SAGES Innovation Programme

Job Title: SAGES Policy Placement
Organisation: Scottish Science Advisory Council / SAGES
Duration: 3-6 months, part-time (flexible to fit around academic commitments)
Start date: November 2021
Remuneration: £ 4,000-8,000 (dependent on duration)
Travel costs: supported by SAGES (receipted travel and necessary overnight stays)

Applying a cross-sectoral lens to support prioritisation of investments in research and development which would help accelerate progress towards Net Zero in Scotland

Summary

SAGES are offering a unique opportunity for a short-term policy placement with the Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC) and SAGES for three to six months, part-time. SSAC has previously completed a study on the Environmental Impacts of Scotland's Manufacturing Industries and a Briefing Note on the Opportunities for Sustainable Chemicals https://www.scottishscience.org.uk/Publications. These both highlighted potential opportunities and competition between sectors with respect to delivery of "net zero".

Job Description

The SG Climate Change Action Plan is due to be refreshed in 2024, with only 6 years remaining after that, for delivery of the 75% carbon reduction target. It is generally accepted that the target is challenging and progress is not currently on target.

The setting of targets draws on outputs from the Scottish TIMES model, which contains many thousands of variables. ClimateXChange recently commissioned a technical review of the Times Model (DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.7488/era/793) which included compliments on good practice in some areas and recommendations for improvement in other specific areas.

The model represents biomass in energy terms, including both domestic and imported sources but does not consider uses of biomass from outside the energy sector. Our earlier studies have identified significant opportunities (for the transition to net zero) associated with Scotland's natural resources, but with potential competition between sectors so this looks like an area which might be worthy of a quantitative study.

Presentations to the SSAC (Chris Stark and Melanie Welham) have highlighted Scottish strengths in the use of Scotland's natural resources to replace some of the current economic sectors supported by the fossil fuel industry (land resources by Chris and academic skills by Melanie) and sub-group discussions with Net Zero (Iain Gulland) have highlighted the need to raise the profile of the cross-sectoral opportunities presented by considering "waste" as a resource which is integral to the Circular Economy. The appointment of a new Minister with responsibility for the Circular Economy alongside Biodiversity suggests growing SG interest in this opportunity.

Research online has identified the following policy statements/documents as being relevant to the discussion:

2016: https://www.gov.scot/publications/making-things-last-circular-economy-strategy-scotland/

March 2020: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/green-growth/index_en.htm

July 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/circular-economy-package-policy-statement/circular-economy-package-policy-statement

Scottish highlights:

- improving resource efficiency through actions such as discouraging use of single-use materials
- introducing a Deposit Return Scheme for drinks containers
- supporting delivery partners to tackle litter and fly-tipping

- taking advice from the Expert Panel on Environmental Charging and other measures
- funding Zero Waste Scotland to deliver waste-reducing initiatives
- funding the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to regulate on the treatment and disposal of waste

June 2021: https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/press-release/true-size-scotlands-raw-material-consumption-footprint

Aims and Outputs

The policy placement researcher will work with the SSAC lead (Prof Mark Inall) and Zero Waste Scotland to build on the numbers in their Materials Flow Account with respect to opportunities from alternative sources of materials.

The aim is to work with Zero Waste Scotland, to build on their Materials Flow Account to identify which supply flows could be substituted with local resources (including the 25M tonnes per year of bio-waste) for both environmental and economic gain.

Additional sub-objectives required to deliver a useful input to the 2024 Climate Change Action plan would be:

- liaise with UKCCC on any work they are doing in this area;
- work with IBioIC to understand Scotland's skill base in industrial biotechnology with respect to the range of opportunities being identified;
- liaise with the Times modellers to assess whether/how the numbers generated could be incorporated into the TIMES model.

Person specifications

We are looking for an Early Career Researcher or SAGES Graduate student:

- Either working towards, or has recently completed a PhD
- Knowledge and/or experience of working in a policy environment
- Knowledge of issues surrounding Net Zero and the carbon budget.
- Strong research data collection and synthesis skills.
- Strong communications skills (written and verbal) as post holder will be working with various organisations.
- Independent worker who can plan their own workload and is confident in their ability to deliver a well written report.

How to apply

To apply, please provide a one page cover letter detailing why you are the right person for this Policy Internship as well as a CV (2 pages maximum) to Laura Scotland at the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Innovation, laura.scotland@ed.ac.uk. Please include one reference that you are happy for us to contact, should you be successful.

Deadline for applications is Friday 22nd October 2021, 17.00hrs.

By applying you are confirming that you are available for an interview on Friday 5th November 2021.