The report on the Knowledge Exchange workshop on Virtual Research Environments is **now available**
. The workshop brought together experts to discuss how these environments can best be developed and supported. The most important findings were:

Insight is required into the wide band of what Virtual Research Environments (VREs) are to best support researchers and their demands. VRE's are not 'one thing': they can vary in shape, size, goal and use. They can range from communication platforms to tools to manage and collaborate on large datasets. To exploit the full potential of the phenomenon we need to bring together a variety of perspectives (e.g. researchers, IT staff, librarians, policy makers and research funders) and solutions. Better ways are required to reach particularly young researchers, who tend to rely on their network of peers rather than on institutional support. A joint approach is also important to support the development of VREs and sustaining the tools that have been developed after the project funding ceases.

One of the suggestions was to collect case studies – of successful and failed projects –to gain better understanding of researcher's behaviour, and the way it is affected by the use of VRE's. Through the case studies the value and impact of VRE's can be explored, and this should help identify the factors that influence use and success. Insights from such case studies will help to support community networks in the development and implementation of VRE's and resolve sustainability issues more easily. The insights can also be used to inform policy makers and funders about effective policy and financial support. There was a strong agreement that Knowledge Exchange is well-situated to play an important role in these knowledge developing and sharing activities to integrate VRE's in the research infrastructure.

The workshop brought together 34 experts in Birmingham on 17 and 18 November 2011 to explore the potential of Virtual Research Environments (VREs). Drawing from experiences of the last seven years in a variety of projects, the discussions provided valuable insights into how VREs can integrate more fully in the research infrastructure, both organisationally and socially. Such questions were addressed as what changes do they bring about and what changes do they presume.

Read the full report on the workshop at: http://www.knowledge-exchange.info/Default.aspx?ID=451   .