



KNEPP WILDLAND FOUNDATION

Director

Appointment brief
September 2026

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Welcome from the Chair

Nature can recover astonishingly quickly when given a chance.

The rewilding project we began at Knepp 25 years ago has shown how readily wildlife and ecosystems can bounce back, given the right sort of interventions and then largely left to their own devices.

At a time when the world is desperately in need of environmental solutions, Knepp has become a powerful source of hope and a driver for change.

We established Knepp Wildland Foundation to tell the story of how and why to rewild, sharing the surprising and inspiring experience of Knepp as widely as possible and stimulating a movement far beyond our own boundaries.

In just four years the Foundation has grown rapidly, developing an ambitious portfolio of work, a multidisciplinary team, strong national and international partnerships and a strategy through to 2030.

We are now entering a new phase. Two of our major initiatives have matured to the point where they are ready to become independent organisations, allowing us to focus on our core work.

We are looking for a Director who can lead the Foundation into that next phase: someone who will consolidate what we have built, strengthen our organisational foundations and empower our team, while bringing the entrepreneurial energy to drive things forward and seize the enormous opportunities ahead of us.

We're hugely looking forward to the next chapter for Knepp Wildland Foundation – more wonderful projects, and the fun and inspiration of making good things happen!

Charlie Burrell

Charlie Burrell, Chair



**KNEPP WILDLAND
FOUNDATION**



About Knepp Wildland Foundation

Who we are

Knepp Wildland Foundation (KWF) was established to harness the extraordinary experience of Knepp and use it to catalyse rewilding and nature recovery across Sussex and beyond.

KWF exists to share the story of how and why to rewild: translating the evidence and experience of Knepp into practical models, inspire new generations of rewilders and nature recovery on the ground, so that others can do what Knepp has done.

We sit within the unique ecosystem of the Knepp Estate, one of Europe's best-known rewilding projects, but our role is distinct from the Estate's. We exist to translate the experience, evidence and learning generated at Knepp into wider influence, practical models and systemic change.

We currently have an annual turnover of around £1 million, a multidisciplinary team and an exceptional network of partners across conservation, research, education, land management, government and philanthropy.

Our strategy through to 2030 is centred on a simple ambition: **to catalyse rewilding across Sussex and beyond – restoring land and species, equipping future generations, and sharing evidence to shape wider change.**

Our values are **Grounded, Connected, Empirical, Collaborative** and **Transformative**.

What we do

We work both **At Knepp** and **Beyond Knepp**.

At Knepp, we support the landscape as a pioneering rewilding demonstration site, enabling targeted learning, research, species recovery, education and public engagement.

Beyond Knepp, we work with partners to translate Knepp's insight into wider change through landscape recovery, partnerships, policy engagement, communications and capacity-building.

Our four strategic areas of delivery are:

Landscape Recovery

We have helped accelerate connected nature recovery across Sussex, supporting river recovery, habitat creation, land manager collaboration and landscape-scale approaches. As Weald to Waves and our Landscape Recovery project become independent organisations, our role will shift towards being a partner and connector: supporting Weald to Waves, sharing learning from Sussex nationally and engaging with land managers who want to learn from Knepp.

Species Recovery

We lead the White Stork Project, and we are developing a broader role in species recovery, exploring agile, evidence-led approaches and connecting Sussex-based work with national and international efforts.

New Generation

Through our Wild Futures summer field education site, partnerships with local schools, resources for young people and collaborations with university research projects, we aim to equip the next generation with the knowledge, experience and opportunities to take part in rewilding and nature recovery.

Knowledge & Influence

We are developing Wild Data, a website sharing the 20 years of scientific evidence gathered at Knepp since the rewilding project began. It will evolve to explain the principles and wider experience of rewilding at Knepp, with interviews, rewilding stories, reports and digital content published by KWF.

Across all four areas, we seek to act as a **catalyst, connector, amplifier** and **incubator**, using a lean specialist team and wider partnership network to increase our impact without placing unsustainable pressure on the Knepp landscape.



Governance and organisational relationships

KWF is governed by a Board of Trustees with expertise such as ecology and rewilding, land management, finance, law, communications, charity governance and HR.

The Board is keen to maintain a clear distinction between governance and executive leadership, while becoming more actively engaged in strategy and drawing on the networks and experience its members bring.

