



The countryside charity
Sussex



Director/Chief Executive

Appointment brief • June 2026

A rare place-based leadership role helping shape the Sussex countryside of tomorrow

3–4 days per week | £60,000 – £70,000 FTE, pro rata

Jenny Hills • Director, Harris Hill Ltd

020 7820 7321 • jenny.hills@harrishill.co.uk • www.harrishill.co.uk

HarrisHill
Executive Search

Contents

A guide to the opportunity

| | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|
| 03 | — | Welcome from the trustees |
| 04 | — | CPRE Sussex at a glance |
| 05 | — | What CPRE Sussex does |
| 06 | — | Why this role matters now |
| 07 | — | Recent momentum and context |
| 08 | — | The leadership opportunity |
| 09 | — | Role profile |
| 10 | — | Key responsibilities |
| 11 | — | Person specification |
| 12 | — | Terms and selection process |
| 13 | — | How to apply |
| 14 | — | Advertising copy |

Why the role stands out

- A rare place-based leadership role at the heart of Sussex's countryside
- Real scope to shape public voice, planning influence and organisational direction
- A chance to help lead the next stage of CPRE Sussex's development and impact



Role snapshot

- Director / Chief Executive
- 3–4 days per week
- £60,000 – £70,000 FTE, pro rata
- Sussex-based or genuinely Sussex-commutable
- Senior leadership role in a campaigning charity influencing planning, land use and countryside issues across Sussex and nationally
- Requires external credibility, strong practical leadership and commercial awareness

Welcome from the trustees

A rare opportunity to help shape the future of CPRE Sussex and the Sussex countryside



Thank you for your interest in CPRE Sussex and in this Director / Chief Executive opportunity.

CPRE Sussex is the countryside charity for Sussex. We are both an independent county charity and part of the wider CPRE network, with an important role to play in shaping planning, land use, countryside protection and public understanding across Sussex.

This is a significant moment for the charity. CPRE Sussex has recently been through a period of organisational change, including leadership transition, trustee turnover and investment in new staff capacity. The organisation has made good progress over the past year and enters this appointment from a position of growing confidence, but we recognise that there is more to do to strengthen focus, build on recent momentum and ensure our resources are being used to greatest effect.

The trustees are looking for someone who can combine public credibility, sound judgement and practical leadership. This is a role for someone who can represent the charity, work effectively with trustees, staff and volunteers, and help ensure that CPRE Sussex's time, people and resources are clearly focused on our charitable aims.

Our new leader will help guide CPRE Sussex through its next phase of development - strengthening influence, growing membership and support, and building organisational cohesion.

This is a rare and exciting opportunity to take on a high-trust leadership role in a respected place-based charity, and to help shape both the future of CPRE Sussex and the future of the countryside and policy landscape in Sussex.

We hope this pack gives you a clear sense of who we are, what we do and the kind of leadership we are seeking.

Penny Hudd | Chair



Josh Lelliott | Treasurer



CPRE Sussex at a glance

The countryside charity for Sussex

CPRE Sussex is an independent county charity and part of the wider CPRE network. We are a campaigning charity influencing planning and land use, while also building public support for the countryside through membership, volunteering, events, communications and practical projects.



Who we are

A respected Sussex charity with a county-wide voice, strong local roots and the support of the wider CPRE network.

Why this platform matters

This role offers the chance to shape the next chapter of CPRE Sussex and to influence the future of the countryside and policy landscape in Sussex.

At a glance

- c.1,000 members, with a wider supporter base beyond this
- Small part-time staff team covering planning, campaigns, communications, membership, fundraising, finance and administration
- Supported by trustees, district leads, volunteers and specialist external support where required
- County-wide activity across planning, campaigns, communications, events and practical countryside projects
- Financially stable, with substantial reserves providing a strong platform for future development

Current priorities

- Strengthening CPRE Sussex's influence on planning and wider land use
- Sharpening CPRE Sussex's public voice and relevance
- Growing membership, supporters and diversified income
- Directing the charity's staff, volunteers and assets to greatest effect

The role in a sentence

Directing CPRE Sussex's people, profile and resources to greatest effect, while helping shape the next stage of the charity's development and impact.

Financial position

Recent legacies have left CPRE Sussex in a strong financial position from which to invest in its next phase. The charity currently holds substantial unrestricted reserves and has been able to strengthen capacity across campaigning, communications, membership and fundraising.

The longer-term challenge is not immediate financial security but building a more resilient and diversified income model through membership growth, supporter engagement, fundraising and public awareness. The Director / Chief Executive will help lead the next phase of this work, ensuring resources are aligned with strategic priorities and directed towards maximum impact.

What CPRE Sussex does

Campaigning, planning, engagement and practical action across Sussex

CPRE Sussex is a campaigning charity influencing planning and land use across the county. We work to protect, celebrate and regenerate the Sussex countryside through policy influence, public campaigning, membership and supporter engagement, volunteering, events and practical projects. Our work combines external voice with on-the-ground activity and local connection.

Planning and land-use influence

We respond to significant planning applications, local plans and wider land-use issues affecting Sussex. This includes commenting on major developments, supporting local voices where appropriate, and helping shape decisions on the schemes and policies that matter most to the countryside.

Campaigning and public voice

We speak up on the biggest countryside issues affecting Sussex and help shape public debate through campaigns, media, policy engagement and partnership working. Current areas of focus include development pressure, infrastructure, Gatwick-related questions, local government reform, climate and nature.

