



Gorcott Outdoor Learning Officer (GRCF)

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title:	Gorcott Outdoor Learning Officer
Salary:	£22,000 p/a (15 months fixed term contract to end of March 2023)
Hours:	37.5 hours across the week – usually Monday to Friday 08.00 to 16.00 with approximately 2-3 weekend days a month (for which hours can be accrued as TOIL (Time off In Lieu) or equivalent time taken off in the week).
Reporting to:	Head of Learning and Skills
Responsible for:	Volunteers and Supported Interns
Location:	Between Middle Spernal Farm, Spernal Lane, Nr Studley, B49 6JE and Gorcott Hill Wood Heart of England Forest site
Date:	July 2021

JOB SUMMARY

The Heart of England Forest is looking for a self-motivated Outdoor Learning Officer to develop and deliver learning and volunteering programmes for young people at Gorcott Hill Wood as part of our Green Recovery Challenge Fund project – Growing Future Forest Guardians.

With 7,000 acres of Forest habitat, and a clear vision to create a 30,000-acre native broadleaf woodland, the Heart of England Forest has a tremendous resource available and bold ambition to enable it to become a centre for excellence in the delivery of high quality, cost effective learning outside the classroom in the UK.

In this role you will work with, and be supported by, our Learning and Skills team to create and deliver bespoke Forest Learning Programmes to improve connections to the natural world and develop skills and knowledge. Targeting schools with high numbers of disadvantaged, BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) or SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) pupils, you will recruit and develop relationships with 7 new schools who will visit the Forest regularly for learning sessions which deliver school priorities and national curriculum objectives.

You will lead on the delivery of volunteering and work experience programmes for teenagers, young people with SEND and adults with SEND. You will also work closely with the Gorcott Biodiversity Officer to develop volunteering programmes for young people and disadvantaged adults to enable them to develop skills and help to create pathways into employment in the natural environment sector. You will support them to put their new skills into practice to bring this neglected site back to life by improving the varied habitats at Gorcott Hill.

You will bring experience of delivering learning outside the classroom activities to a range of audiences, and a knowledge of how to support individuals with special educational needs and disabilities or other needs which are a barrier to them accessing education and meeting their full potential. You will have a good knowledge of and a passion for the natural environment.

You will also be responsible for safeguarding the children and young people we work with, and should be competent in undertaking risk assessments.

As well as demonstrating a sound knowledge of learning outside the classroom best practice and current issues, you will need to consider issues of widening public access and encouraging people and wildlife.

The role will involve significant autonomous working, as well as playing a key role as part of a small team and working with colleagues from other teams in order to meet your objectives.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Learning and Skills

- Develop and deliver learning and skills programmes at Gorcott Hill to a range of audiences in order to meet a range of outcomes.
- Plan sessions, create activities and design & prepare resources.
- Carry out the administration and planning for formal and informal learning programmes at Gorcott Hill including all supporting documentation.
- Develop and implement effective evaluation methods to help us demonstrate our impact on educational achievement, wellbeing, skills, employability, personal development and nature connectedness to schools, funders and other stakeholders.
- Contribute to the development of the wider Heart of England Forest learning and skills programme in partnership with the learning and skills, partnerships and community engagement teams.
- Safeguard all of the individuals we work with, managing risk, conducting risk assessments and following safeguarding procedures.

Formal education

- Develop positive relationships with 7 new schools with high numbers of disadvantaged, BAME or SEND pupils.
- Plan and deliver formal learning sessions in order to achieve the project objectives of 1000 child visits during the lifetime of the project.
- Develop programmes and provision for pupils with SEND, mental health needs or who are struggling to access their education at school.
- Develop programmes for a wide range of audiences including those less likely to access the natural environment, vulnerable groups, SEND, out of school, early years, and 16-18 provision.
- Contribute to strategic planning to develop the Heart of England Forest into a centre of excellence for learning outside the classroom provision.
- Support the Head of Learning and Skills to develop and deliver CPD opportunities for school staff.
- Evaluate programmes to gather evidence of impact, both qualitative and quantitative.

Informal education

- Lead on the delivery of a programme of informal education opportunities for families, young people and adults, including vulnerable groups at the Gorcott Hill site.
- Establish and lead on the delivery of a monthly Young Foresters group for 15 teenagers aged 12-18 from disadvantaged areas in Redditch.
- Expand our existing informal education provision for families, young people and adults, targeting new audiences including those less likely to access the natural environment, vulnerable groups, SEND, out of school, early years, and 16-18 provision.

