UK Research and Innovation

Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

DESNZ delivering resilient, competitive and diversified solar supply chains for Clean Power fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

Host team:

Solar Strategy team, Renewable Electricity Directorate, Energy Infrastructure Group. The fellow will work alongside policy and analytical colleagues and engage with cross government forums on supply chains, trade and responsible business conduct.

Academic discipline/s:

Economics, international trade, supply chain analysis, energy systems, materials and circular economy

Summary:

An opportunity to build the evidence base on how the United Kingdom can strengthen the resilience, competitiveness and responsible sourcing of solar supply chains to support Clean Power delivery.

Policy topic:

Supply chain resilience, industrial capability and responsible sourcing in solar, supporting the Clean Energy Mission and the Clean Energy Industries sector of the Industrial Strategy.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is scheduled to begin on 1 October 2027 subject to 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 role can be based in any DESNZ office. The Solar Strategy team is primarily based in London, with a wider departmental presence in Aberdeen, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Darlington, Edinburgh and Salford. If not based in London there will be a requirement to travel to meet team members and stakeholders, approximately six times per year.

Hybrid working:

While DESNZ has a 40% (approximately two days a week) minimum office attendance requirement, we would be content for a minimum one day a week office attendance for the fellow, at any location listed above, during the main placement phase. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. In addition to office attendance, it would be useful to budget for travel to London around six times in the placement year and once in the inception phase. Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

Basic Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) is required, which usually takes around six weeks. We would expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process, with support from the host team, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by UKRI. Inception phase can begin before the security clearance process is completed but will be required for the main placement phase. The civil service also has nationality requirements that candidates would need to meet in order to take up the post. Please see civil service recruitment nationality rules for further information. Candidates should check these requirements before applying to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

Fellowship position description

Solar is central to delivering Clean Power 2030, but global manufacturing is highly concentrated, creating exposure to geopolitical disruption, trade measures and price volatility, and raising questions about responsible sourcing and forced labour risk in upstream supply chains. DESNZ is seeking a policy fellow to strengthen the evidence base on how the United Kingdom can build more resilient, competitive and responsibly sourced solar supply chains, while maintaining the cost and pace of deployment.

The fellow will co-design a programme of work with DESNZ during the inception phase. Potential areas of interest include:

- assessing the resilience and security of solar supply chains, including geopolitical dependencies and the effects of international trade measures
- examining approaches to reducing forced labour risk, including traceability, due diligence and certification schemes such as the Solar Stewardship Initiative
- identifying viable pathways for global diversification and the associated trade-offs for cost, deployment pace and resilience
- assessing opportunities for domestic capability, including emerging technologies such as floating and vertical solar

The fellow will have scope for original research, drawing on international comparisons and industry engagement, and will access a wide range of stakeholders including industry, certification bodies,

academics and international partners, as well as cross government forums with the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade, Great British Energy and the National Wealth Fund.

Expected outputs include analytical papers, evidence reviews, briefing materials and knowledge exchange with industry, academia and international partners. Beyond DESNZ, the work will support cross government thinking on supply chain resilience, strengthen links between government, industry and researchers, and contribute to international discussions on solar supply chain transparency. Subject to clearance processes, there will be opportunities to publish findings.

The fellow will have a designated line manager and IT equipment, access to office space on the same basis as other team members, and will participate in the day-to-day work of the team, including team meetings and key project workstreams.

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:

- experience of research relating to supply chain resilience, diversification or responsible sourcing
- the ability to impactfully present and communicate complex research and data to policy and senior audiences
- strong analytical skills, including the ability to synthesise quantitative and qualitative evidence from multiple sources

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 engaging with industry, trade associations or international stakeholders to gather primary evidence
- experience of research or analysis relating to clean energy or other strategically important supply chains
- experience of working with incomplete, commercially sensitive or politically sensitive evidence

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.

We 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. Please see the DESNZ Personal Information Charter for more information.