



2024 BES Policy Fellowship (England) with the [Office for Environmental Protection](#)

The British Ecological Society (BES) is committed to making the best scientific evidence available to decision-makers and supporting members to enhance their policy engagement skills and impact. The BES Policy Fellowship offers an ecologist the chance to conduct a placement in a government department or public body, applying their scientific expertise to a practical policy challenge. **The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) will be funding and hosting a 2024 BES Policy Fellowship to support its work in England.**

The Fellowship will provide an exciting opportunity for ecologists to gain first-hand experience of working within a statutory body, improve their policy knowledge and awareness, develop their communication skills, and build their professional networks. The Fellowship will also help to foster wider links between the ecological and policy communities while supporting policy development informed by outstanding science.

Nature of the Fellowship

Eligibility

Applications to the BES-OEP Policy Fellowship is open to a postdoctoral researcher or PhD student who will be affiliated with a UK institution (university, research organisation or otherwise) for the entire duration of the Fellowship. The applicant does not have to be affiliated with the institution when they submit their application, but if they are not then the letter they submit from a Head of Department/School, as detailed in the Application Procedure section, must explicitly state that the institution agrees to host the applicant as an employee for the duration of the Fellowship. The Fellowship is only open to those who have UK Citizenship or an existing visa to work in the UK for the duration of the Fellowship.

Activities

The focus of the Fellowship will depend on prevailing policy needs as well as the interests and experience of the successful candidate. Applicants should specify which topic(s) they would prefer working on from the list below (brief descriptions of envisaged work on these topics can be found at the end of this document):

1. Invasive non-native species
2. Sustainable management of soils

3. Integrated Pest Management, pesticides and nature restoration
4. Marine noise

OEP will provide a line manager for the Fellow, who will be appointed following the choice of the topic. The Fellow will be encouraged to be part of the OEP team and to work from the OEP office in Worcester where possible, and otherwise from home. They will be provided with an OEP computer and may be asked to travel to attend meetings. The Fellow will remain employed by their home institution for the duration of the placement.

Duration

The precise duration of the placement to be agreed between OEP, the Fellow and the Fellow's home institution. The placement can be full-time or part-time.

Start and end dates

The Fellowship will ideally start in September 2024, with the exact start date to be agreed between OEP, the Fellow, and the Fellow's home institution. It will finish no later than 28 March 2025.

Other Requirements

The Fellow will:

- Complete a project for OEP within the agreed deadline.
- Contribute to related work on evidence management, analysis and policy development as a team member at the OEP.
- Actively share the knowledge and experience gained through the Fellowship with the wider BES membership (e.g. through articles on the BES website or in the Niche).
- Ensure all communications, outputs and products are approved by OEP before publication.
- Submit a mid-placement progress report to the BES and OEP, outlining progress against agreed objectives.

The Fellow may:

- Support external academic engagement activities undertaken by OEP, for example assisting with seminars and workshops with external stakeholders and representing OEP work at external academic meetings.
- With support from the BES and OEP, arrange at least one knowledge exchange event (to be held at OEP/BES/host institution as appropriate) to discuss the outputs and learning from the project with a wider policy and/or scientific audience.

The host organisation (OEP) will:

- Provide a 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 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 e.g. through the activities of the BES' English Policy Group.
- Provide funding for the duration of the placement as outlined below.

Conditions of work

The Fellow must adhere to their employer's and OEP's requirements of independence from political or commercial interest through the placement. The Fellow must sign a placement agreement, a legal agreement and undergo basic security checks before starting the Fellowship. The Fellow 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. Insurance for the Fellow will be covered by the Fellow's institution.

Funding

A maximum of £20,000 is available from the OEP 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.
- Other factors

The payment process is done via the fellow's employing institution (the BES does not fund fellows directly).

Application Procedure

Applications will be via the grants portal on the BES website. You will need to register into our online grants system, complete your contact details, and navigate to 'Your Applications'.

<https://bes.flexigrant.com/>

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, or an institution that agrees to host the applicant during the fellowship. This should indicate that they agree to the applicant taking time away from their normal duties to complete the Fellowship and/or that they agree to host the applicant as an employee for the duration of the Fellowship, according to the requirements and conditions set out above

- Contact information for Finance at the Fellows' employing institution
- An equality and diversity monitoring form

Initial shortlisting will be conducted by a review panel consisting of a representative of the BES English Policy Group, one representative of the OEP, the BES Senior Policy Manager and the BES Policy Officer supporting the BES work in England.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview, with the interview panel comprising one representative of the BES, one representative of the OEP and one member of the BES English Policy Group.

