

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Senior Ecologist		
Directorate	Economic Development, Skills & Climate		
Reporting to	Ecology Manager		
Grade	10		
Evaluation ref:	AU1247	Job Family ref:	
Role Purpose			
<p>The Senior Ecologist will deliver expert ecological advice to Somerset Council across planning and environmental matters, ensuring compliance with international, national, and local legislation and policy. They will support the Ecology Manager in overseeing the day-to-day operations of the ecology team, including mentoring junior staff and reviewing technical outputs. Acting as a lead advisor for at least one planning area within Somerset, the Senior Ecologist will provide authoritative guidance on environmental legislation and policy. The role also involves participation in ecological fieldwork, with opportunities to lead surveys and assessments.</p>			
Accountabilities			
<p>Act as deputy to the Principal Ecologist in the day-to-day management of the team, support the supervision and mentoring and the review and approval of work undertaken by Team members.</p> <p>Review planning applications, proposed plans, e.g. Minerals, Waste, Transport, Local, Neighbourhood, etc and provide professional ecological advice to the Council and ensure they maintain their statutory duties under international, national and/or local legislation and policy. Review submitted ecological information and assess ecological impacts of proposed developments and plans against legislation, policy and best practice guidance and appropriate planning conditions and recommend alterations to policies as necessary.</p> <p>Undertake Habitats Regulations Assessments and Ecological Impact Assessments (in accordance with Regulation 9 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended) of plans, e.g. Minerals, Waste, Transport, Local, Neighbourhood, etc and projects, e.g. planning applications or Council schemes where required: -</p> <p>Assess the ecological impacts of plans and projects alone and in-combination upon the integrity of European and Ramsar sites and their qualifying features and in-combination upon the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of populations of European Protected Species (which are not a qualifying feature of a European site), e.g. impacts on species populations and their habitats, and ecologically support factors such as soils, air/water quality and landscape connectivity and structure.</p>			

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Recommend alternative strategies to projects or alterations to policies for plans as a result of the assessment.

Consult with and obtain agreement from Natural England.

Develop baseline environmental data, indicators and targets for monitoring ecological impacts of plans or projects including innovative systems such as

baseline modelling and ecological mapping to support Habitats Regulations and Ecological Impact Assessments.

Develop procedures and processes as part of pilot projects for Government departments.

Support and/or represent the Council in planning appeal hearings or inquiries where required, e.g. prepare evidence and supporting statements, and attend as a representative or expert witness (including cross-examination by the legal representatives of opposing parties).

Undertake and/or contribute towards responses on national consultations regarding governmental environmental legislation, policy or guidance, on behalf of the Council where required.

Undertake and/or assist with botanical/habitat surveys and protected species surveys e.g. for great crested newt, reptiles, birds, hazel dormouse, water vole, otter, badger and bats, where required, in accordance with best-practice guidance. Undertake site visits throughout the county to establish the required baseline data.

Undertake and/or assist with compiling protected species survey and Ecological Impact Assessment reports where required, in accordance with best-practice guidance. Collate and consider a wide variety of ecological data (desk-study and survey data), recommend appropriate avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, maintain a record system of survey results and monitor information and assessments undertaken.

Undertake the delivery and management of ecological aspects of major and minor scheme projects delivery and management of badger projects for the Council: -

Manage and allocate the budget.

Review proposed scheme design to provide professional ecological advice on the potential ecological impacts of the scheme, set objectives and habitat prescriptions.

Detail ecological field surveys of sites throughout the county to establish the required baseline data.

Manage specialist surveyors where required.

Undertake site surveys throughout the county to establish the required baseline badger data.

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Report on desk-study and survey results, ecological impact assessment and recommend appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures.

Compile and obtain protected species and badger licences from Natural England where required and implement licence actions.

Instruct Council officers on work schedules for schemes to fit in around the requirements of protected species and badgers.

Instruct and supervise Council or sub-contracted officers overseeing on-site construction operations.

Investigate and report on illegal badger sett interference.

Undertake post-construction monitoring.

