

Welsh Government

Research in Practice Project Placement Proposal

Cadw Topographic Names Research

Summary of project

The focus of the project is to investigate topographic naming in Wales, with particular attention to how alternative, non-Welsh or colloquial names emerge, circulate, come into common use and affect the cultural value and understanding of Welsh landscapes. The project will explore the social, linguistic, recreational, tourism-related and digital drivers of naming change, including the role of guidebooks, signage, media, mapping platforms, social media and outdoor communities.

The successful applicant will work closely with Welsh Government officials and stakeholders to review existing evidence, identify examples of topographic name change, examine how names are used across different contexts, and support the development of policy-relevant research outputs. The placement will provide an opportunity to apply research skills in a live policy environment, develop experience in evidence review, stakeholder engagement and applied analysis, and contribute to Welsh Government's understanding of how Welsh-language and historic place names can be better safeguarded.

About Welsh Government Research in Practice Placements

The Welsh Government is the devolved Government for Wales with responsibility for the economy, education, transport, health and the Welsh NHS, business, public services and the environment of Wales.

A placement in Welsh Government offers a unique opportunity to work alongside policy officials and researchers, applying your research skills in a live policy environment. You'll have the opportunity to develop a range of research skills while deepening your understanding of how evidence shapes decision-making in Welsh Government.

The placement will be based alongside the members of the [Government Social Research \(GSR\) profession](#). GSR provides high-quality analytical advice and independent evidence to inform key policy decisions. Their work supports the full policy cycle—from understanding and development through to implementation,

monitoring, and evaluation. Placement students will also contribute to wider efforts to support policy colleagues in shaping and delivering effective policy.

The Project - Cadw Topographic Names Research

Background

In partnership with Welsh Government's Cymraeg 2050 Division, Cadw is exploring how Welsh-language and historic place names can be better understood, valued and safeguarded. Place names are a significant part of Wales' cultural heritage, reflecting language, history, community identity and relationships between people and landscape. They often preserve information about local environments, historical events and patterns of land use, providing insights into how places have been understood and experienced over time.

In recent years there has been growing interest in the visibility and use of Welsh place names. Examples such as Eryri, Yr Wyddfa and Bannau Brycheiniog have highlighted wider public discussion about language, identity and the use of Welsh names in everyday life. At the same time, concerns have been raised about the emergence and increasing use of alternative names for topographic features, particularly in tourism, recreation and online environments. Some of these names are translations of existing Welsh names, while others are entirely new names that have developed informally through guidebooks, social media, mapping applications and outdoor recreation communities.

Cadw recently commissioned research examining changes to Welsh-language property names, business names and street names. While this work established an important evidence base, it identified a significant gap in understanding how names of landscape features such as mountains, lakes, valleys, cliffs and other topographic features are used, shared and changed. Topographic names have received comparatively little research attention despite concerns about the growing prominence of alternative naming practices in some locations.

This placement will investigate how alternative and new names for topographic features emerge, circulate and become established. The research will explore the social, linguistic, recreational and digital factors that influence naming practices and examine how different communities understand and use Welsh and alternative names. Particular attention will be given to the role of outdoor recreation, tourism, signage, guidebooks, mapping platforms and social media in shaping awareness and use of place names.

The project will seek to understand not only whether naming practices are changing, but why they are changing, who drives those changes, and what the implications may be for cultural heritage, local identity, visitor understanding and the visibility of the Welsh language. The research is likely to combine desk-based evidence review, digital auditing and stakeholder engagement to provide Cadw and Welsh Government with a stronger evidence base for future policy development.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- An audit of existing evidence, research and projects relating to topographic name change in Wales.
- A geographically focused examination of examples where topographic features are being named, renamed or referred to by alternative names.
- Addition of new examples to the existing name-change evidence base.
- A typology of different forms of name change, including Welsh names, English names, translations, alternative historic names, colloquial names and newly coined names.
- Engagement with key stakeholders, including local communities, recreational users, tourism and interpretation stakeholders, and organisations working in place-name protection or promotion.
- Case-study timelines showing how unofficial or alternative names emerge, circulate online and offline, gain visibility, and potentially come to sit alongside or displace official or historic Welsh names.
- A focused digital and media audit examining how alternative names appear in social media, mapping platforms, blogs, tourism websites, guidebooks and press coverage.
- An assessment of the cultural, practical, experiential and linguistic impacts of topographic name change.

What skills do we need

We welcome individuals who can bring strong applied research skills to the role:

- Welsh language essential.
- Experience of auditing, reviewing and summarising evidence sources, such as academic, policy, digital, media or administrative sources.
- Strong analytical skills, with the ability to identify patterns, gaps and emerging issues in a developing evidence base.
- Excellent communication skills, including written communication and report writing skills and the ability to present findings clearly for policy and non-specialist audiences.

Placement timescales

The placement will be for a period of 3 months. The placement is expected to start no earlier than between November 2026 and January 2027.

The start date will be discussed with the successful applicant and there may be some flexibility dependent on individual circumstances.

Funding and expenses

This opportunity is only open to students funded through the WGSSS Studentship scheme (awarded from October 2024 onwards) who are required to complete a Research in Practice placement. The placement is unpaid, however you will continue to receive your ESRC stipend. Welsh Government is not able to cover any relocation costs associated with the placement.

Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred while carrying out placement-related activities may be claimed, subject to prior agreement with your placement supervisor and in line with the Welsh Government's Travel and Subsistence Policy

Working arrangements

Welsh Government working hours are 37 hours per week, 7 hours 24 minutes per day on average. With prior agreement with the placement supervisor, you may be able to work flexible hours in accordance with Welsh Government practices. For students registered on a part-time studentship, this placement may be available on a part-time basis over a longer time frame, this would be negotiated between the Welsh Government and the successful applicant. If you would like to be considered on a part-time basis, please specify your preferred working hours on the application form.

It is anticipated that the successful applicant will work in a hybrid way between home and a Welsh Government office during their placement. This may change depending on Welsh Government policy. Any changes to working arrangements will be discussed with successful applicants.

Nationality requirements and security vetting

Eligibility for taking up this placement in Welsh Government is dependent on meeting the [Civil Service Nationality rules](#). Please check that you are eligible before applying.

Those who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be able to take up a placement opportunity.

Successful applicants will be required to undergo Welsh Government's vetting procedures (which apply to temporary as well as permanent staff). This will involve the completion of a Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) application form and a Security Questionnaire.

Contacts

For more information about this placement project, here are the contact details:

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If you require information about Research in Practice placement opportunities in Welsh Government please contact:

James Carey, Head of GSR Workforce Planning and Professional Standards

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If you have any other queries about Research in Practice Placements please contact:

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