



Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust

Job Description – Hospitality Manager

Job Title: Hospitality Manager

Term: Full-time, fixed term 5 years (with the possibility of extension)

Probationary period: 1 year

Background

Fair Isle is a small (approx. 5 x 3 km), remote island that lies approximately halfway between Orkney and mainland Shetland in northern Scotland. The island is owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and is famous for its spectacular coastal scenery, internationally important seabird populations, diverse marine and archaeological heritage, and as a thriving centre for local arts and crafts. Fair Isle is also well known for its history of recording rare vagrant birds to the UK.

There is a vibrant local community of around 55 residents and the island has a primary school, a shop and a resident nurse. Fair Isle is served by regular transport links (six days per week in summer) to mainland Shetland, by sea and air.

Fair Isle Bird Observatory (FIBO) is owned and run by Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust, an independent, non-profit-making charity. FIBO was established in 1948 by the eminent Scottish ornithologist George Waterston. Its original aims – to carry out ornithological studies and research, to provide accommodation, interpretation and education for visitors, and to assist the economic well-being of the island – remain among its core objectives today.

The Observatory has recently been completely rebuilt, and is due to be ready for re-opening in early 2025. The Observatory will provide full board en-suite accommodation and facilities for up to 35 visitors, primarily through the season of April to early November, in addition to seasonal staff and visiting researchers. Core staff comprise the Hospitality Manager and a Head of Ornithology. Seasonal staff comprise 4–5 hospitality staff (including a cook, an assistant cook and general domestic assistants) to provide a consistently high standard of food and accommodation, and 1-2 ornithological staff and a ranger (with responsibility for providing visitor interpretation).

The Hospitality Manager and the Head of Ornithology are jointly responsible for the successful day-to-day operation of all Observatory functions, including accommodation and other visitor services and the ornithological work. The Hospitality Manager oversees all visitor and accommodation matters and staff employed in relation to these aspects, while the Head of Ornithology coordinates the ornithological work and related staff (including the ranger). Both have major roles in engaging with staff, islanders and visitors. These are challenging and responsible posts, requiring considerable initiative, dedication and autonomy. They provide a unique opportunity to live and work in a setting of outstanding natural beauty, and exciting possibilities to spearhead the continuing development of a world-famous ornithological research station and visitor facility.

We are now accepting applications for the Hospitality Manager and Head of Ornithology positions, aiming to hire new personnel to run the new Fair Isle Bird Observatory for the 2025 season onwards.

We welcome applications from couples/partnerships who can jointly undertake the two roles, and also from individual applicants who can undertake one role or the other (the provided accommodation can be operated as one unit or two self-contained flats, and is family-friendly). Appointments to each role will be made with consideration for appropriate skills and experience for each specific role, and also for compatibility with appointments to other roles.

Main duties of the Hospitality Manager

The Hospitality Manager role is a prominent and responsible one, and the post-holder will be the main face of the visitor facility. The main duties are:

1. To work alongside the Board of Directors to envision, implement, further develop and promote the work of Fair Isle Bird Observatory as a premier tourism and hospitality venue that is also in the unique position of leading ornithological research. To be creative and innovative, suggesting new ideas, processes and activities that ensure the success of FIBO as a business.
2. To be in overall charge of hospitality, accommodation and catering at the Observatory and to maintain and develop these activities to reach the highest possible standards of quality and reliability within budgetary constraints. To ensure that bed nights and revenue targets are achieved and advise the Finance Director promptly if it appears likely these may not be met.
3. To manage, inspire, motivate and empower the hospitality team to ensure the smooth, safe and efficient running of the hospitality facilities, including accommodation, catering, public spaces and all associated activities. To take overall responsibility for the visitor experience, ensuring the hospitality team works efficiently and smoothly.
4. To engage with and assist all visitors to the Observatory, ensuring that they receive a warm welcome and that their stay is in all respects enjoyable and satisfying. To ensure that hospitality staff and visitors do likewise. To ensure that all visitors to the Observatory are picked up and dropped off at the airstrip or the pier, welcomed and informed on the Observatory's facilities, schedules and activities.
5. To be responsible for day-to-day financial management and administration of the hospitality operations including budgeting, ordering and updating any financial or other relevant systems. To make the Finance Director aware of any problems in securing prompt payment of money owed to FIBO.
6. To liaise with and report regularly to the Board of Directors on a range of metrics, including visitor numbers, financial results and other key indicators, along with raising any operational issues in a timely manner.
7. To support activities and working objectives of the Head of Ornithology, with joint responsibility to ensure that the Observatory is run on sound 'value-for-money' principles.
8. To contribute to making FIBO sustainable, minimising waste, and implementing actions towards net zero as far as is feasible within the constraints of the remote island location.
9. To co-ordinate and manage advertising and marketing of the Observatory accommodation, organise and run a reliable and efficient booking system, respond rapidly to enquiries, and advise on and assist with travel bookings where necessary.

