

**ROLE DESCRIPTION**

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| **JOB TITLE** | **POST NUMBERS** |
| **Senior Biodiversity Officer** | **H4015** |
| **DIRECTORATE** | **LOCATION** |
| Planning & Environmental Services | Hybrid working (Council Offices, Hailsham / homeworking) |
| **GRADE** | **OTHER ALLOWANCES** |
| WDC9 | Essential car user |
| **KEY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS** | **INTERNAL/EXTERNAL** |
| **Who will I be working with?** | **Internal:** Director of Place, Head of Planning & Environmental Services, Development Manager, Team Leaders, Head of Planning Policy, Economy & Climate Change, Planning Policy Manager, Development Management Team, other heads of service, other members of staff and councillors.**External:** Officers of the County Council and adjoining councils, town and parish councils, officers of government departments, non-government organisations, developers and their agents, members of the public and others associated with the development management function when acting for or on behalf of the District Council. |
| **How will I be interacting with others?** | On a daily basis through emails, phone calls, Teams or face-to-face interactions.Attending meetings both internally and externally.Attending planning committees.Sharing biodiversity and ecology information and providing expert biodiversity and ecology advice in a planning context to influence and negotiate good planning outcomes. |
| **STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES/LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY** |
| **What am I accountable for?** | Together with the Head of Planning & Environmental Services to exercise all the Council’s powers, duties, responsibilities, and functions to undertake planning powers under all relevant legislation, subject to exceptions as set out in the scheme of delegation.This includes matters specifically relating to biodiversity and ecology but, amongst other matters, can include advising on planning applications, progressing matters relating to biodiversity net gain, working on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, defending appeal decisions.Ensuring process and procedures of biodiversity and ecology matters are up to date, effective and efficient.Performance of the Biodiversity Officer.Leading on biodiversity and ecology matters, including assisting the Council in complying with the biodiversity duty.This role is designated a politically restricted post under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.A current full driving licence is required and you should own your own transport.Flexibility of working hours as required for occasional out of hours working. |
| **What are the consequences for me or the council?** | In the main the role is advisory to planning officers, but as a specialist advisor decisions will often be taken in accordance with your advice. Poor decision taking will result in negative social, environmental and economic outcomes throughout the district.The role is also important in ensuring the natural environment is protected and enhanced, with a clear consequence of that not happening being the potential loss of or harm to the natural environment.Risk of legal action if decisions taken have erred in law or failing in our biodiversity duty.Poor performance can lead to increases in complaints and may result in designation by the Secretary of State.All of these have financial loss and reputational damage implications for the Council. |
| **DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY** (INDEPENDENCE) |
| **What actions can I take independently?**Management and progress of work relating to biodiversity and ecology: application consultations; matters relating to biodiversity net gain; collaborative work relating to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Local Wildlife Sites Initiative, Biodiversity Records Centre, etc.Responsible for all matters relating to the leadership, management and performance of the Biodiversity Officer, except where authorisation is required from the Team Leader, Development Manager or Head of Service.Authorisation of matters relating to all the Council’s powers, duties, responsibilities, and functions under all relevant planning legislation, subject to exceptions as set out in the scheme of delegation. Specifically those relating to biodiversity and ecology matters.Take decisions to ensure service delivery and to provide 5\* customer service having regard to the approach set out by the Head of Service and Development Manager.**When do I need to involve others?**The role has a high level of autonomy, particularly in relation to the processing and progress of biodiversity and ecology matters, along with delegation from the Head of Planning & Environmental Services and the Development Manager. Where matters are not delegated to you, having regard to the scheme of delegation and Council policies and procedures, matters will be escalated to the Team Leader, Development Manager or Head of Service. |
| **JOB PURPOSE** (COMPLEXITY) |
| **Why does this job exist?**The Development Management Team are responsible for the Council’s role as local planning authority, specifically that in relation to planning application, enforcement and related matters. This role is to be the lead in providing specialist biodiversity and ecology advice in relation to those matters. It also ensures the Council can fulfil its biodiversity duty under the Environment Act, where we must have regard to what can be done to conserve and enhance biodiversity across our services.This role also provides leadership and management of the Biodiversity Officer and contributes to an overall effective and efficient delivery of the Council’s development management function.**How does it contribute to the Council overall?**The role contributes to achieving good planning outcomes – with a particular focus on biodiversity and ecology matters – which in turn ensures that the priorities of the Council’s Strategy are being delivered, including: supporting tackling climate change, protecting the countryside and biodiversity, moving to more active forms of travel and use of sustainable transport, promoting renewable energy, improving infrastructure, delivering affordable homes and supporting the local economy. |

