

Chief Operating Officer

Candidate Information Pack, July 2025



LHH

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Welcome from Anna Brown, Director of Forest Services

Thank you for your interest in the role of
Chief Operating Officer at Forest Services.

At the Forestry Commission, we are united by a shared vision: to help tackle some of society's biggest challenges through thriving forests, woods and trees. Forest Services is the part of the Commission delivering grants, regulations and advice, and as Director, it is a privilege to lead a team dedicated to protecting, expanding and improving England's treescape - ensuring its benefits are felt by nature, people and the economy.

The Chief Operating Officer is a key leadership role that lies at the heart of our delivery. As COO, you will lead our operational teams across England, ensuring our regulatory responsibilities, grant schemes and plant health initiatives are delivered to the highest standards. Your work will be central to how we achieve our strategic ambitions, from increasing tree cover and enhancing woodland condition to supporting our sector through advice and partnership.

In this role, you will deputise for me and play a vital part in shaping the performance culture of Forest Services. You will guide the performance and direction of more than 500 staff, ensuring they are empowered to deliver and adapt to the evolving needs of government, landowners and wider society. Your ability to lead in a complex, high-profile environment - balancing delivery and innovation - will be essential.

We are looking for a confident, collaborative and capable senior leader who shares our passion for the role of forestry in a better future. If that sounds like you, I look forward to reading your application.

Dr Anna Brown

Director of Forest Services





Advertisement - Chief Operating Officer

Location - Any Forestry Commission office with regular presence in Bristol and London and travel nationwide

Salary - £76,000 - £117,800 (New entrants are expected to join on the minimum of the pay band)

At the Forestry Commission, we are united by a shared vision - to help tackle some of society's biggest challenges through thriving forests, woods and trees.

Forest Services is the part of the Forestry Commission delivering regulation, incentives and advice to support woodland creation and management across England. Our work directly supports Government priorities around climate change, biodiversity, plant health, rural growth and more – and we do it by working closely with landowners, delivery partners, and wider stakeholders.

We are now looking for an exceptional individual to join us as Chief Operating Officer of Forest Services.

This is a vital leadership role, offering the opportunity to influence and deliver across our entire national and regional operational portfolio. You will play a central part in shaping and implementing high-profile programmes including grant schemes, regulatory frameworks and plant health interventions that have real-world impact on our environment and communities. With management responsibility for around 500 staff and oversight of significant public funds, the COO is a cornerstone of our Executive Team.

You will bring vision and clarity to a broad and complex portfolio, ensuring consistent, high-quality service delivery while nurturing a culture of innovation, integrity and collaboration.

Your leadership will be key to helping us navigate change, manage risk and build capability for the future – all while delivering to the highest standards across our frontline services.

We are looking for an experienced senior leader, capable of operating in a large, multi-disciplinary organisation. You will have a proven track record of leading complex operations and navigating high-stakes policy landscapes. You'll be a skilled communicator and strategic thinker, with strong judgement, and the ability to inspire and develop others. Your ability to manage performance, drive forward change and build lasting partnerships will be key to success in this role.

If you are ready to make a tangible difference through strategic leadership of England's woodland and forestry services, we want to hear from you.

Applications in the form of a tailored CV and covering letter (no longer than two pages), highlighting your skills and experience pertinent to the role, should be submitted no later than midnight **Thursday 10 July** to Executive@LHH.com

For a confidential discussion about the post or to request the Candidate Information Pack, please contact LHH Executive Search on **+44 (0)141 220 6460** or email Executive@LHH.com



Forestry Commission: Our Organisation

The Forestry Commission also plays a key role in shaping wider policy.

The Forestry Commission is a Non-Ministerial Department sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and overseen by the Forestry Commissioners. We are the government's forestry and woodland experts and work closely with other agencies at a regional level including Forest Services, Forestry England and Forest Research.

Our vision and purpose is to tackle some of society's biggest challenges with thriving trees, woods and forests. Trees provide a uniquely versatile and proven solution to a range of today's problems, from reducing carbon in the atmosphere and creating habitats for biodiversity, through to supporting rural economies, providing timber and relieving the burdens on our health services.

