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Rewilding Affric Highlands



Appointment of Chief Executive



Welcome message from the Chair

Steve Micklewright
Chair

Rewilding Affric Highlands is working to transform 500,000 acres of the Scottish Highlands to enable nature restoration and thriving communities. After five years of development, the initiative is looking for a Chief Executive who can lead a committed team of people to turn the many opportunities for nature restoration in the landscape into reality.

We are looking for someone with strong empathic leadership skills who can inspire, influence and persuade people to become part of the UK's most ambitious rewilding initiative. As well as leading environmental change at a crucial time for nature and the climate, you will work in a truly inspiring landscape, with the iconic Glen Affric national nature reserve at its heart.

If you are motivated by the opportunity to deliver meaningful change and can demonstrate a track record of successfully guiding organisations through transition, we would love to hear from you. Whether you are looking for a six-month opportunity to lead organisational change, strengthen foundations and support the organisation's next phase of development, or you are excited by the prospect of shaping its long-term strategic vision as a permanent Chief Executive, please contact our chosen search partner, AWS Executive, for a confidential discussion about the role.





Background to Rewilding Affric Highlands

The Affric Highlands rewilding landscape was launched in September 2021 as a joint initiative between Trees for Life and Rewilding Europe. Affric Highlands is an ambitious initiative to rewild over 195,000 hectares of the Scottish Highlands, achieving significant nature restoration across the area in thirty years. The vision is for a landscape, where woodlands and peatlands are restored and regenerated, keystone species are thriving and natural processes are driving change across large parts of the landscape.

Rewilding in this landscape will bring many benefits including a surge in biodiversity, contribution to climate change mitigation, social, economic and wider benefits to the communities within the landscape and health and wellbeing benefits to visitors.

Since its inception, the landscape was ‘incubated’ by Trees for Life while support from landowners and other key stakeholders was being sought. With 15 landowners signed up to the project Trees for Life and Rewilding Europe agreed a new structure should be created to take this project forward and facilitate delivery of our shared vision for the Affric Highlands area.

This led to the formation of Rewilding Affric Highlands (RAH); a charity limited by guarantee by Trees for Life and Rewilding Europe. This is a critical time for RAH and the purpose of this role is to lead the formation and development of RAH to ensure that it is ‘fit’ to deliver on its vision and mission.

The Charity is its own legal entity, separate from Trees for Life and Rewilding Europe with its own Board of Directors (approximately 5 members) including one Director from each of the founding organisations.

The objective of RAH, in particular but not exclusively, is the expansion of wild nature and wildlife in the Affric Highlands area of Scotland, as well as the stimulation of nature and landscape development, on the basis of natural processes and for the benefit of society by implementing and executing the vision and action plans as agreed with the Rewilding Europe Initiative.

Our values

Rewilding Affric Highlands (RAH) will be part of the Rewilding Europe Network and will sign a long-term partnership agreement with Rewilding Europe, which is called the Network Agreement.

Our Values

The two founding organisations each has a clear set of values which are closely aligned and summarised as follows;

Rewilding Europe values; Pioneering, Entrepreneurial, Inspirational, Empowering, Practical, Experienced and Committed.

Trees for Life values; Groundbreaking, Collaborative and Pragmatic.

The values of the two founding organisations have shaped the values of RAH which are;

- We are ambitious and committed to the long term. We want to bring innovation and we continue to strive for new and ground-breaking ways to rewild Affric Highlands.
- We are open, friendly and cooperative. We welcome and encourage collaborative working with other organisations, landowners and empower the wider community.
- We seek practical, sustainable solutions in everything we do and are always mindful of our responsibilities to our staff, partners, communities and above all to nature.
- We make things happen on the ground and we work with partners to ensure everyone is focused on taking the right actions to bring about the desired outcomes.



What we are looking for

Following five years of development, Rewilding Affric Highlands is entering a new phase of delivery. The Board is open to appointing either an experienced interim Chief Executive for an initial six-month transformation project or a permanent Chief Executive who can lead both the immediate organisational transition and the longer-term strategic development of the charity.

In the first six months, the priority is organisational change and implementation rather than strategy. We are looking for a leader who can quickly assess the organisation, identify what is needed to strengthen delivery, and implement the changes required to create a resilient, high-performing organisation.

Key priorities for the role include:

- Providing confident organisational leadership, bringing a pragmatic, delivery-focused approach to organisational development and operational improvement.
- Leading a programme of organisational change, identifying gaps, reshaping structures and processes, and ensuring the organisation is fit for its next phase of growth.
- Developing an organisational structure that is aligned with impact, accountability and effective delivery.

- Supporting and stabilising the team following a period of uncertainty and change, demonstrating empathy and strong people leadership whilst also making difficult decisions where necessary. This may include restructuring teams, redefining roles and managing organisational change in a fair, transparent and compassionate manner.
- Building the capability and capacity required for long-term success, ensuring the right people, skills and systems are in place.

For an interim appointment, proven experience of organisational transformation, change management and team leadership will be essential.

For a permanent appointment, candidates should also demonstrate the ability to think strategically, connecting immediate priorities with the long-term vision for Rewilding Affric Highlands. They will be capable of translating strategic ambitions into practical delivery plans and leading the organisation through its next stage of development.

We welcome applications from candidates interested in either the six-month interim appointment or the permanent Chief Executive role. We also recognise that some candidates may bring both the organisational transformation expertise required to lead the initial change programme and the strategic leadership needed to shape the longer-term future of Rewilding Affric Highlands. We would welcome applications from individuals with this combination of skills and experience.



