

Shadow Volunteer

Role Name: Craftsperson Shadow Volunteer

Forest: Thetford Forest - East District

Country	England
Location	Santon Downham, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 0TJ
Supervisor	Fraser Eyres
Position Type	1-3 days per week for 6 months
Salary	Voluntary
Closing date for applications	23:59 on 5 th July 2026
Interview dates	Between 20 th - 24 th July 2026

Background Information

East England Forest District (EEFD), with over 150 directly employed staff, covers an area of 35,000 ha from North Norfolk to Brighton; including Thetford Forest and the outlying beats of Sandlings, Kent, East Sussex, Chilterns and Thames Chase. The volunteer role will be based in Thetford Forest which is the largest lowland pine forest in the UK.

Thetford Forest is comprised of four beat teams. Each forest beat area is managed by a local team comprising a Forester, Work Supervisor and Forest Craftsperson. They are supported by locally based Wildlife Rangers, Apprentices and Community/Recreation Rangers. We are offering a Shadow Volunteer Craftsperson role in Thetford Forest to work alongside our existing Craftspersons and beat teams to gain practical experience in Forestry and Land Management. This role will be based in the Thetford South and Thetford East beats which manage the forest blocks of Elveden, Mildenhall, High Lodge, Thetford, Santon Downham, Harling, Hockham, Kings and Croxton.

Thetford & North Norfolk have an annual tree planting programme of over 1 million trees. The thinning and clearfell harvesting programme supplies around 80,000 tonnes of timber a year to the UK'S wood processing industries. A Forest Resilience Programme is currently considering how we can adapt our forest management in of

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projected climate change effects on temperature, rainfall and extreme weather events.

The majority of Thetford Forest (18,000 Ha) is designated for its conservation interest, including Special Protection Areas (SPA) to conserve the breeding habitat for the Woodlark and Nightjar and Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) to recognise the rare botanical interest in the forest.

We are proud to be able to offer a range of shadow volunteer opportunities for individuals with an interest in pursuing a career in forestry and land management. This Shadow volunteer role will be based at **Santon Downham** and **will focus on practical forest management**.

You will work directly with our beat teams, out and about in Thetford Forest, carrying out tasks such as tree planting, vegetation management, tree care, wildlife management, timber harvesting support and general estate maintenance.

Successful applicants will be given training and development opportunities by work shadowing our experienced team. Through this opportunity, you will develop on the job practical forestry skills, and gain experience in forestry management.

The video on this link was taken throughout Thetford Forest over a years period and showcases the types of operations you will be involved in.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haKnOBz0TJA>

What we offer

- Training relevant to the role from your experienced member of staff you are shadowing along with gaining knowledge from wider colleagues.
- Guidance and support in applying for further training or employment opportunities.
- Genuine out of pocket expenses which include travel expenses beyond your reporting station.
- Volunteer parking pass after 35 hours of volunteering.
- Volunteer uniform.
- Formal training opportunities - first aid, risk assessment, and manual handling.
- A full tour of Thetford Forest and multiple site visits to gain an understanding of how the forest is managed and in what way the work you will be doing, directly contributes.

Purpose

Experience, encourage and support forestry work across Thetford Forest; through shadowing the sustainable land management team, participating in woodland management and learning about harvesting operations.

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Working as part of the team assist, support, and help in the care and management of woodlands & countryside sites in Thetford Forest. Assist and provide support to a diverse range of people, experiencing a range of tasks, activities and procedures that craftspeople undertake within their role.

Key work areas

Work towards ensuring our forests are sustainable

- Assist in forest maintenance including but not limited to vegetation control, hand weeding, tree planting, tree pruning & tariffing, fence building & repairs.
- Liaise with other teams such as recreation, wildlife & ecology to ensure tasks are completed within given timescales

Embed a safety-first culture in our teams

- Report all incidents & accidents to mentor or supervisor, collating all relevant information.
- Ensure personal safety at all times by following job risk assessments and by carrying out PPE and safety checks, in compliance with policy guidance.

The key work areas detailed are the typical duties expected of the role but are not an exhaustive list. The post holder may be reasonably requested to undertake other duties by their manager.

Person Specification

Read this section carefully as it will help you complete the [online application form](#).

We are not expecting you to have qualifications or previous experience in the environment sector. The Shadow Volunteer program is about giving you that experience. We are looking for enthusiasm, curiosity, ability to listen and learn, ask questions, show initiative and show responsibility for the people and environment where you work.

The application form will ask you questions based on the person specifications below. You don't need to give examples related to the environment sector or forestry. They can be relevant examples from other experiences you have had.

What interests you in this role

This is your opportunity to tell us about you and why you want to be a Shadow Volunteer. Give us an insight into who you are your reasons for applying to be a Shadow Volunteer.

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Experience

Essential

An interest in forestry, land management or Forestry England.
Seeking a career in the environmental sector; craftsperson, forestry, countryside ranger, environmental.

Work with Other People

Essential

Be approachable, open, polite, and helpful to others.
Respect diverse backgrounds, views, and approaches.
Willingness to work as part of a team as well as the ability to work on your own.

Desirable

Willingness and enthusiasm to lead groups and activities.

Communication

Essential

Ability to listen and communicate with people from a variety of age groups, abilities, behaviours, and backgrounds.
Ability to deal with difficult situations with tact, diplomacy and in a constructive manner.

Deliver Results

Essential

Motivated and capable of working under own initiative.
Prioritise and organise your time and resources effectively to meet agreed deadlines and objectives.

Desirable

Understand and apply current legislation, rules, and procedures relevant to the job (e.g., Health & Safety, Risk assessment).

Learn and Apply

Essential

Be open to change and show a willingness to undertake appropriate training to develop new skills and confidence.
Take responsibility for own work, learning from experience, mistakes, and constructive feedback.

Other

Able and willing to work 1-3 days per week, Monday - Friday. The working hours of the volunteer days will be 7am - 3pm.

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This post may require you to hold and continue to hold, a full current driving licence.

Duties will require you to be fit and able to negotiate rough terrain. However, Forestry England is willing to consider any proposal put forward by applicants that would allow them to do the role by other means.

This role will require a DBS check. Applicants must be over 18.

How to apply

Please apply online by completing the [application form](#) on the website.

Make sure when applying, you type “**Craftsperson Shadow Volunteer**” as the role that you are interested in. For the Forest, please type or select “**Santon Downham and Warren Wood**”.

When completing the person specification areas please give examples of experiences you have had. These don’t have to be in the environment sector they can demonstrate your experience or things you have done in any situation relating to the specification area.

If you are interested in multiple roles, you will need to complete multiple applications. You can, however, use the same information and answers for each so feel free to copy the information from one to the other, if you are happy this is correct.

If you have any problems with the application or questions please email rosie.hernon@forestryengland.uk

If you consider yourself to have a disability the application form will ask you to provide details of any support, you may need or reasonable adjustments we can make to enable you to fulfil the role (as outlined in the role description for the placement you are interested in). If you are selected for a Shadow Volunteer role based on your application and interview this will help us discuss with you regarding what we can safely and practically put in place to enable you to carry out the role or other alternative solutions.

If you are successful in your application you will be asked to attend an **induction on the 2nd of September at Sherwood Forest** and a **First Aid Course on the 8th of September at High Lodge in Thetford Forest**. Your travel expenses will be covered along with any overnight stay required.

Closing date: 23:59 on 5th July 2026