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UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) Director
Announcement of Opportunity

Issued on: 31 October 2019
Full Proposals deadline: 4pm on 21 November 2019
Interviews: 19 December 2019

1. Summary

Engineering and Physical Science Research Council (EPSRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), as part of their contribution to the Cross-Council Energy Programme, recently supported Phase 4 of the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC). We are now seeking to recruit a new Director to oversee the work of UKERC for the remainder of this phase of the funding, which is due to end on 30 April 2024.

The Director will be responsible for the overall leadership of UKERC, including oversight, co-ordination and integration of the research programme.

The Director position is available until the end of UKERC phase 4.

2. Background

The UK energy system must evolve to meet the Paris Agreement and associated UK carbon emission reduction commitments by 2050 (80% reduction on our 1990 baseline), as well as meeting the EU Renewable Energy Directive target of 20% renewables by 2020. A number of strategies have recently set the direction for UK energy, including the Clean Growth Strategy and the Industrial Strategy, aiming to build the UK competitive advantage in light of challenges such as decarbonising the energy sector. There are also more devolved policies such as the Scottish Energy Strategy, which highlights the importance of a whole-system view. However, energy is an intrinsically complicated landscape and these policies do not stand alone, with implications for the 25 Year Environment Plan (for example, the consequences for air pollution from different energy sources) and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform (with regards to land use for bioenergy crops).

The UK is on the cusp of transition with major changes already happening in the energy system. However, the future remains uncertain and unstable with, for example, implications of Brexit yet to be understood. These factors need to be taken together to allow the UK to take full advantage of the opportunities available, with whole-systems and interdisciplinary research playing a crucial role in making tough decisions on the pathways to follow to
achieve clean, affordable, reliable and socially acceptable (the energy quadrilemma) supply and use of energy.

The Cross-Council Energy Programme is bringing together engineers, social scientists and natural scientists from many areas to tackle the research challenges involved in creating new energy technologies and systems, and understanding and incorporating their social, economic and environmental implications. EPSRC leads the Energy Programme, in which BBSRC, ESRC, EPSRC, NERC and STFC work together to develop and deliver energy research and training within a common strategic framework, using a whole-systems approach.

The Research Councils have funded UKERC since 2004. It is a key part of the Cross-Council Energy Programme and when established by the Research Councils, its mission was to be the UK’s pre-eminent centre of interdisciplinary research in energy and source of authoritative information and leadership on sustainable energy systems. Today, UKERC acts as a focal point for UK energy research and a gateway between the UK and the international energy research communities and carries out world-class research into sustainable future energy systems. Its interdisciplinary, whole systems research informs UK policy development and strategies of public, private and third sector organisations.

Its support to date has been provided by EPSRC, ESRC and NERC.

UKERC phase 4 research programme focuses on new challenges and opportunities for implementing the energy transition, and is be concerned with three main questions:

- How will global, national and local developments influence the shape and pace of the UK’s transition towards a low carbon energy system?
- What are the potential economic, political, social and environmental costs and benefits of energy system change, and how can they be distributed equitably?
- Which actors could take the lead in implementing the next stage of the UK's energy transition, and what are the implications for policy and governance?

The centre has seven interlinking themes which will address these questions:

- Theme 1: UK Energy in a Global Context
- Theme 2: Local & Regional Energy Systems
- Theme 3: Energy, environment and landscapes
- Theme 4: Energy infrastructure transitions
- Theme 5: Energy for mobility
- Theme 6: Energy systems for heat
- Theme 7: Industrial decarbonisation

The research themes are complemented by four national capabilities that form part of the research programme: an expanded Technology and Policy Assessment (TPA) capability; a new Energy Modelling Hub; the UKERC Energy Data Centre; and a new Public Engagement Observatory. Research within TPA and the Observatory will align and integrate with the main research themes. These four capabilities will also enhance UKERC’s ability to provide evidence, data and expertise for academic, policy, industry and other stakeholder communities.

The UKERC headquarters (HQ) team supports the management and co-ordination of the research programme; and also undertakes a range of other functions to support the broader
UK energy research community and its key stakeholders. These functions include promoting networking and engagement between stakeholders in academia, policy, industry and third sector (including through a networking fund), supporting career development and capacity building, and enhancing international collaboration (including through the UK’s participation in the European Energy Research Alliance).

3. Director Role

The UKERC Director will be required to lead UKERC to ensure delivery of the following key elements of the centre:

- A strongly visionary and integrative whole-systems work programme focused on championing interdisciplinary research into appropriate environmental, social, physical, political, economic and engineering, biological and chemical aspects of the secure, affordable, equitable and sustainable supply and use of energy, adding value, and making a distinctive contribution to the UK and international energy research landscape. Whilst keen to encourage interdisciplinary whole-systems research the funding for the centre is being provided by EPSRC, ESRC and NERC, and so the UKERC Director should ensure that the proposed research includes strong elements of physical sciences and engineering research, economic and social research and environmental research.

