

2017 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 2017 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 2017 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](#) 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 2017, for the first year of the programme, one Fellowship will be available, offering an individual project focused on wildlife conservation, or agri-environment and land use policy 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 of the successful applicant, emergent policy needs and timing of the placement.

Possible project areas:

- What are resilient ecosystems, how can they be measured and what do we understand about how resilience is likely to change under different future policy scenarios?
- How does biodiversity relate to ecosystem resilience and other environmental benefits and how do conservation measures (e.g. species protection, protected sites) contribute to resilience?
- What ecosystem benefits are provided by different land use interventions in agri-environment schemes? How may agri-environment schemes be developed (e.g. through targeted or broad-brush approaches) to maximise the benefits provided?
- What innovations in science, technology and society could have significant positive or negative impacts on our ability to manage to the natural environment? What can be done to harness innovation to support natural environment policy objectives? (follow-on to futures workshop at [Defra Royal Society conference](#))
- Working with relevant administrations and agencies, prepare case studies on the evaluation of the effectiveness of measures taken to achieve Aichi biodiversity targets in the UK and Overseas Territories.

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 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 first Fellowship will begin before the end of 2017, with the exact start date to be agreed between Defra, the Fellow, and the Fellow's home institution.

Other Requirements

The 2017 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 Defra.
- 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 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 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.

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 Monday 12 June, and will close on Monday 7 August. 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.