Skills

- Lead on the delivery of volunteering and work experience programmes for young people and adults with SEND to help them to develop skills and put their new skills into practice in helping to improve the site for wildlife.
- Establish and deliver a weekly volunteering group for 10 young people with SEND.
- Establish and deliver a weekly volunteering group for 10 adults with SEND.
- Working with the job coach, develop the Supported Interns based at Gorcott Hill to assist with the delivery of Forest Learning Programmes and volunteering opportunities.
- Support the Gorcott Biodiversity Officer to develop volunteering programmes for young people and disadvantaged adults as required.
- Supervise work experience students, interns and supported interns as required.

People engagement

- Help to plan and deliver a programme of educational events, such as guided walks, family activities, school tree planting days, etc. (which will include some delivery and some weekend and Bank Holiday working).
- Assist with the planning and delivery of wider Heart of England Forest events.

Communications

- Help to prepare and disseminate promotional materials, case studies, lesson overviews, etc to promote the learning and skills provision more widely.
- Contribute regular information and photographs for the social media communications plan.
- Contribute articles and news stories in the monthly e-newsletter and bi-annual magazine to help raise awareness of learning and skills issues.

Fundraising

- Support the fundraising team with practical information and costings for targeted projects suitable for corporate or trust funding.
- Provide information & evaluation data for interim and end of project reports for funders highlighting progress against targets.

Develop specialist knowledge and expertise

- Develop and maintain knowledge of current issues and best practice in outdoor education and learning outside the classroom
- Develop and maintain relationships with schools and other educational establishments as well as partner organisations with an interest in education.
- Represent and promote the Heart of England Forest and act as an ambassador both internally and externally.

General

- Demonstrate and promote the values of the Heart of England Forest.
- Maintain a commitment to high standards of health and safety at all times. Ensure all work, including any work undertaken by contractors and volunteers, is undertaken within the Heart of England Forest health and safety policy and processes.
- Commit to continual professional development.
- Play an active part within the wider Heart of England Forest team.
- Make active use of information and resources gained via personal networks to inform the development of this role.
- Perform any other duties consistent with the role and / or reasonably required by the Chief Executive.

Hours

Normal working hours will be a minimum of 37.5 across the week, normally between 08.00 and 16.30, Monday to Friday in term time and in school holidays. . An average

of 2 days weekend working will be required per month (for which hours can be accrued as TOIL or equivalent time taken off in the week).

Location

The post will initially be based at Middle Spenal Farm, Spenal Lane, near Studley, B49 6JE where the majority of our learning and skills provision is currently based, and will spend a significant amount of time at the Gorcott Hill Wood Heart of England Forest site. On days where no delivery is required there may be the flexibility for the postholder to work from home or hot desk at the Heart of England Forest head office in Dorsington, where printers, laminators and other office equipment are available.

The post holder must have the willingness and ability to undertake extensive travel across the Heart of England Forest on a daily basis to meet the demands of the role.

What do we offer?

- The chance to join an ambitious charity and play a part in creating and conserving a huge Forest for the benefit of people, wildlife and the environment
- Competitive salary with a Living Wage Foundation accredited employer
- 28 days holiday plus bank holidays
- Contributory company pension
- Group Income Protection Scheme
- Group Life Assurance Scheme
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Death in Service benefit
- Medical cash plan

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential

- Experience of designing and delivering learning outside the classroom (LOtC) programmes/sessions to meet a range of outcomes including national curriculum objectives
- Knowledge of learning outside the classroom and its benefits
- Knowledge of the attributes of high-quality learning outside the classroom
- Knowledge of the natural environment
- Knowledge and experience of how to support individuals with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or other needs which are a barrier to them accessing education or employment
- Experience in working with individuals with mental health issues and SEND.
- Experience in monitoring and evaluating the impact of interventions on pupil progress and wider outcomes (nature connectedness, personal development, wellbeing etc)
- Experience of supervising volunteers and work experience students
- Experience in managing, assessing and minimising risk when undertaking learning outside the classroom activities
- Good IT skills (including Word, Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint)
- Self-motivated and proven experience of ability to work on own initiative
- Strong interpersonal skills with an ability to build relationships and engage effectively with stakeholders at all levels
- Empathy with children and young people, and an ability to engage and motivate them to learn and develop in order to improve future life chances
- Love of the outdoors and a willingness to work outside, all year round and in all weathers
- Effective team worker
- Good communication skills, both oral and written
- An innovative, can-do, enthusiastic work ethic
- Able to communicate Heart of England Forest values and standards to supporters and stakeholders
- Committed to conservation
- Ability to multitask, prioritise workload and meet deadlines
- Full clean driving licence
- A flexible approach to work and willingness to work throughout the year and undertake some work at weekends and in the evening
- Willingness to develop new skills and take on new areas of responsibility

Desirable

- At least 3 years' experience in delivering learning outside the classroom programmes/sessions
- Knowledge of the England education system, and learning and skills agenda
- Experience of undertaking practical conservation management tasks
- Experience in promoting a connection to nature in children and young people
- Bushcraft skills
- A paediatric or outdoor first aid qualification
- Knowledge and experience of working with teenagers and young adults

ABOUT THE HEART OF ENGLAND FOREST

Planting tomorrow's great native woodland

The Heart of England Forest is an exciting and ambitious charity. We want to help reverse centuries of woodland decline and plant one of the largest forests in England. Our goal is to create a huge, unbroken woodland – a refuge from the modern world where people can rediscover nature and wildlife can flourish. It is an ambitious vision, which we are determined to make happen, one tree at a time.

