

Executive Director Recruitment Brief

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the role of Executive Director at Friends of the Dales.

We are a proudly independent, dynamic and resilient charity working to protect and enhance the special landscapes that make the Yorkshire Dales so distinctive and loved. Our purpose is to promote for the benefit of the public the conservation of the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and adjacent areas, and the social and economic well-being of its local communities; and to encourage others to engage with, understand, enjoy and protect these areas.

We work collaboratively with many partners to campaign and influence policy with the aim of seeking necessary changes and improvement to the Yorkshire Dales whilst encouraging everyone, from all backgrounds to value and enjoy this special area and advancing the education of the public. Our work spans nature recovery, wildlife species, landscape management, farming, sustainable access, housing, transport and climate resilience.

Our current Executive Director, who has been with the charity for fifteen years and at the forefront of our successes and building a strong reputation, is leaving in the spring 2026. The charity has been undergoing a strategic review since mid-2024 which has led to a focus on campaigning and taking new directions with new voices amongst us, building a more diverse organisation and following. To support our growth, we are seeking a leader with the vision, enthusiasm and expertise to take things further and build a larger more sustainable charity.

To succeed in this role, candidates will bring a track record of hands-on management of a charity or similar/transferable skills, and successful experience or evidence of transferable skills of campaigning, influencing, advocacy, organisation leadership along with knowledge/expertise in fundraising, membership management, partnership working and operations. We are looking for someone who is values-driven with experience and insight into the sector and the Yorkshire Dales, who can inspire our team of staff, trustees and volunteers, engaging with our 1,000 + members and supporters.

If this appointment brief inspires you and you feel encouraged to apply then please get in touch and I look forward to meeting you.

Jonathan Riley
Chair of Trustees

About Friends of the Dales

We are an independent membership and campaigning charity in the Yorkshire Dales, comprising three permanent staff, ten trustee directors, a number of active volunteers bringing expertise to the charity's committees, events and The Review publication. We are renowned for our critical and supportive local voice, on activities ranging from farming and land management to the decline of nature and the climate impact, as well as rural society issues such as housing, transport and access. We are a welcoming and inclusive organisation and are committed to widening diversity among the charity and with all those with whom we interact.

We work collaboratively with all the 11 National Park Societies in England and Wales campaigning to address the specific threats in National Parks, and with our colleagues at [Campaign for National Parks](#), an independent charity working to protect and strengthen the powers of all National Parks.

Friends of the Dales was behind the creation of the DalesBus network of weekend bus services providing sustainable transport to and around the Yorkshire Dales National Park and neighbouring countryside, setting up this volunteer-run, not-for-profit social enterprise in 2007, and the Dales and Bowland Community Interest Company (D&BCIC).

Friends of the Dales Aims and Objectives

Our aim is to ensure that the government, the National Park Authority and other agencies deliver their promises to care for and improve the Yorkshire Dales for future generations.

Our charitable objectives are:

1. To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation of the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Yorkshire Dales National Park and adjacent areas, and the social and economic well-being of its local communities; and to encourage others to engage with, understand, enjoy and protect these areas.
2. In pursuance of the above, to advance the education of the public.

Our Origins

The Yorkshire Dales Society (Friends of the Dales is the working name of the society) was founded in 1981. The values behind why it was founded are still as relevant today and are set out below:

“Local people with a love of the special qualities of the National Park, and who believed in the protection of this special landscape, felt they did not have a voice. They felt there was a negative perception that somehow the National Park was a “bad thing” preventing economic growth by draconian planning laws. We knew this was not an accurate picture, and that the Yorkshire Dales National Park was in fact subject to the identical planning laws as in other parts of Britain. At the same time, we also felt that there needed to be a bridge between people who loved and cared for the Dales who lived outside the National Park boundary, and those who lived within. We wanted

to support the ideals of conservation of the area as a nationally important asset, whilst recognising that the only way such a special landscape of the Yorkshire Dales can be protected is through a vibrant local economy. Essentially the Yorkshire Dales is a cultural, not a purely natural landscape”.

A phrase we coined at that time is as true today as it was in the 1980’s – “A Landscape is a People”.

Our Strategic Themes, Policies and Campaigns

Our work has followed the key policy areas of:

- Wildlife and Biodiversity
- Energy
- Countryside Access
- Farming
- Housing
- Forestry and Woodland
- Peatlands
- Transport
- Tourism
- Built Heritage
- Sustainable Socio-Economic Development
- Minerals

Our campaigns have been focussed on these critical issues:

- **Living Verges** - Helping roadside verges become wildlife havens by promoting better cutting times.
- **Living Woods** - Raising awareness of the devastating impact of single use plastic, especially plastic tree guards.
- **Living Waters** – Supporting organisations such as Yorkshire Peat Partnership which are re-wetting and restoring the biodiversity of our peatlands, so helping to store more carbon and support cleaner rivers.
- **Living Access** - encouraging people of all backgrounds to access and enjoy the countryside in a responsible way.
- **Public Transport** - Lobbying local authorities and Government of the vital importance to residents, visitors, the environment and economy of sustainable transport for the Dales.
- **Campaign for Curlew** – supporting the actions across the Yorkshire Dales to help raise awareness of the plight of curlews and how we can help.
- **Young People** - Supporting young people aged 20-30 to become Creative Campaigners, working with them so we can better understand their viewpoints. Our programme also provides opportunities for younger people to develop their skills and knowledge of environmental campaigning.

