Durham Wildlife Trust
From Tees to Tyne

Sunderland City Council

Funded by UK Government



JOB PACK

Connecting Through Nature Officer (River Walk)

Salary: £30,633.00 per annum – pro-rata
Location: Rainton Meadows, DH4 6PU
15 hours per week / Fixed Term
Closing date: 9am Thursday 10th December 2026
For more details contact:
Emily Routledge, eroutledge@durhamwt.co.uk


Photo: Enid Hoseason

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Photo: Enid Hoseason

About Durham Wildlife Trust

Our Vision

Nature restored from Tees to Tyne

Our Mission

To deliver nature's recovery from the Tees to the Tyne with the backing of our supporters, partners and wider society; providing opportunities for participation, education and enhanced health and wellbeing.

Our Goals

Goal 1. From Tees to Tyne, people care about nature and are taking meaningful action to support nature recovery.

For nature to be protected and restored from Tees to Tyne, people have to care for nature. People care for nature as they experience it and come to appreciate it. Around 1.75 million people live or work between the Tees and the Tyne. Their access to and love of nature is our goal.

As the leading wildlife organisation operating across our area, with over 50 nature reserves providing a valued local resource, the Trust will help more people to experience, care for and take meaningful action for nature, more often.

The Trust will support farmers, land managers, politicians, community groups and councils with advice, partnership, expertise and, where appropriate, delivery support.

Goal 2. Nature is recovering from Tees to Tyne. Habitats are thriving and connected and wildlife is more abundant.

Durham Wildlife Trust's area runs from the Tees to the Tyne – the southern and northern boundaries of the historical County Durham – and covers around 270,000 hectares. Our vision is to restore our region's rich natural heritage and landscapes and the species that live in them.

We also recognise that nature recovery at the scale we need requires action far beyond land directly managed by the Trust and we will work in partnership with others to deliver that aim.

As well as managing exemplar nature sites on our reserves we will influence, advise and campaign to encourage other stakeholders to improve land for nature. Our goal is for nature to thrive across the range of landscape from the Tees to the Tyne, from private homes to large estates and everything in between. Already this goal is

shared with many.

Goal 3. Nature-based solutions are recognised and valued as making our region more resilient and its people safer and better off.

Society faces many challenges from climate change and pollution, from conflict and social polarisation, from inequality and mental health. These challenges are often global and can seem huge and overwhelming. Yet there are reasons for optimism as it is increasingly recognised that reversing nature loss – itself a global challenge that is deeply connected to many of the others – can often provide the simplest and most robust solutions.

Nature-based solutions often require long-term commitment, but their economic value is growing in recognition, and through them nature restoration has a growing role to play in making society safer and better off.

Whilst nature recovery remains the Trust's central goal, the wider benefits it creates are central to the story we will tell. We will continue to champion nature-based solutions and in our regional partnerships we will contribute to their implementation.

Goal 4. Durham Wildlife Trust is the trusted leader in nature recovery from Tees to Tyne and has the resources needed to deliver lasting impact.

There needs to be ongoing attention paid to strengthening the charity and its ability to play the leadership role in nature recovery that is required.

We will invest in the recruitment, retention and reward of our staff. We will explore avenues for income growth to support greater delivery and we will spend for maximum impact for nature recovery. We will professionalise our use of data and technology.

The Federation

The Wildlife Trusts are a grassroots movement of people from a wide range of backgrounds and all walks of life, who believe that we need nature and nature needs us. We have almost a million members, over 39,000 volunteers, 3,600 staff and 600 trustees.

About Durham Wildlife Trust

Durham is one of 46 Wildlife Trusts, part of a national federation. Each Wildlife Trust is a place-based independent charity with its own legal identity.

Durham Wildlife Trust operates across County Durham, Darlington, Gateshead, South Tyneside and Sunderland. The organisation is led by a Board of Trustees drawn from its membership, with a broad range of skills and knowledge to ensure effective governance. More than 450 active volunteers provide vital support across all activities and strong partnerships assist the delivery of our work.

For more than 50 years Durham Wildlife Trust has protected and restored nature, making a real difference for people and wildlife. Today we own or manage over 50 sites across 1300 hectares, protecting rare and threatened habitats and species, and delivering nature's recovery at a landscape scale. We deliver projects that provide solutions to the ecological and climate emergencies and offer opportunities for participation and learning to thousands of people every year.

