



Farm and Conservation Manager for The Woodlands Farm Trust Candidate Information Pack

1. Welcome from the Trustees

Thank you for expressing your interest in joining The Woodlands Farm Trust as our Farm and Conservation Manager. We hope this information pack a useful and inspiring overview of the role and our work.

Our Farm Manager is retiring after 16 very successful years in post. Over that time The Woodlands Farm Trust has transformed its 89 acre site into one of London's leading examples of nature -friendly farming, restoring species -rich grassland and hedgerows, maintaining rare -breed livestock herds, delivering high impact- education for thousands of children each year, building a thriving volunteer community, hosting large public events, maintained financial sustainability (even through COVID!), and developed strong collaborative partnerships with our tenants Sitopia Farm and Eltham Sheds that positions the farm to further develop as a hub for regenerative agriculture and community engagement.

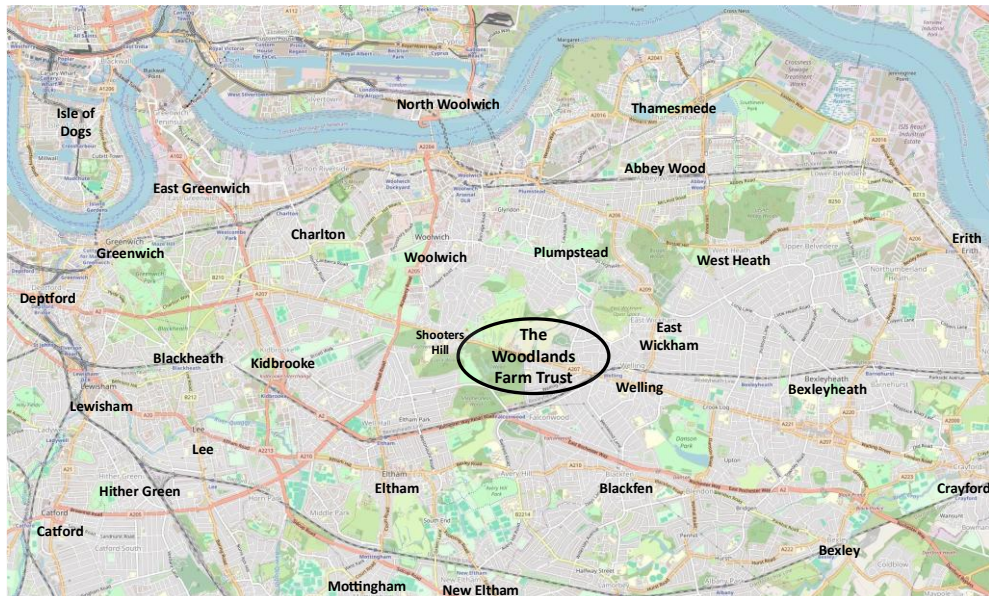
However, we also recognise that the farm and the breadth of its work remain largely undiscovered, both locally and nationally, presenting a major opportunity for greater visibility and engagement. Major funders have also recognised this, and together with recent agreements with the Rural Payment Agency for Higher Tier operational and capital grants, we have just received grants from both the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to develop a business case, and from Levy (a subsidiary of the Compass Group) to “accelerate the ecological regeneration of one of Europe's largest city farms to position the unique 89-acre site as a leading showcase for Agro- Ecological farming in London”.

If you are successful, you will be joining the farm at the beginning of this next part of its journey and with the opportunity to shape it's future for the next decade.

We would encourage you to visit the farm to discover for yourself it's unique ethos, and to informally discuss the role with Dai. Please book your proposed visit by emailing admin@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org using the title 'Farm and Conservation Manager advert - visit'.

2. About The Woodlands Farm Trust

Woodlands Farm lies close to the heart of London on Shooter's Hill in the Royal Borough of Greenwich, bordering the London Borough of Bexley and close to Welling. The farm was originally created in the early 1800s from dense woodland, remnants of which still exist on the farm. The farm became neglected in the late 1800s, but was successful again in the early 1900s. At that time it was larger at about 250 acres. In 1919 the farm was purchased by the Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society (RACS) and became known to local residents as the Co-op Pig Farm. As well as keeping pigs, the farm remained a commercial arable farm producing barley and hay until the 1980s.



