

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title	Senior Ecologist		
Directorate	Community, Place and Economy		
Reporting to	Ecology Manager		
Grade	10		
Evaluation ref:	AG1247	Job Family ref:	EST
Role purpose			
<p>The Senior Ecologist will 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. The position holder will assist the Principal Ecologist in the day-to-day management of the team and provide vital mentoring to junior Team members.</p> <p>The Senior Ecologist will be a key advisor and assessor to at least one Planning Area of Somerset on all relevant environmental legislation and shall also regularly partake and occasionally lead on ecological field work.</p>			
Responsibilities			
<p>Assisting the Principal Ecologist in the day-to-day management of the team, support the supervision as well as 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 assessed 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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), eg impacts on species populations and their habitats, and ecologically support factors such as soils, air/water quality and landscape connectivity and structure. 			

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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, eg 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 botanical/habitat surveys and protected species surveys 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 projects that may impact protected species, for the Council: -

- Assisting or where appropriate being technical lead for ecology surveys.
- 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 data for habitats and protected species.
- Report on desk-study and survey results, ecological impact assessment and recommend appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures.

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- Compile and assisting in obtaining 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. This may also include acting as a council representative for local biodiversity group panels.

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.

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

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with staff, service users and communities and includes challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Impact

The contacts below embrace all mediums; written, verbal and digital:

With the Principal Ecologist and Team members on the day-to-day running of the ecology service.

With the Service Manager – Development & Planning, Council Planning Officers, other officers and elected members to provide professional ecological advice.

Instruction and supervision of Council or sub-contracted officers to oversee on-site construction operations on appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures for legally protected species.

With central government environmental departments, e.g. Natural England and non-governmental conservation organisations, e.g. Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Environmental Records Centre and other Local Nature Partnership stakeholders, as required, on partnership working and ecological matters.

With Somerset Ecology Services prospective and existing clients to promote and market the traded service and to maintain customer service.

With ecologists/officers from other Local Authority areas on partnership working and ecological matters, including projects across administrative boundaries, as required.

With other central government departments, eg Environment Agency, Forestry Commission, DEFRA, to provide professional ecological advice, partnership working and other ecological matters.

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.

Knowledge / Experience / Skills

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	Essential	Desirable
Knowledge		
A technical knowledge of a range of Protected Species and their ecological needs, particularly bats, amphibians, reptiles, hazel dormice and badgers	X	
An understanding of the relevant National Planning Policy Framework	X	
Holder of at least one Protected Species Licence.	X	
Understanding of Habitats Regulations Assessments and Regulation 9 Assessments.	X	
An understanding of Biodiversity Net Gain and other associated strategies instilled by the Environment Act 2021 such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as well as knowing how to use of the Standardised Biodiversity Metric Calculators.	X	
Experience analysing, scrutinising and evaluating a range of ecology reports.	X	
Local knowledge around Somerset's Local Biodiversity. They should also have an awareness of the organisations and partnerships involved in nature conservation and planning and experience of collaborative working.		X
An understanding on Environmental Impact Assessment and when applications qualify for them. This also includes Scoping and Screening opinions.	X	
Some knowledge of influential Judicial Review decisions and how they affect the way planning applications are dealt with by the planning system from an environmental perspective (Woolly vs Cheshire East Borough Council as an example).		X
Experience		
Significant experience in the Ecology industry, specifically in consultancy and Local Government.	X	
Experience using QGIS, MapInfo, MAGIG, Ordnance Survey Maps, The Natural England and Joint Nature Conservancy Council website and others.	X	
Analysing, scrutinising and evaluating a range of ecology reports.	X	
Experience undertaking a range of protected species surveys.	X	

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Being able to work independently and as part of a team.	X	
FISC Accredited and experience in undertaking habitat surveys based on UKHab definitions.		X
Qualifications / Registrations / Certifications		
A degree in Ecology or a related subject or equivalent experience	X	
Holder of at least one Protected Species Licence, or able to demonstrate that they are working towards one.	X	
Professional membership of CIEEM or equivalent		X
Skills		
Good organisation which allows the handling of complex workloads and deliver to deadlines	X	
Having the ability to make quick decisions	X	
Being able to write ecology reports for a non-expert audience.	X	
Excellent communication skills		X
Having excellent verbal and rationalised reasoning skills is important to allow the post holder to present complex ecological and legislative issues in simple English for non-experts.	X	
Working Conditions		
Working Arrangements		
Somerset Council's dynamic Working Strategy will be applied to this position		
Corporate Responsibilities		
<p>Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, organisational policy, and professional codes of conduct to uphold standards of best practise.</p> <p>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.</p>		



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Date: