Environmental Science Collaborative Research Project(s) (NERC Showcase 2020)
Guidance for Applications

1. Background – Proof-of-Concept Public Engagement Awards (up to £30K)

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**
You are invited to attend an Environmental Science Collaborative Research Project(s) (NERC Wales Showcase 2020) learning event on **Friday 20 March 2020** and a NERC Showcase development event on **Friday 3 April 2020** to explore an exciting opportunity to develop an environmental collaborative research project with a public community or group as part of a Natural Environment Showcase 2020, in partnership with Cardiff University.

The events will support NERC researchers working in, on or with Wales to shape a submission for consideration by an established public engagement panel at Cardiff University which will be approved by NERC.

Applications must have a permanent member of staff as a lead applicant or co-applicant; non-permanent early career researchers, from postdoctoral research associate upwards, can be leads on applications, but must have a permanent member of staff as co-lead who will also support the public engagement activity. A team structure will also need to be detailed to develop, deliver and evaluate the project proposed. Proposals also need to provide evidence of agreement that they have time to deliver the award from their current line manager.

Further NERC eligibility requirements can be accessed [online](#).

**About Natural environment showcases**
NERC has run an annual public showcase since 2015. These events are free. Our 2017 showcase was **UnEarthed** at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh, which featured over 100 NERC-funded scientists running 30 different activities, free entry to the science museum and NERC technology on display including a deep-sea drill, underwater robots and a seabed-scanning boat. In 2018, we partnered with the Natural History Museum on an adult Lates event called ‘Your Planet Needs You’. The Lates event gave the public the opportunity to engage with environmental science and NERC’s researchers through a variety of emotive and informative activities. The event attracted over 3,500 visitors, which was 50% above average attendance for an NHM Lates event. Most visitors said they had gained new knowledge about the planet and environmental science and over half had spoken to a researcher that night.

As part of NERC Showcase 2020, Cardiff University University are invited to design and deliver a collaborative research project(s), developed in partnership with current NERC-funded scientists, public community/group(s), and Techniquest. The Environmental Science Collaborative Research Project(s) will run alongside other showcase activities.

**Summary:** The NERC Showcase 2020 will fund exciting and innovative collaborative research with a defined public community or group with outputs for delivery at the Showcase event at Techniquest and the National Eisteddfod. The public engagement project(s) funded will have the potential to significantly increase public...
involvement/knowledge exchange in the chosen research area, and enhance training of early career researchers allowing them to develop hands-on public engagement experience boosting their confidence and knowledge.

Applications to be submitted by 17:00 GMT, Friday 24 April 2020.

2. Application Guidance and Top Tips

The application has different sections, which we use to evaluate your Public Engagement activity and complete NERC reporting requirements. Please use the suggested word limit.

**Lay Summary** – Please write for a non-technical audience, and ensure the importance of the activity is clear. For guidance on how to write lay summary, please click here.

**Public Engagement Outline** – To enable comparison between submitted Public Engagement activities, please provide information about your Public Engagement activity using our requested headings: *Nature of the Public Engagement activity, aim and objectives, target audience, delivery plan and expected outcomes.* These outcomes will be one of the measures of success that we will report back to the NERC. Please provide a timeline for delivery of key Public Engagement tasks in an Appendix (e.g., Gantt Chart).

**The Public Engagement Need** – The College is keen to encourage the use of NERC funding for new emerging Public Engagement with research where the collection of pilot data can support submission of subsequent external grant funding. This section provides an opportunity to outline how your Public Engagement activity goes beyond current state-of-the-art and will address a defined community knowledge gap or advance Public Engagement aligned to a key priority NERC area. Please provide information about your Public Engagement activity using our requested headings: *Research landscape underpinning the Public Engagement activity, Public Engagement need and new insight enabled by the Public Engagement activity.*

**Strategic Alignment** – Explore the strategic drivers of NERC, the UKRI Public Engagement Vision, the NERC PE strategy (specific focus areas are listed in the NERC Showcase 2020 briefing document) and consideration of strategic alignment to Cardiff University’s ‘Way Forward’ strategy by reviewing current strategies and how your public engagement with research will align to the goals, and key performance indicators (KPIs) featured.

**Targeted Communications and Engagement** – Via a stakeholder mapping and identification process, you will have identified the most appropriate engagement methods for your activity. You may need to employ a combination of formal and informal engagement processes encouraging strong Public Engagement (e.g., public meetings/focus groups, digital media (newsletters/websites/social media) and public displays). You will also require approaches to communicating your engagement throughout the activity, as well as the outcomes afterwards. Please provide information relevant to this using the requested headings: *Engagement plan and Communications plan.*
**Monitoring and Evaluation** - Please describe the benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation methods you will use to demonstrate benefits to the targeted audience. This may include surveys, detailed feedback forms and tracking appropriate success metrics through frameworks such as the Logic model or Theory of Change etc. Monitoring and evaluation methods will be covered as part of the BLS Public Engagement Training, if you are unsure about the best approach. In this section, please use the following headings: *Methodology to capture outputs and outcomes, benchmarking methods and monitoring and evaluation plan*.

