
Head of Operations - Wetland Reserves

Grade: 11a

Directorate: Operations Directorate

Reporting to: Director of Operations

Location: Flexible (subject to travel requirements of role)

Main function of post: To support the Director of Operations in achieving WWT's Inspire, Thrive and Restore ambitions at its ten visitor sites in the UK. You will lead Site Managers at Steart, Caerlaverock and Welney, as well as potential future sites including, Awre, Steart Estuary and Brean, to ensure the effective management and performance of WWT's wetland reserves. Your focus will be on improving the health and diversity of our wetland habitats for the benefit of wildlife and for the enjoyment of our site visitors. You will also support sites to make the very best commercial use of any existing property portfolio. You will be an active member of the Operations Management Team and the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to the overall management strategy for all Sites and support activities.

Supervisory responsibilities: The management and professional support of your portfolio of three or more Site Managers and their respective staff and volunteers. Engagement with matrix managers and support functions across the organisation including Conservation, Fundraising, Marketing and Communications (FMC), Finance, Human Resources and IT

Responsibilities of the post

1. To deliver **healthy and diverse wetland habitats for the benefit of nature and visitors** within your portfolio of sites. You will support Site Managers to:
 - a. Develop and deliver Site Business Plans and Master Plans that work to the site's particular strengths as Wetland Reserves (term TBC).
 - b. Develop plans for visitor experiences that make the best use of the site's existing assets (such as buildings, volunteers and staff) so that visitors can immerse themselves in high quality wetland wildlife, landscapes and habitats. Develop investment plans that consider the new opportunities for their particular site. New investment will deliver innovation in the visitor experience at site, with a targeted Return on Investment of 5 years. This might include growing new and existing opportunities for on-site guest accommodation

- c. Develop investment plans for the site's reserve and work with the Head of Philanthropy and Partnerships to seek additional funding for investment in wetland habitats for the benefit of wildlife and visitors.
- d. Work closely with the Head of Reserve Management and the wider Conservation team to ensure our reserves' habitats are the best they can be for our wildlife and environmental Restore ambitions. This will include participation in the Species Recovery Board.
- e. Consider the importance of the Wetland Reserve site in its local and regional setting and how this might be improved by working with the Conservation Waterscapes team and surrounding landowners/partners to restore the wider wetland landscape.

To manage **performance** at sites within your portfolio by:

- a. Holding site managers to account for their own performance and that of their Site, making sure that sites deliver WWT's agreed corporate strategic plan, associated annual objectives and key performance indicators.
 - b. Identifying and delivering any necessary corrective actions by Site if/when failings are identified.
 - c. Making sure Sites have clarity on their delegated freedoms within the matrix management framework, with a particular focus on revenue management.
 - d. Facilitating access to internal and external resources to enable the potential of the reserve to be reached.
 - e. Assisting Site Managers with achieving the highest standards of presentation and maintenance with regards to WWT Reserves and Buildings and to help provide solutions where problems are identified or standards fall below those expected
 - f. To manage **financial performance** at sites within your portfolio by:
 - Supporting Site Managers with the production of annual operating budgets, thoroughly assessing the proposed levels of income and expenditure and ensuring appropriate supporting justification is provided prior to Site Managers presenting during the annual budget process.
 - Making sure Sites are achieving the effective management of agreed budgets, including meeting income generation targets (through grants and Stewardship schemes)) and active control of expenditure and any associated key performance indicators.
 - Work with the Assistant Director of Operations and the Trading Teams to ensure that Welney's trading operations are in line with agreed catering and retail strategies and that they deliver operational profit to agreed budgets.
2. Work with the Head of Operations for London, Martin Mere and Slimbridge and the Head of Operations for Castle Espie, Arundel, Washington and Llanelli on best practise and on innovative approaches inspiring visitation by:
- a. Actively seek opportunities to further develop visitor experience and develop these into business cases for consideration by Management Board.

