



River Keeper

JOB LOCATION	Primarily based at our head office in Fairford, by early 2025 our head office will be based in nearby Quenington.
REPORTS TO	Conservation & Woodland Manager
CONTRACT	08:00 to 16:30 Mon-Thurs, 08:00 to 15:30 Fridays.
SALARY	£26,000 - £31,000

The Ernest Cook Trust

The Ernest Cook Trust is an educational charity and one of the UK's foremost providers and funders of Outdoor Learning. Our vision is for an environmentally engaged society with stronger connections to nature.

Our mission is to improve the life chances of children and young people through a range of Outdoor Learning activities, enabling them to learn from nature, empowering them to have a positive impact on the environment. We do this through grant support, direct delivery of our own programmes, research and advocacy.

The Role

The River Keeper plays an important part in our Estates team, comprising: River Keeper, Gardener, Estate Worker, Groundsperson, Conservation Ranger and Countryside Ranger Apprentice, line managed by the Conservation & Woodland Manager. You will be managing a 2 mile stretch of the River Coln, a haven for wildlife including brown trout, otters and water voles. This role is responsible for the conservation and sporting management of the river; working independently or leading volunteers to maximise healthy fish and wildlife populations, guided by our Catchment Management Plan.

The River Keeper is responsible for the management of river level controls, responding to seasons and weather to maintain appropriate river levels. The seasonal cycle of work includes managing vegetation, cutting Ranunculus, bank works, stocking and impalements. The role also requires responsive work, and sometimes pitching in with the team to make progress on wider projects. Responsibilities include oversight of rod rules, infrastructure, budgeting of works and occasional contractor supervision. There is potential for future supervision of an apprentice.

Work to manage invasive plants and animals is essential to support the river, requiring good knowledge of species and habitat. The work is carried out through the use of hand tools, machinery such as ride-on mowers, chainsaws, brush cutters, tractors and implements. Work in the river itself is required, so you will need to be comfortable with this aspect of the role.

You will uphold best practices in safety and sustainability throughout your work, as well as taking care to maintain tools and equipment. As the River Keeper, you are the main point of contact with the fisher men and women on the river, and an important ambassador for the Trust with stakeholders in the local communities of Fairford and Quenington, liaising with parties such as Farm Tenants, the Town Council and the Environment Agency. The role requires out of hours working to effectively manage issues pertaining to access, poaching and river level management.

Main Accountabilities:

- Deliver objectives that support the ecological health of the River Coln, in line with the Catchment Management Plan ensuring a balanced and sustainable habitat for aquatic species, including maintaining healthy breeding fish stocks through habitat enhancement and controlled stocking of farmed fish
- Carry out ongoing maintenance of riverbanks, boundaries, and infrastructure to ensure accessibility and support wildlife conservation; this includes monitoring river levels, water quality and managing sluices
- Monitor for signs of poaching and other illegal activities, ensuring quick reporting and response to protect fish stocks and the river environment.
- Monitor, manage and control invasive species, pests, and predators to protect native ecosystems and preserve the health of the river and surrounding habitats
- Lead work parties and contribute to the creation and management of wetland areas, aiming to enhance biodiversity and improve conditions for breeding fish and other wildlife
- Support the Trust’s charitable object of education in relation to Outdoor Learning - maintaining safe access and exemplary management of the river for visiting groups
- Work with the Conservation & Woodland Manager and Conservation Ranger in the management of the wider catchment for wildlife
- Liaise with stakeholders to integrate river management with wider land uses and landscape projects

River Keeper - Person Specification	
Specific Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitive approach to habitat management, a good awareness of timing and methods to maximise conservation value • Motivation to work independently, identifying and responding to work as it arises • Strong attention to detail, taking care in and pride in presentation of the river • Good knowledge of species and habitats
Personal Qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good initiative and independent working, supported by strong interpersonal skills • Interpersonal skills to build strong connections with stakeholders • Adaptability to meet the changing demands throughout the year • Ability to organise and manage workload, looking ahead through the year to maintain the site and meet management project plans
Skills and Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 (or above) qualification in Fisheries Management (or similar equivalent) • Trained and competent in use of tools and machinery including chainsaw, brush cutter, ride on mower • Shotgun licence (desirable)

How to Apply

In the first instance, please upload your completed CV and cover letter to:

<https://hr.breathehr.com/v/river-keeper-38851>

Closing Date

Sunday 26 January 2025 at 23:59

Interviews

w/c 10 February 2025 at Fairford, Gloucestershire GL7 4JH

What3words: <https://w3w.co/otters.laying.campus>

We look forward to hearing from you.

