

## Purpose

This paper reviews Forest Enterprise England's recent experience with apprenticeships and proposes a way forward which aligns with our Strategic Framework, current Government policy on apprenticeships, and the availability of funding for the training of apprentices.

## Background

The launch of FEE's Strategic Framework in 2017 has identified *investing in our staff* as a critical component of *connecting everyone with the Nation's forests*. The skills and competencies of our staff will determine the speed at which we move forward and how successful we are at making positive change stick. We are continually recruiting new staff and, along with our existing staff, all will benefit from training and learning opportunities. However, only a small number of our staff currently benefit from training which is structured as an apprenticeship.

Since 2012 Forest Enterprise England has successfully hosted apprenticeships in Forest Crafts. During that time 24 individuals have completed a two year training programme and moved into skilled roles in Districts. FEE Technical Training run the apprenticeship programme from the training centre at Cannock. At present there are 8 apprentices working towards their Level 2 Diploma Work based Trees and Timber (General Woodland and Forestry Tree Work) which will be completed in the next 8 to 12 months. A fresh intake of forest craft apprentices is planned for Autumn 2018. The number of apprentices recruited in each intake is matched to likely future vacancies in Forest Districts.

Government policy on employment and training has introduced measures that are designed to significantly expand apprenticeship opportunities and encourage employers to lead the way in defining their needs. In November 2015 an apprenticeship levy was announced. Since April 2017 employers with an annual pay bill of over £3 million each have been paying 0.5 percent of their pay bill into the apprenticeship levy. Employers have the opportunity to make use of the levy to spend on Government approved apprenticeship training.

## Financing apprenticeship training

The financial implications of new staff development activity through apprenticeships will be included within the normal Business Planning cycle with the first proposals coming forward in the 18/19 Business Plan.

The estimated total amount of levy that will be paid by the Forestry Commission for 2017/18 is £342k this includes contributions from Forest Services, Forest Research, Forestry Commission Scotland, and Forestry Commission England.

This paper assumes that, as a minimum, FEE will utilise its share of the levy funds, equivalent to about £120k annually.

Levied Funds are being accrued and, once an electronic account is established for the Forestry Commission, any part of FC can potentially use the funds to pay for training or assessment from approved providers. Funds need to be drawn down within 24 months of being paid into the account, otherwise they expire. At present the "ownership" of the electronic account sits with Corporate Services in Silvan House. Arrangements need to be put in place for the account ownership to transfer to England before April 2019 and for access to funds in the account to be assured for FC England as soon as possible.

### **Forest Enterprise England and the apprentice levy**

The funds available can only be used to pay for training or assessment and are subject to a maximum for each apprenticeship. If the costs of training and assessment exceed the funding band maximum, the difference must be paid by FEE. Funds cannot be used to pay for other costs associated with apprentices, specifically wages, travel and subsistence costs.

In the event that FEE spends all of the available funding in their account, we understand that the UK Government will fund 90% of additional costs of the training, with FEE paying the remaining 10%. It remains to be seen if this position is sustainable for the Government over the medium term, but it does appear to represent a short term opportunity to boost our available funding for training beyond our Levy contribution.

Apprentices can be current members of staff or new recruits. Therefore the funding can be used for apprenticeships which upskill and develop existing staff as well as providing structured training for new recruits who demonstrate motivation and aptitude, but who have not yet acquired the skills we need in FEE.

In order to access funds, an apprentice must be engaged to work through a programme of training and work experience which is defined by an approved Apprenticeship Standard. Over the last two years a Forest Craft Apprenticeship Standard has been developed by a Trail Blazer employer representative group with leadership from Steve Fowkes in FS. The investment of timely effort in the Trail Blazer Group means that we have an approved Level 2 Standard ready for the next intake of forest craft apprentices.

### **Identifying why, and where, FEE need apprentices in the future**

We need to be strategic in the identification of apprenticeship opportunities and use funding for training to support the delivery of strategic outcomes. HRBP's

are working with District / Business Unit Management Teams on workforce planning which is helping to identify the most urgent strategic needs for the development of apprentice opportunities in FEE.

### **Forest Operations Apprenticeships**

The current forest crafts apprenticeship is a good example of a strategic issue being addressed with the creation of a bespoke training programme. The issue developing over many years was a decline in the availability of the key skills required for craft level management on the PFE. This became obvious as cohorts of field based staff retired and ad hoc recruitment of college leavers revealed a disappointing scarcity in the mix of soft and technical skill which we need in our field teams. By introducing an apprenticeship standard, and recruiting apprentices in groups, we are able to structure, deliver and quality assure their training so that they acquire a high level of competency as team members within FEE which compliments the certificated technical skills needed for forestry and land management. This is not only an investment in our staff, it is an investment in the future management of the PFE and is aligned with our Strategic Framework.

