



Reducing the Impacts of Plastic Waste in Developing Countries

Closing date	No1: 20 January 2020 Full proposals: 17 March 2020
Funding available	£20m
Funding mode/stream	Global Challenges Research Fund
NERC Core or UKRI/Collective Fund budget	UKRI Collective Fund – GCRF
Project duration	4 years
Start date requirements (if applicable)	Grants must start in July 2020
Call aims and objectives	<p>The objective of this programme is to support the interdisciplinary research needed to understand the risks plastic pollution poses in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) and to explore which interventions, policies and regulations can mitigate these risks. Research to develop new forms of plastic or alternatives to plastic is out of scope for this programme. The outputs of the research will support economic growth and societal wellbeing by enabling a cleaner and more resilient and productive environment.</p> <p>Proposals must address all three research themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sources and drivers of plastic pollution2. Impacts of plastic pollution3. Intervention, mitigation and adaptation <p>Projects can focus on one or more LMIC, and can include research on any type of plastic waste, but should clearly demonstrate how the proposed research addresses the objectives of the call and how the planned outputs will support a reduction in plastic pollution. UKRI will use the recommendations of the assessment panel along with the overall call requirements, the goal to support research on</p>

	plastic waste in a range of developing world contexts, and the available budget in making the final funding decisions.
Eligibility criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Investigator (PI) must be based in a UK Research Organisation eligible for UKRI funding • Co-Investigators (Co-Is) and researchers can be based in the UK or overseas; those based overseas receive funding through the lead research organisation • Proposal must be ODA compliant • Applicants may submit no more than two proposals to the call as an investigator, only one of these may be as the lead Principal Investigator (for joint proposals, the PI on the non-lead proposal is a Co-I for these purposes).
Call specific requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End-users must be engaged both during the design phase and throughout lifespan of project. • Projects must address all three Research Challenges. • Project teams should be interdisciplinary. • Projects should have equitable partnerships and include capacity building. • Individual projects to work together to enable synthesis of the outputs and the translation of context specific research to other areas where appropriate. This element of the programme will be developed once projects have commenced.
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Reducing the Impacts of Plastic Waste in Developing Countries

Announcement of Opportunity

Issued on: 5 November 2019

Notification of Intent to Submit deadline: 16:00 GMT on 20 January 2020

Full Proposals deadline: 16:00 GMT on 17 March 2020

Information about your application, including the personal information provided on the forms, will be processed and stored electronically by the Programme Secretariat.

Your application and personal information will be stored by the Reducing the Impacts of Plastic Waste in Developing Countries Programme for management purposes but will not be shared with other organisations outside the UKRI-GCRF partnership. We will use details provided in the application for correspondence about the call and may also use this information for future analyses of the performance of the programme.

By submitting your application to the Reducing the Impacts of Plastic Waste in Developing Countries Programme you have indicated your acceptance of these data protection terms and conditions.

1. Summary

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) invites proposals for international, interdisciplinary, collaborative research projects under the UKRI-GCRF Reducing the Impacts of Plastic Waste in Developing Countries Programme.

Plastic waste is polluting the land, rivers and seas, impacting the health and wellbeing of both people and the environment, particularly in developing countries. The aim of this programme is to support the interdisciplinary research needed to understand the risks plastic pollution poses in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) and to explore which interventions, policies and regulations can mitigate these risks. Research to develop new forms of plastic or alternatives to plastic is out of scope for this programme. The outputs of the research will support economic growth and societal wellbeing by enabling a cleaner and more resilient and productive environment.

This call aims to support up to five international, interdisciplinary, collaborative research projects with a value of up to £3.5m (cost to UKRI); UK institutions are eligible for 80% FEC and overseas organisations are eligible for 100% direct project costs. The total available budget for this call is £20m. It is expected that projects will start in July 2020 and have a maximum duration of four years.

All projects are required to have a Principal Investigator based in a UK Research Organisation eligible to hold UKRI grants. For this call, standard NERC eligibility rules apply, however it should be noted that PIs and Co-Is from **any discipline supported by UKRI** are welcomed and encouraged to apply, within the parameters of the call. Projects involving co-investigators and researchers based in LMICs are expected, and are eligible to receive funding via a UK Research Organisation.

This call has a Notification of Intent to Submit and a Full Proposal application stage. A Notification of Intent to Submit should be submitted using the [online form](#) no later than 16:00 GMT on 20 January 2020. **Submission of a Notification of Intent to Submit is a requirement of this call and full proposals will only be accepted from those teams who submit a completed Notification of Intent to Submit online form prior to the deadline.** The lead PI should not change between submission of a Notification of Intent to Submit and submission of a full proposal.

Full proposals must be submitted via the UK Research Councils' Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system before 16:00 GMT on 17 March 2020.

