

Developing people through training

Introduction

The Forestry Commission is a **government department**, making it a **public sector** organisation. Its **mission** is 'to protect and expand Britain's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment'. It is Britain's largest land manager and is responsible for some of the UK's most spectacular landscapes. Over the last 20 years it has expanded Britain's woods by an area more than three times the size of Greater London.

However, that is not the whole story. The Commission's 3,000 staff also:

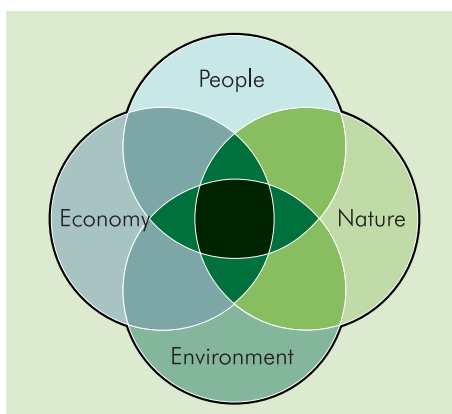
- manage forestry land owned by the government, including 15,000 miles of roads and 2,300 bridges
- support and **regulate** the use of privately-owned forests and woodlands
- plant and renew forests
- restore landscapes
- develop open forestry spaces to provide forest walks, concert venues, bike trails and even wind farm sites
- help to protect Britain's trees from pests and diseases
- contribute to **wealth generation** by providing jobs and selling products. For every £1,000 raised from timber and forestry, another £3,000 is generated to the UK economy from associated products and services, for example, tourism, paper and food
- represent the UK at international forest-related talks and negotiations.

The Forestry Commission has always placed operating in a 'green' manner top of its agenda. It balances four related needs: people, nature, environment, economy.

The Forestry Commission takes a long-term view about how it can help create a better environment for everyone in this country.

For example, forests:

- if sustainably managed, provide many benefits. The Forestry Commission ensures its forests are sustainably managed and encourages private owners to do so too
- provide extremely low carbon sources of energy and fuel
- provide us with the lowest energy-consuming and carbon-emitting building materials available
- help to absorb carbon emissions from other industrial activities
- provide a micro-climate for many species of insects and animals – for example, oak trees support more than 600 species of plants and animals
- provide recreational outdoor spaces that contribute to healthy lifestyles. Over 50 million visitors each year to Forestry Commission sites generate more than £2 billion in revenue
- create employment within the forestry and other industries, such as construction, tourism and engineering.



The case study will show how training and development is central to the work of the Forestry Commission and how it benefits the career development of its people. It will particularly highlight the work of Julie McMorran, a civil engineer with the Forestry Commission, for whom training and development has provided the springboard to promotion.



CURRICULUM TOPICS

- Roles and responsibilities
- On-the-job training
- Off-the-job training
- Learning & development

GLOSSARY

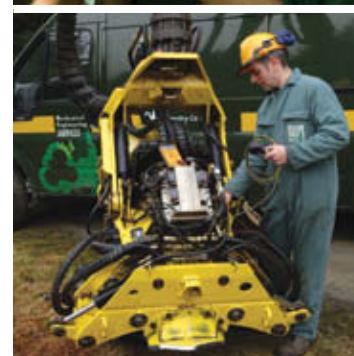
Government department: A body set up by government to run a particular activity on their behalf.

Public sector: That part of the economy that is owned and managed by the government.

Mission: Overall purpose, providing direction for an organisation.

Regulate: Supervises the way in which activities, resources or businesses operate.

Wealth generation: Processes through which members of a society become better off.

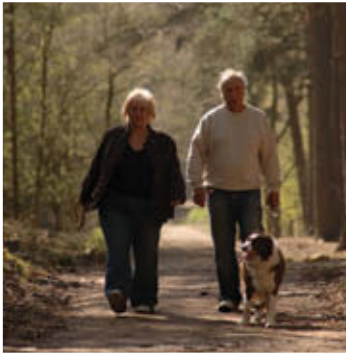




GLOSSARY

Job role: The tasks and responsibilities of a worker within an organisation.

Middle management: Managers who operate at a level below senior management but above supervisors and workers.



Roles within the organisation

A **job role** is made up of the tasks and responsibilities a person takes on at work. The Forestry Commission needs a wide range of skills and abilities to fulfil its variety of roles. People can join at different entry levels.