Applicants will be scored against 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.

Contact Details

If you have any questions about the Fellowship or application process, please get in touch with the BES Policy Team, policy@britishecologicalsociety.org

OEP Fellowship topic descriptions

1. Invasive Non-Native Species

Invasive non-native species (INNS) are one of the main direct drivers of biodiversity loss. The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 has a goal to enhance biosecurity, which includes a target to reduce the rates of introduction and establishment of INNS by at least 50% by 2030.

The Great Britain Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy was refreshed in February 2023, and included the development of a GB INNS Strategic Evidence Plan. The Evidence Plan includes six priority areas including:

- Impacts of INNS
- Economic and wider social science evidence
- Pathways
- Surveillance and early detection
- Rapid responses and longer-term control/eradication
- Species prioritization

A Fellow would focus on progressing one or more of the areas above, for example, the development of pathway action plans, with the selected work area being undertaken in conjunction with the GB INNS Secretariat to ensure the work feeds into the implementation of the GB INNS Strategy and the OEP's annual assessment of government's progress on improving the natural environment.

2. Sustainable Management of Soils

The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 identifies a commitment for government to bring at least 40% of agricultural soils in England into sustainable management by 2028, increasing to 60% by 2030. Understanding soil ecology and defining soil health are closely related. However, defining and then establishing sustainable management practices that are grounded in soil ecology, supporting them through policy, and identifying means of regulation all remain a challenge.

Situated at the interface between landscapes, air, water, and habitats, soil functions as a critical mediator of environmental impacts arising from land use. Understanding these complex relationships is essential for developing policies that enhance soil biodiversity and the diverse ecosystem services supported by soil, including carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, and water purification.

A Fellow would work on understanding how sustainable management of agricultural soils can be defined in the context of soil ecology, maintaining and improving soil biodiversity and soil functions, and what these mean for the development and implementation of policy. In particular a focus on agro-chemicals, nutrients and physical alterations to soil structure would be welcomed.

3. Integrated Pest Management, pesticides and nature restoration

Achieving the legally-binding target to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2030 will require diverse actions, some of which, like reducing pressures from pesticides usage, ought to have relatively immediate impacts, while others, like habitat creation, will take longer for benefits to accrue.

To reduce pesticide use, the draft National Action Plan for Sustainable Use of Pesticides states the intention to establish a set of clear targets to support the reduction of risk associated with pesticide use. To do this, it relies heavily on the uptake of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The main avenue for increasing IPM uptake is through financial support through the Sustainable Farming Incentive and catchment sensitive farming. The Office for Environmental Protection is interested in the pressures created by pesticides usage, and the likely timeliness and effectiveness of integrated pest management in contributing towards the species abundance target.

A Fellow will work with our analysts to bring together evidence on the impacts of pesticides and of changes in their patterns of usage, primarily arising from IPM, on biodiversity, as measured by the Species Abundance Indicator, and the temporal and spatial scale of nature's recovery.

4. Marine noise

Marine noise is an indicator of good environmental status (GES) as part of the UK Marine Strategy (UKMS). There is conclusive evidence showing seal avoidance of tidal turbines, or response to the playback of turbine noise, at distances ranging from 200 to 2000 meters. The impact of anthropogenic noise is also a growing concern for cetaceans, yet there is limited understanding of how continuous and impulsive noise contribute to effects at the population level.

The 2016 UKMS assessment revealed partial progress towards achieving GES for anthropogenic underwater noise, with the establishment of a marine noise registry and improved monitoring of ambient noise levels both enhancing understanding of impulsive and continuous noise in UK waters.

Despite these advances, the UK has not yet set new targets for this indicator, hindering the ability to determine whether GES characteristics have been met, and therefore casting doubt on prospects for achieving GES. There is work underway to develop threshold values within OSPAR, HELCOM and the EU.

This project will review the currently available evidence on the levels and impacts of marine noise. It will provide a baseline assessment of the issue and policy recommendations.