The Heart of England Forest is not only a perfectly positioned lung for the Midlands, but a breath of fresh air for the nation. With Almost 2 million new native trees planted so far, we are restoring our native woodland – providing a safe and permanent habitat for wildlife as well as an escape for people from the urban environments surrounding it.

The Forest stretches up the Warwickshire / Worcestershire border, from the present-day borders of Shakespeare's Forest of Arden to the edge of the Vale of Evesham – the north Cotswolds to south Birmingham. It is an area dense in cities, towns and industry. Which is why we are creating a place to walk under shady canopies and through airy glades, away from the bustle of city life.

The UK has less than a third of the native tree cover of many other European countries, including France, Germany and Italy. Planting tomorrow's great native woodland has already started. With 7,000 acres of land, the forest currently consists of 600 acres of mature woodland and 4,000 acres of new planting. We have planted an incredible 1.9 million trees so far, which is over 20% of the way towards our goal of a 30,000-acre forest. But with patience and your support, who knows how far it will grow!

Green Recovery Challenge Fund



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

The
National Lottery
Heritage Fund



Environment
Agency



We have recently been awarded a significant grant from the Defra Green Recovery Challenge Fund to deliver our Growing Future Forest Guardians Project at Gorcott Hill Wood in Warwickshire.

Launched in August 2021, the project is due for completion in March 2023. Over the next 17 months and alongside the charity's ongoing work to deliver its charitable objectives, the project will include the instigation of woodland habitat management at Gorcott Hill Wood, woodland ride creation, restoration of 4 ponds, as well as, collating baseline survey data, commissioning specialist surveys, and arranging training and surveys as part of a training and work experience programme for local young people and volunteers.

The Heart of England Forest is a vibrant and rewarding place to work. Joining the charity as part of the Growing Future Forest Guardians in the Heart of England Forest project delivery team offers the unique chance to play a key part in delivering momentous and meaningful work today, that establishes long-term foundations for further growth tomorrow.

More information can be found at www.heartofenglandforest.org

Learning and Skills in the Heart of England Forest

The Heart of England Forest's Learning and Skills Strategy underpins the wider work of the charity by aiming to ensure that ALL members of the communities living and working in and around the Forest are encouraged and able to enjoy it on a regular basis to improve their quality of life.

Informed by evidence, the Learning and Skills Programme encourages frequent and progressive interactions with the Forest environment in order to cultivate our Friends of the Forest, volunteers and foresters of tomorrow. Our long-term aim is to ensure our audiences are more likely to take action to care for the environment on both a local and a global scale and are more likely to incorporate spending time outdoors into their everyday lives.

In a market crowded with standalone events and one-off trips, the Heart of England Forest Learning and Skills Programme spearheads the principle that in order to affect behaviour change and long-term impacts a longer term approach is required to truly make a difference. Our aim is to become a Centre of Excellence for Learning Outside the Classroom, informed by and making a contribution to improving research in the field.

Our formal learning programmes are high quality and bespoke, rather than the off the shelf sessions commonly offered by other providers. Like Forest School, our programmes offer a long-term process of regular interactions, rather than infrequent visits. However, our programmes differ from and go further than Forest School in responding to what schools tell us about the pressures they face which force them to direct their time and resources towards delivering curriculum targets and academic progress. Therefore, each programme is developed in consultation with our school partners to deliver their priorities and react to the needs of their learners. Taking time to listen to each school partner, we tailor our sessions to deliver national curriculum outcomes in literacy, maths, history, geography, science, art and DT; as well as wider benefits including personal development, resilience, improved mental and physical health and connection to nature.

Our informal learning programmes also offer frequent and progressive opportunities to spend time in the Forest. For children and young people, rather than the typical half term events, we will focus our resources on regular provision which helps establish the habit of spending time outdoors and encourages individuals to develop a lasting and emotional connection with the Forest and the natural world.

We will also reach out to those who may not otherwise choose, or have the opportunity to spend time outdoors such as people from less affluent groups or people from BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds who are known to spend less time outdoors (Monitor of Engagement in the Natural Environment, 2018).