



Head of Improving Rivers

Job Description

Salary:	£55,000 to £60,000 per annum
Band:	Senior Leadership Team
Contract length:	Permanent - 35 hours per week, full time. Hybrid working
Location:	London-based, primarily Guildhall (EC2V 7HH) and Bow Lock (E3 3JY), with work across Thames21 project locations
Responsible to:	Chief Executive
Responsible for:	Improving Rivers Managers and associated staff.

About Thames21:

Thames21 is an environmental charity which works across London and the Thames Basin to deliver high-impact nature-based solutions to the climate and biodiversity crisis by restoring rivers, whilst also connecting communities to their local green-blue spaces and inspiring long-term stewardship of them.

Diversity at Thames21

Thames21 is committed to building a diverse and inclusive organisation that reflects the communities we serve across London and the Thames Basin. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, cultures, and lived experiences.

Purpose of the role

Lead and grow Thames21's Improving Rivers Team to deliver high-quality river restoration, catchment management and environmental evidence programmes, while contributing to organisational growth and strategic partnerships.

Key relationships

Chief Executive and Senior Management Team, Improving Rivers Managers, Finance, Fundraising/Partnerships, external partners including the Environment Agency, water companies, local authorities, GLA and mayoral bodies, academic partners, environmental NGOs and funders.

Main duties and responsibilities

1) Strategic leadership & portfolio growth

- Lead the strategic development of the Improving Rivers portfolio, setting clear objectives and outcomes aligned to Thames21's plan (2023–2028).
- As a member of the Senior Management Team, contribute to organisational strategy, financial sustainability, risk management and culture across Thames21.
- Translate strategy into actionable delivery plans with measurable targets and milestones.
- Embed effective monitoring & evaluation across projects and programmes to evidence impact and inform decision-making.

- Contributing to organisational risk management and business planning.
- Champion innovation and the use of environmental/nature finance mechanisms where appropriate to scale delivery.

2) Programme oversight, quality & compliance

- Direct and support Improving Rivers Managers to deliver a coherent programme of work across river restoration, evidence, and catchment partnerships.
- Enable cross-team collaboration (with the Engagement & Learning Team and others) to maximise multiple benefits for people and nature.
- Ensure robust project governance, risk management and reporting. Oversee Health & Safety and CDM compliance and safe systems of work.
- Act as one of the Duty Senior Managers in the weekend cover rota
- Establish and maintain portfolio measurement indices and ensure timely data entry into Thames21 platforms.

3) People leadership & culture

- Lead, motivate and develop Improving Rivers Managers; set clear objectives, undertake regular 1:1s, appraisals and PDPs.
- Foster an inclusive, collaborative and high-performance culture. Ensure staff wellbeing and professional development.
- Plan and chair IR team and managers' meetings. Maintain effective internal communications and knowledge-sharing (e.g., SharePoint).

4) Finance, funding & organisational development

- Hold delegated authority for budget setting and expenditure sign-off within the portfolio. Ensure accurate financial planning, management and reporting.
- Support development of high-quality bids and funding agreements (statutory, partnership and philanthropic), including large strategic bids and environmental market opportunities by providing technical expertise, programme design and partner engagement.
- Work with Finance and Fundraising to strengthen controls, update relevant policies/processes, and ensure audit-ready documentation.
- Contribute to whole-organisation systems, policies and processes that support effective delivery and financial resilience.
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6) External relations & advocacy

- Represent Thames21 with senior stakeholders (e.g., Environment Agency, water companies, GLA/mayoral teams, local authorities, eNGOs, funders, corporate partners and the Rivers Trust).
- Build and steward strategic partnerships and alliances that enable delivery at scale and unlock new funding and policy influence.
- Act as a confident spokesperson for Thames21 when required.

7) Reporting, governance & data

- Ensure timely and accurate portfolio reporting for SMT and Board, including dashboards/infographics and risk register updates.
- Promote effective use of organisational systems and data within the team to improve efficiency and data quality.

Key performance indicators (portfolio-level)

- Water quality - monitoring & investigation: improved evidence base and prioritisation of pollution sources for resolution.
- Improving water quality - implementation of evidence-based actions at catchment scale.
- Flows - natural flood management outcomes and strengthened drought/low-flow resilience.
- River/wetland enhancement, restoration & connectivity - ecological condition and connectivity improved.
- Catchment-based approach - strengthened hosting and partnership effectiveness.

Other Duties

This job description cannot cover every issue or task that may arise within Thames21. At various times the post-holder will be directed to carry out other reasonable duties in support of other Thames21 activities that are consistent with those in this Job Description.

Person Specification

Knowledge, skills and competencies:	Essential	Desirable	Assessed by
Honours degree (or equivalent experience) in a relevant subject.	✓		Application
Deep understanding of river ecosystems, pressures and scalable solutions.	✓		Application & interview
Proven strategic and systematic programme management capability.	✓		Application & interview
Ability to motivate people and lead multidisciplinary teams and partnerships.	✓		Application & interview
Knowledge of stakeholder objectives and drivers (EA, water companies, local authorities, private sector, NGOs).	✓		Application & interview
Knowledge of sources of funds and methods of fundraising	✓		Application & interview
Strong financial acumen; budget setting, controls and reporting.	✓		Application & interview
Excellent communication – presentations, reports and media handling; confident external representation.	✓		Application & interview
High level of IT literacy and data-driven decision-making.	✓		Application & interview
Experience of environmental/nature finance mechanisms and investment-readiness.		✓	Application & interview
Experience of research/fieldwork related to water environments and relevant technical terminology.		✓	Application & interview
Track record of securing and delivering large multi-partner programmes.		✓	Application & interview
Experience of:	Essential	Desirable	Assessed by
Leading multi-sector partnerships to deliver healthier rivers.	✓		Application & Interview
Managing, motivating and enhancing performance of managers and teams.	✓		Application & Interview
Designing and delivering projects/programmes that improve river health.	✓		Application & interview

Developing successful funding bids and managing contracts and funder relationships.	✓		Application & interview
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Additional Information

- The role may require occasional evening and weekend work. Travel across London and the Thames Basin as needed.
- 25 days annual leave (plus public holidays) and office closure between Christmas and New Year; flexitime/TOIL.
- Auto-enrolment workplace pension with NEST with 8% employer contribution
- Laptop and mobile phone for company use; season-ticket/bike loan (interest-free).
- 24/7 access to our employee assistance programme.

For more information on Thames21, please visit our website at www.thames21.org.uk.

Please email your CV, as an expression of interest to Chris Coode at chris.coode@thames21.org.uk, by no later than **5pm on Friday 9th October 2026**. Please mark the reference (**HIR0926**) in the subject box of your email.

We appreciate the time you will have taken to apply to this role, and we do appreciate that it is disconcerting when you don't hear back from a role you have applied for. However, due to the high number of applications we expect to receive, we are unable to respond to or give feedback on individual applications, but we do want to be able to manage expectations. Therefore, if you do not hear from us within 4 weeks of the closing date, please assume that your application has not been successful on this occasion.