**Future of UK Treescapes Fellowship Scheme 2023  
ROUND 2**

**Call for Proposals**

*NERC are inviting proposals for a second round of Treescapes Fellowships as part of the Future of UK Treescapes programme.*

These fellowships aim to fill research gaps in areas such as productive forestry, tree health, and woodland expansion. Fellows will have the opportunity to learn and exchange knowledge across disciplines, engage with stakeholders, and contribute to the environmental and forest science capacity. The fellowships’ duration can range from three months to one year, with maximum funding of £32,000. The deadline for submission is 29 September 2023.

NERC are inviting proposals for a second round of Treescapes Fellowships as part of the Future of UK Treescapes programme.

**Programme Background**

The Future of UK Treescapes is an interdisciplinary research programme designed to improve environmental, socio-economic and cultural understanding of the functions and services provided by UK treescapes. Outputs from the programme will help inform future decisions about treescape expansion, management and resilience for the benefits of the environment and society.

The programme is supported by the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC), and the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC). Funding for the Treescapes Fellowship Scheme is provided by NERC. Additional background can be found at https://www.uktreescapes.org/

**Treescapes Fellowships Scope**

In 2022, The Future of UK Treescapes appointed nine fellows under Round 1 of the Treescapes Fellowship Scheme (see www.uktreescapes.org/project-category/fellows/ for details of the funded fellows).

In 2023, Round 2 of the Fellowship Scheme will fund up to two further Fellows to work on targeted projects that aim to fill gaps in the Programme’s portfolio of research including productive forestry and tree health. The aim of the Scheme is to provide a learning and knowledge exchange experience outside the Fellow’s usual area of expertise and to enhance broader interdisciplinary environmental and forest science capacity. It could include time spent exploring new understandings and conceptual frameworks relevant to the Treescapes programme, developing new methodological skills or data use or exploring the policy and/or practice implications of applied research.

We are seeking proposals that address one of the following specific topics:

* + • **The challenges and opportunities facing productive forestry as part of the transition to net zero.** Forest management and the commercial forestry sector more generally will increasingly need to deal with the challenges of increasing demands for multifunctionality. This is likely to mean pressures to plant more diverse species mix (to improve climate resilience and provide biodiversity benefits), adopting technological advancements such as harvest automation, changing markets that will require a range of tree species and adapting the processing sector to better cope with different timber sizes to service a more diverse range of wood products (e.g. innovations in building materials, lignin and cellulose replacing plastic, sustainable textile fibres, wood fibre insulation). Areas of research might include: o assessing the functional biodiversity of productive forests across growing cycles and different species mixes (including potential new commercial species);

o measure or model carbon flows and other ecosystem services for different future commercial forestry scenarios (clear felling, continuous cover forestry, land sparing/sharing etc.);

o assessing the economic potential of different management regimes;

o co-designing with actors innovative support tools and concepts to empower and incentivize forest owners to apply climate-smart forestry practices;

o identifying best practice and transferable learning from other countries.

• **Future proofing new tree and woodland planting from tree pests and diseases.** Trees, woods and forests are under increasing pressure from a growing number of pests and diseases. As a result, treescape structure and function may undergo changes of uncertain character, rapidity and magnitude, with significant impacts on ecosystem service delivery and the appearance and amenity value of farmed and protected landscapes. Areas of research might include: o assessment of the cumulative impact of multiple biotic and abiotic factors on our trees and treescapes;

o enhancing surveillance of the wider environment and making the best use of data and toolkits;

o optimising pest and disease management, considering trade-offs, future availability and substitutions, including natural control mechanisms;

o breeding and planting resilient treescapes for the future;

o building societal support and stakeholder awareness of plant health to better protect our treescapes.

Applications are invited from academic researchers who wish to learn a new technique, methodology or mode of knowledge production and exchange by spending time in a different disciplinary research group or laboratory. It may also involve working with non-academic stakeholders or spending time in a stakeholder institution to understand how existing environmental research can be used or extended to better inform policy and practice across one of the research topics outlined above. Alternatively, non-academics could spend time in an academic institution learning new environmental and forest science research skills and gaining experience in promoting two-way exchange between academia and policy or practice.

Applicants for this Fellowship scheme are encouraged to be innovative and creative in the development of their proposal, with a clear description of how they intend to use the Fellowship to contribute to the Treescape programme and environmental and forest science capacity more broadly, as well as developing the Fellow’s own skills, understanding and knowledge.

Fellows may (but are not required to) include visits to international research or stakeholder institutions in order to gain knowledge and best practice relevant to UK treescapes. For instance, a researcher could spend time in an overseas lab, research group or non-academic setting in order to learn about different approaches to managing productive forests or tree pests and diseases in other country contexts, with a clear rationale for how that new learning will be applied or shared in the UK. The primary purpose of proposals, however, must be to develop the Fellow’s capacity to take away and build on newly acquired skills, understandings, methods and learnings.

