Harper Adams University

Senior PDRA: SOB4ES - The economic value of soil biodiversity and ecosystem services

[Full Time, Fixed Term until 3 February 2028]

Candidate Information Pack



About Harper Adams

Harper Adams University is a welcoming, forward-thinking community of over 600 employees working together to create real, lasting impact – ensuring that everyone, everywhere, can access sustainable food, land, and animal systems. Our work contributes directly to planetary health, animal welfare and ultimately human wellbeing. We're passionate about what we do – and about the people we do it with.

We are deeply committed to the wellbeing and development of our colleagues. Our annual employee survey consistently tells us that staff are proud to work here, feel trusted to do their jobs, and are supported by their managers. Our inclusive and empowering culture is one of the many reasons our people stay, grow, and thrive.

While our rural Shropshire campus remains central to who we are, our presence now extends to Telford – a town with a rich history of innovation and revolution, and a fitting symbol of our ever-evolving mission. This growing site strengthens our ties to the local region and reinforces our commitment to inclusive education and collaboration that reaches far beyond any single postcode. Our impact and reach are proudly regional, national and international.

We offer:

- A beautiful rural working environment
- Generous holiday allowance with the opportunity to purchase more
- Flexible, agile working opportunities
- On-campus retail, catering and gym facilities
- Free staff parking
- Corporate discounts at seven fitness centres in Telford and Wrekin
- Enhanced maternity and sickness benefits
- Disability Confident Employer status
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Cycle scheme supporter
- Workwear provided (where applicable)

Harper Adams is the UK's leading specialist institution serving the agri-food, animal wellbeing, engineering and land management sectors. We are a world-respected provider of industry-led education and research in food production and technology, animal health, environmental sustainability and sustainable business. Our work is grounded through partnerships – with more than 1,100 organisations in the UK and beyond – that fuel our research, shape our teaching, and deliver genuine impact.

We began life in 1901 as Harper Adams Agricultural College and became a university in 2012. Our Chancellor is Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal and our Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ken Sloan, joined us in 2021. Our rural campus near Newport in Shropshire is supported by a growing site in Telford, offering a range of housing options and excellent rail and road connections to the West Midlands and beyond. We've invested more than £50 million in our estate in the last decade – including leading-edge teaching, research and veterinary facilities, modern laboratories, and a purpose-built Veterinary Services Centre. Our commercial farm spans 494 hectares and plays an active role in our education, research, and knowledge exchange.

Take a virtual tour of the campus: Virtual Tour

We are proud to be the UK's highest-ranked small specialist provider for the agri-food and animal wellbeing sectors, consistently delivering the largest cohort of graduates into these industries – with over 97 per cent going directly into employment. We currently welcome over 3,000 full- and part-time students across undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including subjects like agricultural engineering, veterinary nursing, business, land and property management, and veterinary medicine and surgery – the latter delivered through the Harper & Keele Veterinary School, established in 2020.

For further details about the University, please visit our website: http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk

JOB DESCRIPTION

Title of the post: Senior PDRA: SOB4ES - The economic value of soil biodiversity and ecosystem services [Full Time, Fixed Term until 3 February 2028]

Department: Agriculture & Environment

Reporting to: Prof. Simon Jeffery

The postholder will be a full-time researcher within the Horizon funded SOB4ES project which runs until the 3 February 2028. Professor Simon Jeffery is the Principal Investigator, and the project team includes Prof. Karl Behrendt and Dr Hairong Mu of the Harper Adams Business School.

Specific Duties and responsibilities of the post

The successful candidate will have a background in undertaking agri-environmental economic modelling and cost-benefit analysis, ecosystems services (ES) valuation, and GIS methods. The post will involve working closely with a small team, which includes a PhD student contributing to complimentary tasks as part of the SOB4ES project. There are significant publication and impact opportunities.

The first task is to assist with the development of a cost-effective framework to estimate economic values for non-market soil biodiversity (SOB) contributions to ES. This will involve leading work in modelling uncertainty in the economic valuation of the contribution of SOB to ES. This will define the variance of economic values for alternative SOB conservation efforts, as well as identify the probability of any changes to the rankings of SOB improvement alternatives under different conditions.

The second task will be to support the prioritisation of ES to assist regional/national soil monitoring programmes and in restoration/conservation planning. This work will involve leading efforts to map priority areas for ecological restoration/conservation across large spatial scales using the Relative Aggregated Value of Ecosystem Services (RAVES) index (Comín et al. 2018. https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.13061). Stakeholder/expert engagement conducted by project partners will be used to define ES weightings and enable the mapping of priority areas for restoration using GIS approaches. This will lead to the identification of optimum areas for investment in SOB friendly management practices to arrive at the most cost-effective solutions for the maximising of SOB based ES.

The researcher at this level will be:

- An experienced and professional researcher and will be a subject specialist, drawing upon knowledge gained from postgraduate research.

- Associated with project(s) and will contribute ideas, and/or enhancement of techniques or methodologies and be expected to take significant initiatives in their work and consult with the Principal Investigator over the details of the project.

- They will work under supervision and receive academic, pastoral support and guidance which may include specific training, career opportunities and mentoring.

- They may contribute to the Department's teaching through the supervision of post-graduate research projects.

- The main focus of the work will involve conducting individual and collaborative research under the general guidance of a senior academic or Principal Investigator using conventional and emerging research techniques and methods, analysing and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data and writing up research for publication.

Main Duties of the Role

1. Conduct individual and collaborative research projects to include:
    - Using expertise to carry out projects they are working on.
    - Use conventional and emerging research techniques and methods.
    - Analyse and interpret complex and technical quantitative and qualitative data.
    - Write up research work of the project and ensure its dissemination through seminar and conferences presentations and peer-reviewed publications.
    - Present complex information and findings in a way that is easily understood.