- The Director will have ultimate oversight of the flexible research programme, which should be used by UKERC to support a flexible, responsive, complimentary, interdisciplinary programme of innovative, whole-systems, policy-relevant and curiosity-driven research. The Director will ensure that UKERC sets out the principles and procedures for developing this activity and how the research will be commissioned and managed as part of UKERC.

- UKERC will be expected to identify synergistic research opportunities to support and pursue their strategy and research themes by bidding for other funding, and by obtaining input from project partners. UKERC should build in capability to co-ordinate new opportunities into their work stream as they emerge e.g. Prospering from the Energy Revolution ISCF Challenge (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prospering-from-the-energy-revolution-full-programme-details).

The Director will also be required to oversee the governance of the centre including relevant advisory groups and work closely with the other members of UKERC’s executive leadership team and is responsible for overall leadership, including oversight, co-ordination and integration of the research programme. The Director will be required to coordinate the UKERC phase 4 Researchfish submission and to work with the current UKERC Director to submit returns for UKERC phase 3.

We expect applicants to demonstrate relevant experience and track record details, providing evidence of the competency to lead a large, interdisciplinary collaborative centre of this kind and should explain how the leadership will be provided to a diverse group of researchers and collaborators and how the existing programme of activities and its outputs will be managed. Applicants should detail how they will link into existing centre management and governance activities to achieve the aims and themes of phase 4 of UKERC.
4. Funding available

There is £481,588 of funding available to cover the salary of the Director until the end of April 2024. The successful candidate must commit at least 0.6 FTE to the role.

Applications are welcome from academics that job share, have a part time contract or those currently committed to other longer, large existing grants (centres, hubs, programme grants, CDT, etc.) provided that these commitments enable the applicant to be able to fulfil the Director role.

The successful candidate must be seconded into UCL to undertake the UKERC Director role because they are the current host institution for UKERC.

UCL is ranked 7th in the QS World University Rankings, placing it in the top 1% of higher education institutions globally, 3rd in the UK and Europe, and best in London. Set within UCL’s Faculty of The Built Environment, The Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources (BSEER) is comprised of four world-class Institutes, providing the expert knowledge collaborative research and teaching of UCL Energy Institute, UCL Institute for Environmental Design and Engineering, UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage and UCL Institute for Sustainable Resources. BSEER is a fast growing, internationally renowned School for cross disciplinary research with economists, energy modelers, social scientists, building engineers, physicists and heritage specialists all working to mitigate climate change. It comprises 75 academics and 70 research staff working on a huge variety of research and consultancy projects across the shared problem domains of Energy, Environment, Resources and Heritage. BSEER holds a research portfolio currently valued at £42 million funded from every UKRI council and multiple international sources. There are three Centres for Doctoral Training as well as five multi-million-pound research centres. The research proposal rate of over 90 per annum to a wide range of funders, including research councils, EU, the Wellcome Trust, DFID, government departments like BEIS and Heritage England. As well as a wide range of initiatives with industry partners in heritage, shipping, transport and the buildings sector.

Applications are also welcome for Co-Directors. For co-applications, applicants must demonstrate the clear split of responsibility (e.g. 1) Strategy, 2) Management). In this case the applicants must make clear to the panel how they would effectively work together.

5. Eligibility

The successful applicant must be able to show they can fulfil the assessment criteria (See Assessment Criteria and Person specification below) and become the UKERC Director.

The successful applicant should have a research and/or policy background with a clear grasp of the multidisciplinary research landscape including an understanding or appreciation of whole-system energy research. Although proposals will be administered by NERC, applications are welcomed and encouraged from those who are usually funded via other Research Councils participating in UKERC (i.e. EPSRC and ESRC).

The successful applicant will be employed by University College London, or will be seconded to the university.
6. Application process

Closing Date: 4pm 21 November 2019

Applications should be submitted by 4pm on the closing date by email to Amy Vitale: amy.vitale@nerc.ukri.org

Submissions should include the following documentation:

1) **Personal statement – Up to eight A4 pages.**
   The first page should describe the applicant’s vision for the research area and the following pages should cover:
   - How the applicant fits the assessment criteria and person specification – identifying any research gaps and how the applicant will fulfil these aspects. The applicant should give relevant examples for each criterion.
   - Why the applicant wants the role and what they will bring to it.
   - How they will be a leader of the Centre
   - How much time they expect to commit to the role and how they will manage other, existing commitments in order to undertake this role
   - Demonstrable links to stakeholders relevant to the whole-energy systems approach.

2) **Applicant’s CV – Up to two A4 pages per applicant**
   This should include:
   - Your employment history.
   - Your academic or professional qualification history.
   - Track record of relevant experience: for grants, include start/end dates, funding body, value of award, type of grant (e.g. first grant, fellowship, etc.), your role on the grant (PI, Co-I, Researcher, etc.).
   - Any current large project commitments.
   - Any current administrative activities e.g. may include editorial responsibilities, committee membership, networking activities, etc.
   - Other, e.g. may include invited talks, awards, prizes, memberships of professional bodies, etc.