Job Description

Job title: Chief Executive

Reporting to: Rewilding Affric Highlands Board

Directly manages: Affric Highlands Team Leader

Starting Salary: £53,000 pa

Pension: 3% employer contribution. (Creative Pensions)

Hours: Full time 35hrs

Holidays: 6 weeks a year, which includes public holidays, (closed 24th Dec -3rd Jan).

Duration: 6 month FTC or Permanent position

Location: Great Glen House in Inverness / Hybrid

Overall Purpose of the Job

The overall purpose of this role is to ensure the success of the Affric Highlands initiative, especially through the effective implementation of the Affric Highlands strategy. This requires leading, directing the initiative internally and representing and promoting it externally.

Internally, the purpose includes: developing and agreeing action plans with the wider team; ensuring plans are aligned with Rewilding Europe's aspirations for the rewilding landscapes; ensuring the work of key partners (especially Trees for Life) are aligned with the strategy and support its delivery.

The role is also responsible for the effective operation of the charity, fulfilling all legal and ethical requirements, though implementation may be delegated.

Externally, the purpose includes representing and promoting the initiative to stakeholders and key decision-makers and ensuring Affric Highlands perspectives are shared and adopted by the wider rewilding movement in Scotland and Europe.

Key Liaisons

Internal: RAH Board, Affric Highlands Team Leader, Affric Highlands Field Officers.

External: Trees for Life, Rewilding Europe, Affric Highlands landowners, communities and businesses, funding partners, and stakeholders.

Key responsibilities (Initial 6 month contract)

- Providing confident and empathetic leadership through organisational change.
- Reviewing the current organisational structure, identifying capability gaps and implementing appropriate changes to support future delivery.

- Working collaboratively with the team to strengthen ways of working, build trust and create a positive, high-performing culture.
- Bringing clarity, focus and pace to operational delivery, ensuring priorities are aligned and resources are effectively deployed.
- Reviewing governance, decision-making processes and organisational systems to ensure they are fit for the next phase of growth.
- Supporting and developing the leadership team, helping individuals and teams adapt successfully to change.
- Establishing robust performance management, reporting and operational planning processes.
- Working closely with the Board and partners to build confidence in the organisation's future direction.

Longer-Term Strategic Responsibilities (Permanent Appointment)

Following the initial transition period, the Chief Executive will lead the longer-term strategic development and delivery of Rewilding Affric Highlands, including:

- Leading the development and implementation of the Rewilding Affric Highlands Strategy 2024–2030.
- Developing annual business plans and ensuring delivery against agreed objectives.
- Monitoring organisational performance and reporting progress against agreed KPIs to the Board.
- Maintaining effective governance arrangements, policies and organisational processes.
- Leading organisational development, including structure, recruitment, succession planning and culture.
- Providing overall financial leadership, including long-term financial planning and fundraising strategy.
- Building and maintaining strategic partnerships at local, regional, national and European levels.
- Leading the organisation's communications and external profile.
- Representing Rewilding Affric Highlands as a member of the Rewilding Europe Network Executive Team.

Person Specification

Knowledge & Experience

- Significant relevant experience in a senior leadership role.
- Ability to develop a strong local network in related fields.
- Partnership-forming across diverse stakeholders and building bridges across different perspectives.
- Knowledge and expertise in different governance arrangements for complex partnerships.
- Knowledge of Scottish land management and rural development issues, including rewilding/ecological restoration.
- Familiarity with the different perspectives on land and rural issues in the Highlands and the relationships between the people who hold these.
- Developing and managing an effective and empowered team, with a supportive approach to managing people.
- Experience of financial planning, management and budgeting at a senior level.
- Ability to act as a media spokesperson.
- Able to make clear decisions and be accountable for them.
- Participative management style demonstrating high levels of trust and understanding.
- Project management in fluid and dynamic situations, judging when and how to adapt delivery in response to project learning and feedback.
- Aligns with RE & Tfl values.

Personal Attributes

- Passion for rewilding, nature and rural communities.
- Ability to work in a collaborative manner.
- Logical, organised, structured worker.
- Resourceful, flexible, solution-focused and able to work with a level of uncertainty.
- Authentic - honest, straightforward and trustworthy.
- A good communicator, listening skills.
- Able to solve problems.
- Assertive and able to say 'no' when required.
- Full UK driving licence, travel to remote locations will be necessary.

Skills & Competencies

- Strategic thinker with ability to lead and motivate colleagues and external parties towards the rewilding vision and objectives.
- Proven leadership and stakeholder engagement skills, or business development background.
- Very result oriented, proactive, hands-on approach, outgoing and entrepreneurial attitude.
- Strong skills in working with local authorities, government institutions, local entrepreneurs, landholders, conservation managers and others.
- Excellent interpersonal and lobbying skills, including the ability to develop and maintain strong relationships and partners at all levels, including with local field staff, local communities, government agencies, scientific community, and the for-profit sector.

Working Conditions

This role will be both office based and require working between different locations occasionally including remote areas.

- Be able to work in an open office environment/hot desk.
- Be flexible to business needs - occasional out of hours working.



How to apply

For further information or to arrange a confidential discussion about this vacancy, please contact either contact either Alan Surgeon or Donna McKay:

Email:

affrichighlands@awsexecutive.com

Closing Date for Applications:

Monday 3rd August 2026 at midday

Interview Date:

Thursday August 13th 2026

Interview Panel Process Stage 1:

Steve Micklewright, Pennie Stuart, plus one other from Rewilding Europe Team.

Interview Process Stage 2:

Tour of Great Glen House, Team introduction, 2nd stage interview.

Please submit a tailored CV and cover letter that clearly addresses the personal specification via the Apply button at the link below:

<https://awsexecutive.com/chief-executive-rewilding-affric-highlands/>