At the heart of tackling these issues is our Forestry Commission Strategy 2023-28 which has three strategic goals:

- More trees, more diverse species, growing and thriving.
- Better managed woods and forests that are protected and improving.
- Bigger benefits for nature, climate, people and economy

In delivering our strategy we collaborate widely across sectors to inform, demonstrate and enable what works to deliver multiple benefits from thriving trees, woods and forests.

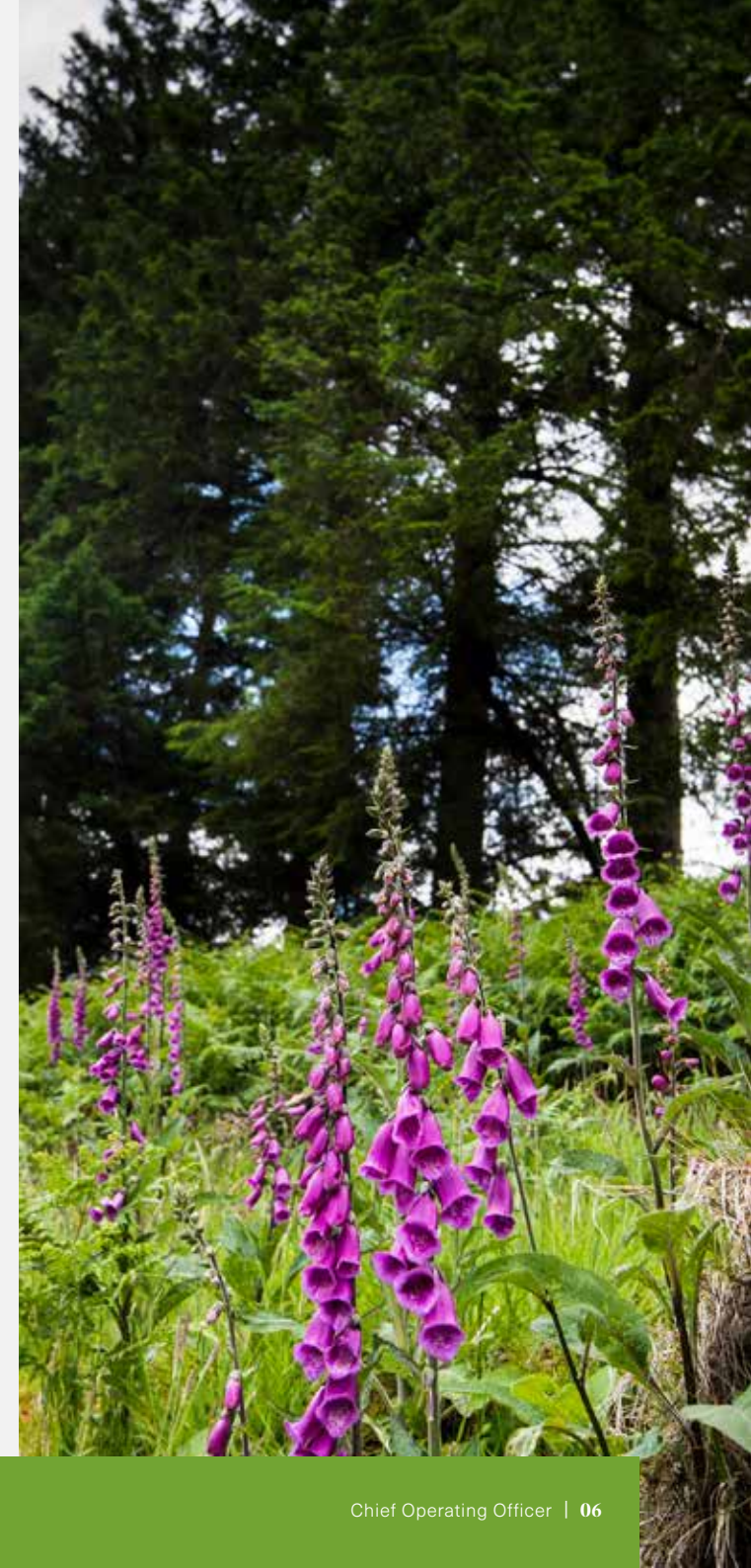
We do this by:

