

Chair of Trustee Council Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Appointment Brief | June 2024

The Trustees of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust are seeking a new Chair to replace Mark Street who will retire from this office at the end of his fixed term period at our October 2024 AGM.



Message from the Retiring Chair



After a very rewarding three years as Chair and seven as a Trustee, I am now stepping down.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's CEO, Jo Lewis, appointed in 2023, has overseen the formation of a new Executive Team to lead the implementation of our new strategy to 2030: A Wilder Wiltshire. The Trust has grown significantly over the last few years, developing a reputation for leadership on nature's role in education and wellbeing alongside land management for conservation. Nature-based solutions are a significant new growth area for the Trust, driving investment in nature's recovery beyond our own stunning network of reserves. While we are experiencing significant change as we grow and take up new opportunities, the Trust is financially stable with a strong and experienced team of staff, trustees, volunteers and supporters who all share a passion and commitment to our charity and our work for nature.

The remaining Trustees are looking for a forward thinking and inclusive Chair to help lead them. My experience in the role suggests that the new Chair will need to be someone who can combine high levels of emotional intelligence and leadership skills with an urgency to achieve the Trust's strategic goals. They will need to display a drive to support ongoing organisational development and most importantly balance the legal duty placed on Trustees with the right level of delegation to the Executive Team. This is a demanding, yet rewarding, voluntary role suited to someone who can navigate through complex relationships and communicate well at all levels.

Experience of conservation is not essential. More important is an understanding of governance and of the charity sector, an ability to see the strategic picture and harness the skills of talented Trustees to provide support at the appropriate strategic level to the Executive Team.

Trustees recognise that board diversity is vital for Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to achieve our aims and we encourage applicants who share our passion for Wiltshire, for wildlife, for our values and our purpose, from all and any backgrounds.

If you think you have the strategic skills, relevant experience and a passion for wildlife in Wiltshire then we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Mark Street
Retiring Chair of Wiltshire Wildlife Trust



Who we are

We are part of The Wildlife Trusts

We are a Federation of 46 local independent charities working across the UK to create a wilder future. Nationally we have 900,000 members and manage 2,300 nature reserves.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust was founded in 1962 and is today the leading charity in Wiltshire and Swindon working to achieve nature's recovery and a sustainable future for wildlife and people.

We employ over 140 staff and are supported by more than 1,700 volunteers and **23,000 members**.

We manage 44 nature reserves across Wiltshire and Swindon, including wetland, woodland, meadow and chalk downland habitats.

We have two Nature Centres with cafés, where people can come and enjoy spectacular wildlife views whilst enjoying locally-sourced food and drink.

We also have two Care Farms, helping children with additional needs through therapeutic nature-based activities.

Our farming enterprise manages over 650 cows and sheep, from three farm hubs, which keep our grasslands healthy and species-rich through grazing.

We have over £15 million of assets and annual income of around £7 million.

Our Vision is a sustainable future for wildlife and people.

Our Purpose is providing leadership, driving nature's recovery, connecting all generations with nature and empowering them to take meaningful action for nature and the climate.



Our Council

This is the governing body of the Trust. It is ultimately responsible for setting strategic direction, overseeing the Trust's finances, and safeguarding its brand and reputation. There are currently 11 Trustees, and you can meet them here.

Our CEO

Jo Lewis joined the Trust in August 2023, having previously spent eight years as Strategy and Policy Director at the Soil Association, following a career in environmental policy and solution development. She has led the formation of a new Executive Team to ensure the right strategic leadership is in place to implement our Strategy to 2030, including the growth area of Nature Based Solutions and the modernisation of the Trust's structures and systems so that we can pursue our strategic goals at greater scale.



Our area

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's work covers the unitary authority boundaries of Swindon and Wiltshire.

Wiltshire is a farming county: 80% of the land is farmed, with significant opportunities for farmers and landowners to lead nature's recovery at scale. There is an active network of farmer clusters across the county, keen to explore the opportunities for nature-friendly farming.

Swindon is the fastest growing city in Europe, with a diverse population.

Wiltshire is also home to some fast-growing market towns such as Chippenham, Salisbury, Trowbridge and Melksham, making it vital that new housing developments achieve a net gain in biodiversity and that green infrastructure is created to ensure everyone is within 15 minutes' walk of natural greenspace.

Two thirds of Wiltshire lies on chalk.

Wiltshire has half the UK's surviving species-rich chalk grassland, some 18,000 hectares, helping to make it one of the best places in the UK for butterflies. The Wiltshire and Hampshire Avon, with its sparkling chalk-stream headwaters, is one of the most biodiverse river systems in the UK.

Wiltshire also retains ancient hay meadows, wetlands and ancient woodland.

The Trust's nature reserves include examples of all of these habitats which need to be made resilient to climate change and other challenges.



Our strategy

New strategy to 2030: A Wilder Wiltshire

We face an ecological and climate emergency that is already impacting the three pillars of sustainable living: nature, people and our economy. We want to see an increased abundance of nature, experienced by people in their daily lives. In Spring 2023, we launched our new seven-year strategy, which builds on our achievements to restore nature rapidly at scale, and inspire people to live more sustainably.

Our goals

1

Nature will be in recovery

By 2030, Wiltshire and Swindon's habitats, species and natural processes will be in recovery and 30% of land will be well managed for nature. To achieve this, we will lead by example by:

- Doubling the area of land owned and managed by the Trust to 2,400 hectares.
- Restoring species abundance and diversity across Wiltshire and Swindon.
- Restoring natural processes on our land and in rivers.

