

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## MARCH NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the March newsletter! Keep reading to discover the latest highlights, including an introduction to our new starter, Sami, insights from the Research Impact Awards, a recap of World Water Day 2026, reflections on a recent trip to Kerala, and as always, information about upcoming grants.

## NEW STARTERS

### Sami Ullah



Hi everyone, I'm a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, working with Professor David Hannah under the Charles Wallace Fellowship for Pakistan. My research, "*Multi-Driver Attribution of Terrestrial Water Storage in the Indus Basin Using Satellite Observations*," aims to develop a spatially explicit, data-driven understanding of how climate variability, agricultural expansion, and urban water demand jointly shape water storage in one of the world's most water-stressed basins, with a focus on generating policy-relevant insights. Alongside this, I bring over nine years of experience delivering urban and rural water infrastructure through ADB- and World Bank-supported projects, currently contributing to climate-resilient systems under Pakistan's Local Government framework. Rooted in both lived experience and engineering training from UET Lahore, my work seeks to bridge advanced geospatial science with practical, community-focused water solutions.

## CELEBRATING WORLD WATER DAY 2026

We extend our thanks to everyone who joined us to celebrate World Water Day 2026 at the University of Birmingham. This year's theme, *Water and Gender*, prompted an important discussion on equity, access, and sustainability.

While water is essential to life, billions of people still lack safe access. Women and girls continue to bear a disproportionate burden in water collection,

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

management, and care—highlighting the urgent need for more inclusive solutions.

We were delighted to host an international panel of experts:

- Thom Bogaard (Delft University of Technology, Netherlands)
- Tanvi V Deshpande (University of Birmingham, UK)
- Michaela Mahlberg (Friedrich-Alexander University, Germany)

For nine years, the University of Birmingham—through initiatives including the Birmingham Water Centre, the UNESCO Chair in Water Science, UNESCO UNITWIN Ecohydrology, and the Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action—has convened events that spotlight global water challenges and drive innovative solutions.



World Water Day 2026 is a call to action: to invest in women’s leadership, strengthen partnerships, and accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 6 and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Our global audience reflected the international importance of this issue, with participants joining from across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Conversations like these move us closer to building more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable water futures.

The World Water Day Webinar Recording will be available to view on the University of Birmingham Youtube page in the coming weeks.



# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## IMPACT AWARDS – PROF DAVID HANNAH

Professor David Hannah has recently been recognised with a Research & Impact Award for Outstanding Contribution to the External Research Community. This prestigious award honours sustained and influential service beyond academia, celebrating those who shape and strengthen the wider research ecosystem.

As a UNESCO Chair in Water Science and a globally recognised leader in hydrology and climate science, Professor Hannah's work bridges science, policy, and education to address some of the world's most pressing water and environmental challenges. His leadership has fostered extensive international collaboration and contributed to impactful research with real societal benefit.

Colleagues and collaborators have highlighted his inspiring leadership and the global reach of his work, particularly in advancing sustainability initiatives and tackling complex environmental issues through interdisciplinary partnerships.

Congratulations to Professor Hannah on this well-deserved recognition. This award is a testament not only to his outstanding personal achievements, but also to the collaborative spirit and global impact of the research community he has helped to build and lead.



# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## VISIT TO KERALA

**Written by Sasha Han**

Dr Shasha Han, Prof Stefan Krause, Dr Chandni Thakur visited Kerala (India) as part of our NIHR-funded project 'Improving Primary Healthcare for Patients with Non-Communicable Diseases During Severe Flooding in India'. The team met with the District Medical Office, the Indian Medical Association (IMA), and several Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in Kochi, which provided a valuable opportunity to better understand the impacts of flooding on the healthcare system and to learn about existing flood preparedness within the health sector in flood-vulnerable regions, directly from local expertise. The team also visited the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Calicut and the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM) in Kozhikode. The discussions cover current flood management practices, early warning systems, and ongoing flood-related research in Kerala.



# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## PUBLICATIONS

Dixit, S., Sen, S., Yasmin, T., Khamis, K., Sen, D., Buytaert, W. and Hannah, D.M. (2026) 'Integrating SMART principles in flood early warning system design in the Himalayas', *Natural Hazards and Earth System Sciences*, 26, pp. 1251–1268. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5194/nhess-26-1251-2026>

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Leader, S., Kettridge, N., Mendoza, C., Hannah, D. and Devito, K.J. (2026) 'Influence of landscape and lake characteristics on long-term water-level responses in shallow lakes of the sub-humid boreal plains, Canada', *Water Resources Research*, 62(2), e2025WR040903. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1029/2025WR040903>

## HYDRO – ECO 2026



### Abstract Submission

Abstract submissions for oral and poster presentations are now open.