2. Background

2.1 Scientific Background

Since they were invented in the early 20th Century synthetic plastics have been revolutionary; they have changed the way we live and are now an essential part of everyday life and embedded in the global economy. Across societies, our relationship with plastics has been shaped by various cultural, social and economic factors, notably in regard to the low cost, diverse uses and the utility of the broad range of plastics now available. The ubiquity and durability of plastics has significant consequences, however; as of 2017, approximately 7000 million tonnes (Mt) of plastic waste has been generated globally, with over 80% of this accumulated in landfills or released into the natural environment; and up to 12 Mt entering the oceans each year ([Jambeck et al. 2015, Science](#)).

While we now know that plastics are present in all parts of the earth surface system and there is increasing concern about the risks plastic waste poses to the environment, and consequently society, the impacts of plastic pollution are poorly understood. This lack of reliable evidence on the impacts of plastic pollution hampers the development of policies and interventions that will reduce the negative impacts of the current plastic waste burden, and makes it more challenging to develop alternatives to current plastics that do not create similar problems.

The volume of plastics entering the environment is greatest in LMICs. High Income Countries use the most plastics, but regulation and waste management systems limit the release of plastics into the environment to some extent in those countries, whereas LMICs often lack robust waste management systems and are rapidly adopting Western consumption patterns. LMICs may also be importing plastic waste from other countries. LMICs are, therefore, both most vulnerable to the problems created by plastic pollution and the greatest contributors to the global plastic pollution burden, and understanding the developing world context is a key element of tackling plastic pollution.

Reducing plastic pollution in LMICs is not straightforward, however, and requires understanding of plastic pollution from production to disposal to develop workable solutions. This means taking account of the myriad of local, national and international factors that contribute to plastic pollution such as: approaches to waste management (including access to innovative technology), supply chains, how plastics behave in different environments, social and cultural attitudes and behaviours regarding plastic use, disposal and plastic pollution, economic drivers, and the legal, governance and regulatory context. Importantly, the trade-offs between reducing pollution and development must be considered to ensure that actions to reduce plastic pollution enable and do not restrict equitable, sustainable growth.

2.2 Programme Background

This programme is funded by the [Global Challenges Research Fund \(GCRF\)](#). GCRF is a key component in the delivery of the [UK Aid Strategy](#): tackling global challenges in the national interest. The fund aims to ensure that UK Research and Innovation takes a leading role in addressing the problems faced by developing countries through:

- Challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research.
- Strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both developing countries and the UK.
- Providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need.

GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, and will be awarded in a manner that fits with [ODA guidelines](#). ODA provided by UKRI must comply with the requirements of the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 which states, the “desirability of providing development assistance that is likely to contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequalities between persons of different gender.”

Interdisciplinary research excellence is central to the GCRF and investigators from all disciplines are encouraged to apply within the parameters of the call. This call will be managed by NERC on behalf of all UKRI research councils and all proposals received will be shared with other constituent parts of UKRI as necessary to assist with processing.

Where appropriate, projects funded through this call will be considered part of the UK contribution to the Commonwealth Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework, which aims to provide a platform and overarching structure for bringing together governments, industry, researchers and practitioners from across the Commonwealth to work together to tackle this global issue.

3. Scope of the Call

3.1 Programme Objectives

The aim of this programme is to support the interdisciplinary research needed to understand the risks plastic pollution poses in LMICs and to explore which interventions, policies and regulations can mitigate these risks. The outputs of the research will support economic

growth and societal wellbeing by enabling a cleaner and more resilient and productive environment.

The programme has three themes:

- Sources and drivers of plastic pollution
- Impacts of plastic pollution
- Intervention, mitigation and adaptation

Projects must address all three research themes.

As the focus is on understanding and managing the risks associated with the current plastic waste in LMICs, research to develop new forms of plastic or alternatives to plastic is out of scope for this programme.

i. Sources and drivers of plastic pollution

Possible research questions include, but are not limited to:

- What is the nature of plastic entry into the environmental system; what types of plastic (e.g. chemical composition, size and shape) are entering the environment, where are they entering it, and in what volumes?
- How do social, economic, regulatory, behavioural, cultural and technical factors influence the nature, location, and scale of the release of plastic waste into the environment?
- What factors affect how plastic waste is managed, and how effective are management approaches?
- How does the global waste market affect the release of plastic waste into the environment in LMICs?
- Are there hotspots that are likely to have higher exposures and concentrations of plastics, and what are the factors that determine the location of hotspots?

ii. Impacts of plastic pollution

Possible research questions include, but are not limited to:

- What are the key physical, chemical and biological mechanisms that control fate, behaviour, concentration, decomposition, fractionation, distribution, and transport of plastics in the environment over different spatial and time-scales?
- How are different types of plastics modified physically, chemically and biologically within the environment?
- What is the hazard and risk to ecosystems from different plastics, and which ecosystem services or ecosystem functions are particularly vulnerable?
- At what point, if any, do plastics no longer interact with the environment, either because they are hazardous but not exposed, or persistently non-hazardous?
- What is the impact of plastic pollution on social and economic structures, and social inequalities?
- How does plastic waste impact the health, wellbeing and livelihoods of different groups in society, and are particular groups more exposed to the negative impacts than others?

iii. **Intervention, mitigation and adaptation**

Possible research questions include, but are not limited to:

