

Person and Job Specification

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1 Introduction

Due to Trustee succession, there are two vacancies on our board. We are looking for a new Trustee with specialist skills in investment management and a new Trustee with specialist skills in conservation science and practice to join us and complement the skills and experiences of the existing six Trustees and to help VWT deliver the new Ten-Year Strategy.

With a new Chair of Trustees, and now into our third year of our Ten-Year Strategy, this is an exciting time to join the board.

Trustee with specialist skills in investment management

As a Trustee specialising in investment management, an interest in the conservation of wildlife is desirable, however there is no requirement for experience or specialist knowledge of wildlife or conservation. We are looking for someone with experience and connections in their field who can bring a new perspective to help navigate the Trust through the challenges ahead. Preference will be given to those who have good knowledge of financial products and can contribute to the investment policies and strategy of the Trust, ideally with expertise in equities or multi-asset strategies.

Trustee with specialist skills in conservation

We are looking for a Trustee with strong experience in wildlife conservation science and practice. Experience of mammal conservation and research, particularly interdisciplinary approaches that extend towards social science, is desirable. We are looking for someone with experience and strong and diverse connections in their field, and who can bring a broad, analytical perspective to help navigate the Trust through the challenges ahead. Preference will be given to those who also have connections across a range of wildlife conservation organisations and settings.

2 Background to the Trust and Board of Trustees

VWT is a specialist mammal research and conservation charity that has been a key player in the conservation and research of threatened carnivores and bats for more than 40 years. We are a science-led organisation, developing evidence-based conservation interventions to address issues affecting our priority species and then delivering those interventions through practical on-the-ground conservation projects. We work closely with universities, co-funding and supervising PhD projects, and with partner NGOs, where synergies in our aims allow us to deliver over and above what we could achieve on our own.

VWT is now respected internationally as an emerging leader in the demonstration of innovative methods based on pioneering research that aims to halt and reverse declines in threatened mammal species, such as horseshoe bats and pine martens.

Our Head Office is near Ledbury in Herefordshire where ten of our team are based. The rest of our team work from home offices, including two in the Republic of Ireland. Although most of our work is focused on Great Britain and Ireland, we have a broader European remit and a particular interest in threatened mammal populations in eastern Europe.

VWT has a financially secure base derived from a substantial endowment from our late founder, Vincent Weir, which is invested across a diverse portfolio of assets. Our annual turnover is c. £1 million, with funding from our investments supplemented through grants, donations and specialist contract work that we undertake for government bodies and NGOs.

VWT has strong governance and leadership and a clear direction to increase the impact and geographical scope of its operations through its 2020-30 Ten-Year Strategy.

More detailed information is available on our website: www.vwt.org.uk

3 The Future Challenges

As with most organisations, the key challenge is to increase resources and increase impact in our field of work. We have no great desire to become a large environmental NGO beyond our niche position, but we do feel that in making our work deeper and wider, there is room to grow.

There is scope to increase our impact in Britain, Ireland and mainland Europe, working on a wider range of species and at a landscape scale.

Funding VWT expansion and new projects will be an ongoing challenge. We have a strong financial base to build from, given our high value investment portfolio for an organisation of our size. This provides income in line with long-term investment returns to support staff and pump prime projects.

More emphasis in the future will be on knowledge transfer to third parties and monitoring and supporting the impact others can have on mammal conservation using the approaches we have developed. To have meaningful impact, this will need to be at a national and international strategic partnership level. This will be a challenge for a specialist small to medium-sized charity.

The long-term growth of our Investment Portfolio, alongside generating returns to cover operational costs, will also need to be navigated as we apply our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policies across our range of assets.

4 Trustee Qualities and Person Specification

We are looking for candidates who understand the role of a Trustee for a charitable entity, both within Britain and/or Irish context, and preferably in other European countries. VWT is uniquely positioned in being able to use the returns from its investment portfolio to fund the core activities of the Trust, and there is a high degree of responsibility on all Trustees to ensure those funds are well managed.

