

Post-Doctoral Research Opportunity: Impact of 'People and Place' active and sustainable travel programme

ClimateXChange (CXC) wishes to offer a 7 month post-doctoral research opportunity to support Transport Scotland (TS) colleagues in mapping the evidence-base that can be used to develop a pragmatic but robust methodology to assess modal shift to active travel as a result of the 'People and Place' programme.

A ClimateXChange Fellowship – the fellowship will respond to specific policy questions and evidence needs, rather than primary research. We expect the fellow to be expert in their field, with an understanding of public policy and the use of evidence to support decision making. The fellow will be partially embedded within a TS policy team, although there is significant scope for remote working.

1. The need for this research

Active and sustainable travel is fundamental to all of the interconnected priorities of Transport Scotland's [National Transport Strategy](#). The national 'People and Place' active and sustainable travel behaviour change programme supports our transition to a net zero transport system by delivering the behavioural change initiatives recommended in the [Strategic Transport Projects Review \(STPR2\)](#). The programme provides a strategic and joined up local and regional approach to making active travel the most popular choice for everyday short journeys, achieving the 'switching modes' element of the route map to [20% reduction in car use](#) by 2030.

Modal shift 'up' the sustainable transport hierarchy (away from single occupancy ICE-vehicle journeys and towards walking, wheeling and cycling) [reduces GHG emissions](#). With sufficient resource it is possible to evaluate the emissions impacts of individual interventions, or to model them e.g. using the WHO [Health Economic Assessment Tool \(HEAT\)](#) for walking and cycling.

However, there is a need to develop and apply a robust and pragmatic method to estimate the total impact of this national-level programme that supports the full range of disparate travel behaviour change interventions.

2. Background

Within the 'People and Place' programme, a national delivery system supports regional and local programmes of sustainable and active travel behaviour change interventions. There are two components: the 'People and Place Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) Programme', and the 'People and Place Local Authority (LA) Direct Award'.

- **People and Place RTP Programme.** This funding enables Scotland's [seven statutory RTPs](#) to strategically commission and deliver comprehensive programmes of sustainable and active travel behaviour change interventions on a regional basis. These projects are tied to their local and [regional transport strategies](#), their LA's programmes of [active travel infrastructure delivery](#), and [specific community needs](#). The programme was established in 2024-25 as part of TS's [active travel transformation work](#), moving funding of services to a devolved model.

- **People and Place LA Direct Award.** This funding has a strong emphasis on maintaining the staff and expertise essential to the delivery of the People and Place programme and is particularly essential for smaller LAs.

RTPs are currently each producing an evaluation report of their 2024-25 People and Place programmes (by end of June 2025).

People and Place Key themes

The People and Place programme is focused on five key themes: Active Schools; Active Workplaces; Accessibility and Inclusion; Capacity and Capability; and Sustainable Travel, and supports a very wide range of interventions, including:

- Maps, apps, and guides, community and workplace active travel challenges, walking and cycling festivals, support for community active and sustainable travel projects and services, and support to voluntary and community organisations encouraging active travel.
- **Sustainable travel interventions** including shared transport (such as introduction or expansion of car clubs, bike and e-bike share schemes, as well as car share/lift-share), Digital Demand Responsive Transport schemes, Mobility Hubs (full and pop-up), Real Time Passenger Information provision, and Support for Mobility as a Service project roles.
- **Supporting Sustainable and Active Travel Behaviour Change roles**, with an emphasis on capacity and capability building.
- **Acquiring any necessary specialist support**, such as transport planning or procurement, especially in collaboration with other LAs / RTPs.
- **Maintenance of 'light' infrastructure** such as bikes, on-street cycle storage and racks, maintenance stands / equipment, pop-up mobility hub equipment, and signage.
- **Ensuring that active travel strategies and action plans are in place and up to date** to evidence holistic planning for active travel schemes. This may include asset registers of active travel infrastructure showing existing, newly developed and planned routes, paths and associated infrastructure such as additional lighting, signage, etc. but excludes design work for active travel infrastructure.

3. Project scope and aim

Research question

This research will explore a complex cross-sectoral, multi-agency policy issue with the aim of supporting an evaluation of the impact of the programme. It will consider the following question(s):

- **How can the impacts from modal shift to active transport in the 'People and Place' programme be robustly measured?**

The researcher will work closely with Transport Scotland to:

- Explore the available evidence base around the active travel elements of the 'People and Place' programme.
- Establish options for a pragmatic methodology that can be used to robustly evaluate the programme's current impact – initially around modal shift but with a view to measuring climate impact/emissions reduction in future.

