

# **Middle Level Commissioners**

## **Conservation Officer**

### **Job description**

The post of Conservation Officer at the Middle Level Commissioners combines a wide range of skills, knowledge and experience. It involves practical skills, fieldwork experience, knowledge of wildlife legislation, administrative ability, presentation skills and the personal qualities to interact with and hold the confidence of a wide range of people.

The Conservation Officer works closely with the MLC Operational Engineers to achieve outcomes that benefit biodiversity at the same time as achieving the flood risk, water resource and navigation management requirements and aims of this large authority. The Middle Level Commissioners also provide consultancy services to around 34 local Internal Drainage Boards/District Drainage Commissioners (Boards) and the successful candidate would be required to work with these Boards to design and deliver environmental benefits for the districts by way of preparation and delivery of Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) or through involvement in local partnership conservation schemes.

The Middle Level Commissioners have gained a reputation as a leading body in practical conservation measures and the successful candidate would be expected to carry on this work and seek to develop opportunities to promote biodiversity alongside excellence in water management.

### **The overall purpose of the post**

- To provide the Middle Level Commissioners with guidance on wildlife conservation and the related legislation requirements (eg badger licencing, water vole mitigation).
- To maintain and enhance the wildlife habitats, species biodiversity and the environmental potential of the Middle Level catchment and the Boards.
- To communicate the importance of the environmental work and achievements to local, regional and national bodies and decision makers.
- To encourage an understanding and appreciation of the natural Fenland environment and the positive role that drainage and water management bodies play in maintaining it.

### **Responsibilities**

The Conservation Officer not only carries out projects to benefit biodiversity on the main waterways and banks of the Middle Level system but also works for 34 Boards to support the aims of their Biodiversity Action Plans. Surveys of each Board's district are carried out and a BAP Report written annually. Reports are produced for the MLC Board meetings, Conservation Committee, Waterway Users Committee and the Drainage Board Conservation Committee.

The Conservation Officer works with the MLC Technical Services Department and comments on the environmental aspects of planning applications relating to waterways and/or key protected species.

### **Qualifications**

An HND or degree in an appropriate natural sciences subject and/or extensive experience in practical conservation or ecology work over a period of 10 years or more.

### **Desired Knowledge**

- Some knowledge of Internal Drainage Board and water management systems and operations.
- Wetland and riparian species and their habitat requirements, threats and legal protection.
- Planning legislation in relation to wildlife and habitat protection and appropriate mitigation measures that may be applied.

### **Skills**

- Extensive field skills in at least one relevant area of identification eg botany, birds, insects, etc.
- Off-road driving and use of 4x4 vehicles.
- Computer literacy, use of Word, Excel and PowerPoint.
- Maintain effective records using IT database systems.
- One to one and group verbal communication/presentation.

### **Work experience**

The successful candidate is likely to have considerable experience of working in a practical environmental role, ideally in a drainage or water management environment. They will be able to provide evidence of being a dedicated worker committed to the aims of improving the local biodiversity and environmental quality following national principles.

### **Carry out practical conservation actions including but not exclusively**

- Support and promote a mink control scheme and carry out mink control.
- Support the monitoring and maintenance of Board installed barn owl boxes by licenced BTO volunteers.
- Monitor bat boxes.
- Publicise and promote the control of invasive non-native species of water plants and fauna (eg mitten crab).
- Record (counting/weighing) elvers and eels at St Germans Pumping Station elver pass. Pass on records to regional and national Environment Agency Fisheries staff and other organisations.
- Promote research into and investigate trials of cost-effective eel passage solutions at pumping stations and other barriers to silver eel migration.
- Investigate reports of water pollution and liaise with Environment Agency staff.

## **Survey & Recording**

Undertake surveys of thirty plus IDB and DDC areas in the ML IDB BAP Partnership, complete a BAP report and update a BAP map for each district annually.

Submit records of BAP and other key species to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Environmental Records Centre (CPERC) or Norfolk Environmental Records Centre as appropriate.

Promote and support species surveys by other specialists within the Middle Level catchment.

## **Conservation Advice**

- Provide advice to the MLC Board, staff, labour force and the Members of the Internal Drainage Boards on environmental matters and their legal responsibilities.
- Provide recommendations and mitigations for the environmental impacts of planning applications submitted to the MLC Technical Services Department.
- Respond to inquiries from the public regarding environmental matters on Middle Level waterways.
- Review and update Biodiversity Action Plans, their targets and actions.
- Review and update the Middle Level Operations Manual in conjunction with the Operations Engineer as required.

## **Publicity, Promotion**

- Promote the environmental and biodiversity work of the MLC and Boards to outside organisations, government bodies and the general public.
- Compile and distribute an email newsletter.
- Create press releases on the conservation work of the Middle Level and the Boards in the ML BAP Partnership.
- Write and submit articles on biodiversity issues for the IDB industries ADA Gazette or other relevant publications.
- Give presentations on the conservation work of the MLC to local groups and societies

## **Education**

- Organise and deliver workshops for IDB staff, members and volunteers on relevant topics such as invasive non-native species, working with protected species, etc.
- Provide briefings on practical environmental issues to MLC work force in the form of 'Toolbox Talks' or longer presentations as appropriate.
- Organise the annual ML IDB BAP Partnership meeting.
- Support Work Experience students, higher education/post graduate students' studies in environmental areas of the Middle Level waterways that will provide mutual benefits for the students, science and the MLC.

**Liaison and Collaboration**

Maintain contacts with other relevant conservation organisations and groups and share relevant information with them. Organise and coordinate volunteers to assist with project delivery, monitoring and recording.

**Funding**

Identify funding sources for environmental initiatives and apply for funding support for MLC/Board biodiversity projects where appropriate.

**Professional development**

Ideally the successful candidate would be the member of a professional institute or be working towards professional membership (eg CIEEM)

**Working hours**

While the normal working hours are 37.5 per week, unsocial hours, such as early starts and evening meetings may be necessary in your role as the Conservation Officer. It may also be necessary to work some weekends and public holidays, for instance if attending events with displays, carrying out surveys, running training events or giving presentations.

**Annual Leave**

Dependent upon salary grade and years of service, annual leave will range from 25 days up to 29 days, plus public and bank holidays.

**Salary**

Between £26K and £34K, dependent upon qualifications and experience.

**Pension**

A NEST pension will be offered.