

Engaging the UK public with the big issues of environmental science

Announcement of Opportunity

Closing date for [expressions of interest](#) to attend call information event: **16:00 (GMT), Monday 12 September 2016**

Call information [event](#): **Thursday 22 September 2016**

Closing date for full proposals via [online form](#): **16:00 (GMT), Thursday 3 November 2016**

Summary

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is inviting proposals under this programme for public engagement projects costing **up to £20k** that **must be delivered between January and end of March 2017**. Closing date for full proposals is **16:00 (GMT), Thursday 3 November 2016**.

This call initiates delivery of NERC's [public engagement strategy](#) through:

- Engaging members of the UK public with relevant **contemporary issues** of environmental science through delivery of public engagement activity.
- Building **public engagement capacity** in the environmental science research community and providing opportunities for early career researchers and PhD students to develop skills, practise and embed public engagement in their research careers.
- Building **partnerships** between researchers and publics or public-facing groups, and between research organisations.

Projects will focus on broad, contemporary issues of environmental science, not specific research projects or grants. Total funding of up to £200K is available for this call.

An additional budget is available to provide matched funding up to the total value of the proposal (an additional maximum £20k per proposal) to provide training and support for the involvement of early career researchers and PhD students in public engagement projects. Please see [section on matched funding](#) below for details.

Information Event

NERC will be holding an information event for potential applicants to the call on Thursday 22 September 2016 in Birmingham. Attendance is by invitation only and is not compulsory, but highly recommended.

The closing date for expressions of interest to attend the call information event is **midnight (GMT), Monday 12 September 2016**. If you would like to apply to attend the event, please complete the [online form](#). Submission of the form will be taken as an indication of your availability on the dates of the workshop.

NERC will try to ensure a balance of different disciplines/expertise and the number of attendees from the same institution. Invited participants will be notified by Wednesday 14 September 2016.



Background

Understanding our changing planet is fundamental to our future wellbeing and prosperity. NERC is the driving force of investment in environmental science. We advance the frontier of environmental science by commissioning new research, infrastructure and training that delivers valuable scientific breakthroughs. Our [Royal Charter](#) states NERC's responsibility to 'encourage public engagement and dialogue', 'communicate research outcomes' and 'generate public awareness' of the environmental science we fund.

We recently published our [public engagement with research strategy](#), through which we aim to:

- Convene informed public debate about contemporary issues of environmental science, including the ethical and social implications.
- Inform, interest and inspire members of the public and future researchers in environmental science and the processes of research, in a way that is accessible and relevant.
- Carry out public dialogue¹ on complex and controversial issues. Actively listening to members of the public allows NERC to make decisions that are relevant to society.

This is the first call under the strategy, designed in acknowledgement of the need to build public engagement capacity and capability in environmental science. We anticipate that there will be subsequent, larger calls over longer timescales in future years, which will be informed by the outcomes of projects funded through this call, for instance, through participation in future workshops to draw out learning from this call.

The Research Councils UK (RCUK) [Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research](#) outlines the expectations and responsibilities of research funders with respect to public engagement.

Aims of call

This call is part of NERC's [public engagement strategy](#) to develop engagement with contemporary issues of environmental science.

The aims of the call are to:

- Engage members of the UK public with relevant **contemporary issues** of environmental science through delivery of public engagement activity.
- Build **public engagement capacity** in the environmental science research community and provide opportunities for early career researchers and PhD students to develop skills, practise and embed public engagement in their research careers.
- Build **partnerships** between researchers and publics or public facing groups, and between research organisations.

This new call will support innovative public engagement projects that stimulate discussion around broad, contemporary issues raised by environmental science research that are relevant to the UK public (not specific research projects or grants), valuing contribution and expertise of both researchers and members of the public.

Through engaging researchers with this call and providing additional support for the inclusion of early career researchers and PhD students, we will enhance long-term capacity to carry out effective public engagement.

Projects will provide opportunities for environmental science researchers to interact with and/or listen to members of the public for the mutual benefit of all partners.

Projects must involve environmental science researchers, and may involve collaboration between researchers and public/community partners, either of whom may lead as Principal Investigator. Projects may also involve the formation of interdisciplinary relationships (for example, with social science colleagues), both within research organisations and with other sectors.

We intend that there will be subsequent, larger calls over longer timescales in future years. We wish these to be informed by the outcomes of projects funded through this call, and those funded should anticipate attending a one-day workshop in the UK in early 2017.

