

Doctoral Training Policy and Evidence Placement

Project: Soil Policy Evidence Programme - Soil Scientist

Title: PhD student placement opportunity – “Soils Policy Evidence Programme – soil evidence review and developing future policy”

The Welsh Government (WG) Soils Policy and Land Use Team is seeking a PhD student for a placement opportunity. The Soils Policy and Land Use Team is responsible for soil policy, Best and Most Versatile (BMV)¹ land protection policy, minerals policy (agricultural after use) and peatland policy.

The Team are responsible for soils research and work in collaboration with Natural Resources Wales (NRW), through the WG/NRW Technical Soils Group, to expand the policy evidence base for Wales and ensure an evidence-based approach to managing Welsh soils. The Team also has responsibility for both policy and implementing the BMV Land protection policy in Wales to ensure it is conserved as a resource for the future. WG began work in 2020 with NRW to deliver the National Peatland Restoration Plan, a £1million/year budget for capital works to restore over 600ha of peatland a year for the next five years.

The team’s remit falls under the portfolio of the [Minister for Climate Change](#) which supports delivery objectives identified under primary legislation such as the [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016](#) and [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#). The team works closely with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders and representatives of the UK Government and the other Devolved Administrations.

The Soils Policy and Land Use Team has commissioned over 40 research reports to better understand climatic and soil conditions in Wales, and the challenges facing Welsh soils and agricultural capacity in the context of biodiversity loss and climate change. Reports from the Soil Policy Evidence Programme (SPEP) and Capability, Suitability and Climate Programme (CSCP) can be found here: [Soils policy evidence programme | GOV.WALES](#)

In 2022, a Soil Scientist Research Fellow, supported by two PhD student placements produced a synthesis of Welsh relevant soils evidence. The synthesis is published and can be found here: <https://gov.wales/review-welsh-soil-evidence> This synthesis is the foundation for a **Soil Policy Statement for Wales (SPS)**, which will represent the Welsh Government’s aim and objectives for sustainable management of agricultural soil in Wales. Through a co-design process this is currently being shared with a variety of soil stakeholders (farmers, unions, NGOs, WG Policy Teams) using facilitated workshops and discussions. Co-design is a different approach for developing policy. The intention is to engage with relevant actors to identify challenges and solutions through sharing experience and knowledge, these findings will then inform the development of the Statement.

WG have contracted an external agency to run the workshops, gather and analyse the evidence and produce a report of the findings. We would like the post holder to review these findings and incorporate into a redrafted version of the Statement.

Purpose of the Post

The post holder will undertake a range of duties, linked to production of the SPS. This will primarily be supporting the Soil Scientist Research Fellow to review and incorporate the findings from the co-design process into the Statement plus liaison with stakeholders (farmers and internal policy teams). The post holder will be encouraged to develop their own ideas for the SPS, supported by the WG Soil Policy Team. They will also have the opportunity to contribute to a journal paper on the development of the statement.

The intention is to host the post holder for a 3-month period, although longer placements of up to six months would be considered.

The post holder will be embedded within the Soil Policy and Land Use Team alongside the Soil Scientist Research Fellow. There may be the opportunity for collaborative working with a Social Scientist PhD student placement to incorporate findings into the final draft of the Statement and work on wider issues arising from the evidence gathered from the co-design process.

¹ Planning Policy Wales 11, paragraphs 3.58 and 3.59.

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Key Tasks

- Support the Soil Scientist Research Fellow to develop and finalise the SPS
- Where / if needed, assist in liaison with various stakeholders
- Support the commissioning and management of research projects
- Development of policy ideas and recommendations for consideration by policy officials
- Support the evidence base for the development of longer-term policy direction

The exact tasks required of the post holder will be dependent on the particular focus of the team at the time of the placement. The post holder could become involved in other work areas where they have a specific interest.

Details

Skills required:	<u>Key Skills</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to apply an innovative approach • Creative thinking • Excellent research skills • Ability to analyse complex information and data • Ability to write clearly and concisely • Ability to present technical material in an accessible format (ability in creating infographics would be helpful) • Good presentation skills • A specialism in applied agricultural soil science would be useful but not essential
Outputs:	As agreed with line manager and in relation to the above priorities, will broadly include a report and presentation of findings/workshop.
Host Organisation:	Welsh Government
Placement Start Date	Early 2023
Development Opportunities	<p>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 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.</p> <p>The student will join a soil policy team managing a diverse evidence-base and delivering technical and advisory support. 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.</p>
Duration, location, working arrangements and environment:	<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 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.</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</p>



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	<p>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>Application criteria</p>	<p>Welsh Government can only accept applications to the PhD student placement programme from registered students.</p> <p>All applicants must seek approval from their academic supervisor before applying</p>
<p>Funding</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. Please note: we do not pay students directly</p>	
<p>Contact</p>	
<p>Name:</p>	<p>Caroline Fallone (Academic Engagement Manager) caroline.fallone@gov.wales</p>
<p>Application process</p>	
<p>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</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 caroline.fallone@gov.wales as soon as possible to discuss your requirements and any questions you may have.</p>	