Fellows will be required to deliver a short report at the end of the grant, and will be encouraged to produce policy or practice notes, where appropriate, and engage in wider programme dissemination activities led by the UK treescapes programme ambassadors, including participating in the final Treescapes programme conference in autumn 2024.

**Eligibility**

The Treescapes Fellowship Scheme is open to applicants of all nationalities who have the right to live and work in the UK. Applicants do not need to currently be receiving funding from the Future of UK Treescapes Programme, and the call is open to researchers and non-academics from any discipline. Proposals from applicants with diverse backgrounds and experience will be encouraged and there will be no limits on amount of postdoctoral experience.

Fellowships are open to applicants from any discipline under the remit of NERC, ESRC or AHRC, but proposals must clearly demonstrate their relevance for the funding research council, NERC.

Applicants who are employed at a research institution in a role where they would be eligible to apply as a Principal or Co-investigator for a grant are expected to apply for the fellowship for a percentage of their FTE only.

Applicants at an earlier career stage and are not yet eligible as a PI/Co-I for NERC grants, may apply for up to 100% of their time through this fellowship.

Applicants do not need a PhD, however, current PhD students are expected to have submitted their thesis before taking up the fellowship.

For non-academics currently employed at end-user/stakeholder organisations, the fellowship grant should be held by a host academic institution, which must be eligible for UKRI funding. The host academic institution must provide a letter of support from the Head of Department confirming that the applicant will have the facilities and support from the research organisation to deliver the project.

Applicants may only be involved in **one** proposal submitted to this opportunity.

Fellowship grants may be held at:

* • approved UK higher education institutions (HEIs)
* • approved research council institutes (RCI’s)
* • independent research organisations (IROs)
* • public sector research establishments (PSREs)

Prospective applicants should check the eligibility status of their host organisation.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

The Future of UK Treescapes Programme and UKRI are committed to creating and sustaining a fair, equitable and inclusive environment for our research community to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate and benefit. We therefore encourage applications from all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria from all backgrounds, regardless of:

age

disability

gender reassignment

marriage and civil partnership

pregnancy and maternity

race

religion or belief

sex

sexual orientation

**Budget and Duration**

The full economic cost of your fellowship must not exceed £32,000. We will fund 80% of the full economic cost. Fellowships can be funded for a minimum of three months and a maximum of one year, and could include full-time or part-time arrangements. We expect to fund up to two fellows.

Eligible costs include the applicant’s salary and associated estates or indirect costs, consumables, travel and subsistence. Equipment costs are not eligible under this call. Applicants should include sufficient resources for 2 UK-based one-day meetings and associated travel and subsistence, to attend Treescapes Fellow events and the two-day final Treescapes conference (likely to be held in Scotland).

This scheme is administered by the Future of UK Treescapes Ambassadors on behalf of NERC. Successful awards will be issued as contracts from the University of Gloucestershire to the organisation where the fellowship will be held and will not be part of the research council Je-S system. The awards will follow the standard UKRI grant terms and conditions except where variation is justified for the purpose of processing payments via contracts.

**Engagement with the Future of UK Treescapes Programme**

Fellows will be expected to coordinate their activities with the Future of UK Treescapes Ambassadors, engage with the Future of UK Treescapes Programme activities (such as the Treescapes events and annual conference) and interact with each other through Fellowship events, organised by the Ambassadors. Applications that cooperate with one or more projects currently funded under the Future of UK Treescapes programme are welcomed (although this is not a requirement for funding).

**Application and Assessment Process**

To apply, please download and complete the application form and diversity monitoring form from the Programme website: www.uktreescapes.org. If you cannot download the form, contact treescapes@glos.ac.uk. Completed forms should be emailed to the Future of UK Treescapes Ambassadors at treescapes@glos.ac.uk. Please also include:

a letter of commitment from the research organisation where your fellowship will be held (this is referred to as the ‘host’ institution, where the funding is hosted and may be your existing employer or a different research organisation), and;

a letter of commitment from any partner organisations (these may be academic departments/units or stakeholder organisations who are providing mentoring, learning, networking or training opportunities or placements, for example), signed by the head of that department, unit or organisation.

Applications will be assessed by a review panel consisting of the Treescapes Ambassadors and independent academic experts. Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

Potential for the applicant to develop new skills, knowledge and understanding

Closeness of fit to the Call’s two priority areas

Suitability of the applicant

Suitability of the host

Feasibility of the proposal

Value for money

If applicants are based within the Ambassadors’ institutions (Imperial College London and University of Gloucestershire), independent reviewers from outside Imperial and Gloucestershire will be included to ensure a fair and open competition.