Over the next few years our charity will continue to grow, providing opportunities for a wide range of talented people to join us. To achieve our goals we will deliver our existing work to the highest possible standards and develop innovative new approaches.

Working for Durham Wildlife Trust

Durham Wildlife Trust is the leading organisation in environmental land management, nature conservation and rewilding in our region because of its dedicated staff.

Successful candidates will join our passionate and talented team of educators, influencers, fundraisers and skilled practical conservation officers and managers. To address the significant challenges faced by nature we need to recruit and retain committed and talented people and support them to develop further.

Central to the Durham Wildlife Trust staff journey is the ethos of personal and professional development. We offer a fun and stimulating working environment, with a competitive salary, holiday entitlement and benefits package -

- Staff welfare package, including access to online GP appointments for you and your family.
- Access to unrivalled training and development opportunities available across the Wildlife Trusts national federation, as well as training provision by Durham Wildlife Trust.
- Flexible and hybrid working arrangements.

Durham Wildlife Trust is an inspiring and energetic place to develop your career and we welcome applications from anyone who wants a role that makes a difference. We are creating a work environment that's inclusive as well as diverse – where all our people can be themselves. Every idea, insight and perspective is valued.



About this role

Connecting Through Nature Officer (River Walk)

Durham Wildlife Trust is supporting Connecting Through Nature, a Nature Towns & Cities project in Sunderland that aims to re-connect people and communities to nature and to the River Wear.

The Connecting Through Nature Officer (River Walk) will lead engagement for the revitalisation and rejuvenation of the River Wear Trail. The role will share knowledge, grow skills and improve outcomes for people and greenspaces / bluespaces in Sunderland, enabling local communities and groups to support nature's recovery along the River Wear and help forge Sunderland City of Nature.

Durham Wildlife Trust is looking for a warm, approachable and highly motivated communicator with experience of community development and engagement, ideally in the environment sector. The successful candidate will work with partners to co-ordinate engagement and volunteering opportunities along the River Wear Trail, co-design and deliver walks, talks, wellbeing sessions and practical nature recovery tasks and support community groups to plan and fund improvements to green and blue spaces along the river.

The post holder will be responsible to the Trust's Engagement Manager and will report to Sunderland City Council's Nature Towns & Cities Project (Connecting Through Nature) Lead. You will work with residents, community groups, the North East Community Forest, the project's community artist and other partners, building strong links with community leaders and champions and gathering local stories about how people see and use the river.

Trust staff are encouraged to gain experience of the full range of work the charity does. To gain that experience, there will be opportunities to participate in practical tasks, attend networking events and to support our fundraising work.

As an organisation we are open to new thinking and ideas. We welcome applications from people already working in nature conservation, or who come from other sectors and have the skills, ideas and knowledge needed.

This is a part-time role, fixed term until 31st March 2028.

The process

Questions about the role

If you have any questions about the role, or want to discuss potential hours and working patterns before submitting an application, please contact:

Emily Routledge, Head of Development and Communications, by email in the first instance – eroutledge@durhamwt.co.uk

How to apply

Please complete the application form available on the Trust's website and provide a personal statement (maximum two sides of A4) setting out your suitability for the role.

Submit the form and statement (as separate documents) by email to – eroutledge@durhamwt.co.uk. Please put Connecting Through Nature Officer (River Walk) in the subject line.

Closing date for applications

Applications will close at 9am on Thursday 10th December 2026. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed. Due to the volume of applications, we are unable to provide personalised feedback to those who are not shortlisted for the role.

Interviews

Interviews are scheduled to take place at Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve, DH4 6PU on Wednesday 16th December 2026. Should you have any concerns regarding availability for interview, please contact eroutledge@durhamwt.co.uk

Please note, CVs and/or covering letters will not be accepted.

Job description

Identification of post

Post title: Connecting Through Nature Officer (River Walk)

Function: To re-connect people and communities to nature and to the River Wear.

Responsible to: Engagement Manager (Durham Wildlife Trust). Role reports to Sunderland City Council Nature Towns & Cities Project (Connecting Through Nature) Lead.

