

Job Title: Research Associate in Land Use for Net Zero

Grade: 7

Salary: £39,906 to £46,049 per annum, pro-rata if part-time

Department: School of Geography, Geology and the Environment, Institute for Environmental Futures

Hours/Contract: Full-time or job share, fixed term contract to 26 October 2026

Reference: 13148

About the Land Use for Net Zero Hub

The University of Leicester is looking for a Research Synthesis Fellow to support the new research programme “Transforming land use for net zero, nature and people” in the coordination and translation hub. This programme is co-funded by UKRI, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (on behalf of England and Wales) and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. It has been co-designed with Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Welsh Government and Scottish Government.

Agriculture and other land use currently have a major impact on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, carbon sequestration, biodiversity and a wide range of other environmental, social and economic outcomes. Land use change has three major roles to play in meeting net zero:

- Reducing direct GHG emissions (especially from agriculture and degraded peatlands).
- Sequestering carbon to offset emissions in hard to mitigate sectors.
- Enabling decarbonisation of other sectors (for example, generating energy from woody biomass, solar and wind, producing low-carbon building materials, and growing feedstocks for the bioeconomy).

To achieve net zero by 2050 while meeting our wider environmental goals, a large-scale transformation in the way land is used and managed is underway. The Land Use for Net Zero (LUNZ) Hub is co-led by The James-Hutton-Institute and the University of Leicester and adopts an agile, ‘big tent, four nations approach’. The Hub is analysing, aggregating and translating evidence to support policy-makers and other stakeholders to deliver transformative changes in land use, agricultural systems and soil health. In the Hub, we co-develop evidence-based, credible pathways to achieving Net Zero. The Hub has an Agile Policy Centre, Net Zero Futures Platform, and a Creative Methods Lab, underpinned by National Teams, Topic Advisory Groups, and an Impact Maximisation Strategy. Built on principles of capacity building and Just Transition, the hub brings together 34 organisations into a transdisciplinary community. It fast-tracks emerging evidence from the LUNZ research projects and key allied research to inform policy at national, regional and local levels within the four nations of the UK.

Role Purpose

In this role, you will be a key member of the Land Use for Net Zero (LUNZ) Hub, with your main responsibilities for supporting Work Package (WP) 2 on transdisciplinary research, i.e. research that integrates insights from different academic disciplines with non-academic project partner and stakeholder knowledge. WP 2 (“Transdisciplinary Community and Capacity Building”) is facilitating co-learning and shared understanding of land use for net zero, nature and people. This role will expand upon learning developed through participation in other transdisciplinary programmes and networks to mobilise a community of practice in land use for net zero. You will work with our experts organised in Topic Advisory Groups on the integration of epistemologically distant disciplines to produce outputs, critiquing methods and ways of thinking through bespoke creative activities designed with the Place Collective, a network of artists. Your work will drive the development of novel ways of working with and engaging diverse



stakeholders and users in the co-production of knowledge. The role includes ethnographic and auto-ethnographic research on Hub activities and events to foster reflexivity. You will apply concepts of liminality, i.e. the state of between-ness, boundary spanners, knowledge brokering, translation activities and use of complementarity of analyses and syntheses to highlight and mitigate challenges of integrating and acting on relevant evidence to achieve a just transition to a Net Zero future.

Written outputs will likely include LUNZ Working Papers, in-depth workshop and event reports, and blogs, with a possibility of contributing to a journal paper. The role will require the ability to understand and maintain excellent communication channels with a range of disciplines and sectors, including policy-makers, scientists and artists. You will be part of the core team in the Hub and benefit from being part of an extensive network of leading experts in all aspects of land use for net zero, nature and people, and you will be able to join the Early Careers Board of the programme.

Main Duties and Responsibilities

Transdisciplinary research synthesis:

- To be a key member of WP 2 (“Transdisciplinary Community and Capacity Building”) as a member of a large transdisciplinary team.
- To support the Creative Methods Lab in building a transdisciplinary community around land use for net zero, nature and people, as part of the Work Package 2 team:
 - Support the development, running and evaluation of transdisciplinary seminars, discussion groups and workshops.
 - Undertake research synthesis of transdisciplinary research methods and ways of working within and beyond the hub.
 - Support the development of stakeholder engagements, including with land owners, managers and users, and local community groups, including through management of databases of expertise and stakeholder engagements.
 - Undertake ethnographic studies of the development of transdisciplinary working within the Hub and associated research projects.
 - Facilitate co-learning and shared understanding of land use for net zero, nature and people.
 - To deploy concepts of liminality, boundary spanners, knowledge brokering, translation activities and use of complementarity of analyses and syntheses to highlight and mitigate challenges of integrating and acting on relevant evidence to achieve a just transition to a Net Zero future.
 - To analyse environmental co-benefits and trade-offs of net zero policy options, and likely impacts on socio-economic equity together with experts in those fields.
- To expand upon learning developed through participation in other transdisciplinary programmes and networks to mobilise a community of practice in land use for net zero.
- To work with our experts organised in Topic Advisory Groups on the integration of epistemologically distant disciplines to produce outputs, critiquing methods and ways of thinking through bespoke creative activities designed with the Place Collective, a network of artists.
- To work together with our national Policy Teams on ongoing state-of-the-art reviews of evolving knowledge and its confidence levels (following a model similar to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC), and ongoing policy developments, implementations, and lessons learned (‘What works where’ approach).





