Support for learning placements on National Nature



Boardwalk building at Cliburn Moss nature reserve

Natural England has received a £740,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Skills for the Future programme for its Nurturing Nature Conservation Skills using National Nature Reserves project. The project will fund training for 99 recruits to learn essential techniques for caring for England's most valuable wildlife habitats.

The training will be delivered through a combination of placements based on Natural England's National Nature Reserves over a four year period. This successful application follows the initial approval secured last June to develop the project plans.

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) provide a fantastic training ground to nurture and develop skills which are essential to future conservation and to growing a better understanding of our biodiversity. Skills will include habitat and species identification; and recording of more difficult taxonomic groups of species such as insects and mosses; ecological surveying; habitat creation, and landscape restoration. The project will recruit individuals from a wide range of backgrounds who are new to – or developing skills in – the specialist areas, but who also fall outside existing funding opportunities.

Natural England's innovative project also aims to train individuals in wider nature conservation skills and knowledge

which are currently in short supply. Recruits will work alongside Natural England's reserve managers, learning from their expert knowledge and from other specialists inside and outside the organisation. This will also help the industry to develop a better understanding of the sector's skills gaps.

The opportunities will consist of a combination of three-month placements and longer term 18-month appointments, the latter offering the successful candidates a land-based diploma qualification at the end of their period. In addition, there will be a further 45 training places for existing volunteer and community participants to help them develop and expand their existing skills. The trainees will be deployed to help pass on skills and knowledge among local communities that support the work of NNRs and to other partner organisations which Natural England works with to manage the reserves.

There are 224 NNRs in England, 143 of which are managed entirely or in part by Natural England and cover some 66,000ha. The NNRs include some of England's most important and rich sites for wildlife and geology. Almost all NNRs are accessible, and provide great opportunities for people to experience nature close up.

Ian Fugler, Director of Access and Engagement said: "We are delighted to secure this vital funding. This is an exciting project for NNRs, Natural England and the future of the nature conservation industry. There is a growing gap in the number of people with specialist skills to identify survey and monitor wildlife and its habitat. This funding will provide specialist training on our best wildlife sites for those people who may not otherwise have the opportunity to gain experience and expertise within our diverse and exciting industry."

There will be two rounds of intake for each of the three training programmes. Recruitment will begin this summer for the first group of trainees, who will begin a three-month starter course in September. There will be up to 15 places on the work placed diploma scheme, which is expected to start in January 2015.

Further details for applicants will be available on Natural England's website in the coming weeks. Meanwhile, applicants can register their interest or request more information by emailing: skillsforfuture@naturalengland.org.uk.

Notes to editors

Launched in July 2009, Skills for the Future is an HLF programme supporting organisations across the UK to create new training places. HLF has awarded grants totalling £26.8m under this programme enabling high-quality work-based training, the development of new qualifications and capacity building in the sector.

The intended breakdown of placements as agreed between HLF and Natural England will consist of:

- 3-month 'taster' trainees: 15 people in two intakes
- 18 month diploma trainees: 15 people in two intakes
- 3-month survey & monitoring trainees: 24 people in two intakes
- Wider community opportunities: 45 people (rolling programme tbc)

About National Nature Reserves

The first NNRs emerged in the post-war years alongside the early National Parks and have continued to increase since then. NNRs were initially established to protect valuable wildlife sites and to provide 'outdoor laboratories' for research and study. Their purpose has widened since and, as well as delivering important nature conservation goals, NNRs make a substantial contribution to enabling the public, schools and specialist audiences to experience and enjoy

England’s natural heritage. Natural England’s NNRs provide extensive opportunities for work experience and research at all academic levels.

About Natural England

Established in 2006, Natural England is the government’s independent adviser on the natural environment. Their work is focused on enhancing England’s wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public.

- They establish and care for England’s main wildlife and geological sites, ensuring that over 4,000 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are looked after and improved. All of England’s NNRs form part of a UK wide network of nature reserves covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- They work to ensure that England’s landscapes are effectively protected, designating England’s National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and advising widely on their conservation.
- They run Environmental Stewardship and other green farming schemes that deliver over £400 million a year to farmers and landowners, enabling them to enhance the natural environment across two thirds of England’s farmland.
- They fund, manage, and provide scientific expertise for hundreds of conservation projects each year, improving the prospects for thousands of England’s species and habitats.
- They promote access to the wider countryside, helping establish National Trails and coastal trails and ensuring that the public can enjoy and benefit from them.

Twitter: @NaturalEngland

Further information

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