

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE	Conservation Officer (Frome Headwaters Chalkstream Restoration Project)
TEAM	Conservation - Nature Based Solutions
GRADE	D
RESPONSIBLE TO	River Catchment Manager
RESPONSIBLE FOR	Volunteers, contractors

OVERALL ROLE

The postholder will play a key role in delivering more space for nature in Dorset by leading delivery of the Frome Headwaters Restoration Project, one of a national network of Chalkstream Flagship Restoration Projects. A core part of the role is building trusted relationships and maintaining strong, consistent communication with farmers, land managers and delivery partners, supporting collaboration from first contact through to design, delivery and long-term management.

The postholder will be responsible for planning, delivering and monitoring interventions across the Upper Frome, River Hooke and Wraxall Brook catchments to benefit biodiversity and the water environment, including land use management and change and river restoration, natural flood management (NFM) and floodplain reconnection. The role will work in partnership with internal DWT project team, land managers, the Frome Headwaters Farmer Cluster Group, Dorset Catchment Partnership, CaBA, Wessex Water, the Environment Agency and other NGOs, and will support landscape recovery through land management change, land use change and agri-environment scheme advice and facilitation.

Key responsibilities

Building partnerships with Dorset land managers for nature recovery

- Focus proactively on the Frome Headwaters priority area (Upper Frome, Wraxall Brook, River Hooke) to build long-term, trusted relationships with land managers and deliver catchment- and landscape-scale nature-based solutions for biodiversity, the water environment and landscape recovery.
- Engage, liaise and advise farmers and land managers within the project area on land management change and land use change, including agri-environment schemes and other grant support, to enable delivery of nature-based restoration and intervention measures.
- Provide clear, timely and two-way communication with farmers and partners (e.g., regular site visits, updates, briefings and follow-up actions), translating technical options into practical on-farm solutions and ensuring feedback is captured and acted upon.
- Work in partnership with the Frome Headwaters Farmer Cluster Group to deliver nature based solutions.

Project Management

- Be responsible for the day to day delivery of Frome Headwaters Flagship Chalkstream Project meeting deadlines, working within budget and complete required reporting to a high standard.
- Provide excellent, structured communication with internal DWT project team, the project steering group, farmers/land managers and key partners (e.g., Dorset Catchment Partnership, Wessex Water, EA), sharing clear progress updates, decisions and next steps, and proactively managing expectations and risks.
- Work with and support line manager in project planning, resource management, risk management and external communications.

Policy and advocacy

- Keep abreast of The Wildlife Trusts (TWT) wetlands and agriculture policy work and represent DWT locally, regionally and nationally as relevant to the project.
- Work with the communications team to maintain regular wetland and land management conservation features in media and DWT website.
- Record and communicate best practice case studies with local farmers and organisations which can be used to promote and demonstrate nature-based solutions.

Other Duties

All staff are expected to:

- Undertake any other duties appropriate to the post as delegated by the line manager;
- Contribute to other Dorset Wildlife Trust activities when required, to deliver the aims of the Strategic Plan;
- Engender a culture of public engagement and membership recruitment within the team;
- Abide by organisational policies and procedures laid down in the Staff Handbook, including promoting equal opportunities particularly with regard to volunteer work.
- Ensure that Health and Safety policies and procedures are met in all aspects of the role.

Some evening and occasional weekend working may be required with time off in lieu. There also may be periodic travelling within the county with occasional journeys further afield; DWT pool cars are available but own vehicle may be needed. A valid driving licence is a requirement of this position. Overnight stays are only rarely required.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Area A Experience

You will be able to demonstrate relevant experience in the following:

- Working with farmers, landowners and land managers to develop and deliver land management change for nature recovery (essential).
- Building effective partnerships across multiple organisations (e.g., NGOs, water companies, statutory agencies, catchment partnerships) and maintaining strong working relationships over time (essential).
- Delivering practical nature-based solutions on the ground, such as river restoration, natural flood management (NFM) and/or floodplain reconnection (desirable).
- Supporting or advising on agri-environment schemes and/or other land management incentives and grants (essential).
- Facilitating meetings, workshops or farmer groups (e.g., cluster groups/forums) and handling differing views constructively (essential).
- Managing projects or work programmes (planning, budgets, contractors, reporting and monitoring) (desirable).
- Producing case studies and/or communications materials that share best practice with land managers and partner audiences (desirable).

Area B Knowledge

You will have knowledge and understanding of:

- Chalkstream ecology, including characteristic habitats, key species and major pressures (essential).
- River restoration approaches and the evidence behind nature-based solutions, including NFM and floodplain reconnection (essential).
- Principles of catchment management, water quality, hydrology and how land use influences rivers and wetlands (essential).
- Landscape recovery and nature recovery delivery through land management change, land use change and agri-environment schemes (essential).
- Agri-environment schemes and other land management funding mechanisms, including typical options, constraints and farmer considerations (essential).
- Practical habitat management and the policies/land uses that influence habitats and species in Dorset (desirable).
- Health and safety legislation and safe working practices relevant to site work and contractor management (essential).
- How to interpret natural heritage and communicate technical information to a range of audiences (essential).
- Countryside/access legislation and best practice (desirable).

Area C Skills/Qualifications

You will have the following skills and qualifications:

- Excellent verbal communication and active listening skills, with the ability to build rapport and trust with farmers/land managers (essential).
- Strong written communication skills, including clear emails/briefings and high-quality reports for funders and partners (essential).
- Facilitation and stakeholder management skills, able to convene partners and handle differing priorities diplomatically (essential).
- Ability to translate technical information (e.g., restoration options, scheme rules) into practical, workable on-farm actions (essential).
- Project management skills (planning, prioritisation, budgets, contractor oversight, monitoring and evaluation) (essential).
- Competent IT skills (Microsoft 365); ability to manage data and maintain accurate records (essential).
- GIS skills and/or experience using mapping tools to support land management planning (desirable).
- Full UK driving licence and willingness to travel across Dorset (essential).
- First aid qualification (desirable).

Area D Personal qualities

- Relationship-led and approachable, with the credibility and empathy to work effectively with farmers and land managers (essential).
- Tactful and diplomatic, able to influence and negotiate positively while maintaining trust (essential).
- Proactive and self-motivated, comfortable working independently and as part of a team (essential).
- Organised and reliable, able to plan ahead, manage competing priorities and meet deadlines (essential).
- Pragmatic and solutions-focused, able to balance ecological outcomes with farm practicality and business realities (essential).
- Resilient and adaptable, confident working in changeable outdoor and partnership environments (essential).
- Committed to the aims and values of Dorset Wildlife Trust and to improving access to nature and wellbeing (essential).

Director signature:

Date:

Postholder signature:..... Date.....