

Job Description - Senior Specialist Natural Grazing and Herbivory (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. Our 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 16,000ha of the nation's forests, bringing innovative approaches together with a sound evidence base to shift our land management to restore and enhance natural processes.

With a multi-million-pound annual budget, 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.

As a Senior Specialist you will play a key role in the national Forest Wilding Programme Team, bringing your deep knowledge and experience to bear as we support the implementation of species recovery and wild area projects across England. The post holder will bring technical skills and insight, combined with the ability to interpret and apply evidence and good practice, helping to shape national and local decision-making, supporting ambitious nature recovery delivery on the ground.

Across Forestry England's wild areas, one of the key interventions we seek to make is to introduce naturalistic grazing, to support the ecological process of natural herbivory, to enhance ecosystem function, biodiversity and climate and pest resilience. As a senior specialist you will have and apply an expert understanding of such approaches and provide sound technical leadership. You will help drive this ambition within Forestry England and more widely, engaging with external partners, including academic institutions, Forest Research, environmental non-government organisations, private landowners and practitioners, Defra and other Defra bodies. Your specialist work will encompass developing, interpreting and sharing sound evidence on which to base nature recovery through herbivory, and undertaking and commissioning relevant research.

You will have the skills and experience to apply this evidence base to on-the-ground implementation, working closely with forest wilding programme team and forest district colleagues. To do this effectively you will need to have a sound understanding of the legislation, regulation and relevant codes of practice, relevant to this work area. You will be willing to challenge established norms in the role of herbivores in nature recovery, and to work internally and externally with regulators and key stakeholders to influence the regulatory environment, advocating for a more proactive and ambitious approach to nature recovery.

To succeed in this role, you will have an excellent track record of supporting the implementation of nature recovery projects through the practical application of your specialism. You will have sound technical knowledge in the specialist area, be an effective project manager, and be able to contribute to the Forest Wilding programme outcomes. You will be a strong collaborator and communicator, able to work effectively with our diverse teams and partners and provide functional leadership for this work area across Forestry England.

Reporting to the Forest Wilding Programme Manager, the Senior Specialist - Natural Grazing and Herbivory will work as part of a collaborative national team and with numerous colleagues and external partners across England, delivering the objectives and outcomes for forest wilding.

You will work as part of Forestry England's Forest Wilding Programme Team, a small but growing group of dedicated professionals, whose primary focus is implementing evidence-based nature recovery on the ground. Though dispersed across the country, we work closely and collaboratively together and with our district teams, to seize the opportunity presented by our Defra funding, to bend the curve on nature recovery, working at scale and pace. We work alongside colleagues whose focus is on improving designated sites management, accelerating the restoration of ancient woodlands, establishing nature networks, and improving the resilience of timber production across the nation's forests. Making a difference for nature is our passion, but so too is our wellbeing, and we have a supportive working environment, which champions mutual support, and maintaining a good work/life balance.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

Main responsibilities:

- 1) Provide strong technical leadership in natural grazing and herbivory, and their integration with nature-focussed land management and forestry, especially through:
 - developing, maintaining and disseminating technical knowledge, legislative and regulatory knowledge, reports and advice.
 - providing support and guidance to inform project concepts and project delivery.
 - ensuring natural grazing and herbivory are developed in tandem with Forestry England's wider organisational objectives, for example considering forestry operations and presence of protected species.
 - maintaining a strong sector presence and network within Forestry England and externally to learn from others and share experience.
- 2) Detailed programme planning and control including:
 - supporting the programme manager in developing, agreeing and maintaining a detailed programme plan and contributing to the development of constituent project plans.
 - managing programme and project deliverables in line with the programme plan.
 - managing a delegated budget to support the delivery of the specialisms within the Forest Wilding Programme.
 - managing risks and escalating where necessary.
 - resolving cross-functional issues at programme and project level.
 - contributing to the management of programme and project objectives, outcomes, outputs and benefits.
 - monitoring progress and performance, including through milestones and gateway reviews, and reporting on these to the Forest Wilding Programme Manager.
 - procuring, commissioning and managing national contracts, and contractors, especially of ecological consultants and academic institutions.
- 3) Develop and manage strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including:
 - working with district-based project officers, and functional staff, without direct line management accountability, in support of programme delivery.
 - working as part of project boards, providing confident leadership and governance.
 - manage the coordination of internal and external partners and working groups engaged in the programme.
 - represent Forestry England in relevant regional, national and international forums.
 - supporting the implementation of the forest wilding communications and engagement plan.
- 4) Develop and support the evidence-base, embedding science for your specialisms into the Forest Wilding Programme and its constituent projects:
 - Ensure the effective use of evidence relating to relevant specialisms in the forest wilding programme, providing expert input to the decision-making on key projects.
 - Produce resources that help/guide conservation decision making that are based on the best available evidence for the effectiveness of actions and that ensure the sources of evidence used are transparent and clearly referenced
 - Contribute to the interpretation and communication to colleagues of research, including technical reports, research summaries, website and scientific publications

- Represent Forestry England through at national and international conferences, workshops and other forums, presenting and cascading evidence across the forest wilding programme.
- Work collaboratively across Forestry England and its partners to develop innovative and interdisciplinary technical knowledge, advice and evidence to support nature recovery.
- Design, procure, oversee and where relevant, undertake research and report writing to address evidence gaps. Act as the main point of contact for researchers and funders in your specialisms, ensuring research is well coordinated, commissioned appropriately, and delivered to time and budget.

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

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 technical background, with experience in natural grazing and herbivory for nature recovery outcomes.
- Experience of analysing and evaluating complex or conflicting evidence to provide usable advice and guidance to multi-disciplinary teams.
- 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.
- Strong leadership skills, and a great team worker, with a strong track record of collaboration and relationship management.
- 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 procurement and contract management.
- Competence in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- Working knowledge of environmental legislation and designations, including their practical application in species recovery.

Qualifications

Essential

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

Desirable

- Post-graduate qualification or demonstrable experience in the appropriate specialism.
- 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.

Location information

The post holder can be based anywhere in the country from any Forestry England office, but we support hybrid working from home.

The duties of this post require the applicant to sometimes travel to remote locations that are not accessible by public transport. You will therefore need to hold a full and current driving licence that enables you to drive in the UK and be willing to stay away from home. We are willing to consider any proposals put forward by applicants that would allow them to do the job by other means.