

Doctoral Training Policy and Evidence Placement

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| **Project**  |
| **Title:** Data collation to aid understanding of otter decline in Wales |
| **Description (250 words max):** Click or tap here to enter text.In recent decades Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* populations has recovered from near catastrophic population decline during the 1950s-70s, but the latest National Otter Survey of Wales (OSW) highlights a worrying downturn across Wales (Kean and Chadwick, 2021). Reasons for decline are unclear, and a steering group of experts (including NRW) have identified important actions needed to understand the risks to otter populations in Wales. One such step (actioned in 2022) was an evidence scoping review, which identified key research questions, potential data sources, and evidence gaps (Kean et al 2022). The next step, and the aim of this internship, is to collate the data identified by Kean et al 2022 into an interactive digital map resource (e.g. as an ArcGIS Story Map) which can be used to inform monitoring and conservation of otter populations in Wales. The intern will review and collate (i) environmental data (such as habitat, water quality, fish stocks, etc), and (ii) otter records (and associated data) from past Wales National Otter Surveys. Where not already held in digital form, datasets will be digitised by the intern (following a review of feasibility within the 3-month timeframe). (iii) In association with the digital maps, the intern will create a summary report describing (and providing electronic links to) all data sources, relevant methods, relevance to otter/freshwater ecology, and the limitations / strengths of each dataset, as well as identifying remaining data gaps. These data will be used to help plan the next National Otter Survey, and interim monitoring of populations and habitats, contributing to otter conservation. |
| **Details**  |
| **Skills required:** | Experience of manipulating and presenting data in a variety of formats; ability to exhaust all avenues where data may be held; able to write clear and concise emails to request data/information/assistance; experience of data confidentiality and keeping secure records – especially when dealing with external landowner details; concise report writing. |
| **Anticipated outputs:** | 1/ OSW Digital Data Archive, including additional information (beyond simple presence / absence data) taken from existing survey sheets2/ Digital resource (e.g. ArcGIS Story Map) linking otter survey sites to wider environmental data (e.g. habitat, water quality). 3/ Report describing (and providing electronic links to) data sources, methods, relevance and limitations with respect to otter population monitoring |
| **Host organisation:**  | NRW |
| **Duration and format (full time/part time):**  | 3-month project full time |
| **Development opportunities** | The placement provides an opportunity to gain insight into the functioning of Natural Resources Wales and evidence based decision making within the Welsh environment context. The researcher will work in an interesting and diverse team, and their contributions to tackling the nature and climate emergencies will be highly valued.  The researcher will be expected to work independently within parameters and guidelines provided by Natural Resources Wales. Working closely with a wide range of colleagues the successful candidate will build valuable working relationships, broaden their knowledge of this sector, and enhance their existing transferable skills.  The researcher will join a team managing a diverse range of programmes and providing technical and advisory support across our Operational and Evidence, Policy, and Permitting directorates. This is a fantastic opportunity to understand how research and evidence is used to inform decisions. With support from their NRW supervisor, the researcher will be expected to take responsibility for managing and delivery of work commitments during the placement period. |
| **Location and working environment:**  | Primarily desk-based from home or within university establishment. For this post it may be necessary to visit an NRW office as a visitor in order to access paper files (but these could be couriered).  |
| **Start date:** | Flexible |
| **Application criteria**  | Natural Resources Wales (NRW) can only accept applications to the PhD student placement programme from registered students who are within their funded period. All applicants must seek approval from their academic supervisor before applying.  |
| **Funding** |
| The placement will be funded by NRW and will match the current UKRI PhD stipend rate. The payment process aims to compliment PhD student university stipend payment structures, i.e. NRW pay the university and the funds are passed-on to the student’s account. To avoid delays to students receiving payments, it is preferable that the student’s PhD stipend is not paused during the placement and that, instead, it continues and that NRW reimburse the university for the time the student is not undertaking research. Please note: we do not pay students directly |
| **Contact – for queries** |
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| **Application process**  | Please submit the equal opportunities form, your CV and a short covering letter, explaining why you are suitable for this placement to Lleoliadau@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk.  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 lleoliadau@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk as soon as possible to discuss your requirements and any questions you may have.  |