Research Associate

**Department:** Department of Environment and Geography

**Hours of work:** Part time, 18.50 a week (50% FTE)

**Contract type:** Fixed term to 31st July 2024

**Salary:** Grade 6.1-6.3, £33,309 - £35,326 per year (reduced pro rata)
**Introduction**

SEI-York has a strong track record of action research and community engagement, with a focus on environmental values and participatory methods. We are seeking a social scientist to join the existing team working on these topics, primarily within the Nature Society Relations group. You will have the chance to apply a variety of social science research methods to support SEI-Y’s ‘Branching Out’ project funded under UKRI’s Future Treescapes programme. This project responds to the needs of local authorities to implement increased tree planting targets for carbon sequestration, in order that they also realise the multiple public benefits – health and wellbeing, green infrastructure, social amenity, the green economy – that treescapes can provide. Local authorities need a vision of future societal needs and the forms of future treescapes that might meet them; we will deliver the evidence and decision making processes to realise such a vision.

‘Branching Out’ will evaluate the neglected symbolic, heritage, spiritual social and cultural (S&C) values of urban trees across three cities, and develop new ways of mapping, predicting and communicating those values to support robust, evidence-based decision making and management. The three selected focus cities purposefully have different planning histories, supporting subsequent widespread adoption of our novel approach. York (historical) and Cardiff (post-industrial) are county towns, while Milton Keynes is a post-1960s new town. Each city has particular, yet not uncommon, challenges relating to their treescapes, has declared a climate emergency, and expects trees to play a role in mitigation and adaptation. Our central tenet comprises three broad approaches: 1) co-production, using deliberative methods with citizens and stakeholders, to develop a holistic value framework; 2) storytelling, creating narrative accounts of meaning and value of the past, present and future; 3) mapping, to link biophysical features and S&C values. Our approach will map both values that are generalisable and those that are particular and highly situated.

The tools we co-create will provide local authorities with useable evidence for decision making to predict the impacts of developments or changes on S&C value, and enable them to calculate more accurately the impacts of changes on ecosystem services. Such multidimensional mapping can reveal inequalities in current and future provision of benefits as treescapes change through time, providing a better understanding of how and where those inequalities can be addressed.

**Main purpose of the role**

- To conduct research under the supervision of senior colleagues and to contribute to the production of research
- To assist in the identification and development of potential areas of research and the development of proposals for independent or collaborative research projects

**Key responsibilities**

(Role holders will be required to undertake some or all of the duties below)

- To support critical interdisciplinary reviews of both conceptual social & cultural value literature and empirical treescape values to further identify and interpret key value dimensions and types.
- To support the co-development of a values framework.
- To conduct a stakeholder mapping in each focal city and use this to support the establishment of an end user panel of stakeholders and user groups who will continue to be involved as the project develops.
- To support deliberative processes between researchers, policy makers, other end users and citizens.
• To support a programme of interdisciplinary retreats to build interdisciplinary understanding across the project team and ensure that dependencies across work packages are met.

• To conduct individual and collaborative research projects, duties to include: analysis and interpretation of research data; use of appropriate research techniques and methods; writing up of research results and dissemination through publications, seminar and conference presentations and public engagement and outreach activities; contributing to the identification of possible new areas of research.

• To contribute to the preparation of research proposals and applications to external bodies.

• To undertake appropriate organisational and administrative activities connected to the research project, including conference organisation, and the development of promotional or educational material including website maintenance and development.

• To develop and initiate collaborative working internally and externally, duties to include: the building of internal contacts and participation in internal networks; collaboration with colleagues on joint projects as required; participation in and identification of external networks in order to share information and identify potential opportunities for collaboration and possible sources of funding; attendance at and contribution to relevant meetings.

• To provide guidance to other staff and students, as required, as well as coordinating the work of small research teams.

• To assist with undergraduate teaching in own area of expertise.
# Person specification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential / Desirable</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>First degree in [geography, social science or allied discipline]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>PhD in [geography, social science or allied discipline] or equivalent experience</td>
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## Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Knowledge of environmental values and governance.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Knowledge of a range of qualitative research and participatory techniques and methodologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Knowledge of action research and/or transdisciplinary approaches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Has research expertise in an area that will complement and enhance the department's research strategy and goals</td>
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## Skills, abilities and competencies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Highly developed communication skills to engage effectively with a wide ranging audience (including the general public), both orally and in writing, using a range of media</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Ability to write up research work for publication in high profile journals and engage in public dissemination</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Ability to develop research objectives, projects and proposals for own and joint research, with the assistance of a mentor if required</td>
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<td>Essential</td>
<td>Competency to conduct individual and collaborative research projects</td>
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<td>Essential</td>
<td>Ability to identify sources of funding and contribute to the process of securing funds, with collaborators if required</td>
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<td>Essential</td>
<td>Competency to make presentations at conferences or exhibit work in other appropriate events</td>
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## Experience

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential</th>
<th>Experience of carrying out both independent and collaborative research</th>
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<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Experience of writing up research work for publication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>Ability to work as part of a team and also to work independently using own initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Experience of undertaking action-research and/or transdisciplinary research projects</td>
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## Personal attributes
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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Requirement Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Attention to detail and commitment to high quality</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Collaborative ethos</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Interest in and enthusiasm for the subject matter of the project</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Positive attitude to colleagues and students</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Willingness to work proactively with colleagues in other work areas/institutions</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Ability to plan and prioritise own work in order to meet deadlines, including using initiative to plan research programmes</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commitment to personal development and updating of knowledge and skills</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
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