

CONTEXT STATEMENT

Job title: Principal Officer - Countryside Access
Directorate: Communities
Location: Area Operations Hub – Oxford
Reports to: Group Manager - Area Operations Hub

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 & Investment, Environment, Strategic Planning, Facilities Management and Safety functions with many more people engaged in service delivery through our key supply chain or partner organisations.

The Communities Directorate plays a key role in delivering the councils 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

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

- Countryside Access management including two National Trails (Thames Path & Ridgeway).
- Highways maintenance (including winter maintenance)
- Highway & Countryside Access records [Definitive Map & Commons]
- Highway improvements and construction

- Tree inspection and maintenance
- Flood risk management.
- Road space management (including traffic control centre);
- Waste management
- Parking services

Area Operations Hub

The Area Operations Hub is a multi-disciplinary group comprising professional leads for Countryside Access & Arboriculture, hosting the Thames Path & Ridgeway National Trails, Road Safety, Community Engagement which includes volunteer coordination. The teams provide a central and county wide professional lead function to both internal teams and external stakeholders as well as enabling and supporting communities with their own initiatives including direct delivery.

The Role

The Principal Countryside Access Officer acts as professional lead for the authority in all matters relating to the day to day protection, maintenance and development of the Public Rights of Way [PRoW] network across Oxfordshire.

The post will line manage a Technical Officer - Countryside Access and the Countryside Tasks Team [CTT] which acts as an in-house practical delivery team who deliver maintenance and improvement projects on the network. The CTT also specify & oversee the delivery of work through local contractors and larger capital funded bridge schemes

The post also provides technical guidance and professional support to four Countryside Access Officers in the context of organisational priorities and service delivery. These posts are currently based in the North and South Area Highway delivery teams. The Countryside Access area will also benefit from a planned capital investment programme over the next few years and the Principal Officer role will oversee delivery of a range of schemes currently in development designed to improve access to the countryside.

The post will report directly to the Group Manager - Area Operations Hub who will offer professional guidance and line management. The two roles will work together to ensure a county-wide consistency of approach to the management of the PRoW network in partnership with colleagues in the North and South area Highways teams and with the Countryside Access Strategy & Development colleagues in Planning and Place.

This context statement is designed to be considered in conjunction with the generic role profile for the Principal Officer role. Its purpose is to highlight the key work areas specifically related to Countryside Access & Public Rights of Way not contained within the generic JD:

Role purpose & responsibilities:

- Act as the professional lead for all Public Rights of Way matters across the authority area to ensure consistent and effective management of the network and all statutory duties in relation to PRoW are discharged
- With the TO Countryside Access & TO Countryside Tasks develop & ensure delivery of a forward delivery plan within the capital investment programme to ensure funding is secured to replace key assets and deliver improvements on the network

- Ensure the effective monitoring and management of the PRow maintenance budget and that risks are managed & concerns escalated to the Group Manager as required
- Maintain a close working relationship with the Principal Officer - Countryside Records [Definitive Map & Commons] and Countryside Access Strategy & Development to ensure shared objectives are delivered effectively & consistently
- Provide professional advice on PRow related issues to other divisions of the directorate, other Council directorates, members, and outside agencies
- Deal with detailed/complex enquiries as escalated by Countryside Access Officers, liaising with the Countryside Records and other teams as required
- Work with colleagues in the area highways team to ensure the Service is delivered to agreed standards and where necessary additional resource is drafted in to support key activities
- Develop effective partnerships with relevant outside agencies on a local, regional and national basis, through professional networks e.g. IPRoW, ADEPT & APSE to ensure all operations comply with current best practice and legislative requirements
- Develop understanding and participation in the management and use of the rights of way network working closely with community groups, local organisations and volunteers. With TO CA maintain links to Principal Officer (Volunteer Co-ordination) to share expertise, ideas and integration of volunteer effort
- Lead on performance management & reporting on progress against agreed targets via SIPs and KPIs including the risk register and escalating issues where required.
- Contribute to the monitoring and policy development of the Rights of Way Management Plan in partnership with the PO (Countryside Access Strategy & Development)

Selection criteria:

Essential

Educational achievements, Qualifications, Training and Knowledge

- A professional qualification Level 6* (e.g. Degree) (or similar qualification in a relevant discipline)
- Significant experience [minimum of five years] working in countryside access, including extensive experience in the management of rights of way including all aspects of current and emerging legislation
- Evidence of managing and prioritising a complex and dynamic workload
- Knowledge and training in project and programme management, budget management and other key managerial disciplines
- Knowledge of methods of performance management
- Proven ability to demonstrate advanced advocacy and negotiation skills to resolve complex issues with tact and diplomacy communicating complex issues in easy to understand language in a wide variety of situations
- Experience of PRow recording systems (specifically CAMs) and other applications including GIS including
- Experience of liaison and partnership working with a wide range of agencies, bodies the voluntary sector and user/amenity groups, including communities to help them understand and identify their needs and enable them to deliver solutions themselves
- Experience of design & delivery of large or complex programmes of work or projects including financial monitoring & reporting

Personal qualities:

- A high level of commitment and the ability to lead and motivate others
- Articulate with good interpersonal skills, the ability to prepare clear, well written reports appropriate for the purpose with the ability to articulate complex issues effectively to others using different styles of communication
- Exhibit the confidence to constructively challenge established ways of working with the determination to solve problems in partnership with others and to make decisions based on clear analysis and understanding.
- Acts with high levels of trust, integrity and personal accountability and responds positively to change and opportunities for personal development
- Ability and willingness to accept responsibility and accountability

Job related aptitude and skills

- Excellent customer service skills.
- Ability to work both as part of a team and independently.
- Ability to work under pressure and to deadlines.
- Ability to think and work strategically across the organisation
- Report writing and correspondence skills that demonstrate the ability to provide clear and coherent information suitable for the audience concerned.
- High degree of ICT literacy.
- Willingness to work unsocial hours including evenings and weekends.

Other Requirements

- Full, valid, clean UK driving licence.
- Willingness to attend meetings out of normal office hours, including occasional weekend working

Desirable criteria

Educational achievements, Qualifications, Training and Knowledge:

- Membership of a relevant countryside access professional body
- A sound understanding of agricultural, rural enterprise and land management practices
- Postgraduate qualification in countryside access management or a related area
- Use of asset management systems to prioritise investment and delivering projects within a capital funded programme
- Experience of managing staff in a front line delivery team

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