Undertake and/or contribute towards the strategic development and research to support the delivery of the ecology service. Progress, research and develop environmental planning and design tools, e.g. Somerset's Habitat Evaluation Procedure, Guidance for European Sites and Species Alert Mapping.

Undertake and/or contribute towards the strategic development of various initiatives in Somerset, e.g. the Somerset Pollinator Action Plan, Biodiversity Net Gain, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Nature Recovery Networks, and the strategic response to the nutrients issue on the Somerset Levels and Moors.

Provide professional ecological advice to the Council on other ecological matters where required, to ensure they maintain their statutory duties under international, national and/or local legislation and policy.

Disseminate information to other Council officers and report to elected members as required, through written and verbal reports to the Regulations Committee.

Contribute towards Council group, service and corporate projects as requested by senior managers.

Commission and/or supervise contract surveys, to provide additional ecological information to support the work of the Council.

Assist the Principal Ecologist in the regular review of the scope and content of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with the Somerset Environmental Records Centre and others where required.

Contribute towards the publicity and marketing of Somerset Ecology Services through regular written, verbal and/or digital communications with prospective and existing clients.

Contribute towards income generation to assist in achieving the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) saving.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Understand, uphold and promote the aims of the council's equality, diversity and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in everything you do. Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge		
Strong technical understanding of protected species and their ecological requirements, particularly bats, amphibians, reptiles, hazel dormice, and badgers.	X	
In-depth knowledge of the National Planning Policy Framework and its ecological implications.	X	
Experience conducting and interpreting Habitats Regulations and Regulation 9 Assessments.	X	
Familiarity with Biodiversity Net Gain, the Environment Act 2021, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and use of Biodiversity Metric Calculators.	X	
Proven ability to analyse and evaluate a wide range of ecological reports.	X	
Understanding of Environmental Impact Assessment processes, including screening and scoping.	X	
Holder of at least one protected species licence.	X	
Local ecological knowledge of Somerset, including awareness of key organisations and partnerships in nature conservation and planning.		X
Awareness of influential judicial review decisions affecting ecological planning (e.g. Woolley vs Cheshire East Borough Council).		X
Understanding of nutrient neutrality and its implications for development planning.		X
Experience		
Extensive experience in ecology, particularly within consultancy and local government.	X	

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Proficient in GIS and mapping tools (e.g. QGIS, MapInfo, MAGIC, Ordnance Survey).	X	
Experienced in conducting a wide range of protected species surveys.	X	
Able to work independently and collaboratively within a team.	X	
Able to write clear, accessible ecological reports for non-specialist audiences.	X	
Excellent verbal reasoning and communication skills to explain complex ecological and legislative issues in plain English.	X	
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications		
Possesses at least one protected species licence or is actively working towards one.	X	
FISC accreditation and experience in habitat surveys using UKHab classification.		X
Professional membership of CIEEM or equivalent.		X
Holds a degree in Ecology or a related discipline, or equivalent experience.	X	
Skills		
Skilled in analysing and evaluating ecological reports and data	X	
Strong organisational skills with the ability to manage complex workloads and meet deadlines.	X	
Capable of making sound decisions under pressure.	X	
Strong communication skills across written, verbal, and digital formats		X
Working Conditions		

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Dimensions of the role

Provide support to the Principal Ecologist in the day-to-day management of the team and the supervision and mentoring of junior Team members.

Provide professional ecological advice to the Council on planning and other ecological matters and ensure statutory duties under international, national and/or local legislation and policy are maintained.

Instruct and supervise Council or sub-contracted officers overseeing on-site construction operations on appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures for legally protected species.

Contribute to the maintenance and administration of equipment and assets.

Working Arrangements

Somerset Council's Dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position.

Corporate Accountabilities

Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, organisational policy, and professional codes of conduct to uphold standards of best practise.

Deliver the aims of the council's equality, diversity and inclusion policies; health, safety and wellbeing of self and others; and Organisational values in everything you do, ensuring team members are also aware of their responsibilities and maintaining their understanding that Equality and Diversity practice covers both interaction with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Date: