

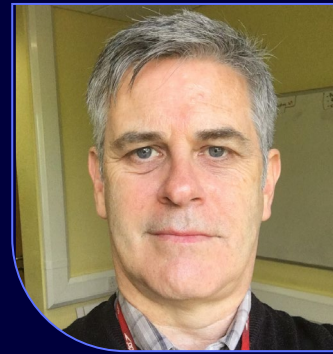
Plenary Panel Session

Research needs of cluster roadmaps

Chair



Lindsay Marie
Armstrong
University of
Southampton



Jon Maddy
University of South
Wales



Joe Howe
University of Lincoln



Tony Parton
Black Country Industrial
Cluster



Plenary Session: Research needs of cluster roadmaps

Six industrial clusters have produced roadmaps to achieve net-zero emissions, funded by the Industrial Decarbonisation Challenge (IDC). These blueprints were published in March 2023 and this session will look at the research and innovation need identified. The panel will discuss the similarities and differences of the UK industrial clusters, the specific research needs that they have and how academia can continue to support the clusters to accelerate decarbonisation.

Chair: Lindsay Marie Armstrong (University of Southampton)

Panellists: Jon Maddy (University of South Wales); Joe Howe (University of Lincoln); Tony Parton (Black Country Industrial Cluster)

The panel started off by debating how well industry was able to engage with and navigate academia and vice versa. Momentum seems to have grown post-covid, and industry is now coming to academia asking how they can collaborate. There was a view that industries can be very cautious about their IP – but the consensus was that they need to be brave and open to collaboration. From an industry perspective, there was agreement that a personal and a single point of communication is important. There was discussion that since SMEs represent 50% of the carbon emissions, this sector is key for academia to engage with.

It was noted that in South Wales, many industries were willing to share information and this had facilitated the creation of more research groups, in turn creating an ability for businesses to work in areas that they have not been able to work beforehand.

It was noted that often industry feels they are restricted to projects with too low “technology readiness levels” (TRLs) which does not work well in relation to their needs. Projects with a higher TRL are quicker to deploy and commercialise and would be welcomed by industry.

The session looked at engaging with policy makers. If we are going to make long term investments, we are going to need the right policy framework.

Finally, the role of the IDRIC Academic Cluster Lead as a mediator was discussed. It was agreed that the role is able to transcend the “traditional” triangle of academia/industry/policy.