



PRESS RELEASE

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Leading scientist secures £1.2m to advance vital research on climate change and its impact on the world's oceans.

Dr Babette Hoogakker from Heriot-Watt University's School of Energy, Geoscience, Infrastructure and Society, has been selected by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) for the highly prestigious Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF).

The Fellowships, announced publicly today by the UKRI, are designed to identify and support outstanding early career researchers and innovators from across the UK and overseas.

Dr Hoogakker, who is based at the Lyell Centre, a collaborative research centre for earth and marine science and technology between Heriot-Watt and the British Geological Survey, said: "I'm absolutely thrilled to have been selected for a Future Leaders Fellowship.

"The Fellowship brings with it a significant sum of funds, which will allow my project the opportunity to build a specialist research group capable of examining in detail the impact of climate change on the oceans chemical cycling and marine life."

Dr Hoogakker is leading a project, named FARGO ('FAte of ocean oxygenation in a waRminG wOrld'), that examines the health of the world's oceans and critically, predicts how climate change will impact them in the future.

Oxygen is crucial to the health of all higher life on earth. Since 1960, however, dissolved oxygen concentrations in the oceans have declined by 2%, a trend that is expected to continue as a result of climate change.

Future deoxygenation, along with overfishing, threatens the sustainability of economically important fisheries and marine ecosystems. Over the next seven-years, the FARGO project seeks to answer why, and to what extent, seawater dissolved oxygen concentrations may change in a warming world.

It aims to do this by studying dissolved oxygen concentrations in the Pacific Ocean, the largest low oxygen water body, through an innovative research programme. This involves reconstructing dissolved oxygen levels during key warm periods in the geological past, and the use of climate model simulations over similar periods to help forecast the likely impact of climate change on dissolved oxygen on our future oceans.

"It is crucial that we obtain a well-informed view about what the future may hold," Dr Hoogakker explains.

"A better understanding of the effects of climate change on oxygenation is important for future assessments of the marine oxygen cycle. FARGO aims to raise awareness about ocean deoxygenation across the wider community, with engagement activities planned with the public, other scientists and policymakers including the Scottish and UK governments."



Passing on her congratulations, Dr Tracy Shimmiel, Director of the Lyell Centre, said: "I am very glad to learn that Babette's expertise has been recognised and she has been identified as a future leader in her field. I am delighted to have scientists of such a high calibre at the Lyell Centre."

It is the first time an academic from the university has been recognised with a Fellowship, which is hugely competitive and attracts applications from researchers and innovators from around the world.

Professor Garry Pender, Deputy Principal Research and Innovation at Heriot-Watt University, said: "To have one of our academics recognised with Future Leadership Fellowships is unprecedented and speaks of the tremendous talent we have at this university.

"I'm delighted by the continued recognition of the exceptional research that is produced out of this university and the impact it has on improving lives around the world."

Ends

Notes for Editors:

The Lyell Centre

The Lyell Centre is a strategic partnership between the British Geological Survey and Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh, which builds on our individual and combined interdisciplinary expertise in land and marine conservation, geology and geoscience. Based at Heriot-Watt University's Edinburgh campus, the Lyell Centre strives to be one of Europe's leading centres for research and expertise in the earth and marine sciences.

The British Geological Survey

The British Geological Survey (BGS), a component body of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), is the nation's principal supplier of objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise and information for decision making for governmental, commercial and individual users. The BGS maintains and develops the nation's understanding of its geology to improve policy making, enhance national wealth and reduce risk. It also collaborates with the national and international scientific community in carrying out research in strategic areas, including energy and natural resources, our vulnerability to environmental change and hazards, and our general knowledge of the Earth system. More about the BGS can be found at www.bgs.ac.uk

Heriot-Watt University

Heriot-Watt is a specialist, pioneering University, with a global presence, world renowned, innovative research and highly employable graduates. www.hw.ac.uk

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