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**Head of Capital Projects**

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| **Job grade** | **7** | **Reports to** | **Director of Estate Transformation** |
| **Directorate** | **Estate Transformation** | **Function** | **Capital Projects** |
| **Contract** | **Permanent** | **Location** | **Regent’s Park** |

**Responsibility for resources**

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| **Direct line reports** | **1** | **Responsibility for other resources** | **None** |
| **Financial resources** | **Project portfolio of £6m-£9m pa.** |

**Our vision and mission**

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is an international conservation charity, driven by science, working to restore wildlife in the UK and around the world. Our vision is a world where wildlife thrives and every role, every person in every corner of ZSL has one thing in common – we are all conservationists, and passionate about restoring wildlife.

**Purpose of the role**

ZSL has developed an ambitious long-term estates masterplan and while the full programme is aspirational and contingent on fundraising and strategic partnerships, we are actively shaping and enabling early-phase projects aligned to our institutional priorities. These include new animal habitats, improved visitor experiences, energy and water infrastructure upgrades, and new scientific and operational facilities.

The Head of Capital Projects will lead the delivery of capital projects across both London Zoo and Whipsnade Zoo, managing an annual programme valued between £6m–£9m. Working closely with colleagues across Conservation, Visitor Operations, Animal Care, Facilities Management and Fundraising, the postholder will ensure that all projects are effectively scoped, prioritised and delivered to high professional standards. This includes setting realistic budgets, timelines and objectives in collaboration with internal teams, and ensuring compliance with statutory obligations, regulatory standards, and ZSL policies. The role is also responsible for embedding best-practice governance and project management processes to support consistent, high-quality delivery.

This is a role for an experienced capital programme leader who thrives in a complex, mission-led environment and delivery requires diplomacy, persistence and creative problem-solving.

**Key responsibilities**

**Strategic leadership**

* Provide strategic and operational leadership for the delivery of ZSL’s capital programme, in alignment with the Estates Transformation guiding principles and organisational strategy.
* Champion sustainable design and lead initiatives that support ZSL’s commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2035, including the integration of whole-life cost and carbon analysis into project planning and appraisal.
* Drive value for money across the capital portfolio by embedding robust project controls, procurement strategies, and post-occupancy evaluation processes.
* Collaborate with the Energy and Sustainability Manager to ensure upcoming projects contribute meaningfully to ZSL’s net zero roadmap.
* Promote a joined-up approach across capital delivery and facilities management, ensuring life cycle costing principles are embedded in project scope and specification.
* Lead and motivate internal and external teams, providing direct support and performance oversight to Senior Project Managers, consultants and contractors to ensure quality, accountability and delivery to programme.

**Capital projects**

* Provide strategic leadership for the implementation of ZSL’s long-term estate masterplans, supporting a phased capital programme with a high-value pipeline over the next decade.
* Oversee the annual delivery of a capital programme valued between £6m and £9m, ensuring projects are planned and delivered from RIBA Stage 2 through to post-occupancy review in line with ZSL’s strategic priorities and professional standards.
* Maintain and manage the integrated capital programme across both London and Whipsnade Zoos, ensuring sequencing of works minimises disruption to operations, animal welfare and the visitor experience.
* Own and manage the capital project risk register, escalating high-level risks into the departmental and organisational risk frameworks.
* Oversee handover planning and execution, ensuring effective transitions between capital delivery and operations, including coordination of soft landings, training, commissioning and stakeholder sign-off.

**Stakeholder management**

* Build trusted relationships with senior internal stakeholders and enabling functions (HR, Legal, Finance, Procurement and Comms) to support the effective planning and execution of projects.
* Act as the principal liaison with external stakeholders including major donors, funders, trustees, statutory authorities and landlords, representing ZSL’s capital programme with professionalism and clarity.
* Serve as the key internal consultee on planning matters, lease deeds, and legal covenants, working closely with local authorities to ensure compliance and alignment with planning policy.

**Values and behaviours for people management**

* **Collaborative:** creates an engaging environment where people feel comfortable asking for help or support
* **Impactful:** delivers results on time and to the agreed standards
* **Inclusive:** makes decisions that promote transparency and inclusion
* **Innovative:** is forward thinking and able to see the broader picture when planning and organising work

**Person Specification**

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| Experience |

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| Essential | * Substantial experience delivering capital projects in complex, operational or heritage environments (e.g. cultural institutions, zoos, education, or public realm) * Proven ability to deliver in low project maturity environments where systems and governance are still developing * Strong leadership experience, including the ability to coach, influence, and build team capability across diverse disciplines and locations * Exceptional stakeholder management and negotiation skills, including engagement with senior internal and external stakeholders * Demonstrable experience introducing new governance, systems and delivery frameworks * Strong understanding of design and construction processes and contractual frameworks, including NEC or JCT * Passion for ZSL’s mission and a pragmatic approach to delivery in resource-constrained environments * Familiarity with Health & Safety management responsibilities within capital delivery |
| Desirable | * Experience of liaising with local authorities |

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| Knowledge and skills |

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| Essential | * Ability to lead and coordinate multiple capital projects simultaneously in a live, operational environment, while balancing competing demands and stakeholder priorities * Highly developed influencing and engagement skills, particularly in non-hierarchical, mission-led organisations * A solutions-focused mindset, with strong judgement and an evidence-based, pragmatic approach to decision-making * Excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to prepare clear and compelling project documentation, reports, and business cases * Strong organisational and time management skills to maintain delivery momentum and coordinate cross-functional teams * A track record of raising professional standards, including the development and rollout of project delivery procedures, policies, or tools * A degree in a design, engineering, surveying, construction or project management discipline is desirable. Equivalent experience and career progression will also be considered. * A professional qualification reflecting the seniority of the role is highly desirable — e.g. RIBA, RICS, CIBSE, APM, ICE, CIOB or other relevant chartership. |
| Desirable | * CSCS card, CDM training and/or Project Management Qualification |

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| Additional requirements |

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| Essential | * This post is a blended role for office and home working; regular travel to Zoo sites will be required. * Strong commitment to creating a culture that lives ZSL values and commitment to safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion. |