

High Nature Value Farm Advisor (Environmental Farming Scheme)

Thank you for your interest in the above vacancy. Please see below for the job description and person specification for the post.

Applicants must complete all the application papers – **the use of CVs in any way will not be accepted.**

Under the section headed 'Role Requirements' it is essential that applicants **clearly demonstrate through the use of examples** how they meet the essential and/or desirable criteria required for the post. It is not acceptable to simply restate the criteria. The shortlisting panel will not make assumptions and if applicants do not demonstrate, through examples, how they meet the criteria they will not be shortlisted to the next stage of selection.

Ulster Wildlife reserves the right to interview only those who demonstrate on their application form that they fully meet the essential criteria and desirable criteria. Ulster Wildlife reserves the right to apply additional criteria to facilitate the shortlisting process where necessary.

All applicants will be contacted regarding the outcome of their application. However, regretfully due to limited resources, Ulster Wildlife cannot provide feedback regarding your application.

Completed application and monitoring forms in Microsoft Word format should be returned by email to recruit@ulsterwildlife.org by 12 noon on Monday 04 April 2022.

Candidates who score above the minimum threshold during a recruitment selection process, but whose scores mean they are ranked lower than other successful candidates, may be kept on a reserve list for similar roles for a period of up to 12 months.

Canvassing will automatically disqualify.

Ulster Wildlife supports the principles of equality of opportunity

JOB DESCRIPTION

Role:	High Nature Value Farm Advisor (Environmental Farming Scheme)
Salary:	Starting from £26,389 subject to skills and experience. Access to employer's contributory pension scheme - maximum 7% per annum.
Hours:	Full-time hours – 37.5 hours per week. Will require some evening and weekend working. The role is suitable for part-time or flexible working to be considered.
Location:	Fermanagh House, Broadmeadow Place, Enniskillen, BT74 7HR. There will be an element of home working and occasional travel across the UK and Ireland.
Contract:	Fixed term to 31 March 2026. Contract renewable subject to successful delivery and continued DAERA funding. Post subject to a 6-month probationary period.
Leave:	24 days per annum plus 12 days statutory holidays.
Reporting to:	EFS Planner and Group Facilitator
Other benefits:	Health cash-back plan and flexi-time system.

OVERVIEW:

Context and background

With biodiversity declines and climate change having reached a critical phase, the importance of securing high quality expertise and input at the interface of agriculture and nature conservation has never been more urgent. In NI, nowhere is this more pressing than in the south west – a region that, despite many threats, still harbours a high percentage of our priority species, farmland habitats and carbon reserves. In response, and by agreement with DAERA, Ulster Wildlife's Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) Group was established in Fermanagh in 2017 and has grown exponentially in the past 5 years.

For those of us lucky enough to call the wildlife rich countryside of south-west NI our base, this work has been hugely rewarding. Imagine for a moment, the pleasures of a spring morning surveying upland heather habitats with skylarks and red grouse calling and the smell of flowering gorse drifting across the hill. Or a designated woodland meadow, visited with the local farmer in June as orchids, ragged robin and a red squirrel jostle for your attention. With complex mosaics of biodiversity ranging from oak woodland to fens to montane heath to limestone grassland and breeding wader habitats, your role is to engage and inspire the guardians of these key remaining fragments of our natural heritage.

Taking groups of local farmers on a journey of understanding, you will help conserve these special places for future generations and on a landscape scale. Because, while the corncrake may have departed, the hay meadows they used to call home can still be found, as farmers increasingly engage in the business of maintenance and restoration with the help of schemes like EFS. Reconnecting people with nature and restoring many of our finest wildlife habitats will be your business.

The Environmental Farming Scheme

The Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) is the current agri-environment support mechanism in NI, enabling and encouraging wildlife friendly farming. EFS Higher Level targets biological designations such as Special Areas of Conservation, while also covering our finest remaining wildlife rich habitats and priority species. Higher level entrants manage their land, and the farmland wildlife that it supports, in a sensitive and balanced way in return for public money.

Our EFS Group has grown to become the largest in NI and recruits farmers who have a Higher Agreement, or who are thinking of applying, to support, up-skill and assist in the delivery of favourable condition status on a landscape scale. Members can avail of mentoring support, farm visits, Group events and online training from our expert Facilitators and Advisors. The Group approach helps farmers understand scheme requirements, manage their farm accordingly and develop their knowledge on the importance of the rich habitats and spectacular species their lands support. With Group membership in excess of 400, covering 15,000 ha of NI's finest habitats, Ulster Wildlife operates at a genuine landscape-scale and contributes to a significant range of biodiversity and climate objectives.