Purpose of Post

- Lead engagement for the revitalisation and rejuvenation of the River Wear Trail for the Connecting Through Nature, a Nature Towns & Cities project.
- To share knowledge, grow skills and improve outcomes for people and greenspaces / bluespaces in Sunderland.
- To be an enabler for local communities and groups to support nature's recovery along the River Wear and help forge Sunderland City of Nature.

Main responsibilities

- Work with partners to co-ordinate the promotion and delivery of engagement and volunteering opportunities across the River Wear Trail.
- Lead on delivering the River Wear Trail area specific events and support the wider Connecting Through Nature community engagement programme including networking and sharing partner events and opportunities.
- Develop links with community centres, voluntary groups and stakeholders along the river to promote participation.
- Support community groups applying for grants and in planning and developing improvement projects for green and blue spaces along the River Wear.
- Lead on River Wear Trail communications – print, community outreach and digital (including social media and blogs).
- Speak with residents about how they see and use the river, gathering their stories.
- Co-design and delivery of walks, talks, wellbeing sessions and practical volunteering tasks including the creation of accessible, tailored activities to reach out to and build confidence in groups who don't normally visit the river or spend time in nature.
- Deliver practical nature recovery sessions with local volunteers in conjunction with partners and community groups including working with the North East Community Forest on community tree planting initiatives.
- Ensure that volunteers and community groups are well supported and receive a high-quality experience.
- Supporting the appointed community artist for the new River Wear Sculpture, helping run workshops and feeding resident input into the content of new signs and interpretation.
- Maintain records, track participation and prepare reports for volunteer and community involvement in the programme.
- Present outputs and outcomes back to the Project Steering Group, funders and other stakeholders as and when required.
- To develop and maintain strong links with community leaders and champions.

General duties

- To pursue personal professional development, including attending training courses as and when required.
- Carry out budget monitoring and reporting.
- To liaise with all Trust staff, honorary officers and volunteers on relevant issues.
- To attend meetings and events as requested.
- Undertake any other duties as requested by the Trust Director in line with the seniority and nature of the post and the aims of Durham Wildlife Trust.
- To promote the Trust's charitable objectives and strategy.
- To follow the Trust's policies and procedures.
- Where appropriate, promote membership of the Trust.
- Present a professional image of the Trust at all times.
- After 2 years join the Duty Officer Rota.



General terms and conditions

Salary: For a full time (37.5 hours/week) role, the salary is £30,633.00 per annum – **pro rata for part time**.

Term: Fixed term until 31st March 2028.

Pension: Employees will be automatically enrolled into the Durham Wildlife Trust pension scheme. Minimum employee contribution 3% of salary and employer contribution 6% of qualifying salary. Employees can decide to opt out from the pension scheme if they choose.

Hours: 15 hours per week, days to be determined / discussed, with a 30 minute unpaid meal break per day. Weekend and evening work will be required from time to time, and after two years the post holder will join the Duty Officer rota.

Holidays: The number of days paid holiday per year is 33 days for a 37½ hour week inclusive of Bank and Statutory Holidays. Part-time employees are entitled to pro-rata holidays and public holidays.

If you start your employment during the leave year, the holiday entitlement will be calculated on a pro-rata basis depending on the number of completed months of service and hours worked.

After two years of continuous employment, you will be entitled to one extra paid day of leave per year worked, up to a maximum of five extra days per year. Years of service at another Wildlife Trust count towards holiday entitlement

Place of work: Usual place of work will be Rainton Meadows, DH4 6PU. You may be required to work from other DWT premises or Sunderland City Hall at the discretion of Trust management. Durham Wildlife Trust currently operates hybrid working arrangements, with a mix of office-based working and working from home as set out in a rota.

