

Job Description - District 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 District Ecologist will play a key role in the delivery of that vision by leading the team of Area Ecologists in West District and 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.

The role manages Area Ecologists who are based across the District and are primarily tasked with supporting teams in delivering core operational plans in accordance with wildlife legislation, policy and best practice guidance.

You will have the opportunity to work with experienced colleagues, passionate about their contribution to sustainable forestry, conservation and the organisation's overarching strategy. You will help to connect everyone with the nation's forests, caring for them for people to enjoy, wildlife to flourish and business to grow.

You can expect to spend around one third of your time outdoors, often independently and remotely and you will usually be expected to manage your own time to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.

The role is funded by DEFRA rather than Forestry England generated revenue and is therefore subject to government spending reviews. While DEFRA has indicated long-term support for Forestry England's 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 with the possibility, but no guarantee, of extension or permanency. The position is a full-time post to work 37 hours per week. Normal working hours are Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm with an hour lunch break; and Friday 8.30am - 4.30pm with an hour lunch break. This can be worked flexibly by agreement.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

- Lead the Area Ecologist team, supporting effective and efficient delivery through a culture of teamwork and mutual support and collaboration.
- 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.
- Proactively lead on the conservation of protected and priority habitats and species as supported and facilitated by the DEFRA Biodiversity funding.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

And any other tasks reasonably requested by your line manager.

Location-specific information

The postholder will be based in the district office at Bank House, Coleford, Gloucestershire (other Forestry England office locations within the district may be considered). A blended working pattern can be agreed, with a minimum attendance at an office of 2-days per week.

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Experience in writing management plans, in particular for designated sites such as SSSI.
- 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.

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.

Qualifications

Essential

- The successful applicant is very likely to have a degree or equivalent in ecology, nature conservation or environmental management.

Desirable

- Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.
- European protected species licenses (EPS)
