**2018/19 BES Policy Fellowship with the UK Government**

The British Ecological Society is committed to making the best scientific evidence available to decision-makers, and supporting members to build their policy engagement skills and enhance the impact of their work. The BES Policy Fellowship will offer a mid-career ecologist the chance to spend up to six months on a placement embedded within a government department or agency, applying their scientific expertise to a practical policy challenge. The 2018/19 Fellowship will be hosted by Defra’s Environment Analysis Unit. The Fellowship will provide a prestigious opportunity for BES members to gain first-hand experience of working within government, improving their policy knowledge and awareness, developing their science communication skills, and building their professional networks at an exciting and crucial time for environmental policy. The Fellowship will also help to foster wider links between the ecological and policy communities, and support policy development informed by outstanding science.

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, critical decisions will be made about the future of our environmental policy framework, with opportunities to develop innovative new approaches. Gathering, synthesising and communicating the best scientific evidence – from how to maximise the environmental benefits of land management schemes, through to how to promote ecosystem resilience – is essential to ensuring the success of any policy decisions. The 2018/19 BES Policy Fellowship with the UK Government offers the chance to be at the heart of this process. You will spend up to six months embedded within Defra’s Environment Analysis Unit, the team tasked with pulling together science and data from across the organisation to support policymaking.

**Institutions: why encourage your staff to apply for the BES Policy Fellowship?**

The BES Policy Fellowship offers mid-career ecologists a unique opportunity to gain first-hand experience of working in a policy environment, enhancing their professional development. The Fellow will develop a greater understanding of the science-policy interface, and enhanced understanding of pathways to research impact, vital knowledge that can be shared with colleagues at a particularly opportune time to engage with and inform policymaking. Policy engagement is valued by researchers and institutions, with 20% of impact case studies in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) making a contribution to ‘informing government policy”.

In addition, the placement will provide an opportunity to raise the profile of the research work of the Fellow and their home institution within a core UK Government department, creating potential for further research collaboration. Participants in similar schemes such as [NERC Policy Placements](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/schemes/placements/) have gone on to develop lasting collaborations with policy hosts. With permission, the Fellow’s home institution will be named in all publicity materials and outputs generated from the placement.

**Nature of the Fellowship**

**Eligibility**

Applications to the BES Policy Fellowship will be open to any member with five or more years’ research experience post-PhD.

**Placement**

In 2018/19, one Fellowship will be available, offering an individual project within Defra’s Environment Analysis Unit (EAU). Potential project areas are listed below, but there is some flexibility to adapt them to take account of the research interests or career plans of the successful applicant, emergent policy needs and timing of the placement.

**A.** Supporting the development of mapping tools and data for future natural environment policies including the Nature Recovery Network. Working closely with Defra policy and evidence colleagues, Natural England, National Parks and local authorities, NGOs and the research community to compile information on landscape scale mapping projects across England, identifying opportunities for mapping natural capital and priority areas for ecosystem service delivery.

**B.** Identifying strategic research priorities on invasive non-native species to fulfil commitments in the GB Non-Native Invasive Species Strategy. The project would require working across the Defra group, devolved administrations, academic bodies, research councils and NGOs to review and assess the current evidence base and define a set of future research needs to meet policy requirements.

**C.** Compilation of evidence to support development of policies for the conservation of birds in England. The project will involve a review of the current evidence base around the multiple issues that contribute to domestic and international commitments, monitoring needs, wildlife crime and wildlife management.

**D.**Building the evidence base to support evaluation of the 25 Year Environment Plan. The project will involve compiling evidence on the logic models that link policy interventions (inputs, performance measures) to longer term goals (impacts, outcomes) relating to wildlife, natural beauty, clean water and resource efficiency (exact scope to be agreed).

The Fellow will be expected to spend at least 40% of their time over the course of the placement based in Defra’s offices. Defra will provide a named line manager for the Fellow. The placement would ideally be based in Defra offices in London, Bristol or York, with travel to attend meetings and events within the UK.

The Fellow will remain employed by her/his home institution for the duration of the placement.

**Duration**

The Fellowship will last between three months (full-time) and six months (part-time), with the precise duration of the placement to be determined between Defra, the Fellow and the Fellow’s home institution.

**Start Date**

The Fellowship will begin ideally in autumn 2018/19, with the exact start date to be agreed between Defra, the Fellow, and the Fellow’s home institution.

**Other Requirements**

The 2018/19 Fellow will:

* Complete a defined project for Defra within the agreed deadline.
* Contribute to related work on evidence management, analysis and policy development as a member of the EAU.
* Support external academic engagement activities undertaken by Defra (e.g. assisting with workshops with external stakeholders, helping to organise small seminars (“bite-size sessions”) bringing experts from a range of institutions into the Department, representing aspects of Defra work at external academic meetings).
* Submit a mid-placement progress report to the BES and Defra, outlining progress against agreed objectives.
* With support from the BES and Defra, arrange at least one knowledge exchange event (to be held at Defra/BES/host institution as appropriate) to discuss the outputs and learning from the project with a wider policy and/or scientific audience.
* Actively share the knowledge and experience gained through the Fellowship with the wider BES membership (e.g. through articles on the BES website or Bulletin, at the BES Annual Meeting).
* Ensure all communications, outputs and products are approved by Defra before publication.

