

Job Description - Ecologist: Biodiversity (PB5)

Job summary

Our vision is that the nation's forests will provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England. The Biodiversity Ecologist will play a key role in the delivery of that vision by inspiring others to support our work for nature. A key responsibility of the job is the maintenance and enhancement of SSSI condition through the creation and implementation of management plans. The postholder will also focus on the conservation of important protected habitats and species through Defra funded projects. The role will provide ecological advice to ensure species, habitats and designated sites are managed in accordance with wildlife legislation, policy and best practice guidance when implementing these projects. The postholder will also assist in the restoration of ancient woodland and connectivity across the District through supporting operational teams. We've not always been known for our conservation work, but Forestry England 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](#).

Explore our work to see how we're putting nature recovery at the heart of England's forests:

- [White-tailed eagle reintroduction](#)
- [Nightjar Conservation](#)
- [Creating Wilder Forests](#)

Forestry England's Biodiversity Programme is a multi-year work stream to accelerate nature recovery at scale in England. With a multi-million-pound budget, supported by Defra and a growing portfolio of external funders, 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 is that the nation's forests will provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England. A key responsibility of the job is the maintenance and enhancement of SSSI condition and the conservation of important protected habitats and species through Defra funded projects. The role will provide ecological advice to ensure species, habitats and designated sites are managed in accordance with wildlife legislation, policy and best practice guidance when implementing these projects. The postholder will also assist in the restoration of ancient woodland and nature network connectivity across the District through supporting operational teams.

The role is based in Forestry England's North District which covers Northumberland, Cumbria, County Durham and North Lancashire. This is an exciting role, at the forefront of nature recovery in Forestry England. Reporting to North District Nature Recovery Team, the post holder will also work closely with other district-based staff, including operational teams and foresters. The post holder will be part of a growing team of colleagues across the country delivering similar nature recovery projects, sharing expertise and experience.

This role is funded by DEFRA rather than through Forestry England generated revenue and is therefore subject to government spending reviews. While DEFRA has indicated long-term support for the Biodiversity Programme and we expect funding to continue, it is possible that funding levels may change at the end of any financial year depending on DEFRA's budget allocations. In the event of funding changes, we would prioritise retaining staff posts wherever possible. This approach is consistent for roles within publicly funded organisations. We are committed to keeping staff informed and supported through any changes.

The position is a 3-year fixed term appointment until the 31 March 2029, with the possibility, but no guarantee, of extension or permanency. The position is a full-time post to work 37 hours per week.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

- Proactively lead on the conservation of protected and priority habitats and species as supported and facilitated by the DEFRA Biodiversity funding.
- Provide ecological expertise and support across the district to facilitate efficient, effective and compliant forest operations as well as feed into forest plans, planning applications, minerals restoration, woodland creation schemes, building maintenance and development as well as related biodiversity net gain work.
- Champion high standards of health and safety and model our core value of 'look-out and look-after', take a stand against unsafe behaviours.
- Foster a positive team working relationship between the operational beat teams, the visitor service teams and the ecology team so as to inspire and engage everyone to drive beneficial change for the benefit of wildlife.
- Proactively liaise with communications and marketing colleagues so as to champion success and promote our work.
- Collaborate and build relationships with stakeholders including statutory bodies, NGOs, academic institutions and community groups to support sustainable forest management.
- Positively collaborate with colleagues and stakeholders to ensure full SSSI management plan coverage with shared understanding, active implementation and delivery of the agreed plans.
- Co-ordinate and liaise closely with colleagues to ensure effective and efficient planning, delivery and monitoring of works - ensuring compliance with agreed plans and procedures.
- Identify, develop and implement nature restoration projects ensuring readiness for funding opportunities and supporting both existing and new initiatives.
- Deliver strategic ecological monitoring and analysis, contributing to evidence-based decision making and natural capital approaches.

Any other tasks reasonably requested by your line manager

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Experience in writing management plans, in particular for designated sites such as SSSIs
- Good wildlife identification skills, especially for protected species.
- Able to design and deliver robust survey and monitoring programmes.
- Experience or an understanding of forestry and woodland management.
- An effective communicator, both written and spoken.
- Able to manage a complex workload, effectively prioritising and meeting deadlines.
- Up-to-date knowledge of environmental legislation, particularly biodiversity, and experience of its application to land management.
- Experience balancing ecological requirements with commercial and social objectives.
- Excellent team and partnership working, with a track record of interdisciplinary working.
- Experience working with local stakeholder groups, including landowners; non-governmental organisations; charities; and local government.
- Able to analyse data and evaluate evidence to produce succinct reports.
- Competent IT user with experience in MS Office suite of applications.
- Lead the Area Ecologist team, supporting effective and efficient delivery through a culture of teamwork and mutual support and collaboration.
- A track record of successfully developing, managing and coordinating land management or nature recovery projects.
- Experience managing and prioritising workloads, meeting deadlines and solving problems, and managing budgets
- Practical experience of a range of land management interventions
- Experience of procurement and contract management
- A great team worker, adept at working under your own initiative and as part of a multi-disciplinary team, taking ownership of the responsibilities of the role, building collaborative working relationships with colleagues and being adaptable in the face of changing situations.
- An excellent communicator, both written and verbally, able to adapt to a range of audiences.
- Competent using information technology, and sound knowledge of Microsoft Office suite, especially Word, Excel, Outlook, Teams.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- Ecological knowledge and understanding the key ecosystems and species present in the district.
- Experience or understanding of the UK forestry sector, the UK Forestry Standard and UKWAS certification.
- Experience of citizen science projects.
- Experience of managing small nature recovery projects.
- Good knowledge of biodiversity net gain and/or experience of the planning system.

- An understanding of natural capital and how it supports making land management decisions.
- Strong ecological knowledge and understanding of the key ecosystems found in the district.
- Knowledge and/or experience of working with livestock and/or graziers.
- Working knowledge of environmental legislation and designations, including their practical application.

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

- European protected species licences
- A member of a relevant professional body, e.g. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Institute of Chartered Foresters

