

Job Description - Operations Manager - High Lodge (PB5)

Job summary

High Lodge is one of Forestry England's flagship outdoor recreation destinations, receiving over 500,000 visitors annually and offering high-quality facilities, trails, heritage features, play areas, cycling, events, and commercial partnerships.

As the Operations Manager, you will lead the delivery, management and development of recreation operations across High Lodge and support recreation management across wider beat areas. The role is responsible for day-to-day operational excellence, facility and asset management, health and safety leadership, contract oversight, budget management, and developing a positive and inclusive "one-team" culture.

You will play a central role in ensuring that High Lodge provides an outstanding visitor experience while contributing to the wider East District recreation strategy, commercial growth targets and Forestry England's values of sustainability, safety, access and wellbeing.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

Leadership & People

- Lead, manage and develop the recreation team (Recreation Rangers, Assistant Rangers, Craftsperson roles, apprentices).
- Provide coaching, direction and support to foster a positive, inclusive and collaborative "one-team" culture.
- Act as Duty Manager on a rota (including weekends, public holidays, peak visitor periods).
- Promote Forestry England's values, behaviours and health and safety culture ("Look Out & Look After").

Health, Safety & Compliance

- Ensure full compliance with health and safety guidance including PPG 61 and 62.
- Oversee safe working practices for staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors.
- Lead and support accident investigations, reporting, and corrective actions.
- Maintain safe and compliant recreational facilities including play areas, trails, cycling routes and buildings.

Recreation Operations & Facility Management

- Oversee the day-to-day management and presentation of High Lodge facilities, including buildings, play, trails, heritage and visitor infrastructure.
- Lead building and asset management, facility inspections, audits and civil engineering-related works.
- Maintain High Lodge's buildings to statutory standards and customer expectations, working with Estates and specialist teams where required.
- Implement district-wide Woodland Access Review actions and manage permissions, unauthorised trails and volunteer activities.

Commercial Management & Business Development

- Identify and develop opportunities for commercial growth while ensuring alignment with sustainable land management principles.
- Manage budgets, monitor income/expenditure and report on variances.
- Oversee delivery of commercial activities contributing towards c.£1.5m of annual income.

- Support the growth and diversification of the recreation business across East District beats.

Contract & Partnership Management

- Lead contract management for recreation-related contracts (e.g., cleaning, vegetation management, gate locking, maintenance).
- Manage contractors' performance and health & safety compliance.
- Work closely with external partners, concessionaires (e.g. Go Ape), volunteers and stakeholders.
- Achieve value for money through fair, transparent procurement processes.

Events & Programme Delivery

- Collaborate with the Visitor Services Manager on event development and delivery, including Forestry England-led events (e.g., Forest Live) and externally delivered events.
- Support the planning, permissions, logistics and safe delivery of activities and special events.

Stakeholder Engagement & Representation

- Build and maintain strong relationships with internal teams (Sustainable Land Management, Civils, Ecology, Estates, Marketing).
- Represent Forestry England at external meetings where required.
- Provide site information and updates at internal district and national meetings.

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

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Experience in outdoor recreation operations or a public-facing role in a comparable environment.
- Experience leading teams and managing staff, volunteers or contractors.
- Demonstrable experience of health, safety and wellbeing management, including risk assessments and incident reporting.
- Proven experience in facilities or asset management.
- Understanding of budget management, income/expenditure monitoring and commercial delivery.
- Experience of contract management and delivering value for money.
- Ability to engage stakeholders, partners and volunteers effectively.
- Competent IT user (Microsoft Office applications; experience with ForesterWeb desirable).

Desirable professional and technical experience

- Understanding of Forestry England recreation practices and national standards.
- Experience managing tenants or partnership businesses.
- Project management experience.
- Knowledge of managing volunteer programmes.
- Qualification in a relevant discipline (NVQ, HND, Degree).

Qualifications

Essential

- a GCSE in Maths and English or functional skills equivalent.
- Full current UK Driving Licence (or the ability to fulfil the needs of the role through alternative means)

Desirable

- A relevant vocational or academic qualification in recreation, land management, environmental management or similar discipline.