Farm and Community Engagement Officer – River Irfon Integrated Natural Resources Scheme

Job description

Contract: Fixed-term contract to September 2028. 0.6 FTE.

Salary: £28,000 per annum, pro rata.

Location: Home-based, with regular travel to sites in Mid Wales, particularly around

Llanwrtyd Wells and Builth Wells.

Responsible to: Freshwater Habitats Trust R. Irfon Integrated Natural Resources Scheme Project Director.

Responsible for: delivery of community engagement components of the R. Irfon Integrated Natural Resources Scheme.

Background

Freshwater Habitats Trust is a friendly and ambitious conservation charity which works to protect UK and European freshwater biodiversity through practical, evidence-based and innovative nature conservation projects. Our organisation is well-respected nationally and internationally, working with a network of UK-based partners in both the public, private and NGO sectors, and internationally with the European Pond Conservation Network and others.

This post is part of a new strategic programme to demonstrate and practically apply the Freshwater Network concept, a new approach to freshwater biodiversity conservation developed by Freshwater Habitats Trust, which considers all freshwater and wetland types as an interdependent network, linking Important Freshwater Areas, floodplains and Wetland Opportunity Areas. Following demonstrations of the concept in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, the New Forest and the R. Irfon in mid-Wales, we now have an opportunity to embed the concept in the long-term management of the R. Irfon as part of the Welsh government's Integrated Natural Resources Scheme. The job is an important opportunity to shape the way freshwater environments are perceived and managed in Wales as the R. Irfon is one of Britain's finest river systems and also a demonstration site for implementing the new Freshwater Network concept. The post will place a special emphasis on the critical role of small waters and wetlands which research demonstrates are essential for maintaining freshwater biodiversity.

Role

The Farm and Community Engagement Officer will be responsible for developing and maintaining engagement programmes with the farming and local resident communities in the R. Irfon Integrated Natural Resources Scheme. The project is a landowner- and community-focused practical conservation and engagement project which aims to protect the biodiversity of the whole freshwater and wetland environment in the catchment, with a special emphasis on small waters and wetlands, the endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel and endangered freshwater and wetland species of the Important Freshwater Areas of the R. Irfon catchment.

You will work with a range of audiences, working both with the farming community and local

residents and businesses to deliver meaningful freshwater biodiversity outcomes. You will work closely with the project's Habitats and Species Officer and with a network of external organisations who are our projects partners, and with our key audiences. You will be responsible for running two main areas of work:

- Engaging with the **local farming and landowning community**, ensuring effective and constructive relationships are maintained, including establishing and running a programme of quarterly engagement activities. You will also be responsible for creating information for project communication on the FHT website, media and ensuring project communications success criteria are met.
- **Citizen science projects with volunteer groups** (e.g. water quality surveys undertaken by citizen scientists, surveys for Invasive Non-native Plants, surveys of endangered wetland plant species), including working with other Freshwater Habitats Trust colleagues. This work is helping to build a new practical conservation volunteer audiences and will require co-ordinating work and maintaining relationships with local site owners, especially private farming landowners.

These programmes are roughly equal in size and will require excellent time-management skills and the ability to engage with and motivate non-specialists with little knowledge of freshwater biodiversity. You will need to keep excellent time and financial records (including tracking volunteer time inputs) in order to report the results of our work to funders. To achieve this you will work closely with the Project Manager and Freshwater Habitats Trust's Finance Manager to help deliver the projects on time and to budget.

Key responsibilities

Project delivery:

- Engaging with the **local farming and landowning community**, to support the Habitatas and Species Officer in ensuring effective practical conservation work is undertaken
- Running a programme of quarterly engagement activities for landowners and farmers. You will also be responsible for creating information for project communication on the FHT website, media and ensuring project communications success criteria are met.
- Encouraging and helping local people to access and enjoy wetland habitats in their neighbourhoods to increase their well-being and awareness of important but often overlooked habitats.

Project management:

- Ensure that projects for which you are responsible keep good time and financial records, and are delivered on time.

Project communications:

- Work with the Freshwater Habitats Trust Communications team to provide information about the projects you are involved in to ensure wide local and, if possible, national awareness of Freshwater Habitats Trust's work.

Additional general responsibilities for the post holder

- Help to build a positive relationship between Freshwater Habitats Trust and its partners.
- Understand and follow Freshwater Habitats Trust's internal procedures including Health and Safety, information management systems, site protocols etc.
- Work closely and constructively with your manager and colleagues in all areas of your responsibility.
- Undertake other duties as the FHT Senior Management Team may from time to time require.

Competencies

Qualifications

- Degree or equivalent in a relevant subject (at least a 2:1).
- Full current driving licence.

Knowledge and experience

- Experience of working with and motivating community groups, especially those experiencing economic, health or well-being disadvantages.
- Ability to engage and motivate volunteers in the conservation and management of freshwater and wetland habitats, ideally also including running citizen science projects.
- Experience of communicating nature conservation ideas to non-specialist audiences
- Interest in the ecology of freshwater and / or wetland habitats, ideally including specific knowledge of freshwater habitat management.
- Proven ability to communicate effectively with a range of stakeholders, including landowners and the public.
- Computer literate: Word and Excel are essential, GIS is desirable.
- Preference would be given to those with a knowledge of the Welsh language.

Personal qualities

- Ability to manage workload and competing priorities effectively and meet internal deadlines through effective forward planning.
- Good verbal and written communication skills.
- Good interpersonal skills - approachable, professional and courteous.
- Attention to detail and able to deliver on time.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.