



Head of Land Use and Biodiversity

Job Pack

January 2026

About The Southern Uplands Partnership

The Southern Uplands Partnership is a rural sustainable development charity, dedicated to connecting, protecting and creating opportunities for thriving nature and community in the south of Scotland.

We deliver diverse projects and programmes around three strategic themes:

- Community Empowerment - strengthening rural communities
- Land Access - increasing sustainable access to the Southern Uplands for people and nature
- Land Use - facilitating sustainable land use and land-based opportunities for people and nature

We recently celebrated our 25th anniversary and a successful track record of innovative partnership work at all levels, from the hyper-local and practical, to influencing policy and strategy. We take a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together specialists in biodiversity, culture, climate and community development, to deliver holistic, integrated programmes.

Role Summary

This is a new post, which presents an exciting opportunity to help lead and shape our future work on land use and biodiversity in South Scotland. This is a good time to join us, as we embark on delivery of our new strategy, develop our business plans, work on a re-brand and continue to refine who we are, what we do and how we evidence our impact.

We are ambitious to develop new landscape-scale partnerships and plans, working with landowners, land managers and communities to bring about meaningful improvements for people and nature. There is potential to play a leading role in Local Biodiversity Action Plans, Forest and Woodland Strategies and re-establishment of Biodiversity Partnerships in Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders, as well as shape a programme of Nature Connection activity in communities. We are also keen to better integrate our work internally, supporting all our programme teams with consistent and coherent approaches to people and nature.

We are seeking an experienced, proactive, motivated and flexible senior manager with a background in Ecology, Environmental Management, land management or a related discipline. This expertise will complement the community development, social enterprise and creative expertise within our Senior Management Team and is key to ensuring our future work is truly integrated across the “three-legged stool” of sustainability: people, economy and nature.

Reporting to the Chief Executive and working as part of the Senior Management Team, the postholder will develop and lead a small, dedicated team and manage a portfolio of current projects and programmes, including business and service development for [The South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre](#) (SWSEIC), the local Environmental Records Centre for Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire, which SUP incorporates. The postholder will also support development of the [Environmental Alliance of the South of Scotland](#), working to connect the sector regionally around land use and biodiversity, contributing to the Regional Land Use Partnership and influencing local and national policy.

There is significant scope to proactively seek out and develop new opportunities, including with communities, landowners and land managers, as well as relevant tenders and commissions for public sector bodies, other NGOs and communities. For example, through our trading subsidiary Southern Uplands Partnership Services Ltd, we are currently completing a State of Nature report for the South of Scotland Regional Land Use Partnership.

Terms and Conditions

Salary: £42,436 (FTE). 3% annual inflationary increases are normally awarded, subject to availability of funds.

Contract Duration: Permanent, subject to funding and satisfactory completion of a six-month probationary period.

Contract Hours: Full or part-time. Our preference is for full-time (35 hours/week) but consideration will be given to requests for part-time options.

Pension: We offer an 8% employer pension contribution, linked to a minimum 5% (4% with tax relief) employee contribution.

Annual Leave: The annual entitlement is 40 days, including 4 mandatory public holidays.

Location: Hybrid – home working and Southern Uplands Partnership offices, with regular travel across the South of Scotland. The place of work will be one of:

- Studio 1, Lindean Mill, Galashiels, TD1 3PE or
- Studio 1, Hillend Mill, Kirkgunzeon, Dumfries, DG2 8LA

There is a requirement to work in person at an office 1-2 days per week, combined with regular travel to other locations for in-person meetings.

Overnight stays may be required, for which expenses can be claimed. There is flexibility around home-working or hotdesking at partner sites at other times.

It is anticipated the successful candidate will live in the Scottish Borders or Dumfries and Galloway or be willing to relocate.

Essential Car Use: The rural location and poor public transport links associated with the area necessitate essential car use in the postholder's own vehicle. Mileage will be reimbursed at a rate of (currently) 0.45p per mile.

Flexible Working: SUP operates flexible working hours, meaning that days and hours of work are flexible, providing that they meet the needs of the post and the organisation, comply with Working Time legislation, and are agreed in advance. Standard working hours are Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm. Some evening and weekend working will be required, for which time off in lieu may be taken by agreement.

Job Purpose

The Head of Land Use and Biodiversity will lead operational and development management responsibility for an assigned portfolio of projects and activities in line with the Strategic Plan for The Southern Uplands Partnership (SUP).

The Head of Land Use and Biodiversity will contribute to overall organisational development and operational management as a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) of SUP and will lead assigned areas of cross-organisation development and improvement, including evaluation of project effectiveness and impacts, managing budgets, people and other resources

The Head of Land Use and Biodiversity will also develop new project proposals and partnerships, and lead on resourcing current and new work, including fundraising and development and delivery of commercial tender bids.

Principal Duties

1. Operational Management and Development

Overall objective: Bring fresh approaches, new skills and expertise to SUP to support existing and new projects to deliver for people and nature.

