Forestry England

Job Description – Habitat Restoration Officer (PB5)

Job summary

We are Forestry England. We are the country's largest land manager, caring for the nation's forests for people, nature, and the economy. The foundation of our organisation is our world-class sustainable management of the nation's forests.

Our South England Forest District team is made up of around 160 people, containing a diverse range of roles - from wildlife rangers and ecologists to marketing professionals, we all contribute towards the management of 46,000 hectares (ha) of public forest estate and national parks that stretch from Sussex to Dorset, and from Berkshire to the Isle of Wight.

Much of this forest is of high national importance for nature conservation and wildlife, and of international importance for biodiversity. South England Forest District is therefore responsible for land that includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar sites, Areas of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) and sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The successful candidate will join the Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) project team based in the New Forest. The team plans and delivers landscape-scale habitat restoration projects with external funding from the New Forest HLS scheme. The Verderer's of the New Forest HLS scheme is focused on restoring and enhancing internationally-important habitats, renowned for their flora and fauna, and covering around 20,000 hectares. As a Habitat Restoration Officer you will play a vital role in planning and delivering habitat restoration projects in the New Forest.

The purpose of the role is to plan and manage the delivery of habitat restoration projects in the New Forest SSSI from conception to completion, building and maintaining good communications with Forestry England colleagues, contractors, local stakeholders and others to enable delivery of the HLS restoration programme, with a particular focus on wetland, heathland and wood pasture restoration.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

The following provides an overview of the key responsibilities of the role. This list is not exhaustive, and additional duties may be assigned as required, consistent with the nature and level of the post.

1. Plan work programmes to restore internationally important habitats in the New Forest by carrying out fieldwork and preparing practical plans to deliver works, including wetland and river restoration and terrestrial restoration work including tree felling, scrub removal, and ridge and furrow removal. This will include:

- Reviewing and updating HLS team databases to identify priorities for restoration
- Carrying out walkover surveys to assess restoration work requirements
- Preparing practical habitat restoration plans
- Identifying constraints and implementing appropriate mitigation.

2. Engage with our staff and stakeholders, including leading consultation site visits, to get agreement for restoration proposals and to manage site-specific constraints (physical, ecological, archaeological etc):

- Work collaboratively across the HLS and Wider FE teams to integrate restoration work with other operational priorities.
- Liaise with Forestry England colleagues to guide the production of restoration Operational Site Assessments (OSAs).
- Engage with other stakeholders (e.g., Natural England, New Forest National Park Authority, EA, CDA, Verderers, etc.) on restoration proposals and secure approval to enable delivery of the HLS works programme.
- Work with the HLS Engagement Officer to engage with stakeholders such as Parish Councils, local landowners and other interested parties.

3. Deliver restoration projects on the ground by setting up and managing contracts, providing site-specific technical advice and liaising with contractors to ensure restoration is undertaken to agreed specifications with high standards of safety:

- Follow procurement protocols to set up and manage contracts for the HLS programme of restoration projects.
- Ensure contractors have the necessary information to undertake contracts safely, including all constraints maps and H&S documentation.
- With guidance from the HLS Ecologist, communicate ecological constraints to contractors (toolbox talks, maps, pre-commencement meetings).
- Liaise with contractors throughout the delivery phase and ensure restoration is undertaken to agreed specifications.

4. Report progress and monitor outcomes of habitat restoration projects:
- Update HLS team databases to enable accurate auditing and reporting.
- Report on progress quarterly to HLS Project Manager for updates to the HLS Board.
- Work with the HLS Communications Officer to keep relevant pages of the HLS website up to date.
- Provide verbal updates on work programmes at HLS team meetings and New Forest Operations meetings.
- Contribute to evaluating restoration effectiveness and recommend adjustments to future work proposals or methods.

5. Line management responsibilities
- This is a management role and, as such, there may be opportunities in the future to undertake line management responsibilities, including the supervision of a Works Supervisor and/or Volunteer Ranger.

And any other tasks, reasonably requested by your line manager.

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Experience working in the environmental management sector.
- Sound knowledge and understanding of delivering habitat restoration work within designated sites.
- Demonstrable experience in planning and delivering habitat restoration projects.
- Experience engaging with local stakeholder groups, including: landowners; non-governmental organisations; charities; local government.
- Experience in contract management.
- An effective communicator, both written and verbally.
- Competent in IT – Microsoft Office suite including Outlook, Word, Excel and Powerpoint.
- Sound knowledge of the application of environmental legislation to project planning and delivery.

Desirable

- Experience delivering river or wetland restoration.
- Knowledge of river and wetland ecology, hydrology and restoration techniques.
- Experience working within a designated site.
- Experience of budget management.
- Experience supervising or mentoring staff, volunteers or contractors.
- An understanding and knowledge of the New Forest and its habitats.
- Sound knowledge of the application of environmental legislation to project planning and delivery.

Qualifications

Essential

- Degree or equivalent in Ecology or Environmental Management.