- How can existing approaches to waste management and consumption be adapted or improved to prevent or reduce the release of plastics to the environment?
- What innovations and/or policy interventions and regulations might be needed to reduce environmental damage, and what are the barriers to introducing them?
- How might mitigation strategies and policies be developed to deal with legacy plastic waste already accumulated in the environment?
- At which points in the cycle might social, behavioural, economic or engineering interventions be most effective, what are the barriers to uptake, and how can change be encouraged and incentivised?
- How can the risks associated with plastic waste be effectively communicated to enable sustained change, how should approaches be tailored for engagement with different stakeholders?
- What are the trade-offs between tackling plastic pollution and enabling growth, and how can any negative impacts, particularly on vulnerable groups, be reduced?
- Which local, national and international factors affect the design and suitability of approaches, interventions and strategies, and how can these be incorporated to ensure that solutions are feasible and likely to enable sustained benefits?

3.2 Proposal Requirements

Projects must address all three research themes listed above. Projects can focus on one or more LMIC, and can include research on any type of plastic waste, but should clearly demonstrate how the proposed research addresses the objectives of the call and how the planned outputs will support a reduction in plastic pollution. UKRI will seek to support research on a range of developing world contexts to create a balanced programme that addresses the programme goals.

Individual projects will be expected to work together to enable synthesis of the outputs and the translation of context-specific research to other areas where appropriate, this will ensure that the programme makes a substantial contribution to reducing plastic pollution in developing countries. Additional funding will be made available to support this integration once the projects have started.

It is expected that project teams will be interdisciplinary and include the range of expertise, e.g. from the arts and humanities, economics and social, engineering, physical, environmental and life sciences, needed to deliver the integrated cross-sectoral research required to increase understanding of, and mitigate against, the risks plastic pollution poses in LMICs. It is expected that project teams will develop equitable partnerships with researchers in LMICs to strengthen the impact and relevance of the research and address the GCRF goal of building research and innovation capacity in LMICs.

As the aim of the programme is to develop realistic and feasible solutions which will enable a reduction in plastic pollution, it is expected that project teams will co-design interventions, strategies and approaches with relevant stakeholders, e.g. local and national governments, policymakers, businesses and local communities, to ensure that they enable sustained change and long-term benefits. Projects must work closely with such end-users both during the design phase and throughout the lifespan of the project.

Where appropriate, projects funded through this call will be considered part of the UK contribution to the Commonwealth Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework. Proposals that focus on Commonwealth countries or include researchers from Commonwealth countries are welcome, but it is not a requirement of this call that projects include research in Commonwealth countries and the assessment process will not prioritise projects that focus on Commonwealth countries.

4. Programme Requirements

4.1 Programme Funding

This call aims to support up to five international, interdisciplinary, collaborative research projects. The total available budget for this programme is £20m. The maximum project size is £3.5m (cost to UKRI); with UK institutions eligible for 80% FEC and overseas organisations eligible for 100% direct project costs.

4.2 Implementation and Delivery

It is expected that projects will start in July 2020 and have a maximum duration of four years.

Investigators from **any discipline supported by UKRI** are welcomed and encouraged to apply, within the parameters of the call. This interdisciplinary call will be managed by NERC on behalf of UKRI. Awards will be made under the standard [UKRI Terms and Conditions](#), and there may be additional call-specific conditions applied to the awards.

The funds available through this call are intended to promote inter-institutional collaborations, and are also expected to enhance opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Partnerships should be equitable, genuine and reciprocal, and proposals must demonstrate that collaborative research activities will add value to that which could be achieved by individual partners working on their own. This may be through enhanced outcomes and impacts, or achieving outcomes at less cost or faster than if working alone.

4.3 ODA Compliance

This call is funded through the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). GCRF forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment, which is monitored by the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD). ODA-funded activity focuses on outcomes that promote the long-term sustainable growth of countries on the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list, which is available [here](#). Funding within this call will therefore be awarded in a manner that fits with Official ODA guidelines (see [here](#)).

When applying to this call it is important applicants ensure that their proposal is ODA compliant. It will be important to ensure that it is clear in the proposal how it is ODA eligible as defined by “administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as its main objective”. There are no priority countries, proposals may relate to any country or countries on the DAC list except those which are flagged as likely to graduate from the list during the course of the proposed project. If a country is flagged as likely to graduate it cannot be the primary focus of a proposal, although it can be included as an additional case study or comparison.

As part of the government’s commitment to ODA transparency and in line with DfID ODA reporting requirements, UKRI is responsible for publishing information about UKRI ODA grants including project titles and summaries via the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) registry and via DfID’s national statistics. The purpose of publishing information via the IATI registry is to make information about ODA easily accessible to governments, stakeholders and other relevant groups in beneficiary countries. All UKRI funded projects from this programme will be published in this way. Please therefore write your project title and summary in such a way that they are meaningful and accessible to non-specialist audiences, following publication. Project proposals are expected to ensure that the project title and summary are written in plain English and avoid the use of jargon, acronyms, puns and plays on words. Please also make clear in your project title and summary how your project is ODA compliant, for example by identifying the development challenge(s) being addressed, the aims of the project and the beneficiary countries.

