



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**



**Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs**

ESRC Policy Fellowships 2021: Opportunity description

Fellowship Title: DEFRA Behavioural science and Net Zero

Host department: [Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs \(DEFRA\)](#)

Host team: Strategic Behavioural Insights team and relevant evidence and policy teams

Summary: This fellowship will explore which individual or societal behaviour change approaches Defra should prioritise to deliver the largest greenhouse gas benefits, alongside wider environmental benefits.

Policy topic: Net Zero

Potentially relevant academic disciplines: Behavioural science, behavioural economics, or systems research in a climate related area

Relevant research career stage: Mid-career

Practical details

Start of 3-month inception phase: December 2021

Length of core placement: 12 months

FTE for core placement: Ideally 1, can consider other arrangements

Location requirements: London office on a weekly or fortnightly basis, ideally. Open to discussing the location; fellow could be based at DEFRA's Bristol or York office.

Necessary level of security clearance: Will need [Counter Terrorism Check](#) if London-based. Otherwise, Baseline Personnel Security Standard, which may require 4-6 weeks to obtain. See [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Detailed description

Drawing from the [25 Year Environment Plan \(25YEP\)](#) and the forthcoming Net Zero Strategy, we propose appointing a research fellow to explore which individual or societal behaviour change approaches Defra should prioritise to deliver the largest greenhouse gas (GHG) benefits, alongside wider environmental benefits.

The scope and deliverables are to be defined depending on policy needs and expertise of the researcher. As a preliminary proposal, a mixed method social science project is proposed, supplemented by an assessment of GHG impacts of various behaviours in collaboration with natural scientists.

The precise scope of the fellowship will be agreed with the research fellow. Depending on the researcher's expertise and policy needs, the deliverables may include:

- A brief review of existing evidence on key behaviours to meet net zero and 25 YEP goals, including barriers to behaviour change, and trade-offs and synergies between behaviours within Defra sectors and targets (bringing together existing evidence reviews and products)

- A methodology to assess CO2 impacts of the behaviours (working with natural scientists)
- Mapping out what behaviour change is required to reach GHG targets and the 25 YEP goals, and by whom, in key delivery areas
- Assessment of feasibility of achieving behaviour change at a scale in key delivery areas
- Development of example road maps for behaviour change to achieve CO2 reduction and 25 YEP goals
- Designing behavioural interventions to achieve behaviour change in key delivery areas
- Potential field work on a select number of interventions

Through the fellowship we are hoping to gain a deeper understanding of how to shift behaviours around climate and about approaches to achieve this, synergies and trade-offs, potential spill over, and how to bring climate front of mind with partner organisations and wider society. We are equally keen for the research to consider ways to co-deliver wider environmental benefits to achieve the 25 Year Environment Plan goals.

We will welcome academic publications and knowledge exchange activities as agreed with policy teams.

Opportunity-specific person specification

Applications will be assessed against the following opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

Skills/ expertise:

- Experience of combining social science research in the field of climate change
- Ability to work with natural science experts in assessing CO2 impacts of behaviour.
- Research background in behavioural science, behavioural economics, or systems research in a climate related area.