Within Forest Districts we are also experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff with the necessary mix of skills for roles in wildlife management and recreation management. Both of these "hard to find" skill / competency areas represents a strategic issue for FEE because they are critical in the future management of the PFE. Both wildlife management and recreation management are candidate areas for Trailblazer development of future Level 2 or 3 Apprenticeship Standards.

Looking beyond forest operations there are several other areas for which there is a strategic need for technical apprenticeships; surveying, ecology, civil engineering, and IT all present similar difficulties in recruiting junior staff with the necessary mix of soft and technical skill.

### **Leadership and Management apprenticeships**

FEE has identified a need to develop leadership behaviours across our current and future staff. This has been underlined by the launch of the Leadership and Management framework. The purpose of the Framework is to help embed the leadership behaviours into everyday working practices and create the leadership that the organisation needs for its future expansion and development. The Executive Board have approved and supported the programme and this development need.

Leadership and Management Apprenticeships will be made available at three levels; supervisory (level 3), strategic (level 5) and graduate (level 6) levels.

They will be introduced as development opportunities for new and current staff and will replace the centrally delivered Management Development Programmes.

Developing leadership skills in our current workforce will prepare them for career progression, through promotion, as opportunities become available. Access to levy funds will significantly increase the impact FEE can achieve in developing leadership behaviours across the organisation.

## **Public Service Operational Delivery and Human Resources support apprenticeships**

Several Forest Districts are experiencing challenges in recruitment and retention of staff. In areas of low unemployment, especially in the South of England, attracting, and retaining, suitable staff in business support roles is proving to be very difficult. There is an opportunity to offer these roles as Level 3 apprenticeships could attract more applicants and retain the best candidates within FEE.

This apprenticeship programme includes development in customer service, communications, team working and problem solving and usually takes 12 to 18 months to complete. HR will work with Districts to develop this approach and recruit new staff into these roles.

In the business case for the transition of the corporate service functions from Silvan House a Human Resources Support apprentice was identified. This post will be recruited and levy training funds will be made utilised.

## **Accessing suitable apprenticeship training**

At present we see an ongoing need for the "FEE bespoke" approach on forest crafts, wildlife management and recreation management at Level 2/3. FEE Technical Training team will continue to focus their attention on these areas, register as an Employer Training Provider and access available training funds for apprentices within these areas.

Across a wider area of FEE's business needs we will access apprentice training from "off the shelf" training providers. Standards are now available which cover a wide range of technical and managerial roles from Level 2 up to Level 6.

In order to administer and develop apprentice programmes, which are not led by our Technical Training team, additional staff resources will be required. These are not immediately available within HR therefore it is recommended that the services of a skills provider are procured to arrange access to specific frameworks across the UK, including induction and development of the apprentice qualifications.

This will reduce the burden of administration which will be necessary to manage each apprentices training including the coordination of multiple training providers. The skills provider would allocate levy funding to registered suppliers of apprenticeship training. They would also be ideally placed to access any extra grants and extra monies that are made available as part of the UK government plans for the development of trainees and apprentices.

### Next steps

Over the coming months FEE will consider our approach to staff development so that we include apprenticeships more widely and match these to our strategic needs. Action will include;

- Set up FC England's digital training account so that we can draw down funds (this has not been set up by Silvan House).
- Preparation for a new intake of Forest Crafts apprentices in autumn 2018, based in Forest Districts with training supervised and delivered by Technical Training. Up to £12K will be drawn down for the training and assessment of each apprentice.
- Launch apprenticeship opportunities for Leadership and Management and Public Service Operational Delivery across FEE using all funding from the levy.
- The feasibility of Wildlife Management and Recreation Management Apprenticeship Standards will be investigated by Technical Training and considered for development through a Trail Blazer Group serving the wider forestry/land management industry. Assistance from FS will be required if new Trail Blazer work is initiated.
- HR will work with the wider business, including Forest Services, to assess its strategic needs for staff development and identify where an apprenticeship appears to represent the most effective training solution. This will move beyond Level 2/3 and take into consideration, amongst others, the development of Trainee Foresters and Graduate Entrants. The financial implications of new staff development activity through apprenticeships will be included within the normal Business Planning cycle with the first proposals coming forward in the 18/19 Business Plan.
- HR, working with key stakeholders, will provide guidance and raise awareness, for the wider business on the, opportunities which apprenticeships now present in terms of addressing strategic issues. They will also provide guidance on accessing Levy Funding for training and will appraise the merits, including value-for-money of an out-sourced training coordination service.

**Recommendation**

The Board are asked to note the proposed approach to apprenticeships in FEE, and the actions which will take place leading up to the April 2018 launch of Levy Training funds.

