Countryside Officer (GCN District Licensing)

JE Code: JE1677

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| **Values – We are dedicated, respectful, collaborative, we are Milton Keynes Council** |
| **Service** | Environment & Waste |
| **Reports to:** | Ecologist |
| **Job Family** | Professional and Technical |
| **Grade:** | G |
| **Political restricted** | N |
| **Date:** | ASAP |

**Key Deliverables**

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| **1.** | To provide clear, timely, accurate and relevant advice to Development Control and others frequently conveying complex information to non-specialists in the form of written and/or verbal reports within agreed timescales so that planning applications, conditions, obligations, and enforcement matters relating to ecology can be determined. |
| **2.** | Act as responsible officer to issue GCN licences to developers on behalf of the LPA. |
| **3.** | Effectively promote the District Great Crested Newt Licensing Scheme to developers, planners, and ecologists in partnership with NatureSpace as an alternative to traditional mitigation licensing. |
| **4.** | To ensure that the Councils landholdings, including Country/District/Local parks, public open spaces, wildlife sites, nature reserves, woodlands and farms are protected, conserved, and managed to enable wide and inclusive use by the public |
| **5.** | To ensure environmental management schemes, events and projects are initiated, designed, resourced, managed, and monitored to completion as required. |
| **6.** | To pursue funding and collaborative working opportunities for improvements to the service to further the Councils responsibilities to protect and enhance the natural environment. |

*Within reason these key deliverables may evolve to meet service need and it is expected that you will be flexible and adaptable in your delivery to meet both service and council wide needs*

**Essential Requirements (key skills & qualifications)**

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| **1.** | A relevant degree in ecology or environmental management |
| **2.** | Knowledge and understanding of the UK planning system, including ecological impact assessment and/or biodiversity in planning |
| **3.** | Knowledge of European protected species legislation, licensing, planning, and licensing policies |
| **4.** | A genuine enthusiasm for ecology and conservation in the UK |
| **5.** | A full driving licence with access to a car for business travel. |

Job Family

Professional/Technical

Grade G

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| **Colleagues Expectations*** Be professional at all times
* Work together for the good of the team, council and local people
* Promote a supportive culture
* Challenge assumptions
* Take ownership
* Be willing to change and do things differently
* Always work in a safe manner
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**Role Characteristics**

Provide guidance and support to planning officers, developers, and ecologists in relation to the Great Crest Newt District Licencing Scheme and act as the main point of liaison with the licence administrators, the NatureSpace Partnership. Ensuring the correct processes are followed and that obligations of the District Licence Scheme are met by applicants and the planning authority.

Issue licence authorisations under the district licensing scheme in accordance with the obligations and processes of the scheme and undertake monitoring of compliance with the requirements of the licence. Maintain internal project tracking and undertake reporting of licensing outcomes in the borough when required for a range of partners and purposes.

Maintain consistent and clear communication with the NatureSpace Partnership on scheme monitoring, best practice, and opportunities for collaborative projects, and report to Council departments and Members as necessary.

Respond to planning consultations in relation to the council policies on ecology and biodiversity – providing clear and pragmatic advice on ecological considerations including mitigation, enhancement, and biodiversity net-gain.

Work with internal and external partners to identify opportunities for Great Crested Newt habitat creation, restoration, and enhancement. Provide ad-hoc operational advice to Council departments and sub-contractors in relation to Great Crested Newts and wider ecological considerations.

Plan and coordinate monitoring of Great Crested Newt distribution within the Council’s portfolio of landscape assets.

**The Knowledge and skills required**

Highly organised, methodical, and conscientious - able to juggle and prioritise multiple cases, enquiries, and tasks, and work efficiently to meet tight deadlines.

An excellent communicator with good inter-personal skills - able to liaise proactively and confidently with developers, consultants (e.g., ecologists, planners), planning and other regulatory authorities, NGO partners and colleagues.

Highly literate, able to prepare documents quickly and diligently to a high standard, following defined processes, protocols, and guidance.

Excellent I.T. skills

Self-motivated and independent - able to work flexibly and with minimal supervision, as part of a small, dispersed team

Willingness and ability to travel as necessary

**Thinking, Planning and Communication**

External communication is undertaken on a regular basis with Parish and Town Councils, community groups, private and public landowners, contractors, farmers, local groups and other interested parties in order to advise and assists these groups with various issues pursuant to promoting biodiversity and ecosystem services.

Organise and manage contractors and volunteers to carry out a variety of tasks, such as maintenance contracts and habitat improvements.

Assists with resolving enquiries from Customers of Milton Keynes Council, members of the public, community representatives, Councillors etc., about service delivery within the appropriate service area.

Attend Council, Parish and Town Council, Community Group, and other Stakeholder meetings as necessary to represent the Council on ecological and open space matters and issues.

Represent Milton Keynes Council on external bodies such as Local Nature Partnerships, benchmarking groups, court appearances, Public and Planning enquiries.

Internal communications with Planning Officers, other Council officers including senior management and Council members on the issue of Planning and Development control, attend Development Control meetings as necessary

External communication is undertaken on a regular basis with developers and their agents regarding planning applications. External communication also undertaken on a regular basis with other professions regarding ecology, particularly relating to planning and development.

The role holder will plan, co-ordinate and deliver events, information, and interpretation in relation to the licensing scheme and other ecological matters to internal and external groups as required.

**Areas of responsibility**

Ensure planning officers are familiar with the scheme and the process (dealing with NatureSpace certificates, reports and authorisations)

Assess planning applications to assess potential ecological impacts (specifically impacts on great crested newts) to ensure that developments properly identify and where appropriate, address their ecological impacts.

Provide clear, timely, accurate and specific advice to ecologists and planning officers on any development in respect of great crested newts and the options/requirements for licensing including the district licensing scheme

Support planning officers to ensure that the District Licence requirements for developments wishing to use the District Licence are converted fully and appropriately into planning conditions and authorisations at the appropriate time

Monitor developer compliance with any newt-related planning conditions and advise planning and enforcement teams, NatureSpace and Natural England on any compliance and enforcement issues

Undertake site visits and meetings as required, to provide advice and guidance on newt licensing requirements

**Impacts and demands**

Role holder will be required to attend site meetings, sometimes at short notice to make fast responses to unexpected situations regarding enforcement with service users who do not understand or agree with the requirements of Council policies and relevant wildlife legislation, this may lead to a risk of confrontation.

Role holder will be expected to carry out surveys in all weathers and at remote locations if required.

Role holder will be required to work in exposed locations including building sites, adjacent to highways or waterbodies and be aware of personal health and safety issues.