In 2025 we launched a major campaign; **‘Eyes on the Skies’**, which speaks out against the ongoing criminal killing of birds of prey, helping raise public awareness of these horrendous crimes and how to report suspicious or illegal activity. This has gained national attention and resulted in thousands of people supporting the campaign and our petition aimed at seeking three key reforms from the UK Government to better protect these majestic species.

Our campaigning work is driven by our policies which are created by our volunteer **Policy & Planning Committee** made up of trustees, staff and other experts. We campaign on a wide range of environmental and social issues that affect the biodiversity and landscape of the Dales and the wellbeing of local communities - from transport and housing to renewable energy and wind farms.

The charity is governed by a Board of Trustees supported by the work of the **Finance & Governance Committee** comprising the Treasurer, trustees and the Executive Director.

We hold a number of events and talks about the Yorkshire Dales throughout the year aimed at education and engagement. A monthly e-newsletter is circulated to our members and supporters as well as promotional activity on social media sites.

Please click [here](#) to see our website to understand more about what we do. Please click [here](#) to read our Annual Report and Accounts with an overview of our activities.

The Role of Executive Director

The Executive Director (ED) will lead the charity as it continues to grow and diversify, building on the recent strategic review, providing strategic leadership, line management, management of the operation and external representation for Friends of the Dales. The ED is responsible for implementing the Board's strategic direction and operational business plan with a focus on growing the supporter base, campaigning, and financial resilience whilst ensuring it is impactful and aligned with our values and mission. As a leader in this small charity, a "hands-on" approach, balancing strategy with day-to-day line and operational management and external engagement is required.

To read the job description; the person specification, and our Candidate Privacy Statement click [here](#).

Key Terms and Conditions

- This role reports to the Chair of the Board of Trustees. A key relationship exists with the appointed Treasurer on financial matters.
- Although we envisage this role ideally as a part time (4 days per week role) there is the scope to work full time which is 37 hours per week.
- Permanent part-time (4 days per week) or full-time role with a full time salary of £50k per annum. Part time hours would attract a pro-rata salary rate.

- Friends of the Dales head office is Canal Wharf, Eshton Road, Gargrave BD23 3PN and attendance on site will be required as agreed. This would be considered your place of work.
- There are flexible working options available in terms of hours and work location, by agreement, although some on site attendance is a requirement. Given the role will require regular travel throughout the Yorkshire Dales and occasional evening and weekend work, the Executive Director will need to live within a commutable distance of the Yorkshire Dales.
- We offer 22 days annual leave rising to 27 days after five years' service plus all the English bank holidays (pro rata for part time hours) We also grant special paid leave during the office closure between Christmas and new year.
- Pension: We offer an enhanced employer contribution of 5%, with standard employee contributions via NEST.
- All applicants must have an existing Right to Work in the UK and be based in the UK as regrettably the organisation does not have the capacity of sponsorship at this time.

Recruitment / Selection Timetable

Tuesday 22 April 2026	Search commences, website and advert goes live
Monday 18 May 2026 @ 5pm	Closing date for all applications
w/c 25 May 2026	Review of applications and shortlisting
w/c 15 June 2026	Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a one-day event held in the Yorkshire Dales. The assessment will include a short presentation and discussion to a group which will include Trustees and staff, then a panel interview (approx 1 hour)
w/c 29 June 2026	Candidates informed of the outcome.

* Note that reasonable adjustments and alternative arrangements will be considered where required.

How to Apply

We hope that you are interested in applying for this role. Please review the following application instructions -

1. Please supply a CV setting out your experience and achievements from your career. Please indicate any reasons for gaps in employment.
2. Please also supply a supporting statement in no more than 2,000 words. This should clearly set out why you wish to apply for the role and how you meet the criteria set out in the person specification. You should provide evidence, examples and dimensions in your statement; tell us your actions, impact and how it helped meet your organisations' goals.
3. Please supply details of two referees, one of whom should be with regards to your current or most recent leadership level role. Our intention would be to contact referees if you are shortlisted for an interview. Please indicate that you are happy for us to contact your referees as part of this process. Referees will not, of course, be contacted without your prior consent.
4. If invited to participate in the group presentation and interview you will be asked to prepare a brief presentation on a relevant question linked to the activity of the charity and the role. This presentation should be for no more than 10 minutes after which you will be requested to lead a Q&A session. The presentation topic and interview questions will be made available to shortlisted candidates ahead of the event, to give time to prepare.
5. Please ensure that you indicate in your application any dates when you will not be available or where we might have difficulty in contacting you.
6. Please indicate any adjustments or accommodations that you may require to attend/at the interview /presentation event.
7. Please send your applications to Jonathan Riley at Jonathan.Riley@friendsofthedales.org.uk by Monday 18 May 2026 at 5pm.

All applications will be acknowledged.

Friends of the Dales is committed to a workforce that is representative of the community it serves at all levels of the organisation. We therefore welcome applications from all backgrounds and all sections of the community.

We welcome and will respect the privacy of any initial approach or expression of interest in this role whether formal or informal. For an informal and confidential discussion, after having read the appointment brief, please contact **Jonathan Riley** at Jonathan.Riley@friendsofthedales.org.uk