2. Responsible for the management of projects to include:
    - Plan and manage own research activity in collaboration with others.
    - Manage administrative activities with guidance if required.
    - Plan and monitor the work of the project or projects if applicable.
    - Escalate issues and challenges with the project to Supervisor or leading researcher.
    - Communicate project progress and outcomes to internal and external stakeholders.

3. Assist with post-graduate teaching and learning support in own area of study to include:
    - Assist in the development of student research skills.
    - Supervise and guide post-graduate students.

4. Develop and initiate collaborative working internally and externally to include:
    - Build internal contacts and participate in internal networks for exchange of information and to form relationships for future collaboration and to progress their research.
    - Develop links and join external networks to share information and identify future potential sources of funding.
    - Work with colleagues on joint projects as required.
    - Attend and contribute to relevant meetings.
    - Liaise with internal and external academic staff, industry and policy stakeholders.

5. Demonstrate evidence of own personal and professional development to include:
    - Continually update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism.
    - Appraisal, induction and performance reviews.
    - Participate in training and development activity.
    - Maintain links with professional institutions and other related bodies.
    - Collaborate with academic colleagues on areas of shared research interest.

6. Supervision and support of colleagues within project teams to include:
    - Act as subject matter expert in area of research to project and departmental colleagues.
    - Deputising for project / research lead if required at internal and external meetings with stakeholders.

Person Specification

	Essential	**Desirable**
Qualifications	A PhD (or near completion of a PhD) in a relevant discipline At least 2-3 years' experience as a Post Doctoral Researcher or equivalent experience relevant to this field.	
Experience	Ability to successfully undertake undergraduate and postgraduate supervision. Experience of working with basic computer software packages such as Microsoft office suite. Evidence of a record in research and contributions of published works at national/international conferences and in peer reviewed journals within related scientific areas	Experience with analytical and modelling software such as R, Matlab, Python, ArcGIS, SPSS etc. Experience of working within large multi-partner and multi-country research projects Experience of working with multi-disciplinary teams and industry
Knowledge/Skills	Participation in networks that seek to promote research collaboration Effective management of resources. Excellent writing, presentation and communication skills. Knowledge of benefit-cost analysis and ecosystems services valuation	Team management or supervisory skills.
Personal Qualities	Show evidence of collaborative working, particularly on interdisciplinary activities Evidence of working in an open and transparent way, providing information and communicating effectively with colleagues Evidence of Continuous Professional Development	

Conditions of Service

The national recommendations which have arisen from the negotiations between UCEA and the unions recognised at national level, the Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES), directly affect the terms and conditions insofar as they have been adopted by the Board of Governors.

Salary	The commencing salary will be within the range £40,705 to £45,641 per annum. The point of entry will be dependent upon relevant qualifications and experience. Salaries are paid monthly, in arrears, by credit transfer on the 28th day of the month.
Contract Term	This is a full-time, fixed-term contract. Employment may be terminated during the course of the contract by either party giving two months' notice in writing
Hours of Work	The routine working week is 37 hours over Monday to Friday, inclusive. There may be a requirement for overtime working from time to time and time off in lieu may be allowed for agreed hours worked in excess of 37 per week.
Holidays	The annual holiday entitlement is 22 working days, plus statutory bank holidays. In addition to this there are 8 University closure days during the full annual leave year. The holiday year runs from 1 August to 31 July and in the holiday year in which the employment commences or terminates the holiday entitlement will accrue on a pro-rata basis for each complete week of service. The timing of holidays is subject to the agreement of the Line Manager. **All annual holiday entitlement (including bank holidays and University closure days) is pro-rata for part-time employees. Further details will be confirmed on appointment.**
Sick Leave	During periods of certified sickness, the post-holder will be eligible to receive sick pay in accordance with the University Sick Pay Policy. The payment of sick pay is subject to compliance with the University rules for the notification and verification of sickness absence, details of which will be provided to the successful applicant upon commencement of employment.
Pension	The post-holder will be entitled to join the Harper Adams Group Pension Scheme and details will be provided to the successful applicant upon commencement of employment.
Exclusivity of Service	You are required to devote your full-time attention and abilities to your duties during working hours and to act in the best interests of the University at all times. Accordingly, you must not, without written consent of the University, undertake employment or engagement including external consultancy, which might interfere with the performance of your duties or conflict with the interests of the University. It follows that, regardless of whether you are employed on a full-time or part-time contract, you are required to notify your line manager of any employment or engagement which you intend to undertake whilst in the employment of the University (including any such employment or engagement which commenced before your employment under this contract). Your line manager will then

	notify you within 10 working days whether such employment or engagement is prohibited.
Criminal Convictions	The post involves the opportunity for access to children and young persons under the age of 18. For this reason, the University is entitled to consider any criminal convictions, cautions or impending case(s) that it considers to be relevant to this post. The post is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. This means that applicants are not entitled to withhold information about convictions which for other purposes are "spent" under the provisions of the Act. Applicants must therefore complete the part of the application form declaring any criminal convictions and cautions from any court or police authority. The successful applicant will have to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service Check before an appointment can be made.

Application Procedure:

Please apply online via the Harper Adams e-Recruitment programme at http://jobs.harper-adams.ac.uk submitting your CV and a personal statement outlining your suitability for the role. Your personal statement should clearly demonstrate how your skills, experience, and achievements meet the requirements outlined in the person specification. Applications without a personal statement may not be considered **by no later than midnight on 18 November 2026**

Should you require any adjustments to complete your application for this role then please contact vacancies@harper-adams.ac.uk