

### Project:

**Title: PhD student placement opportunity “Nutrient trading schemes, a possible solution to river eutrophication in Wales?”**

The Strategic Analysis team in the Strategic Evidence Unit of Welsh Government’s Climate Change and Rural Affairs Group is seeking a PhD student for a placement opportunity within their team. As part of the wider Strategic Evidence Unit, the Strategic Analysis team specialises in evidence synthesis and engagement, supporting policy teams in understanding and utilising the latest evidence in their policy making. The team also have a challenge role in challenging policy teams on delivery of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(2015\) Act](#) and the [Environment \(Wales\) Act \(2016\)](#), always with a view that we can all do better in our understanding and in our commitments to the Welsh people. The team also works closely with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders and representatives of the UK Government and the other Devolved Administrations.

The Welsh Government is aware of the complexity and interconnectedness of both nitrate and phosphate pollution of Welsh rivers. In January 2021 legislation was introduced to control water pollution emanating from farming systems.<sup>1</sup>

[The Water Resources \(Control of Agricultural Pollution\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2021: guidance for farmers and land managers | GOV.WALES](#)

In July 2022 the First Minister held a [Rivers Pollution Summit](#) to consider phosphorus pollution in Wales’ Special Area of Conservation (SAC) river catchments.<sup>2</sup> The summit identified that there is a need for a range of collaborative measures across a number of different sectors to halt and try to reverse the damage phosphates have caused to rivers. The First Minister issued a written statement with the eight areas of intervention agreed at the summit.<sup>3</sup> The list includes: (7) a platform for nutrient offsetting and exploring potential for nutrient trading. The potential for nutrient offsetting and the merits on nutrient trading need to be assessed.

### **Background**

There are many challenges facing our inland water bodies, including the quality of rivers and their tributaries, lakes and ponds. These water bodies are under continuing pressure from climate change, extreme weather events, pollution levels and increased demand for water to support population growth.

There is now also increasing public demand for inland waters to be valued as recreational assets, particularly for swimming. The Welsh Government is committed to improving environmental water quality and working to introduce new inland bathing waters to Wales.

One possible mechanism to improve water quality is by nutrient trading and a commitment to explore this option has been made by the First Minister. There have been some initiatives on nutrient trading, in the Milford Haven and Cleddau Catchment<sup>4</sup> and Poole harbour.<sup>5</sup> The ambition is to learn from this work and to propose a system of nutrient trading between farmers and other land users (Sellers) within a catchment, to take up measures to reduce nutrient loading and who are then rewarded by others who derive benefit from the nutrient reduction (Buyers). Those benefitting could be from a range of stakeholders, for example, water companies, property developers with local authority/planning departments, industrial sites that discharge wastes. There are already regulatory constraints on single point discharge, but diffuse pollution from land use is not regulated and is difficult to monitor. For nutrient trading scheme to operate successfully and to enable the trade, the measures implemented must be above the legal and regulatory requirement and quantifiable.

<sup>1</sup> [The Water Resources \(Control of Agricultural Pollution\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2021](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://gov.wales/tackling-phosphorus-pollution-special-area-conservation-sac-rivers-information-and-evidence-pack>

<sup>3</sup> <https://gov.wales/written-statement-river-pollution-summit-royal-welsh-show>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.planed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BRICS\\_WP1\\_Drivers-and-Structures\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.planed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BRICS_WP1_Drivers-and-Structures_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://pooleharbournitrates.org.uk/>

## Doctoral Training Policy and Evidence Placement

### Purpose of the Post

The Strategic Analysis team have been given the task of running an external stakeholder Task and Finish Group to look at the structures and evidence base that would be required to enable nutrient offsetting in our SAC river catchments. The second part of the work of the Task and Finish Group is to look at possible mechanisms for nutrient trading in the future. The post holder will support the work of the Task & Finish group, collating and presenting the evidence for the different topics under discussion. The post holder will also have the opportunity to work on other projects that the Strategic Analysis team are working on, including future visioning work and evidence analysis on various aspects of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The post-holder will:

- Gain an understanding of Welsh Government structure and processes, with a specific focus on policy development.
- Be directly involved in a policy development process.
- Have an opportunity to work with external stakeholders and seeing how Government seeks to balance all of the different needs and concerns of stakeholders.
- Opportunity to work on a cross-cutting area of work within Government, engaging with a range of different policy officials.

### Key Tasks

- Engagement with internal and external stakeholders
- Drafting of briefing papers for senior officials and the Minister
- Produce a report to on possible options of a nutrient trading scheme in Wales
- Development of policy recommendations
- Development of longer-term policy and strategic direction

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 within the team where they have a specific interest.

### Details

<b>Skills required:</b>	<p><b><u>Key Skills</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excellent research skills</li> <li>• Ability to analyse complex information and data</li> <li>• Ability to write clearly and concisely</li> <li>• Ability of presenting technical material in an accessible format</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> <li>• Creative thinking</li> <li>• Ability to apply an innovative approach</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs:</b>	As agreed with line manager and in relation to the above priorities
<b>Host Organisation:</b>	Welsh Government
<b>Placement Start Date</b>	ASAP
<b>Development Opportunities</b>	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.

## Doctoral Training Policy and Evidence Placement

	<p>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.</p>
<p><b>Duration, location, working arrangements and environment:</b></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Start date will be agreed following successful Welsh Government security clearance.</p>
<p><b>Application criteria</b></p>	<p><b>Welsh Government can only accept applications to the PhD student placement programme from registered students.</b></p> <p><b>All applicants must seek approval from their academic supervisor before applying</b></p>
<p><b>Funding</b></p>	
<p>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. <b>Please note: we do not pay students directly</b></p>	
<p><b>Contact</b></p>	
<p><b>Name:</b></p>	<p><a href="mailto:ResearchPlacements@gov.wales">ResearchPlacements@gov.wales</a></p>
<p><b>Application process</b></p>	
<p>Please submit CV and covering letter to the above mailbox. <b>NOTE: All applicants must confirm that they have received authorisation to take an interruption of studies from their academic supervisor</b></p> <p>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.</p>	