

JOB TITLE – CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

37 Hours per week

Salary: Negotiable up to £50,000



CONTEXT

Originally a deer hunting forest, Ashdown Forest is now one of the largest free public access spaces in the South East.

The Board of Conservators of Ashdown Forest is responsible for managing Ashdown Forest on behalf of the Owner, The Ashdown Forest Trust. The Board, created in 1885, has been regulated under a series of Acts of Parliament, the most recent being the Ashdown Forest Act 1974, and other legislation relating to the protection of wildlife, biodiversity and the status of Common Land in the modern age.

OVERALL PURPOSE OF THE POST

Overall responsibility for the Executive direction, protection, and conservation of Ashdown Forest (in accordance with the Ashdown Forest Act 1974 and other applicable legislation) and the management of staff and resources.

The Chief Executive is to primarily work closely with the Board of Conservators in further developing its strategic direction and overall management of Ashdown Forest, its staff and volunteers, whilst implementing the Forests 2021/2022 Strategic Plan (“The Plan”) and associated budgetary submission to East Sussex County Council as required by the Ashdown Forest Act 1974 by end December 2020.

Division of expected responsibilities are estimated to be 60-75% Plan development with staff, Board members and others as required and 25-40% operational oversight of staff, conservation policy, land and amenity management, learning and engagement, communications and finance.

The appointee will also be expected to represent the Forest in its external engagement and fundraising activities (via The Ashdown Forest Foundation - TAFF) and other affiliated parties or local and national government bodies (e.g. Friends of Ashdown Forest, Natural England, ESCC etc.)

MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Strategic Leadership and Development

- Lead in the further development of the current change program, its new strategic plan, associated budget inclusive of operational and resource needs and implementation once approved by the Board
- Working with the Board, Senior Management Team and governmental agencies to ensure Ashdown Forest has appropriate sustainable income to support planned expenditure, being aware of possible future reductions in existing funding streams
- To ensure oversight of continued compliance of Forest operations with national and international conservation designations and with those targets set by and agreed with project funders i.e. Natural England
- To provide support for the next phase of development of The Ashdown Forest Foundation which is the entity responsible for the fundraising efforts for Ashdown Forest
- To assist in the exploration and applications for appropriate grants and funding from Government agencies, conservation programs and other sources

- Inspire, motivate, and provide direction across the organisation ensuring strong coordination and internal communications

2. *Governance*

- Develop a strong relationship with the Chair and Vice Chair holders of the Board, the rest of the Executive Committee and Conservators
- Develop and ensure that the organisation follows best practice and complies with relevant legal, statutory and regulatory requirements, including but not restricted to the Ashdown Forest Act of 1974.
- Ensure that the Board of Conservators are informed, advised and supported to make appropriate decisions enabling them to fulfil the full range of their governance responsibilities via its Committees and Board meetings
- Ensure that the Ashdown Forest performs and behaves in a manner that fosters a professional and positive reputation for itself

3. *Organisational Management*

- Ensure that collectively, the budget and its associated plan is approved by the Board and ESCC (annualised budget of c. £950,000)
- Work to enhancing existing organisational management systems, processes and structures for the efficient operation of the Ashdown Forest as required and consistent with its revised plan
- Keep under review the Ashdown Forest's financial strategy including levels of financial reserves, allocations of funds and investments, and progress against the annual budget
- To retain overall responsibility for the management of all staff and volunteers
- Continue to foster the Ashdown Forest's volunteering culture, ensuring that volunteers and groups remain integral to the operation of the organisation
- Ensuring the effective and efficient management of the Ashdown Forest's resources: land, buildings, people, equipment, data, finance
- Ensure the continuous development of the skills and knowledge across Ashdown Forest through learning opportunities, staff development and performance management

4. *External Relations*

- To be the public face of Ashdown Forest during the period of employment supported by Board members
- Continue to liaise and strengthen key relationships with stakeholders
- Ensure the Ashdown Forest collaborates with local and national governmental bodies, and other conservation trusts in fulfilling the strategy, as well as neighbours and the local community.
- To continue with the development of the amenity value of the Forest for visitors, whilst recognising the paramount need for conservation

5. To carry out all other such duties as may from time to time be determined by the Board of Conservators.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:	Essential	Desirable
<p>Qualifications/Education/Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Degree level qualification or equivalent level of education II. Management training III. Degree level qualification in environmental studies/ countryside management or related subject 	<p>E E</p>	<p>D</p>
<p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Proven track record of senior strategic leadership and team management II. Significant experience of working with stakeholders, including the local community III. Experience of identifying appropriate funding opportunities and successfully securing funding IV. Experience and understanding of the public sector V. Experience of working with a Board or similar governing body VI. Experience of countryside management 	<p>E E E</p>	<p>D D D</p>
<p>Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Knowledge of and strong commitment to conservation, countryside management, interpretation and education II. Knowledge of the East Sussex area III. Clear understanding of the structure and operation of local government IV. Clear understanding of the working relationships with Central Government i.e. DEFRA, Natural England, the Forestry commission and the Environment Agency etc. 	<p>E</p>	<p>D D D</p>
<p>Skills & Competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. A proven track record of financial management, business planning and implementing a long-term financial strategy II. Experience of successfully establishing and sustaining a strong performance management culture III. Experience in Human Resource and Change Management IV. Persuasive and confident communicator orally and in writing when addressing complex matters V. Strong financial acumen VI. Good interpersonal skills VII. Ability to relate to and gain the confidence of all staff and Ashdown Forest Conservators VIII. Understanding and advanced awareness of corporate issues and risks within a complex range of functions IX. Ability to act as a confident advocate for the Ashdown Forest in public situations X. Fully competent with the use of ICT XI. Fully competent in dealing with the legal implications of proposed actions and able to respond with appropriate advice 	<p>E E E E E E E E E E</p>	<p>D</p>

<p>Personal Attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Confident in dealing with conflict successfully and diplomatically II. Enthusiastic, flexible and resilient III. Clear and logical strategic thinker 	<p>E E E</p>	
<p>Other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Ability and willingness to attend occasional Ashdown Forest related events and meetings in the evenings and at weekends II. Full, clean driving licence 	<p>E E</p>	

Health and Safety Statement. *We take our health and safety responsibilities to staff, volunteers and visitors seriously. Our general Health and Safety Policy statement sets out the Board’s commitment to maintaining high standards of health, safety and environmental protection to all our operations, particularly where they interface with the public, and outlines individual staff responsibilities and organisational structure.*