dialogue materials. In this context, evaluation will be used to inform and improve the dialogue and not just form part of a final assessment.
- 2.3 The aims of the evaluation are to:
- Provide an independent, unbiased evaluation of the project, including assessment of the effectiveness and value of the process, its impact and success
 - Help BBSRC further define the original aim, objectives and expected outcomes/outputs of the project to enable continuing effective evaluation
 - Provide information on developing best practice in public dialogue projects that can both inform the dialogue methodology as it progresses and be used in the future.
- 2.4 The Sciencewise principles of good practice for public dialogue are being used to evaluate the process. The principles seek to ensure that:
- The conditions leading to the dialogue process are conducive to the best outcomes (Context).
 - The range of issues and policy opinions covered in the dialogue reflects the participants' interests (Scope).
 - The dialogue process itself represents best practice in design and execution (Delivery).
 - The outputs of dialogue can deliver the desired outcomes (Impact).
 - The process is shown to be robust and contributes to learning (Evaluation).
- 2.5 This report contributes to the fifth Sciencewise principle of undertaking evaluation. More details on each of the other four principles are given in the findings sections relating to each principle.

³ <http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/society/dialogue/activities/bioenergy-dialogue/bioenergy-dialogue-project.aspx>

- 2.6 Issues related to the governance of the project (such as how decisions get taken, who is involved at what points, etc.) affect the ability to achieve these principles and it was agreed that a review of governance would be prepared as an interim product of the evaluation (principle 5), so that lessons can be identified and taken on board to contribute to a formative process.
- 2.7 The other four Sciencewise principles were used to structure observations of meetings and dialogue events and have been used in this report to organise the discussion of the findings.

Conceptual framework for the governance of public dialogue projects

- 2.8 For the purposes of this report, governance is defined as the roles, relationships and processes to make the dialogue happen and achieve its objectives. The increase in use of the term ‘governance’ to describe systems for managing decision-making and the exercise of power, rather than the more familiar ‘government’, reflects the multiplication of actors, networks and processes which contribute to decision-making and increase its complexity:

‘Governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest.’ (Commission on Global Governance 1995)⁴

- 2.9 The description above gives a sense of the blurring of boundaries which can make it difficult to grasp what is covered by the term ‘governance’. The ‘many ways individuals and institutions ... manage their common affairs’ are often not written down and may not be known to all participants. There may be debate over what people ‘have agreed or perceive to be in their interest’ and it may only be after some time that people come to recognise that a particular process is part of governance arrangements – or that it has ceased to be recognised as part of these arrangements. People participating in a public dialogue may have different views as to which relationships and processes are part of the governance arrangements.
- 2.10 Governance arrangements can be made flexible to allow for groups and individuals to contribute to decisions in different ways, creating the possibility of greater accountability and responsiveness on the part of those charged with making the final decision. The evolution of governance arrangements can be seen as recognition that today sectors without direct decision-making power can have a strong voice and even exercise power through a number of channels, including the social media and through their purchasing power.
- ‘It has been argued that the inclusion of more actors in policy making is more capable of accounting for the existence of diversity in the ‘real’ world, as a plurality of perspectives can be incorporated into decisions.’⁵*
- 2.11 However, other writers have argued that in what looks like more democratic governance is in fact just the opening up of participation to multiple actors, with shared decision-making remaining an illusion. A report commissioned by BIS and Sciencewise in 2011 suggests that thinking about public

⁴ Quoted in Walker, G et al (2010) *Risk Governance and Natural Hazards*. European CapHaz-Net project.p 10.

⁵ Marks, G. & Hooghe, L. (2004) *Contrasting visions of Multi-level governance*. In Bache, I. & Flinders, M (Eds.) *Multi-level governance*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Quoted in Walker (2010), op cit, p 10

engagement in science and technology should move away from a focus on ‘public engagement’ to promoting ‘governance in the public interest’⁶.

Objectives and governance arrangements

- 2.12 Good governance should enable the project to achieve its objectives (see 2.1 above). The dialogue objectives can be grouped under three main headings: facilitating dialogue between the scientific community involved in bioenergy research and members of the public in order to identify public views and concerns; using the results of the dialogue to create awareness of public views and concerns among researchers, to inform BBSRC decisions and to provide information to wider stakeholders, for example in Government; and to test a novel approach involving a more flexible, distributed dialogue.
- 2.13 Sciencewise’s experience of dialogue projects on a range of topics in many different institutional contexts, indicates that decision makers rarely appreciate the amount of time that goes into the activities that support the dialogue in relation to time spent in working directly with members of the public. The organisation’s generic Project Timechart⁷ (see Figure 1) shows that setting up and maintaining governance arrangements constitute a major part of activities throughout the project.
- 2.14 The governance arrangements for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue include the following:

Table 1: Governance bodies for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue

NAME	DESCRIPTION	KEY FUNCTION (S)
Project Management Team	Small team (3 people) of 2 permanent staff and one temporary position within BBSRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the concept of and designing the approach Overall ownership of the dialogue process
Steering/Over-sight Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BBSRC’s Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group acts as oversight group Members of the group include academics and representatives of industry, farmers and NGOs. The academics, representatives of industry, farming and NGOs. The majority are academics (See Appendix 2 for full list) The Process Sounding Board (see below) is also seen as part of the oversight of the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help define parameters and specific questions for the dialogue Oversee the format and design of materials Oversee the process and bring in intelligence from their own fields of work.
Internal Advisory Panels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy Strategy Advisory Panel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice and input to the public dialogue Provide advice to BBSRC’s Executive on the implications of the findings of the dialogue for policy and research priorities
Process Sounding Board	Meetings held every 4 – 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice on theoretical grounding for the dialogue Advise on the development of the dialogue process.

⁶ TNS-BRMB, 2011. Science, governance and public engagement. Commissioned by BIS / Sciencewise, November 2011. p 2).

