

Role profile

Job title	Aspen Project Officer
Reporting to	Head of Nature Restoration
Has reporting	None
Starting salary	Grade D £31,496pa - £35,840pa
Job type	28 hours a week, Fixed Term 21 months
Location	Findhorn Office (IV36) or Dundreggan Estate (IV63) Project delivery in the Cairngorms National Park.

Trees for Life

Trees for Life stands at the forefront of rewilding in the Scottish Highlands. Hopeful and bold, we are committed to creating nature-rich landscapes that include and support people. Working on a grand scale, we aim to close the gap between people and nature.

Focusing on Scotland's spectacular Caledonian forest, we foster biodiversity and encourage natural processes essential to life. From the iconic red squirrel to the elusive lynx, we are working to bring more life back to our landscapes.

Rewilding is a shared journey. Together with communities, we are restoring Scotland's natural and cultural heritage while supporting local livelihoods. Join us on this path of hope and positive action. Rewild the Scottish Highlands.

Dundreggan and the Rewilding Centre

Dundreggan is our 10,000-acre estate in Glenmoriston between Loch Ness and Skye. Since 2008, the estate has been transformed by Trees for Life and its volunteers into one of the best examples of forest restoration in Scotland. It includes a ground-breaking tree nursery and is where many volunteers come to take part in rewilding projects.

The Rewilding Centre opened in April 2023 and serves as a gateway to make Dundreggan, and the work being done here, making rewilding more accessible to a broader audience. It operates under the Enterprises arm of Trees for Life and is a commercial business.

The site includes an innovative visitor centre, a café, 40-bed accommodation, events and educational facilities. The Rewilding Centre welcomes visitors of all ages, interests and backgrounds to explore the natural, Gaelic and cultural heritage of the Highlands and be inspired by rewilding initiatives, including the restoration of the Caledonian forest.

Join the Trees for Life team!

Join our friendly, values-driven team, taking practical steps to rewild the Scottish Highlands. We offer competitive pay and benefits, flexibility, great working culture, and much more. We welcome applicants from all walks of life, with diverse backgrounds, cultures, perspectives, and experiences.

If you require any adjustments during our recruitment process, that would enable you to do as well as possible in the process, please let us know.

Don't meet every single requirement? That's okay. We're committed to building a diverse and inclusive team, and we know that skills and experience come in many forms. The right mindset, attitude, and potential to grow are just as important to us as ticking every box. If you're excited about this role, meet some of the core criteria and feel you can make a meaningful contribution - we encourage you to apply. Please use the personal details section of the application form to tell us why you'd be a great fit.



Our values

Our values are at the heart of our mission to rewild the Scottish Highlands, guiding us in everything from the daily rhythms of office life to the development of our landscape-scale initiatives.

We are *Bold*

We are an ambitious charity with a critical purpose. For us, being bold means thinking about landscape restoration on a grand scale, embracing innovative rewilding methods and challenging the status quo. This approach ensures that every step we take is a bold stride toward a revitalised, thriving natural landscape.

We are *Collaborative*

Our approach, deeply rooted in community and collaboration, involves working closely with local communities, conservation groups, landowners, and volunteers. Finding common ground and working together we will initiate positive solutions to the twin climate and biodiversity crises.

We are *Pragmatic*

We embrace pragmatic and sustainable solutions in everything we do. We are always mindful of our duty to our supporters, our volunteers, our staff and above all to Scotland's wild forest. By adopting practical solutions, we safeguard our efforts and ensure a resilient future for our initiatives.

Overall purpose of the job

Contribute to delivery of an aspen network in the Cairngorms National Park (CNP). Increasing the aspen resource, providing habitat connectivity, continuity and resilience while elevating the profile of aspen and its associated species. Boosting wildlife and improving conditions for a suite of threatened priority species.

Key liaisons

The postholder will be based with Trees for Life's Nature Restoration Team. They will also be in regular contact with staff at Cairngorms National Park Authority and need to visit and work from the Park Authority office in Grantown on Spey regularly. Aspen is a priority for a number of organisations in the Cairngorms and there is a need to maintain good communication with these other groups.

