

Forestry Commission launches ground-breaking apprenticeship programme for the forestry sector

A first-of-its-kind apprenticeship initiative to foster a growing, highly skilled and more diverse workforce within the forestry sector has been opened today (Wednesday 6 April).

The Development Woodland Officer programme offers a three-year, paid development opportunity for passionate individuals looking to kickstart their careers in forestry. Jointly led by the Forestry Commission, the University of Cumbria and the Institute of Chartered Foresters, the programme marks the first time that a degree-level forestry apprenticeship has been offered in the UK.

The initiative aims to grow, upskill, and diversify the forestry sector workforce. Expanding long-term workforce capacity will help to deliver the Government's tree planting and woodland creation ambitions over the coming years as we build back greener.

Development Woodland Officers will benefit from academic studies in forestry management at the University of Cumbria, practical experience in Forestry Commission area teams across England, and nine months of wider sector placements to further build their skills and experience, enhancing future employment prospects.

Upon completion of the programme, successful graduates will earn a Professional Forester Apprenticeship (equivalent to Level 6), a BSc (Hons) in Forest Management and the potential to gain Chartered Forester status with the Institute of Chartered Foresters.

Forestry Commission Chief Executive, Richard Stanford said:

This new programme offers an exciting career pathway into the forestry sector for people from all backgrounds and abilities.

It offers the unique opportunity to gain hands-on experience, a BSc (Hons) and the potential to gain Chartered Forester status with the Institute of Chartered Foresters. The Forestry Commission apprentices will be paid and will gain all these qualifications, with zero tuition fees and no need for a student loan.

We are looking for ambitious, driven individuals who are eager to support our plans to expand, protect and improve our nation's vital forests, woods and trees to give us a resilient future for generations to come.

University of Cumbria Vice Chancellor, Professor Julie Mennell said:

The University of Cumbria is proud of the collaborative role it plays with partners to upskill workforce teams in existing and emerging industries to address higher-level skills and sector needs.

We are delighted to be working with the Forestry Commission to offer this new pathway into forestry.

Executive Director, Institute of Chartered Foresters, Shireen Chambers MBE FICFor said:

The Institute has been part of the developing Trailblazer group since its inception, and we are delighted to see the launch of this exciting degree apprenticeship in forestry. We hope this will inspire a new generation of forestry professionals and encourage those already in the industry who want to learn while working, providing much needed new skills into our growing sector.

Today's announcement follows the publication of the England Trees Action Plan, which set out [plans to treble tree planting rates in England during this Parliament](#), funded through an expected £500 million from the Nature for Climate Fund. It also forms part of wider Government action to create new green jobs across the country, including through the [£6 million Trees Call to Action Fund](#), the landmark National Apprenticeships drive and the multi-billion-pound Plan for Jobs – putting the UK at the forefront of a green recovery.

Up to 45 Development Woodland Officer positions will be created over the next three years, with the first cohort of 15 Officers starting in September this year.

Apply now via the [Civil Service Jobs Portal](#).

The Forestry Commission are also interested in working with partners within the sector to develop the offer on an ongoing basis. If you would like to find out more about the Development Woodland Officer programme or the Professional Forester Apprenticeship, are considering offering apprenticeship positions or would like to offer support with work placements, please contact: DW0enquiries@forestrycommission.gov.uk