Official Development Assistance provided by UKRI must comply with the requirements of the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014 which states, the “desirability of providing development assistance that is likely to contribute to reducing poverty in a way which is likely to contribute to reducing inequalities between persons of different gender.

All proposals to this call will be required to include mandatory attachments (ODA Statement and Gender Equality statement) setting out how they fulfil the criteria for ODA and Gender Equality compliance. Further guidance on how to complete this attachment is provided in the Application Process section of this document.

4.4 Eligible Research Organisations

All projects are required to have a Principal Investigator based in a UK Research Organisation eligible for UKRI funding. Projects involving co-investigators and researchers based in LMICs are expected, and they will receive funding through a UK research organisation.

UKRI research and fellowship grants for all schemes may be held at approved UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), approved Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and approved Independent Research Organisations (IROs). Full details of approved RCIs and IROs can be found on the [UKRI website](#).

Co-investigators can be from non-UK research organisations (for example higher education organisations, public laboratories, or other non-profit research intensive organisations) and

can receive funds via the lead UK Research Organisation. Co-investigators from DAC list countries can receive funding for direct costs and some indirect costs. Full details of eligible costs are provided under Section 5.3 of this document.

Co-investigators can also be based in high-income countries outside of the UK and can claim 100% of their direct costs but no indirect costs. However, as the scheme is intended to fund work in DAC list countries, high-income country applicants are advised to keep their costs claimed to a minimum. The balance of intellectual leadership and costs between high income countries and DAC list countries will be considered in the assessment of proposals.

The funders recognise the importance of, and want to encourage the involvement of, non-academic organisations such as NGOs, local and national policymakers, and organisations representing affected communities in this programme. If a collaborating organisation is integral to the design and delivery of the project and is contributing to the project through financial or in-kind contributions to the grant (e.g. staff time, access to facilities, data, sites) then they should be listed as a project partner.

Project partners – Participating organisations not meeting the criteria to be a Research Organisation and co-investigator can be project partners on the awards based on the following requirements:

- Third sector organisations – NGOs, charities and other non-profit civil society organisations (not meeting the minimum requirements for research partner organisations) can be included on proposals as project partners and are eligible to receive a contribution towards costs from the award (see Section 5.3).
- Government departments and business – Overseas and UK government departments and businesses should be engaged where appropriate but are not eligible to directly receive funds on the awards.

Sub-contracts – Sub-contracts are eligible costs on proposals submitted to this call but should only be used for the procurement of goods and services. Sub-contracts are not permitted for research partners providing intellectual input into the project, where a research partner or project partner relationship is more appropriate.

Proposals should state the partner organisations being engaged, including the nature of the contribution to the project. Letters of Support from project partners are required for this call.

It is important to highlight that any UK Research Organisation awarded a grant is responsible for the conduct and administration of that grant. It is accountable for the effective use of public funds, and must therefore ensure that all grant monies are subject to proper financial management processes. It is the Research Organisation's responsibility to ensure that expenditure on collaborations in the UK and abroad is subject to robust controls to ensure value for money and propriety and that all costs should be fully vouched and maintained for possible inspection and checks by, or on behalf of, UKRI.

If any of the Research Organisations that receive funding from UKRI wishes to sub-contract research to an overseas research organisation or include a Co-Investigator at an overseas research organisation then the UK Research Organisation must undertake due diligence checks to ensure that the funding will be appropriately used.

As part of UKRI funding assurance, non-UK research organisations may be requested to complete a UKRI Overseas Due Diligence Questionnaire. Please be aware that research organisations may be contacted by UKRI at any point during the review process. This is in order to expedite our assurance process. If UKRI does contact any non-UK research partner organisation named on an application, the lead organisation will be informed.

For organisations hosting non-UK co-investigators, due diligence checks are for UKRI's assurance purposes only and do not replace the [due diligence requirements](#) of the lead organisation. However, when obtaining information from non-UK research organisations UKRI will request permission to share the information provided with the lead organisation. The lead organisation can then use this information for their own due diligence processes should they wish.

4.5 Research Roles and Eligibility

Applicants may submit no more than two proposals to the call as an investigator, only one of these may be as the lead Principal Investigator (for joint proposals, the PI on the non-lead proposal is a Co-I for these purposes).

Normal individual eligibility applies and the lead Principal Investigator must be from a UK-based organisation and eligible to hold a UKRI grant. Full information on individual eligibility and role descriptions can be found under Section C of the [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#).

4.6 Associated Studentships on a Proposal

Associated studentships (either Masters or PhD studentships) cannot be included on proposals submitted to this programme.

4.7 Programme Level Coordination and Integration

The PIs of the successful grants will be expected to form a Programme Coordination Team and will be responsible for programme-level coordination and integration, and the development of programme-level research and knowledge exchange outputs. These programme coordination and integration activities will build on and not duplicate or replace project-level research and Pathways to Impact activities. Additional funding to support these activities will be available once the projects are underway and a kick-off meeting to discuss these arrangements will be organised.

