

Job Description - Forest Planning Skills and Capability Lead (PB4)

Job summary

Forestry England is a leader in sustainable forest management, caring for the nation's forests for future generations. This is supported by more than 250 Forest Plans, which translate our organisational strategy and ambitions into practical, localised, long-term plans. Forest Plans underpin our UKWAS certification, provide regulatory approval for our operations and are the primary means by which we communicate our management intentions to stakeholders.

Forest planning is a rapidly evolving profession, at the forefront of applying advances in GIS, remote sensing data analysis and artificial intelligence to support sustainable land management.

This role will sit within the National Operations Forest Planning team and play a key part in shaping the future of forest planning across Forestry England. You will:

- Lead a new Trainee Forest Planner programme, recruiting and developing the next generation of Forest Planners.
- Support and develop our existing team of Forest Planners, providing technical expertise and training, and helping them navigate complex challenges.
- Identify opportunities to improve processes, capability and approaches across the forest planning function.
- Support the national forest planning team in providing strategic leadership, direction and continuous improvement.

This is a rare opportunity to influence the future of forest planning in England. The decisions supported by Forest Plans shape forests for decades to come, and through this role you will help develop the people, skills and innovation needed to deliver resilient, productive and inspiring forests for future generations.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

Lead the Trainee Forest Planner programme

- Plan and deliver a comprehensive programme of work for annual cohorts of up to six trainees, including structured training, practical experience and supervision of their work.
- Mentor, coach and support trainees throughout their development, helping them build the skills, knowledge and professional confidence required to become successful Forest Planners.
- Work closely with district teams acting as hosts for trainees to ensure a high-quality and consistent development experience.
- Lead the annual recruitment of trainees, including advertising, sifting and an assessment centre, working with a recruitment agency and HR colleagues as appropriate.
- Review and update the trainee prospectus and development programme to ensure it stays fit for purpose and aligned with the future needs of Forestry England.

Build organisational capability and skills in forest planning

- Act as a source of expertise in forest planning, supporting the professional development of colleagues across Forestry England.
- Design and deliver training, guidance and learning resources relating to forest planning and associated disciplines where appropriate.
- Build effective relationships and networks across Forestry England to identify knowledge gaps, capability needs and opportunities for professional development.
- Foster a collaborative community of practice, encouraging knowledge sharing, continuous learning and the dissemination of best practice.
- Identify opportunities to improve processes, guidance, systems and approaches to forest planning, contributing to continuous improvement and organisational learning.
- Support the translation of forest planning requirements into practical tools, guidance and resources for operational teams.
- Work closely with other Skills and Capability Leads in the National Operations team, to ensure that work is coordinated and maximises collective impact.

Support district forest planning teams

- Provide technical expertise across all aspects of forest planning to support Forest Planners and help deliver efficient, high-quality outcomes.
- Support districts and Forest Planners in challenging or complex cases, such as difficult stakeholder engagement and regulatory requirements like Habitat Regulations Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments. Support the implementation and dissemination of new forest planning processes, tools and approaches across Forestry England.
- Help identify opportunities to make greater use of innovation, technology and data to improve forest planning practice.

Support the national forest planning team

- Collate, analyse and interpret forest planning information to support monitoring, reporting and continuous improvement of the function. This will include maintaining oversight of Forest Plan status, renewal schedules and delivery across Forestry England.
- Prepare and present reports, briefings and papers on forest planning matters for a range of audiences.
- Contribute to the development of future approaches to forest planning, helping ensure the function remains effective, resilient and aligned with organisational priorities.
- Represent the forest planning team in meetings, working groups and stakeholder forums.
- Support internal and external audits relating to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard.

Stakeholder engagement and influencing

- Develop and maintain effective relationships with internal and external stakeholders to support delivery of forest planning objectives.
- Work closely with key roles across Forestry England, Forest Services, and Forest Research.
- Support clear and consistent communication of Forestry England's approach to forest planning, helping stakeholders understand its importance and practical application.

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Experience of forest planning, with a strong understanding of woodland and forest management.
- Experience of supporting colleague development through training, coaching, mentoring, or knowledge-sharing activities.
- Experience of using GIS and spatial data.
- Working knowledge of the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) and UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS).
- Ability to communicate complex technical information clearly and effectively to a range of audiences.
- Competent user of Microsoft Office, including Excel, PowerPoint, Word and Teams.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- Experience of delivering structured training programmes, workshops or professional development activities.
- Strong project management and organisational skills, with the ability to coordinate activities, manage competing priorities and deliver work to agreed timescales and resources.
- Strong analytical skills, including the ability to collate, interpret and present data and evidence to support decision-making, monitoring and reporting.

Qualifications

Essential

- Educated to degree level in forestry, ecology or similar discipline, or equivalent professional experience.
- A full current driving license

Desirable

- Professional membership of the Institute of Chartered Foresters (or equivalent) or can demonstrate working towards chartered status.