⁷ Paper SW-ERC06 – PO5 Dialogue Process Flowchart

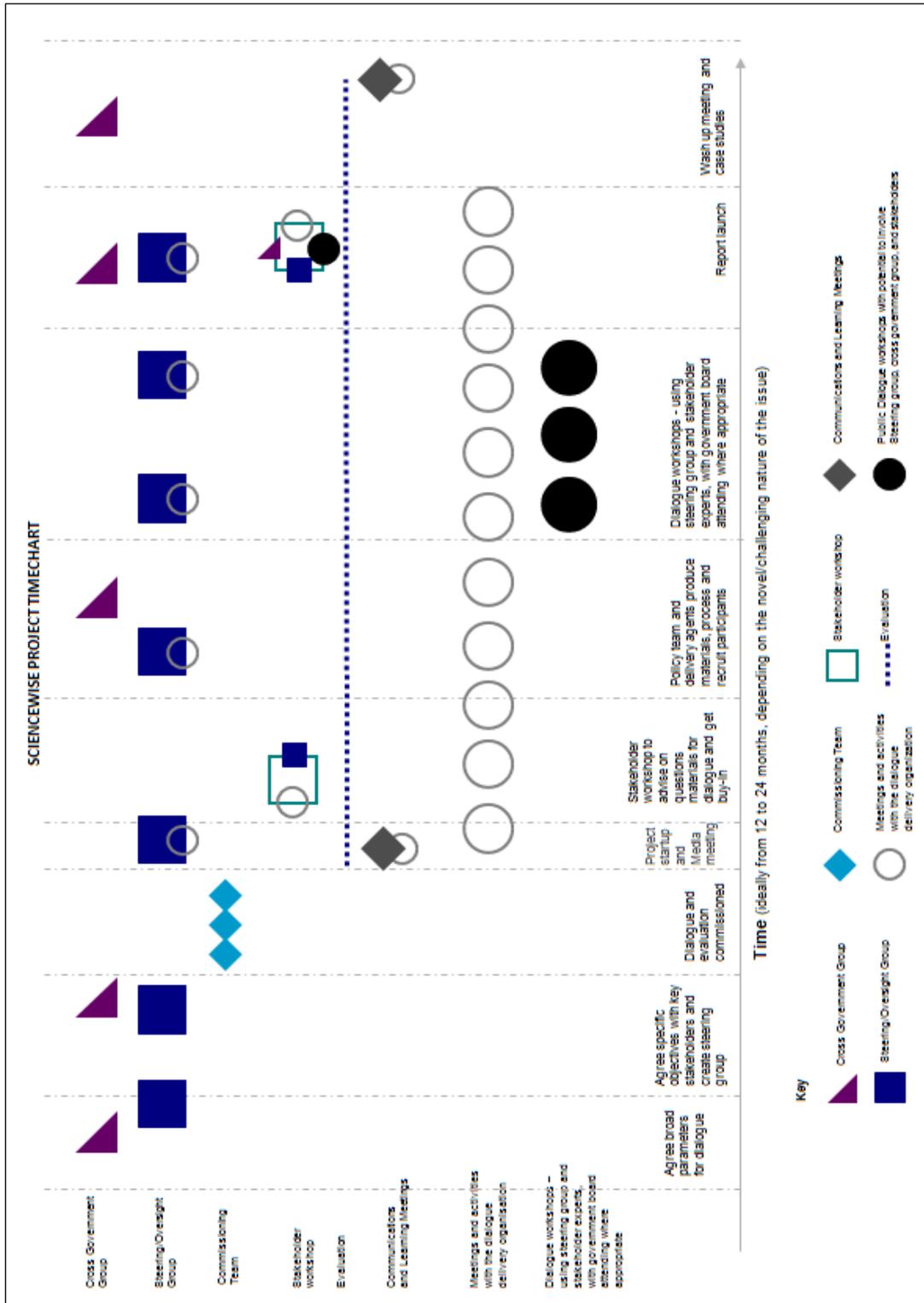


Figure 1 Sciencewise generic Project Timechart

- 2.15 The characteristics of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue (particularly the dispersed nature of the public dialogue activities which are taking place over a number of phases and being carried out by many different people and the coordination of dialogue activities in-house in BBSRC rather than by an external delivery body) mean that many of the governance arrangements that have been seen in other public dialogue process are not relevant or appropriate.
- 2.16 In this interim examination of governance arrangements, the focus will be on the extent to which the project has been able to develop and maintain appropriate governance arrangements which provide for the basic governance functions described above, enable the project to meet its objectives and enable principles of good practice in public dialogue to be met.
- 2.17 Every public dialogue process is different and will need governance arrangements that are appropriate to its context and objectives. Nevertheless, a number of key roles and functions are likely to be required for good governance:
- Ownership and vision of the overall process
 - Monitoring of progress against objectives and planned targets
 - Mechanism for bringing in diverse perspectives, to ensure that the scope, content and design of the public dialogue reflect a range of issues and that results will be relevant to current debates and decisions
 - Consideration of the implications of the results of the public dialogue for policy and decision-making: to ensure that results are used.

Approach to the evaluation of the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue

- 2.18 To collect data for the governance evaluation three methods were used:
- i) Meeting and event observations
 - i) Review of BBSRC minutes and papers
 - ii) Interviews with people involved in governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue.

Meeting and event observations

Data collection

- 2.19 The following events were attended and observed by members of the evaluation team:
- Project kick-off meeting (December 2012)
 - Project Training and Testing event (January 2013)
 - Process Sounding Board meeting (March 2013)
 - BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group (March 2013)
- 2.20 For each event:
- Notes were taken throughout of what was said and immediate reflections on the events were also noted.
 - The notes were used to fill in the evaluation table.

Analysis

- 2.21 The notes from meeting observations were analysed to assess responses to research questions and to draw out additional themes.

Review of BBSRC advisory panel minutes and papers

- 2.22 In order to understand the process of development of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue project, the minutes of meetings of BBSRC advisory panels (BBSRC Science for Society Strategy Panel, BBSRC Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy Strategy Advisory Panel and BBSRC's Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group) held between 2011 – 2012 were reviewed, where these were available on BBSRC's website.

Interviews with people involved in the governance of the BBSRC public dialogue project

Data collection

- 2.23 Six interviews were conducted with people involved in the governance of the project in a variety of roles. Interviews were conducted by telephone or face-to-face, lasting approximately 40 minutes.

Analysis

- 2.24 Notes of the interviews were sent to the interviewees to be checked and corrected. The interviews were put into a summary table in order to analyse responses to research questions and to draw out additional themes. The interview data is used throughout this report and direct quotes are shown in italics. All participants' identities are anonymous.

3. Governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue: structures and processes

Objectives of the dialogue process

- 3.1 BBSRC's Bioenergy Public Dialogue takes an innovative approach to exploring public views on bioenergy, seeking to provide dialogue activities in many different locations and for a variety of audiences ('dispersed dialogue') rather than focussing on a set of activities with a small number of participants, chosen to be representative of members of the public. By not limiting the dialogue to a specified period of time, the process can be responsive to developments both in bioenergy technologies and approaches and in public attitudes and concerns.
- 3.2 The main innovative features of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue are:
- Activities run mainly by researchers and others working in the field (e.g. science communicators) rather than by external facilitators;
 - Responsibility for planning and managing the dialogue activities held in-house by BBSRC rather than being outsourced to independent dialogue delivery contractors;
 - Longer term process rather than one-off interactions with the public;
 - Dialogue process taking place over a number of phases, with an opportunity for tools (information and activities) to be revised between phases.
- 3.3 The governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue has also been dispersed across the BBSRC, with several different bodies having a role in monitoring, steering and supporting the process. The purpose of this is to embed the dialogue within the BBSRC, in order to share responsibility for the process and ensure that the views put forward by members of the public inform decision-making and research priorities across the organisation.

Governance structures

- 3.4 Project Management
- 3.5 A significant feature of the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue is that project management is the responsibility of a small team in the BBSRC External Relations Unit. This team developed the concept of distributed dialogue, with support from people inside and outside BBSRC, including Sciencewise. The project team designed the project and obtained funding from Sciencewise. The team has a clear vision for the public dialogue and ownership of the dialogue process.
- 3.6 The team is confident about its roles and responsibilities:
- '...within the BBSRC team we are reasonably clear about what we are doing. We have clear actions and clarity about our responsibilities...'*
- 3.7 The core Project Team is made up of three people. One is the project manager who has been employed full-time to take forward the dialogue by developing materials, coordinating with and providing support for researchers and others who have come forward to run dialogue events, analysing outcomes and preparing reports. The project manager was employed until September 2013. The other two core team members are involved in the Bioenergy Public Dialogue as part of their work; both have previous experience of managing public dialogues in BBSRC.

Oversight and Advice structures

- 3.8 Figure 2 shows how different parts of BBSRC contribute to the oversight of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue project. Immediate oversight is provided by the BBSRC's Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group ('the Outreach Group'). This body has a mixed membership comprising both BBSRC staff and researchers and people from outside BBSRC, including a member of RSPB and industry representatives.

