



2024 BES Policy Fellowship with Natural England

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 agency, applying their scientific expertise to a practical policy challenge. **Natural England will be hosting a 2024 BES Policy Fellowship in England, funded by the BES.**

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-Natural England Policy Fellowship are open to BES members currently affiliated with an English institution (university, research organisation or otherwise) as a postdoctoral researcher or a PhD student. This affiliation must remain in place 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.

Topic

Fellows will be required to address the question:

Which levers for nature recovery, and in what combination, generates the best outcomes for the national Nature Recovery Network?

The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is central to the Government's ambitions for the environment as set out in the Environment Act 2021 and the Environment Improvement Plan (EIP). The NRN has, at its core, a suite of high quality Sites of Special Scientific Interest and

National Nature Reserves. These areas need to be extended, buffered and connected through protecting, creating and restoring wildlife rich habitat – to achieve the international commitment of protecting 30% of our land and seas by 2030 and the government’s apex target to halt the decline of species abundance by 2030. Natural England has wide ranging powers and duties including specific legal, funding and delivery mechanisms to secure land management regimes and drive land use change to support the NRN. Some levers focus on incentivising the (relatively) short term delivery of outcomes (for example agri-environment schemes); others use regulation and legislative to drive practice (e.g. SSSI notification, or green infrastructure standards); other levers use changes in land tenure to drive beneficial change (e.g. land acquisition).

Understanding of the actual or relative contribution of different levers to government’s nature targets is a crucial element to help us to understand what it will take to meet the targets and the most effective (and efficient) ways of achieving this. This is a very live issue for the sector, and timely, given the current review of the EIP and work within Defra on the National Biodiversity Targets. The fellowship provides the opportunity to engage in some of these debates and work across the sector to develop our understanding of how we can deliver more for nature.

Natural England is committed to improving our understanding of what works for nature recovery and to being an evidence-led organisation as set out in our ambitious Science, Evidence and Evaluation Strategy. This project has the potential to inform our approach to the nature recovery and be influential across the wider sector.

Natural England will provide a line manager for the Fellow, who will be appointed following the choice of the topic. The Fellow will be expected to work on their own computer and to work from home with potential travel to attend meetings and events at Natural England offices (London, Peterborough, Bristol and York). 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 Natural England, the Fellow and the Fellow’s home institution. The placement can be full-time or part-time.

Start Date

The Fellowship will ideally start in January 2025, with the exact start date to be agreed between Natural England, the Fellow, and the Fellow’s home institution.

Other Requirements

The Fellow will:

- Complete a project for Natural England within the agreed deadline.
- Contribute to related work on evidence management, analysis and policy development as a member of Natural England.
- 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 Natural England before publication.

- Submit a mid-placement progress report to the BES and Natural England, outlining progress against agreed objectives.

The Fellow may:

- Support external academic engagement activities undertaken by Natural England, for example assisting with seminars and workshops with external stakeholders and representing Natural England work at external academic meetings.
- With support from the BES and Natural England, arrange at least one knowledge exchange event (to be held at Natural England/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 (Natural England) 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 Natural England's requirements of independence from political or commercial interest through the placement. The Fellow must sign a placement agreement, a legal agreement and undergo a DBS check 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 Natural England 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 open in September 2024. 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 Policy Team and representatives of Natural England.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview, with the interview panel comprising one representative of the BES, one representative of the Natural England 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