



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

## The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair – Call for Host Institution

**SFC Call for Proposal**

Issue Date: 28 August 2020

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Deadline: 25 September 2020

Reference: SFC/AN/15/2020

Summary: The Scottish Funding Council is inviting proposals from Scottish universities to host The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair. This call is in partnership with Scottish Water.

FAO: Principals / Chairs of Scotland's universities

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## **The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair in Water – Call for Host Institution**

### **Introduction**

1. The Scottish Funding Council is pleased to announce a call for proposals from Scottish universities to host The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair in Water. Funding of up to £3.5 million is available over six years from April 2021 in support of the Chair appointment and associated activities. This call is being made in partnership with Scottish Water.
2. The closing date for proposals is 12 noon, on 25 September 2020.
3. In this document we set out the strategic context, aims and objectives and assessment process for this call.

### **Background**

4. Scotland's water sector has a vital role in helping achieve Scotland's climate ambitions. Scottish Water has been working closely with the Scottish Government, the Water Industry Commission for Scotland, the Customer Forum, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Drinking Water Quality Regulator and Citizens Advice Scotland to develop a vision that will ensure Scotland's water sector is admired for excellence, helps secure a sustainable future and inspires a Hydro Nation. The vision has challenging objectives that will require transformative change to the way the water sector operates to make a positive contribution to Scotland's net zero ambition, to deliver service excellence and to live within the means of our planet's resources. In particular the vision aims to:
  - Maximise the water sector's positive contribution to Scotland achieving net zero emissions.
  - Ensure all of Scotland gets high quality drinking water that people can enjoy all of the time.
  - Collect, treat and recycle waste water in ways that generate value and protect the environment.
  - Live within the means of our planet's resources, embracing circular economy principles.
  - Enhance the natural environment.
5. Research and innovation will be a key enabler in transforming the water sector to achieve these objectives.
6. To drive this, Scottish Government and Scottish Water have announced funding

of £3.5 million over six years from April 2021 to establish The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair. Hosted by a Scottish university and working in collaboration with universities and research institutes across Scotland, the Chair will build Scotland's reputation as a centre of excellence for the management of water and the environment and enhance Scotland's credentials as a Hydro Nation.

7. SFC is committed to actively responding to the challenge of the global climate emergency announced by Scottish Government in April 2019<sup>1</sup> and is working in partnership with Scottish Water<sup>2</sup> to run a call for proposals to select a university to recruit and host the Chair, and enable collaboration.
8. A briefing session for universities was convened by SFC and Scottish Water on Wednesday, 19 August 2020. This call reflects the feedback received from participants on the Chair opportunity, its relationship with existing investments and the assessment process (including indicative timescales). We expect delegates will have informed their Principal of their attendance at the session.

### **The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair opportunity**

9. The Scotland Hydro Nation Chair will complement the existing relevant research and innovation initiatives and infrastructure in Scotland. The Chair will play a leading role in maximising Scotland's academic water impact, international reputation and engagement with wider sectors to deliver the knowledge and capability required to enable transformative change and to attain net zero carbon emissions by 2040.
10. The Chair will provide visible leadership of Scotland's water research and the research community to deliver impact, both in Scotland and internationally. They will lead large scale funding bids to UK Research and Innovation (including Innovate UK) and others to secure additional resources and increase Scotland's research knowledge, capability and outputs and ability to translate research into practical application in the water sector.

### **Call for Proposals**

11. SFC, in partnership with Scottish Water, is inviting proposals from Scottish universities to host the Chair and contribute to the delivery of the overarching aims of the role and Scotland's net zero ambitions.
12. We welcome proposals from individual universities and consortia that can work

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/global-climate-emergency-scotlands-response-climate-change-secretary-roseanna-cunninghams-statement/>

<sup>2</sup> The Scottish Government's Programme for Government (2019/20) said, "In 2020, we [Scottish Water] will run a competition across Scotland's universities to establish a Hydro Nation Chair to help our water industry manage the challenges of climate change, including innovative approaches to surface water management and managing changes to organic matter levels in raw water."

collectively to support the delivery of the objectives of the Hydro Nation Chair role. Any consortium proposal must have a nominated lead university that will employ the Chair and be responsible to SFC for accountability and administration of funds.

13. The successful university (or nominated lead) will have a strong strategic rationale for taking on this opportunity. It will be committed to working collaboratively with other universities to help build on Scotland's acknowledged and growing reputation as a centre of excellence for the management of water and the environment; in turn enhancing the university's own reputation for research excellence and impact.
14. The host will be expected to work closely with Scottish Water and their key stakeholders in order to maximise the impacts of the appointment and associated activity.