4.8 Research Ethics

All GCRF projects must be underpinned by a strong research ethic based on mutual respect and understanding for different cultural, ethnic, social and economic beliefs and practices. Solutions to any development challenge(s) must be rooted in, and acceptable to, the institutions, communities and societies where they will operate.

Ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and may encompass areas where regulation and approval processes exist as well as areas where they do not. Applicants must ensure

that the proposed research will be carried out to a high ethical standard and must clearly state how any potential ethical and health and safety issues have been considered and will be addressed, ensuring that all necessary ethical approval is in place before the research commences and all risks are minimised. More guidance can be found in the [ESRC Framework for Research Ethics](#).

4.9 Capacity Building

An important aspect of GCRF is capacity development, and UKRI strongly encourages all proposals to this call to identify research capacity-building activities as part of, and not separate to, the stated research approach. The focus should be on the quality and impact of the research, and how increasing capacity contributes to this. Examples of building capacity include:

- Opportunities for those with relevant skills who have not previously worked on development of relevant research projects to orient their research towards global issues.
- Support and mentoring for more junior team members.
- Co-design of research and implementation with developing country partner staff.

Further information on capacity-building in relation to GCRF is available on the [ESRC website](#).

4.10 Equitable Partnerships

Partnerships are a key pillar of the GCRF strategy. Partnerships should be transparent and based on mutual respect. Partnerships should aim to have clearly articulated equitable distribution of resources, responsibilities, efforts and benefits. Partnerships should recognise different inputs, different interests and different desired outcomes and should ensure the ethical sharing and use of data which is responsive to the identified needs of society.

4.11 Safeguarding

UKRI condemns all forms of harm and abuse, including bullying and harassment. We take a zero tolerance approach to harm and abuse to any individual employed through or associated with our programmes in all contexts; whether in humanitarian or fragile and conflict-affected settings, in other field contexts, or within the international or UK research and development community which we fund. We expect institutions to promote the highest standards in organisational culture, and have in place the systems and procedures required to prevent and tackle all incidents of harm and abuse. Applications must detail how they will identify and manage safeguarding risks and what policies and procedures will be in place to enable reporting and investigation of allegations when they arise.

4.12 Knowledge Exchange and Impact

Knowledge exchange (KE) is vital to ensure that environmental research has wide benefits for society, and should be an integral part of any research.

All applicants must consider how they will or might achieve impact outside the scientific community and submit this with their application as a [Pathways to Impact](#) statement, with

associated delivery costs where relevant. Pathways to Impact activities do not have to be cost-incurring; it is not a requirement to include funded activities. Any funds required to carry out any proposed, outcome-driven activities identified within the Pathways to Impact **must** be fully justified within the Justification of Resources statement.

The Pathways to Impact will identify those who may benefit from or make use of the research, how they might benefit or make use of the research, and methods for disseminating data, knowledge and skills in the most effective and appropriate manner.

An acceptable Pathways to Impact is a condition of funding. Grants will not be allowed to start unless unacceptable Pathways to Impact are enhanced to an acceptable level within one month of notification of the panel outcome.

All funded projects may also be required to engage with programme-wide KE activities, in which case appropriate funding for which will be provided by the programme.

4.13 Data Management

The [NERC Data Policy](#) must be adhered to, and an [outline data management plan](#) produced as part of proposal development. Successful projects will need to agree the full data management plan with the relevant Data Centre within 6 months of the grant start date.

Where other specific types of data are also collected, applicants must refer to relevant council guidance for archiving such specific data. For example, if specific social science data is produced, please refer to the full statement on data management planning and datasets deposition requirements for data intensive investments in the [ESRC Research Data Policy](#) and the [Research Funding Guide](#).

4.14 NERC Facilities

Prior to submitting a proposal, applicants wishing to use a NERC service or facility must contact the facility to seek agreement that they could provide the service required. Applicants wishing to use most NERC facilities will need to submit a mandatory 'technical assessment' with their proposal. This technical assessment is not required for HPC. For NERC, this means a quote for the work that the facility will provide. A [full list](#) of the Facilities requiring this quote can be found on the NERC website. The costs for the service or facility (excluding HPC costs) must be included within the Directly Incurred Other Costs section of the Je-S form and also within the facilities section of the Je-S form. Further information on [NERC services and facilities](#) can be found on the NERC website.

Applicants wishing to use NERC's marine facilities must contact NERC Marine Planning (marineplanning@nerc.ukri.org) as soon as possible to discuss usage as the proposed start date for grants may preclude the use of these facilities. Note that NERC shiptime cannot be requested through this call. Following discussion with NERC Marine Planning, applicants wishing to use other NERC marine facilities should complete an online Shiptime and Marine Equipment (SME) or Autonomous Deployment (ADF) application form on the [Marine Facilities Planning](#) webpage. The SME/ADF number should be included on the Je-S grant proposal form under Services and Facilities. SME/ADFs must be submitted and approved by NERC Marine Planning by the time the proposal (Je-S form) is submitted, so that a pdf of the SME/ADF can be attached as a facility form. Failure to do so

may result in the request not being included in the NERC Marine Facilities Programme. The costs for the marine facility must be included within the Directly Incurred Other Costs section of the Je-S form and also within the facilities section of the Je-S form.