- Manage the operational planning and delivery of activities and projects within the portfolio, working closely with the employees and contractors responsible for delivery, ensuring delivery in line with targets and effective resource management and reporting.
- Act as an in-house expert within own area of expertise and deep knowledge.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues and other organisations to identify synergies, overlaps, to share knowledge and expertise, and to build capacity.

- As a member of the Senior Management Team of four, (alongside the Chief Executive, Head of Finance and Operations and Head of Culture, Climate and Communities) actively participate in the development of overall SUP strategic and business planning.
- Set objectives for own portfolio of directly managed projects, working collaboratively with employees and stakeholders within those projects.
- Establish effective monitoring, evaluation and learning methodologies and data capture tools for own portfolio of projects that ensure impact assessment of the community and environmental benefit of the projects.

2. Communications and Relationship Management

Overall objective: Develop and maintain excellent working relationships and act as an ambassador for SUP values.

- Develop and maintain positive, collaborative networking relationships with and between relevant agreed partners.
- Represent SUP at external forums and events as delegated and in line with own specialist knowledge and expertise.
- Contribute to effective internal and external communications, ensuring colleagues at all levels are appropriately informed and engaged.
- Deputise for the Chief Executive, where appropriate and agreed.

3. People Management and Development

Overall objective: Support highly motivated, valued and high performing staff, within a positive, collaborative team culture.

- Provide leadership and guidance to employees within own area of management, modelling the values and behaviours for SUP, and taking a capacity building approach.
- Act as a Line Manager and provide ongoing people and performance management, including recruitment, induction and probationary review, regular 1:1 supervision, and annual performance review.

4. Resource Management and Development

Overall objective: Horizon-scan, scope new projects and ensure high quality delivery of existing and new projects within budget.

- Participate in setting of budgets, working collaboratively with Head of Finance and Operations and Chief Executive.

- Contribute to monitoring and researching the funding and commercial tender landscape, to identify potential resource opportunities for projects and initiatives that are aligned to SUP's strategic objectives and within capacity to deliver.
- Explore new initiatives in line with SUP's charitable purposes and agreed priorities. Coordinate, draft content, quality check, and oversee the development and submission of charitable funding bids and commercial tenders.
- Draft updates and reports to SUP's Board of Directors, as required.

Person Specification

We realise that not everyone will meet all these criteria from the outset. We welcome applications from people with potential and commitment to develop their knowledge, skills and experience over time, and with appropriate support provided.

Essential

- Degree level qualification in an environmental, ecology or land management subject and commitment to continuing professional development.
- Knowledge of ecosystem services and natural capital approaches.
- Understanding of environmental legislation, planning policy, and ecological best practice in a rural context.
- Experience of landscape-scale projects and plans.
- Successful track record in developing tenders and funding bids, pricing work, and identifying new opportunities.
- Strong project and people management experience, including performance management, financial oversight and reporting.
- Strong planning, prioritisation and organisation skills, including delivery of own projects and activities to time, and oversight of delivery of others.
- Track record of successful partnership-working with land managers, public agencies, businesses and/or community groups.
- Great interpersonal communication, relationship building, engagement, and collaborative working skills with diverse partners, stakeholders, and colleagues. Proven ability to lead, inspire, and support a team, including sub-contractors and junior staff.
- Strong analytical and evaluative thinking skills and ability to take evidence-led approaches to influencing policy and practice.
- Excellent written communication skills, including detailed reports and tender / funding bids.
- Confident and competent IT user with good knowledge of Microsoft Office 365.
- Flexible approach to work duties, comfortable working with uncertainty and change; self-motivated self-starter, who works well independently and as part of a team.
- Commitment to the aims and objectives of SUP, including equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Driving license and access to a vehicle.
- Right to work in the UK.

Desirable

- Full membership (or eligibility for membership) of CIEEM.
- Experience producing, reviewing, and quality-assuring ecological surveys, reports and/or assessments.
- Experience in environmental research and/or policy development.
- An understanding of current challenges and opportunities for people and nature in rural South Scotland, including environmental, economic, social and cultural issues.
- Experience of and/or ability to work with biological and spatial data.
- Knowledge of farming and/or forestry management practice and policy.

Application Process

We welcome enquiries and/or an informal discussion of the role with Cara Gillespie (Chief Executive) in advance of applying. Please contact recruitment@sup.org.uk to arrange this.

To apply, please provide:

- A current CV, and
- A covering letter, indicating your reasons for applying and outlining how your knowledge, skills and experience relate to the Person Specification.

We are able to accept applications in alternative formats. If you have any form of access needs, please not hesitate to contact us to discuss your requirements.

Closing Date:

Please submit by email to recruitment@sup.org.uk by 10 am on Monday 2nd March 2026.

First stage Interviews (online): Tuesday 10th March 2026

Second stage Interviews (in person): Tuesday 24th March 2026

Start date: 4th May 2026 (desired)