- Generating, sharing and applying world-leading science and evidence.
- Demonstrating the best of modern forestry and land management as custodians of the nation's forests.
- Supplying domestic timber to market and building capacity in the wider forestry sector
- Working across agencies to prevent and respond to outbreaks of tree pests and diseases
- Enabling others to sustainably manage and expand woodland through advice, grants and regulation We deliver this work through Forest Services, part of the Forestry Commission, as well as two executive agencies, Forestry England and Forest Research

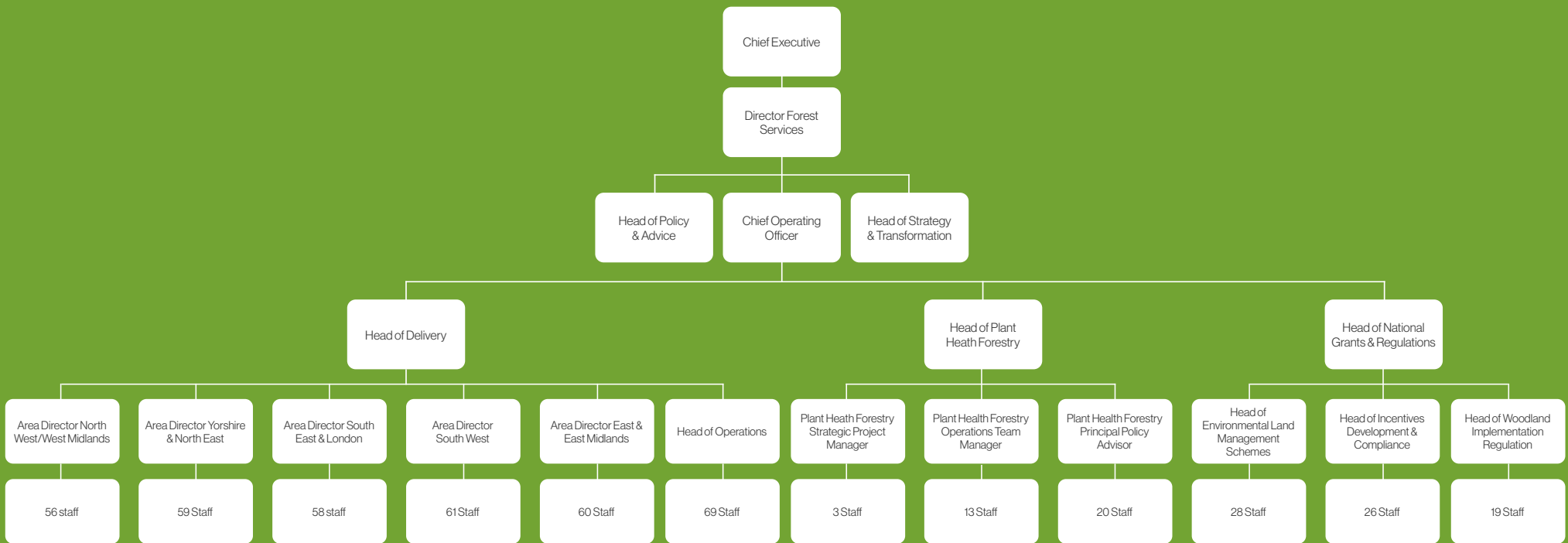
The Forestry Commission also plays a key role in shaping wider policy, working closely with the UK Government and the devolved administrations to align our strategic plans to the policy priorities of the day, as the government's forestry experts. While this policy landscape may change over the next five years, we will continue to support current government policy priorities such as Defra's Environmental Improvement Plan and the government's Net Zero Strategy.

To read our strategy, visit:

[Forestry Commission Strategy 2023-2028 - GOV.UK](#)



Forestry Commission: The Team



Chief Operating Officer – The Role

We advise nationally and locally on how to unlock the full potential of woodlands.

Background information

Forest Services is part of Forestry Commission, the Government's forestry experts. We advise nationally and locally on how to unlock the full potential of woodlands and support the forestry sector to protect, improve and expand England's valuable woodland assets, ensuring that they continue to provide benefits to people, the environment and the economy. Forest Services achieves these objectives through regulation, incentives and advice. Forest Services plays a central role in delivering the government's forestry ambitions, including climate change mitigation, biodiversity enhancement, and rural economic development. If you are passionate about the role of forestry in creating a better future for England, and want to play a key part in that, we want to hear from you.