2

People will be taking action

By 2030, people will be taking informed and meaningful action for nature and the climate and benefiting from having nature in their lives. To achieve this, we will:

- Empower 1 in 4 people to take significant and transformative action for nature.
- Help improve the health and wellbeing of people through their engagement with nature.
- Provide opportunities for all children and young people in Wiltshire to experience the joy of nature and kindle a lasting interest in wild places.

3

Nature will be valued

By 2030, nature will play a central and valued role in helping to address local, national and global problems. To achieve this, we will:

- Get nature and climate at the heart of decision making.
- Create and promote nature-based solutions with partners to address the climate and nature emergencies.
- Support sustainable, healthy, productive and resilient ecosystem services across Wiltshire and Swindon.

To read our strategy in full, visit: www.wiltshirewildlife.org/strategy



Role profile

Trustees are looking for a forward thinking and inclusive Chair to help lead us on our journey, who can combine leadership skills with an urgency to achieve the Trust's strategic goals and the drive to support ongoing organisational development.

Experience of conservation is not essential. More important is an understanding of governance and of the charity sector, an ability to see the strategic picture and harness the skills of talented Trustees to provide support at the appropriate strategic level to the Executive Team

There will be support available from individual chairs of other Wildlife Trusts and also through the wider Wildlife Trust Federation (RSWT) Chairs Community of Practice Group.

The role

- This is a voluntary position to lead the Trustee Board in ensuring that it fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of the organisation by ensuring that the organisation acts in accordance with its constitution, the Charity Commission Code of Practice and by managing its activities.
- To work in partnership with the Chief Executive helping them to achieve the Trust's strategic goals, and with the Board of Trustees ensure appropriate line management of the CEO.
- To optimise the relationship between the Council and staff/volunteers; and between WWT and The Wildlife Trusts.
- To attend all board meetings plus RSWT events such as open days, conferences and leaders days where appropriate.

Key priorities for Chair during tenure

- To support the CEO and Executive Team in the successful implementation of the Strategy to 2030 in Wiltshire.
- To line manage the CEO including objective setting and regular 1-2-1's.
- To maintain and nurture our standing and relationships within The Wildlife Trusts and with other key partners.
- To drive forward becoming a truly inclusive and diverse organisation, supporting our internal development but also reaching out to new audiences and allies.

About you:

Key competencies

Governance: The Chair should have an ability to understand the charity, its values, culture and philosophy and importantly its legal structure and the legislation that affects it. Plus a willingness to show commitment and devote necessary time and effort.

Strategic: The Chair should have the ability to help to actively shape the charity's vision and future and be prepared to take responsibility for the charity's long-term success or failure.

Leadership: The Chair must provide leadership to the board with the prime responsibility for ensuring it has agreed priorities, appropriate delegated structures, processes and a productive culture and have Trustees who are able to govern well and add value to the charity.

Interpersonal: A Trustee the Chair should put energy into acting as part of a team and helping to develop it and its shared sense of purpose and group decision-making.

Analytical: The Chair must have the capacity to look at situations dispassionately and analytically, drawing on multiple perspectives and to apply good, independent judgment.

Political: The Chair should have the ability to understand and navigate different interest groups and perspectives be good at building partnerships and have the confidence and gravitas to build consensus and take people with them.

Essential Skills

- A natural team player and good listener
- The ability to motivate, and empower others
- Experience of creating trusting, diplomatic partnerships
- A rational, clear thinker who forms judgments independently and can affect change
- Demonstrating flexibility, sensitivity, and consensus building including conflict resolution
- Leading with a visionary and strategic perspective gutsy but showing humility
- A willingness to develop an understanding of relevant legal duties and responsibilities relevant to Charities

Desirable Skills

- Experience as a Chair
- A current or previous executive role in a not-for-profit/public sector organisation
- Experience of federated organisations
- Experience of / strong commitment to The Wildlife Trusts or environment sector
- An adept and persuasive communicator
- Business acumen
- Performance management
- Financial management
- Experience of Allyship and Inclusivity

Commitment

- An initial term of three years, with potential to renew for a further three-year period.
- Attendance at four Council meetings and at least one annual away day. These can be held at our Devizes HQ, or at various locations in Wiltshire including options to attend via Zoom or similar hybrid methods. Dates are issued at the start of the year.
- The Chair and CEO also meet their counterparts in The Wildlife Trusts federation on a regular basis, including two in-person meetings or field visits a year.
- Attendance at the Annual General Meeting in October.
- Play a full part in the work of sub-committees of Council and/or advisory and task-and-finish groups, according to expertise and skills – current sub-committees are Finance, Personnel and Health & Safety, subject to review as part of a self-assessment Governance Review.
- Being in email/telephone communications with the staff team and other Council members about any urgent matters arising between meetings.

How to apply

Application process

The application process is overseen by a Nominations Advisory Panel made up of selected WWT Trustees and advisors supported by the CEO and senior Wiltshire Wildlife Trust staff to ensure a fair and balanced process.

The process runs as follows:

1. Apply by emailing your CV and a covering letter to introduce yourself, detailing your relevant skills / experience and suitability for the role. Please ensure your CV includes two referees.
2. Shortlisted candidates invited for interview
3. References checked for chosen candidate
4. Election at AGM
5. Induction begins

To apply, please email your CV and covering letter to recruitment@wiltshirewildlife.org.

If you require any special provision or adjustments to facilitate your application, please do let us know. If after reading the role description you would like to discuss this opportunity informally with a Trustee, please contact recruitment@wiltshirewildlife.org.

Recruitment Timetable

Deadline for applications – 22 July 2024

Stage 1 Interviews – 16 August 2024

Stage 2 Interviews – 22 August 2024

Introduction to the Board of Trustees and co-option as Trustee – 12 September 2024

Formal election as Trustee at AGM – 4 November 2024

Election as Chair by WWT council – November 2024