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| **ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES**  |
| **What are the most important things I will be doing?**1. To provide expert advice on ecology and biodiversity issues to enable the Council to make robust planning decisions as competent authority regarding protected species, European protected species and European protected site assessments. To provide advice to ensure the Council makes planning decisions that provide net gain in biodiversity, and meet environmental legislation, local and national policies and government guidance.
2. To be responsible for leading and co-ordinating the Council’s response in respect of national and local habitat and species requirements, biodiversity strategies, biodiversity net gain, District level protected species licencing, local nature partnership and ecological networks/corridors with other local authorities and multi-agency working.
3. To prepare technical and robust statements and proof of evidence and to attend public and local enquiries, hearings, policy examinations and court proceedings as the Council's expert witness in the professional sectors of ecology and biodiversity.
4. To liaise with all sections of the department and other departments where appropriate. To liaise with the County Council, neighbouring authorities, government and other organisations in respect of ecology, biodiversity, landscape and arboricultural matters including cross-authority projects, plans, multi-agency working and provision of advice as appropriate to enhance the service.
5. To provide of an authoritative, consistent and high quality ecology, biodiversity, landscape and arboriculture service to the Development Management Team, Planning Policy Team and senior management including environmental requirements, consistence with best practice and wildlife law.
6. To work with the planning validation team and planning officers to ensure applications are sufficient in ecological and biodiversity information, as per legal requirements and government guidance.
7. To assist in the development of planning policy and guidance in relation to Council functions for ecology and biodiversity.
8. To assist the Planning Enforcement Team in progressing enforcement action as appropriate. To liaise with other statutory bodies in this regard including other local authorities, the Forestry Commission, Natural England, the Environment Agency and wildlife crime officers where appropriate.
9. To provide advice on general and technical biodiversity issues in relation to planning applications or enforcement matters, being able to provide technical responses in tight timeframes where required.
10. To provide support and guidance to the Planning Enforcement Team when considering enforcement action in relation to ecology and biodiversity enforcement matters.
11. To, at the request of officers, attend relevant pre-applications, site visits, case conferences etc.
12. Multi-agency working with partner organisations, neighbouring authorities and professional bodies on biodiversity strategies or projects, including the Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre, Local Nature Partnership, Local Wildlife Sites Partnership, Association of Local Government Ecologists, The South Downs National Park, The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Natural England and the Environment Agency. To represent the Council on relevant steering groups on such strategies or projects and provide Council influence.
13. To undertake critical appraisal of planning applications and accompanying technical scientific document, assessment and interpretation in relation to ecology and biodiversity in line with legislation, government standing advice, British standards, best practice, and local and national policies and guidelines including Supplementary Planning Guidance. To undertake the critical appraisal of preliminary ecological appraisals, protected species surveys, EIAs, Appropriate Assessments, planning statements, landscape visual impact assessments, arboricultural assessments, arboricultural impact assessments and other related reports submitted by applicants and their agents in connection with planning applications, in line with the above legislation, policies and standards. To ensure development provides net gains in biodiversity and features or habitats required for adequate mitigation, compensation or enhancement as per local and national policies or biodiversity strategies. This includes interrogation, scrutinising and analysis of technical data and biodiversity data on GIS.
14. To identify and to undertake investigations and monitoring and reporting of non-compliance with ecology and biodiversity conditions imposed upon the granting of planning permission, in line with service guidelines and guidance and to assist the Planning Enforcement Team in progressing enforcement action as appropriate.
15. To prepare robust technical scientific statements for written representations, planning appeals and attend any hearings as the Council's expert witness on ecology and biodiversity as necessary.
16. To assist in improving standards of ecology and biodiversity, specification and implementation, to achieve the Service’s and Council’s aims and policies, including the education and influencing of staff and giving talks as appropriate to other bodies.
17. To advise the Council on the ecology and biodiversity, in the management of Council owned sites including advising the Council on implications of its actions and providing land management advice and ecological survey for the purpose of the conservation of biodiversity.
18. To undertake ecological projects, desktop and on-site ecological surveys, ecological site evaluations and provision of technical evidence or ecological land advice for the Council where the business or senior management requires and to support the Council’s strategies, Local Plan and landholdings. This may include critical appraisal of European Protected Site ecological monitoring, ecological survey and review of local wildlife sites or critical analysis or undertaking long-term ecological monitoring of European Protected sites.
19. To undertake training of members, parish councils technical staff, planning officers and other staff on matters relating to ecology, biodiversity and wildlife law and local authority responsibilities to this regard.
20. To maintain records appropriate to the fulfilment of the above stated activities and the development of computerised record systems and databases. To contribute to the existing ecological and species record databases in Sussex held at the local biological records centre.
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| **What other activities will I be responsible for?**1. To undertake such duties as the Head of Planning & Environmental Services may from time to time require.
2. Where appropriate and competent to do so, provide advice on tree and landscape issues in relation to planning applications, enforcement matters and the service level agreement with the SDNPA when working with or substituting for the Arboricultural Officer or Assistant Arboricultural Officer.
3. To liaise with and provide training as required for elected members on biodiversity and ecology matters.
4. Support the Development Manager and Team Leader with the improvement and updating of the technical planning conditions ensuring they are in step with NPPF/NPPG and local policies.
5. To assist with the development of the council’s IT systems in conjunction with the Head of Service, Development Manager, Team Leaders and the Planning Services Improvement & Admin Manager.
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| **Will I be managing others?**YesDirectly responsible for the Biodiversity Officer. |
| **Who do I report into?**Built & Natural Environment Team Leader |

