

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH STUDIES

The Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust (NVT) is a UK-based registered charity dedicated to conservation of the Nyika National Park and the adjacent Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve in northern Malawi. NVT has been much involved in management of the Nyika plateau in the past and now provides financial support to the new management body, the Nyika-Vwaza Co-Management Trust (NVCoMT). This recently-formed body has strong institutional support from the Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife.

The Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust is funded through a legacy endowment and ongoing public support, and has the following specific objectives:

- *To assist in the long-term conservation and appropriate management and research objectives of the Nyika and Vwaza protected areas in Malawi.*
- *To encourage relevant training and education programmes for Malawians and those living in communities adjacent to the protected areas.*

For further details on the Trust see [www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org](http://www.nyika-vwaza-trust.org)

The Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust is offering financial assistance for research projects in northern Malawi on conservation-related issues. The PPF Research Coordinator based in Mzuzu will be fully involved in selecting successful grants, which will reflect current NVCoMT/PPF objectives.

The grants will be available for up to one year, but may be extended on request. Applications should arrive not later than 15 January for projects starting in April. Each grant should be regarded as offering supplementary finance to enable field studies to be carried out. They are not designed to cover course fees or salaries, other than a reasonable amount to meet basic field living costs during the study period. NVT encourages counterpart funding in conjunction with other organisations.

Grants will be offered to undergraduates or graduate-level researchers affiliated with university departments, government departments or non-government organisations involved in the study of natural sciences or socio-economic aspects of biodiversity conservation and environmental management. Socio-economic studies are welcome where they can contribute to wildlife protection and improved habitat management. Grants can also be made available to unaffiliated, independent researchers who do not require institutional support, provided they are able to offer appropriate references for their work and proof of their ability to support themselves in all other respects.

The grants are designed to enable researchers to undertake studies in northern Malawi relevant to their areas of research but can involve brief visits to similar ecological areas in Zambia and Tanzania. Applications for MSc-level fieldwork are particularly welcome. The Trust is also willing to consider grants for undergraduate level study field visits to the Nyika and Vwaza. Please contact the Trust Secretary for further details.

Each grant offered is up to a maximum of £5,000 to cover reasonable travel and maintenance costs, costs of fieldwork materials and, where necessary, wage costs for hired field assistants and related ancillary costs. Salary or wage costs for researchers are not covered.

Although the Trust may consider a programme of study extending over a longer period, grants are initially offered for up to one year and any extension or subsequent grant will be conditional upon satisfactory performance and acceptable deliverables under the Grant Agreement.

Applications should identify the potential benefits and implications of the study in meeting the NVCoMT research objectives as set out in the notes below. Proposals that implement baseline surveys are also welcome, as long as they are structured so as to be readily repeatable. All supported studies should result in published output being made available in the public domain, including on the NVT website, and that findings are disseminated effectively within Malawi.

The Trustees will require a written report within four months of the completion of the grant-supported activity. This will be publicly available and posted on the NVT website.

Applications should be made according to the specified outline below and should not exceed three pages. They should be submitted to the Trustees by email ( [sec.nvt@gmail.com](mailto:sec.nvt@gmail.com) ).

## NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

Applications, not exceeding four pages, should be submitted including the following information:

### Part 1 – The applicant

- Candidate's full name and date of birth
- Candidate's postal and personal email address
- A brief curriculum vitae (not exceeding 2 pages) to be submitted as an addendum to the application
- If appropriate, name of supervisor and college/institution.

### Part 2 – The proposed study

An outline of the proposed study including:

- a) the research objectives, including their wider relevance to conservation,
  - b) a justification for the study including the problem that the study intends to address,
  - c) an indication of methods and approach to be used,
  - d) the intended and quantified outputs,
  - e) an indication of how the results can be used by conservation managers,
  - f) an indication of any research centres it is proposed to visit, if necessary,
  - g) the proposed starting and expected completion date,
  - h) an outline budget for travel, living and research expenses up to a maximum of £5,000, indicating the main items and costs.
- Proposals for basic surveys will be considered as long as they can act as a baseline for future monitoring, as will monitoring projects. The establishment of demonstration trials can also be included.
  - Non-Malawian applicants are encouraged to include a suitably qualified Malawian partner in the study team, either resident in Malawi or studying overseas. An additional grant of up to £1,000 may be available to cover these costs.
  - For candidates affiliated to an institution, a reference from the candidate's supervisor, Head of Department or other responsible person should be attached. The supervisor is asked to comment on the candidate's potential and the feasibility of achieving the grant's objectives. Any other comments that will assist the Trustees in selecting outstanding candidates and proposals for this award will be much appreciated.
  - The Head of Department or other person responsible for ensuring compliance with the organisation's health, safety and security procedures is asked to confirm that appropriate steps will be taken to promote safe work by the researcher. They should also endorse the supervisor's recommendation and provide any other comments that may assist the Trustees. The Trust will not be held responsible for any adverse incident involving the researcher during the period of the grant.
  - Successful candidates will be informed of the outcome of their submission by email within one month.
  - Funds awarded will be paid as a grant to the College/University Department or organisation as appropriate. The organisation will be asked to provide a receipt on the Trust's pro-forma when the grant is received. In the case of an independent researcher, funds can be paid direct to the researcher.