- b. Identify lessons to learn from both our sites and those managed by others and develop these into approaches to be used by WWT. Staying abreast of industry developments in visitor engagement at wild spaces.
3. To support good **general management** at sites within your portfolio by:
- a. Making sure that WWT Sites are at all times managed in accordance with the Trust's stated policies, practices and procedures, in particular with WWT's employment and Health & Safety policies and that Site Managers and relevant HQ managers and their teams are utilising the advice and expertise of the Head of Safety Management & People Department where/when appropriate.
 - b. Ensuring effective and collaborative joint working and two-way communication between the Sites and Central Directorates, allowing for an understanding of WWT's agreed corporate strategies and policies & procedures. Furthermore, to work with Site Managers in helping to identify ways in which Sites can play an integral role in helping to shape future policies and procedures and input into corporate strategies and the setting of direction throughout the organisation where and when relevant.
 - c. Supporting Site Managers with the recruitment, development and performance management of all team members, ensuring that you and relevant team members react promptly to issues that are identified and adhere to agreed deadlines.
 - d. Supporting Site Managers in ensuring that our reserve sites develop and maintain good relationships with local communities and other points of influence or importance to the centres and to WWT's profile and standing.
 - e. Upholding WWT's Values and Behaviours Framework and holding site teams to account where behaviours conflict with this framework.

In addition to the duties and responsibilities listed the post holder is required to perform any other reasonable duties which may be assigned by the Director of Operations from time to time.

Date raised: July 2025

Date Amended: 7th August 2025

Person Specification

1. Qualifications

Essential:

- Educated to degree level or equivalent.

2. Experience

Essential:

- Extensive operational experience and demonstrable record of success at a senior management level in a comparable organisation – a nature reserve or conservation operation
- Demonstrable and successful general management experience with clear evidence of leadership and management of a multi-disciplinary team recruitment, training, motivation and performance management.
- Substantial experience in financial management, budget setting and control.
- Demonstrable ability to deal with the public.
- Project management experience.
- Experience of property/asset management.
- Demonstrable methods of planning work programmes.
- Experience in networking, influencing and engagement at a high level.
- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal.
- Effective time management and IT skills.

Desirable:

- Experience of managing change in a multi-disciplinary environment.
- Evidence of finding innovative solutions to operational problems.
- Knowledge/experience of the charity sector.
- Empathy with our conservation messages.
- An interest in the environment and conservation.

3. Managerial & Supervisory

Essential:

- Demonstrable leadership skills – clarity of direction, coaching and mentoring, drive and resilience
- Evidence of an ability to direct and motivate staff and volunteers.
- Demonstrable ability to manage the complexity of demands posed by triple bottom line KPIs across our conservation targets, visitor engagement and finances
- Prioritise workloads of self and others.

Type of staff	Number managed	Number supervised
Employed Staff	3 x Centre Managers at start with future sites added	28 staff plus 150 volunteers (note: additional staff subject to future additional sites)

4. Responsibility

Essential:

- Demonstrable experience in managing multiple sites, with responsibility for KPIs across.
- Evidence of leading multi-disciplinary teams
- Evidence of managing capital projects
- Experience of managing capital assets

- ***Levels of Responsibility:***

Type of Responsibility	Level (£'s)
Budget Responsibility	£1.4m
Income	£1m
Project Size (normally managed)	Large £200k+
Assets (required for job, exc. buildings)	£5,000
Visitors (number per annum)	77,000 plus Steart 55,000

5. Creative Ability

Essential:

- Ability to understand the dynamics of the organisation as a whole.
- Able to see opportunities to further develop WWT wetland reserves and for engagement with our visitors.
- Able to think and make decisions strategically.
- Imaginative and resourceful.
- To have a good eye for detail and presentation.
- Determination to ensure targets are achieved and within deadlines.

6. Contact

Essential:

- Demonstrable ability to communicate positively with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders - this job has frequent contact with a wide range of groups, including visitors, volunteers, local and regional groups, general public and local authorities.

- Experience and confidence at handling verbal and written communication at these levels is essential.
 - A motivational and supportive management style.
 - Excellent communication skills
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General Notes

This is a full time position and will require weekend work and occasional evening work to meet the needs of the post. A current driving licence and an ability to travel extensively within the UK are required. This role may be based at one of your centres, however it may also necessitate the need to be able to work from home on a regular basis.