10. To ensure that all rooms, facilities and furnishings are maintained to a high standard. To arrange and coordinate a maintenance strategy and organising replacements where required.
11. To be responsible for the timely appointment and relevant training of seasonal staff, and ensure the career development opportunities of the post-holders are maximised.
12. To set up and maintain operating rotas, including time off and holiday schedules which adhere to legal employment regulation. To bring in short-term staff or other assistance as required to support the operation during busy periods.
13. To maintain good relations with the islanders, and to be a committed and integral member of the island community including attendance at Fair Isle community (and similar) meetings to represent the views of FIBOT.
14. To facilitate accommodation requirements from external partners on and off-island (e.g. maintenance contractors, and other Fair Isle visitor groups).
15. To solicit, compile and, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, act on feedback from visitors to continue to improve the visitor experience and inform future developments.
16. To develop and manage the shop and bar facilities, including sourcing and ordering stock, liaising with local producers to include a range of Fair Isle items, and organising the bar rota. To obtain and comply with all license requirements under the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005.
17. To overseeing the planning and organising, in conjunction with the ranger, a range of events e.g. author talks, guided walks, knitwear demonstrations etc.
18. To jointly ensure, with the Head of Ornithology, the implementation of FIBOT's Health, Safety and Environment policies as set out in the Safety Management System.
19. To develop and administer fund raising efforts, including membership of the 'Friends of Fair Isle' scheme.
20. To work flexibly with a positive problem-solving attitude, adapting to undertake maintenance, hospitality, catering, cleaning, communications, community and other activities that may unexpectedly arise and require rapid attention within the context of an isolated island location.

The Hospitality Manager will report to:

The Chairman of Fair Isle Bird Observatory Trust.

Reporting to the Hospitality Manager:

Seasonal hospitality staff, typically including a cook, an assistant cook and 2-3 domestic assistants.

Salary and terms of employment

The starting salary will be within the range £20,000 - £24,000 per annum, according to qualifications and experience. In addition to the salary, a generous package of benefits is included, consisting of pension contribution, newly built self-contained accommodation within the Observatory, food (a monthly food allowance will be paid November – March, when the Observatory is not open to visitors) and utilities.

Five weeks of paid holiday are due per year, of which not more than one week may be taken while the Observatory is open (April to October inclusive). The Hospitality Manager is expected to be resident on Fair Isle throughout the year, except for holidays, since Observatory work continues year-round.

Working hours must be flexible and, especially during the peak visitor seasons, can be considerable and sometimes unpredictable. The post-holder should liaise with the Chairman to ensure sufficient and appropriate time off is taken within and outside the peak periods.

The contract is subject to a probationary period of one year, with the expectation that the ongoing appointment will be confirmed by both employer and employee following a successful performance review after nine months (or at another suitable timepoint as decided by the Board of Directors).

Person Specification – Hospitality Manager

	Essential	Desirable
Education/qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitality, business administration or similar qualification, or equivalent experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced hospitality, management or similar qualification.
Experience, training and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to conceptualise and enact a vision for the development of FIBO as a world class visitor facility. • Experience of working in a visitor attraction, ideally including a hospitality/ catering/ guest house/ hotel service. • Ability to lead a team including recruitment and effective line and performance management of staff, and team motivation and development. • Ability to manage a budget and being held accountable for income targets and cost control, as well as spotting and enacting opportunities to increase revenue. • Demonstrated ability to work well as part of a team, and manage a range of external relationships and partnerships. • Ability to plan and manage own workload, prioritising daily whilst also anticipating the future. • Sufficient computing skills to maintain transparent FIBO digital correspondence and archives including e-mail, word-processing, databases and spreadsheets. • Good working knowledge of relevant health and safety regulations for all hospitality related functions, such as risk assessments and willingness to lead delivery in a FIBO context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience of catering, including a variety of dietary requirements. • Experience of marketing. • Experience of using publishing and presentation computer packages. • Experience of human resource management.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to work effectively with the public, customer, community and key service providers to maintain and develop excellent working relationships and ensure high quality customer service. • Experience of implementing Safeguarding procedures or willingness to train. • Qualified first aider, or willingness to train. • Full driving licence. 	
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Essential personal qualities and abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to live and work harmoniously as part of a small community in a remote setting, and to contribute to the successful functioning of that community. • Outstanding sense of responsibility to self, staff, visitors and islanders. • Excellent communication skills, coupled with a willingness to interact with and inform all visitors to Fair Isle. • Ability and willingness to work harmoniously and collaboratively with Directors and close colleagues. • Ability to learn new skills (incorporating problem-solving and troubleshooting), and to work effectively in unpredictable circumstances. • Ability to work with a 'hands on' approach, and attend to necessary tasks and assist colleagues as necessary. • Enthusiasm to learn about Fair Isle's social, cultural and natural history and convey knowledge to visitors. • Willingness to work long and variable hours between April and November, and to interact with staff and visitors frequently.
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Timetable for applications and appointments

Application deadline: 11th December 2024

Interviews: Week starting 8th January 2025 (dates to be confirmed)

Start date: Late winter / early spring 2025

Applicants should submit:

- 1) an up-to-date CV**
- 2) a cover letter explaining their motivation for the job and their suitability for the essential and desirable criteria**
- 3) the contact details (name, email address and ideally phone number) of at least three independent referees who can comment on professional and personal suitability for the role**

If you have any queries or wish to discuss the post further prior to submitting an application, please contact: vacancies@fairislebirdobs.co.uk

Further information

The following websites may be helpful sources of further information:

Fair Isle Bird Observatory: www.fairislebirdobs.co.uk

The Fair Isle community: www.fairisle.org.uk

Shetland: www.shetland.org

JNCC seabird monitoring programme: <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/seabird-monitoring-programme/>

British Birds Rarities Committee: www.bbrc.org.uk

British Trust for Ornithology: www.bto.org

NatureScot Ranger Service:

<https://www.nature.scot/naturescot-ranger-services-scotland-achievements-glance>

National Trust for Scotland: www.nts.org.uk