The style of the Trust and its Board is one of informal professionalism; a friendly, supportive and intellectually challenging culture is the order of the day. Trustees report back that the time spent on VWT work is informative, stimulating and enjoyable. Furthermore, Trustees feel that their experience on the Board of VWT forms part of their broader learning, which they can apply to other aspects of their professional lives.

5 Ideal Person Specification

All Trustees are expected to demonstrate the seven Nolan Principles of public office: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership plus commitment to the work of Vincent Wildlife Trust.

Trustees are expected to be:

- committed to the mission, vision and values of the Trust;
- willing to devote the necessary time and effort to be an effective Trustee;
- able to think strategically and objectively in order to identify key issues, and make balanced and independent judgements, which support robust decision-making;
- willing to voice opinion in a board setting, to listen to others' views and be flexible, constructive and open to challenge;
- understanding and accepting of the legal duties and responsibilities of being a charity Trustee.

6 Key Responsibilities

With other Trustees, to hold the charity 'In Trust' for current and future beneficiaries by:

- ensuring that VWT has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and is focused on achieving these;
- ensuring that VWT complies with all legal and regulatory requirements;
- acting as guardians of VWT's assets, both tangible and intangible, taking all due care over their security, deployment and proper application;
- ensuring that VWT's governance is of the highest possible standard.

7 Training and Development

The Board reviews its own progress and skillset from time to time, to ascertain what collective or individual plans need to be actioned. In addition, the CEO circulates Trustee training and development information as appropriate, which Trustees are asked to assess in relation to their personal requirements. Reasonable and appropriate training expenses are reimbursed for agreed training sessions.

Where an individual Trustee has a specialist skill that is useful for other Trustees or staff, they may be asked to lead on a training or briefing session.

All new Trustees are taken through an induction programme, arranged with the Chair and CEO according to the individual Trustee's needs.

8 Outline Conditions

All appointments must follow Charity laws and the Trust's Articles of Association. Membership forms, conflicts of interest and other necessary declarations and documentation must be completed before or shortly after Trustee appointments. The Trust is required to check Companies House, Charity Commission and other public records for Trustee eligibility checks as well as any other due diligence deemed necessary.

9 Meetings and Travel

The Board usually meets four times a year – March, June, September and December – in a variety of venues such as VWT’s Head office near Ledbury in Herefordshire, Birmingham or London, with one or two overnight stays each year. The board does hold meetings virtually but has returned to meeting ‘face to face where possible. Field visits are sometimes part of the meeting format and could be anywhere in Britain or Ireland.

Travel and overnight expenses are reimbursed according to our expenses and environmental policy. The meetings usually start late morning and finish mid-late afternoon.

Meetings are held virtually for any Trustee decisions that are required in between meetings. Investment manager reviews also take place throughout the year.

10 Appointment Procedure

Interested candidates are invited to call the CEO for any initial questions and discussion about VWT.

A CV, along with a covering letter outlining why you think you are suitable for the position, should be sent to the CEO at the VWT Head office address (see below). The CEO will forward this information to the Recruitment Task and Finish Group made up of the Chair, CEO and Trustees with specialist skills in investment management and conservation and, if appropriate, a meeting will be arranged.

If the Recruitment Task and Finish Group shortlists your application, your details will be circulated to the rest of the Board for its comments, and actions agreed as to how to take your application forward. This will depend on the number of other applicants, whether a Board meeting is imminent and other factors. With each step, you will be notified as soon as possible as to the way forward. A formal decision for appointment, if appropriate, will be made at the next available Board meeting. Our target date for appointment is December 2022.

For further information on this recruitment pack, please contact:

Dr Lucy Rogers, CEO
lucyrogers@vwt.org.uk

VWT, 3-4 Bronsil Courtyard, Eastnor, Ledbury, Herefordshire HR8 1EP

For specific questions about the investment Trustee post please contact:
Ms Shelly Moledina shellymoledina@gmail.com

For specific questions about the conservation Trustee post please contact:
Professor Robbie McDonald r.mcdonald@exeter.ac.uk