The researcher must engage closely with a range of stakeholders involved in delivering the 'People and Place' programme and Transport Scotland policy leads. Stakeholders will include, but are not be limited to: TS Monitoring and Evaluation leads, Active Travel Delivery Partners M&E group, an RTP Governance / M&E group, and Local Authorities.

The research will include a review of existing data sources and liaison with TS and partner organisations to map the data. There is analytical support within TS that will be available to support the PDRO.

Interim findings from this research should support Transport Scotland's Year 1 Programme Assessment Report (expected Autumn/Winter 2025). Final project findings are expected to inform how ongoing programme impacts of modal shift to active travel can be measured.

4. Audience

The work is commissioned on behalf of Transport Scotland, and beyond their Sustainable and Active travel Unit¹, will be of particular interest to the Scottish Government's Climate Behaviours and Engagement Team², Community Climate Action Team³, Air Quality Team⁴, and the Active Scotland Strategy and Communications Team⁵. Members of Public Health Scotland's Public Health and Sustainable Transport Partnership Group⁶ will also have a keen interest.

The results must be presented in a format and language that can be easily understood by readers across different policy areas and without an academic background. Written outputs must be well presented and written in Plain English.

5. Outputs

The primary output will be a **final report** in the CXC house style. The final report is expected to be no more than 30 pages long (to be confirmed by the project steering group). It will include:

- Narrative discussion of results to cover:
 - Mapping the evidence base and any data gaps
 - Recommendations for evaluation of the ongoing programme impacts of modal shift to active travel
- Conclusions in response to the research questions
- Next steps e.g. suggestions to address data gaps
- Appendices to cover detailed methodology, any necessary data and technical results.

We understand that the successful researcher will want to produce academic outputs (e.g. journal paper(s)). However, the primary output will be the above report to Transport Scotland and will follow the CXC reporting guidelines and timescales.

The ownership of the research material including the final report and any data produced as a result of the research lies with ClimateXChange on behalf of Scottish Ministers. The research may be published on the ClimateXChange website, the date and format of which will be

¹ <https://www.transport.gov.scot/active-travel/>

² <https://netzeronation.scot/>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/climate-change/community-led-climate-action/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/air-quality-key-behaviours-report/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/physical-activity-sport/>

⁶ <https://publichealthscotland.scot/population-health/environmental-health-impacts/transport-and-health/what-are-we-doing-about-it/>

determined by the Scottish Government / Transport Scotland and ClimateXChange. One or more drafts are likely to be required before a final version is agreed.

ClimateXChange supports the Scottish Government Open Research Guidance for RESAS, summarised as “open as possible, closed as necessary.” This means that all products will be placed in the public domain, unless there is a strong argument otherwise (for example to comply with data protection regulations). Descriptions of all projects and related products will be uploaded to the ResearchFish system.

6. Project governance

The researcher will work closely with the People and Place Team in Transport Scotland. Physical attendance in Edinburgh is not required throughout the fellowship, but the fellow should expect to attend and budget for a minimum of five in person meetings with Transport Scotland.

The project will be managed by a project steering group, the role of which is to guide and direct the research. It will include representatives from Transport Scotland and ClimateXChange, along with the successful academic institution and researcher. External members will be considered depending on the methodology/approach.

Further project support will be available through existing TS groups, access to which will be managed by the TS policy lead.

The lead contact for ClimateXChange will be the CXC Project Manager – Climate and energy, Nicola Dunn, who will liaise with the successful institution and the lead researcher. Regular update calls will be scheduled between the researcher, Transport Scotland and the CXC Project Manager to discuss progress and address any issues, escalating to the researcher’s Principal Investigator (PI) and or steering group for consideration where necessary.

7. Project timetable

Milestone	Completed by
Interview panel (if required) – online	w/c 11 August 2025
Appoint successful researcher/ institution	15 Aug 2025
Confirmation of arrangements, including supervisory group and researcher/ institution	Mid Aug 2025
*Project kick-off meeting, to confirm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope • Boundaries • Timeframe • Secondment arrangements with Transport Scotland 	Late Aug 2025 tbc
CXC / Transport Scotland induction	Tbc August 2025
Regular discussion of progress (researcher, CXC & Transport Scotland; also researcher + CXC PM)	Fortnightly
Interim Steering group meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review findings from review of data sources 	Late November 2025

Milestone	Completed by
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree methodology to be used for quantification of emissions savings 	
Submission of draft report to CXC PM for review	4 February 2026
*Submission of draft report to the steering group	11 February 2026
Steering group meeting to review draft & findings	Tbc February 2026
Submission of final report (for publication)	31 March 2026

*There will be two invoicing points at the milestones marked in **bold** above.