Entry level	Examples
Modern apprenticeship	People interested in becoming a forest craftsperson can undertake an apprenticeship in forestry. Apprentices work alongside experienced staff.
GCSE/'A' level	People with GCSEs or 'A' Levels can enter a range of support roles such as in personnel, finance or estate management. These are generally office based.
National Vocational Qualifications	NVQs in, for example, engineering, forestry or countryside management can lead to roles managing vehicles or planning forestry operations.
Graduate and Post-graduate	Graduate job roles include forester, engineer or scientist. Graduates can also take on roles as education rangers, working with schools and youth groups. The Commission offers a three-year graduate training programme.
Work placements	For students interested in finding out more about working for the Forestry Commission, a number of short-term or seasonal placements are available.

There are different levels of responsibility within the organisation:

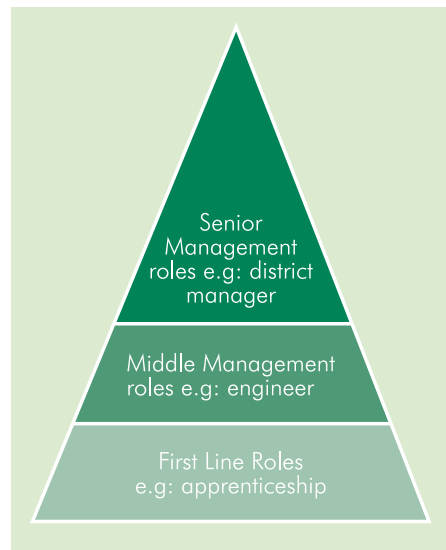
Murray Livingstone recently started a two-year apprenticeship with the Forestry Commission. Murray works in the West Argyll Forest District as a forest craftsperson, harvesting trees for timber. His initial training involved learning about different types of machines and health and safety on the forest site. This is a first line job which one day could go on to a **middle management** post as a senior Forester.

Julie McMorrán is a civil engineer. Some of her projects involve building new roads and bridges for timber lorries to get in and out of forestry areas. Alternatively, she might create concepts, and design and test models for footbridges, walkways or towers. These form part of the Forestry Commission's recreational work for walkers, cyclists or even theatre events.

At a higher level within the organisation, Gordon Donaldson is a Forest District Manager. His work includes managing the restoration of forest land at Loch Katrine in Scotland. This involves removing non-native plants and re-establishing farming of highland cattle in the area.

All employees working with the Forestry Commission receive good rates of pay, which can rise steadily with greater responsibility. For example, a Senior Project Engineer is currently paid up to £41,000 per year. Other benefits include a company car.

The Forestry Commission promotes employees from within the organisation. Whether employees join with qualifications from school, college or from university, they have the opportunity of a long-term career path. The Forestry Commission benefits by keeping its trained staff, which is less costly than recruiting new ones.



The importance of training

Training provides the opportunity to gain or improve relevant skills or knowledge. The Forestry Commission invests heavily in a range of training essential for the organisation's growth and development:

- health and safety training, for example, in the safe use of equipment and pesticides
Regular refresher training is required under health and safety laws
- technical skills, such as how to handle and work safely with powerful machines
- other skills such as communication and leadership. These are required, for example, by employees in both logging areas and tourism roles
- customer care skills necessary for working with the public, other organisations and internal customers.

The Forestry Commission has a culture of **Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**. This is supported by a system of regular **appraisals**. An appraisal involves employees reviewing performance with their line managers to identify areas where they want or need to learn more. They then develop a training plan to fill the gaps. Part of the appraisal involves setting SMART objectives so the trainee knows what to expect.



The Forestry Commission is proud of its status as an **Investor in People (IiP)**. This award is given to organisations that show a high commitment to looking after the needs of all their people. It sees training as an investment that helps the organisation to meet its aims and objectives. Training allows staff like Julie McMorrان to engage in learning that has clear links to their current or future roles. Julie wants to take more responsibility for her work so she is now studying for a Masters Degree in timber engineering.

Training can motivate employees and help them to work their way up through the organisation. They can develop their skills and knowledge to allow them to take their next career step. Becoming office manager might be the next step for an administrative support worker. A forest craft worker might move up to become a works supervisor.

Types of learning and training

'On the job' training involves training at work. This is the best way of learning practical work based skills. The trainee learns by carrying out real work tasks under instruction from a colleague, trainer or manager. For foresters this includes how to plant new seedlings and protect them from the cold and heat. Methods include:

- coaching - the coach guides and instructs the trainee
- mentoring - a mentor, a more experienced person, provides advice and support
- secondment - an employee goes to work elsewhere for a short period to learn useful skills.