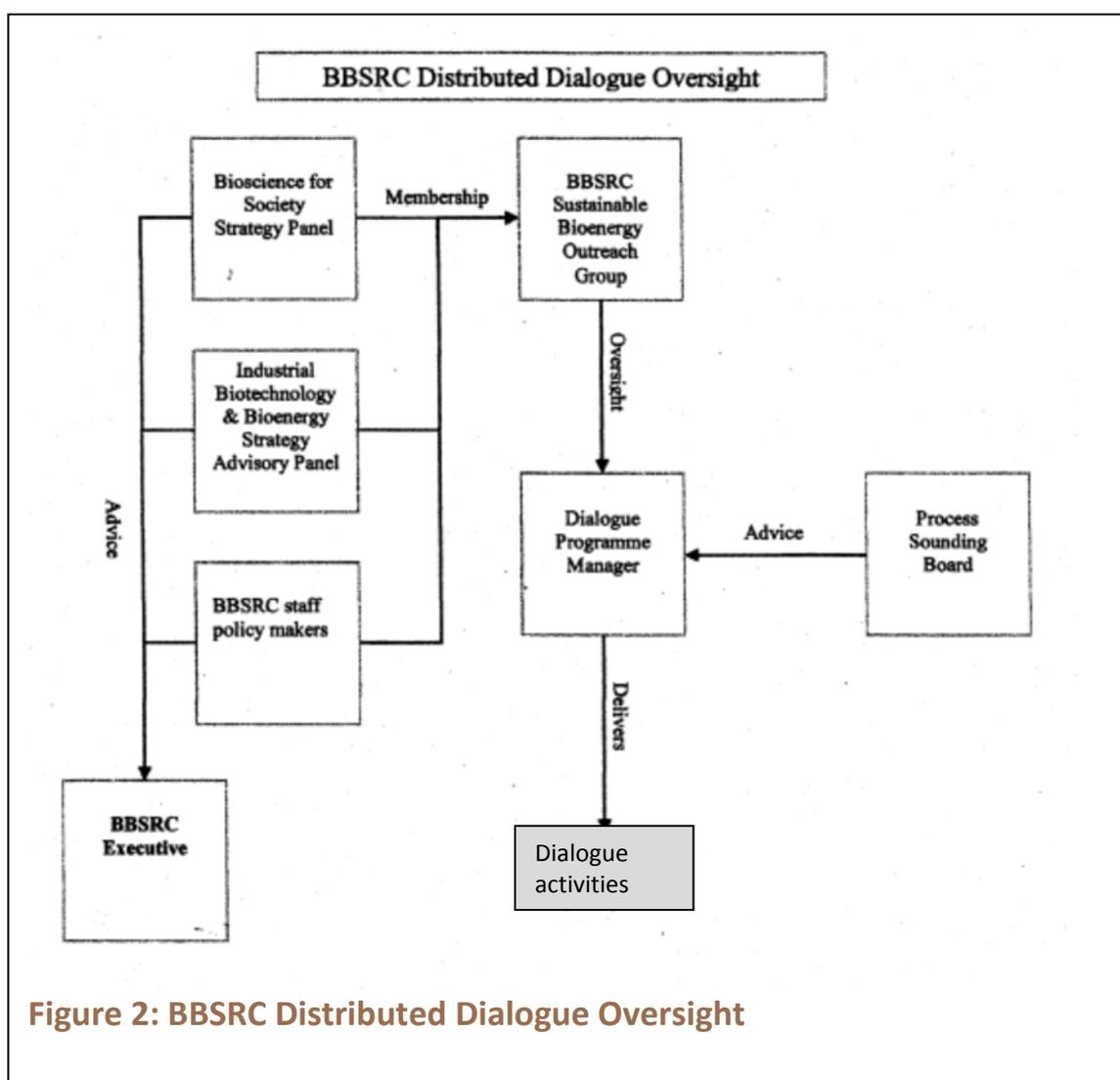


Figure 2: BBSRC Distributed Dialogue Oversight

- 3.9 The Outreach Group was described in a paper circulated to the Process Sounding Board as having ownership of the dialogue and the results, including leading on ensuring that BBSRC responds to the dialogue. The Outreach Group is also able to advise on the content of the public dialogue toolkit, but not on its form. In Figure 3, a second diagram circulated to the Process Sounding Board, the Outreach Group, along with the Bioenergy Champion and the IBBE Strategy Panel, is shown as receiving the results of the dialogue and using these to set policy and strategy.
- 3.10 The Outreach Group is chaired by the Bioenergy Champion, whose role overall is to promote bioenergy by influencing national and international policymakers and funders.

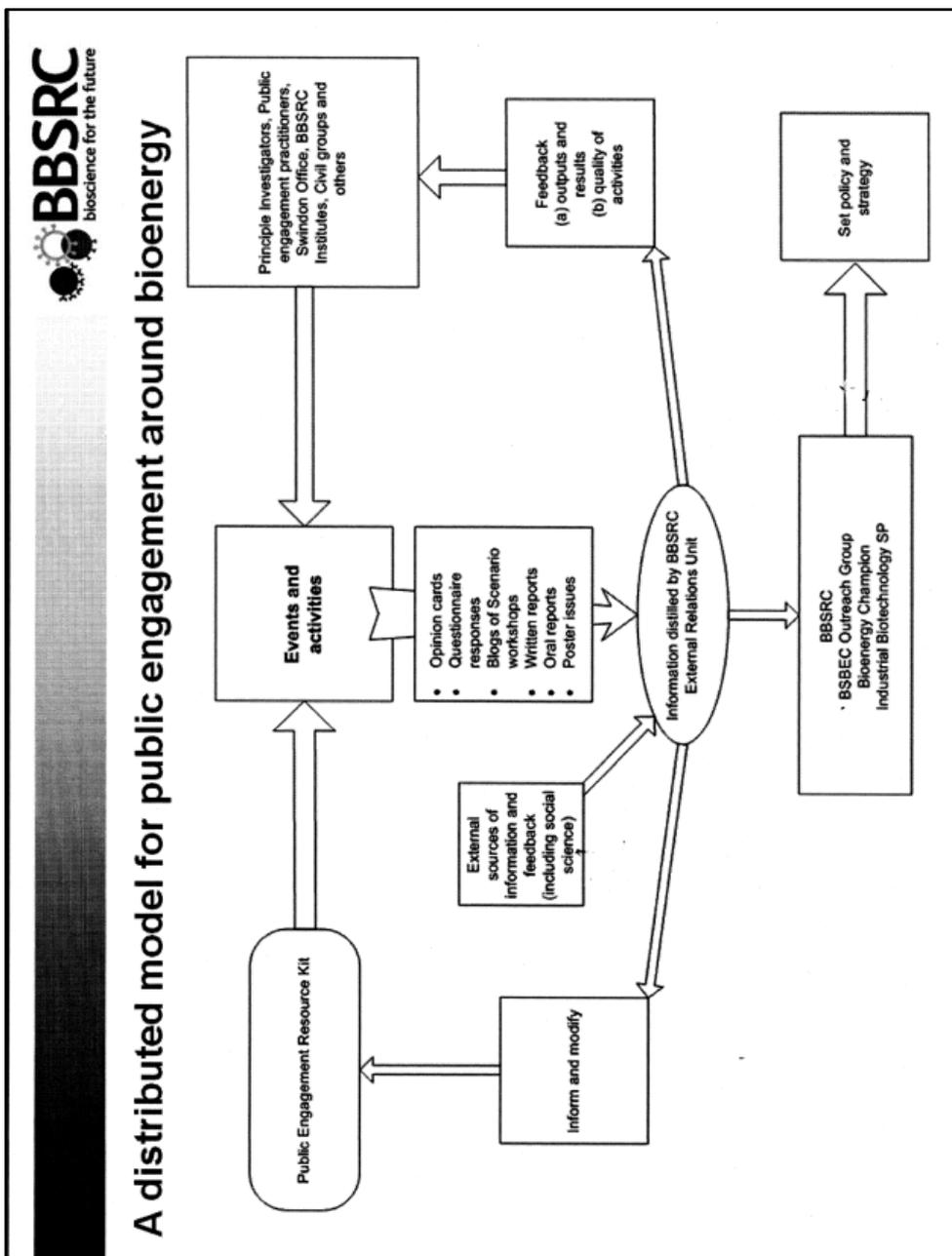


Figure 3: BBSRC Distributed model for public engagement around bioenergy

3.11 As Figure 2 shows, the Outreach Group in turn is linked to two Strategy Advisory Panels (the Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel (BSS) and the Industrial Biotechnology and Bioenergy Strategy Advisory Panel (IBBE)) through the members of these Panels who also sit on the Outreach Group. The

Strategy Advisory Panels work in two directions, on the one hand providing advice and input to the public dialogue and, when results begin to emerge, by providing advice to BBSRC's Executive on the their implications for policy and research priorities. It is too early to say how the Panels will communicate their advice and to what extent they will be able to ensure that findings from the Bioenergy Public Dialogue are taken into account in decision- and policy-making. However, it is worth noting some initial concerns about the potential transparency and effectiveness of this process:

'It's not clear to me what the governance is or how it operates... The people involved in the dialogue [in BBSRC] are completely sensible – I have no problem with that. The question is, how you would make use of the public engagement to get policy decisions? I worry that it is disappearing into senior decision-making bodies where there is little experience of how these things happen.'