Completed SMEs/ADFs must be submitted by 17 January 2020 to allow sufficient time for costing and approval.

4.15 Reporting Requirements

Successful applicants will be required to report research outcomes on ResearchFish in line with standard [UKRI Terms and Conditions](#). This is required annually and continues for up to five years post grant end.

In addition to the standard outcomes all award holders will need to complete sections under the 'GCRF Collective Fund' outcomes.

Project teams may also be required to participate in a mid-term review and respond to ad hoc reporting requests from NERC or the GCRF Collective Programme.

5. Application Process

5.1 How to apply

This call has two stages: a Notification of Intent to Submit stage and a Full Proposal stage.

5.1.1 Notification of Intent to Submit

A Notification of Intent to Submit must be submitted using the online form no later than 16:00 GMT on 20 January 2020.

Only one Notification of Intent to Submit form needs to be submitted per project. The notification must follow the instructions provided on the online application form and include details of the research themes that the proposed research will address and the institutions, investigators and project partners that are expected to be involved. UKRI will use this information to plan the proposal assessment process. The notifications will not be assessed but eligibility of the applicants for UKRI funding will be checked. **It should be noted that submission of the Notification of Intent to Submit is a requirement of this call and full proposals will only be accepted from those teams who submit a completed Notification of Intent to Submit online form prior to the deadline.** The lead PI should not change between submission of a Notification of Intent to Submit and submission of a full proposal.

NERC will acknowledge receipt of all notifications and invite eligible applicants to submit a full proposal. NERC will also share the notifications with other constituent parts of UKRI as necessary to assist with processing.

The Notification of Intent to Submit online form is available from the [Announcement of Opportunity](#) page on the NERC website.

5.1.2 Full Proposals

Full Proposals must be submitted via the [Joint Electronic Submission \(Je-S\)](#) system by 16:00 BST on 17 March 2020.

One Full Proposal submission (plus any associated component proposals) is required for each proposed project. The GCRF Plastics call will close on Je-S at 16:00 on 17 March 2020 and it will not be possible to submit to the call after this time. Applicants should leave enough time for their proposal to pass through their organisation's Je-S submission route before this date. Any proposal that is incomplete, or does not meet NERC's eligibility criteria or follow NERC's submission rules (see [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#)), will be office rejected and will not be considered.

All applications must be submitted in English and costed in pounds sterling (£/GBP).

In order to prepare a Je-S Full Proposal submission the person preparing the proposal has to create a new proposal. The process for this is as follows:

- Log into Je-S and select the Research Council – 'NERC'
- Select the Document type – 'Standard Proposal'
- Select Scheme – 'Directed International'
- Select Call – 'UKRI-GCRF Plastics'

All attachments, with the exception of letters of support and services/facilities/equipment quotes, submitted through the Je-S system must be 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. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

Applicants should ensure that their proposal conforms to all eligibility and submission rules, otherwise their proposal may be rejected without assessment. More details on NERC's submission rules can be found in the [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#) and in the [submission rules](#) on the NERC website.

Proposals for this call should be submitted using the NERC large grant proposal format following the requirements outlined in Section F of the [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#) (also detailed under section 5.2 of this AO).

Additional requirements for this call

ODA Statement:

In addition to the usual requirements for large grants, a statement of ODA compliance of up to 1 side of A4 should be submitted. This should be uploaded as an attachment type of 'Non-UK Components'. All research funded through the GCRF will form part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) and thus it is a requirement that funding be awarded in a manner that fits with [ODA guidelines](#). Therefore, research proposals submitted to this call should describe how the proposed project meets the Official Development Assistance requirements of this call by answering the following questions:

1. Which country/ countries on the [DAC list](#) will directly benefit from this proposal?
2. How is your proposal directly and primarily relevant to the development challenges of these countries?
3. How do you expect that the outcome of your proposed activities will promote the economic development and welfare of a country or countries on the DAC list?

Gender Equality Statement:

A Gender Equality statement of up to 1 side of A4 should also be submitted. This should also be uploaded as an attachment type of 'Non-UK Components'. It is a requirement that funding that forms part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) complies with the International Development (Gender Equality) Act 2014. Therefore, research proposals submitted to this call should address the following questions as part of their Gender Equality Statement:

- Have measures been put in place to ensure equal and meaningful opportunities for people of different genders to be involved throughout the project? This includes the development of the project, the participants of the research and innovation and the beneficiaries of the research and innovation.
- The expected impact of the project (benefits and losses) on people of different genders, both throughout the project and beyond.
- The impact on the relations between people of different genders and people of the same gender. For example, changing roles and responsibilities in households, society, economy, politics, power, etc.
- How will any risks and unintended negative consequences on gender equality be avoided or mitigated against, and monitored?
- Are there any relevant outcomes and outputs being measured, with data disaggregated by age and gender (where disclosed)?

