**PBC4GGR Travel Grant fund**

**The role of Perennial Biomass Crops in meeting the UK’s net zero carbon objectives**

Operational guidelines

**Opening and closing dates:** We welcome applications at any time and we will assess applications on an ongoing basis between 1st May 2023 and 31st December 2024, or until all funds are allocated.

PBC4GGR (Perennial Biomass Crops for Greenhouse Gas Removal) is one of five demonstrator projects and a coordinating hub funded under the UKRI Strategic Priorities Fund. [www.pbc4ggr.org.uk](http://www.pbc4ggr.org.uk). The project is running for 4.5 years and is led by Aberystwyth University, together with UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Rothamsted Research, Countryside and Community Research Institute, and University of Aberdeen. PBC4GGR will be administering flexible funding that will be awarded to academics and researchers at any UK research organisation, including via this travel grant fund.

The aim of this funding is to facilitate travel by UK-based academics and researchers to undertake training and research visits to relevant projects in the UK and other countries, and to attend conferences. The scheme is open to UK based researchers at institutions eligible for UKRI funding, for travel that relates to the remit of the role of perennial biomass crops for GGR.

**1. Scope of the call:**

Stabilising global temperatures necessitates urgent and drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors of the economy. This requires both policy interventions and actions we can take as individuals. However, some sectors are unlikely to be able to reduce their emissions to zero, so we will need to offset those emissions by using greenhouse gas removal (GGR) technologies. One such technology is BECCS – biomass energy with carbon capture and storage.

In PBC4GGR we are investigating the potential for plants like willow and miscanthus to support BECCS in the UK. We will demonstrate novel establishment techniques that maximise yield whilst minimising greenhouse gas emissions, and provide an up to date quantification of the scope for greenhouse gas removal. We will establish the conditions required for farmer uptake and wider societal acceptance, and investigate the costs, benefits and trade offs for biodiversity and ecosystem services. In conjunction with other GGR projects and a coordinating hub we will determine the appropriate scale of implementation of BECCS in the UK compared to other GGR approaches.

We recognise that there is much work going on in this area in other countries, and that visits to other research groups, industrial facilities, conferences, training courses and other allied events are of great value to researchers at all stages of their careers.

**2. Funds and Scale of the Award:**

We will provide up to £1,000 for trips outside the UK, and up to £500 for UK based visits; funds can be used to cover travel and accommodation expenses and any registration fees. Awards will be at 100% FEC. We cannot support salary costs.

**3. Criteria:**

Criteria for funding are as follows:

* The purpose of the proposed visit should fall within the broad area of perennial biomass crops and their role in greenhouse gas removal.
* The proposed trip should represent a significant opportunity for the beneficiary and be relevant to their career stage. Whilst the application will need to be made by a person who is eligible to receive BBSRC funding, we encourage applications on behalf of early career researchers and staff who might not otherwise have the opportunity (e.g. technicians wishing to learn research skills or attend summer schools, staff who do not fit within conventional academic role descriptions).
* We particularly encourage visits that extend the boundaries of the applicant’s usual work or demonstrate a commitment to innovation (e.g. visits to industrial facilities, visits exploring interdisciplinary issues, training courses, or periods spent in other institutions learning new research techniques).
* We particularly encourage trips that will forge new links between researchers and projects/research groups in other countries.
* Where applications are made for conference attendance, participation as a speaker, poster presenter or similar is required, and we will prioritise supporting applicants at an early stage of their career.

**4. Eligibility:**

Funds are available to UK based academics working in the area of perennial biomass crops and greenhouse gas removal, and who meet the eligibility criteria in section 3 of the BBSRC Research Grants guide [(](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/grants-guide.aspx) https://www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/[)](http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/apply/grants-guide.aspx).

Please note the following eligibility criteria:

* Whilst applications must be made by researchers fulfilling the eligibility criteria, we strongly encourage applications on behalf of individuals who do not meet BBSRC eligibility criteria (e.g. a PI who is BBSRC eligible may apply on behalf of a postdoctoral researcher).
* Technicians, Masters students and PhD students may benefit if there is no other source of funding available.
* Awards are limited to one per applicant (or named recipient) per year, whether for a UK-based or international event.

**5. Sustainable travel**

We recognise the importance of minimising the carbon impact of research activities, and that whilst travelling can be of significant benefit to individuals and organisations it can result in significant carbon impacts. We will therefore:

* Prioritise applications where it is clear that similar benefits could not be gained by remote attendance/video conferencing (e.g. visits to industrial facilities or other research groups, practical skills workshops or for individuals where lack of travel opportunities might limit career progression).
* We will not fund domestic flights (except in the case of connection with an international flight), or flights where overland travel could reach the same destination in under 10 hours.
* Where costs are higher for overland travel than for the equivalent journey by air, we will allow applications in excess of the £1000 maximum claim limit. Please provide details on the application form.
* We expect applicants to use public transport instead of private vehicles where possible. We will not fund use of private petrol/diesel vehicles for travel where the host institution has low emissions vehicles available for staff use.