¹ Sciencewise [definition of public dialogue](#)

Funding available

Funding of up to £200k is available for the call and projects of up to £20k may be proposed. An additional match-fund is also available giving the potential to match up to the value of the project for providing training and support for the involvement of early career researchers and PhD students in public engagement projects. The total funding requested must not exceed £20k for stand-alone proposals or £40k for proposals including a match-funded element.

Projects must be delivered between January and March 2017. **Projects that extend beyond March 2017 are not within the scope of this call and will not be funded.** Project extensions beyond the end of March 2017 are not possible.

The call closes at **16:00 (GMT) on Thursday 3 November 2016**. Proposals received after this time will **not** be accepted. Proposals must be submitted using the [application form](#).

Matched funding for early career researchers and PhD students

Matched funding up to the total value of the proposal (maximum match-fund £20k, increasing total potential value to £40k) may be requested to provide training and support for the involvement of early career researchers and PhD students in public engagement projects (for example, if £15k was requested for the public engagement proposal, up to £15k could be requested for the match-fund, taking the total to up to £30k).

There are no mandated training delivery formats for these awards, but these initiatives must prioritise NERC-funded PhD students or develop the public engagement skills of environmental science early career researchers.

NERC defines eligible early career researchers as either:

- Current NERC Fellows.
- Researchers who have a maximum of eight years of full-time postdoctoral experience from the PhD certificate date to the closing date of this call but who do not have a permanent academic position (or equivalent in institutions other than universities). The eight-year window is based on full-time working. Where applicants have worked part-time or had career breaks, the window would be extended accordingly.

Eligible costs for this matched funding include:

- Training provision.
- Training materials.
- Additional costs resulting from early career researcher and PhD student delivery of public engagement activity
- Travel and subsistence.
- Placements/secondments (for NERC-funded students, NERC would allow studentships to be extended to accommodate the placement).

Applications requesting matched funding must include a named Co-Investigator who will be responsible for this aspect of the project. Up to two extra sides of A4 may be included in the application to detail the proposals for this matched funding, as part of the overall application. Please see further details about [attachments](#) below.

Applications for this matched funding must demonstrate balance and integration of training/skills development elements that benefit early career researchers and PhD students with the public engagement aims of the project.

Eligibility

- Proposals must engage the UK public with relevant contemporary issues of environmental science.
- Projects must involve environmental science researchers as named Investigators, and may involve collaboration between researchers and public/community partners, either of whom may lead as Principal Investigator. Projects may also involve the formation of interdisciplinary relationships, both within research organisations and with other sectors.
- Projects must be delivered between January and end of March 2017.
- Activities must be free at the point of access for public audiences.
- Applicants to this call may submit only one proposal as the Principal Investigator.
- Projects will focus on broad, contemporary issues of environmental science, not specific research projects or grants.

Who can apply?

Proposals will be accepted from applicants who are normally [eligible for NERC grants](#) and also from public/community partners.

- The project team **must** include at least one **environmental science researcher**. Full details of the eligibility criteria for both individual researchers and research organisations, can be found in the [research grants and fellowships handbook](#). This call is funded outside of [Full Economic Costing \(FEC\) rules](#).
- The project team **may** include **researchers from other disciplines** for whom the same eligibility requirements apply.
- The project team **may** include **public/community partners**. This is a named investigator from an organisation whose primary focus is on the UK public. This includes museums, charities, community organisations and so on.

Where collaborative proposals are submitted, any partner may lead as Principal Investigator. If the public/community partner is the Principal Investigator of a proposal that is selected for funding, but is not already registered with [UKSBS](#) to receive payment, they would need to do so by the end of January 2017, in order for payments to be made. We anticipate that payments will be made by end of February 2017.

Eligible activities

Activities must directly relate to the aims of this call. Funding could provide support for (but is not restricted to) the following activities:

- Researching, developing and/or delivering environmental science public engagement or enhancing an existing environmental science engagement project.
- Products, for example:
 - Websites, software and other digital delivery
 - Guidelines, booklets and toolkits
 - Disseminating project outputs and project reports
 - Events, exhibitions, artworks and performances
 - Networks, relationships and partnerships
- Skills, knowledge and understanding.

Additional matched funding for early career researchers and PhD students may be requested, please see *matched funding for early career researchers and PhD students* [section above](#) for further details.

How to apply

Applicants are required to submit their proposal through the [online form](#). The call is open for submissions from **Monday 5 September 2016**. The deadline for the submission of proposals is **16:00 (GMT), Thursday 3 November 2016**.

The [online form](#) requests details of the applicants and host organisations, project title (150 characters), project summary (2000 characters), project duration and total budget requested.

A single PDF proposal document must be attached to the online form. This proposal attachment must not exceed 4 sides of A4, (6 sides of A4 in cases where matched funding is requested) and must be a completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Applications submitted in incorrect formats may be rejected.

