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| **Project:** | |
| **Title: PhD student placement opportunity –** *“Creating a digital map of outdoor public access in Wales ”* | |
| The Landscape, Nature & Forestry Division of the Welsh Government is seeking a PhD student for a placement opportunity within its Designated Landscapes & Countryside Access (DLCA) team. The team’s remit falls under the portfolio of the Minister for Climate Change which supports delivery objectives identified under the Welsh Government’s “Programme for Government” (PfG) and other strategies.  The Welsh Government is currently working on a programme of reform proposals for recreational access in Wales based around the public rights of way network (PRoW) and open access land. This placement would support the development of a proposal to create a single digital map of public access in Wales.  **Background**  There are currently a number of statutory maps covering public access to outdoor spaces in Wales, including the definitive maps of public rights of way (PRoW) maintained by local authorities and the map of open access land that Natural Resources Wales is required to produce under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act.  As required by legislation, these have traditionally been hard copy maps held locally and made available to the public through authority offices. While a number of authorities have put their maps online, this has been done on an individual authority basis using a range of different software systems.  In keeping with the Welsh Government’s commitment to improve access to services through digital delivery, we are examining the merits of creating a single digital map of public access in Wales. Such a map is expected to make use of Welsh Government’s GIS platform, DataMapWales.  The intention is that this digital map would:   * improve public access to PRoW and open access data for a range of uses (e.g. inform recreational activities, aid planning of commercial events, inform planning applications); * facilitate the creation of a more efficient system for the management of the PRoW and Open Access networks by creating a universal, digitally-based system; * contribute to the further development of DataMapWales as a source of public GIS data in Wales; and * become the standard working map for access authorities in Wales, with a view to it also becoming the legal document in due course (in tandem with related legislative changes).   The management of PRoW and open access data is governed by a range of legislation including National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Highways Act 1980, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. These would need to be considered as part of this work.  **Purpose of the Post**  The purpose of this role is to support the development of a universal schema for PRoW data that all access authorities in Wales could use. It is anticipated that this schema could be used to develop a single digital map of outdoor public access in Wales hosted by DataMapWales.  Currently this data is held in different systems resulting in different and multiple approaches to publishing the information in digital formats. In addition to working with the DLCA team, the post-holder will work with DataMapWales, possibly using Feature Manipulation Engine (FME) software, to support the development of a minimum viable schema. Additional data could be added post-analysis by cross-referencing with other layers to bring data that may be useful to an end-user. The process will be iterative, with frequent meetings with a working group of stakeholders to ensure the schema meets their needs.  Policy in this area has been informed by a report submitted to Welsh Government by the Access Reform Advisory Group (ARAG) in May 2021 that outlined recommendations for potential changes to governing and administering recreational access, including the merits of the creation of a single digital map of public access. Subsequently, Welsh Government has engaged with local and national park authorities to understand what systems they currently use to maintain their statutory access maps; what (if any) systems they have for publishing information digitally; and the challenges and opportunities they see in moving towards a new system based around a single digital map. The DLCA team has also worked with DataMapWales to understand the technical requirements for developing a single digital map of public access within its platform.  With the direction and support of members of DLCA, the post-holder will:   * Set up/establish and manage with a working group of stakeholders to capture and share best practice relevant to the project. This is likely to include representatives from Local and National Park Authorities, Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, mapping organisations and user groups. * Work with DataMapWales to iteratively develop a minimum viable schema for PRoW working copy data to be held on their system. * Brief senior officials on research findings * Actively support the development of a longer-term policy direction/strategy to take forward these proposals based on their research findings   **Key Tasks**   * With the support of the DLCA team, engage with internal and external stakeholders * Spatial data analysis and manipulation * Preparation of materials/updates for the DLCA team to include in briefing papers for senior officials * Development of recommendations for consideration by the DLCA team * Development of longer-term policy and strategic direction ideas for consideration by the DLCA team.   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 spatial and non-spatial information and data * Understanding of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) * 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   **Desirable skills**   * Understanding of Business Analysis methods and Agile methodology * Understanding of User Experience (UX) and User Research (UR) methods |
| **Outputs:** | As agreed with line manager and in relation to the above priorities |
| **Host Organisation:** | Welsh Government |
| **Placement Start Date** | ASAP |
| **Development Opportunities** | The placement provides an opportunity to gain insight into the functioning of Welsh Government and evidence-based policy development at the highest level. The post-holder will work in an interesting and diverse team, contributing to the delivery of a cross-government programme in an area of policy in which, through its legislative framework, Wales leads the UK. 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 policy area. 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 Welsh Government supervisor, the student will be expected to take responsibility for managing and delivering 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 likely be required to work from home, however, office working may be permissible and individual circumstances can be discussed. This is in-line with working arrangements for all Welsh Government employees.  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 this 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; will match the current minimum UKRI PhD stipend rate; will be payable in one sum at the end of the placement; and is in addition to the stipend a student normally receives from their university. 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 (Academic Engagement Manager) via [ResearchPlacements@gov.wales](mailto:ResearchPlacements@gov.wales) |
| **Application process** | |
| Please submit CV and covering letter to the above mailbox. **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 the above mailbox as soon as possible to discuss your requirements and any questions you may have. | |