Purpose of the job

The purpose of the role is to enable Forest Services to effectively deliver across its portfolio, deputising for the Director of Forest Services as required.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) for Forest Services is a key member of the executive leadership team, responsible for the strategic and operational oversight of all delivery functions across the organisation. This includes the effective administration of grants, regulatory compliance, and plant health initiatives. The COO will lead both national and regional teams to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery that supports sustainable forest management and meets government and stakeholder expectations.

Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Provide strategic direction and leadership for the frontline delivery teams, and the plant health team and national grants and regulation teams in Forest Services, aligning with national forestry and plant health policy and organisational goals
- Provide oversight for the development and implementation of operational plans, ensuring integration across the grants and regulatory landscape to ensure the best outcomes for Government and customers
- Be an active member of the Forest Services Executive Team and contribute to the wider leadership of Forest Services, taking interest in and joint responsibility for matters beyond your immediate portfolio
- Act as a key advisor to the FS Director, wider Forest Services Executive team and Forest Service Board on operational performance, risks, and opportunities within your area.
- Contribute to wider policy development and delivery for Forestry Commission, playing an active role on relevant boards

Operational Oversight

- Drive operational excellence and consistency across national and regional teams
- Oversee the design, delivery, and continuous improvement of grant schemes and regulatory frameworks.
- Ensure robust systems are in place for plant health surveillance, response, and compliance with national and international standards
- Oversee and act as senior point of escalation for all cost centres in your portfolio, including spotting and responding to synergies and tensions between them and the wider business.



Team Leadership and Development

- Lead and inspire a large, multidisciplinary workforce, totalling ~500 staff, including line management of three PB1s/G6's.
- Foster a culture of collaboration, innovation, and accountability, ensuring clear communication to both staff, the Director and rest of the ET.
- Ensure staff are supported through professional development and performance management, promoting compliance with HR and other corporate policies as well as good health and safety and well-being in the team.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Represent Forest Services and wider Forestry Commission at national forums, building and maintaining strong relationships with other government departments, devolved administrations, landowners, industry bodies, and environmental non-government organisations, raising the profile of the Forestry Commission and supporting integrated working to enable delivery.

Governance and Compliance

- Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, policies, and standards.
- Oversee performance metrics and risk registers for your areas, ensuring robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks are in place.
- Proactively oversee multi-million-pound cost centres, taking ownership for spend decisions within your delegated authority and ensuring accurate forecasting. Closely monitor spend against budget and ensure that all those to whom you delegate financial authority are appropriately trained in financial awareness.
- Act as Sponsor or Senior Responsible Officer when required, championing their benefits and ensuring their efficient and timely delivery.

Chief Operating Officer – The Role

Forest Services achieves these objectives through regulation, incentives and advice.

Person specification

Essential

- Proven senior leadership experience in a complex, multi-disciplinary organisation, providing clear vision and direction
- Excellent people management skills and strong experience of successfully leading a diverse, multi-disciplinary, geographically dispersed and high performing team to achieve ambitious targets.
- Experience of leading innovation and complex organisational change, including navigating governance and bringing stakeholders together to ensure successful adoption
- Excellent strategic thinking, planning, and decision-making skills, including strong judgement combined with the confidence to take appropriate risks and exploit opportunities, and the ability to make timely decisions with incomplete information
- Experience of reacting promptly and tactically to issues, as well as making long-term strategic plans for your business unit and wider organisation
- Strong Business management experience including budgetary, forecasting and analytical skills
- A proven track record of actively building and maintaining relationships and influence across a complex stakeholder landscape, including where their needs are in conflict

- Excellent influencing and communication skills, with experience of briefing senior officials verbally and in writing to achieve the right outcomes, and of securing your team's buy-in to strategic changes
- Strong delegation and reporting skills, combined with the ability to balance sound governance and procedure (including escalation) with the need to maintain portfolio ownership

Desirable

- Strong understanding of forestry policy, grants administration, regulatory frameworks, and plant health.
- Awareness of Civil Service financial procedure and good practice (e.g., through an understanding of Managing Public Money)
- Demonstration of a leader's commitment towards continuing professional development





Conditions & Remuneration

Blended working forms part of our flexible and inclusive approach to future ways of working.

