

Job Description - Project Manager Volunteering (PB4)

Job summary

Forestry England cares for the nation's forests for people, nature and the economy. Our volunteers and partners play a vital role in connecting communities with nature and supporting the sustainable management and enhancement of England's forests.

This important national role sits within Forestry England's National Operations Team and works alongside the existing Technical Volunteer Advisor to provide leadership, specialist technical advice and strategic support for volunteering across the organisation. As a Defra-funded post within a Forestry England-wide programme, the Programme manager for volunteering will take a lead role in shaping, guiding and embedding volunteer involvement within the Biodiversity and Resilience Programme, ensuring volunteer activity delivers meaningful, measurable outcomes for nature recovery and forest resilience.

While Forestry England has not always been known for our conservation work, we have bold ambitions to be a leading force for nature recovery. Our progress is real and measurable: FSC certified since 1999, WWF's 'Gift to the Earth' award in 2001, and commitments to restore all our ancient woodlands in 2007 and 11,000 hectares of open habitats in 2013. In 2022 we launched our first Biodiversity Plan with a clear goal to make the nation's forests the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England.

Working closely with the Nature Recovery Programme team, district delivery teams, biodiversity specialists and volunteer colleagues, this role will design, support and monitor volunteer opportunities that directly contribute to biodiversity, ecological recovery and forest resilience. The post is supported by a Volunteer Officer, who will work with districts to lead operational delivery, including volunteer recruitment, engagement and support for Forestry England-directed volunteers and local partner and community groups.

Through national leadership and technical expertise, this role will ensure Forestry England's biodiversity-focused volunteer programmes are effective, inclusive and safe, and that volunteering across the nation's forests consistently delivers high-quality outcomes aligned with our strategic objectives for nature recovery, forest resilience and long-term ecological health.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

Key Work Areas

- Provide specialist technical advice and national leadership on volunteering opportunities within the Nature Recovery Program and wider Forestry England Volunteer program relating to biodiversity /ecological volunteering, ensuring alignment with organisation and program goals and district operational needs.
- Work as an effective member of the national community partnership and volunteer team and in partnership with the Nature Recovery Program team at a national level to embed volunteer opportunities into program planning, monitoring, and delivery.
- Support district colleagues to support existing and develop new biodiversity volunteer programs, both delivered by ourselves and in partnership with local, regional or national organisations, fostering innovation and growth where resources allow.
- Provide technical support to District Volunteer Coordinators, biodiversity teams, and supervisors, both 1:1 and through peer support sessions, ensuring safe, rewarding, and effective volunteer programmes.
- Work with the existing technical volunteer technical advisor to complete the annual audit program for volunteer and community partnership activity across districts and relevant business areas.
- Support the development, improvement, and use of Forestry England's CRM system (Connections) and volunteer portal (My Forestry England), ensuring staff and volunteers can use these systems effectively for biodiversity focused programmes.
- Produce data and reports from Connections and other sources to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of biodiversity volunteering.
- Contribute to the review and maintenance of relevant Policy, Practice and Guidance (PPG) frameworks relating to volunteering and community partnerships for Forestry England.

- Working with the wider volunteer team and appropriate departments to ensure the provision of relevant training for biodiversity volunteer and community partnership roles; and ensure staff receive consistent and high-quality training in volunteer management.
- Support the development of business cases where additional resources, training, system development, or expanded delivery are required, with the National Community Partnership and Volunteer Lead, and the Nature Recovery Program Manager.
- Manage and monitor pre-engagement check processes for biodiversity related volunteer roles, ensuring compliance and safeguarding standards.
- Represent Forestry England in relevant national volunteer and biodiversity networks, including engagement with the Environmental Volunteer Network Group (EVG).
- Support partnership development with local environmental groups, specialist conservation organisations, and community partners delivering biodiversity volunteering on Forestry England land.
- Work collaboratively with national teams (Ecology, Wildlife, Forest Planning etc.) to integrate volunteer contributions into wider programmes and aspirations.
- Identify areas for improvement or risk within biodiversity volunteer management and work with the Community Partnership and Volunteer Lead to shape strategic direction and business planning.

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

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Experienced in volunteer management, including recruitment, onboarding, training, ensuring delivery of an inclusive program.
- Knowledge of relevant health and safety legislation and best practice in its application of volunteer management within the outdoor environment.
- Experience in working within a team and with other disciplines and stakeholders. Candidates must be able to engage with and motivate geographically dispersed teams and be conversant with the remote working technology such as Ms Teams and SharePoint.
- Strong project and contract management skills, including risk, budget, and change control.
- Proficient in Microsoft systems including Teams, SharePoint, Excel, Word and PowerPoint.
- Experienced in providing advice and guidance around volunteer management, both within your own organisation workforce, and supporting partnership and third-party groups, who engage volunteers within their proposed work to be delivered on our land.
- Experience of engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Experience in procurement and financial reporting.
- Experience of working in a forestry or rural environment and delivering volunteer programmes within this setting.
- Experience of Customer Relation Management or Volunteer Management systems.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- Experience and relevant qualification in project management.
- Experience of working in environments with a high degree of public access.
- Experience of undertaking procurement activities in the public sector and managing contracts across multiple teams.
- The duties of the post require the applicant to have a full current driving license that enables them to drive in the UK. The Forestry Commission is willing to consider proposals put forward by applicants that would allow them to do the job by any other means.

Qualifications

Essential

- Candidates must hold a degree or be able to demonstrate equivalent experience in land-management disciplines, volunteer or people management.

