Job Description – Species Recovery Officer (PB5)

Job summary

Forestry England's Biodiversity Plan sets out a bold ambition of nature recovery in the nation's forests. Working across five principal focus areas, Forestry England aims to restore resilient biodiversity in the nation's forests, delivering our vision to ensure that these forests provide the most valuable places for wildlife to thrive and expand in England.

Established in 2022, Forestry England's Forest Wilding Programme brings together two of these focus areas as part of a co-ordinated effort to deliver a step-change in nature recovery. Our species recovery work focuses on the reintroduction of key influential species, such as beaver, wildcat, pine marten, white-tailed eagle and wood ants. Alongside this nationwide effort, we have established Wild Areas on over 16,000ha of the nation's forests, bringing innovative approaches together with a sound evidence base to shift our land management to restore and enhance natural processes.

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.

Forestry England's Forest Wilding Programme Team is a small but growing group of dedicated professionals, whose primary focus is implementing evidence-based nature recovery on the ground. Though dispersed across the country, we work closely and collaboratively together, and with our district teams, to seize the opportunity presented by our Defra funding, to bend the curve on nature recovery, working at scale and pace. We work alongside colleagues whose focus is on improving designated sites management, accelerating the restoration of ancient woodlands, and on establishing nature networks across the nation's forests. Making a difference for nature is our passion, but so too is our wellbeing, and we have a supportive working environment, which champions mutual support, and maintaining a good work/life balance.

The Forest Wilding Programme currently manages over thirty species recovery projects across England, focussed on seven priority species: beavers, pine marten, wildcat, golden eagle, white-tailed eagle, wood ants and soil fungi. Alongside delivery projects which reintroduce and recover species, enabling projects facilitate these through science and evidence, taking larger-scale governance approaches and unblocking barriers. Understanding what comes next for species reintroductions is also critical to enable the appropriate planning and scoping. This post will play a critical role in coordinating, supporting and delivering these projects, working with District teams, project partners, Natural England and Defra to ensure the successful reintroduction of species across England.

One of two multi-species coordinator roles, which are dynamic and work across taxa as required, this post will initially focus on working with the Beaver Projects Coordinator to support delivery of beaver recovery projects, alongside development work on wood ants and soil fungi.

Species Recovery Officers support the delivery of species recovery through conservation translocation projects in our districts and across England, from planning and feasibility through to delivery and post-release monitoring. Translocations enable species restoration where natural recovery is not possible, or unlikely within a reasonable timeframe. International and national guidance (e.g. IUCN, Defra) informs best practice and evidence-based decision-making to optimise project success.

You will use your skills and experience in nature recovery and project management to implement the strategic delivery of species reintroductions and other conservation translocations across Forestry England's Forest District teams. Helping to co-ordinate activity and implementation both within and between related projects across England will be a key element of your responsibilities. You will provide the necessary expertise to help lead and guide projects through feasibility, delivery and post-release monitoring and management, following best practice and an evidence-informed approach. You will advise and play a key role in developing project documentation including project management plans, budgets, feasibility reports, risk assessments and translocation plans.

You will have or develop a sound understanding of relevant legislative and licensing requirements for species reintroductions. You will ensure excellent project governance is in place, as appropriate for projects, whether we are a lead or supporting partner. You will champion effective communication, evidence-based decision making and learnings across the Forest Wilding Programme, integrating species reintroductions with wild areas, and other areas of biodiversity delivery such as designated sites, nature networks and ancient woodland restoration.

Our species recovery projects are often delivered with other organisations, so to succeed in this role you will need to be experienced in working with internal and external stakeholders, including partners, landowners and funders. Effective communication will be a key part of this role, alongside the successful implementation of a robust communications plan. You will be willing to challenge established norms on management for nature and help drive nature recovery at scale and pace.