In early 1980 the Department of Transport proposed to construct the 'A406 East London River Crossing' across Woodlands Farm and the adjacent deciduous ancient woodland of Oxleas Wood. The threat of the road scheme meant the farm became largely derelict. In 1993 the road scheme was abandoned, but local residents who had resisted the road scheme came together to save the farm for the community. The Woodlands Farm Trust charity was incorporated in 1995 and the farm purchased on a 999 year lease from the RACS in 1997 with the help of the Heritage Memorial Lottery Fund.

The early 2000's saw an intensive programme of restoring and promoting sustainable farming including hedge laying and planting, ditch clearance, fencing, rubbish clearance, pond restoration and new pond creation. Traditional native livestock was reintroduced to the farm comprising cows, sheep, poultry and pigs. The programme also ensured the survival and enhancement of the unique habitats of the farm, increasingly rare in London, of open meadow grassland, intact and interconnected hedgerows, natural banked streams, ponds and wetlands, ancient coppiced woodland, mature boundary trees, and improved crop fields managed without herbicides or chemical fertilisers.



The Farm comprises 89 acres (36ha) and is open to the general public every day except Mondays and Christmas day and draws visitors from Greater London and Kent. There are also a number of events for the public, including 'Lambing Day' and 'Apple Day'. It is operated on principles that combine the needs of farming with those of nature conservation and community access. The primary aim of the Trust is to educate people about agriculture, the countryside, country life, conservation, ecology, the environment and to try to reconnect the community to the rhythms of the countryside.



Woodlands Farm maintains a traditional mix of native and rare -breed livestock, reflecting its commitment to nature friendly- farming and conservation grazing. The farm keeps:

- British White cattle – a small pedigree herd (3 cattle) used for conservation grazing and beef production.
- Manx Loaghtan, Lleyn and Dorset Down sheep –pedigree flocks (about 40 in total) providing lambs, wool and essential grazing management
- Pigs – Two Oxford Sandy and Black sows used for breeding and meat production, and two Tamworth sows kept for public engagement
- Poultry – A flock of about 30 laying hens providing eggs for sale and education
- Bees – Over a dozen hives producing honey and supporting pollination across the farm. The beekeeper (a volunteer) is hoping to expand the apiary

These animals play a central role in the farm's educational work, conservation grazing, and income generation, while also helping maintain the character of a working urban farm.

To date, about 12ha of land is used to produce late cut hay, with an output of between 40 and 110 bales, depending upon the weather. The hay is used to feed both the cattle during the winter, and the sheep when they are housed prior to lambing. As the geology of the farm comprises mainly London Clay, the fields become very wet during winter.



The farm strives to maintain a careful balance between the number of animals we keep and the amount of hay we can sustainably produce. Livestock numbers need to be high enough to deliver conservation grazing, breeding programmes and income, but not so high that winter forage requirements exceed what the land can provide. Managing this balance will be essential to animal welfare, ecological stewardship and financial resilience.

3. Our Strategic Direction (2026–2031)

The 2025 ambitions of The Woodlands Farm Trust were to:

- build a truly sustainable future through sensitive farming using native stock and working towards a sustainable, harmonious practice, minimising the impact of activities on the environment, both local and global.
- maintain the farm as a community resource, giving volunteers and the community access to education, training, experiences and tasks that they might not otherwise encounter.
- conserve and improve the biodiversity of our 89 acres.
- ensure a sustainable operating and financial structure for the future.

While these ambitions remain at the heart of our work, recent conversations and site visits with leading figures in the environmental, farming and food industry have indicated that the farm, together with Sitopia as our tenant, has the potential to be much more. The factors they have been so enthusiastic about include:

- Our location close to central London (20 minutes drive from the O2)
- The size of the farm, which is so much larger than other ‘city farms’, and that it aims to be primarily a working farm. Our animals are generally in the fields and not enclosed in paddocks and barns for demonstration purposes.
- The farm’s tranquil atmosphere – a common theme is that ‘you wouldn’t know we are so close to London’. (except that we are ‘in’ London!)
- The conservation value, with over 4km of hedges, woodland/wooded water courses, over 26ha of sensitive grassland habitat supporting native breeds (being used for both grazing and late cut hay), and existing agroforestry systems (that could be developed)
- Our educational facilities
- The presence of Sitopia on 2 acres of leased land and who produce organic vegetables and flowers. ([Sitopia Farm](#))
- The potential that would arise if the education/visiting/retail infrastructure could be expanded and improved.