External advice and support

- 3.12 The Process Sounding Board (PSB) is a group of people external to BBSRC who have expertise in policy making and dialogue. Their role is: 'to advise BBSRC on the theory behind and process of the dialogue' (from a paper to the PSB). The PSB will meet twice a year and will give advice on all aspects of the dialogue.
- 3.13 One PSB meeting has been held so far. This was a wide-ranging meeting, as it was the first time the group had met. Members also provided practical advice on dialogue materials, the range of participants to be involved in the dialogue and how to use the results.

Embedding the Bioenergy Public Dialogue within BBSRC

- 3.14 The body ultimately responsible for using the results of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue is BBSRC's Executive Group. The organisation's Strategy Advisory Panels provide advice to inform the Group's decisions:

'Key individuals will be responsible for getting the results to influence decision-makers. BBSRC's Strategy Advisory Panels are advisory. They are used to discuss ideas and it is the Executive [Group] that signs off decisions and is the ultimate executive decision-maker. There is lots of opportunity for people to influence the discussion along the way.'

- 3.15 The involvement of a number of different bodies within BBSRC in the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue is seen as an effective way of embedding its results within the organisation:

'What we are realising is that if you embed this within the ... BBSRC itself, the results will (if you have a good board and good structure of little boards) be completely owned by the upper echelons of the organisation.'

- 3.16 A member of one of the Strategy Advisory Panels feeding into the public dialogue noted the positive response of the Panel and indicated that members were committed to ensuring the results of the dialogue were properly taken into account in decision-making:

'We will independently be asking for evidence that the results of the dialogue have been taken notice of and of how it has been used. One of the roles of my Panel is to provide this check.'

- 3.17 However, another interviewee felt that while information about the dialogue was being taken to different internal bodies, none of these were engaging thoroughly with the issues:

'This has been discussed in [BBSRC] groups but not enough and there has been a failure to reach research audiences.'

The role of Sciencewise

3.18 Sciencewise Expert Resource Centre (Sciencewise) is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Sciencewise aims to improve policy making involving science and technology across Government by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate to ensure public views are considered as part of the evidence base. Sciencewise provides a wide range of information, advice, guidance and support services aimed at policy makers and all the different stakeholders involved in science and technology policy making, including the public. Sciencewise also provides co-funding to Government departments and agencies to develop and commission public dialogue.

Sciencewise sees its role as being to test innovative approaches rather than to make dialogue processes conform to tried and tested models:

'My job is ... not to make things fit in the normal way of doing dialogue but to find other ways to do things which are still within the guidelines. In the past we have had paid deliverers but this time we've funded a post within BBSRC. I think that there are things a deliverer would know whereas a person in a post doesn't. We have to experiment. My role was to help the BBSRC team abide by Sciencewise guidelines and come up with a product that was likely to work while being individual and creative.'

3.19 Sciencewise's role so far has involved:

- Providing help to develop the funding bid.
- Understanding the governance arrangements proposed by BBSRC, seeing which comply with the spirit of Sciencewise's guidelines and where arrangements may be inadequate. In the case of the oversight arrangements, the Sciencewise Dialogue and Engagement Specialist (DES) for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue agreed with the proposal to use an internal body as the oversight group and suggested additional meetings.
- Attending project meetings and providing feedback on materials.
- Being available to provide advice to the Project Team on the developing process. The Project Team has not asked for much advice, perhaps because within the team there is experience of previous BBSRC public dialogues as well as research skills in designing public dialogues and analysing responses.
- Providing advice and support around managing the evaluation.

3.20 Overall, Sciencewise's role has been to make sure that general good practice principles of public dialogue were being met, so that the results would be valid, but to intervene as little as possible in the process itself, unless asked. This approach is designed to foster innovation and creativity on the part of the Project Team:

'This is what Sciencewise does – we let people go through a process. We don't just do shining examples of perfect dialogue. We have to have negatives – people learn much more.'

This approach of letting the process develop organically was supported by a second interviewee:

'You can be handicapped by an over-specified script. For something like this, you have to feel your way through.'

Governance processes

This section describes some of the key processes in the development of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue so far, in order to reflect on the governance processes involved.

Project conception and funding

- 3.21 The idea of running a public dialogue as a more dispersed process is not completely new. In particular, the 2005 Small Talk dialogue on nanotechnology run by the British Science Association and others (<http://www.smalltalk.org.uk/>) was also seen as an evolving process with information being fed back iteratively into the development of the process.
- 3.22 A number of individuals and groups were involved in developing the proposal for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue: the Project Team, the Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel, Sciencewise. Papers setting out this thinking were taken to the Strategy Advisory Panels and the Outreach Group. This led to agreement for joint funding of the project by BBSRC and Sciencewise.
- 3.23 In spite of this extensive engagement, among those interviewed, opinions on how much relevant players have been involved in thinking through the project vary considerably, from: *'I felt the Panel had all the information and opportunities we needed'* through to: *'[I've had] no role really. I knew it was going to happen'*, and: *'[My role] has been superficial. I tend to get asked to contribute almost too late.'*

One interviewee expressed a concern that the design of the public dialogue had failed to take full account of lessons from previous dialogues on controversial technologies such as GM crops. This interviewee felt that there was not enough emphasis on wider developments in the field of bioenergy, leading to the risk that new developments or new information might cause a rapid change in public perceptions of bioenergy, no matter what the outcomes of the public dialogue and that nothing was being done to address this risk.

Delivery through appointment of internal project manager

- 3.24 As indicated earlier, one of the main innovative features of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue is the appointment of an internal project manager rather than an external contractor to lead the public dialogue. In order to explore the advantages and disadvantages of this model, a simple SWOT analysis was carried out. Table 2 presents the Strengths and Weaknesses as well as the future Opportunities and Risks associated with having this in-house role rather than an external capacity.

Table 2: SWOT analysis of the model of using an internal project manager working with volunteer organisers and facilitators from the bioenergy community to deliver the Bioenergy Public Dialogue

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in the Project Team, increasing team capacity and mutual support. • Direct links to bioenergy researchers and public engagement staff. • Low cost compared to external contractors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliant on people who have come forward to run the events to recruit participants and conduct public dialogues. • One person's expertise (delivery organisations generally have teams with a range of expertise in designing, organising and facilitating events and of analysing and reporting the results).
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links with and potential for motivating people interested in bioenergy issues to organise and run dialogue events (not seen as having a 'commercial' interest). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited ability to ensure consistency and quality of individual dialogue events. • Internal criticism of previous events could put off potential organisers of dialogue events, with the result that fewer dialogues take place than

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some budget to cover dialogue expenses like room hire and refreshments. • Could potentially offer incentives for volunteers in the form of publicity in BBSRC newsletters and other publications or even some kind of award for outstanding events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk that BBSRC promotion of events could be seen as supporting the priorities or interests of the BBSRC.
--	---

Development, design and testing of dialogue materials

- 3.25 The development of the dialogue materials began before the public dialogue project itself. It is not clear what governance arrangements were in place for this key aspect of the dialogue process. Several interviewees mentioned that they found this problematic:

The toolkit was pretty much completed before the ... project started and BBSRC didn't change much. I hadn't realised how much of a fait accompli it was – it had been given to researchers to do and was quite separate. I was a bit frustrated...'

Input to content of material (Democs game and Toolkit)

- 3.26 Two different sets of material were produced for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue: a Toolkit containing materials for facilitators to use to get discussions going and to get feedback from participants; and a Democs game on bioenergy which has similar materials but in a format that can be used by people who aren't trained facilitators and who don't have the support of experts at the meetings to clarify information. One of the people who developed the Democs game said they were quite happy with the exchanges they had had with scientists and experts about the content of the game:

We spent quite a lot of time with ... the experts, talking through what the cards were about and then reviewing them in detail. There was quite good 'to and fro' on this. They were entitled to give their views but we also took positions: 'you can't say this, it's too complicated', etc. We went through quite a lot of drafts.'

- 3.27 Clearly a balance has to be found between providing members of the public with 'the right' information so that they are able to make judgements based on scientific understanding and providing them with 'enough' information to appreciate the issues involved and express a view on these, without necessarily understanding all the scientific principles. As the quote above suggests, this was achieved through frank discussions between bioenergy experts and dialogue experts over a period of time. In other situations, where this kind of discussion does not happen naturally or if there were a conflict over the kind of information to be produced, governance bodies could play a role in ensuring that the different perspectives of scientific and dialogue experts were aired and debated.

