



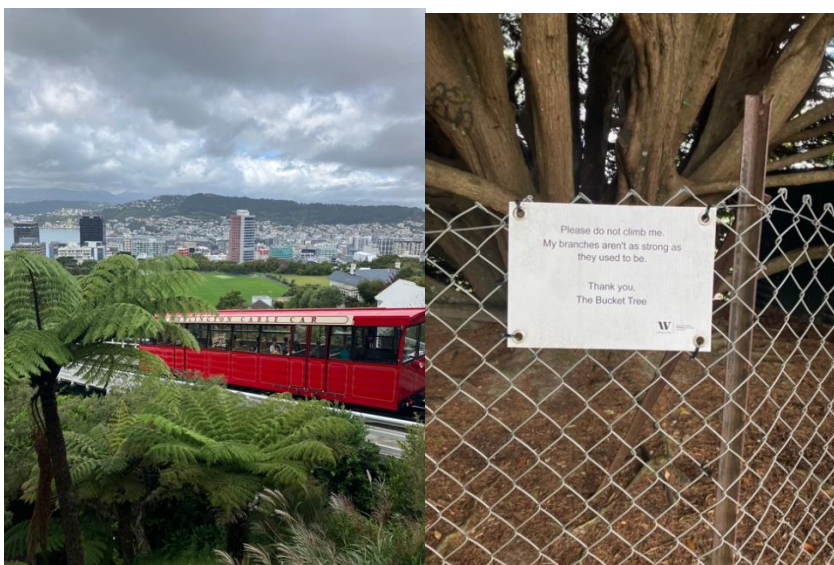
Eleanor Absalom – ACCE DTP

My name is Ellie and I'm doing [my PhD](#) on [urban tree health and management](#) at the University of Sheffield. In Spring 2023, I undertook a placement with [Manaaki Whenua/Landcare Research](#) in Wellington, New Zealand via the ACCE placement scheme. It was an amazing experience and I'd highly recommend applying to do a placement during your PhD.

It was quite easy to set up my placement. I knew I wanted to gain experience of research and policy outside of the UK, so I started by searching for relevant organisations. I quickly found a couple of interesting looking programmes in New Zealand and got in touch with the researchers, giving them some information about me, the ACCE placement scheme, and why I was interested in working with them. I received positive replies, and we arranged video calls to discuss in more detail. In the end I chose Manaaki Whenua because it had direct links to policy, which is a career option I was interested in exploring.

Writing the ACCE placement application was straightforward, especially with input from my placement hosts and help from staff at Sheffield and Liverpool for the financial/admin details. It took a little time to do this and get approval though, so I'd recommend doing it well in advance! As far as I know no one from the UK had been on placement at Manaaki Whenua before, although they often host students from other countries.

My placement looked at the socio-economic impacts of urban trees and people's perception of urban trees. I helped to develop statistical models of the impacts of different urban tree characteristics, such as species, on socio-economic factors in Singapore and Wellington, including rates of crime, chronic disease and unemployment. I also assisted with urban tree health assessments and developing 'tree-walks' along commuter routes in Wellington to understand and improve people's engagement with the urban forest (such as below). We are in the process of publishing results, and will be presenting at IUFRO 2024 in Stockholm.



*(Left) A view of the very hilly (!) Wellington City and its famous cable car. (Right) One of the trees on the Wellington tree walk – named the 'Trippy Tree' in the 2013 'Top 10 trees in Wellington' due to infamous student parties that used to take place inside it.*

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The highlight for me was working with my placement supervisors and the team at Manaaki Whenua – all brilliant scientists. I was inspired by the incorporation of indigenous Maori culture into their work, placing an emphasis on kaitiakitanga, or guardianship of the environment. I especially enjoyed fieldwork and communicating our results to policymakers.

Overall, I would highly recommend a placement to other students. It was inspiring to see real-world applications of research and expand my knowledge by working with different researchers. It was a welcome break to my PhD (particularly long hours of writing up) that has helped me to reset, reenergise and refocus on my future goals. It was also a great opportunity to travel, and I had plenty of time to explore New Zealand: an amazing country, especially if you like weird birds and Lord of the Rings!



*(Left) Completing the Tongariro Crossing – a 19km hike climbing up to 1900m above sea level across an active volcano. (Right) An inquisitive kokako, an endangered wattlebird endemic to New Zealand, at the Pukaha National Wildlife Centre.*

I'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who helped make the placement happen – my supervisors, ACCE support staff at Sheffield and Liverpool, and especially my fabulous placement hosts at Manaaki Whenua. Nga mihi nui, see you in Stockholm!