

Job Description - Head of Recreation and Visitor Experience (PB3)

Job summary

As Head of Recreation and Visitor Experience, you will lead the Recreation and Communications function across the North of England, working collaboratively with colleagues across all teams and disciplines to deliver the Forest District Business Plan and contribute to our national strategy, Growing the Future.

You will champion the development of high quality, engaging visitor experiences across the nation's forests, ensuring programmes are delivered efficiently, safely, and to a consistently high standard. You will promote innovation, strengthen our health and safety culture, and drive commercial performance—delivering significant income to the District while seeking continual improvements in operational efficiency. You will also provide leadership for communications and stakeholder engagement across the District, ensuring this supports teams to advance our objectives.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

Leadership

- Provide a clear sense of direction and accountability for the Recreation and Communications team.
- Inspire, support, and develop staff to deliver high-quality results aligned with district and organisational objectives, and our values.
- Build a positive, inclusive team culture; encourage cross-functional collaboration, and engagement with national teams. Play an active role within the District senior leadership team.
- Ensure all operations comply with organisational guidance, with a focus on safe working practices and facilities for staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors.
- Embed continuous improvement, ensuring learning, development, and knowledge-sharing across district and national teams and site partners.
- Ensure agreed plans are delivered effectively through the wider team.

Business Development

- Shape and evolve the district's recreation and communications strategy, ensuring alignment with national priorities.
- Lead district teams to manage resources efficiently and deliver operational plans and services.
- Own and maintain the recreation and communications team business plan and investment pipeline.
- Build, monitor, forecast, and report budgets accurately throughout the year, taking necessary action to ensure we meet or exceed targets.
- Understand and respond to existing and emerging markets, using insight and understanding of audience to strengthen product development, marketing, commerciality and visitor engagement.

Communications

- Clearly communicate strategy and the value of Forestry England's work to staff, volunteers, visitors, partners and stakeholders, representing at local and national forums.
- Build positive, productive relationships with internal and external stakeholders across all recreation, communications, and district interests.
- Lead the District communications function and provide advice to other teams on stakeholder engagement and strategic communications matters.

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

Location-specific Information

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Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- Proven track record of leading, inspiring and coaching diverse teams to consistently deliver high-quality visitor experiences.
- Experience driving commercial growth and innovation, achieving both financial and non-financial outcomes within complex operational environments (ideally in outdoor recreation, leisure, or tourism).
- Experience in stakeholder engagement and/or strategic communications, with the ability to engage, influence, build partnerships, and coach others through challenging external public relations issues.
- Demonstrable commitment to fostering a positive health and safety culture.
- Clear commitment to diversity and inclusion, with a track record of building inclusive teams and ensuring accessible, welcoming public services.
- A valid driver's licence and be able to travel to the 5 main forest sites within the district.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- Experience leading capital projects through planning, development, and delivery.
- Experience working with local residents and communities.
- Knowledge of countryside access, land management, volunteering, or community outreach.

Qualifications

Desirable

- A relevant project or programme management qualification.