This is first and foremost a chief executive role. Our Chair, Charlie Burrell, Isabella Tree and other trustees will continue to act as public spokespeople for rewilding and for Knepp.

The Director's external role is to explain and promote the work of the Foundation, build its relationships with funders and partners, and make sure its own voice is clear and credible.

The Director will report to the Chair and Board, with day-to-day line management from the Chair. They will need to be confident working with an engaged Board, able to tap into the expertise of individual trustees, and clear about what sits with the Board and what is owned by the executive.

In the first year they will help establish clear expectations, decision-making routes and accountabilities, keeping governance proportionate to our size.

The relationship with the Knepp Estate is especially important.

KWF's ability to deliver its purpose depends in part on access to Knepp's experience, expertise and landscape, so the Director will need to build a constructive working relationship with the Estate and its team, working together on shared goals while keeping roles, responsibilities and boundaries clear.

This calls for diplomacy, confidence and an understanding of the particular opportunities of a young charity operating alongside a prominent, founder-led estate.



Current position

KWF has grown extraordinarily fast. Our first phase was deliberately entrepreneurial: we responded to an exceptional level of interest in Knepp and built a larger and more ambitious organisation more quickly than originally envisaged.

That growth has brought considerable achievements, but at times it has run ahead of the infrastructure, management capacity and internal clarity needed to support it.

Two of our largest initiatives, **Weald to Waves** and **Landscape Recovery**, are expected to become independent organisations over the next six to eight months.

We will remain involved in Weald to Waves and will continue to work closely with partners across the wider landscape recovery agenda, but the Foundation itself will become smaller. This will change our programme mix, staffing structure, relationships, funding arrangements and identity, and will require careful communication and support for staff, partners and funders.

Our core ambitions remain, with strong ideas about our future direction: species recovery and the **White Stork Project**; education and the development of **Wild Futures; Wild Data** and knowledge-sharing; and our wider role in communicating the practical evidence and hope generated by Knepp.

Our future operating model, however, is not a finished plan waiting to be implemented. The new Director will work with trustees and staff to test assumptions, set priorities and decide how our ambitions can best be delivered within our resources. It is an exciting moment, with plenty of room to grow once our foundations are secure.

Financial position

KWF currently operates at around £1 million turnover. Once Weald to Waves and Landscape Recovery become independent, this is likely to fall to around £500,000–£540,000.

The Director will need to understand and actively manage the financial implications of the transition, including the balance of restricted and unrestricted income, the funding of core capacity, the consequences of project closures or transfers, and the level of reserves and resilience we need.

Our future operating model is expected to involve a lean core team, with a significant proportion of staff time funded through projects alongside unrestricted income. We have established funding relationships and a compelling case for support, but environmental funding is increasingly competitive, so the Director will need to strengthen relationships with trusts, foundations, major donors and government while building a more diversified income model.

Earned income from courses and educational activity will play a modest role. On-site activity at Knepp needs to be kept within sustainable limits to protect the landscape and to respect the Estate's own business, so it is not seen as a primary route to growth.

We want a Director who is ambitious for the Foundation and can spot and pursue the right opportunities, while making sound judgments about its scale and shape so that income generation supports our purpose rather than determining it.



Challenges and opportunities

1. From entrepreneurial growth to organisational maturity

We need to keep the energy, creativity and willingness to act that characterised our first phase, while putting in place the systems, processes and management practices a sustainable organisation needs. The Director will identify where more structure is needed and where existing arrangements already work well, introducing rigour that empowers our highly competent and committed team without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

2. Defining the Foundation's next shape

Given that KWF will be reducing in size, the Director will need to work with the Board and staff to clarify what we uniquely exist to do and to make choices about priorities, capacity and the balance between our work At Knepp and Beyond Knepp. This is a strategy developed in partnership, not by one person alone.

3. Supporting people through change

The transition will directly affect staff roles, responsibilities and expectations. The Director will need to provide clear and consistent leadership, be open about what is known and what remains uncertain, and ensure staff are well supported, recognising and building on the knowledge, commitment and relationships already held within the team.

4. Empowering the team and distributing responsibility

As in many organisations that have grown quickly, knowledge and decision-making have tended to concentrate in a few places. The Director will establish clear authority, accountability and management structures so that people can make decisions at the right level and develop their own leadership, balancing support and challenge.