### Research study reports

Recipients of NVT grants will be required to submit a report within four months of the completion of the study topic, formally endorsed by their supervisor where applicable. This report should be sent by email to the Secretary of the Trust at [sec.nvt@gmail.com](mailto:sec.nvt@gmail.com). Reports will be made accessible on the Trust's website as a form of dissemination. Original photographs in digital format illustrating the work are encouraged.

As a condition of the grant, three hardcopies should be produced by the researcher within three months of completion and distributed to: Research Coordinator, NVCoMT; Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW), Divisional Office, Mzuzu; and DNPW offices at Chelinda or Vwaza (as appropriate). This can be a separate budget item in the proposal.

The Trust reserves the right to return any final report for modification or clarification before final acceptance.

### Format and content of report

The front cover of the submitted report should be headed Nyika Vwaza Trust Research Study Report, with the name of the researcher and the name of the organisation, if applicable. This should be followed by an informative title for the study topic and the date. See examples on the NVT website.

The report should contain an abstract of the principal conclusions and any recommendations, followed by a summary of the objectives and initial justification for the study. It should also contain the names of any Research Centres visited, principal contacts and the start and finish dates of the study.

The major part of the report should be a brief but informative summary of the study undertaken and any conclusions, with use of graphics and pictures where appropriate. This should be sufficient detail to provide the NVCoMT Research Coordinator and NVT Trustees with a clear understanding of the issues addressed and how the conclusions may affect the longer-term objectives of conservation management. Detailed aspects of the research may be added as appendices.

References or publications consulted during the study should be listed and proposed future related studies or collaboration should be mentioned.

Publications arising from the research study should formally acknowledge the support of the Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust. It is the intention of the Trust to publish all reports on its website and also use them to inform the Trust's supporters via its Newsletter. Agreement to this is a condition of the grant being awarded.

### ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR PROPOSALS

1. The **Nyika Vwaza (UK) Trust** is a registered charity in the United Kingdom (charity number 1105105) and is managed by a Board of Trustees. The Trust places importance on helping local communities in the areas surrounding the Nyika and Vwaza areas with collaborative management, in sharing benefits and in carrying out educational programmes in those communities.
2. The Trust is willing to fund applied research across northern Malawi, but with a special focus on the **Nyika National Park** and **Vwaza Marsh Wildlife Reserve**. Both areas are managed by the newly-formed **Nyika Vwaza Co-management Trust**. The operational headquarters is at Thazima, the border gate to the Nyika Park, with administrative offices currently in Mzuzu.
3. Research topics of interest to the Nyika Vwaza Co-management Trust and NVT (UK) are primarily those associated with biodiversity conservation and land management, but other topics such as socio-economic or similar issues within surrounding communities will be considered. Supported research is expected to assist managers and decision-makers with conservation decisions and activities as well as add to the existing body of information on the area, not a duplication of what is already known. Purely academic research can be considered, but may be assessed as being of lower priority. Proposals that form part of a BSc, MSc, PhD or other degree are welcomed.

An indication of topics of particular interest under this grant are given below. These supersede earlier NVT Research Notes. Although proposals on these topics are more likely to be approved, other topics may also be considered if they are likely to result in conservation benefits.

- a) **Baseline biodiversity studies.** Studies providing a baseline or significant additional data on the distribution and status of important indicator species or habitats in the two protected areas. These include:
  - **Nyika:** Roan antelope, Clawless Otter, Elephant, vulture species, Blue Swallow, *Brachystegia boehmii*, wetlands, grasslands, forest patches.
  - **Vwaza:** Impala, Elephant, Hippo, vulture species, Lake Kazuni fish, wetlands. Besides vultures, other birds could serve as important indicators of the ecological condition of forest, miombo woodland and wetlands.
- b) **Woodlands and the Nyika elephant sanctuary.** A small population of introduced elephant has been living in an enclosure on the lower slopes of the Nyika and will soon be released. More data are required on what impacts these elephants have had on the woodland so far, what potential impact they may have on surrounding miombo woodland when released, and modelling of potential elephant impacts on both vegetation and the surrounding human populations.
- c) **Spatial analysis of change.** More data and insights are required to understand the drivers behind shifting mindsets towards conservation in the landscape, including conducting knowledge–attitudes–practice (KAP) surveys to identify influencing factors and analysing the social and demographic trends that may support or challenge emerging positive attitudes. It also involves exploring how evolving aspirations among the surrounding human population relate to conservation goals. These dynamics, together with land-use and land-cover changes, should be examined within a spatial framework to reveal patterns, overlaps, and potential areas for intervention.
- d) **Edible orchids.** Establishing a baseline inventory of orchid species present in the area, or smaller defined portion, with particular emphasis on species harvested for their edible tubers, including:
  - Documenting species presence, distribution and population status.
  - Identifying conservation concerns and sustainable harvesting thresholds for culturally and economically important orchid species.

**4. Additional support from the Trust.** NVT maintains a group of natural history specialists (the Technical Advisory Group) who are all well known in their particular fields of study. We can offer support to candidates by introducing them to the relevant specialists. In addition, the Trust has compiled a [bibliography](#) of existing references and can supply e-copies of some upon request.

**5. Living and working conditions.** Whilst living and working conditions are generally good, conditions are likely to be more difficult in the more remote Nyika National Park and at the Vwaza Reserve. Mzuzu, the principal town in northern Malawi is about 140 km from the main camp at Chelinda. The NVCoMT Research Coordinator can provide assistance with research permits (if required) and can advise on transport and accommodation arrangements.