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| **PROGRESSION & DEVELOPMENT**  |
| **What are the development opportunities for me?**The Council will provide opportunities for training. This will include training for continual professional development to maintain expert ecology, biodiversity and planning knowledge and competency and training to gain personal skills aiding professional development and improving career progression possibilities.The role includes leading and managing the Biodiversity Officer where practicing that will aid professional development. |
| **How will I know I am being successful in this role?**Success will be achieved by delivery of successful projects (i.e. BNG implementation, wildlife site reviews, etc.), maintaining and enhancing an effective consultation process, through sound and consistent decision taking on biodiversity and ecology matters, consistently enforcing regulations where needed, providing meaningful input into the Council’s new Local Plan, positive customer feedback, having good working relationships with elected members and town and parish councils, ensuring a positive and productive team, and good performance in relation to relevant Council set KPIs and performance standards set by government.After an initial probation period (20 weeks) you would move over to our annual appraisal process, which includes a 6-month review. The appraisal lists any team or individual targets which are assessed to monitor progress and identify successes or areas of concern before they cause a problem.In addition, there are regular check-ins with the Team Leader to discuss expectations and performance and to identify any further support or guidance that is required. |
| **What is the required learning for me in this role?**Mandatory / compulsory training, including but not limited to: corporate induction requirements, cyber security, equalities and diversity, health and safety, data protection and freedom of information.Management training, including but not limited to: recruitment and selection training, appraisal training and performance management.Continual professional development requirements to maintain professional status and competency. |

This is an outline job description designed to summarise the key responsibilities of the role and is not intended to cover every task that may be required. It may be subject to change to meet the evolving needs of the organisation.

