



### **Job Description:**

Market Gardener– Hands of Hope Charity

Competitive Salary based on experience

Location(s): Peasmarsh and Hawkhurst

Full Time

Salary: £25,000 per annum – OTE up to £35K

---

### **Background**

Hands of Hope are a community based charity operating in Rother, Hastings and West Kent. Our goal is create a Community Hub from which we will use growing and cooking to improve people’s emotional well-being, increase their physical activity and educate the community on the important of good nutrition. We want to reconnect people with where their food comes from, teach them how to grow and cook healthy, nutritious food and using this process to ultimately tackle some of the biggest health and social issues facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century including Childhood Obesity, Rural Isolation, Loneliness, Dementia and Mental Health.

Currently farming 4 acres of Soil Association accredited land in Peasmarsh where we have established a “market garden” we have now acquired a derelict walled kitchen garden and 18 adjoining acres in Hawkhurst, West Kent, which will be restored, regenerated & developed as an innovative “Community Hub” for the whole region.

This is an exciting project that will produce heritage, organic fruit and vegetables within the restored 2 acre walled kitchen garden and include a Victorian Glass House, a Cooking School and Training room. As well as a valuable education resource centre, the site will support community projects and workshops, employment engagement activities, volunteering and community events.

### **This new facility will be:**

- A place to grow
- A place to learn e.g. schools projects, growing programmes, cookery club, workshops/events, sustainable gardening, healthy eating, etc
- A place for nature e.g. wild areas, biodiversity, bees, pond, wildflower meadow
- A place for children – Schools projects, nature play, forest school,
- A place for specialist groups focusing on loneliness, mental health, dementia,
- A place to access fresh affordable *in season* and organic produce
- A place to feel connected e.g. welcoming, inclusive, a sense of community, vibrancy and energy where there is always something happening
- A place to connect with each other and with nature
- A place that is sustainable offering a valuable legacy to future generations

Our goal is to make the Community Hub self sufficient and part of this will include a number of commercial income streams such as Growing Courses, Plug-Plants, Veg Box Scheme as well as supplying vegetables to local catering businesses.

### **Our Mission**

“To Inspire Children, Families and Adults to lead and sustain fitter, healthier and happier lives by increasing their access and knowledge of Healthy Food, Food Growing and Cooking”

### **Purpose**

There are multiple elements to this post:

- To manage existing 1.5 acre Fruit & Vegetable garden in Peasmarsh;
- To plan and develop the 3 acre growing space at our new site in Hawkhurst, currently in development, as well as managing large glass houses;
- To help set up and develop commercial activities as set out above;
- To develop and deliver “Growing Programmes” both at Peasmarsh and at Hawkhurst as well as managing community outreach programmes with schools etc

### **Key Responsibilities**

We are seeking a highly motivated, enthusiastic and experienced Commercial Market Gardener to lead this project. Working alongside the current Trustees and a team of dedicated Volunteers your primary responsibility will be the day-to-day management of Hope Farm in Peasmarsh and “The Community Hub”, in Hawkhurst.

Initially, your responsibilities will revolve around the management of the current site in Peasmarsh including developing planting plans, crop rotations, purchasing seeds etc for both sites, as well as establishing Volunteer Rotas, Apprenticeship Programmes, Community Outreach Programmes and Commercial Schemes.

As the development of the “Community Hub” in West Kent progresses, there will be scope for the newly appointed Commercial Market Gardener to make decisions about the final layout and design of the Walled Kitchen Garden as well as establishing growing areas to generate activity, during the development phase.

The successful candidate will need to be enthusiastic and highly motivated. A hands-on approach to the job will be essential and some morning, evening and weekend working may sometimes be required, as will work in all weathers. A commitment to organic growing and sustainable food production are essential, as is an interest in using Growing and Cooking to combat social and health issues such as childhood obesity, loneliness and social isolation.

