

Spey Catchment Engagement Officer

Job Description

Reporting to: Paul Hughes, Head of Communications and Strategic Projects.

Location: Spey Catchment Initiative, The Town House, The Square, Grantown-on-Spey PH26 3HF. Option for hybrid working. Extensive field work across the Spey catchment will be a core part of this role.

Status: Part-time, 3 days per week (0.6 FTE). Fixed term for 12 months initially, from January 2027, with the intention to extend and expand the role, subject to funding.

Salary: Circa £36,500 per annum FTE (£22,000 actual, pro rata for 3 days per week)

Benefits: Employer pension contribution, a travel and expenses allowance and 25 days' annual leave per year FTE (pro rata for part-time), plus statutory public holidays.

Job Purpose

The Spey Catchment Initiative (SCI) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), established in 2010, working in partnership across the Spey catchment to protect and restore its rivers, woodlands and wider natural environment.

Two major programmes are currently being developed in the Spey catchment: The Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Spey Catchment Investment Programme, and the Atlantic Salmon Trust's (AST) Catchment Audit. Both are multi-year programmes with the potential to attract significant investment in nature-based solutions (NbS), and both will be underpinned by understanding and addressing the needs of land managers across the catchment.

The Spey Catchment Engagement Officer will help deliver a programme of engagement with farmers, landowners and other land managers – understanding who they are, identifying where appetite for NbS and sensitivities lie, listening directly to their businesses, motivations and concerns and keeping them informed throughout.

Any future programme will only succeed with the participation and support of farmers and land managers. A solution that doesn't work for the people who manage the land, will not work at all.

The postholder will work closely with SCI's Head of Communications and Strategic Projects and wider team, and will be in regular contact with TNC, AST, Cairngorm National Park Authority and other catchment partners.

As a secondary part of this role, the postholder will also take on day-to-day creation and scheduling of SCI's social media content, working closely with the wider team, and will develop materials to support their own engagement programme as needed. This sits under the overall communications and engagement oversight of SCI's Head of Communications and Strategic Projects; land manager engagement remains the primary focus of the role throughout.

Responsibilities

- Design and deliver a structured programme of engagement with land managers across the Spey catchment, built around five strands: understanding who land managers are, identifying appetite for NbS and sensitivities, listening to their businesses and concerns, keeping them informed and acting on what's learned to shape delivery.
- Build and maintain trusted, direct relationships with farmers, landowners, estates and other land managers, including in areas of prior sensitivity, primarily through one-to-one conversations and small group settings.
- Convene and facilitate regular focus groups for land managers, bringing together SCI, TNC and AST on a consistent basis.
- Develop audience profiles and, where publicly available, indicative catchment data on land ownership and land manager types, to inform how engagement and communication are targeted.
- Gather and feedback insight on land manager appetite, concerns and no-go zones to directly inform TNC's modelling and AST's catchment audit.
- Identify potential pilot or exemplar sites and local champions for nature based solutions, and feed engagement insight into SCI's own project pipeline and area-based strategies.
- Maintain a lightweight engagement tracker (e.g. Airtable) recording contacts, conversations and next steps, and produce short written updates on progress for SCI's Project Advisory Group.

- Work with SCI's wider team to maintain a public-facing presence for this engagement programme specifically, including website content and attendance at partner and community events.
- Contribute to a short summary report and interactive story-map presenting the findings of this phase of engagement, to be shared with participants and partners.
- Work in close, regular contact with TNC, AST, CNPA and other catchment partners, including learning from comparable engagement approaches elsewhere (e.g. the Dee catchment audit, the South Esk farmer focus study, Tweed Forum).

In addition, as a secondary part of this role:

- Take on day-to-day responsibility for SCI's wider social media content creation and scheduling across its channels, working closely with the SCI team, under the overall communications and engagement oversight of the Head of Communications and Strategic Projects.
- Develop materials to support the engagement programme itself, such as flyers, briefing notes, and materials for focus groups and events.

Knowledge, Experience and Training

Essential

- Excellent, warm interpersonal and listening skills, with a genuine ability to build trust and rapport with people from a wide range of backgrounds and views, including those sceptical of environmental programmes.
- Demonstrable experience of community, stakeholder or public engagement – planning and facilitating conversations, focus groups or workshops that generate honest, useful input.
- An understanding of, and genuine interest in, environmental conservation, catchment management or nature-based solutions, and the ability to explain technical programmes in plain, accessible language.
- A pragmatic, self-motivated approach, comfortable working independently with minimal day-to-day supervision, while keeping colleagues and partners well informed.
- Sound written communication skills, able to synthesise conversations and findings into clear summaries for partners and funders.
- Full UK driving licence and access to your own vehicle, with a willingness to travel extensively across the catchment, including to remote locations.

Desirable

- Familiarity with the Spey catchment, Cairngorms National Park, or a comparable rural Scottish catchment, and an appreciation of the practical realities and pressures facing farmers and land managers.
- Direct experience of farming, land management or estate work, or of working closely with farmers and landowners in a professional capacity.
- Previous experience within the catchment management, forestry, fisheries or wider natural heritage sector.
- Existing relationships or networks within the Spey catchment or the wider Cairngorms area.
- Experience using lightweight CRM or database tools (e.g. Airtable) to track engagement or contacts.
- Educated to degree level or equivalent, or an equivalent qualification/experience in a relevant field such as rural development, environmental management or community engagement.
- Confidence creating engaging content for social media and other digital channels, and experience with content planning or scheduling – full support and training will be available for this secondary part of the role.