This is an exciting role, at the forefront of nature recovery in Forestry England. Reporting to the Species Recovery Manager in the Forest Wilding Programme Team, the post holder will work alongside colleagues in the national Environment and Nature Recovery team, as well as district-based staff, including ecologists, planners and foresters. The post holder will be part of a network of colleagues across the country delivering similar nature recovery projects, sharing expertise and experience.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

1) **Project Management**
   - Lead on the development of the vision and the project plan for one or more species recovery projects, and/or help govern and guide this where other organisations are the lead partner.
   - Apply appropriate project management principles to ensure effective and timely project implementation, in accordance with Forest Wilding Programme guidance and frameworks.
   - Ensure relevant project documentation is produced and maintained throughout the lifecycle of the project.
   - Develop annual and long-term work programmes and budgets for the project(s), supported by relevant project boards and sub-groups and the Forest Wilding Programme Team.
   - Manage a delegated budget to ensure the project(s) are managed within budgetary limits and fiscal guidelines.
   - Support funding bids for external funding and ensure that commitments to funders for the projects are appropriately met through project delivery.
   - Fulfil necessary corporate and funder reporting.

2) **Species Recovery**
   - Lead on progressing one or more species recovery projects, at scoping and feasibility, release, or post-release monitoring and management stage; working with district colleagues and the Forest Wilding Programme Team to recover influential species to our landscapes.
   - Follow and adhere to conservation translocation best practice to ensure an evidence-informed approach is applied throughout, whether we are a lead or supporting partner.
   - Ensure biological, ecological and socio-economic factors are considered and addressed throughout the project's lifecycle, including end-of-project review.
   - Procure and manage contracts and contractors, including ecological and social science consultants, and academic institutions.
   - Support the investigation of the (re)introduction of influential species to wild areas, which help restore natural processes.
   - Ensure Forestry England procurement and contract management regulations are followed throughout the project.

3) **Knowledge and Monitoring**
   - Lead or feed into the design, commission and interpretation of ecological, biological and socio-economic feasibility studies to guide species reintroduction projects.
   - Ensure best practice and evidence-informed release strategies and post-release monitoring and management are implemented.
   - Work with the national Forest Wilding programme team, colleagues from Forest Research and wider academia to learn from and share best practice from the projects.
   - Ensure appropriate licensing requirements are understood and met, in addition to considerations around forestry operations.

4) **Communications and public engagement**
   - Support the development of partnerships with other organisations to increase the scale and effectiveness of species recovery outcomes.
   - Lead or support the development and delivery of a stakeholder engagement plan(s) alongside district and national colleagues, building and managing relationships with relevant stakeholders.
   - Work with district and national communications colleagues to develop and implement a communications plan(s) for the project(s).
   - Showcase the projects to internal and external stakeholders to gain support for forest wilding, nature recovery and further delivery within the nation's forests.

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

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- A track record of successfully developing, managing and coordinating species recovery projects.
- An experienced project manager, able to manage and prioritise workloads, meet deadlines and solve problems, and manage budgets.
- Strong knowledge of ecology, biology, social science and/or human-wildlife coexistence with applied experience in species recovery initiatives, particularly conservation translocations.
- Experience of working on the recovery of one or more of FE's seven priority species, ideally with experience of practical reintroduction and/or management
- Experience of procurement and contract management, especially in the relevant areas of species recovery, land management, feasibility studies and ecological survey and monitoring
- 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.
- Demonstrable skills in stakeholder management, with a track record of developing constructive collaborative relationships with a wide range of stakeholder groups, including public sector, private sector, and non-governmental organisations, volunteers and community groups.
- 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

- Sound experience in the forestry sector. A working knowledge of environmental legislation and regulation designations, including their practical application, with relevance to species reintroductions

Qualifications

Essential

- Ecology, zoology or environmental degree, or equivalent professional experience in nature focussed species recovery and reintroductions.
- A full and current driving licence that enables you to drive in the UK.

Desirable

- A recognised project management qualification
- A member of a relevant professional body, e.g. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Institute of Chartered Foresters