We invite the submission of abstracts for oral and poster presentations that address the conference theme “*HydroEcology Meets One Health*”. Contributions are welcomed from across disciplines, including hydrology, ecohydrology, environmental and public health, social sciences, policy, and practice.

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

We encourage submissions presenting original research, applied case studies, methodological innovations, and interdisciplinary perspectives that explore the links between water systems, ecosystem processes, and human and animal health.

Submit your abstract: [HydroEco26 Abstract Submission](#)

Submission guidelines and the submission portal are available on the conference [webpage](#).

## CATCHMENT SCIENCE SUMMER SCHOOL



### Course Overview

The Catchment Science Summer School is a 5-day short course that is intended for post-graduate students and post-docs interested in a hands-on catchment science curriculum, focusing on northern catchments, runoff processes and combined hydrometric, isotope/chemical tracer and modeling techniques in catchment hydrology. The learning objectives for this short course are to understand:

- Rainfall-runoff processes
- Rainfall-runoff model development, use, and testing
- Hydrochemical and isotopic measurement and analyses
- Linking field experiments with modeling approaches
- Evolution of empirical and theoretical understanding of runoff processes

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

- Landscape analysis, land-use and climate change impacts on streamflow

**Please note, demand is high for positions on this course, so please secure your spot - [buy a ticket here](#). Only 15 out of 30 positions remain.**

## UPCOMING GRANTS

### [NERC - Pre-announcement: Pushing the frontiers of environmental science 2026](#)

Deadline to apply – tbc

Award amount: £950k

Apply for funding to pursue an ambitious, high-reward curiosity-driven project in environmental research.

### [FiERCE - 1st OPEN CALL FOR THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAM](#)

Deadline to apply: 31/03/2026

Award amount: €50k

SMEs\* based in EU members States and Horizon Europe Associated Countries that can demonstrate their potential to leverage downstream space data, such as EO, remote sensing, satellite navigation to cut environmental footprint.

### [Oceans – Social Worlds, Living Worlds](#)

Deadline to apply: 15/04/2026

Award amount: €15-30k

As part of its new 'Oceans' Programme, the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme (FMSH) is launching its second call for projects to support international teams and networks of scholars in the humanities and social sciences. In the face of the urgency of climate challenges, this call aims to shed light on the human dynamics impacting maritime spaces and to contribute to the development of sustainable and inclusive solutions.

### [Metascience research grants: round two](#)

Deadline to apply: 23/04/2026

Award amount: £350k

Apply for funding to undertake cutting-edge Metascience research into more effective ways of conducting and supporting research and development (R&D), including the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), how to optimise research institutions and the challenges of measuring research excellence.

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## [Sea-Changers Innovation Fund 2026](#)

Deadline to apply: 30/04/2026

Award amount: £10k

The fund's unique emphasis is on supporting ideas that are new and/or experimental solutions in the field of marine conservation. Please read the guidance provided to understand more about the kinds of projects we are looking for.

## [UKRI Translation: Proof of Concept](#)

Deadline to apply: 13/05/2026

Award amount: £100-250k

Apply for funding for research commercialisation activities to develop new products, processes, and services via future venture creation, licensing or other commercialisation routes.

## [ESA – Sustainable Wetlands](#)

Deadline to apply: 15/05/2026

Award amount: €75k

This opportunity invites businesses to submit proposals for space-based applications and services that support wetland sustainability while delivering economically viable business cases. Selected studies can access 75% funding from the European Space Agency, with a maximum of €75,000 per activity.

## [NERC - Independent Research Fellowship 2026](#)

Deadline to apply: 16/06/2026

Award amount: no set limit

Apply for funding to further your career through an independent research fellowship, 5-year fellowships covering fellow's salary, research expenses, and travel costs.

## [UKRI - Future Leaders Fellowships: round 11](#)

Deadline to apply: 16/06/2026

Award amount: £300k to 2M

Apply for funding to support ambitious research and innovation across UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)'s remit. You must be a researcher or innovator who is either looking to establish or transition to independence.

## [EPA Ireland – Research Calls 2026](#)

Deadline to apply 29/06/2026

Award amount: €330-660k

The EPA Research Call 2026 will support innovative research projects to support policy- and decision-making addressing environmental, climate change and sustainability challenges.

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## [Clean Maritime Demonstration Competition 7: Pre-deployment trials](#)

Deadline to apply: 15/07/2026

Award amount: £750k - 1M

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), will invest up to £121 million from the Department for Transport in this competition. This is subject to a sufficient number of high quality applications being received.