3) **Engagement plan**
   The applicant should detail how they will engage and integrate with the existing funded UKERC research and researchers including:
   - Plans of how they will integrate with the rest of UKERC phase 4 as already funded once in post.
   - Their approach to engagement more widely with external stakeholders and what skills they bring to address this challenge.

4) **Justification of resources**
   The applicant should justify their time allocation to the UKERC Director role. Where an application is from co-directors details should be provided of how the role would be split both in terms of budget and time commitment.
7. Assessment Process

The proposals will not be assessed by postal peer review, as the applicants will be assessed by an independent panel of experts, with membership drawn from those with experience of UKRI leadership roles or longer larger grants and fellowships. The expert panel will then rank the applicants based on the assessment criteria and person specification detailed below. The applicants will be invited to an interview on 19 December and will be asked to give a brief verbal presentation on a specific topic. The details of this presentation and the topic will be included in the interview invitation. Applicants who are invited to interview will be provided with further details relating to the UKERC phase 4 workplan ahead of the interview. Depending on volume of applications received, the panel may sift the full applications against the assessment criteria prior to the interview stage, but there will be no other peer review outside of this process.

The expert panel will then rank the applicants based on the assessment criteria and person specification (see Assessment Criteria and Person specification below).

Assessment Criteria and Person specification

Since this is an assessment of the applicant and their ability to lead, the standard UKRI assessment criteria, such as quality of research, national importance and impact, do not apply to the process. Instead, a competency-based person specification is used to describe the desired qualities, skills, experience, and attributes expected to be demonstrated by a successful applicant, as provided in the table below. Note, the role isn’t just about research coordination, but is more outward facing in terms of engagement with stakeholders and understanding the research landscape.

Where an application is made for Co-Directors, the applicants will be considered jointly against the assessment criteria.

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<th>Criteria</th>
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<td>The candidate (Primary criterion)</td>
<td>Thought leadership</td>
<td>The applicant must:</td>
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<td>• Demonstrate that they are mindful of the current interdisciplinary research landscape in the area of whole-system energy research.</td>
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<td>• Show evidence that they are able to assemble key information across disciplines to build a compelling narrative and communicate this, effectively, to the right stakeholders at the right time drawing together perspectives from multiple disciplines.</td>
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<td>• Be able to demonstrate how they have given advice to or influenced industrial users of the research and/or policy makers</td>
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| **Inspirational team leader** | The applicant must:  
- Demonstrate their ability to guide and inspire others and to identify and maximise potential in others (i.e. get the best out of people)  
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting the development of researchers at all stages of their career and to provide increased opportunities for professional development and networking |
| **Community ambassador** | The applicant must:  
- Give evidence of a profile within the research community for research excellence  
- Demonstrate they can act as a figurehead for the UKERC community  
- Demonstrate how they would act as an ambassador to the wider research and user communities and advocate for whole-system energy research and for research in general |
| **Strategic vision** | The applicant must:  
- Be a strategic thinker who is focused on ensuring the interdisciplinary research achieves maximum impact  
- Demonstrate an aptitude for identifying, exploring and developing research opportunities more broadly and across different interfaces  
- Demonstrate where they have positioned themselves to take-up opportunities and have the ability to make decisions to deliver their vision |
| **Track record of coordinating research and translation** | The applicant has a track record of running a programme of outstanding large interdisciplinary research, delivering demonstrable impact and translating research outputs to users (e.g. to industry, the innovation infrastructure or HM Government) – at both the national and international level. |
| **Understanding of whole-system energy research and innovation** | The applicant can demonstrate that they are not only focused on their specific research but can take a systems view of energy research and innovation.  
They will also have a good understanding of the interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research, which is required to form a meaningful and cohesive programme of research to address the objectives of the programme |
| Communication and engagement skills | Communication and interpersonal skills. | Engagement | The ability to implement the comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercises needed to identify key audiences and develop strategies for engagement.

It is recognised that the skills needed for effective knowledge exchange may not, necessarily, reside with the leader but they should be able to facilitate others to carry out these tasks |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------|--|
| Resources and Management | The applicant must be able to demonstrate that they have the skills required for the project management of UKERC, including the management of staff and resources.

The applicant must be able to demonstrate that they are able to identify risks and put contingencies in place.

The applicant should demonstrate how they will fit into the existing management and governance structure and that they have the skills required to get to know the different activities being undertaken by UKERC and then be able to shape the research agenda moving forward taking into consideration the existing deliverables. | 

8. Timetable

Announcement published: 31 November 2019
Deadline for submission: 4pm on 21 November 2019
Shortlisting: 25-29 November 2019
Interview panel: 19 December 2019
Start date: As soon as possible after 1 January 2020

9. Contact

For all enquiries, please contact:

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Tel: 01793 442594