

Job Description - Wild Areas 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 14,000ha 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.

The role will be working with seven projects in different landscapes across England from the Scottish border uplands to the South coast heathlands and west country ancient woodlands. Each of these Wild Areas are at different stages of development and implementation. Two projects are part of potential Landscape Recovery Projects and partnership working is considered essential to amplify the success of projects in the wider landscapes. The post holder will work closely with District teams across the country to support the development of new projects in meeting the Biodiversity Plan's Forest Wilding ambition.

Working as part of the national Forest Wilding Programme team, and with the Wild Areas Manager, you will use your skills and experience in nature recovery and project management to implement work packages aligned with the strategic delivery of Wild Areas across England. 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 be a key contributor to programme planning and programme management, helping to scope, define and implement wild area projects across the country. You will use your technical expertise to bring cross-cutting support across England, collecting and disseminating technical, ecological, legislative and regulatory knowledge, reports, guidance and advice to Wild Area projects, and assist with Wild Area monitoring, progress tracking and reporting.

You will play a key role in developing project documentation including project management plans, budgets, feasibility studies and land management plans. To ensure the effective delivery of projects to time, cost and specification, you will develop strong working relationships with Wild Area project officers, other district staff, contractors, consultants and stakeholders. You will champion effective communication, evidence-based decision making and learnings across the Forest Wilding Programme, integrating wild area activities with species translocations and other areas of biodiversity delivery such as designated sites, nature networks and ancient woodland restoration.

Our wild area 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 Wild Areas 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

- Co-develop the visions and project plans for Wild Area projects with project teams and project boards
- Apply appropriate project management principles to ensure effective and timely project implementation, in accordance with Forest Wilding Programme guidance and framework
- Produce, maintain and review relevant project documentation throughout the project lifecycles.
- Co-develop annual and long-term work programmes and budgets with Wild Area project teams, supported by relevant project boards and the Forest Wilding Programme Team.
- Support the Wild Areas Manager in the management of the national Wild Areas budget, ensuring that projects 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.
- Work with the Wild Areas Manager and Wild Area projects to ensure that programme, corporate and funder reporting requirements are met.

2) Land Management

- Support the development of land management plans for Wild Area projects, working with district colleagues and the Forest Wilding Programme Team to drive nature recovery at the landscape scale.
- Champion the investigation of appropriate techniques which will deliver the vision for Wild Areas in restoring natural processes, ensuring there is a sound evidence base for land management interventions.
- Help facilitate land management plans on the ground, including for example, installation of grazing infrastructure, management of herbivores, forest management, tree planting, peatland restoration, hydrological restoration where required].
- Work with the Wild Areas Manager to procure and manage contracts, services, technical equipment and contractors, including consultants and academic institutions.]
- Ensure Forestry England procurement and contract management regulations are followed throughout the project
- Support the investigation of the (re)introduction of influential species to wild areas, which help restore natural processes.

3) Knowledge and Monitoring

- Support the implementation of Forestry England's evidence framework, in assembling evidence to support decision-making and monitoring the success of land management interventions for nature recovery.
- Work with the national Forest Wilding programme team, colleagues from Forest Research and wider academia to learn from, identify synergies and efficiencies and share best practice across the Forest Wilding programme.
- Assist the Wild Areas Manager to Commission, manage and interpret surveys to gather baseline information relevant to wild area projects, including eDNA soil analysis, ecological and hydrological information.
- Undertake or commission feasibility studies to explore innovative approaches to secure nature recovery in wild areas

4) Communications and public engagement

- Support project teams in the development and delivery of a stakeholder management plans, and in building and managing relationships with relevant stakeholders
- Work with district and national communications colleagues to develop and implement communications plans for relevant wild areas and the Forest Wilding programme
- Where relevant, support the development of partnerships with neighbouring landowners to increase the scale and effectiveness of landscape scale nature recovery.
- Showcase the project 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 nature recovery projects.
- An experienced project manager, able to manage and prioritise workloads, meet deadlines and solve problems, and manage budgets
- Strong ecological knowledge, with practical experience of a range of land management interventions including in woodlands, heaths, wetlands, and uplands, relevant to the location of the role
- Experience of procurement and contract management, especially in the relevant areas of 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
- Experience of procurement and contract management.
- Working knowledge of environmental legislation and designations, including their practical application.

Qualifications

Essential

- Ecology or environmental degree, or equivalent professional experience in nature-focussed land management.
- 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