

Announcement of Opportunity: NERC - Valuing Nature Placements

*Applications must be received by info@valuing-nature.net by **midday Monday 14 December 2015**.*

Researchers wishing to extend their skills and knowledge on issues of 'valuing nature' are invited to apply for funding under the **Valuing Nature Placement Scheme**. The purpose of the scheme is to fund researchers to spend up to three months working on a topic related to the Valuing Nature remit in a new disciplinary, institutional or applied setting. This should include a learning experience outside the researcher's usual area of expertise; this could involve developing understanding of key concepts, related methodological techniques or data use, or approaches to policy or practice uptake.

Scope of placements

The scheme is designed to encompass placements that promote:

- **Cross-disciplinary dialogue and exchange of ideas around issues of valuing nature** – for instance, arts and humanities researchers or natural and social scientists exposing themselves to different models of knowledge production and problem-framing by spending time with a new research group, disciplinary researcher/team, or in a laboratory.

Or

- **Uptake and usability of academic knowledge and skills in practical contexts concerned with valuing nature** – for instance, academic researchers working directly with non-academic stakeholders to understand better how to produce or augment existing research that promotes valuing nature agendas in policy development and delivery processes. This may include working with known users of valuation research, or exploring new audiences and settings.

Applicants for this placement scheme are encouraged to think creatively about how placements will animate issues of valuing nature within the Valuing Nature (VN) community as a whole, alongside personal research development.

This call is open to all researchers, but applications from the following are particularly encouraged:

- **Early career researchers** – those have completed their PhDs in the last 5 years, including researchers pending the examination of their PhDs; and
- **Researchers without a permanent contract of employment** – for instance, researchers on fixed term research contracts or those actively seeking a research career.

Research topics

The scheme covers the broad range of topics within the Valuing Nature Programme which aims to better understand and represent the complexities of the natural environment in valuation analyses and decision making and to consider the wider economic, societal and cultural value of ecosystem services. This scheme contributes to the Valuing Nature Programme's aim to build an interdisciplinary research community capable of working across the natural, biological and social sciences, and the arts and humanities, and link researchers to businesses, policymakers and practitioners.

The scheme includes, but is not limited to, the two research goals of the current Valuing Nature Programme (full details at (<http://valuing-nature.net/research>), on improving understanding of:

- (i) the links between ecosystem stocks and tipping points, and
- (ii) the role of biodiversity and ecosystem services in human health and wellbeing.

Applications may also build on the topics of the first round of Valuing Nature projects 2011-13 (<http://valuing-nature.net/valuing-nature-projects-2011-2013>).

The scheme is NERC funded, so placements should include demonstrable links to natural environment research, but can bridge any other discipline interests of the Valuing Nature Programme funders (ESRC, AHRC, BBSRC and Defra).

Available resource & eligibility

There is up to £180K available, which is expected to support 5 to 10 placements. Placements will be 1-3 months in length and must be underway by mid-February 2016.

- Eligible costs would be salaries of both applicant and host supervisor (if required), consumables and T&S but not estates or indirect costs.
- Awards can only be made to institutions eligible for funding from the Natural Environment Research Council – see NERC research grant handbook for details (<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/application/howtoapply/forms/>).

Identifying hosts

Placements are first and foremost distinguished by the opportunities they offer for new learning by the applicant. Placements may include spending time within a different research context within the applicant's home institution or working in a different institutional setting. Alongside applicants identifying their own host, potential academic and non-academic hosts can advertise opportunities for placements on the Valuing Nature website (see valuing-nature.net for details).

Other requirements

All successful applicants will be expected to:

- Attend a start-up meeting in London with fellow placement holders and members of the VN Programme Coordination Team. This meeting is planned for 13 January 2016.
- Attend a wash-up meeting at the University of Kent (Canterbury) on 24 and 25 May 2016 with fellow placement holders and members of the VN Programme Coordination Team.
- Participate in the production of outputs that can communicate experiences and learning through the placement, and associated outputs that contribute to the Valuing Nature knowledge base of resources to promote wider community understanding. This will include at least: (i) completing a video and written blog at the end of the placement for the VN web; (ii) producing a short formal report summarising key learning points for the VN community at large.
- Attend the Valuing Nature Programme Annual Meeting (planned for June 2016).

Assessment Procedure

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Opportunity for the candidate to acquire new skills and knowledge
- Outcomes and outputs that can contribute to Valuing Nature aims
- Suitability of Applicant
- Suitability of Host
- Feasibility of Proposal
- Value for Money

Applications will be assessed by the Valuing Nature Programme Coordination Team (with input from the Chair of the Valuing Nature Programme Advisory Group if any conflict of interest is identified), and recommendations will be made to NERC for approval.

Timetable for awards

- **Midday Monday 14 December 2015:** Deadline for submissions on application form to info@valuing-nature.net
- December 2015: Applicants notified of result of application
- Early January 2016: Contracts awarded
- Mid-Feb 2016: All placements underway
- End May 2016: All placements complete.

Contact

Please contact the Valuing Nature Programme Coordination Team with any enquires, by emailing info@valuing-nature.net.