**Job Description**

**Ecology/BNG Officer**

**Level: 10**

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| **Responsible To:**  | **Responsible For:** |
| Planning Policy Team Leader  | NA  |

**About the job:**

We are seeking a knowledgeable and motivated **Ecologist** to join our Planning and Enforcement team. This is a key role in ensuring that ecological and biodiversity considerations are fully integrated into the planning process. You will assess planning applications, review Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) submissions, monitor compliance with approved ecological mitigation and enhancement schemes and provide pre-application advice as part of a charged service. You will also work collaboratively with neighbouring authorities, including Chorley Council, contribute to the development of planning policy, and act as an expert witness at planning appeals and inquiries where ecology issues are raised.

**Role:**

* Provide expert ecological advice on planning applications, including the review of ecological surveys and recommend appropriate conditions to ensure effective prevention and mitigation of harm to ecology and enhancement to biodiversity.
* Assess and monitor Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) submissions in line with national and local policy.
* Deliver ecological input as part of the council’s pre-application advice service.
* Support the enforcement team in investigating breaches of ecological planning conditions/S106.
* Work with neighbouring councils, including Chorley Council, and statutory bodies to ensure a consistent and strategic approach to ecological planning.
* Contribute to the development and review of planning policy and guidance relating to ecology and biodiversity.
* Represent the council at relevant forums and working groups and advise Members and senior members of staff on ecological matters.
* Act as an expert witness at planning appeals, hearings, and public inquiries where ecological issues are raised.
* Undertake site visits and attend meetings, including occasional evenings.

**Responsibilities:**

* Maintain accurate records and provide reports as required.
* Ensure compliance with relevant legislation, planning policy, and best practice in relation to biodiversity and ecology.
* Promote early consideration of ecological matters in the planning process.
* Liaise with developers, agents, and landowners to provide clear and constructive ecological advice.
* Carry out any other duties commensurate with the grade and nature of the post.

**Team:**

* You will work with your colleagues to prioritise team objectives over individual objectives.
* You will support and respect your colleagues at all times**.**
* You will work together to share knowledge and experiences to improve your service.
* You will participate in development activities as required.

**Corporate:**

* You will carry out your duties and responsibilities in line with the Health & Safety Policy and associated legislation.
* You will actively engage with customer care, value for money and performance management.
* Your duties will be carried out in line with our equality scheme.
* You will be compliant at all times with GDPR and data protection legislation.
* You will constructively participate in communication and promotional activities.

**Organisational:**

* You will be prepared to take on responsibilities and projects that may be outside of your normal work area but are relevant to your role.
* You will support an inclusive culture which provides opportunities for everyone to participate and progress.
* You will support effective relationships across all Directorates, with stakeholders and external partners to ensure the Council’s priorities and objectives are met.
* You will positively promote and represent the Council at all times.

**What the successful candidate will have:**

**Qualifications**

* Degree in Ecology, Environmental Science, or a related discipline (Essential).
* Postgraduate qualification in a relevant field (Desirable).
* Membership of CIEEM or equivalent professional body (Desirable)

**Experience**

* Experience of ecological assessment within the planning system (Essential).
* Experience interpreting ecological reports and data (Essential).
* Experience of providing evidence or professional advice in formal settings (Essential).
* Experience working in or with local government (Desirable).
* Experience of delivering pre-application advice or ecological consultancy (Desirable).

**Knowledge**

* Strong understanding of UK wildlife legislation and planning policy (Essential).
* Knowledge of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements and ecological mitigation (Essential).
* Awareness of the planning appeal process and the role of expert witnesses (Essential).
* Familiarity with GIS and ecological mapping tools (Desirable).
* Awareness of local ecological issues and regional biodiversity priorities (Desirable).

**Skills & Abilities**

* Excellent written and verbal communication skills.
* Ability to analyse complex ecological information and provide clear, evidence-based advice.
* Strong organisational skills and ability to manage a varied workload.
* Ability to work independently and collaboratively with internal and external stakeholders.
* Confident in engaging with developers, agents, and members of the public.
* Ability to represent the council in meetings, forums, and formal appeal settings.