**Sustainability of the Public Engagement Activity and building a Wales-wide research network** – Please provide a clear pathway to external funding taking a focused approach to sustainability where you have identified a clear funding opportunity aligned to the strategic priorities of your identified funder and where there is a suitable call within a relevant timeframe of completion of your award. Also provide information about the legacy of the Public Engagement for recipients, information which will be required for a successful external funding application. The information you provide here will be one of the sustainable measures of success for the Public Engagement activity, and provided for monitoring purposes to the NERC. Please provide information about your Public Engagement activity using our requested headings: *Legacy of Public Engagement for recipients, External funding plans and Building a network of researchers across Wales*.

**Academic Promotion and Enhancing Research Careers** – The NERC award focuses on enhancing research careers across the academic lifespan. Please tell us why this award is important to you, and to your career ambitions (e.g. skill sets, project management experience). How will this help you transition to the next stage of your career? Please provide information using our requested headings: *Future research career progression and Skill set and experience developed*.

**Equality and Diversity** – As part of the NERC funding we are embedding monitoring of equality and diversity throughout all schemes, and wish to learn more about application of equality and diversity with respect to any involvement of researchers in helping delivery of the Public Engagement activity, management of the Public Engagement activity and data. Information you provide here will form part of our reporting around this area to NERC.

**Early Career Researchers** – The NERC funding creates the opportunity to catalyse and enhance the careers of our ECRs, and we are keen to learn more about how you will use your award to support these future Public Engagement leaders. For example, what activities will you embed in the delivery of your award to build skills in ECRs involved in delivering the Public Engagement activity, and how could the outcomes provide support for their transition to independence?

**Justification of Resources** – It is critical to justify your requested finances, and to provide a clear breakdown using the suggested headings. Where finances are not sufficiently detailed, applications will not be considered at the relevant Panel.

**Peer Review** – To support high-quality peer review, we are providing information about call deadlines in advance to enable appropriate preparation of grants. We have requested information, therefore, about the individual who has peer reviewed your application, and a tick-box to ensure that School peer review and costing procedures have been followed.
All applications should be submitted on the appropriate application form, with attention paid to the requirements for each section. Please note that additional information/appendices (beyond our requested timeline, see Project Outline) are not allowed and will be excluded from the application at review. Applicants should not exceed the permitted word count for each section (including table and figure legends); if they do, the application will not be considered at the Panel. Similarly, a lack of detailed justification of Public Engagement costs will result in the application not being submitted to the Panel.

All applications will be reviewed by an experienced and representative panel of Cardiff University staff. For these panels we aim to ensure representation from across the College, both in terms of scientific expertise, diversity and seniority. Early career researchers may attend these panels as observers, and be provided with lay summaries (in confidence) to help them learn more about grant reviewing processes.

Alongside assessment of the quality of the Public Engagement activity, and potential to deliver sustainable external funding, the panel will be encouraged to consider alignment with NERC priorities. They will also consider the benefit to early career researchers of all applications (e.g., growing skills and capacity in key interdisciplinary research areas).

Strategic decisions when applications are tied for funding will be made based on NERC public engagement with research priority. We are keen that the NERC Funds are used to the maximum benefit for the many talented researchers we have at Cardiff University, and researchers should consider carefully alignment to their research and public engagement aspirations. Similarly, consideration of budgets can mean that the full requested amount of funding may not be awarded.

The panel may also recommend amendments to your proposal and approach to ensure a high quality collaborative research project(s) is developed, delivered and evaluated.

4. Governance and Panellists

Our panellists are all experienced at grant reviewing, with each panel including representation from both junior / senior researchers, as well as across all Schools in the College. Panellists undergo equality and diversity training to ensure a fair and transparent assessment process.

Panels provide recommended decisions which require ratification by the NERC public engagement team. Panellists are not allowed to provide information about outcomes from panel decision-making, similar to external grant reviewing panels. The contact for all queries relevant to applications, panels and outcomes is via smithc32@cardiff.ac.uk.

We hope to ensure that all researchers obtain feedback from applications to help them develop their skills in grant writing.

5. Submission Deadline

All applications should be submitted to ISSFPE@cardiff.ac.uk by 17:00 GMT, Friday 24 April 2020. Applications submitted after this time will not be accepted. All applications
need to be subjected to the normal review and costings procedures within the submitting School.