To underpin these ambitions, we have recently been awarded the following grants

- **Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier Agreement:** Five years commencing January 2026 with supplements that include 26.3ha (73%) of sensitive grassland habitat supporting native breeds (CSP16) and Educational Access Visits (VED1)
- **Countryside Stewardship Capital Grant Agreement:** Three years commencing December 2025) and including 200m hedgerow laying/yr, 399m new hedgerows, and 1111m of new sheep netting with associated gates.
- **Levy ‘Living System Fund’ grant:** A £100,000 one year grant “to accelerate the ecological regeneration of one of Europe’s largest city farms to position the unique 89-acre site as a leading showcase for agro ecological farming in London”. Workstreams comprise an ecological baseline, ecology work, hydrology enhancements and consideration of agroforestry. It is hoped that the relationship with Levy, a subsidiary of the Compass Group, will extend beyond one year.

- **Esmee Fairbairn grant:** A £50,000 approximately one year grant to develop a strategy and business plan that works for the short, medium and long-term for the farm, our tenants and the community, together with a full ecological baseline from which to build from and that demonstrates ecological impact alongside food production. The grant also aims to strengthen our legal structure and governance framework and promote community links.

The Farm and Conservation Manager role will be central to delivering these agreements and grants, working in collaboration with the trustees, staff, volunteers and community.

4. The Role: Farm and Conservation Manager

The purpose of the role is to lead the day-to-day management, ecological stewardship, livestock care, staff management, volunteer coordination and delivery of the agreements and grants entered into by the Trust. It is a visible leadership role combining practical farming, ecological regeneration, compliance, community engagement, and project delivery.

The key responsibilities comprise (refer to the Job Description):

- Livestock management
- Conservation and land stewardship
- Compliance, safety & record keeping
- Staff and volunteer leadership
- Education and community support
- Events and public engagement support
- Delivery of grants/agreements: delivering the agreements and grants set out above, working in collaboration with the trustees, staff, volunteers and community.
- Work with trustees and staff to ensure the farm's digital profile effectively represents our mission, activities and impact.
- Provide a consistent and positive public presence for the farm, engaging with visitors and external stakeholders."
- Collaborate working (including Sitopia, Eltham Sheds, Natural England, RPA, DEFRA, local authorities, and sector bodies)
- Financial & operational management, working with the responsible Trustee (Treasurer)

Day to day work typically comprises directing a small group of volunteers (typically 4 to 6 people) to carry out routine feeding and cleaning, manage the animals, and then to direct farm improvements and maintenance, such as the work required under the CS Capital Grant. The manager is supported on 3 days a week by a farming team leader (who acts as an assistant farm manager) who often covers for the farm manager during holidays, events and lambing.

Close liaison with the Education Officer and the 'education volunteers' is required as schools and community groups visit the farm and use the education building on most days.

The manager leaves details notes for the weekends that list jobs to do (beyond routine feeding/cleaning) or concerns to be aware of. A Trustee meeting is held in the evening (online and at the farm) every month or two for which a short report is required and attendance is expected.

The farm leases land/buildings to the following valued organisations/businesses:

- Sitopia Farm (a Community Interest Company) lease 2 acres of land and also the 'old café building'. They have 4 staff who carry out the horticulture on the land and then distribute vegetable boxes and flowers from the building. Their role to educate people about food production strongly aligns with the farm's mission.
- Eltham Sheds (associated with menssheds.org.uk) is a community based woodworking project, dedicated in supporting man and women over the age of 50, to staying active, creative and socially connected. The group operate in one part of a barn rent free, but with an obligation to do work for the farm (ie signage, children activity equipment, painting) at the

direction of the manager. They have only operated at the farm for the last year, but have proved to be a valuable addition to the community.

- Iron Fighters ([Iron Fighters](#)), run by blacksmith Steve Capper, has operated from rented land and buildings near the farmyard for many years and is often invaluable when blacksmithing work is required on the farm.”