It is expected that some projects will have less impact on gender and gender relations and professional judgement of the applicants should be exercised to ensure appropriate consideration of the context and intended aims of the project. Applicants are able to reference other parts of your application within this statement, if relevant.

Guidance on Gender Equality compliance is provided on the [UKRI website](#).

Other considerations

Please note that on submission to council ALL non-PDF documents are converted to PDF, the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document.

Additionally where non-standard fonts are present, and even if the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc), the document should be converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal.

In order to prepare a Je-S proposal submission, the person preparing the proposal has to log onto Je-S and create a new proposal. Note that this person must have previously created an individual Je-S account for themselves. This should be done well in advance of the application deadline as there may be some delay in the approval of an individual Je-S account.

For the full proposal stage, any individuals that will be named on the application (with the exception of Project Partners and sub-contractors) must have an individual Je-S account for themselves or will need to create an account in order to be added to an application. It is also necessary for an individual's organisation to have been registered before they can register themselves. Guidance on how to register an organisation and how to create an individual Je-S account can be found on the [JeS website](#).

5.2 Documents Required at the Full Proposal Stage

The Full Proposal application will comprise a Je-S pro-forma and a series of additional attachments, as outlined below. Please see the [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#) for further details of what information to include under each of the sections.

The **Je-S pro-forma** has a series of sections that need to be completed:

- Title of the proposal
- Applicants
- Objectives
- Impact Summary
- Summary
- Summary of Resources requested
- Cash and In-Kind Project Partner contributions

Document/attachment type	Requirements
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Proposal Form	Je-S pro-forma
Case for Support	<p>Comprising a common Previous Track Record incorporating all Research Organisations involved (up to 3 sides of A4), a common Description of the Proposed Research (up to 16 sides of A4 including all necessary tables, references and figures) and a Description of the Proposed Management Structure and plans, participant responsibilities, and scheduling chart. (up to 2 sides A4). The Case for Support should explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • underlying rationale and scientific issues to be addressed; • describe why the work is strategically important; • how the application addresses the scope of this particular call; • the key research objectives and hypotheses; and • how these will be achieved
Outline Data Management Plan (ODMP)	Up to 1 side A4
Justification of Resources	<p>Up to 4 sides A4 for all Research Organisations in the proposed grant. It should include full justification of all sea-time and facility costs (excluding High Performance Computing (HPC)) included as estimates on proposals. Use of ARCHER should be included as an estimate in Million Allocation Units (MAUs). A brief justification for the use of High Performance Computing (HPC) should be included.</p>
C.V.	<p>CVs are required for named research staff (including Researcher Co-Investigators), Visiting Researchers, all Principal and Co-Investigators named in the proposal (up to 2 sides A4 for each CV). There is a Je-S validation requiring the same number of CVs as named investigators and researchers on the proposal. Note: Only CVs for the PI, any CoIs and named researchers will be sent out to panel members. Other submitted CVs e.g. from Project Partners should not be attached and will not be made available to panel members.</p>
Pathways to Impact	Up to 2 sides A4
Project Partner Letter of Support	From any named Project Partners (up to 2 sides A4 each). There is a Je-S validation requiring the same number of attachments as Project Partners
Letter of Support	<p>Letters of support should generally be from Project Partners or relevant to the Pathways to Impact so be attached as above. No further letters of support should be attached, except in exceptional cases where permission has been received from researchgrants@nerc.ukri.org. Letters of support can only be attached to the lead proposal. Applicants should ensure that any letter of support adds value to the scientific case e.g. where access to data is being granted. NERC reserves the right to not make letters of support available to panel members where they do not add value to the scientific case.</p>
Facility Form	Use only for: application forms for Shiptime and Marine Equipment (SME); Autonomous Deployment (ADF); and for High Performance Computing (HPC) when use of ARCHER exceeds 160 MAU (in any one year) for the whole project.
Technical Assessment	Mandatory for any NERC Facility selected on the Je-S pro-forma except those listed in the previous row. The full list is on the NERC website. The attachment should be a quote from the relevant facility.

Non-UK Components	The mandatory ODA Statement and Gender Equality Statement (both 1 side of A4 each) must be uploaded under this attachment type.
Equipment Section attachments	Not applicable for this call (equipment costs are limited to a maximum of £10,000 per item for all GCRF funded grants).
Other attachment	This attachment does not go out to panel members and should not be used, except where a Head of Department is required to confirm the eligibility of one or more of the Investigators. If the document does not fit within any of the attachment types above, it probably should not be submitted. Contact researchgrants@nerc.ukri.org if unsure.
Proposal Cover Letter	This attachment does not go out to panel members, so should not be used except to flag up a significant issue to the NERC Office (e.g. a request not to use a certain reviewer). This attachment should be used to declare any relevant interests .

5.3 Project Finances

All applicants are advised to consult their institutional finance officers when completing the financial parts of the application.