An apprentice will combine work with a more experienced forester who will help and guide them, with formal studying for a qualification. On-the-job training is cost-effective.

'Off the job' training involves attending courses and training events away from the workplace, for example, Julie's university degree. Benefits include the opportunity of meeting other people in similar roles and discussing new ideas.

The Forestry Commission invests heavily in training for managerial development. This provides the leaders of the future. Through the appraisal process all employees have a **Personal Development Plan (PDP)** which highlights their strengths and weaknesses. This makes it possible to build on the strengths and improve areas of weakness through training and development. The Forestry Commission's Leadership Programme helps a manager learn to take on more responsibility. This may be through:

- 360° feedback - managers are given feedback on their way of working from above (by their line manager), from below (by those working for them), from the side (by peer workers)
- specialist courses at development centres
- formal study or distance learning, like Julie's Masters Degree.



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GLOSSARY

Continuous Professional Development (CPD): Where workers maintain or increase their knowledge and skills throughout their professional lives.

Appraisal: An assessment of an individual's progress. A manager meets with a subordinate to review their work and agree on future objectives.

Investors in People: An award given to organisations that have met tough checks to demonstrate that they look after the needs of employees.

On-the-job training: Training undertaken whilst in the course of doing a job i.e. with an experienced person immediately to hand.

Off-the-job training: Training undertaken away from the workplace, e.g. block release at college.

Personal Development Plan (PDP): A written plan setting out ways in which individual employees will have their training and development needs met.



 **Forestry Commission**



GLOSSARY

Competency: An area of activity in which a firm is particularly strong e.g. research and development and product innovation.

Chartered engineer: An engineer with a Masters Degree who is registered with the Engineering Council.

The Forestry Commission has created a **Competency** Framework of the skills required by the organisation and its employees. For a mechanical engineer this would include:

Job Role	Responsibilities	Skills and capabilities required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanical engineer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing a workshop Managing budgets Inspecting, maintenance and repair of vehicles and machinery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People management Financial management Technical skills Problem solving

Identifying individuals' skills gaps makes it possible to design appropriate training for them. This might include taking a higher degree or updating Health and Safety training.

Training in action

A good way of looking at how training works at the Forestry Commission is to examine the training opportunities provided for Julie McMorrان. The following profile highlights how the training she has received has developed her career:

'Engineering at the Forestry Commission is different from that on a typical 'construction site'. This attracted me to the job. I enjoy the fact that I can take an idea, create a design and then see it through to the final product. No two days are ever the same.

*Whilst working for the Forestry Commission I have had excellent internal training on such topics as Health and Safety and new legislation. In addition, the Forestry Commission sponsored me to upgrade my vocational qualification in engineering to degree level. Following discussions with my manager, I am now studying on a full time post-graduate course for a Masters degree in timber engineering. This is also sponsored by the Forestry Commission. This will help me gain **Chartered Engineer** status and enable me to manage projects fully, taking overall responsibility for certification of these structures.*

Training and development has benefited me in personal and professional terms. I have been promoted twice in the last three years. It also benefits the Forestry Commission. The new contacts I have made through the University generate new ideas and networks for research. My training gives me and the Forestry Commission early insights into industry advancements and new legislation. This advantage means we can adjust plans to meet the requirements.'

Conclusion

People who work for the Forestry Commission perform a wide variety of jobs. They are all important in contributing to the overall aims and objectives of the organisation. To carry out their roles effectively they need training. Development helps them to grow as individuals and take on extra responsibility, which adds value to the organisation.

The Forestry Commission's investment in training and development enables employees like Murray Livingstone, Gordon Donaldson and Julie McMorrان to develop more confidence in their roles. It also allows them to become more equipped to achieve their own and the organisation's objectives. The result is a better managed 'green' forest resource that everyone can benefit from – people, animals, plant life, and our planet.

Questions

1. What is a job role? Give two examples of job roles at the Forestry Commission. How can a job role be widened?
2. Define a) 'on-the-job training' and b) 'off the job training'. Illustrate the difference by giving examples of the two types of training at the Forestry Commission.
3. Why is training important to a) an employee of the Forestry Commission, and b) The Forestry Commission?
4. How has training helped Julia McMorrان?