Success in this role will mean maintaining a confident, motivated and well supported team of staff and volunteers who feel valued, informed and able to contribute meaningfully to the farm’s work. You will have developed and be delivering a clear, seasonal programme of activity for livestock, land management and conservation, including forward planning for breeding, purchasing and sales. You will be contributing actively to the Trust’s emerging strategy and programme of ecological regeneration, ensuring that day to day operations align with the ambitions of the Higher Tier, Capital, Levy and Esmée Fairbairn grants. You will maintain close oversight of costs and income opportunities, particularly around produce sales and events, and provide trustees with reliable operational insight, plans and reports to support strategic decision making. A key part of this strategic work will involve reviewing staffing capacity and working arrangements to ensure they are fit for purpose, resilient and aligned with the farm’s long term direction. You will also play an important role in raising the profile of the farm—helping to promote its work, values and impact so that more people locally and nationally understand and engage with what we do. Above all, you will have helped create a calm, organised and purposeful working environment in which people, animals and habitats can thrive. We realise this is no small task—but then again, neither is the potential of the farm.

5. Person Specification

Refer to the separate Person Specification for this role

6. What We Offer

- Salary range: £36,000 to £45,000 (depending upon experience).
- Hours of work: normally 37.5 hours a week, subject to the demands of a working farm.
- Pension: Employee contribution is 5% of qualifying earnings. The Farm will contribute 3% of your qualifying earnings.
- Annual leave: 33 days per holiday year (April to March), including bank holidays.
- Training and development: As required
- Opportunities to shape ecological regeneration
- A working farm in London with an extensive volunteer base and loyal longstanding staff
- The potential to promote the profile for both yourself and the farm within the farming and food industry.

The appointment will be subject to a three month probationary period

7. The Team You Will Join

There are currently 15 Trustees of the charity who are elected from the approximately 300 members of the Trust annually. Most of the Trustees also volunteer on the farm.

There are 5 staff members in total (including this position), most of whom are part-time and who have been with the farm more than 10 years. The existing organisation structure comprises a Board of Trustees (Directors) comprising 15 people. The Trust employ 5 staff, all of who have been with the farm more than ten years, and who comprise:

- Manager (the Farm and Conservation Manager – this position – full time

- Farming team leader (3 days/week, generally Wednesday to Friday)
- Education Officer (4 days/week, Monday and Wednesday to Friday)
- Housekeeper/cleaner (2hrs/day every weekday)
- Young farmers leader (Saturdays)

The manager currently has line management responsibility for these staff.

Although staff usually work weekdays and Trustees support weekend operations, the realities of farm life mean that staff and volunteers often work flexibly during key periods such as lambing and events. The strategic work described above will include a review of these arrangements.

We generally have over 100 volunteers supporting the farm working either as farm volunteers or as education or administrative volunteers reporting to the Education Officer, who currently reports to the farm manager.

The original 2 storey 1910 farm house is adjacent to the entrance of the farm; the first floor is rented out as a private flat, but the ground floor comprises four main rooms acting as an education office, farm manager's office, general office and store, and kitchen. However, those involved with farming generally congregate in a 'mess room' petitioned off from one of the animal barns with farm supplied tea, coffee and biscuits.

8. How to Apply and recruitment process

Please submit the application comprising your curriculum vitae and a cover letter setting out why you believe you would be suitable for this role to the chair@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org and at least two References that we can contact after an offer of employment.

The deadline for applications is 1700hrs on Monday 17th August.

For shortlisted applicants, the panel Interviews will be held in either late August or early September, with a practical assessment held on the same day.

Please contact Dai (David.jones@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org) after the 27th July to arrange an informal conversation either over the phone or as part of a pre-visit. Please book any proposed visit by emailing admin@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org using the title 'Farm and Conservation Manager advert - visit' and suggest dates/times for us to consider.

Any offer of employment will be dependent upon satisfactory references and DBS checks

9. Policies and Safeguarding

The Woodlands Farm Trust is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for all visitors, volunteers, staff and young people. All staff are expected to uphold the highest standards of safeguarding. We value and promote equality, diversity and inclusion across all aspects of our work, and we welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and lived experiences.