The attachment of CVs and letters of support are not required. Any such attachments will not be accepted and will be removed from proposals.

What to include in proposal attachment (up to 4 sides):

- **Objectives and intended outcomes:** please describe your project objectives and how you will meet these. Please include how you meet NERC's aims for this call, and detail the contemporary issue of environmental science that the project will focus on and your target public audiences. Please also describe intended project outcomes.
- **Management and planning:** please detail how the project will be managed and outline a plan for its delivery and dissemination of outputs.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** state how you propose to monitor progress of the project and evaluate outcomes.
- **Track record:** please describe how the Principal Investigator and Co-Applicants' relevant knowledge and experience can be applied to deliver the objectives of the proposal.
- **Justification of resources:** please provide a justification of resources requested. This should include an itemised list of costs (for example, staff, travel and subsistence – see [funding section](#) below).

What to include in proposal attachment where additional matched funding component is requested (up to 2 additional sides):

- **Early career researchers and PhD students:** applications requesting matched funding must detail objectives, plans and outcomes for the provision of training and support for the involvement of early career researchers and PhD students in public engagement projects. Where matched funding is requested, an additional 2 sides of A4 are permitted.

Funding - what can be requested?

Proposals can include fully-justified direct costs incurred in delivering the project. This may include, for example:

- Staff resources, including:
 - Administration and coordination
 - Contributions to salaries (where a named individual will undertake work that would not be considered part of their normal duties)
 - Sub-contracting of services
 - Enabling public/community partners to take part in data collection
- Non-staff resources, including:
 - Cost of materials and travel & subsistence
 - Meetings and events
 - Consumables, materials and equipment
 - Evaluation costs

What cannot be requested?

The budget and costings must be based on valid estimates. Funding will not be provided for the following:

- Estate and in-direct costs.
- Fees or honoraria to people already in paid employment to deliver activities where such activities would reasonably be undertaken as part of their normal duties.
- Retrospective funding, including those projects with a start date after the closing date but before the funding decisions are announced.
- Infrastructure/building costs.
- Expenses incurred submitting your application.
- Academic courses such as Master's degrees or PhDs, and other tuition fees.

Further information on the application procedure can be found in the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook](#). Please note that in cases where this call makes exception to the handbook (for example on eligibility) these exceptions are explained in this call document.

Assessment

Assessment Process:

There is a one-stage application process for this call. Proposals will be reviewed by an Assessment Panel comprising members with relevant expertise in both public engagement and environmental science. The panel will assess and rank proposals based on the [assessment criteria](#) below. Please note that proposals will be sent straight to the assessment panel for review: they will not go through a two-stage assessment process. A Principal Investigator response will not be required and applicants are not required to nominate reviewers.



During the panel meeting, in cases where there is a conflict of interest (for example, where a panel member has pre-existing links to an applicant), the individual(s) in question will leave the room while the proposal is discussed.

Prior to the assessment panel, NERC will carry out an internal sift based on [eligibility criteria](#) and remit of the call.

Assessment Criteria

Proposals will be assessed on the overall excellence of the proposal using the following criteria:

- 1) Fit to the aims of the call and potential for impact, within which the following will be considered:
 - The aims, objectives and plans for delivery of the project are clearly articulated.
 - The project evaluation plan is clearly stated and appropriate.
 - Planning for dissemination of project outputs and communication of project outcomes.
 - Suitability of the applicants to deliver the objectives of the proposal.
 - The proposal represents value for money.
- 2) Balance and integration of training/skills development elements with the public engagement aims of the project in proposals where funding for early career researchers and PhD students is requested.

Successful applicants will be required to share their project evaluations with NERC and engage in wider evaluation of this public engagement call. They will also be expected to attend a community workshop (date to be confirmed) to bring together learning to inform larger, strategic public engagement initiatives in future. Further details will be given in the offer letter to successful applicants.

Applicants will be informed of the funding outcome in the week commencing Monday 12 December 2016. Successful applicants will be notified in writing of the level of award and any terms and conditions that will apply.

Timeline

Date	Event
Monday 5 September 2016	Call launched
Monday 12 September 2016, midnight	Closing date for Expression of Interest to attend event
Thursday 22 September	Call event in Birmingham
Thursday 3 November, 16:00	Call closes
Late November/early December	Proposal Moderating Panel
Week beginning Monday 12 December	Successful applicants informed
1 January 2017	Projects may start from this date
31 March 2017	Projects must be complete

Contacts

We are available to support you during the application process. If you have any questions please contact:

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