Presentation and format of materials

- 3.28 The materials are attractive and varied, organised around a number of different future scenarios which are presented as stories with characters. Cue cards are used to explore different situations and issues. At the test event in January participants were engaged and motivated throughout. Nevertheless, observation of the testing event and feedback from a sample of participants at that event bear out a comment made by one of the interviewees:

*The toolkit is obviously written by an academic. I didn't have any information about it. It is terribly clever and funny but it's too complex somehow.*⁸

- 3.29 Participants needed basic information about bioenergy in order to feel that they could contribute properly to the dialogue. 12 out of 31 participants who completed questionnaires at the end of the event said that they would have liked to have had more information ('we had so few real facts for the discussion', 'there was a general lack of information for most people').
- 3.30 The review and refining of the materials is an important element of the dialogue model, because it makes the process responsive to feedback from participants. After the pilot event, the Toolkit materials and activities were modified to take account of participants' views. Decisions about what to change seem to have been made by the Project Team. There was some discussion of the changes to the Toolkit at the Process Sounding Board meeting in March, but it is not clear that there was input from the Strategy Advisory Panels or other governance bodies.

Delivery of training

- 3.31 The training event at the Dana Centre in London in January 2013 was delivered by the Project Team. The BBSRC's Bioenergy Champion attended the training. About 15 experts, researchers and science communicators from BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centres around the country participated. The Project Team opted to hold this as a short training session in order to allow more people to attend and to give potential volunteers a flavour of what the project was about, rather than providing a fuller training programme which might have put some people off. They also felt that some of those attending (particularly the science communicators) would already have facilitation skills.
- 3.32 Participants were taken through the guide to planning and running public dialogue events in the Toolkit in a two-hour interactive session. After that, they were asked to work in pairs or small groups to prepare sessions for the evening test event, which they then ran themselves.
- 3.33 The training session packed a lot of information into a very short time. Participants all received a copy of the Toolkit which meant that they were able to take away the materials to refer to. They were also encouraged to draw in expertise from elsewhere as required. This was essential as there was no time during the training session to do more than look briefly at some of the material available.
- 3.34 The majority of the participants were not aware that they were going to be asked to run sessions at the pilot event in the evening. They also seemed unclear that they were being asked to run public dialogue events when they got back to their own workplaces. This lack of clarity over the objectives of the training may help to explain why so few people came forward to organise events after the training and pilot event.
- 3.35 It was felt that more training would be needed to prepare people for the role of lead or support facilitator in the dialogue. In response to the question in the facilitators' feedback form, 'How well equipped in advance did you personally feel to run this event?', five of the eight participants who responded said that they felt 'not very well equipped' to run the event. More time would have been needed to train them in facilitation, with further time needed to explore the issues around bioenergy that would be discussed at the dialogue events.
- 3.36 Further consideration of training is included in the Analysis and Discussion section (points 4.12 – 4.13) and Recommendations section (point 5.5) below.

⁸ The scenarios used in the toolkit were originally developed as part of an academic report; they were adapted for use in the toolkit by a science communicator.

Feedback to BBSRC and decision-making

3.37 Following the pilot event at the Dana Centre the Project Team produced a template report with the learning from the event and the results of the questionnaires completed by the members of the public who participated, to provide an overview of outcomes and get feedback on the approach to reporting. This was discussed at the IBBE Strategy Advisory Panel meeting in May. Members provided comments and discussed criteria to ensure robust results from the dialogue process.

3.38 The results of the pilot event have been fed back to other advisory panels and groups as fully as possible. The timings of the meetings of the Outreach Group and the BSS have meant that they did not have the opportunity to see the template report but they did receive a summary report on the pilot event.

3.39 The interviews indicated that members of BBSRC panels and groups are keen to have an input to the Bioenergy Public Dialogue and help to make the best use of its results:

'I'd like to see what happens at the next step. I'd like to input before that happens rather than after. I'd like to input to the interpretation of the findings and to decisions about actions.'

One panel member said that the panel didn't receive a lot of information about the public dialogue, suggesting that more information would be useful to inform debate at meetings. Some of the aspects on which this interviewee felt more information would be useful were: selection of participants for dialogue events, interests represented by participants, measures taken to ensure a broad representation of interests and involvement of particular stakeholders, e.g. NGOs.

3.40 The Project Team has also used other opportunities to talk to different forums about the public dialogue, to make people working on bioenergy aware of the dialogue and get them to think about how the results might be relevant to their own work. One member of the Team spoke at a researchers' conference and had the opportunity to speak informally with a large number of participants. However, the Team is small and it can be a challenge finding time for these activities.

3.41 It is less clear how the results of the public dialogue are feeding into wider discussions about energy futures or issues associated with different bioenergy options. Some interviewees suggested that the wider debate was less important and that the main role was to influence BBSRC: *'The external aspect doesn't matter so much – we are BBSRC.'*

But another interviewee voiced concerns about what they saw as a failure at government level to join up initiatives around bioenergy, which means there is no common debate to feed the bioenergy public dialogues into:

'Part of my concern is that there is not much connection. Everything in government is fragmented in the UK: BIS and Defra set all sorts of things going and rarely connect them back up. So there is the Industrial Bioenergy Leadership Forum, which is involved, and the Knowledge Transfer Networks like the Biosciences KTN. But these initiatives are not well connected.'

4. Analysis and discussion

Roles and responsibilities

4.1 BBSRC has chosen to use a distributed model of governance for its Bioenergy Public Dialogue. BBSRC decision making is complex with a number of advice streams. The decision was taken to embed the governance of the dialogue within existing structures. It was hoped that this would help to create ownership of the findings by all the groups who might use them. It also provided an opportunity to further embed dialogue across the whole organisation. However, the Project Management Team recognises that there are also challenges around differing priorities for the dialogue among the different groups, the potential for a lowered sense of ownership, potential confusion about who has final say. It also makes the governance more difficult to explain to e.g. public participants.

4.2 The sharing of ownership of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue project across two BBSRC Advisory Panels and the Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group (BSBOG) which has the oversight role appears to be making progress in getting the dialogue process seen as part of the BBSRC landscape, rather than an external project of occasional interest:

'Its early days but the dialogue has got some visibility among people who know about it. People are waiting to see the results.'

The same interviewee named a number of aspects of the public dialogue that are working well:

'There is a clear owner [of project decision-making and management] as required for Sciencewise funding. There is a team of social engagement people supporting the dialogue. The secretariat is good.'

4.3 However, some of those interviewed were not clear about the ownership of the project and how its results would be used. The dispersal of ownership amongst a number of BBSRC bodies means that, while more people are involved in reviewing the development and outputs of the dialogue, they are not necessarily clear about who or which body has the ultimate authority in terms of making sure that the dialogue is working effectively and that its findings are being analysed and used. If those involved are not clear about the extent of their own or other's roles and responsibilities, there is a risk that important oversight or decision-making functions may not be performed. One example of a situation in which BBSRC groups or committees do not seem to have provided effective support for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue is the recruitment of volunteers to run public dialogue events. The distributed dialogue approach depends on people coming forward to organise events with support from the Project Team. Although the Project Team used different channels (the website, bioenergy research centres, meetings) to invite people to organise events and advised relevant groups and committees about these efforts, none of the advisory bodies came forward to champion the search for volunteers and ensure that the target number of events was achieved. At a meeting of the Outreach Group, members recognised there would be a problem for the project if engagement events could not be organised, however no specific actions were agreed to address the issue, with the Group limiting itself to suggesting actions that could be taken by the Project Team.

4.4 It would seem that further work needs to be done to promote the public dialogue more widely within BBSRC:

'I'm still a fan of trying to distribute governance across structures. More preparatory work is needed... For BBSRC you need the paper trail (to show Sciencewise support, to show that Executive members are

supporting, etc.) but you also need to go round talking to people and developing ownership within the organisation.'

This comment suggests that while there has been a *formal* embedding of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue (the 'paper trail'), *functional* embedding, involving BBSRC staff, researchers and associates coming to recognise public dialogue as being relevant to their own work and part of their role and responsibilities, is likely to require a longer process.

