

## CONTEXT STATEMENT

**Job title:** Principal Officer - Countryside Access  
**Directorate:** Environment & Place  
**Location:** Oxford & county wide  
**Reports to:** Group Manager - Countryside Operations & Volunteer Coordination

### The Role

The Principal Officer Countryside Access acts as professional lead for the authority in all matters relating to the management of the Public Rights of Way [PRoW] network across Oxfordshire.

The wider Countryside Access team is well known and respected service in Oxfordshire. The value and benefit of access to the countryside and greenspace has been well documented and like elsewhere there has been a huge increase in use of PRoW across the county during the recent pandemic, reinforcing the importance of this asset.

The post will line manage a Technical Officer who provides technical guidance and professional support to the team, as well as drawing programmes of work together in partnership with the Countryside Access Delivery Team [CADT]. The post also directly manages four area Countryside Access Officers that deal with day to day enquiries and lead on the management of the network in their areas.

The team works on an agile basis, currently working mostly from home, but regular face to face time is endorsed as an essential means to ensure operational consistency and team/personal development and support.

The Countryside Access Delivery team [currently 4x staff] act as an in-house practical team who deliver maintenance and improvement projects on the PRoW network. The team are within the same group and operate from a dedicated workshop at Sutton near Stanton Harcourt. Both teams work closely to plan & deliver programmes of work across the county.

The postholder will maintain a close working relationship with the Principal Officer Countryside Records [Definitive Map & Commons] & the Principal Officer PRoW Access Strategy [covering strategy & policy development & s106 scheme opportunity and delivery] to ensure shared objectives are delivered effectively & consistently. These two roles are currently in different groups but within the same directorate.

The Countryside Access area is also benefiting from an increasing capital investment programme over the next few years and the Principal Officer role will oversee delivery of a range of schemes currently in development designed to improve access to the countryside. This currently focuses on establishing a bridge inspection, monitoring and replacement programme using data currently recorded in CAMs and will expand to cover other areas in the future.

The post will report directly to the Group Manager – Countryside Operations who will offer professional guidance and line management. The two roles will work together to ensure a county-wide consistency of approach to the management of the PRoW network in partnership with outside agencies, user groups and the Oxfordshire Countryside Access Forum. You will also manage the biannual Monitoring Group meeting with user groups and key stakeholders to discuss performance & policy objectives and take feedback from those using the network and keen to support its continued maintenance & development.

For key job responsibilities and selection criteria please refer to the attached Job Description.

**Personal qualities:**

- A high level of commitment and the ability to lead and motivate others
- Articulate with good interpersonal skills, the ability to prepare clear, well written reports appropriate for the purpose with the ability to articulate complex issues effectively to others using different styles of communication
- Exhibit the confidence to constructively challenge established ways of working with the determination to solve problems in partnership with others and to make decisions based on clear analysis and understanding.
- Acts with high levels of trust, integrity and personal accountability and respond positively to change and opportunities for personal development
- Ability and willingness to accept responsibility and accountability

*Job related aptitude and skills*

- Excellent customer service skills.
- Ability to work both as part of a team and independently.
- Ability to work under pressure and to deadlines.
- Ability to think and work strategically across the organisation
- Report writing and correspondence skills that demonstrate the ability to provide clear and coherent information suitable for the audience concerned.
- High degree of ICT literacy.

*Other Requirements*

- Full, valid, clean UK driving licence.
- Willingness to attend meetings out of normal office hours, including occasional weekend working

**The County**

Oxfordshire has a wonderful balance between beautiful Cotswold countryside and quaint villages and towns against the urban dynamic of the world renowned City of Oxford and surrounding market towns. It is a thriving county with one of the fastest growing economies in the country with a rapidly growing science sector and the base for many national and internationally recognised companies and organisations. As a result of this growth, the county has seen significant investment in both large and small infrastructure schemes in the last few years which has required changes to the way the Council works and engages with its residents and businesses.

The PRoW network extends to 2600 miles across a diverse landscape, covering three AONBs and including two National Trails which are hosted by Oxfordshire County Council and managed within the same group as the Countryside Access team.

**Countryside Operations & Volunteer Coordination group**

The COVC group comprises specialist teams which include; Community Engagement, volunteer training & management on Highway related activities see [here](#); Countryside Access management & delivery, Highway Tree team, and hosting of both the Thames Path & Ridgeway National Trails staff. The teams provide a central and county wide professional

lead function to both internal teams and external stakeholders as well as enabling and supporting communities with their own initiatives including direct delivery. See structure chart attached.

### **The Directorate – Environment & Place**

The Environment & Place Directorate consists of approximately 800 staff supporting the County's Highways, Waste, Property & Investment, Environment, Strategic Planning, Facilities Management with many more people engaged in service delivery through our key supply chain or partner organisations.

The Directorate plays a key role in delivering the councils vision to have:

- Thriving Communities – *where every community thrives and everyone can play an active part*
- Thriving People – *Where everyone leads safe, healthy lives while people with the greatest need are cared for*
- Thriving Economy – *Which creates jobs and homes for the future*

To do this we are seeking staff who will “do the best they can for residents” by:

- Working together in a supportive and honest way
- Striving to find the best solutions
- Being open to change and doing things differently.

### **Community Operations**

The services we deliver to residents and businesses of Oxfordshire include:

- Highways maintenance (including winter maintenance)
- Highway & Countryside Records [Definitive Map & Commons]
- Highway improvements and construction
- Tree inspection and maintenance
- Flood risk management.
- Network management (including traffic control centre);
- Waste management
- Parking services
- Countryside Access management including two National Trails (Thames Path & Ridgeway).

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