

Hastings Borough Council

Job Description

Job Title: Country Parks Officer
Grade: 7
Reports to: Parks & Open Spaces Manager

Job Purpose:

Deliver high quality site management and maintenance work at Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve and other nature reserves in the borough. Apply specialist knowledge and practical skills to implement and monitor the delivery of countryside stewardship grants at the reserve and be the principle on-site point of contact and liaison for members of the public and community groups, advocating and explaining site management priorities.

Working with partners, develop and coordinate a programme of volunteer and community engagement events and activities at Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve and at our network of Local Nature Reserves and community wildlife areas in the borough, including Combe Valley Countryside Park.

Key Responsibilities:

- Have an on-site presence at Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve and be the principal contact for members of the public on management and maintenance of the reserve, engaging with visitors, partners, and users of the reserve to ensure management priorities are fully explained, communicated, and implemented.
- Work with partners to develop, coordinate, and implement an annual programme of community events and activities at Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve and other nature areas where appropriate, supporting, and engaging community groups, working with key partners such as Groundwork South and others to ensure conservation-based activities are coordinated, develop community skills and understanding wildlife and the importance of natural spaces to positive health and well-being outcomes.
- Implement the council's Countryside Stewardship 2023-2033 grant, ensuring the terms and conditions of the grant are met, through appropriate work plans, and seek further grant aid from additional sources where appropriate to help progress the management of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve and other reserves in the Borough.
- Ensure all on-site (way-markers, information boards) and off-site information (web site) about Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve and its management, wildlife and habitats is kept up to date, (together with other community based

and local wildlife sites where appropriate), and work with HBC marketing to deliver new interpretation, signs, and information.

- Be the principal point of contact and expertise for Combe Valley Countryside Park, working with a range of partners at the site including Groundwork South as managing agents, the Friends of the park and the various community initiatives being undertaken at the park.

Key result areas

- To have an on-site presence at Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve, monitoring the condition and quality of the reserve infrastructure and facilities, coordinating repairs to fences, gates, signs, and other site infrastructure as appropriate, or report to others, defects and issues for resolution, engaging specialist contracts where appropriate, and ensure that all health, safety and welfare requirements and responsibilities within the post holder's responsibilities are met.
- Implement and monitor compliance with annual and long-term countryside stewardship requirements at the reserve through liaison with contractors and partners, provide advice to visitors, key stakeholders, specialist groups and users on countryside stewardship and the management objectives of the reserve, undertaking and coordinating ecological monitoring and data collection when required and using the Nofence virtual fencing technology and liaise with Natural England representatives as appropriate.
- Work in collaboration with partners such as Groundwork South and others to seek additional funding for conservation and nature-based projects and community engagement activities, practical conservation and skills training programmes, and educational/ school visits, and health and well-being benefits of the natural environment at all nature reserves in the borough.
- Develop and lead programmes of guided walks and talks, practical conservation activities, skills training programmes, and educational/school visits, to advocate health and well-being, natural history, biodiversity, and management of the reserve, working with partners to help deliver these initiatives, and ensure all volunteers are properly supported, motivated, trained and equipped to fulfil the roles and responsibilities required of them with the appropriate tools and workwear.
- Proactively engage with visitors and users of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve to give advice, help with enquiries, take feedback, and rectify or report issues for resolution, and engage with dog walkers to reduce conflict between walkers, dogs and livestock and reduce disturbance to wildlife and livestock, prevent misuse of the site and enforce the Reserve's Bye Laws.
- Ensure that information on Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve, signage, posters, website information and leaflets are up to date, correct and well-presented.

- Work with council colleagues to ensure the council's strategic priorities are implemented, attend, and represent the council on such internal and external bodies and partnerships as may be necessary and relevant to the post holders' remit and attend meetings with other key stakeholders and regular operational meetings with staff, and senior service managers as appropriate or required.
- Ensure customer complaints are dealt with in a professional manner and in line with the requirements of the council's corporate complaints process.
- Participate in an annual performance check-in based on agreed objectives that are linked to the Council's corporate objectives and priorities.
- Ensure that all duties and services provided are in accordance with the Council's Equalities and Diversity policies and procedures.
- To comply with individual responsibilities, in accordance with work role for health and safety in the workplace.
- Ensure that all duties and services provided are in accordance with the Council's Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection policies and procedures.
- All employees may be called upon to assist with a range of elections duties for the Council on an occasional basis when elections are called. Participation in elections duties is subject to the terms and conditions as determined from time to time by the Returning Officer or Central Government.
- Undertake such other duties and tasks appropriate to the grade and character of work such as changes in information systems and new technology as may be reasonably required. Therefore, the above list of key result areas in this job description should not be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive.

The Council may, at any time and if relevant to the post, require an Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Check to be carried out. An enhanced check details Convictions, Cautions, Reprimands and Warnings held in England and Wales on the Police National Computer (and most of the relevant convictions in Scotland and Northern Ireland may also be included). In addition, it includes a check of the new barred lists and any locally held police force non conviction information considered relevant to the job role, by the relevant Chief Police Officer(s).

The key result areas to this post are set out in this job description. It should be noted that the Council reserves the right to update the job description from time to time to reflect changes in or to the post after consultation about any proposed changes. Significant permanent changes in duties and responsibilities will require revisions to be made to this job description.

