

inpractice

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Nature Conservation on a Shoestring

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Level 7 Apprenticeships on the Horizon: Are You Ready to Embrace Them?

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Level 7 Degree Apprenticeships in Ecology and in Environmental Management will be important new routes for training and recruiting to our professions as well as for providing training for graduates already in post.

For the apprentices, it is a valuable way of achieving an MSc level qualification whilst benefiting from a salary. CIEEM is taking a key role in the development of these apprenticeships and the target is to have applications available to students graduating and other applicants in 2018 (i.e. starting in employment and training in late summer to early autumn 2018). In

order to make the most of this opportunity, we need to be planning and preparing now. There is a lot that needs to be done.

So, what is an apprentice and why should we bother now about something that's almost a year away? Let us stick for the moment with Level 7 Degree Apprenticeships (reference will be made to Level 6 towards the end of this article

and there's good information on the gov.uk website www.gov.uk/education/apprenticeships-traineeships-and-internships). A Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship can be taken up by an individual with an undergraduate degree or relevant work experience. This is not just an opportunity for graduates but could be very interesting to mature professionals (e.g. rangers) who cannot progress as they lack a formal qualification. When successfully completed after 3-4 years, the apprentice will receive an MSc and will need to successfully complete the endpoint assessment for the apprenticeship. All apprenticeships are based on the principle that they receive a full-time salary and that 20% of their time must be spent on training off-the-job. In the remaining 80% of their time they would be undertaking day-to-day/fee-earning work. If the employer has a turnover of £3 million or more, most of the payment for the training comes out the payment that has been levied by the English Government. Smaller companies may also access Government contributions to help to fund the training. The apprenticeship is assessed at the end of the training independently of the trainer. (Apprenticeships are currently only available in England.)

At this point in time, employers need to be thinking about:

- whether or not to advertise apprenticeships and, if so, how many for ecologists and how many for environmental managers;
- how to communicate these vacancies to students and other potential applicants, universities and their own staff;
- how Level 7 Degree Apprentices will be integrated into the business, team or section;
- whether there are any graduates or experienced workers already in the business, team or section who would benefit from a Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship;
- where the apprentice(s) will be able to receive their training;
- whether current staff need any additional support, for example, in understanding more about apprenticeships and in mentoring; and
- what the financial implications are of an employee or employees who will not be on the job for 20% of their time.



These two apprenticeships are being developed by what is termed a 'Trailblazer Group' which comprises at least 10 employers of ecologists and environmental managers, at least two of which must be small to medium-sized enterprise/employers (SMEs). The Trailblazer Group also includes representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England as employers of large numbers of ecologists and environmental managers, and CIEEM. To date the Trailblazer Group has produced an Expression of Interest in developing a standard for each of the apprenticeships which have been approved and standards are in the process for approval. The Group is currently developing the assessment plans. Later this year or early 2018, the Group will be seeking/approaching universities or any other appropriate trainers to encourage them to register as training providers and provide proposals for delivering the training. To inform this, the Trailblazer Group will have undertaken a survey of employers to identify the numbers of likely apprenticeships and locations around the country where training would be best located. Do keep a look out for this survey. There is another Trailblazer Group which is developing a Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship for Environmental Professionals. This apprenticeship will support employers who are in the business of design, development and delivery of the built environment and infrastructure programmes. The outcome of a Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship

is equivalent to a graduate with 2-3 years' experience. Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships therefore combine on-the-job training and development with a degree running alongside, building in the breadth and depth of knowledge expected of any graduate, plus the independent and professional competence of those in their early professional career. Level 6 Degree Apprenticeships could run over 4-5 years and entrants will range from 18-year-olds joining the team straight from school and A Levels to those already in the workplace, carrying out technical work, thereby providing a route for existing technical staff to upskill themselves to a higher professional level. This apprenticeship aims to cover the breadth of the environment profession – from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and air pollution to acoustics and ecology – with apprentices developing a specialism over the duration of their training. The implications of taking on a Level 6 Degree Apprentice are that much greater, necessitating potentially significant changes (e.g. considering what work the apprentice would be capable of potentially taking on at the outset of their apprenticeship).

Further Information:

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