If your individual circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities, disability) limit choice of travel arrangements, please email us to discuss dispensation arrangements.

**6. Application form:**

You must apply using the application form provided. Your application should be emailed to flexfunds@aber.ac.uk. Your application should consist solely of the application form and CVs, as a single pdf document, any additional materials will not be accepted. The application form should not exceed a total of 3 pages plus CVs.

**Details of applicant:** Please provide details for the applicant eligible for BBSRC funding. If the application is on behalf of someone else, please give their details.

**Event details:** Please provide the basic details of the event as required.

**Nature of participation:** in the case of an application for conference attendance, please state whether you are a speaker, giving a poster presentation etc. For other visits, please summarise the type of activity you are undertaking.

**Funding details:** Please outline the costs of your proposed trip. The maximum amount that can be applied for is £1,000 for travel outside the UK, and £500 for UK based trips. Since the money will be transferred to your host institution, you will need to comply with your institution’s policies/rates on travel and subsistence.

**Case for support:** Please describe the activity and how it relates to your area of work. State the expected benefits from attending this event and how they relate to the funding criteria described above. What future benefits might arise (e.g. collaborative research with the group visited, return visits from other researchers, joint funding applications, future career opportunities)? Please also give details of other funding sought/obtained and explain why you need funds specifically from the PBC4GGR flexibility fund. Where the person benefitting from the award is different to the applicant, we would expect the beneficiary to have taken a substantive role in planning the travel activity and writing the application, and for this to be explained in the case for support.

**Sustainable travel:** Please describe the carbon impact of your proposed travel and what steps you are taking to minimise it. If your application includes flights, please describe why low carbon modes of transport are not possible.

**Conflicts of interest:** Applications will be reviewed by independent assessors, we therefore need to know whether any conflicts of interest may arise. See section 7 below for examples.

**Applicant declaration:** Please complete the declaration to confirm that you understand the operation of the scheme.

**CV:** please include a 2 page CV for either the applicant, or the person benefitting from the award where this is different.

**7. Application process:**

Applications should be submitted on the application form together with CVs as a single pdf document by email to flexfunds@aber.ac.uk. All applications will be acknowledged within three working days. We will accept applications on an ongoing basis until 31st December 2024, or until all available funds are allocated. We will notify individuals of the outcome of their application within 1 month of receipt of the application.

**8. Evaluation process:**

Applications will be reviewed by evaluators on a rolling basis. Ordinarily these evaluators will come from the PBC4GGR Project Management Board. This consists of Iain Donnison (Aberystwyth University), Judith Thornton (Aberystwyth University), Ian Shield (Rothamsted Research), Jeanette Whitaker (UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology), Julie Ingram (Countryside and Community Research Institute, University of Gloucestershire), Astley Hastings (University of Aberdeen). The PBC4GGR project manager will judge whether any conflicts of interest (described below) could arise before applications are allocated for assessment. Evaluators will be drawn from other institutions as required, and will themselves be asked to state any conflicts of interest prior to evaluating applications.

Examples of a conflict of interest include:

* employed by the same institution as the applicant(s)
* Actively involved in research collaborations with the applicant(s)
* Working closely with the applicant(s), for example as a co-author or PhD supervisor, or has worked closely in the last 4 years
* Holding a current position on the governing body of or an honorary position within the institution(s) of the applicant(s)
* In receipt of personal remuneration in excess of £5,000 per annum from the applicant’s organisation
* Personal/family relationship with the applicant(s)

It is expected that applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application within a month of the PBC4GGR Project Manager confirming receipt of the application, but we recommend that applications are made at least 2 months in advance of the proposed visit.

**9. Payment of awards:**

Within a month of travel concluding, the applicant (or named recipient if different) is required to submit a short (ca. 1 page) summary suitable for public dissemination, that PBC4GGR are able to publish in part or in whole. Funds will be transferred in arrears from Aberystwyth University, upon receipt of the following documentation:

* Claim form (a template will be provided).
* Confirmation of registration/attendance.
* Proof of participation where relevant (e.g. acceptance of an abstract at a conference).
* Receipts for costs incurred.
* Summary report (a template will be provided).

Costs up to the amount of funding requested in the application, or the maximum amount of funding allowed (whichever is lower) will be reimbursed; any exceeding costs will not be reimbursed.

**10. Acknowledgement:**

Publications/abstracts/posters should acknowledge support as follows *‘We acknowledge the financial support provided by PBC4GGR, a UKRI BBSRC grant BB/V011553/1 via a Travel grant’.*

Email: flexfunds@aber.ac.uk