5. Strengthening financial resilience

We have goodwill, established relationships and a compelling story. The Director will build on these to develop sustainable funding relationships and diversify income, with realistic plans for core costs, programme delivery and long-term resilience.

6. Growing our core projects and their reach

Knepp has 25 years of practical experience and an extraordinary evidence base. There is significant potential for growth in Wild Data, the White Stork Project, education and digital engagement, reaching people who may never visit Knepp or read a scientific paper. The Director will bring the entrepreneurial drive to develop these projects and promote the Foundation's work to landowners, communities, funders and policymakers, working closely with the Chair and trustees who lead our wider public advocacy for rewilding.

7. Navigating a complex external environment

Rewilding is increasingly part of contested political and public debate. The Director will need good judgement and political awareness when engaging with government, funders, conservation organisations, farmers, landowners and communities, and a clear understanding of the reputational opportunities and risks that come with Knepp's public profile.



What success will look like

After one year

- KWF feels settled, focused and confident, and is rooted in its core purpose, with a shared understanding between Board, Director and staff of our priorities and future direction.
- The separation of Weald to Waves and Landscape Recovery has been completed well, with clear responsibilities, relationships and funding arrangements.
- Existing programmes are well coordinated and funders are confident in delivery and reporting; Wild Data has launched successfully.
- A sustainable operating model has been developed and tested, with financial planning and fundraising aligned to it.
- Staff have clarity about roles, reporting lines and decision-making, supported by robust HR, finance, safeguarding, governance and reporting systems, and feel informed, supported and empowered.
- The Director has identified the most promising opportunities for growth in our core projects and begun to pursue them.

After five years

- KWF is a financially resilient, highly respected organisation with an excellent team, a clear identity and a distinctive contribution to rewilding.
- We are recognised as a respected, evidence-led voice within the wider rewilding movement, working alongside others and communicating with energy, imagination and reach.
- We have found the right size and shape to deliver our purpose exceptionally well, growing where there is genuine impact and a credible route to funding.
- The relationship between KWF, the Knepp Estate and related organisations is constructive, productive and clearly bounded.
- KWF is recognised not only for what it has achieved at Knepp, but for how effectively it has helped others to restore nature and reimagine what is possible.



Job description

Job title: Director

Reporting to: Chair and Board of Trustees

Location: Knepp Castle Estate Office, West Sussex

Purpose of the role

The Director is KWF's chief executive, providing strategic and organisational leadership and working with the Chair, Board and staff to deliver our purpose and strategy. In the short term the focus is on consolidating and strengthening the Foundation through its transition; beyond that, it is on driving the growth of our core work as a mature, sustainable organisation.

Key responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- Work with the Board and staff to evolve and deliver KWF's strategy to 2030, translating it into clear plans, priorities and accountabilities.
- Lead the organisation through the separation of Weald to Waves and Landscape Recovery, and establish our future size, shape and operating model.
- Identify, assess and pursue new opportunities, ensuring they fit our purpose and are properly resourced – and say no to those that don't.
- Balance longer-term strategic thinking with the practical demands of running a small organisation.

Organisational leadership and operations

- Establish effective systems, processes, controls and management information proportionate to KWF's size.
- Clarify roles, reporting lines and decision-making authority, so the organisation does not depend on the Director for every decision or relationship.
- Maintain effective governance and compliance, working with the Board to ensure appropriate oversight without unnecessary bureaucracy.
- Hold executive responsibility for safeguarding across all our work, particularly education and youth activity, working with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Trustee Safeguarding Lead.

Job description (continued)

People and culture

- Lead, motivate and develop a multidisciplinary team through a period of change, communicating openly and consistently.
- Delegate effectively, developing programme leads and colleagues to own relationships, decisions and delivery.
- Strengthen management capacity, recruiting additional capability, including operational capacity, where needed.
- Foster a culture that is grounded, collaborative, intellectually curious and ambitious for impact.

Finance and fundraising

- Take overall responsibility for KWF's financial sustainability, overseeing budgets, cash flow, restricted funding and financial reporting with the finance function and Board.
- Understand and manage the financial implications of the transition.
- Maintain and grow relationships with trusts, foundations, major donors, government and other funders, diversifying income in line with our purpose.
- Ensure our income model supports sustainable core capacity as well as programme delivery.

