



Dorset
Wildlife Trust

Chief Executive

Candidate information pack
September 2026

Welcome

Dear Candidate

Thank you for considering applying for the role of Chief Executive at Dorset Wildlife Trust. We are in the midst of an exciting time. In recent years we have grown our operations so that we now manage 42 nature reserves and work with multiple stakeholders and landowners across the county, all focused on the goal of a wilder Dorset by 2030.

We have made some important land acquisitions in recent years at Wild Woodbury, Lyscombe and Upton Heath all of which contribute significantly to our ability to improve outcomes for wildlife in Dorset. We have multiple projects running at any one time (along with multiple funding schemes) and we are an extremely active organisation. All of this increases our visibility and our opportunity to engage with our local communities. However, it remains the case that Britain is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world with multiple species at risk of extinction, widespread decline in species abundance and much of our habitat is in poor ecological health. Dorset is not immune to these trends and there is a lot we still need to do, and we need to pick up the pace.

Brian Bleese, our widely respected and much-loved Chief Executive will be stepping down from his role after 28 years of service to Dorset Wildlife Trust on 31 March 2027. We are now looking for a new Chief Executive who can lead the charity through its next phase.

This is both an exciting and a complex role. The Chief Executive leads the team at DWT to create a dynamic, ambitious, respected and financially resilient organisation. The Chief Executive is the main public face of the organisation and a significant advocate for conservation and improved wildlife outcomes across the county. They drive the momentum towards creating a wilder Dorset and making space for nature and build and strengthen our connections with partners, supporters and anyone else working towards that vision. Working closely with the Chair and the Trustees, the Chief Executive ensures the smooth running of the Trust.

We are looking for an inspirational and experienced leader who has a strong sense of ambition for the Trust and who has the entrepreneurial flair to create and take opportunities that deliver on our goals, and we need someone with a passion for Dorset's landscape and wildlife.

This pack gives you information on our vision and goals and it outlines what the Chief Executive's responsibilities are. It gives a fuller description of the individual we are looking for. If you think all of this describes you well, then we would be delighted to hear from you.

Thanks for your interest in Dorset Wildlife Trust.



Lisbet Sherlock, Chair of Trustees





Job description

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Job title	Chief Executive
Team	Senior Leadership Team
Reports to	Chair of Trustees
Responsible for	Dorset Wildlife Trust staff and operations
Salary	ca. £75,000

Overall role

The Chief Executive (CE) provides leadership and direction for Dorset Wildlife Trust (the Trust) to create a vibrant, respected and financially stable organisation and to champion and to advocate for nature's recovery. The CE is responsible for all operational activities and financial management, working closely with the Chair and Trustees to ensure the smooth, efficient and safe management of the Trust.

The Chief Executive is the principal ambassador and spokesperson of the Trust and is expected to play a leading role in strengthening relationships with partners, supporters, agencies and other organisations, and to protect and enhance the reputation and influence of the Trust.





Main responsibilities

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Leadership

- Maintain and strengthen the reputation of the Trust as a highly valued and well-run organisation.
- Develop and implement effective strategy, in close collaboration with trustees and senior managers.
- Maintain and develop good relationships with staff, members, supporters, stakeholders and partners, working with them to achieve mutual goals.
- Motivate members, staff, volunteers, stakeholders and the wider community towards the Trust's goals, promoting an ambitious vision for wildlife conservation and the wider environment including by demonstrating a personal commitment to its achievement.
- Sustain a strategic understanding of wildlife conservation policies and practices at local and national levels and, working with the conservation Directors and other staff, use this to inform innovation – especially in the management of reserves and the development of successful grant proposals.
- Working with Trustees and senior managers, maintain a continuing identification and assessment of corporate risks, ensuring their appropriate mitigation.
- Seek and develop innovative ideas and initiatives for nature conservation and the effectiveness of the Trust.





Main responsibilities

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Management

- Provide effective and supportive line management of senior staff and their teams, seeking out and supporting opportunities for developing their expertise and skills.
- Working with trustees and senior managers, cultivate a culture of partnership and team-working throughout the Trust, by motivating and developing people to achieve mutual goals.
- Working with the Senior Leadership Team, create and continually develop a culture that focuses the whole organisation on contributing to successful fundraising through effective engagement with stakeholders and the wider community.
- With advice from the Finance team and other senior managers, develop annual budgets for consideration by trustees that focus resources to achieve value for money and results, as well as ensuring the maintenance of adequate free reserves; review progress against agreed budgets, initiating appropriate remedial actions as may be needed.
- Develop, implement and maintain systems and procedures that ensure the operation of the Trust is effective and compliant with statutory and charities' governance requirements, as interpreted in policies set by trustees.
- Sustain timely, open and honest communications with Trustees, staff, members and volunteers and stakeholders.
- Oversee public statements and communications by the Trust and its staff to ensure that these are congruent with agreed policies and helpful to the Trust's objectives.





Main responsibilities

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Personal attributes and behaviours

- Maintain personal integrity in all circumstances and set the highest standards and principles of behaviour.
- Maintain an open-minded, balanced and approachable management style.

Other duties

The Chief Executive is expected to work flexible hours if required, including some evening and weekend working, with time off in lieu; overnight stays are occasionally required. There is frequent travelling within the county, and south-west and occasionally further afield, for which a driving licence and some use of own vehicle is required.

This post is subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

All staff are expected to:

- Undertake any other duties appropriate to the post;
- Contribute to other Dorset Wildlife Trust activities when required, to deliver the aims of the Strategic Plan;
- Engender a culture of membership recruitment within the team;
- Abide by organisational policies and procedures laid down in the Staff Handbook, including promoting equal opportunities particularly with regard to volunteer work.
- Ensure that Health and Safety policies and procedures are met in all aspects of the role.



Person specification



© Sandra Stalker

Knowledge and Experience

- Senior leadership - preferably in a conservation organisation
- P&L responsibility
- Project Leadership (especially in the conservation sector)
- Income generation
- Grants and awards
- Networking skills - preferably within Dorset
- Budget and financial management
- Forecasting and planning
- Organisational change and transformation
- Experience in the charity/non-profit sector, particularly in relation to working with Chair and Trustees
- Relationship/stakeholder management

Skills

- People-focussed
- Problem solver
- Focus on results
- Collaborative
- Articulate communicator

Personal qualities

- Energetic
- Empathetic and People focused
- Entrepreneurial/innovative
- Adaptable/responsive to unplanned opportunities
- Ambitious for the organisation
- Dedicated to our cause and mission
- Tact and diplomacy
- Personal resilience



How to apply

To apply for the role, please submit a cover letter and completed application form to **recruitment@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk**

The deadline for applications is 5pm on 11 October, with first stage interviews in the week commencing 26 October.

If you wish to have an informal discussion about the role, please contact Brian Bleese, Chief Executive: **chiefexecutive@dorsetwildlifetrust.org.uk**



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