- 4.5 The objective of dispersed governance does not sit easily with existing institutional structures and culture and this means that it is likely to take time to make change happen. The TNS-BRMB report referred to earlier argued that:

Governance is expert-led. Power is concentrated at very senior levels. Leaders of organisations have a large influence on policy cultures.⁹

The people most closely involved in the Bioenergy Public Dialogue are aware of these difficulties:

'This approach has the challenge of getting ownership in each of these groups about what the dialogue is and its objectives. We have made a conscious decision to trade a simple governance structure for a more complex one.'

Some of the interviewees suggested that Project Team members, members of advisory panels and other experts all know each other quite well and trust each other. This facilitates dialogue and collaborative working but could also mean that those involved are perhaps are not as critical as they might be. This might be compounded by the limited involvement of external stakeholders who are more likely to question assumptions or point out ways of looking at the research or its implications that may have been overlooked.

- 4.6 There is a risk that the dispersal of governance roles could result in a lack of feedback and constructive criticism because all the governance bodies share a similar culture, particularly in the absence of a multi-stakeholder oversight group.

Dialogue results in relation to four key Sciencewise principles

This section looks at the extent to which the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue can be expected to contribute to this dialogue meeting the Sciencewise principles of good practice public dialogue. Given that the public dialogue activities had not started at time of writing, this discussion will mainly be exploratory rather than focusing on results.

Context

- 4.7 The dispersed and responsive nature of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue creates a challenge in terms of context, as both the reasons for seeking public views and the way that these will be used are likely to vary over time. Experience of public dialogues run by other research councils¹⁰ suggests that members of the public have very little understanding about how decisions on funding science research are taken. The feedback from the pilot Bioenergy Public Dialogue event in January showed a significant minority at that event did not feel that the views of members of the public should influence decisions on the funding of research into topics like bioenergy. In the future, the publicity may need to be clearer about the context of this dialogue and why the public are being involved.

⁹ TNS-BRMB (2011) op cit, p 2

¹⁰ For example, NERC's Public Dialogue on Geoengineering

Design

- 4.8 The project governance allows for people from outside BBSRC to be involved in the design of the dialogue, both through BBSRC's advisory panels and the Outreach Group (which include people from industry, farming and NGOs) and through the Process Sounding Board. However, the majority of the members of these bodies have an academic or science background, so while they come from different organisations and institutions and may represent different interests, they are likely to be comfortable talking about the topics in similar terms to the members from science and academia.
- 4.9 The pilot event was a mechanism for testing the materials and dialogue approach with people from a range of backgrounds. This was formally achieved as the participants did come from different backgrounds; many did not have any previous knowledge of bioenergy. However, the Science Museum's Dana Centre, where the event was held, runs regular activities for people with a particular interest in science who are often familiar with scientific perspectives and ways of thinking. Many of the participants had found out about the pilot Bioenergy Public Dialogue event from a Dana Centre mailing. The audience for the pilot event was not representative of wider publics. Event organisers may find that later dialogue activities and discussions do not work the same way as at the pilot. The drawbacks of the venue chosen for the pilot were recognised by the Project Team but they were felt to be outweighed by the advantages of having a 'safe' audience in terms both of the number of participants and their willingness to engage in discussing this topic.

Delivery

- 4.10 The dispersed responsibility for dialogue delivery makes the role of volunteer organisers and facilitators critical. The difficulties in getting people to come forward to volunteer to organise and run events, and the limited support provided by existing governance structures for mobilising volunteers has been discussed above. There are two additional issues related to the use of volunteers in delivery: (i) the arrangements for training volunteers to run events and gather views of participants effectively; and (ii) the representation of volunteers in the project's governance structures, to enable them to contribute to decisions about the further development of the public dialogue and the use of dialogue results.
- 4.11 Members of the Outreach Group and Advisory Panels don't seem to have had much involvement in developing the objectives and criteria for volunteer training or in monitoring how this is provided (the quality of the facilitation is examined below under the heading 'Consistency and quality control'). The training provided for the pilot event at the Dana Centre involved a two-hour workshop followed by a one-hour planning period in which the volunteers prepared a group session which they then ran as part of the pilot. No specific training programme for future volunteers is planned. A strategy document prepared by the Project Team for the PSB meeting in March 2013 indicated that the Project Management team would support people who are organising events by 'providing training if needed' and 'working with people on a one-to-one basis, either over the phone or on email or by BBSRC visits and presence at events'.
- 4.12 Looking specifically at the role of facilitators, the Toolkit has a section on the role of facilitators within public dialogue. Some of those involved in planning and running events are science communicators who will have had some facilitation training. However, for those who have not had prior experience of facilitation, the level of training and support offered, along with the suggestion that training will only sometimes be required, underestimates the challenge of facilitating this kind of activity. Basic training for support facilitation offered by other providers is longer than the training provided for people involved in the Bioenergy Public Dialogue and does not cover the use of the kinds of materials

that are in the toolkit¹¹. Facilitating a small group in a Bioenergy Public Dialogue is a complex task, involving using different tools to prompt and support discussion and to introduce new topics, managing the participation of experts, without letting the discussion become a question-and-answer session and getting the group to come up with lists of issues. If the people running the public dialogue events do not have a good understanding of all these aspects and of the materials they will be using, they may not get usable results.

- 4.13 Within the governance structures for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue there should be sufficient expertise in engagement and dialogue to provide oversight of the training and support. It is not clear within the current structures where responsibility for this lies. There is expertise within the Outreach Group and Advisory Panels but there was no evidence that any of these bodies has monitored the training being provided. One reason for this may be that their meetings are not held frequently enough to allow members to give timely and effective inputs.
- 4.14 Given there are no financial or other incentives for running dialogue events, there may be a number of reasons why people do come forward to run events, for example:
- They feel a responsibility to respond to a request from BBSRC, often their main funder.
 - They have commitments to do public engagement and this is one way of fulfilling them.
 - They have an interest in understanding public views on their area of research.
- 4.15 The experience of the events themselves will give the volunteers insights into the responses of different members of the public to the topics debated, to wider issues around science and society and to the way that the dialogue event has worked. Volunteers thus become a vitally important resource in terms of thinking about what to do with the results of the round of dialogue events and for taking the public dialogue forward in a way that is responsive to issues raised.
- 4.16 It is not clear how volunteers who run events currently contribute to the Bioenergy Public Dialogue project beyond sending back their feedback form at the end of the event. Providing a mechanism for ongoing involvement might motivate people to run further events, which would build expertise for the project as a whole and help volunteers to feel that they had a greater part to play in the process as a whole.

Impact

- 4.17 Although it is too early to see the wider impacts of the dialogue, there have already been some impacts on the scientists and public engagement staff who participated as experts and facilitators in the first event. Of the nine people who completed evaluation forms at the end of the event, seven said they would be willing to run a future event. In response to a question about how they would use the experience in their work, five people felt it would be relevant for other public engagement events and one person said it had helped them to think about their work from a different perspective:

'I feel more confident on running my own events, where to look for ideas.'

'Be more aware of the wider issues in bioenergy as well as the specifics of my own research area'.

¹¹ The Environment Council (TEC), an organisation with a track record as a provider of training in facilitation skills, runs a one-day course called 'Fast Facilitation' which covers basic facilitation skills, designed 'to address the needs of people who, from time to time, are required to facilitate small to medium sized groups as part of their job', <http://www.the-environment-council.org.uk/learning-and-development/fast-facilitation/>

4.18 Despite this positive response from those involved in facilitating and supporting the dialogue, the same people reported that they felt they were ‘not well equipped’ (4 people) or only ‘fairly well equipped’ (3 people). No-one said they were well equipped for the role. Several people suggested that more time was needed to understand the role and become familiar with the Toolkit. This experience supports the earlier point about the need for more extensive training for people taking on facilitation roles.

4.19 There was optimism among several of the interviewees that the results would be used within BBSRC because the process has been embedded in the organisation:

‘That the outcomes will be used looks really good – the process is integrated in BBSRC. Also very good example of embedding.’