Person specification

Criteria	Essential	Desirable
Education and Training	Educated to degree level or equivalent in a relevant discipline, or substantial experience in a similar role. At least three years' experience in a similar role. Full UK driving licence and use of own vehicle.	Accredited Qualification in Community Organising, Community Development or Volunteering. Accredited qualification in conservation, ecology or substantial experience. First Aid at Work (3 day).
Experience	Experience of working with others to enable change. Experience of developing positive relationships. Experience of undertaking practical management for nature conservation. Experience of developing and supporting community activities and projects. Experience of meaningful community development and engagement activity, particularly in the environment sector. Experience of delivering wildlife focused community activities to a wide range of audiences. Experienced communicator, able to convey information clearly and succinctly to diverse audiences. Experience of engaging and inspiring individuals and organisations by delivering talks and events. Experience working collaboratively with people and organisations and	Experience of working with voluntary and community groups. Experience of working within the nature conservation sector. Experience of working within an Environmental NGO. Experience of working in a small team/small organisation. Experience of delivering an externally funded project and recording relevant data and information. Experience of working in underserved communities with high levels of deprivation and health inequalities. Experience of partnership working with a number of different organisations e.g. local authorities and health sector. Experience of being part of a project team. Experience of evaluating community engagement projects. Experience of networking and making contact with other local groups and organisations.

	managing relationships diplomatically. Experience of promoting community activities to build up new audiences.	
Knowledge	Good knowledge of health and safety and safeguarding systems and principles Knowledge of UK Wildlife. High level of IT competence and excellent knowledge of Microsoft Office applications. An understanding of the barriers to community involvement and how they may be overcome. Knowledge of basic conservation management methods.	High level of social media and digital competence. Knowledge of local habitats and wildlife relevant to the North East of England and specifically the flora and fauna of Sunderland along the riverside. Knowledge of Sunderland communities and heritage. Understanding of inclusion and issues relating to voice and influence. An understanding of the principles and practices that underpin effective community organising. Knowledge of ecological surveying and monitoring methodologies. Knowledge of evaluation techniques. Knowledge of promotional techniques such as social media and blogs.
Skills and Abilities	Ability to work with a diverse range of people and groups from different backgrounds. Excellent organisational skills; able to prioritise and manage a varied workload. Excellent communicator with a proven track record in developing strong relationships with key individuals and stakeholders. Able to work on own initiative and with a high degree of autonomy. Ability to create a safe and supportive working environment for colleagues	Excellent public speaker. Able to work on own initiative and develop opportunities, and see links for project development where appropriate.

	and volunteers, demonstrating empathy and encouraging excellence. Ability to work effectively with colleagues, demonstrating a mutually supportive not competitive attitude.	
Personal	Commitment to equal opportunities. Highly motivated and enthusiastic. Can identify opportunities and seek out and implement new ideas. Can work to tight deadlines and under pressure when required. Tactful and diplomatic, respectful of others. Able to work occasional weekends and evenings. Warm, approachable and courteous manner combined with a good sense of humour. Good people skills, able to develop strong relationships. Ability to listen, absorb and allow effective conversation.	Passionate about addressing the ecological emergency. Passionate about Sunderland.

Relevant policies

Please Note - Durham Wildlife Trust takes its safeguarding responsibilities extremely seriously. Information on our commitment to safeguarding and our safeguarding policies is available on the Trust's website. The successful applicant for this role will be subject to an Enhanced Level DBS check that will be repeated every three years. Any offer of employment made in relation to this role will be subject to a satisfactory DBS check and references.

Relevant Policies

Please read the policy information below before completing your application.

Safeguarding

Durham Wildlife Trust (DWT) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all vulnerable adults, and children and young people engaged in the breadth of its activities. DWT acknowledges its duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect.

DWT implements the approved disclosure procedure for criminal record checking through the Disclosure and Barring Service for all staff and volunteers who work regularly with children or adults at risk.

In doing so, DWT will ensure that it complies fully with the DBS Code of Practice and its obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation and any other legislation pertaining to the safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure information. We require the applicant's consent before requesting this check.

Employing ex-offenders

This written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders is made available at the start of the recruitment process to all applicants for roles requiring a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

As an organisation assessing applicants' suitability for positions which are included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order using criminal record checks processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Durham Wildlife Trust complies fully with the code of practice and undertakes to treat all applicants for positions fairly.

Durham Wildlife Trust undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of a criminal record check on the basis of a conviction or other information revealed.

Durham Wildlife Trust can only ask an individual to provide details of convictions and cautions that Durham Wildlife Trust are legally entitled to know about. A DBS certificate at either standard or enhanced level can legally be requested where the position is one that is included in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 as amended and, where appropriate, Police Act Regulations as amended.

