

Job description - Project Manager (PB4)

Job summary

Forestry England's Biodiversity Plan sets out a bold ambition of nature recovery in the nation's forests. Working across five principal focus areas, Forestry England aims to restore resilient biodiversity in the nation's forests, delivering our vision to ensure that these forests provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England. Established in 2022, Forestry England's Forest Wilding Programme brings together two of these focus areas as part of a co-ordinated effort to deliver a step-change in nature recovery.

The Forest Wilding Programme aims to deliver on our strategic goal of restoring fully functioning ecosystems. Species recovery work focuses on the reintroduction of key influential species, such as beaver, wildcat, pine marten, white-tailed eagle and wood ants. Alongside this nationwide effort, we have established Wild Areas on over 14,000ha of the nation's forests, bringing innovative approaches together with sound evidence to shift our land management to restore and enhance natural processes. With an annual budget of around £4 million, supported by Defra and a growing portfolio of external funding, the programme makes a significant investment in nature recovery, alongside Forestry England's parallel ambitions for sustainable timber production and connecting people with our forests.

Our vision for Wild Kielder is to create a new natural upland ecosystem at scale, complete with the species which should be thriving there. This will be a dynamic landscape, with a core area of productive and resilient forestry, within a wider mosaic of trees, woodland, shrubland, blanket bog, moor, grassland, crags, rivers, burns and fens. We will build upon the legacy of twentieth century land use policies and practices, reshaping and enhancing them to better serve future generations.

You will be willing to challenge established norms on management of our uplands, and help drive nature recovery at scale and pace. Strategic planning and feasibility work has been undertaken on Wild Kielder since 2023, and now that the background documentation and detailed surveys have been completed, the project is ready to move into on the ground delivery. The post holder will also have the opportunity to be involved in other exciting forest wilding projects, including the species recovery of influential species such as pine marten and golden eagle.

The post holder will be a skilled project manager, bringing ecological experience and insight, developing and maintaining standards to deliver projects on time and on budget. You will have a strong track record of implementing nature-based projects using your sound ecological knowledge and land management expertise. Managing internal and external stakeholders and developing partnerships with stakeholders, landowners and funders will be a key part of this role, alongside the successful implementation of a robust communications plan. This is a challenging and fast paced role which will involve working across all business functions, with partners, external stakeholders and external suppliers. The post holder will work alongside the Forest Wilding Programme team, and a network of colleagues across the country delivering similar nature recovery projects.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

detailed project planning, control and implementation, including:

- managing the project in line with the Wild Kielder Project Management Plan, revising the plan as required with the Project Board
- managing the Wild Kielder project budget, as a component of the wider Forest Wilding Programme budget
- procuring, commissioning and managing contracts and contractors, especially for practical land management, ecological survey and monitoring, and feasibility studies
- identifying and managing project risks and issues, managing project scope, overseeing change control, and escalating where necessary
- ensuring the project integrates Forestry England's principal functions of timber production, nature recovery and engagement with visitors, resolving cross-functional issues at project level
- ensuring Wild Kielder meets the defined project objectives, outcomes and benefits
- monitoring project progress and performance, including through milestones and gateway reviews, and reporting on these to Project Boards and the Forest Wilding Programme

provide strong technical leadership in ecology and nature-focussed land management, and its integration with forestry, especially through:

- using the Wild Kielder Strategic Land Management Plan and other project documents to produce a workable programme of land management
- working with technical experts, contractors and colleagues to implement the strategic land management priorities on the ground
- using best practice, technical knowledge and scientific evidence to continue to develop the nature recovery strategy both at Wild Kielder and in other relevant projects to maximise the potential for progress
- working with the Forestry England Resilience Strategy and forester colleagues, to lead new approaches to longer term forest resilience in the context of climate, wildfire and pests and diseases
- working with the Forest Wilding Programme team to support the implementation of a coherent evidence framework, which both supports our decision making and monitors the outcomes of our land management
- providing support and technical knowledge of strategic land management to support additional relevant projects when funding is available, such as species recovery projects.

develop and manage strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including:

- supporting the Project Board, in providing confident and coherent leadership and governance to the project
- managing the engagement and communications with colleagues and internal stakeholders about the project across the Forestry Commission family
- managing the engagement and communications with external partners and stakeholders on the project, especially those with a high risk factor and high influence on the outcomes of the project.
- representing Forestry England and the Forest Wilding Programme with relevant external projects, working groups, conferences and other forums, both in district and nationally

work with Forest Wilding Programme team to explore, secure and develop external funding for the Wild Kielder project and other relevant Forest Wilding projects, for example through:

- UK Government grants, especially Defra's Environmental Land Management Landscape Recovery Scheme
- corporate sponsorship
- biodiversity net gain
- green finance

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

Location-specific information

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- previous knowledge and practical experience of managing change at pace in the environmental sector, including planning, risk, issue and dependency management.
- strong ecological background, with experience in land management implementation for nature conservation outcomes.
- a skilled project manager, able to manage and prioritise workloads, meet deadlines and solve problems, and manage budgets
- strong evidence of stakeholder management, demonstrating negotiation and influencing skills at a high level.
- a great team worker, with a strong track record of collaboration and relationship management.
- Strong leadership and communication skills.
- experience of analysing and evaluating complex or conflicting evidence to provide usable advice and guidance to multi-disciplinary teams.
- an excellent communicator, both written and verbally, able to adapt to a range of audiences.
- competent using IT and Microsoft Office.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- sound experience in the forestry sector.
- experience of managing upland ecosystems
- experience of procurement and contract management.
- competence in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- working knowledge of environmental legislation and designations, including their practical application.

Qualifications

Essential

- ecology or environmental degree, or equivalent professional experience in nature-focussed land management.
- a full and current driving licence that enables you to drive in the UK.

Desirable

- a recognised project management qualification
- a member of a relevant professional body, e.g. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Institute of Chartered Foresters