

Job Description

Title: Principal Ecologist

Status: Full time

Term: Permanent

Location: Hybrid role. Candidates must be based in, or within commutable distance of, Edinburgh or Inverness. Regular travel across the UK is to be expected.

Salary: Highly Competitive, DoE

About Caledonian Climate

Caledonian Climate Partners (CCP) is dedicated to addressing the climate and nature crisis through the restoration of Scotland's degraded peatlands. Established in 2021, CCP is a fast-growing start-up with an entrepreneurial spirit and exciting future in a sector with significant growth potential.

The team of dedicated professionals is now responsible for the development of more peatland restoration than any other organisation in Scotland. Uniquely, the CCP team is solely focused on peatlands and provides a full professional services delivery from the initial assessments to managing contractors on the ground, and the long-term monitoring and maintenance of restored peatlands; achieved through strong partnerships and engagement with local contractors, planning departments, the community, government bodies, and funding organisations.

Summary

The Principal / Senior Ecologist will own CCP's ecological practice across a growing portfolio of peatland restoration projects, acting as the in-house authority on ecology from feasibility through to long-term monitoring. The role combines hands-on field leadership with technical oversight, regulatory navigation, and the development of ecological expertise across the wider team.

With more than 80 Peatland Code projects underway and geographic expansion in progress, this role offers exceptional scope to shape ecological standards in upland and blanket bog restoration. We are looking for a senior practitioner who can hold their own technically, mentor others, and bring innovation to how we survey, assess and monitor peatland ecosystems.

The ideal candidate brings deep field experience, regulatory fluency, and the curiosity to push ecological practice forward in a fast-moving sector.

Key Responsibilities

Ecological Leadership & Project Delivery

- Lead CCP's ecological monitoring programme across a growing portfolio of peatland restoration projects
- Act as the in-house ecological authority, supporting project teams, reviewing contractor outputs, and ensuring ecological best practice is embedded from feasibility through to long-term monitoring
- Lead ecological assessments on major projects, including EIA, HRA, and protected sites consenting
- Own ecological design and delivery across CCP's blanket bog and upland landscapes
- Oversee specialist subcontractors and freelance ecologists, ensuring quality and consistency of outputs

Field Survey & Technical Practice

- Lead and quality-assure field surveys across protected species, upland breeding birds, and botanical assemblages
- Apply NVC methodology and peatland-specific survey techniques in upland and blanket bog environments
- Hold and apply protected species licences where appropriate, particularly interested in otter, water vole, and other priority species
- Build robust ecological baselines that underpin restoration design and long-term monitoring, aligned with and enhancing internal procedures

Regulatory & Stakeholder Engagement

- Apply excellent working knowledge of the regulatory environment (Scotland focus), including HRA, SSSI consenting, and protected sites licensing
- Engage with NatureScot, SEPA, planning authorities, National Parks, and other regulators to secure consents and improve ecological outcomes
- Work with landowners and land managers to align restoration design with broader land use objectives
- Represent CCP credibly in technical forums, stakeholder meetings, and public engagement settings

Team Development & Mentoring

- Support and mentor colleagues, building ecological knowledge and confidence across the team
- Help develop in-house capability in upland and blanket bog ecology, including across newer staff and freelancers
- Contribute to recruitment, training plans, and the development of CCP's ecological function as the team grows

Innovation & Sector Practice

- Drive forward innovation in ecological survey, monitoring and assessment, including the use of remote sensing, LiDAR, and emerging digital tools
- Develop expert knowledge in areas where the sector lacks established practice, particularly peatland-specific ecology
- Engage with Biodiversity Net Gain and equivalent metrics, helping CCP position credibly for co-benefit markets
- Contribute to thought leadership, sector working groups, and CCP's public profile on ecological practice

Geographic Expansion Support

- Support CCP's expansion by adapting ecological practice to new regulatory contexts
- Build relationships with ecological networks beyond Scotland and identify partners where local knowledge is needed
- Help shape CCP's ecological offering as the company moves into new geographies and habitat contexts

