



Ein cyf/Our ref: WQ87407

Andrew RT Davies
Member of the Senedd for South Wales Central
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

20 March 2023

Dear Andrew,

Thank you for your written question for answer by the Minister for Education and Welsh Language on 20 February. I am responding as this matter falls within my portfolio.

My officials work across the Climate Change & Rural Affairs (CCRA) portfolios to identify research priorities that support key policy commitments. Where research, expert advice or analytical services and tools cannot be deployed internally, the team seeks to work collaboratively with policy leads to access external resources and skills to support policy development and implementation.

The four PhD projects being advertised by the College of Arts, Technology and Environment at University of West England, Bristol have been developed as part of the Environment and Rural Affairs Academic Engagement Programme (AEP). The total cost of Welsh Government match-funding is £153,366 over three years.

At approximately £12,780 a year for each research project, this represents good value for money, enabling the Welsh Government to access high quality expertise and research relating to our air quality, modal shift, decarbonisation, and coal-tip restoration commitments.

The AEP was established to enable the Welsh Government to support high quality research to improve the impact and outcomes of key policy commitments. The programme also supports the delivery of Ministerial priorities by:

- Providing funding and direction to Environment Platform Wales (EPW) - a partnership which aims to increase the quality and relevance of evidence available for environmental management and policy making in Wales. This partnership comprises all eight Welsh Universities, the Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Gohebiaeth.Julie.James@llyw.cymru
Correspondence.Julie.James@gov.Wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

- Supporting the Academic Placement Programme - providing three-month research policy placements to PhD students and Policy Fellowships for more senior academics.

We have also provided seed funding or match-funding for PhD research initiatives when they are supported by Policy Officials and directly aligned to Welsh Government policy commitments. Since 2016 we have provided match funding to support seven PhD studentships in Wales in this way, most recently for a Seagrass Restoration PhD based in Swansea University.

The AEP provides access to high-quality expertise and research to support effective evidence-based policy development in Wales. While this is primarily through Welsh Universities, we will work with academic institutions in England or elsewhere where there is a compelling reason to do so, for example, in cases where specific expertise is concentrated outside of Wales.

The University of the West of England's Partnership PhD Programme advertised through academic networks in Spring 2022. Academics at the University provided an extensive list of project ideas to the ERA Research and Innovation team, specifically developed to align with a number of Welsh Government Programme for Government commitments.

This suite of project ideas was presented to Policy Officials in their respective fields for consideration prior to further discussion with the lead academics. The AEP subsequently provided match-funding for up to four PhDs where officials confirmed their relevance to policy priorities and were able to commit to collaborating with the researchers. The four successful projects were developed by academics with considerable project relevant knowledge and address prominent devolved policy issues.

I hope this detailed response is helpful. We are proud of our longstanding record of collaborating with Welsh Universities, but we will continue to collaborate with academics and experts elsewhere where appropriate and when it supports policy development and better outcomes for the people of Wales.

Yours sincerely,



Julie James AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Newid Hinsawdd
Minister for Climate Change

