

Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Recruitment Pack | November 2026

A welcome from Charlie Knowles



Cheshire is home to an incredible variety of wildlife and wild places, from our woodlands and wetlands to the green spaces that connect our communities. But our natural world is under increasing pressure, and protecting what remains is no longer enough. We need to be ambitious, work together and take meaningful action to bring nature back.

At Cheshire Wildlife Trust, we're determined to play a leading role in making that happen. Through restoring habitats, inspiring communities, building partnerships and influencing the decisions that shape our landscapes, we want to create a future where wildlife thrives.

As we look towards the next chapter of our journey, we're seeking a new Chair who shares that ambition and can help us turn bold ideas into lasting impact.

This is an opportunity to make a real difference. Working alongside our Chief Executive and a committed Council of Trustees, you'll help shape our strategic direction, champion good governance and ensure we have the resilience, confidence and collective leadership to make ambitious decisions for nature's future.

We're looking for someone with sound judgement, fresh perspectives and an inclusive approach to leadership. We value different backgrounds and experiences and welcome applications from people who can challenge our thinking, inspire collaboration and help us achieve more.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. I hope you'll be inspired to join us in shaping a wilder Cheshire for generations to come.

Charlie Knowles
Trustee and Chair of the Recruitment Panel
Cheshire Wildlife Trust

About Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Bringing wildlife back – for everyone, everywhere.

Founded by volunteers in 1962, Cheshire Wildlife Trust is the region's leading independent wildlife charity, working to protect and restore wildlife and wild places across Cheshire.

We manage nature reserves, restore habitats, work with landowners and communities, and influence decisions affecting the natural environment. Supported by our members, volunteers and staff, and as part of the wider Wildlife Trusts movement, we're working to create a Wilder Cheshire.

Our ambition is clear

Nature in recovery.

Creating bigger, better and more connected spaces where wildlife can thrive.

More people on nature's side.

Inspiring and empowering individuals, communities and organisations to take meaningful action for nature.

Nature as part of the solution.

Restoring healthy natural systems that help tackle climate change and build a more resilient future.

17,500 Members

500 Volunteers

33 Nature reserves

53 Staff members

Making a difference for nature in Cheshire

Below is a snapshot of the impact we had in 2025.

Goal 1 - Cheshire's nature is restored at scale

45 45 ponds created or restored with 17 landowners

38 38 landowners advised across nearly 700 ha

5,539 5,539 hectares contributed to nature's recovery through delivery, advice and partnerships

14 14 new Local Wildlife Sites protected

33 33 ha of land secured in the Gowy catchment and Pennine Fringe

Goal 2 - Cheshire's ecological networks are stronger

10,000 10,000 wildflower plugs planted onto community sites

13.3 13.3 ha of new woodland created

31.6 31.6 ha of meadows created, restored or enhanced as part of Pollinating Cheshire

45,000 45,000 wildflower plants grown in our nursery to restore 31.6 ha of meadow

Goal 3 - Cheshire's wildlife decline slows

Greenbooth Greenbooth designated for its rare waxcap fungi

5,539 5,539 ha influenced through our advice and partnerships

217 217 sites transformed for nature

597 597 ha secured for nature forever

1,023 1,023 people backed our local campaigns

1,796 1,796 ha of habitat improved

Goal 4 - Cheshire is more nature-positive

245,414 245,414 people reached through communications and engagement

25,377 25,377 people supported to take action for nature

17,455 17,455 members stood with us

494 494 volunteers gave their time and expertise

23 23 meetings with 10 MPs to speak up for nature

132 132 decision-makers were engaged

And we're just getting started!

Our ambitions extend beyond individual projects. We want to restore nature at a landscape scale, strengthen our influence and inspire more people to take action. Strong strategic leadership will be essential to achieving that vision.

Read our 2030 strategy here!

The opportunity; Help shape our future

Cheshire Wildlife Trust is seeking a new Chair to provide effective leadership to our Council of Trustees and help guide the Trust through the opportunities and challenges of the next decade.

We're looking for someone who shares our commitment to nature's recovery and can help the Board take a long-term strategic perspective, set clear priorities and ensure the Trust remains financially resilient and well-governed.

As Chair, you'll lead and get the best from our trustee body, encouraging constructive challenge, informed decision-making and a positive board culture. You'll build a strong working relationship with our Chief Executive, providing trusted support and challenge while maintaining a clear distinction between governance and management.

You'll help the Board oversee strategic risks, navigate political, environmental and funding uncertainty, and ensure that our ambitions are balanced with the resources and capacity needed to achieve them.