### **Areas of responsibility:**

#### **Specific duties**

- Prepare annual sowing plan for existing 2 acre site in Peasmarsh and available glasshouse space in Hawkhurst, optimising available space & yield in line with Charities output requirements, demonstrating good crop rotation;

- Advise on seeds/plug plants required – where possible using heritage seeds;
- Advise on materials required; i.e. Compost, Fencing, Netting, Liquid Feed etc;
- Establish good rotational compost system and manage good soil health;
- Where possible, work to organic principles, whilst minimising waste;
- In line with Trustees and Landscape architects, plan and develop walled kitchen garden in Hawkhurst as well as large glass houses;
- Identify and spec' out kit required; i.e. Irrigation System, Vegetable Washing System; Vegetable Prepping System, Benches etc;
- Work with team to plan annual crops based on projected need, providing year round supply;
- Manage and source Volunteers and develop engaging Volunteer Programmes
- Working alongside Trustees, plan and develop Growing Programmes both on site and in the community;
- Create and maintain Health and Safety Standards;
- Provide supportive and productive welcoming environment for volunteers and visitors;
- To work with the current Trustees and Volunteers to ensure The Wall Kitchen Garden provides suitable educational and training opportunities for apprentices, volunteers & users;
- To work alongside the current Trustees to develop a vegetable box scheme, to deliver fresh produce locally throughout Rother, Hastings & West Kent;
- To ensure the market garden meets the requirements set out by the Soil Association for organic certification and ensure that all necessary records are kept as evidence of this;
- To provide day-to-day supervision of a horticultural apprentice and Volunteers;
- To work alongside existing projects based at Hope Farm and The Wall ensuring a holistic approach to the Farm's future development and supporting a move towards increased public opening;
- To work with the Trustee in charge of Funding to bid for funding and secure sponsorship, to enable further investment in both sites;
- To ensure the site's Sustainability Policy and Hands of Hope's Health and Safety Policy, and Equality and Diversity Policy, and are adhered to at all times by those working within the site(s);
- Any other reasonable duties of a comparable nature as required by the current Charity Chair and Trustees.

## **Person Specification:**

We want the post holder to be able to demonstrate the following competences to a high level and want to use these to the full in their work. This is more important than having a great deal of direct experience of the job content, and we will be looking for evidence of all the following key competences during the selection process, if you are shortlisted.

- Personal effectiveness, organisation and delivery of results
- Proactivity, Initiative and Problem Solving
- Self development and Expertise
- Managing self and relationships with others (including team working and co-operation)
- Communication
- Student/Customer focus & managing diversity
- Maintaining and using systems and processes (including IT)
- Analysing and interpreting written and numerical information

## **Previous Experience:**

- A horticultural qualification at minimum level 3, or demonstrable equivalent experience gained in the workplace;
- Proven experience of small scale commercial growing, ideally organically;
- Proven project management skills, working in partnership with other organisations and delivering projects on time and on budget;
- Experience of working with a diverse customer base including, for example: charities, community groups, schools, members of the public, local government agencies, and food retailers;
- Experience of running, or being involved in the running of, a box scheme and/or market stall, selling to local retailers and/or working with wholesalers;
- Experience of managing community projects and/or volunteer programmes, fundraising and/or farming;
- Experience of working in a garden visitor attraction, college or estate garden/National Trust environment.
- Specialist knowledge and job requirements

## **Specialist knowledge and job requirements**

- A good general education with excellent communication and financial skills to enable the post holder to manage the site(s) in a financially sustainable way;

- A demonstrable interest in organic farming, food production and horticulture, and a commitment to environmental sustainability;
- The ability to assist in the production and management of a costed business plan for the market garden(s) and box scheme and to monitor delivery against this;
- Horticultural skills (including use of relevant hand tools and machinery) or a willingness to develop and acquire such skills;
- A commitment to engaging with the community and in working with the current Trustees to create a unique facility at “The Wall” which has: (i) financially self-sustaining and viable; (ii) promotes and encourages food production and the appreciation of locally produced food both to the public and the food sector; (iii) creates a unique visitor centre, utilising the site and its resources.
- The skills (or a willingness to develop the skills) needed to maintain records and returns as required by national legislation and the Farm’s funders and certification bodies (eg Defra, Natural England and the Soil Association);
- Enthusiasm to develop the Farm’s profile regionally by engaging with local, regional and national food networks and related organisations;
- Good IT skills, to enable electronic record keeping;
- A UK driving licence and willingness to qualify to drive agricultural and related specialist equipment if required;
- An understanding of, and commitment to, Diversity and Equality as it applies to a supportive service and in the workplace;
- An understanding of safeguarding and a commitment to creating a safe learning environment with the site(s);
- A commitment to inclusive and comprehensive educational provision;
- A commitment to the growing of traditional and heritage crop varieties, to seed saving, and the growing of forage and feed crops;
- Experience of fundraising and/or securing sponsorship from both private and non-governmental funders and sponsors;
- Good understanding of renewable energy and sustainable horticultural practices (eg rainwater harvesting) and how these technologies may be applied in the market garden.