Programmes and impact

- Oversee delivery across Landscape Recovery, Species Recovery, New Generation and Knowledge & Influence, ensuring programme ambitions are realistic, prioritised and resourced.
- Drive the development of the White Stork Project and wider species recovery work, Wild Futures and our education and youth work, and Wild Data.
- Ensure existing programmes are completed, evaluated and developed appropriately.

Communications, partnerships and relationships

- Explain and promote the work of KWF to funders, partners, policymakers, landowners, communities and the media.
- Work closely with the Chair and trustees who act as public spokespeople for rewilding and Knepp, so that the Foundation's voice is coordinated, clear and distinct.
- Build institutional relationships that do not depend on a single individual.
- Work closely with the Knepp Estate to ensure a productive, well-bounded relationship that avoids duplication.
- Ensure KWF's identity and positioning are clear as related initiatives become independent.

Person specification

We are looking first and foremost for an exceptional organisational leader, with genuine curiosity about rewilding, respect for evidence and the humility to seek specialist advice. You do not need to be an ecologist or conservation specialist.

Experience

Essential

- Significant senior leadership experience in a small or medium-sized organisation, balancing strategy with hands-on management.
- Leading people through organisational change, consolidation or uncertainty.
- Establishing or improving organisational systems, processes and accountability.
- Managing budgets and overseeing financial performance.
- Leading, developing and empowering a team.
- Working effectively with a Board of Trustees.
- Developing successful funding or income relationships and partnerships across organisational boundaries.

Desirable

- Experience in the conservation, environmental, charity, research, education or related sectors.
- Experience of growing or launching new programmes, products or income streams.
- Experience of policy influence, public engagement or campaigning.
- Experience of working alongside a strong founder, Chair or prominent partner organisation.

Skills and knowledge

- Excellent organisational and operational skills, bringing rigour without bureaucracy.
- Strong financial literacy, including budgets, cash flow, restricted funding and reserves.
- Excellent people management, communication and delegation skills.
- Strong strategic thinking and prioritisation, including knowing which opportunities not to pursue.
- Credible fundraising, business development and relationship-building skills.
- Confident communication and storytelling, with good political judgement.
- An understanding of digital communications, data and public engagement.
- Enough scientific literacy to understand, question and communicate evidence.
- An understanding of safeguarding responsibilities, particularly in work with children and young people.

Person specification (continued)

Personal qualities

We are looking for someone who is:

- An entrepreneurial steward – respectful of what has been built, with the drive and enterprise to take it forward and grow it.
- Calm and grounded – comfortable with complexity, uncertainty and difficult conversations.
- Ambitious for impact, not themselves – motivated by making KWF better and more influential, while giving others the space to lead.
- Collaborative and generous – able to work well with the Estate, Board, team and wider conservation community, and to establish their own authority among people with strong views and long-standing relationships.
- Warm and emotionally intelligent – builds trust and brings out the best in people.
- Curious and open-minded – genuinely interested in rewilding and nature recovery, without needing to be the technical expert.
- Clear and consistent – communicates decisions, expectations and uncertainty in a way that builds confidence.
- Energetic and optimistic – bringing warmth and humour to an organisation whose purpose is fundamentally about hope.

Ultimately, we need someone operationally disciplined enough to steady and strengthen the Foundation, and imaginative and entrepreneurial enough to deliver on the enormous opportunities for growth in its core projects.



Terms of appointment

Role: Director – Knepp Wildland Foundation

Salary: £55,000 – £60,000

Contract: Permanent

Hours: Full time

Benefits: pension, annual leave and other benefits to be added

Start date: Early 2027

Location: Knepp Castle Estate Office, Horsham, West Sussex, RH13 8LJ

The successful candidate will need to be locally based or willing to relocate, working from the Foundation's base approximately three days a week.

The role involves travel to meet partners, funders, policymakers and other stakeholders, and occasional visits to rewilding sites, some of which have outdoor or uneven terrain. We are happy to discuss any reasonable adjustments.

This post is subject to an enhanced DBS check, in line with our safeguarding responsibilities.

How to apply

If you would like to apply for this position, please send:

- An up-to-date CV outlining your employment history, qualifications and contact details.
- A supporting statement of no more than two pages, covering:
 - your interest in becoming Director of Knepp Wildland Foundation
 - how you meet the criteria in the person specification.

Please submit your application to executive@harrishill.co.uk by 9am, Monday 2nd November 2026.