We propose that a progress report should be brought to the EEB in October 2018.

**James Simpson & Bob Price, Forest Enterprise England**

**October 2017**

## **Appendix 1 – How apprentices work**

Potentially, any team within FEE could utilise the opportunity for apprentices. However whilst the costs for the training are met from the levy, there will be direct employment costs and indirect costs with regard to time. Apprentices need to have time set aside to complete their training with a face to face assessor, online learning or completion of assignments and assessments. Any manager proposing the introduction of an apprenticeship post should give careful consideration to the commitment in time required from line managers to ensure that the apprenticeship period is a success.

It is a requirement of the funding that an 80:20 ratio of work to development is required. Therefore a full time apprentice would require 1 day out of 5 to engage in their development. This would need to be evidenced to ensure that the levy funds are released.

The timescales for completion of apprenticeships depend on the level of the qualification. For example some level 2 qualifications may be 6 to 12 months whereas a level 4 may be 18 to 24 months.

At the end of the time period an end point assessment will take place. This may consist of a presentation, a project, a professional discussion and/or submission of a portfolio of evidence. It is linked to the knowledge, skills and behaviours mapped out in the standard. Final certification of the apprenticeship, and the final release of funding, is dependent on this end point assessment being completed.

The level of an apprenticeship is approximately mapped to equivalent qualification standards. Level 2 being 5 GCSEs passes, Level 3 being 2 A level passes, through to Level 6 which is a degree standard.

Before an apprentice opportunity is accepted consideration would need to be given to the reduction of available work hours, balanced against the need for developed staff to fill future vacancies.

## **Appendix 2 – details of leadership and management apprenticeships**

### **Team Leader/Supervisor level 3**

A team leader/supervisor is a first line management role, with operational/project responsibilities or responsibility for managing a team to deliver a clearly defined outcome. They provide direction, instructions and guidance to ensure the achievement of set goals.

Key responsibilities will include supporting, managing and developing team members, managing projects, planning and monitoring workloads and resources, delivering operational plans, resolving problems, and building relationships internally and externally.

This apprenticeship is expected to be completed in 12 to 18 months

### **Operational/Departmental Manager level 5**

An operations/departmental manager is someone who manages teams and/or projects, and achieving operational or departmental goals and objectives, as part of the delivery of the organisations strategy. They are accountable to a more senior manager.

Key responsibilities will include creating and delivering operational plans, managing projects, leading and managing teams, managing change, financial and resource management, talent management, coaching and mentoring

This apprenticeship is expected to be completed in around 2½ years

### **Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship level 6**

A Chartered Manager is someone who can take responsibility for people, projects, operations and/or services to deliver long term organisational success, with the professional recognition of their ability to deliver impact, behave ethically and demonstrate their commitment to continual learning and development.

This is a degree apprenticeship which would be available as part of career development and succession planning. It is aimed at established managers as well as new manager starting in their careers. This could be also offered for graduate apprenticeship entry into FEE.

The typical duration for this apprenticeship is 4 years, but will depend on the previous experience.

## Levy funds for each scheme

Apprentice levy funds would be available in full or part for these schemes. If funding is required then 90% would be paid by the UK government and FEE would fund the remaining costs.

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Maximum funding</b>
Forest Operative	2	£12000
Public Service Operational Delivery Officer	3	£3000
Team Leader/Supervisor	3	£5000
HR Support	3	£5000
Operations/Departmental Manager	5	£9000
Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship	6	£27000

## Examples of other apprenticeship standards relevant to FEE

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Apprenticeship standard</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Funding band maximum</b>
Accounting	<a href="#">Assistant Accountant</a>	3	£9,000
Accounting	<a href="#">Professional Accounting Taxation Technician</a>	4	£9,000
Building services engineering	<a href="#">Building Services Engineering Installer</a>	2	£12,000
Customer service	<a href="#">Customer Service Practitioner</a>	2	£4,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Infrastructure Technician</a>	3	£15,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Software Development Technician</a>	3	£15,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Unified Communications Technician</a>	3	£15,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Data Analyst</a>	4	£15,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Network Engineer</a>	4	£18,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Software Developer</a>	4	£18,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Unified Communications Trouble Shooter</a>	4	£18,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Software Tester</a>	4	£18,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">IS Business Analyst</a>	4	£18,000
Digital Industries	<a href="#">Digital and Technology Solutions Professional</a>	6	£27,000
Event Management	<a href="#">Event Assistant</a>	3	£9,000
Project Management	<a href="#">Associate Project Manager</a>	4	£9,000
Public Sector	<a href="#">Public Sector Commercial Professional</a>	4	£9,000
Surveying	<a href="#">Surveying Technician</a>	3	£9,000
Surveying	<a href="#">Chartered Surveyor</a>	6	£27,000