There is the possibility of a three-month contract extension, subject to funding – if desired by Transport Scotland – which will be discussed once the project has reached a midway point.

8. Application process

PLEASE NOTE – contracts will be signed between your academic institution and the University of Edinburgh. Costings must include appropriate chargeable overheads and all applicable staff time and travel expenses. The contract for ClimateXChange (between University of Edinburgh and Scottish Government) is currently running to the end of March 2026.

Applicants are invited to submit proposals on how to best meet the research aims within the budget available. A full explanation of your chosen approach meeting the ‘award criteria’ and key tasks listed below, including any limitations, should be provided.

The research will use a range of research and engagement methods working with government policy officials and stakeholders. Applicants should address the following key tasks in their submission:

- Meetings with core Transport Scotland team
- Mapping evidence base, including assessing gaps
- Approach to stakeholder liaison
- Developing methodology
- Steering group meetings including preparation
- Reporting and presentation of findings

9. Eligibility

Applicants must demonstrate they meet the following eligibility criteria for the research associate and the hosting organisation.

Organisational

- existing in-house capacity to carry out research that extends and enhances other research happening in the UK
- the capability and skills to independently undertake and lead a research programme

Individual

- have completed your PhD at a UK research organisation
- be eligible to work in the Scottish Government/Transport Scotland for the period of the research, under the criteria set out in the [Civil Service Nationality Rules](#)

10. Submitting a proposal and award criteria

Deadline for submissions – 12 noon on **31 July 2025**. Submissions should address the following criteria, which will form the basis for assessment:

Price 20%

Quality 80%

Quality criteria	Descriptor	Weight
Research expertise	<p>Detail the knowledge, experience, expertise and capability that is required for this research, including as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher • The individual (proposed Principal Investigator or Supervisor) who will be supporting the researcher • Evidence should be provided of previous research and knowledge exchange work relevant to the research requirement (including working hyperlinks) with an emphasis on policy-focussed research and communication. • A statement demonstrating institutional capacity and CVs of relevant staff should be provided. 	25%
Research methodology	<p>Detail your approach to a high quality and workable research methodology that will deliver the outputs in the required timescale, including as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the evidence will be identified, reviewed and assessed • How the proposed analytical steps will address the research objectives • The suitability, robustness and limitations of the methodology • Ethical procedures that will be followed 	25%
The need for this research	<p>Demonstrate your understanding of the requirements, including as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy environment and the supporting role of research • The cross-sectoral nature of the project • The need for this research • The research aim, and how the proposal will address this need 	15%
Quality assurance	<p>Provide details of quality assurance procedures to demonstrate how the research will be continuously delivered to a high standard, including as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issues of quality control at different stages of the project, including initiation, stakeholder engagement, analysis and report writing • Provide a risk assessment matrix detailing any risks identified in relation to the delivery of this contract, and proposed mitigation measures to minimise their probability and impact 	15%

Your submission should be a single document of no more than **8 pages** (excluding CVs) in PDF format with the file name in the following format: Name of submitting organisation – PDR-People and Place IQ18-2025.

File size should not exceed 5MB.

You should highlight any potential conflicts of interest in your proposal.

The costs of proposals for this project are expected to be no more than £100,000 (excluding VAT). However, ClimateXChange would welcome proposals for less than this amount. We welcome consortium bids.

PLEASE NOTE – contracts will be signed with your academic institution, and you should ensure your costings include appropriate chargeable overheads.

Proposals need to be submitted to lee.callaghan@ed.ac.uk and cc'd to Nicola.dunn@ed.ac.uk for evaluation by **noon on 31 July 2025**.

Depending on the quality of proposals received, CXC may choose not to appoint a contractor.

11. Clarification questions

We will respond to any clarification questions received up to 1 calendar week before the close of tender and publish them on the [CXC website](#).

12. Terms and conditions

The institution/organisation of the successful applicant shall be required to enter into a contract for services/research with the University of Edinburgh whose terms shall govern the post-doctoral research opportunity (the “Contract”) following [Standard Terms and Conditions Goods and Services](#).

The payment terms for the Contract will be expressly linked to the Project timetable and will be subject to milestone delivery.

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13. Travel policy

In line with the [Scottish Government travel strategy](#) and the [University of Edinburgh Sustainable Travel Policy](#), we expect contractors to use low-carbon travel options for any in-person meetings, and to only travel when necessary.

ClimateXChange

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