If you require any reasonable adjustments, or would like a confidential conversation about the role, please contact Jenny Hills at Harris Hill at executive@harrishill.co.uk with suitable times for a phone or Teams call.

How to apply (continued)

Timeline

Stage

Applications close

Shortlisting meeting

First-stage interviews (in person at Knepp Castle Estate Office, including a brief tour of the estate)

Second-stage interviews (in person at Knepp Castle Estate Office, including a meeting with a staff panel and a presentation to the trustees / recruitment panel)

Date

9am, Monday 2nd November 2026

W/C Monday 9th November 2026

W/C Monday 16th November 2026

W/C Monday 23rd November 2026

More information

- The [Knepp Wildland Foundation](#) website
- [Knepp Wildland Foundation](#) on the Charity Commission website
- The [Knepp Estate](#) website

Other useful reading:

- *Wilding: The Return of Nature to a British Farm* by Isabella Tree
- *The Book of Wilding – a practical guide to rewilding big and small* by Isabella Tree and Charlie Burrell (trustees of KWF).





Advertisement

Director – Knepp Wildland Foundation

Location: Knepp, West Sussex

Salary: £55,000–£60,000

Contract: Full-time, permanent

Help shape the next chapter of one of Europe’s best-known charitable rewilding foundations.

Nature can recover. At Knepp, we have spent 25 years demonstrating what that can look like.

Over the past four years, Knepp Wildland Foundation (KWF) has grown into a charity with national and international recognition for its work in promoting the understanding of rewilding. We have an ambitious strategy through to 2030, a great multidisciplinary team, strong partnerships and a remarkable opportunity to share Knepp’s practical experience with a much wider world.

As two of our major initiatives become independent organisations, we are looking for a Director to lead the Foundation into its next phase. This is a chief executive role about consolidation, focus and growth: working with the Board and team to establish what we uniquely exist to do, strengthening our organisation, and bringing the entrepreneurial drive to take our core projects forward.

As Director, you will:

- Lead us through a significant period of organisational transition and development.
- Work with trustees and staff to establish KWF’s future size, shape, priorities and ways of working.
- Put excellent operational systems in place and create clarity.
- Develop and empower a talented team, giving people the confidence and framework to lead their own areas of work.
- Strengthen financial resilience, fundraising and strategic partnerships.
- Drive the growth of our core programmes in species recovery, education, and knowledge-sharing, and promote the Foundation’s work to funders, partners, policymakers and landowners.

Advertisement (continued)

We are looking for someone who:

- Has significant senior leadership experience and is comfortable combining strategy with hands-on management.
- Is operationally strong, financially literate and experienced in working with a Board.
- Is an excellent people leader who can empower an already capable team through change.
- Has an entrepreneurial spirit, strong fundraising and partnership skills, and the judgement to know when to pursue an opportunity and when to say no.
- Is an engaging communicator and a constructive collaborator, comfortable working alongside a prominent founder-led estate.
- Is genuinely curious about rewilding and nature recovery and respects evidence and specialist expertise.

You do not need to be an ecologist or conservation specialist. We are looking first and foremost for an exceptional organisational leader who is excited by what Knepp has demonstrated and by the opportunity to translate that experience into wider change.

Why Knepp Wildland Foundation?

KWF offers an unusually open opportunity for a senior leader. We are a young, agile organisation, free of decades of accumulated bureaucracy, with strong goodwill, an exceptional network, an engaged Board, a talented team and the freedom to shape what comes next.

Our message is ultimately about hope: demonstrating that nature can recover, sharing what has been learned and inspiring people to act. If you are an ambitious, grounded and collaborative leader who would relish helping to shape the next chapter of a pioneering charity born out of one of Europe's best-known rewilding projects, we would be delighted to hear from you.

For full details of the role and how to apply, please [download the appointment brief \(link\)](#).

For an informal and confidential conversation about this position, please contact Jenny Hills at Harris Hill at executive@harrishill.co.uk with times to speak and (optional but appreciated) a CV or professional profile, which will be treated with the strictest confidence.

As leading charity recruitment specialists and a certified B Corp, Harris Hill is committed to high and ever-improving standards of equitable and inclusive recruitment. We actively welcome applications from all sections of the community regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexuality and other protected characteristics.

Closing date for applications: 9am, Monday 2nd November 2026



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