Alongside these core responsibilities, there are opportunities to strengthen our connections across the wider Wildlife Trusts movement, build relationships with key partners and help raise the Trust's profile and influence across the region.

Above all, we're looking for someone who can combine ambition with sound judgement, inclusive leadership and a genuine commitment to the people and purpose of Cheshire Wildlife Trust.



Your role as Chair

The Chair provides leadership to Cheshire Wildlife Trust's Council of Trustees, helping the Board fulfil its collective responsibilities for effective governance, strategic direction and the Trust's long-term future.

Working alongside the Chief Executive and fellow trustees, you will:

Lead an effective Council

Chair meetings, encourage constructive debate and informed decision-making, and help trustees contribute their skills and experience. Support the ongoing development and effectiveness of the Board.

Shape our long-term direction

Help Council establish clear strategic priorities, look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the next decade, and oversee progress towards the Trust's ambitions for nature recovery.

Support good governance and financial resilience

Help Council maintain high standards of governance, oversee strategic risks and support the Trust's long-term financial viability, balancing ambition with available resources and organisational capacity.

Work in partnership with the Chief Executive

Build a constructive and trusting relationship, providing appropriate support and challenge, agreeing objectives and leading performance reviews, while maintaining clear boundaries between governance and management.

Champion our people and wider connections

Promote a positive organisational culture and commitment to staff wellbeing. Support the Trust's connections with the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (RSWT) and the wider federation, sharing knowledge and representing Cheshire Wildlife Trust where appropriate.

The Chair leads and supports the Board in carrying out these responsibilities, but accountability for the Trust's governance rests collectively with all trustees.

A more detailed description of the Chair's governance responsibilities is available as supporting information.

About you

We're looking for someone who understands what makes an effective Board, has the confidence to ask challenging questions and can help Cheshire Wildlife Trust make sound decisions about its future.

You don't need to be a conservation expert, but you do need to share our ambitions for nature's recovery and bring the experience, judgement and commitment needed to lead our Council of Trustees.

Essential attributes

Commitment to our mission and future ambition

A commitment to nature's recovery and to helping Cheshire Wildlife Trust become a stronger, more influential and recognised voice for conservation across the region.

Governance competence and sound judgement

An understanding of how an effective Board operates, including trustee responsibilities, due process and accountability. The ability to identify and manage risks while supporting the Trust's ambitions.

Ability to lead and get the best from Council

The skills to chair productive meetings, encourage different perspectives, manage constructive debate and help trustees reach informed decisions. An ability to hold the Board to account and build an effective trustee culture.

Constructive support and challenge for the Chief Executive

The ability to act as a trusted first point of contact for the Chief Executive, offering advice, support and challenge. An understanding of how to strengthen senior leadership without becoming involved in day-to-day management.

A long-term strategic perspective

The ability to look beyond immediate priorities and consider what success should look like for the Trust over the next decade. An awareness of how political, legislative, environmental and funding changes may affect our future direction.



About you continued...

Essential attributes

Time, energy and willingness to be active
The availability and commitment to dedicate approximately 12–15 working days per year to the role, including Council meetings, preparation, regular engagement with the Chief Executive and responding to matters between meetings.

A balanced understanding of the Chair's role
Recognising that effective governance and Board leadership are the Chair's core responsibilities, alongside opportunities to support the Trust's external influence, partnerships and profile.

Commitment to staff wellbeing
An understanding that ambitious outcomes must be supported by a healthy organisational culture, realistic priorities and sustainable ways of working.

Financial understanding
A broad understanding of finance and accounts, with the confidence to question financial information and contribute to decisions about the Trust's long-term financial viability.

Desirable attributes
We would also welcome someone who brings:

External representation and advocacy
Experience of building relationships and representing an organisation with partners, businesses, local authorities or other decision-makers.

Networks and influence
The ability to help open doors, strengthen partnerships, raise the Trust's profile and support fundraising opportunities alongside the wider Board.

Additional financial expertise
A more sophisticated understanding of finance, accounts and financial management.
We recognise that these skills can be developed in different settings and that not everyone will meet every desirable criterion. Our priority is finding someone with the governance experience, judgement and leadership qualities needed to guide the Trust effectively.



Time commitment

We recognise that our trustees volunteer their time alongside other commitments, and we want to be clear about what taking on the role of Chair involves.

Based on the experience of our current Chair, we anticipate a commitment of approximately 12–15 working days per year, although this may vary depending on the needs of the Trust.

Your core commitments

Six Council meetings each year, including preparation and follow-up.