Salary

£76,000 - £117,800 (New entrants are expected to join on the minimum of the pay band)

Location

Any Forestry Commission office (subject to availability in relation to working pattern/blended working arrangements), with regular presence in Bristol and London and travel nationwide. We aim to provide a great place to work, whichever location you work from. Blended working forms part of our flexible and inclusive approach to future ways of working. It is an informal arrangement which gives you the option to work some of the week from home, and some of the week from our Forestry Commission workplaces, subject to role requirements, business needs, and regular review. Informal blended working arrangements will be available as agreed with the line manager.

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Timescales

Closing date for applications **midnight Thursday 10 July**
Interviews with Forestry Commission, **Friday 25 July**
(subject to change)

Benefits

Alongside your salary of £76,000 - £117,800, Forestry Commission contributes £18,330 towards you being a member of the Civil Service Defined Benefit Pension scheme. [Find out what benefits a Civil Service Pension provides.](#)

- A Civil Service pension with an employer contribution of 28.97%.
- A range of family friendly benefits.
- An environment with flexible working options.
- Learning and development tailored to your role.
- A culture which promotes a diverse and inclusive work environment.
- A range of wellbeing benefits including discounted Civil Service Healthcare, access to an Employee Assistance Programme 24/7, Bike to Work Scheme, plus many more.
- 25 days annual leave, with 1 additional day for each years' service up to 5 years (pro rata), plus 10.5 bank holidays/privilege days (pro rata).
- Ability to buy or sell 5 days annual leave.
- 3 days volunteering per year (pro rata).

Selection process details

Applications in the form of a CV and supporting statement are to be submitted to Executive@LHH.com no later than midnight, **Thursday 10 July**. Any move to Forestry Commission from another employer will mean you can no longer access childcare vouchers. This includes moves between government departments. You may however be eligible for other government schemes, including Tax Free Childcare; for further information visit the Childcare Choices [website](#).



If successful and transferring from another Government Department a criminal record check may be carried out.

In order to process applications without delay, we will be sending a Criminal Record Check to Disclosure and Barring Service on your behalf. However, we recognise in exceptional circumstances some candidates will want to send their completed forms direct. If you will be doing this, please advise Government Recruitment Service of your intention by emailing Pre-EmploymentChecks.grs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk stating the job reference number in the subject heading.

This role is full time only. Applicants who wish to work an alternative pattern are welcome to apply however your preferred working pattern may not be available and you should discuss this with the vacancy holder before applying.

Where a role has been identified as one which falls under the scope of the Public Sector English Language Requirements, within Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016, it is essential that applicants should have the ability to converse at ease with members of the public and provide advice in accurate spoken English. Applicants will be assessed in the selection process in accordance with the requirements.

Conditions & Remuneration

Travel

The duties of this post require the applicant to have a full current driving licence that enables them to drive in the UK. However, the Forestry Commission is willing to consider any proposals put forward by applicants that would allow them to do the job by any other means.

The Forestry Commission is actively working to reduce the carbon emission of official travel and applicants should be aware of the broad principles which are being applied to reduce carbon emissions to less than 50gCO₂/km.

Travel options include:

- Use of private car: some Officers choose to use their private car and receive payment for the miles they drive on official business. Vehicle emissions are measured in CO₂ grams per kilometre (g/km). The cap is currently 115 gCO₂/km and will be reduced to 100 gCO₂/km on 1st April 2026. After that date, we expect private vehicles used for official travel to emit significantly less.
- Use of CAPES (lease) Cars: after an employee has successfully completed their probation, they can opt for a CAPES car (the user pays a monthly rate for private use). All CAPES cars must emit less than 50gCO₂/km

Reasonable adjustment

If a person with disabilities is put at a substantial disadvantage compared to a nondisabled person, we have a duty to make reasonable changes to our processes. If you need a change to be made so that you can make your application, you should contact Executive@LHH.com to tell us what changes or help you might need further on in the recruitment process.