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| **Additional Role Requirements** |
| Standards of Conduct | You will be required to comply with the Council’s Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions, and at all times deal honestly with the Council, Members, Colleagues and all those who have dealings with the Council, including customers and suppliers.You must behave with integrity, act lawfully and demonstrate a strong commitment to ethical values. To positively demonstrate the Wealden values yourself and to continue to build the culture of the Wealden values through the appointment, management, appraisal and development of staff (as well as third party providers). |
| Health & Safety/Risk Management | Wealden District Council’s Health & Safety Policy and other safety procedures and guidelines are deemed part of this job description. Employees must look after their own health, safety and welfare and be mindful of other persons who may be affected by their acts. Employees must co‑operate and comply with management instructions regarding H&S issues and report all accidents, incidents and problems to their supervisor, manager or other senior members of staff, in line with the H&S policies.You will need to be compliant with the Council’s risk management policies and procedures. These describe the Council’s commitment to risk management, the recognition that our aim is to protect colleagues and visitors from harm, and stress that all colleagues have a responsibility to minimise risk.  |
| Governance Standards | Comply with the relevant governance standards applicable to the Council as communicated to the post-holder from time to time.  |
| Data Protection | To comply with Council Policies and the Data Protection Act in all respects, with particular relevance to the protection and use of staff and customer information.  |
| Confidentiality | Council colleagues are required to ensure that information about customers and staff is safeguarded to maintain confidentiality and is kept securely in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18). The Council’s Data Security and Protection policy ICT policies provide guidance on how this can be achieved.  |
| Communication | To encourage innovation and positive challenge through effective involvement, motivation and communication with Officers, Members, Partners and other Stakeholders, actively promoting the Council’s reputation and image as an employer of choice. |
| Digital/Records Management | To direct the identification, development and implementation of digital and other systems and procedures which are aligned to the Council’s Drive to Digital Strategy and are shaped to reflect our customers’ and stakeholders’ needs.To maintain Council customer and staff records (both paper and electronic) in accordance with Council policies.  |
| Freedom ofInformation | To provide advice and assistance to all persons who propose to make, or have made requests for information, and to ensure all requests for information are managed appropriately in accordance with Council Freedom of Information procedures.  |
| Security | To comply with Council policies to ensure there is a safe and secure environment that protects Members, staff and visitors and their property, and the physical assets and the information of the organisation.  |
| Other duties | Participate in such non-routine duties as elections and Emergency Planning as directed by the Chief Executive to include, where appropriate, the setup of a Rest Centre. |
| Freedom to Speak Up(Whistleblowing) | You have responsibility for customer and staff welfare and should raise any concerns relating to a breach of Council policies and procedures with your manager or refer to HR for alternative options.  |
| Environmental Impact | You will ensure compliance with the Council’s environmental management policies and procedures. These describe the Council’s commitment to climate change and carbon management, the recognition that our aim is to protect the environment and the use of natural resources that all staff have a responsibility towards.  |
| Performance review | This Job Description will be used as a basis for individual performance review between you and your line manager. The Job Description covers only the key result areas and, as such, does not intend to provide a comprehensive list of objectives. Specific objectives will be reviewed each April and may develop to meet the changing needs of the service. You will need to take due account, in the way they achieve the key result areas, of Council policies and procedures.  |
| Equality and Diversity | To take responsibility and comply with the Council’s Equal Opportunities policy (which makes a commitment to promote equal opportunities and equality of all protected characteristics in Wealden), Officers’ Code of Conduct, Data Protection and other relevant policies, procedures and legislation, to ensure these are embedded and applied throughout the service in both service provision and employment issues. |

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| **PERSON SPECIFICATION** |

| **CRITERIA** | **ATTRIBUTES** | **ESSENTIAL**  | **DESIRABLE** | **ASSESSED BY****Application Form / Interview / Practical Assessment** |
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| **Knowledge & Experience** | Considerable experience in the field of ecology, biodiversity and related matters and experience in the application of that knowledge within a planning policy / development management context | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview / Practical Assessment |
| Experience in the field of arboricultural, landscaping and related matters |  | ✓ | Application Form / Interview |
| Experience dealing with customers and/or members of the public | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Experience of preparation of the evidence base for development plan documents and other associated planning policy documents |  | ✓ | Application Form / Interview |
| Appropriate management experience including performance management and supervision of staff | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Experience of presentation at committee, public inquiries and public meetings | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Knowledge of the relevant law, government policy and guidance and practice relating to planning, ecology and biodiversity. | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview / Practical Assessment |
| Knowledge of local government |  | ✓ | Application Form / Interview |
|  | Knowledge of performance indicators | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| **Skills** | Must have the ability to take initiative and progress projects, both independently and as part of a team, acting in a positive, constructive, concise and pleasant manner whilst providing quality design solutions | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| To carry out negotiations in a positive, constructive and professional manner to deliver positive planning outcomes. Ability to support and articulate these solutions in meetings with others including outside bodies (e.g. town and parish councils) | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Can deliver 5\* customer service | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Good communication skills - ability to be articulate and concise | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Has appropriate ICT skills including experience in using Microsoft Office products | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Demonstrates initiative and is solutions focused to help manage and complete tasks in an efficient and timely manner and to meet targets | ü |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Strategic and lateral thinker who is pro-active, innovative, self-motivated and works well under pressure | ü |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Enthusiastic and ability to work in a team (team player) and assist others in achieving team objectives | ü |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Friendly personality, enjoys meeting the public and dealing with enquiries | ü |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Acts professionally and ethically at all times in accordance with the RTPI code of conduct (or code of conduct of another professional body related to specialism) | ü |  | Application Form / Interview |
| Occupational requirement to have a command of spoken English sufficient for effective performance | ✓ |  | Application Form / Interview |
| **Qualifications/****Education** | Educated to undergraduate degree level or higher in biodiversity, ecology or related discipline or, if without the minimum level of qualification, can demonstrate membership or eligibility for membership of an appropriate professional body as set out below. | ✓ |  | Application Form |
| Membership or eligibility for membership of an appropriate professional body or institute relating to biodiversity and ecology (i.e. CIEEM) | ✓ |  | Application Form |

