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| **Project:** | |
| **Title: PhD student placement opportunity –**  *“What are the most pressing emerging chemical threats to water quality in Wales and how can the associated risks be addressed in future policy making?”* | |
| The Water, Flood and Coal Tips Safety Division and the Environmental Protection Division of the Welsh Government (WG) are seeking a PhD student for a placement opportunity to work on a priority cross-cutting area within in the Water Policy Team. The Water Policy Team is responsible for developing bespoke policy for Wales to manage its water systems sustainably, including inland waters, estuaries and coastal waters. The team also oversees the effective functioning of Wales’ water industry and safeguards drinking water quality in line with statutory specifications. This placement links closely with Chemicals Policy and the PhD student would also support the work of the Chemicals Team. The Chemicals Team manages chemicals legislation for WG including the UK Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation & Restriction of Chemicals (UK REACH) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) legislation. The Chemicals Team also leads on contributions to a potentially UK-wide Chemicals Strategy.  **Purpose of the Post**  Water is one of Wales’ most valuable natural assets and an essential contributor to our economy. It is however under threat from a variety of sources, including point-source and diffuse pollution, and climate change. Emerging contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals and hazardous chemicals also present a great concern for environmental and drinking water quality and require more focus and research to inform future policy development.  The purpose of this placement is to conduct a desktop review of existing evidence in relation to emerging chemical threats to water, identify chemicals of particular interest to Wales and support development of policy development in water and chemicals.  The post-holder will actively support the development of longer-term policy direction in addressing water pollution issues and emerging threats to health and the environment. The initial assessment completed by the post-holder is expected to highlight specific issues applicable to Wales and identify areas where more research and evidence is needed.  The Chemicals team is contributing to a potentially UK-wide chemicals strategy so this placement would support work in developing policy that could be included in the strategy. Additionally, there are various activities under UK REACH, which would be supported by this placement and by any outputs from the post-holder including Restriction activities.  The remit of this placement – Emerging Chemical Threats to Water - falls under the portfolio of the Minister for Climate Change and supports delivery objectives identified under primary legislation such as the Environment Act and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.  **Background**  Chemicals in the environment are derived from a variety of sources some of which are subject to regulation. The Chemicals regime, which includes legislation such as UK REACH, regulates the use of certain substances. However, there are substances currently in use which can pose long term risks to human health and the environment. These risks need to be properly assessed to ensure harm to people and wildlife is minimised in the future.  Over the last decades, much research has been done on emerging contaminants in the aquatic environment, most of which has focused on the identification of emerging contaminants and the characterisation of their toxic potential. The WG needs to develop a better understanding of emerging chemical threats that are relevant in the Wales context, and develop risk management options for the future. Water is a major vector in transferring such substances through the environment; subsequently hazardous chemicals can enter the drinking water supply, adversely affecting human health. Managing emerging chemicals will ensure that we minimise the potential negative impact posed by these substances on aquatic life and human health in Wales.  **Key Tasks**   * Collation and review of relevant research and data sources * Analysis of complex information and data trends * Engagement with internal and external stakeholders * Drafting of briefing papers for senior officials and the Minister * Development of an initial overview report * Identification of research needs and evidence gaps * Contribute to processes under UK REACH * Summary of findings and recommendations   The exact tasks required of the student will be dependent on the particular focus of the team at the time of the placement and the student will likely have the opportunity to become involved in other work areas where they have a specific interest | |
| **Details** | |
| **Skills required:** | **Key Skills**   * Excellent research skills * Ability to analyse complex information and data * Ability to write clearly and concisely * Ability of presenting technical material in an accessible format * Presentation skills * Creative thinking * Ability to apply an innovative approach |
| **Outputs:** | As agreed with line manager and in relation to the above priorities |
| **Host Organisation:** | Welsh Government |
| **Placement Start Date** | January 2022 |
| **Development Opportunities** | The placement provides an opportunity to gain insight into the functioning of Welsh government and evidenced based policy development at the highest level. The post-holder will work in an interesting and diverse team, contributing to the shaping of a future policy direction. The post-holder will be expected to work independently within parameters and guidelines provided by the Welsh Government. Working closely with a wide range of colleagues the successful candidate will build valuable working relationships, broaden their knowledge of public policy-making and enhance their existing transferable skills.  The student will join an analytical team managing a diverse evidence-base and delivering technical and advisory support across the Decarbonisation programme. This is an interesting and diverse role, working on a high-profile programme across Welsh Government portfolios which will allow the student to gain a broad knowledge and understanding of Welsh Government policy work. With support from their WG supervisor, the student will be expected to take responsibility for managing and delivery of work commitments during the placement period. |
| **Duration, location, working arrangements and environment:** | The role will be full-time and is normally based with the policy team in one of Welsh Government’s regional offices. In view of current Covid-19 restrictions, the post-holder will be required to work from home in-line with working arrangements for all Welsh Government employees and it is unlikely that this will change for the foreseeable future.  Post-holders will be provided with a laptop to facilitate regular contact with the policy team members and line management, other policy teams and external partners. Due to the remote nature of working, the policy team will ensure that the post-holder is fully supported during the placement and will endeavour to ensure that the placement is as close to the in-team office-based experience as possible.  The placement will be for a 3 month period and will focus on delivering the objectives set out in the job specification. The option to extend for a further 3 months is possible if the project team feel there is merit in doing so and if it is compatible with the post-holder’s university research schedule and DTP/CDT arrangements.  The Welsh Government is a bilingual organisation and Welsh language skills are considered an asset to the organisation. We encourage and support staff to use their Welsh language skills during a placement.  Start date will be agreed following successful Welsh Government security clearance. |
| **Application criteria** | **Welsh Government can only accept applications to the PhD student placement programme from registered students**.  **All applicants must seek approval from their academic supervisor before applying** |
| **Funding** | |
| The placement will be funded by Welsh Government and will match the current UKRI PhD stipend rate, payable in one sum at the beginning of the placement (to minimise financial administration). The payment process aims to compliment PhD student university stipend payment structures, i.e. WG pay the university and the funds are passed-on to the student’s account. **Please note:  we do not pay students directly** | |
| **Contact** | |
| **Name:** | Caroline Fallone (Research & Academic Engagement Manager)  [caroline.fallone@gov.wales](mailto:caroline.fallone@gov.wales) |
| **Application process** | |
| Please submit CV and covering letter to Caroline Fallone. **NOTE: All applicants must confirm that they have received authorisation to take an interruption of studies from their academic supervisor**  If you have an impairment or health condition, or use British Sign Language and need to discuss reasonable adjustments for any part of the placement programme, or wish to discuss how we will support you if you are to be successful, please contact [caroline.fallone@gov.wales](mailto:caroline.fallone@gov.wales) as soon as possible to discuss your requirements and any questions you may have. | |