For instance, you may need wheelchair access at interview, or if you're deaf, a Language Service Professional. If you are experiencing accessibility problems with any attachments on this advert, please contact Executive@LHH.com

Feedback

Feedback will only be provided if you attend an interview or assessment.

Security

Successful candidates must undergo a criminal record check. People working with government assets must complete baseline [personnel security standard](#) (opens in new window) checks.

Nationality requirements

This job is broadly open to the following groups:

- UK nationals
- nationals of the Republic of Ireland
- nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities with settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\)](#) (opens in a new window)
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities who have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)
- individuals with limited leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain who were eligible to apply for EUSS on or before 31 December 2020
- Turkish nationals, and certain family members of Turkish nationals, who have accrued the right to work in the Civil Service

[Further information on nationality requirements](#)

(opens in a new window)

Working for the Civil Service

[The Civil Service Code](#) (opens in a new window) sets out the standards of behaviour expected of civil servants. We recruit by merit on the basis of fair and open competition, as outlined in the [Civil Service Commission's recruitment principles](#) (opens in a new window).

The Civil Service embraces diversity and promotes equal opportunities. As such, we run a Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) for candidates with disabilities who meet the minimum selection criteria. The Civil Service also offers a Redeployment Interview Scheme to civil servants who are at risk of redundancy, and who meet the minimum requirements for the advertised vacancy.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Civil Service is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found. To learn more please see the [Civil Service People Plan](#) (opens in a new window) and the [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#) (opens in a new window).

This vacancy is part of the [Great Place to Work for Veterans](#) (opens in a new window) initiative.

The Civil Service welcomes applications from people who have recently left prison or have an unspent conviction. [Read more about prison leaver recruitment](#) (opens in new window).

Once this job has closed, the job advert will no longer be available. You may want to save a copy for your records.

Further information

Our recruitment process is underpinned by the principle of appointment on the basis of fair and open competition and appointment on merit, as outlined in the Civil Service Commissioners' Recruitment Principles. If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with these principles and you wish to make a complaint, you should in the first instance contact FCE by email:

englandhr.services@forestryengland.uk. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive, you can contact the Civil Service Commission, which regulates all Civil Service recruitment.

How to Apply

Please send your tailored CV and a cover letter no longer than two pages by email to Executive@LHH.com

The closing date for applications is midnight,
Thursday 10 July.

To apply for this post, please send your tailored CV and a cover letter no longer than two pages by email, highlighting in the subject heading 'Chief Operating Officer', to Executive@LHH.com

If you would like a confidential, informal discussion about the role then please contact LHH on **+44 (0) 141 220 6460** or send an email to the above-mentioned address.

Forestry Commission is committed to equality of opportunity and to no discrimination on the grounds of race, religion or belief, age, sex, marital or civil partnership status, disability, sexual orientation, transgender status, pregnancy or maternity.

We are constantly reviewing our approach to ensuring equality and diversity in our applications and would be pleased if you could complete the Equalities Monitoring Form below.

[Equalities Monitoring Form - Forestry Commission](#)

Should you require any modifications or wish to speak with a member of our team to discuss any particular circumstances, please email the above address.



**LHH Recruitment is Scotland's leading Executive Search team.
We connect Scotland's top businesses with exceptional candidates –
and we do it really well.**

We count innovators, creatives and leaders among the professionals we work with, and our clients and candidates span a diverse range of sectors and functions. From procurement and supply chain, medical, engineering, project management, accountancy, legal, transport and business transformation, to banking, the arts, government, technology, marketing and communications, not-for-profit and HR, our expertise is wide-reaching and our reach unparalleled.

We pride ourselves on our ability to give clients and candidates a competitive edge while making the recruitment process smooth, straightforward and – dare we say it – enjoyable. Whether you're taking the next step on the career ladder or building a bespoke and targeted recruitment strategy, our Scottish team will work hard to deliver a first-class service that meets your exact requirements.

LHH Recruitment is the Professional Services and Executive Search arm of Adecco, a Fortune 500 business headquartered in Zurich and the world's largest human resource consulting and recruitment company. This means we have national and international networks at our fingertips to help clients and candidates make the right connections.

Your time is precious. Let us do the legwork for you.

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