



UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Environment Agency societal resilience to compound climate extremes fellowship

Fellowship type:

Natural hazards and resilience fellowship

Host organisation:

[Environment Agency](#)

Host team:

Climate Change and Resource Efficiency research team within the Chief Scientist's Group

Academic discipline/s:

Climate science, hydrology, behavioural science, social science

Summary:

Opportunity to combine physical and social science evidence to understand and advise on compound extreme risks in a changing climate (for example, prolonged droughts followed by intense rainfall and floods), their implications on societal resilience and the management of water resources and infrastructure.

Policy topic:

National resilience and sustained economic growth in the face of increasing climate shocks. This addresses evidence needs from the Environment Agency's areas of research interest for flood risk management. It will inform the Environment Agency's delivery of the 5-year outcomes on climate resilience within the corporate strategy.

It also aligns with the Breaking Down Barriers to Opportunity mission by considering consequences for inequality, vulnerability and other social impacts. With respect to the IS-8, the proposed fellowship aligns with water-dependent Clean Energy Industries and Digital and Technologies (e.g. AI, data centre cooling). And as a Civil Contingencies Act Category 1 responder, our incident management role helps provide resilience across all five government missions.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is estimated to begin in May 2027. The exact date will be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements. The fellowship will have three phases:

- inception: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE
- main placement: duration is 12 months at 0.6-1 FTE
- knowledge exchange: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements:

The Environment Agency's (EA) research teams are based in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Group hubs: Bristol, Birmingham, London and York or Leeds. Other EA offices are available throughout England and would be suitable with travel to one of the main hubs on a once-a-month basis.

Hybrid working:

Hybrid working is available for both the inception and placement phase. It is not expected that the fellow would be required to work in an EA Office if home working most of the time is preferred. However, the fellow would benefit from co-location with research team members on a regular (at least monthly) basis and may wish to work more frequently in an EA office to better understand the work of the organisation. Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

To support their day-to-day work, the fellow will be provided with full access to the EA's IT systems, in the same way we onboard seconded contractors. They will receive an EA email address, laptop, Office365 access, and will be added to all relevant mailing lists, internal webinars, Teams channels and programme communications so they can stay fully connected with the team's activities.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

Basic Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks and, if London based, Counter Terrorism Check (CTC). We would ask the person taking up this fellowship opportunity to start the security clearance application process as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed. The inception phase may begin whilst clearance is underway but must be complete before the 12-month placement phase can begin. Please see [national security vetting: clearance](#) levels for further information.

Fellowship position description

Increasing flooding, coastal erosion and drought are already affecting people, the economy and the environment. The Environment Agency plays a major role in supporting and building preparedness and resilience, providing strategic leadership for managing flooding and coastal change. We provide people and industry with information to help reduce the worst economic, societal and environmental impacts associated with climate change.

A key ambition within our corporate strategy is centred on more resilient communities. The ambition is for people to understand and be prepared for the greatest climate change risks to their homes, businesses and infrastructure, including drought, flooding and coastal change.

A natural hazard fellow at the Environment Agency would have the opportunity to work at the interface of floods and drought research, helping improve the nations water security.

The hazards and impacts of floods and droughts are regularly considered and managed in isolation. However, we know from UK climate projects that the future will bring hotter, drier summers but with an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall. This combination of droughts and floods is

rarely experienced in the UK, therefore the impacts on the resilience of communities, businesses and infrastructure is poorly understood.

The fellow would have the opportunity to address research gaps at the intersection of environmental science, human geography, and social equity. Their projects could work across the nexus of physical and social sciences to investigate:

- the risks of compound climate extremes—such as prolonged droughts followed by intense rainfall
- the impacts of compound climate extremes are social, economic, institutional and infrastructure resilience
- how social dimensions, such as resilience, income inequality, infrastructure access, governance capacity, and demographic vulnerability, influence adaptive outcomes under future water extremes

Exact topics will be determined during the inception phase and shaped by host priorities alongside the fellow's interests and input. Working with the Environment Agency's technical leads, the fellow would be supported in hosting workshops and discussions to co-create the specific research focus. These inception stage activities would marry together the fellow's research interests and expertise with key evidence gaps from the Environment Agency's perspective. The fellow would create new knowledge that will shape the EA's approach to both hazards, improving our management and emergency response and helping secure water resources into the future.

It is envisioned that research activities during the fellowship will include:

- translating complex academic research
- identifying, overseeing and delivering evidence briefings of relevance
- designing, planning and undertaking new and innovative research

Specifically on the last point, the fellow will have the opportunity to design and deliver research during a drought or flood incident within the fellowship period should that happen. For example, the research might examine resilience behaviours and institutional responses directly.

In terms of research outputs, a variety of products are envisaged:

- internal EA evidence briefing
- a presentation to senior staff in the EA
- an EA branded research report, a peer-reviewed article in an academic journal or both

The role will involve working closely with social and physical scientists in the Environment Agency's Chief Scientists Group and researchers in the national Flood and Coastal Risk Management Research and Development team. Benefits of the fellowship include:

- access to Environment Agency experts and data
- opportunity to join events and contribute to the work of these groups
- opportunity to participate in and witness the strategic decision-making processes within government organisations
- undertake and publish research that will shape management of floods and drought

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by UKRI panel assessment against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

Essential criteria:

- demonstrated potential to deliver environmental or natural hazards research
- demonstrated potential to apply relevant theories and a mix of methods during the fellowship
- experience of working collaboratively for example with different stakeholders

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be invited to a host led interview. At this stage the host will also take into account the following desirable fellowship-specific requirements.

Desirable criteria:

- experience of working with policy or delivery teams to translate research into practice
- knowledge of the risks and impacts of future climate extremes in the UK
- expertise in researching policy, strategic or operational practices using mixed qualitative and quantitative methods

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

Please see the Hosts' [privacy notice](#) and they will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.