The role

The successful candidate will have the opportunity to bring their own skills and experience to bear on this exciting and innovative approach to land management. Joining experienced Facilitators, already delivering high quality support to farmers, this person will offer extensive technical, IT and administrative support to the EFS team. They will provide an independent, confidential service to potential and existing clients. By bringing a complimentary and fresh skill-set into play the Group will continue to flourish and grow, with opportunities for the current geographical emphasis to evolve in parallel.

The successful candidate will act as a locally based point of contact, helping farmers to address the challenges of sensitive farmland habitat management, facilitate skills development and disseminate best practice through Group-based activities, mentoring and advice. This will proactively enhance the landscape-scale management of our best wildlife sites in compliance with all agri-environment obligations.

There are significant and exciting opportunities for development of the post-holder in this role. They will benefit from on-the-job training in a range of environmental and land-use disciplines, species identification and habitat management, agri-environment content and delivery and experience gained from working and communicating with a wide range of stakeholders. Typically, these audiences will include the farming community, wider society, the conservation movement and the appropriate government departments.

TASKS AND MAIN DUTIES OF THE POST

1. To deliver targeted support across High Nature Value farmland.

- Deliver innovative training and landscape-scale support to Group members and farmers across target areas.
- Provide a central point of contact to current Agreement holders and those intending to join EFS Higher or future agri-environment programmes.
- Promote and provide one to one advice & mentoring, workshops, demonstrations, skills-transfer and events designed to help Group members find solutions to land and nature management issues.
- Deliver engaging activity programmes with strong environmental outcomes.
- Identify new ways to deliver support to farmers and landowners that is relevant and impactful.
- Reporting to the Senior Higher Nature Value Advisor you will enhance still further Ulster Wildlife's reputation in this field.

2. To effectively deliver and monitor programme outputs and outcomes

- Assist the targeting and co-ordination of the EFS work programme in relation to designated sites.
- Promote Group membership and scheme participation to farmers of High Nature Value farmland.
- Maintain databases of group participants and activities.

- Track and record programme activities on project deliverables and to ensure a high level of customer satisfaction is achieved.
- Work with other EFS Planners in target areas to improve effectiveness of the Group approach.
- Track the overall condition of habitats and maintain contact with Group participants through annual habitat health checks.
- Identify any risks to delivery of outputs and outcomes.
- Attend as required, meetings with statutory bodies, funders or partner organizations in relation to the project.
- Continue to raise the profile of the Natura 2000/ASSI network through an increasing diversity of communication activities.

3. Managing Resources

- Ensure funders' targets and reporting requirements are met, assisting the Director of Land Use in the preparation of reports for quarterly claims.
- As part of ongoing Group administration retain detailed records of activities and time to enable claims to be accurately completed and verified.
- Support the Director of Land Use in planning, monitoring and controlling expenditure in line with agreed and approved allocated budgets & EU/UW financial procedures.

4. Project Management

- Responsible for ensuring timely and effective delivery of the project tasks allocated to the post-holder arising from the Group Facilitation Agreement with DAERA and EFS.

ORGANISATION-WIDE RESPONSIBILITIES OF POST

No job description can cover every issue which may arise and subsequently the post-holder may be expected to carry out other duties broadly consistent with those listed above.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential Criteria

1. A qualification in agriculture, environmental science or an equivalent deemed suitable.
2. A knowledge of High Nature Value farming systems and environmental best practice.
3. Previous experience of practical land management.
4. An ability to identify priority farmland habitats and species.
5. Knowledge of agri-environment schemes and an interest in managing farmland habitats for biodiversity and carbon capture.
6. Demonstrable experience of building and maintaining effective relationships, ideally within the farming community.
7. Demonstrable experience of working as part of a team.
8. Ability to communicate effectively, both written and verbally with a diverse range of people, particularly farmers.
9. Experience of preparing group-based education sessions.
10. Effective organisational skills including the ability to manage and prioritise workloads and meet deadlines.
11. Computer literacy with a good knowledge of Microsoft Office (particularly Excel).
12. Willingness and ability to work evenings and weekends when required.
13. Understanding of health and safety policies and procedures.
14. Access to own transport for business purposes.

Desirable Criteria

1. Experience with GIS mapping software such as ArcGIS or QGIS.
2. Previous experience of developing habitat management plans.
3. Previous experience of providing practical environmental advice on land management.

4. Knowledge and understanding of NI's biodiversity and the management requirements associated with designated sites.
5. An innovative approach to reaching out to key audiences via a range of platforms.
6. Experience of using video conferencing software to communicate with colleagues and stakeholders.

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