Qualifications, Skills & Experience

Essential

- Minimum 5 years' relevant experience in ecology, with a strong track record in field survey, assessment, and project delivery
- Full membership of CIEEM (MCIEEM)
- Proven experience leading ecological assessments on major projects, covering EIA and/or HRA
- Excellent working knowledge of the Scottish regulatory environment, including HRA, SSSI consenting, and protected sites licensing
- Experience leading specialist teams or directing the ecological elements of project delivery
- Strong field survey skills across a relevant subset of: protected species (particularly otter and water vole), upland breeding birds, and botanical identification
- Experience working with regulators and stakeholders to improve ecological outcomes
- Excellent written and verbal communication, including the ability to present technical material to non-specialist audiences
- Appetite for innovation and embracing advances in technology and ecological practice

Highly Desirable

- Chartered membership of CIEEM (CEcol)
- Relevant degree in ecology, zoology, biology, or environmental science
- Direct experience of peatland ecology, including peatland botany, invertebrates, mammals or birds
- Working knowledge of peatland hydrology and how it shapes ecological outcomes
- Experience with NVC surveys and at least one protected species licence
- Experience of Biodiversity Net Gain or similar metrics, or a clear willingness to learn
- Experience of working across upland and blanket bog landscapes in Scotland, with broader UK or European exposure a plus
- Experience mentoring or line-managing junior ecologists

Personal Attributes

- Strong field practitioner who enjoys time on site in remote upland environments
- Technically rigorous, with a commitment to evidence-led ecological practice
- Curious and forward-looking, willing to challenge established methods where better approaches exist
- Collaborative and generous with knowledge; comfortable mentoring and developing others
- Self-motivated with ownership over outcomes
- Commitment to environmental impact alongside professional excellence
- Confident representing CCP with regulators, landowners, and at sector forums

Other Duties

Flexibility to perform additional tasks as required by the business, including supporting strategic planning, contributing to bids and proposals, and supporting CCP's overall ecological and commercial development.

Benefits

- Hybrid working, with office spaces across Scotland (Edinburgh, Inverness, Angus and Banchory)
- Private healthcare
- 25 days' holiday plus Bank Holidays, rising with service, including year 6 holiday bonus
- Group Life Insurance
- Company bonus scheme, linked to individual and organisational performance
- Company pension scheme with 5% employer contribution
- Cycle to Work scheme
- Health and Wellbeing hub access
- Mission-driven organisation where the work delivers genuine environmental impact

CCP Core Competencies

Teamworking - Demonstrates co-operation and openness with others. Contributes to collective problem solving. Willing to join in. Responds to teamwork. Promotes pride in the workplace.

Innovative Thinking - Challenges the status quo to deliver novel techniques and practices into the sector.

Business Awareness - Understands how your role relates to overall company objectives and the implications of non-performance. Considerate and effective in the use of company resources. Shows awareness of broad company issues and objectives. Supports and endorses all company policies.

Leadership - Positively welcomes responsibility. Self-motivated. Takes ownership of personal goals and objectives. Commits to continually develop professionally.

Developing Others - Willing to help others to learn. Willing to share knowledge and experience.

Customer Focus - Able to identify both internal and external customers and respond to their needs.

Quality Orientation - Demonstrates personal commitment to quality; sets high work standards for self. Consistently achieves quality standards. Wants to do a good job.

Change Management - Accepts change. Adapts and responds positively to change.

Communication - Able to present information on a one-to-one and group basis clearly and concisely. Responds logically and fluently to questions.

Planning and Organising - Organises own day-to-day activities. Works methodically to meet deadlines. Pays attention to detail.

Relationship Building - Demonstrates a positive approach in their interaction with others and builds quality, trusted relationships over time.

Judgement - Applies common sense and clear thinking in own area on day-to-day problems, especially to reduce idle time and achieve objectives. Seeks advice when unsure.