Attendance at approximately one or two Finance, Audit, Risk and Resources Committee meetings annually.

Quarterly review meetings and regular informal contact with the Chief Executive.

Regular communication with the Vice Chair and fellow trustees.

Attendance at the Annual General Meeting and responding to important matters between meetings.

Opportunities to get more involved

There are also opportunities to contribute beyond these core commitments, depending on your interests and availability.

These might include attending regional or national Wildlife Trust events, joining working groups, visiting projects and nature reserves, or representing the Trust at external meetings.

The level of additional involvement is flexible and can be discussed to suit your circumstances.

A more detailed breakdown of the responsibilities and typical annual activities is available in our supporting document, *Being Chair – further information.*



Joining our Council

We want our new Chair to feel confident, informed and supported as they take on the role.

Our recruitment timetable allows for a substantial handover with our outgoing Chair, Charles Neame, providing time to get to know the Trust, its people, priorities and governance arrangements before formally taking up the position.

You'll have opportunities to meet fellow trustees, our Chief Executive and staff, learn more about our work across Cheshire and build connections with the wider Wildlife Trusts movement.

We'll support you through an induction covering your responsibilities as a trustee and Chair, the Trust's strategic priorities and the resources available to help you fulfil your role.

Stage	Date
Applications open	20th November 2026
Closing date for applicants	10th January 2027
Shortlisting and interviews	January 2027
Induction and handover	Spring- Autumn 2027
New Chair takes up position	November 2027 AGM

The successful candidate may join Council as a co-opted trustee and Chair-designate ahead of the November 2027 AGM, providing an opportunity for a supported transition into the role.



How to apply

We welcome applications from people with a wide range of backgrounds and experiences.

You don't need to be a conservation expert or have previously chaired a charity.

We're interested in the leadership, experience and perspectives you could bring to our Council.

We'd like you to provide:

Your CV

A summary of your relevant experience, whether gained through employment, volunteering, community involvement or other leadership roles.

Your responses to our application questions

These will help us understand your motivation, your approach to leadership and governance, and what you could bring to Cheshire Wildlife Trust.
We'll also ask you to share a practical example of a time you've led or influenced others to achieve an outcome.
You can submit your answers in writing, by audio recording or by video, whichever works best for you.

Submit your application

Please submit your application via our webpage ***here*** by **Sunday 10th January 2027.**

What happens next?

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview in January 2027. Further information about the interview arrangements and what to expect will be shared in advance.

We'd love to hear from you

If you'd like an informal conversation about the role or need any adjustments to the application or interview process, please get in touch.

Contact: Charlotte Harris, Charris@cheshirewt.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you!



A final word



Cheshire Wildlife Trust is at an exciting and important point in its journey. We have ambitious plans for nature's recovery, a dedicated team of staff and volunteers, and an opportunity to make a lasting difference to the landscapes, wildlife and communities of Cheshire.

The relationship between the Chair and Chief Executive is central to helping us achieve those ambitions. I value having someone alongside me who can offer fresh perspectives, ask thoughtful questions, provide constructive challenge and help us keep sight of the bigger picture, even when the decisions aren't straightforward.

Our next Chair will have a genuine opportunity to help shape the future of this organisation, strengthening our foundations while giving us the confidence to be bold in our ambitions.
I'm looking forward to working with someone who shares our passion, believes in what we can achieve together and wants to help create a Wilder Cheshire for generations to come.

Charlotte Harris
Chief Executive, Cheshire Wildlife Trust



Being Chair of Cheshire Wildlife Trust has been an enormously rewarding experience. It has given me the opportunity to see the incredible work happening across our region, meet the people who make it possible and play a part in helping the organisation grow and develop.
The role comes with real responsibility.

There are difficult questions to ask, competing priorities to balance and important decisions to make. But there is also tremendous satisfaction in knowing that your contribution is helping an organisation achieve something that genuinely matters.

One thing I've learned is that being an effective Chair isn't about having all the answers. It's about listening, bringing people together, encouraging different perspectives and helping a talented group of people make the best possible decisions.

If you're considering applying but wondering whether you have everything it takes, I'd encourage you to explore the opportunity. Bring your experience, your curiosity and your willingness to make a difference. You may find that you have far more to offer than you realise.

Charles Neame
Chair, Cheshire Wildlife Trust

Cheshire Wildlife Trust



"We have the choice of a better – and wilder – future. A future where wildlife thrives alongside people.

A future where nature helps us in the fight against climate change.

The time is now to create a wilder future."

Sir David Attenborough
President Emeritus, The Wildlife Trusts