- To drive the development of novel ways of working with and engaging diverse stakeholders and users in the co-production of knowledge.
- To write literature reviews, conduct expert interviews and draw on other sources from different disciplines.
- To write up outputs in a variety of formats for different audiences.
- To explore and respond to potential opportunities arising from the LUNZ programme by communicating with the LUNZ projects in the programme, project partner organisations that are supporting the LUNZ Hub and the stakeholder community.
- To disseminate and assist in promoting Hub and programme level results and outcomes.
- To collect material for progress reports to UKRI and produce draft reports if required.
- To provide support to the two LUNZ Hub co-leads (Prof. Lee-Ann Sutherland and Prof. Heiko Balzter) and WP leads as required.

Professional Development:

- To engage in work and opportunities that support your own professional development.
- To identify and engage in career-enhancing professional development courses, self-learning and other activities as agreed with your line manager.

Impact and Knowledge Exchange:

- To disseminate and share expertise through communication and public engagement activities.
- To communicate with policy makers and a broad range of stakeholders from non-governmental organisations, industry and non-profit organisations.
- To develop and/or deepen a transdisciplinary way of working across sectors and boundaries as a core member of the LUNZ Hub.
- To present LUNZ Hub outputs and outcomes at conferences and/or other events, which will involve travel.

Internal and External Relationships

- Establish and maintain contacts with LUNZ Hub experts, Early Career staff, PhD students, policy partners, other hub partner organisations, and stakeholders in the LUNZ programme.
- Participate in the organisation and delivery of LUNZ Hub events and conferences.
- Attend relevant LUNZ Hub meetings and other relevant events.

Planning and Organising

- Plan, prioritise and organise your own workload and ensure that your work aligns with that of the LUNZ Hub.
- Plan and co-ordinate evidence synthesis activities with the Hub Management and Leadership Teams.

Qualifications, Knowledge and Experience

Essential

- A completed or nearly completed PhD in a relevant subject *OR* an MSc/MA together with equivalent, significant professional experience in a relevant role*





- Proven track record of delivering work on time*
- In-depth knowledge of greenhouse gas emissions from land use and agriculture and mitigation options*
- Experience of interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary working across the natural sciences, social sciences and arts/humanities*

Desirable

- In-depth expertise in at least one discipline related to land use for net zero, nature and people
- Experience in writing policy notes, white papers or similar outputs
- Knowledge of land use policies in one or more of the four nations and UK-wide
- Experience with organising and delivering successful events such as conferences, workshops or other meetings
- Experience of working successfully via online, hybrid and in-person meeting types

Skills, Abilities and Competencies

Essential

- Ability to work effectively as part of a transdisciplinary team
- Excellent writing skills for academic and non-academic publications
- Proven ability to solve complex problems involving knowledge from different research fields*
- Ability to work with artists on the planning and delivery of creative outputs
- Excellent communication skills
- Ability to analyse complex problems and deal with uncertainties
- Good digital skills

Desirable

- Land use related competencies or abilities

****Criteria to be used in shortlisting candidates for interview***

Reason for Fixed Term Contract

The reason for the fixed term contract is stated in section 1.9 in the summary of contractual terms in your contract of employment.

Criminal Declaration

If you become an employee, you must inform your manager immediately, in writing, if you are the subject of any current or future police investigations/legal proceedings, which could result in a criminal offence, conviction, caution, bind-over or charges, or warnings.

Supporting University Activities

As a University of Leicester citizen, you are encouraged to support key university activities such as clearing, graduation ceremonies, student registration and recruitment open days. We encourage all staff as citizens to work flexibly across the University if required. If supporting these activities is likely to affect your workload, please speak to your line manager in the first instance





University Values

Inclusive - We are diverse in our makeup and united in ambition. Our diversity is our strength and makes our community stronger.

Inspiring - We are passionate about inspiring individuals to succeed and realise their ambitions. We challenge our community to think differently, to get involved, and to constantly embrace new ideas.

Impactful - As Citizens of Change we will generate new ideas which deliver impact and empower our community

Freedom of Speech

The University is committed to upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law throughout our recruitment processes. We ensure that all candidates are considered based on merit and suitability for the role, without regard to their lawful viewpoints or the expression of challenging or controversial ideas. Our recruitment policies and practices are designed to protect applicants from discrimination or adverse treatment on the basis of their opinions, and to foster an environment where open debate and diverse perspectives are valued as essential to our academic mission.

Equity and Diversity

We believe that equity, diversity and inclusion is integral to a successful modern workplace. By developing and implementing policies and systems that challenge stereotypes across all aspects of our work, we have a culture that recognises and values the diverse contributions of our staff which benefits everyone. Our strong values of inclusivity and equality support our efforts to attract a diverse range of high quality staff and students, and identify our University as a progressive and innovative workplace that mainstreams equality, diversity and inclusion.