A full Justification of Resources and detailed budget are required at the full proposal stage. Details of eligible costs are given in the [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#). All costs should be in pounds sterling (£/GBP).

Individual items of equipment above £10,000 FEC are **not an eligible cost** for this call. Small equipment and consumables may be requested where appropriate as long as individual items are below £10,000. Capital or infrastructure expenditure is **not an eligible cost** for this call.

The maximum project size is £3.5m cost to UKRI (including overheads and any NERC facility costs); with UK institutions eligible for 80% FEC and overseas organisations eligible for 100% direct project costs. Any applications which go over the budget of £3.5m will be automatically rejected. As per normal NERC rules, NERC will not provide additional funding to cover fluctuations in exchange rates.

UK and non-UK research organisational budgets are indicated below:

UK Research Organisation Budgets:

- UK organisations will receive 80% of the full economic cost of the project, as per standard Research Council funding rules. UK universities are required to calculate the FEC using the “TRAC” (Transparent Approach to Costing) methodology.
- Other eligible UK organisations use an equivalent methodology, which has been validated by the Research Councils.
- Overseas travel and expenses costs incurred by members of UK institutions will be paid at 80% and must be included as costs related to that UK institution.

Non-UK Research Organisation Budgets:

- Non-UK research organisations are expected to be able to comply with full and transparent costing for budget elements.

- Non-UK research organisations will be supported at 100% of the Directly Incurred costs of the research (e.g. staff, travel, consumables).
- For DAC list countries only, indirect costs may be charged at up to 20% of the total direct cost.
- Indirect costs cannot be claimed for any non-UK high-income countries.
- For further guidance on what overhead budgets can be used please see [NERC research grants and fellowships handbook](#)
- Non-UK organisations should not enter any costs in the 'Estates' section of Je-S. All overheads (indirect costs) should be entered as an 'Other Directly Incurred Cost' of Je-S.
- Non-UK organisations should identify all costs as an 'Exception' on Je-S, using the exceptions tick boxes, for the full (100%) cost to be paid.
- Costs from UK and Non-UK organisations should be entered as separate items. For example T&S costs for field work should be entered as two separate lines i.e. that related to UK organisations payable at 80% and that related to non-UK organisations payable at 100%, by using the Exception tick box.

Funding available for project partners based in DAC list countries

Organisations that do not meet the minimum criteria to be a research organisation but offer valuable partnerships may be eligible to receive funds from the awards. In recognition of the likely involvement of third sector organisations (e.g. NGOs, charities and other non-profit civil society organisations), third sector project partners based in a DAC list country will be eligible to request a modest contribution to their costs of engaging in the project, funded by UKRI at 100% of direct costs. Costs should be included as Exceptions under the relevant headings in the Je-S submission. All costs must be reasonable, proportional to the role within the project, and clearly identified and fully justified in the Justification of Resources. Indirect costs and overheads are not allowed. All staff costs must be based on basic salaries (i.e. not day rates).

International and UK government departments and businesses are not eligible to receive funds directly from the award.

Sub-contracts

Costs for procurement of goods and services can be requested, including for businesses and government departments. The costs for subcontractors are tied to the country managing the sub-contract, e.g., if a DAC list country research partner organisation is managing a subcontract it will be awarded at 100%. If a UK partner is managing a subcontract it will be awarded at 80%. The most appropriate country should be chosen to manage the sub-contract based on the overall governance arrangements.

6. Assessment Process

All Full Proposals will be assessed by an independent, interdisciplinary panel of experts who will make a funding recommendation to UKRI. Applicants may be invited to give a presentation at the assessment panel.

The assessment criteria to be used will be as follows:

- The scientific excellence of the proposed research
- Fit of the proposal to the programme objectives and requirements:
 - Approach to addressing all three research themes – Sources and Drivers of Plastic Pollution; Impacts of Plastic Pollution; and Intervention, Mitigation and Adaptation.
 - Potential for impact, including co-design and co-production of research with end-users.
 - ODA compliance, including evidence directly addressing development challenges, and of capacity building, equitable partnerships, balance of intellectual leadership and costs between high-income and DAC countries, and appropriate consideration of gender and equality issues.

Feedback will be provided to both successful and unsuccessful applicants following the assessment of proposals. UKRI will use the recommendations of the assessment panel along with the overall call requirements, the goal to support research on plastic waste in a range of developing world contexts, and the available budget in making the final funding decisions. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their full proposals following the Assessment Panel in May 2020.

7. Timetable

Announcement published:	5 November 2019
Deadline for Notification of Intent to Submit:	20 January 2020
Full Proposal call closes:	17 March 2020
Expert Assessment Panel:	w/c 18 May 2020
Outcomes announced:	June 2020
Grants start:	July 2020
Kick-off workshop:	Autumn 2020

8. Contact

All queries relating to the call should be directed to: GCRFPlastics@nerc.ukri.org

If you experience difficulties using Je-S or have questions regarding its use, please contact the Je-S helpdesk:

Email: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone: +44 (0) 1793 44 4164