This funding will be for projects to carry out deployment trials, pre-deployment trials and innovative feasibility studies, each of which forms a separate strand of this competition.

## [EC - MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026](#)

Deadline to apply: 9/09/2026

Award amount: - relative

MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships enhance the creative and innovative potential of researchers holding a PhD and who wish to acquire new skills through advanced training, international, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral mobility. MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships will be open to excellent researchers of any nationality.

## [Horizon - Developing methods to assess the presence, functions and sensitivity of groundwater ecosystems](#)

Deadline to apply: 17/09/2026

Award amount: €5-9M

Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes: the knowledge of existing groundwater ecosystems is improved, supporting policymakers and technical experts in assessments of their presence, functions and condition or status, and their role for climate change mitigation; society benefits from enhanced knowledge and awareness of pollution and overexploitation risks to groundwater ecosystems and the ecosystem services provided by them, including of possible implications for other related ecosystems (associated aquatic and dependent terrestrial ecosystems) and for human health as well as for food and water security, disaster risk reduction and resilience building; the EU water policies are supported with new scientific evidence and public authorities are better equipped for setting effective measures for the protection of groundwater biodiversity and their possible links to groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

## [Horizon - Developing managed aquifer recharge techniques \(MAR\) in a rural context](#)

Deadline to apply: 17/09/2026

Award amount: €5-9M

Project results are expected to contribute to all of the following expected outcomes: farmers have access to water supply from managed aquifer recharge systems and to appropriate business models to cope with longer and more intense periods of water scarcity due to climate change, while preserving the good status of ground water bodies; water ecosystems are healthier and more resilient to climate change, and water

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

related ecosystem services are protected and strengthened, while water resilience of farming systems is increased;

policy makers are provided with improved insights on mechanisms and instruments to improve the water resilience of the agricultural sector to cope with climate change effect.

[Horizon - CL6-2026-01-ZEROPOLLUTION - Clean environment and zero pollution: Call 01 - single stage \(2026\)](#)

Deadline to apply: 17/09/2026

Award amount: €10m

Research funded under this destination will support the EU Commission priorities 'Sustaining our quality of life: food security, water and nature' and 'A new plan for Europe's sustainable prosperity and competitiveness'. Proposals for topics under this destination should set out a credible pathway to achieve a clean environment, ensure water resilience, and enable the transformative change necessary to reduce air, water and soil pollution to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems, while respecting planetary boundaries.

## **Open Calls with no closing date:**

[IGB: Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries – Senior Fellows](#)

We invite excellent established scientists to apply for a research visit at IGB. We offer stays for 3 to 12 months to enable senior scientists to contemplate and pursue new inspiring research ideas in collaboration with scientific staff at IGB. At the time of application, successful candidates can be based at institutions in any country worldwide except Germany. Scientists residing in Germany are not eligible to apply, independent of their nationality.

[NERC Urgency Fund \(£100k\)](#)

Apply for funding to respond quickly to transient, unexpected environmental research opportunities created by sporadic natural occurrences such as earthquakes, droughts, floods, or ephemeral events in ecosystems.

[UKRI – Knowledge Transfer Partnership](#)

Open for business and not-for-profit organisations. Partnerships can last between 12 and 36 months. Business provide one-third to half the project cost depending on their size.

[NERC - Work with US-based researchers on environmental science research](#)

Award amount: £300k Apply for funding to work with US-based researchers on an environmental science application. Collaborative work is governed by an agreement between NERC and NSF.

The title is set against a teal rectangular background. The background image shows a blurred, horizontal view of water with light reflecting off the surface, creating a sense of motion and depth.

# Water Challenges in a Changing World

## [Work with Brazilian researchers: NERC FAPESP lead agency](#)

This opportunity allows UK-based researchers and researchers in the State of São Paulo, Brazil to submit a collaborative proposal under existing NERC funding opportunities. This will go through a single review process.

## [UKRI - Collaborate with researchers in Norway](#)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Research Council of Norway (RCN) have signed a Money Follows Cooperation agreement to reduce barriers to cross-border collaboration.

## [UKRI - Collaborate with researchers in Luxembourg](#)

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and FNR have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to welcome and support collaborative applications. The MoU provides for a lead agency agreement whereby UKRI will receive and assess joint applications from eligible UK and Luxembourg applicants on behalf of both organisations

## [EPSRC - overseas travel grant: Nov 2023: responsive mode](#)

You can apply for an overseas travel grant in any area within the remit of Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). We will award 80% of the full economic cost (FEC) of the project.