

Job Description - HLS Monitoring Project Officer (PB5)

Job summary

The successful candidate will join the Higher-Level Stewardship (HLS) project team based in the New Forest. The team plans and delivers landscape-scale habitat restoration projects with external funding from the New Forest HLS scheme. The Verderer's of the New Forest HLS scheme is focused on restoring and enhancing internationally-important habitats, renowned for their flora and fauna, and covering around 20,000 hectares. As the Monitoring Project Officer you will play a vital role in monitoring our habitat restoration projects in the New Forest.

Key responsibilities & accountabilities

To plan and manage the HLS monitoring programmes, working with our staff, stakeholders, specialists and volunteers to deliver the recommendations in agreed monitoring plans. This will include procuring and managing contracts for habitat and species surveys, leading on data management and analysis, and helping to communicate results to a wider audience.

Examples include:

- Managing and undertaking programmes of physical (geomorphological) surveys, water quality surveys, timelapse photography and fixed-point photography of wetland restoration sites.
- Commissioning, procuring and managing contracts for habitat mapping, vegetation surveys and specialist monitoring activities.
- Liaising with Environment Agency and other partners to ensure suitable deployment of in-house monitoring equipment, including remote telemetry water level loggers.
- Maintaining monitoring equipment and ensuring appropriate calibration, servicing and data quality standards are met.
- Identifying opportunities to adopt innovative monitoring techniques and technologies, such as remote sensing, digital monitoring systems and automated data collection methods.

Procure and manage specialist species monitoring and survey contracts:

- Work with Natural England advisers and other specialists to identify priority species surveys and monitoring requirements.
- Prepare specifications, procure and manage contracts for specialist species surveys.
- Act as the primary contact for consultants and contractors, ensuring surveys are delivered to agreed standards, timescales and budgets.
- Review and quality assure survey outputs, ensuring findings are suitable for informing management decisions.
- Collate, interpret and communicate survey results to colleagues, partners and stakeholders.
- Identify opportunities to address knowledge gaps through targeted monitoring and research.

Manage and deliver a programme of surveys monitoring the impact of our terrestrial restoration work:

- Undertake repeat vegetation surveys at bracken control, wood pasture restoration and heathland restoration sites.
- Work with Habitat Restoration Officers to identify priority monitoring locations and establish new monitoring sites where required.
- Develop long-term monitoring approaches to evaluate habitat condition and restoration outcomes.
- Ensure monitoring methods are applied consistently across sites and survey years.

- Analyse and interpret monitoring results to identify trends, successes and areas requiring further intervention.

Lead on hydrological data analysis and interpretation

- Undertake hydrological analysis using digital terrain models, LiDAR and ArcGIS Pro to inform restoration design and assess restoration outcomes.
- Explore and develop innovative approaches to hydrological analysis and modelling that support restoration objectives.
- Integrate hydrological, ecological and spatial datasets to provide a comprehensive understanding of site function and condition.
- Identify opportunities to improve hydrological monitoring and data collection across the restoration programme.

Lead on data management and analysis:

- Develop and maintain effective systems for storing, managing and sharing monitoring data.
- Analyse, interpret and synthesise the results of completed monitoring projects.
- Undertake quality assurance and validation of datasets collected internally and by contractors or partner organisations.
- Identify evidence gaps and opportunities for additional monitoring or research.
- Use ArcGIS Pro and other analytical tools to support projects monitoring the progress and effectiveness of restoration programmes.
- Integrate information from multiple monitoring sources to provide a robust evidence base for habitat management decisions.

Communicate monitoring outcomes and support evidence-based decision making

- Support Habitat Restoration Officers by preparing monitoring sections of Restoration Plans and presenting findings in a concise and accessible format.
- Produce high-quality reports, maps, presentations and summary materials to communicate monitoring results.
- Work with Communications Officers at Forestry England and the National Park Authority to share survey and monitoring outcomes with wider audiences.
- Explore and develop innovative methods of communicating monitoring findings, including StoryMaps, dashboards, web-based applications and data visualisation tools.
- Present findings at Freshwater and Wetland Restoration Forum meetings.
- Work with the HLS Project Manager to provide quarterly updates and evidence summaries for the HLS Board.

Work with external stakeholders to support other monitoring work related to habitat management in the New Forest.

- Provide technical support and guidance to university students and researchers undertaking studies within the National Park.
- Work collaboratively with organisations including the Environment Agency, Natural England and Freshwater Habitats Trust on wetland and freshwater monitoring initiatives.
- Liaise with specialist surveyors, contractors and research organisations to develop knowledge and enhance monitoring programmes.
- Represent the organisation at technical groups, workshops and stakeholder meetings.
- Identify and develop opportunities for collaborative projects and research partnerships.
- Promote the use of monitoring evidence to support landscape-scale conservation and restoration outcomes.

Coordinate and develop the Riverfly monitoring programme

- Work with Forestry England staff to establish, coordinate and maintain two Riverfly monitoring groups undertaking surveys between April and October.

- Collate, analyse and communicate monitoring results to relevant partners and stakeholders.
- Recruit, train and support volunteers participating in Riverfly monitoring activities.

Skills, knowledge & experience

Essential professional and technical experience

- At least 3 years' experience working within the environmental, ecological, conservation or land management sector.
- Demonstrable experience planning, coordinating and delivering ecological, habitat or environmental monitoring programmes.
- Experience undertaking vegetation and botanical surveys.
- Experience managing ecological survey projects and commissioning and managing external contractors.
- Experience analysing and interpreting environmental datasets.
- Experience using Geographic Information Systems (GIS), particularly ArcGIS Pro, for spatial analysis, mapping and interpretation.
- Experience producing monitoring reports and presenting technical information clearly to a range of audiences.
- Experience working collaboratively with multiple stakeholders.
- Full UK driving licence and willingness to undertake fieldwork across the New Forest.

Desirable professional and technical experience

- Knowledge of river, wetland and freshwater ecology, hydrology and restoration techniques.
- Experience undertaking hydrological analysis using GIS, LiDAR or digital terrain models.
- Experience using remote sensing, telemetry equipment, automated monitoring systems or emerging environmental monitoring technologies.

Qualifications

Essential

- Degree (or equivalent qualification/experience) in Ecology, Conservation, Environmental Science, Geography, Biology or a related discipline.

Desirable

- Analytical software qualifications such as R, Python or similar tools for environmental data analysis