However, at the time the interviews were conducted, others were more sceptical, either because they were not confident that the organisation had thought clearly enough about how the results will be used to inform bioenergy research (which relates to *context*, above) or because they feared that the approach used, especially the emphasis on distributed delivery, would not produce robust results:

‘I don’t know what the results will be. It’s not really been explained. I think that a number of the people involved didn’t have a clear idea of what would come out of it. There is no evidence that there were good hypotheses about what would come out of this. For example, you need to think about what would happen if people say they don’t want the stuff. What would BBSRC do?’

‘The public dialogue needs to come forward with real evidence to create some credibility.’

4.20 The efforts made by the Project Team to disseminate information about the dialogue through BBSRC forums such as researchers’ meetings will help to increase awareness of this work and should mean that its results are used more widely.

Consistency and quality control

4.21 If the results of the public dialogue are to be credible, they need to be robust and collected in a consistent way across the different locations where activities are held. The need for more rigorous training to ensure consistency in the activities facilitated by different people and the reporting of their results has been discussed under ‘Delivery’ above. It would also be important to have a mechanism for monitoring the sessions led by volunteer facilitators, so that they can be given further support or training where necessary. The BBSRC Project Team is likely to play a key role in supporting and monitoring facilitators. Many interviewees recognised and expressed their appreciation of work being done by team members. Some – including one member of the Project Team – also noted that the team tends not to ask others for advice or support but rather takes on responsibility for all aspects of the dialogue. While this is a positive attitude which no doubt helps the team to get things done, there is a risk that they may not ask for support when things are going wrong and therefore not address emerging problems.

4.22 The PSB and BSS Strategy Advisory Panel are two bodies which are well-placed to consider issues of consistency and quality control. Relevant issues discussed by the PSB at its first meeting in March 2013 were:

- Ensuring enough events are run to get robust results.

- Including a range of participants across the dialogue events¹².
- Format for reporting back from events.
- Setting the context by explaining why and how the scenarios are being used to explore issues.

The BSS Strategy Advisory Panel has discussed the bioenergy dialogue at a number of meetings. The BSS Strategy Advisory Panel sees itself as having an important role in checking that the results of the public dialogue are used:

'[BSS] will independently be asking for evidence that the results of the dialogue have been taken notice of and of how it has been used. One of the roles of the Panel is to provide this check.'

Governance arrangements and multiple objectives

4.23 While all those interviewed for this report agreed that the primary aim of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue is to find out about how members of the public see bioenergy, many mentioned other objectives. Some of the additional objectives mentioned were:

- Provide information in order to understand rational (rather than emotional) responses to bioenergy and the arguments that influence different groups of people (characterised, for example, by socio-economic status, level of education, age, gender, etc.) This understanding could help scientists respond more robustly to media scares, avoiding bioenergy becoming the next GM foods.

'I'm also worried that people feel that just doing public dialogue is enough. What's important is how you do it to produce the outcomes you want. Like knowing what we would do if something about bioenergy hit the press.'

- *'Get some feel of where the boundaries of informed opinion might be.'* Use dialogue to test how far different publics would be prepared to go with bioenergy and what considerations influence their views.
- Understand why members of the public think the way they do (whether or not their views are rational or scientifically correct): *'[We are] looking at the qualitative aspects, exploring why people think things.'*
- Make sure that BBSRC is publicly accountable: *'In general, public engagement has come up as something BBSRC should do.'*
- Provide good information to educate the public: *'BBSRC has definitely got a role in educating the public about the role of bioscience and about individual bioenergies.'*

4.24 These objectives reflect different perspectives and priorities. The distributed governance model can be a good arrangement for enabling different actors or governance bodies to focus on different objectives. However it is important that these multiple objectives are recognised and accepted, otherwise individuals or groups may feel that their priorities are being ignored and this is likely to lead to tensions and disagreements over methodologies and criteria for taking forward the dialogue. One interviewee commented:

¹² The PSB advised that the issue of representativeness should not be a concern at the start of the process but should be reviewed later.

'People in BBSRC and the advisory panels are sensitive about the numbers – we are not talking to a large number of people, but looking at the qualitative aspects, exploring why people think things. This is not a representative sample. We need to make the case for working in this way so that policy makers in BBSRC can see the value in that.'

- 4.25 There are good reasons for keeping the governance arrangements for a distributed dialogue as clear and simple as possible:
- To avoid the risk of confusion over who does what at which point in the process, the duplication of efforts or lack of effectiveness.
 - To increase transparency over the implementation of the public dialogue and the way its results are used.
 - To increase accountability by making it easier to keep track of what has happened and where decisions have been made.
- 4.26 It is important that those championing the public dialogue continue to make the case for the approach that has been taken and encourage discussion about the extent to which other objectives can also be achieved through the same process

Role of volunteers in design, delivery and impact

- 4.27 The people who have not been directly included in the governance arrangements for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue are those who have been running events and activities. While the number of volunteers is still small, the distributed dialogue model relies on them playing a significant role, which could be reflected in governance structures.
- 4.28 Volunteer event organisers are the face of the public dialogue: they are the people who will select audiences to work with, explain the context and objectives to participants, establish the scope of the dialogue by deciding what topics can and can't be included, pick up on issues being raised and probe further to better understand participants' views and report back on outcomes¹³. If people do not run their own bioenergy dialogue events, the Project Team will have to take on responsibility for these activities; their number and distribution will inevitably be diminished.
- 4.29 A number of governance bodies have recognised that getting people to organise and run dialogue activities is a key threat to the Bioenergy Public Dialogue (e.g. BSBOG, PSB). The Project Team drafted a strategy paper to address these concerns. However, the focus has tended to be on how to improve publicity (getting more people to consider running events) rather than on what might motivate or discourage people to get involved. Re-thinking this role, to give event organisers a higher profile in the public dialogue, could encourage more people to run events and would also strengthen the process overall by ensuring that the experience of people on the ground informs decisions on its development. While some input from the Project Team would be needed to create this group (e.g. setting up procedures for people to 'join' the group and share contact details, setting up a blog or other mechanism for members to talk to each other, providing regular updates on developments in the process and inviting comments or feedback on proposals for change), it should be encouraged to be self-managing, to reduce administrative burdens on the Project Team.

¹³ Public participants also provide their own individual feedback by completing a form at the end of the session.

5. Recommendations

This section draws on the analysis of the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue to make some suggestions of ways in which the governance of this dialogue and future dialogues could be improved.

What governance arrangements have worked well and could be used in future dialogues

- 5.1 Bring out more clearly the roles and responsibilities of BBSRC groups and panels, to ensure active ownership of the dialogue.
- 5.2 .
- 5.3 Using existing governance structures like expert or advisory groups to monitor and provide oversight of the dialogue process can be an effective way of building ownership of its findings and results within an organisation. Where these structures are used, it can be very valuable to also include external stakeholders who are more likely to question assumptions or bring in perspectives from outside the organisation.
- 5.4 Using researchers to run events alongside science communicators can increase the impact of the dialogue within the organisation, as those involved gain insights into the responses of different members of the public to the topics debated, to wider issues around science and society and to the way that the dialogue event has worked.

What lessons about governance should be considered for the remainder of this dialogue

- 5.5 Increasing transparency and accountability:
 - Publish regular updates on the dialogue activities and results.
 - Provide Strategy Advisory Panels and other governance bodies with enough information to monitor developments and follow up issues raised and actions agreed at their meetings.
 - Explore the possibility of creating a sub-group of the Outreach Group with responsibility for the Bioenergy Public Dialogue. This would ensure day-to-day responsibility for monitoring the development of the dialogue and the implementation of agreed actions between regular meetings. This sub-group could meet between regular BSBOG meetings or seek email feedback from other BSBOG members, as necessary.

Consider including wider external stakeholder involvement in bioenergy dialogue governance bodies, to bring in more perspectives from outside BBSRC. Broad stakeholder groups have been used successfully for other public dialogue projects, such as NERC's public dialogue on geoengineering.

- 5.6 Put structures and mechanisms in place to encourage people to come forward to organise events:
 - Include volunteers in the governance of the public dialogue by providing a mechanism for ongoing involvement which would harness the enthusiasm of those who have been involved and allow the experience of the dialogue events to be fed back into the dialogue process, creating a feedback loop.