Working conditions

The role will involve working outdoors in all weathers and conditions for the purpose of:

- Site inspections, estate management and maintenance and community led activities.
- Health and Safety compliance monitoring of vehicle and manual practices.
- The post will involve working weekends, bank holidays and seasonally extended hours as required.
- The council will provide the post holder with all the necessary protective clothing for wet weather and hats and sun block cream when required, as well as additional training for the purposes of extending knowledge and expertise relating to the site and the role.

Additional information

The role requires high levels of knowledge and expertise on management of nature reserves and habitats that have high visitor numbers and local community users.

The post holder will be expected to have, or develop knowledge of and learn about, habitat management and countryside stewardship grants to provide a longer-term knowledge base and understanding of future management grant options for the council. The post holder will be expected to undertake relevant training in basic livestock welfare, countryside management and conservation grazing techniques such as the Nofence virtual grazing system deployed at the reserve.

The management of Hastings Country Park Nature Reserve is governed by external government grant aid. To ensure and demonstrate compliance with the grant, the post holder will be expected to monitor the management and grazing activities at the reserve and work with others to ensure the priorities of the countryside Stewardship grant are met.

The post holder will be required to demonstrate skills in community awareness, diplomacy, conflict resolution, and understanding, the views of different user groups, whilst clearly advocating the management priorities for the site.

The post holder will have experience of developing and leading guided walks and talks, coordinating and leading conservation tasks and undertaking small level estate maintenance. An ability to work effectively and efficiently on their own and with groups of volunteers is essential.

A knowledge of the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss is essential in advocating and implementing the long-term management of the nature reserve.

Basic IT skills, good literacy and numeracy, a clean current driving licence and a proven ability to prioritise workloads to achieve deadlines are essential.

Country Parks Officer Person Specification

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS:

Qualifications:

1. Appropriate qualifications in countryside management, or experience related to countryside management, ecology and wildlife activities, and community engagement.

Experience:

2. Practical experience in nature reserve management, countryside stewardship and access management.
3. Developing, leading, delivering, and supporting community engagement activities, walks, talks, and tasks, providing participants with skills, knowledge and enhanced feeling of support and well-being related to the natural environment.
4. Working with disadvantaged members of communities to engage positively with nature.
5. Working in or with a local authority and as part of a wider parks and community engagement team.
6. Working in partnership with a range of outside organisations and groups (NGO's, Wildlife Trusts, volunteer groups and organisations), developing projects and applying for grant aid.

Knowledge:

7. Understanding of nature conservation management and habitat restoration and the role of livestock grazing on nature reserve management and biodiversity.
8. Familiarity with countryside stewardship grant aid and how this relates to site-based nature conservation priorities.
9. Familiar with species and specialist habitats in the Borough and the UK and global biodiversity crisis.
10. Health and safety provisions of working with volunteers.
11. Budgets, time management and prioritising workloads.

Personal Aptitude and Skills:

12. Friendly, outgoing, and engaging manner. Enjoys meeting and discussing management priorities of the site.
13. Good collaboration and influencing skills with an ability to deal with difficult and confrontational situations and resolve conflict situations before they escalate.
14. Ability to reach out to local communities to provide skills training and knowledge-based learning and health and well-being outcomes.
15. Ambitious to learn, develop and fulfil potential.
16. Engages with and works well with others, sharing ideas and solutions and happy to work with others to achieve outcomes.
17. Good IT skills and the ability to use Microsoft word, excel and database packages.
18. Excellent verbal and written communication skills and able to build up good working relationships with external agencies and organisations.

Behavioural Approach:

19. Self-motivated, confident, and flexible, quick to respond and shows initiative.
20. Ability to work to deadlines and prioritise own workload.
21. Looks for solutions and resolutions.
22. Cares about delivering the role and setting high standards, behaves professionally and to professional standards.
23. Works with others to achieve outcomes.
24. Ambitious with a desire to learn through continual professional development.

Circumstances

25. Ability to travel throughout the borough, work alone and prioritise work.
26. Able to work weekends, evenings and bank holiday as required.

This person specification outlines the qualifications, experience, skills, knowledge, and personal attributes required for the role. It ensures that the candidate is well-equipped to handle the responsibilities and challenges of the position.

Further behavioural information can be found in our Staff Competency Framework which is included in this pack. Interviews will include competence-based questions,

and our managers are appraised against the framework as part of our performance management process.

The above qualities will be assessed in the first instance on the application form and again at the interview stage if selected.

DESIRABLE REQUIREMENTS:

Qualifications

1. Relevant countryside management, and habitat and species handling qualifications.

Experience:

2. Working in and leading nature-based events and activities, engaging with under-represented and hard to reach communities and developing activities aimed at raising their awareness and understanding of nature.
3. Working with the key non-local authority partners such as Groundwork South, Natural England, the High Weald AONB, Wildlife Trusts and others.
4. Working in a protected landscape setting and understanding of enforcing Byelaws and dealing with incidents, complaints or other enforcement related activities

Knowledge:

5. The role of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its relevance to Hastings Country Park nature Reserve.
6. The role and importance within the reserve of designations such a scheduled ancient monument, Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Area of Conservation, Archaeology areas, Rights of Way, and the England Coastal Path.