The host organisation (Defra) will:

* Provide a named line manager for the Fellow for the duration of the placement.
* Identify a defined project for the Fellow, with clear objectives and success criteria, and an appropriate scope and timeframe.
* Provide facilities including desk space and a laptop configured for Defra networks.
* Provide a suitable induction programme for the Fellow and opportunities to engage in policy development.
* Provide feedback at the end of the placement in line with standard practice in the host organisation.
* Where full publication of the work undertaken by the Fellow is not possible, provide an impact report outlining how the results have been used.

The BES will:

* Identify and offer opportunities to engage more widely with the BES’s policy work during the Fellowship, including:
  + Contributing to the work of the BES Brexit Policy Working Group where applicable.
  + Attending and contributing to relevant parliamentary events organised through the Royal Society of Biology’s Parliamentary Steering Group (e.g. Parliamentary Links Day).
* Provide funding for the duration of the placement as outlined below.
* Support the Fellow to organise at least one knowledge exchange event to discuss the outputs and learning from the project with a wider policy and/or scientific audience.

**Conditions of work**

All Fellows must adhere to their employer's and Defra's requirements of independence from political or commercial interest through the placement. Fellows will need to give undertakings to respect a confidentiality agreement, specifying that information on policy advice and internal debate will not be disclosed without prior written agreement of the host organisation. Fellows will be required to seek security clearance as necessary for access to government office buildings and IT equipment. A Counter Terrorist Check is necessary for access to Defra offices in London which requires personal details and criminal records etc to be submitted and may take several weeks.

**Funding**

A maximum of £20,000 is available from the BES to support the Fellowship. Applicants are asked to specify and justify the amount of funding requested and how it would be spent.

Eligible expenditure includes:

* Salary costs for the applicant, including national insurance and superannuation, but not estates or indirect costs.
* Travel and subsistence, including accommodation.

Facilities, including laptop and office space (hot desking) will be provided by Defra.

**Application Procedure**

**Application will open on 28 August 2018 and will close on 30 September 2018.** Applications will be via a form on the BES website. Alongside the application form, candidates will be asked to provide:

* A CV.
* A letter of support from the Head of Department/School at the applicant’s home institution indicating that they agree to the applicant taking time away from their normal duties to complete the Fellowship according to the requirements and conditions set out above.
* An equality and diversity monitoring form.

Initial shortlisting will be conducted by a review panel consisting of the BES Policy Committee Chair, one representative of Defra, the BES Policy Manager and two other members of Policy Committee. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview, with the interview panel comprising the BES Policy Manager, one representative of Defra and one member of the Policy Committee.

Applicants will be judged on the following criteria:

* Motivation for and interest in the Fellowship.
* Science communication, collaboration and team working skills relevant to policy engagement.
* Scientific expertise relevant to the placement project.
* Skills necessary to widely share the outputs and learning of the Fellowship.
* Strong research record.

**Evaluation Criteria**

An evaluation of the BES Fellowship scheme will be conducted at the end of the placement to inform the future of the programme, including post-Fellowship interviews with the Fellow and the Defra Line Manager. The Fellowship should be evaluated against the following criteria:

For the fellow:

* Improved knowledge of the policymaking process and the role of science in informing policy.
* Improved skills in communicating science to policy audiences.
* Collaborating with policymakers and other stakeholders.
* Demonstrable impact of their work; informing policy development during and after the placement

For Defra:

* Tangible knowledge transfer and analysis to inform policy development.
* Improved broader understanding of specific area of scientific knowledge.

For the BES:

* Raised profile as a reliable source of scientific evidence to inform policy.
* Members benefit from dissemination of Fellow’s learning and experience.
* Improved networks with government departments and agencies hosting the Fellow.

**Communications Strategy for the Fellowship**

**Promotion to potential applicants:**

* BES website and social media accounts
* Dedicated email to all BES members plus BES ebulletin
* BES Bulletin article
* BES Special Interest Groups
* Existing policy mailing lists – Brexit Engagement Group, Wales Policy Group, Scottish Policy Group, alumni of previous policy training schemes
* Targeted emails to Heads of relevant departments/research groups
* Defra promotion to existing contacts
* Natural Capital Initiative mailing list

**Communication during and after the placement:**

NB: the BES and the Fellow’s home institution (with permission) will be acknowledged in all publicity material, and at all events associated with the Fellowship. All communications will require prior approval by Defra.

* At least one news item on the BES website, or article in the BES Bulletin by the Fellow.
* An optional video interview with the Fellow for the BES website.
* At least one event to disseminate the findings of/learning from the project to a policy and/or academic audience.