### **Assessment**

15. Proposals will be assessed by a panel including SFC, Scottish Water and Scottish Government (including the Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division) in October 2020.
16. The assessment panel may suggest integration of proposals that have significant overlap and where collaboration could substantially increase impact.
17. The assessment panel may seek further information from applicants in advance of finalising their decision.

### ***Proposal criteria***

18. In assessing proposals, the panel will assess the following information (high-level criteria):
  - Narrative on proposed approach to deliver Scottish Water's objectives, including new or innovative ideas not restricted to the information in this call document.
  - Evidence of water research/innovation in university strategy to demonstrate relevance and commitment.
  - Evidence of water research and innovation excellence, experience, and impact.
  - Experience of and commitment to working collaboratively with other institutions and cross-disciplinary practice.

- Details of the university resources available (direct and in-kind) outwith the funding award to support the Chair position and wider engagement across Scotland and internationally.
- Plan and process for inclusive recruitment, including proposed job specification, for the Chair position.
- University commitment to the relevant research and knowledge exchange concordats.
- University commitment to equality and diversity, evidenced through the submission of an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA). Further information is provided at paragraph 28.

### **Submission**

19. Proposals submitted in response to this call should clearly address each of the proposal criteria in paragraph 18.
20. Each proposal should not exceed eight sides of standard A4 sized paper in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point. The EHRIA may be submitted as a separate annex.
21. Consortium bids should be submitted by the lead university and the other universities or research institutes involved should be listed in the proposal. There is no restriction on the composition or number of members in a consortium; however, each must have a clear role.
22. Proposals must be able to demonstrate senior level support from the nominated host university. Applications will only be eligible if signed by the Principal or delegated signatory.
23. The deadline for proposals is 12 noon on 25 September 2020. Proposals should be submitted by email to [HydroNationChair@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:HydroNationChair@sfc.ac.uk).

### ***Indicative timetable***

<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>
Call for proposals launched	27 August 2020
Call for proposals deadline	25 September 2020
Assessment panel	October 2020
Letter of grant issued	November 2020
Chair recruitment	November 2020-January 2021

### Funding details

24. Total funding of £3.5 million over six years from April 2021 is available to establish the Scotland Hydro Nation Chair in Water. This funding is to be administered by SFC on behalf of Scottish Water. It is expected that the precise funding profile will be agreed in 2021 when we have a better understanding of when the Chair will take up the position.
25. Proposals should include details of the university resources available (direct and in-kind) outwith the funding award to support the Chair position and wider engagement across Scotland.
26. In the event that a consortium bid is successful, funding will be allocated to the nominated lead university and it will be the responsibility of the lead university to ensure timely allocation of the grant to partner institutions for activities related to the overarching objectives of the Chair.

### Governance and accountability

27. SFC and Scottish Water expect to work closely with the host institution to facilitate the effective delivery of the Chair position, activity and impact. We will each have a representative on the Chair interview panel and work in partnership with the host to establish a governance structure that includes representation from the funders. A governance framework will be developed that sets out respective roles and expectations of key partners and a monitoring and evaluation framework will be put in place.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

28. SFC considers equality and diversity in all its priorities. SFC asks institutions to be mindful of the Equality Act (2010), including the statutory requirement for EHRAs of new and revised strategies and policies. **Proposals must include an EHRIA.** Institutions can complete their own EHRIA form or use SFC's form which is available upon request. Further information and guidance is available from SFC's website<sup>4</sup>.

### Data Protection

29. Any materials produced, reporting required, promotional information etc. must

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<sup>3</sup> The start date of the Chair will be determined by the availability of the successful candidate but is expected to be in post no earlier than April 2021.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/about-sfc/how-we-operate/equality-diversity/equality-diversity.aspx>



be compliant with data protection and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. Institutions must ensure any participants are aware of how their information will be processed in accordance with GDPR. For more information about how SFC uses personal data please see our Privacy Notice<sup>5</sup>.

30. SFC reserves the right to share content, reports and other information with the Scottish Government and other relevant stakeholders to promote and evidence the way in which funding has been used.

#### **Further information**

31. For further information and informal enquiries please contact Keith McDonald, Assistant Director, Research and Innovation Directorate, tel: 0131 313 6674, email: [kmcdonald@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:kmcdonald@sfc.ac.uk) or Fiona Bates, Policy/Analysis Officer, Research and Innovation Directorate, tel: 0131 313 6609, email: [fbates@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:fbates@sfc.ac.uk).



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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/about-sfc/how-we-operate/access-information/privacy-notice/privacy.aspx>