Scope, Accountability and Resources

This appointment will focus on three main tasks:

1. Undertaking a survey data-based analysis of gaps in the connectivity of Aspen stands in the landscape to inform the creation of an Aspen network over time;
2. Proposing actions to fill gaps in collaboration with landowners and managers;
3. Identify Aspen stands that would benefit from active management to restore their condition or protect them from herbivore damage.

The post will be accountable to a partnership steering group between Trees for Life and Cairngorms National Park Authority.

Key responsibilities and Deliverables

Using the evidence from the aspen mapping data and results of ground truthing for the National Park (to be undertaken by contractors), develop a strategic and spatial plan for a Park-wide aspen network, that will support the species and its related specialist biodiversity, in consultation with landowners and managers plus key stakeholders, to include:

- Analyse aspen survey data (presence, condition, priority sites from dependent species and potentially beaver impacted sites) to allow creation of Park-wide aspen network.
- Field survey small areas of existing aspen trees with potential risks from herbivores to suggest and implement actions, along with landowners and local managers, to mitigate these risks.
- Undertake a connectivity gap analysis using Park-wide aspen survey data to identify priority locations where aspen should be planted or managed differently to help form an aspen network in the National Park.

- Liaise with landowners and managers at these gap locations and action work (likely to be new planting or specific management) to fill the gaps.

To support these key deliverables the following is also likely to be needed:

- Develop a plan for sourcing aspen planting stock to deliver the network, including with the Park Authority's main grower at Rivertrees Nursery.
- Integration of 3 main tasks (from Scope, Accountability and Resources section above) into work being delivered by the Park Authority on the C2030 National Heritage Lottery funded Aspen project including working with volunteers trained and supported to undertake site assessments and deliver practical action for aspen conservation at a range of scales.
- Utilising the Park Authorities bespoke aspen survey app, training volunteers in its use as required.
- Undertaking various type of analysis and presentations of data via GIS and mapping.
- Engage with Cairngorms Aspen Group, Butterfly Conservation, RZSS, the Hoverfly Working Group and Plantlife to maximise the opportunities for benefits to aspen-related biodiversity priorities including dark-bordered beauty moth, aspen hoverfly and aspen-associated bryophyte and lichen interests, and ensure work takes account of the potential of aspen to be impacted by herbivores.
- Liaise with landowners to secure permission for aspen planting and initiate ongoing dialogue that inspires them to take pride in their contributions.
- Seek out opportunities to work with land managers interested in enabling practical works to strengthen and expand the presence of aspen on their land.
- Establish best practice case studies.
- Communicate openly with partners and stakeholders to increase collaboration between aspen, species and landscape scale conservation initiatives across the National Park.

Person specification

The successful candidate for the role will be:

Knowledge and experience

- Knowledge of the ecology, and wildlife and habitats of the Scottish Highlands, particularly it's woodlands.
- Understanding of the factors and attributes that affect ecological conditions in woodlands.
- Understanding of how land use history and the common land uses of today affect the Highlands landscapes and their ecology.
- Habitat and/or species survey and assessment in practice.
- Recruiting, managing and supporting volunteers.
- Use of ArcGIS or QGIS for mapping and data presentation.
- Report writing.
- Delivery of practical conservation works i.e tree planting or fencing
- Working with volunteers

Personal attributes

- Highly-motivated and professional in approach.
- Resourceful, flexible and able to work on their own initiative.
- Physically fit and able to work alone outdoors in difficult weather conditions with a conscientious approach to health and safety.
- Well-organised logical thinker, creative and open-minded in approaching problems.
- Strong team player with a flexible approach to finding solutions.
- An outgoing and proactive approach to forming positive relationships with different kinds of land managers and engaging them in practical partnerships to benefit aspen.

Skills and competencies

- Plant and wildlife identification skills.
- Competent using Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, ArcGIS or QGIS.
- Strong interpersonal and team working skills.
- Current UK driving licence and experience of driving off public roads.

Working conditions and special demands

- This post will require occasional weekend and evening working.