# **Job Description**

| **Post title** | Researcher (Adders Up Project) |
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| **Job Evaluation** | N12080 |
| **Grade** | 8 |
| **Service** | Neighbourhoods & Climate Change |
| **Service area** | Environment – North Pennines National Landscape |
| **Reporting to** | Biodiversity Lead |
| **Location** | Your normal place of work will be North Pennines National Landscape Offices, Stanhope, but you may be required to work at any Council workplace within County Durham |
| **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** | This post **is not** subject to a Basic/Standard/Enhanced Disclosure |
| **Flexitime** | This post **is** eligible for flexitime |
| **Politically restricted** | This post **is not** designated as a politically restricted post in accordance with the requirements of Section 1(5) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and by regulations made from time to time by the Secretary of State |

## **Description of role**

Concern has been growing about the status of UK adder (*Vipera* berus) populations, with expert opinion reporting widespread declines. A recent citizen science project, ‘Make the Adder Count’, monitored 260 adder sites across the UK & suggests that all 'small' adder populations could be extinct by 2032 in the UK, adding that 90% of UK adder populations are considered 'small'.

The **Adders Up** project is a three-year programme of public engagement to locate and raise awareness of adders, and land management activity to conserve and restore populations of adders in the North Pennines. In the first year we are partnering with Newcastle University to learn more about adder distribution, genetics, and movement across our landscape. We are recruiting two posts – A Researcher (this post) and a Field Research Assistant. The research design, specialist training, and implementation will be under the direction of Newcastle University staff.

You will lead on the field surveys of adders with support from the Field Research Assistant. The field work will follow protocols provided by Newcastle University using established survey and sampling techniques. The data collection will involve safe handling, measurements, and sampling of genetic material from individual snakes, in addition to standardised population surveys.

You will lead on data recording and management in the field, and ensuring data, field photographs and camera trap images are stored in a secure and systematic manner.

You will lead on planning all survey work including securing access, health and safety, and preparation and maintenance of equipment, with support from the Field Research Assistant. You will also perform DNA extractions and assist with analyses of genetic data and generate landscape models (e.g. landscape resistance models).

You may have some opportunity to support the Adders Up project on the conservation, education, and engagement work, by providing data, disseminating learning to different audiences, and producing communications items e.g., blog posts.

It is anticipated it will be a busy season, mainly working in the field in potentially remote locations, which may require early starts and accessed by walking over difficult terrain.

## **Duties and Responsibilities**

The key parts of the role are: leading on the planning, preparation and delivery of adder-focussed surveys and genetic sampling across the North Pennines National Landscape; correct and consistent handling of data and samples; and any analyses, processing and reporting as directed by Newcastle University staff.

Responsibilities will include:

• Oversight of all field survey of adder sites, including preparatory work, maintaining equipment, and health and safety procedures

• Safe handling and sampling of individual adders, taking a range of measurements, weighing, swabs and scale-clipping

• Ensuring sampling methods and handling are at the highest possible levels of animal welfare

• Ensuring handling, storage and transport of materials for lab analyses is carried out in a correct and consistent way

• Oversight on all data management, spreadsheets, DNA extractions, data analysis and landscape modelling

• Engaging with farmers, landowners, contractors and the general public in a tactful and positive manner

• Feeding learning back into the core activities of the Adders Up project

• Contributing to the programme communications and relevant conferences/outputs

## **Organisational Responsibilities**

### **Values and behaviours**

To demonstrate and be a role model for the council’s values and behaviours to promote and encourage positive behaviours, enhancing the quality and integrity of the services we provide.

### **Smarter working, transformation, and design principles**

To seek new and innovative ideas to work smarter, irrespective of job role, and to be creative, innovative and empowered. Understand the operational impact of transformational change and service design principles to support new ways of working and to meet customer needs.

### **Communication**

To communicate effectively with our customers, managers, peers and partners and to work collaboratively to provide the best possible public service. Communication between teams, services and partner organisations is imperative in providing the best possible service to our public.

### **Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

To take responsibility for health, safety, and wellbeing in accordance with the council’s Health and Safety policy and procedures.

### **Equality and diversity**

To promote a society that gives everyone an equal chance to learn, work and live, free from discrimination and prejudice and ensure our commitment is put into practice. All employees are responsible for eliminating unfair and unlawful discrimination in everything that they do.

### **Confidentiality**

To work in a way that does not divulge personal and/or confidential information and follow the council’s policies and procedures in relation to data protection and security of information.

### **Climate Change**

To contribute to our corporate responsibility in relation to climate change by considering and limiting the carbon impact of activities during the course of your work, wherever possible.

### **Performance management**

To promote a culture whereby performance management is ingrained and the highest of standards and performance are achieved by all. Contribute to the council’s Performance and Development Review processes to ensure continuous learning and improvement and to increase organisational performance.

### **Quality assurance (for applicable posts)**

To set, monitor and evaluate standards at individual, team and service level so that the highest standards of service are delivered and maintained. Use data, where appropriate, to enhance the quality of service provision and support decision making processes.

### **Management and leadership (for applicable posts)**

To provide vision and leadership to inspire and empower all employees so they can reach their full potential and contribute to the council’s values and behaviours. Managers and leaders must engage in personal development to ensure they are equipped to lead transformational change; always searching for better ways to do things differently to meet organisational changes and service priorities.

### **Financial management (for applicable posts)**

To manage a designated budget, ensuring that the service achieves value for money in all circumstances through the monitoring of expenditure and the early identification of any financial irregularity.

The above is not exhaustive and the post holder will be expected to undertake any duties which may reasonably fall within the level of responsibility and the competence of the post as directed by your manager.

## **Person Specification**

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| **Attributes** | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| **Qualifications** | * Degree or equivalent, in a subject related to biology, ecology, or nature conservation, or an expectation of being awarded by May 2024 | * Postgraduate Degree or equivalent, in a subject related to biology, ecology, or nature conservation, or an expectation of being awarded by May 2024 |
| **Experience** | * Work experience in reptile conservation or ecology * Data management and GIS use * Working outside in harsh weather conditions * Working as part of a team * Working independently and managing own time | * Genetic sampling * Genetic analysis/processing |
| **Skills and Knowledge** | * Specialist fieldwork skills * Good understanding of relevant land management, nature conservation, countryside issues, * Skills in collection and handling data * Effective communication, verbally and in writing * Competent in Microsoft Office * Ability to work using own initiative | * Species identification skills * Map reading, navigation * Involvement in reptile fieldwork, including measurements and handling snakes * An understanding of R statistics and programming |
| **Personal Qualities** | * Interest in nature conservation, ecology, or environmental issues * Determination to complete a potentially demanding field season * A highly organised approach to work * Flexible and adaptable to changing situations * A positive attitude and a willingness to learn * Willingness to work outside normal office hours on occasions * Travel is an essential part of the role | * An interest in, and experience of, the North Pennines |