

CONTEXT STATEMENT

Job title: Officer (Countryside Access)

Directorate: Communities

Location: Area Operations (North) – Kidlington

Reports to: Principal Officer Quality Assurance

Introduction

Oxfordshire has a wonderful balance between beautiful Cotswold countryside and quaint villages and towns against the urban dynamic of the world renowned City of Oxford and surrounding market towns. It is a thriving county with one of the fastest growing economies in the country with a rapidly growing science sector and the base for many national and internationally recognised companies and organisations. As a result of this growth, the county has seen significant investment in both large and small infrastructure schemes in the last few years which has required changes to the way the Council works and engages with its residents and businesses.

Communities

The Communities Directorate consists of approximately 800 staff supporting the County's Highway, Waste, Property, Environment, Strategic Planning and Safety functions with many more people engaged in service delivery through our key supply chain or partner organisations.

The newly formed Communities Directorate plays a key role in delivering the council's vision to have

- Thriving Communities – *where every community thrives and everyone can play an active part;*
- Thriving People – *Where everyone leads safe, healthy lives while people with the greatest need are cared for;*
- Thriving Economy – *Which creates jobs and homes for the future.*

To do this we are seeking staff who will “do the best they can for residents” by;

- working together in a supportive and honest way
- striving to find the best solutions
- being open to change and doing things differently.

Infrastructure Delivery Directorate

The services we deliver to residents and businesses of Oxfordshire include:

- Highways maintenance (including winter maintenance)
- Highway records
- Highway improvements and construction
- Flood risk management
- Road space management (including traffic control centre)
- Waste management
- Parking services
- Countryside management including two National Trails.

Location

Staff will be based at a number of locations within the County. These include:

- County Hall - Oxford
- Speedwell House - Oxford
- Southern Area Office - Highways Depot, Drayton
- Northern Area Office – Ron Groves House, Kidlington
- Northern Highways Depot - Deddington

The successful applicant will be based in one of these locations but will be expected to provide support at other locations as required.

Area Operations

The Area Operations service consists of three teams – North, South and Hub. This newly created service and associated teams are responsible for the delivery of all local highway maintenance activity from grass cutting, to pothole filling, to gully emptying, as well as road safety, incident response, management of countryside access and delivery of minor improvement schemes.

The teams are the first point of contact for the community regarding local highway issues and concerns, as well as enabling and supporting communities with their own initiatives and direct delivery.

Officer (Countryside Access)

The post will report directly to the Principal Officer Quality Assurance (North), but will benefit from a centrally based professional lead (Principal Officer – PRow) who will offer guidance on technical, legal, and public rights of way specific matters whilst ensuring a county-wide consistency of approach in partnership with the POQAs (North and South).

This context statement is designed to be considered in conjunction with the generic job description for the Officer role. Its purpose is to highlight the key work areas specifically related to countryside access and public rights of way not contained within the generic JD:

Key work areas and duties:

- The protection, maintenance and improvement of the public rights of way and countryside access network
- To provide support to highways operations functions in the South-East area as required
- To support communities, partner organisations and volunteers in management and improvement of the countryside access network to meet the aims of the adopted Rights of Way Management Plan
- To maintain and develop management records using the Countryside Access Management System (CAMS) and associated systems and processes
- Manage reports from the public, user groups, parish councils and other stakeholders regarding issues on the countryside access network. Undertake site inspections and identify action required within the priority and risk management framework

- Liaise closely with farmers, land managers and occupiers to ensure that they carry out their maintenance and operational responsibilities
- Protect public rights by investigating and seeking the removal of obstructions, enforcement of the Highways Act 1980 and other relevant legislation, including the serving of notices under delegated powers. Where required collect evidence for possible prosecution and litigation cases on occupiers, and also including actions taken against OCC; liaising with Legal Services and attending court or public inquiries as witness as necessary
- Prepare detailed instructions for work required by the County Council and its contractors, ensuring prior liaison with the Countryside Tasks Team on specifications and instructions for contractors as necessary
- Liaise closely with the Definitive Map and Commons Team regarding dedications and diversions, the definitive line and status of public rights where these are brought into question, and assist with matters relating to the Definitive Map and Orders, including the provision of evidence, any posting of notices and site visits
- Respond to planning matters - through OCC's Single Response protocol and for applications received directly from local planning authorities. Assess impacts on affected PRow and make appropriate representations and requests for conditions and obligations based on the aims of the adopted Rights of Way Management Plan
- Assist with responses to internal consultations on planning and other strategies like the Local Transport Plan. Oversee or contribute to the delivery of s106 funded schemes that are linked to public rights of way
- Organise and contribute to local liaison groups, including the Local Rights of Way Forum[s], and local community and volunteer meetings
- Contribute to the preparation of information and advice for landowners, users and the general public on rights of way issues and assist in the general promotion of the network for countryside access
- Develop and maintain positive working relationships with local user and voluntary groups, NFU, CLA, Natural England, National Trust, Wildlife Trust and Environment Agency staff etc. to gain their support and practical assistance in managing & enhancing public access.

Selection criteria

- A diploma level qualification in a relevant subject and/or evidence of vocational development in a directly relevant subject area that demonstrates competent knowledge of current rights of way legislation and procedures as part of the wider countryside and agricultural environment.
- Extensive directly relevant experience in public rights of way and/or countryside access work, including successfully liaising and negotiating with landowners, user groups and local communities, and managing and prioritising a complex and dynamic workload.
- Self-motivated with the ability to act on own initiative and as part of a team, with excellent time and priority management.
- Proven ability to work and communicate effectively with a wide range of people and organisations, including colleagues, local councils, members of the public, user and community groups, farmers and land managers, and to deal with a variety of challenging situations in an appropriate and effective manner.

- Understanding of the planning system and how it can impact on public rights of way and what can be done to limit negative impacts; and how developments can provide infrastructure and wider access improvements.
- Experienced user of ICT for office, site and presentations including normal MSOffice products and GIS based databases such as Countryside Access Management System or similar.
- Competent in the use and interpretation of Ordnance Survey and GIS based maps in the field and the personal mobility and willingness to make unaccompanied site visits including walking up to 10 miles per day over all parts of the Oxfordshire public rights of way and countryside access network throughout the year and in all weathers.
- Hold a full driving licence and have access to own vehicle for use at work, and be able and willing to work outside normal office hours including occasional evenings and weekends with time off in lieu.

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