Working at The Ernest Cook Trust

ABOUT US

As a landowning educational charity, the Trust is uniquely placed to share its woodlands, farms and natural habitats to inspire a greater love and understanding of the natural world, farming and sustainability. We do this for children, young people, their families and communities, particularly those who face barriers to accessing and participating in the outdoors.

We are part of an impressive community of networks and organisations across the UK, working to help create a more environmentally engaged society. Our work is increasingly done in collaborations and partnerships with like-minded organisations, particularly with our funding partners, whose contribution significantly boosts the reach and influence of our work.

To discover more about us, visit our website at www.ernestcooktrust.org.uk.

The Trust's Estates

The Trust owns and manages over 9,000 hectares of land and property made up of mainly let farmland but also 584 hectares of woodland, houses, cottages and a growing commercial portfolio. Land is owned in six counties: Buckinghamshire, Cumbria, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Leicestershire and Oxfordshire. These rural landholdings are managed for income return and capital growth, whilst seeking ways to improve the environment and important habitats, evolving and protecting the landscapes.

Active management dictates that we are constantly looking for new opportunities and ways to evolve and improve our income stream in support of the Trust's overall charitable object, which is education. These already include long-term housing development proposals, natural capital and carbon, and biodiversity net gain projects alongside other long-term ambitious plans.

OUR VALUES

The unique spirit of The Ernest Cook Trust is best expressed through our values:



Cultivating Connections

At the heart of our work lies the belief that meaningful and lasting change happens through the cultivation of connections. We value the relationships we build with the people and communities we serve, as well as each other and the partnerships we form with like-minded organisations. We understand that these connections create the conditions for people and places to flourish.



Freedom to Try

We embrace a culture of innovation and resilience, where both our team members and the individuals we serve have the freedom to try new things. This value encourages a dynamic and adaptable approach, nurturing trust and courage in ourselves and others.



Progressive Stewardship

We believe in responsible, forward-thinking management of our outdoor resources, as places where diversity can thrive. By actively caring for the environment, we ensure that the beauty and benefits of the outdoors are accessible to all, changing lives through individual and shared positive experiences.

How this role links to our values:

• Cultivating Connections

The role will build and sustain connections with work parties and stakeholders, cultivating collaborative work to improve river habitat.

• Freedom to Try

The role has scope to help identify, develop and deliver your own projects on the river, with a focus on access for the rods, conservation value, and social goods.

• Progressive Stewardship

Post holder will be the foremost "boots on the ground" steward of this beautiful stretch of limestone river.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Join our growing team at the Trust for a friendly and rewarding experience. We offer competitive salaries, a range of benefits plus a training budget for your personal growth.

We currently have around 55 members of staff based either at our Gloucestershire Head Office, across our UK landholdings and in our regional hubs (Gloucestershire, Cumbria/Lancashire and Leicestershire) or working hybridly.

Enjoy our generous benefits:

- 10% employer pension contribution (5% from employees)
- 27 days annual leave, plus statutory holidays
- Life Assurance
- Access to Employee Assistance Programme, providing 24/7 support for health, mental wellbeing, and more
- Dynamic, creative, and welcoming work environment

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Embracing diversity is an essential part of the work of The Ernest Cook Trust. We are committed to treating everyone as a unique individual, fairly and with respect, irrespective of race, disability, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or religion. We are committed to ensuring equality, respect, and safety for all, and prioritising the wellbeing of the children, young people and vulnerable adults we support. Our safeguarding policy can be found [here](#).

The appointment will be subject to satisfactory background checks including Disclosure and Barring Service and relevant online searches to comply with best practices in Safeguarding, and proof of the right to work in the UK.

Additional Information - River Coln audio clips

The following audio clips provide a useful insight into how we manage and use the River Coln on our Home Estates. All were originally created for our Founder's Day walk along the river in September 2024:

- One of our Managing Agents talks about the River Coln Catchment Plan. [Listen here](#).
- Our Schools Lead explains why the River Coln in Gloucestershire is such a fascinating place to bring groups of children and young people for School River visits. [Listen here](#).
- One of our farm tenants talks about living and farming in the Fairford area. [Listen here](#).