- Develop a number of other support mechanisms, such as a pool of expert facilitators to provide advice and assistance and ongoing training and support¹⁴.
- 5.7 Assess opportunities for involving cross-Government stakeholders in existing governance structures or through other mechanisms, as a means providing wider perspectives on the process and improving links with relevant departments and agencies.

What lessons should be considered for future dialogues

- 5.8 Where dispersed models of governance are used, organisations need to ensure that there are opportunities for those involved in governance structures to share views about objectives, methodology and outcomes so that common principles can be agreed and differences acknowledged.
- 5.9 Consider the value of providing for the involvement of cross-Government stakeholders in governance structures. This involvement could encourage government stakeholders to promote the results of the dialogue more widely, particularly to relevant departments and agencies.
- 5.10 Clarity of objectives: central organising bodies need to make sure that they can explain clearly, to their own members and stakeholders and to public participants, not just why they are engaging in dialogue with members of the public, but, more importantly, what they intend to use the results for. Clearly, it is not possible to say exactly what will happen as a result of the public dialogue, before the findings of the dialogue are known. But those convening and leading the dialogue should be able to say who will consider the results of the dialogue and in relation to which decisions.

¹⁴ These topics go beyond the scope of this report, and will be considered in more detail in the final evaluation report.

Appendix 1: Public Dialogue Evaluation Data Sources

The following types of data were collected for the evaluation during the course of this dialogue, and its complementary streams.

Types of events / sources	Types of data collected
Project Team meeting	Notes from the observation of 1 Project Team meeting.
Observation of project meetings	Notes from observation of two meetings of Bioenergy Public Dialogue governance bodies, based on a common template: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process Sounding Board meeting 2013) • BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group (March 2013)
Bioenergy Public Dialogue Training and Testing Session	Notes from observation of a training session for researchers followed by a testing event, using the common meeting observation template.
Bioenergy Public Dialogue Process Sounding Board	Notes from observation of 1 Open Access Event events, based on a common template. This event was a meeting held in Oxford.
Interviews	Semi-structured interviews with 6 people involved in different roles in the governance of the Bioenergy Public Dialogue.

Appendix 2: BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Outreach Group

The BBSRC Sustainable Bioenergy Centre (BSBEC) Outreach Group advises BBSRC and BSBEC on communication and public engagement around bioenergy. Membership of the group is drawn from across BSBEC and includes external stakeholders.

The diverse expertise of the group includes representation from:

- University of Cambridge (BSBEC Lead Institution)
- University of Dundee (BSBEC Lead Institution)
- University of Nottingham (BSBEC Lead Institution)
- Rothamsted Research (BSBEC Lead Institution)
- University of York (BSBEC Lead Institution)
- Dingwall Enterprises (Professor Robert Dingwall)
- NFU
- RSPB
- TMO Renewables

The group works with the BBSRC Bioscience for Society Strategy Panel through joint membership.

(http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/support/About_BSBEC)

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

EVALUATION OF BBSRC'S BIOENERGY PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Interviews for Interim Report

Introduction

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is carrying out a public dialogue on bioenergy, the first phase of which will run to October 2013. Collingwood Environmental Planning is carrying out an independent evaluation of the public dialogue. As an early contribution to the evaluation, we are interviewing people who are involved in the governance of the public dialogue process in different capacities, including BBSRC staff and members of BBSRC outreach and other groups.

The objectives of the dialogue are:

- i. To facilitate discussions between the BBSRC scientific community involved in bioenergy research and members of the public
- ii. To identify public views, concerns and aspirations about the science, social implications, and ethics of bioenergy research
- iii. To raise awareness within BBSRC of the needs and views of the public in relation to bioenergy
- iv. To inform our strategy and policy setting around bioenergy
- v. To disseminate our findings to key stakeholders, for example, the government
- vi. To develop and test a novel, flexible model of dialogue for discussion of complex issues that enables engagement with a large group of people nationwide

We would like to do a short telephone interview with you, at a time we can agree, about the public dialogue process. It should take about 40 minutes.

The main focus of the interview with you is to find out your views on the governance of the public dialogue, and how you feel about your involvement.

We will record the interview and the record will be used to write the evaluation report, but anything you say will be anonymous. We may want to quote your exact words in some cases, but your name will not be used anywhere in the report.

We will send you a copy of the interview transcript, so that you can check your words. We will subsequently send you a copy of the Interim Report once it has been approved by BBSRC and Sciencewise.

BBSRC is keen to learn from this experience so feel free to be completely honest in your answers. Your feedback will help BBSRC, Sciencewise and other bodies to improve their public dialogues in future.

Interview questions

Your role in the bioenergy dialogue

- 1 What do you understand to be the main purpose of the dialogue?
- 2 Could you describe what your role has been in the planning, development and/or implementation of the dialogue process so far?
- 3 Do you think that your role is sufficiently well specified?
- 4 Have you been able to contribute effectively to the development of the bioenergy dialogue process? What factors have contributed to this?
- 5 Do you think that any change could be introduced that would make your role more effective?
- 6 What are you personally hoping / expecting that the dialogue will achieve?

The dialogue event(s)

- 7 Do you think that the event catered for enough people and a good enough mix of people to get a good discussion? If not, why not?
- 8 Do you think that the timetable and activities for the event were appropriate? If not, why not?
- 9 Do you feel time was allowed for discussion of the scope of the dialogue process? Was there an opportunity for participants to discuss their aspirations for the process?
- 10 Do you think that the information provided (e.g. slides, handouts, etc) was:
 - sufficient for the public participants to understand the issues?
 - fair and unbiased?
 - designed to provide a good range of different perspectives on the issues?
- 11 Did you contribute in any way to the development of the information provided? If so, do you feel that your input was taken into account? In what ways?
- 12 What did you think of the quality of discussions among the public participants? (*Prompt: level of detail, engagement of participants with the issues, evidence of understanding of issues*)
- 13 Do you feel that the issues raised by the public were adequately recorded / captured during the event? Were there any issues that were raised by the public that seemed really important but that may not have been adequately picked up by the organisers? If so, which?

14 Did anything particularly surprise or impress or worry you about what you observed in the event? Please give details.

15 Did you think it was worthwhile for you to attend the event? If so, why.

5.11 Governance of the project

16 Do you think the decision making and management of the project has been clear and efficient? Please give details of what you think has been working well or not.

17 Do you think the project is sufficiently embedded within the appropriate decision making groups, to ensure the dialogue results are used and have influence? Please give details.

18 Do you think the project is sufficiently well-connected and well-placed in relation to wider current debates and decisions about bioenergy? Please give details.

19 Do you think that any other groups or individuals could or should have been involved in the bioenergy dialogue in any way? Please identify these interests and how they could / should have been involved.

20 What do you think of the role played by Sciencewise in the bioenergy dialogue process? Is there anything else that Sciencewise could or should have done to more effectively support the project?

21 Are there any lessons so far from the governance of this project that could be useful to future dialogue projects?

Impacts / outcomes from the process

22 Are you clear about what the outputs of the public dialogue will be? Do you think these outputs will be appropriate and useful? Please say why.

23 Do you think the design and delivery of the project are sufficiently credible for the results to be valid in influencing BBSRC decisions on strategy and policy around bioenergy? Please explain why.

24 Where and how do you think this public dialogue will affect BBSRC and others' decisions on strategy and policy around bioenergy? Are you satisfied that it should have this kind of impact? Please say why.

25 Will you use the results of the dialogue in your own work? If so, how.

- 26 Do you think the process will have any impacts in terms of spreading understanding and skills in public dialogue? Please give details.
- 27 What, if anything, do you think the dialogue has achieved so far?

Costs and benefits

- 28 What do you believe is the main value or benefit of this sort of public engagement process? To what extent do you think the process will deliver this value/benefit? Please say why.
- 29 Public dialogue has financial costs. Do you feel that the money spent on dialogue is likely to be money well spent? What factors are likely to influence your assessment?
- 30 Do you think that the dialogue might lead to cost savings in the future, for example to your own work or more widely? (this question is looking at potential savings as a result of the dialogue, e.g. not wasting time on certain types of research, etc).

Many thanks