Membership, supporters and communities

We build a movement of members, supporters and volunteers who care about the future of Sussex's countryside. That includes tailored communications, events, supporter journeys and opportunities for people to get involved in campaigning, learning and practical action.

Practical projects and engagement

We complement policy and campaigning work with visible place-based activity – including events, talks, visits, tree and hedgerow projects and wider countryside engagement. This helps connect people to the countryside while reinforcing the case for protecting and improving it.

Why this role matters now

Leadership and impact

The Sussex countryside is under growing pressure – from development, infrastructure demands, climate and nature loss and wider changes in how decisions about place are made. At the same time, local government reform and the move towards larger unitary structures may create further uncertainty and distance between communities and decision-making.

Against that backdrop, CPRE Sussex has an important role to play: influencing planning and land use, strengthening public voice and helping protect the countryside, landscapes and rural way of life that matter so much to Sussex.

The context

- The Sussex countryside faces sustained pressure from development, infrastructure demands, biodiversity loss and changing patterns of land use.
- Climate change and nature recovery continue to shape public policy and local decision-making.
- Local government reorganisation and emerging planning reforms are likely to alter how decisions are made and who influences them.
- At the same time, CPRE Sussex has recently been through a period of organisational change and growth, creating opportunities to strengthen alignment, clarify priorities and build on recent progress.
- In this environment, charities such as CPRE Sussex need to be clear, credible and effective in how they deploy their influence and resources.

The opportunity

- Lead a respected county charity with a live agenda and genuine policy relevance.
- Help shape the future of the organisation as well as the future of the Sussex countryside.
- Build on recent organisational investment and growing capacity.
- Bring together campaigning, planning, communications, membership and fundraising into a more effective whole.
- Guide the next phase of organisational development, influence and impact.

What the Board is really looking for

The Board is looking for a leader who can combine public credibility, sound judgement and strong practical leadership.

This is a role for someone who can represent the charity confidently, direct its people and resources effectively, and translate CPRE Sussex's mission into greater influence, stronger engagement and lasting impact across the county.

Specifically, trustees are seeking:

- A strong external voice for the charity, particularly on countryside, planning and environmental issues.
- A leader who can bring focus, co-ordination and momentum across staff, trustees, volunteers and wider resources.
- Someone able to build trust, alignment and confidence across the organisation.
- Strong commercial awareness and the ability to strengthen membership, supporter engagement and long-term financial sustainability.
- Sound judgement about where CPRE Sussex can have greatest influence and impact.

Recent momentum and context

There is real substance to build on at CPRE Sussex



Planning and policy work

CPRE Sussex remains active on major developments, local plan issues, Gatwick-related questions and wider strategic pressures affecting the county. The charity continues to use its voice on planning and place-shaping issues that matter most.

Membership and communications

Membership has recently been broadly stable at around 1,000, with work under way to strengthen the member offer, improve retention communications and make supporter journeys more tailored and effective.

Media and profile

The charity has increased its responsiveness and public visibility through more regular local media commentary, columns and issue-led communications, strengthening its role as a recognised public voice on countryside issues in Sussex.

Events and public engagement

Events such as Tree Festival, alongside talks, visits and wider engagement activity, continue to build awareness, connection and public support for the countryside.

Volunteering and practical action

Projects including Hedgerow Heroes have brought in new people and delivered visible, place-based countryside activity, including hedgerow planting and community involvement.

Income and growth

Recent legacies have supported organisational growth and given the charity a stable platform for its next phase. The challenge now is to turn that platform into stronger long-term momentum on membership, donors, grants and wider income streams.

Organisational development

Recent legacy income has enabled CPRE Sussex to invest in key roles across campaigning, communications, planning, membership and fundraising. Following a period of leadership change and organisational transition, trustees and staff are focused on strengthening ways of working, improving communication and building a more cohesive organisation.

The next Director / Chief Executive will inherit a committed team, an engaged board and a strong platform from which to build.

This is a chance to build on real foundations – leading a respected organisation that combines financial stability, growing capacity and genuine influence, while helping shape the next phase of its development and impact.

The leadership opportunity

Lead through complexity

CPRE Sussex operates across campaigning, planning, communications, membership, fundraising, events and practical countryside projects, with a small staff team supported by trustees, volunteers and partners. The Director / Chief Executive will need to bring clarity, prioritisation and momentum across this activity, ensuring finite resources are directed towards the areas where the charity can have greatest influence and impact.

Build alignment and confidence

The organisation has recently come through a period of change and growth. Trustees and staff share a strong commitment to CPRE Sussex's mission and future, but recognise the importance of continuing to strengthen communication, clarify responsibilities and build confidence across the organisation. The successful candidate will help create a positive, collaborative and focused culture while supporting healthy governance and effective working relationships.

Grow influence and sustainability

CPRE Sussex already has a recognised voice on planning and countryside issues across Sussex. The opportunity now is to strengthen public recognition, increase membership and supporter engagement, diversify income streams and ensure that the organisation's influence continues to grow alongside its long-term resilience.

What success could look like

In the first year

- Strong relationships established with trustees, staff, volunteers and key stakeholders.
- Clear priorities agreed and communicated across the organisation.
- Greater clarity around governance and operational responsibilities.
- Planning and campaigning activity remains influential and well regarded.
- Membership and supporter growth plans are established and gaining traction.
- The organisation feels more focused on identified core priorities.

Over the longer term

- Membership and supporter numbers are increasing.
- CPRE Sussex has a stronger public profile and wider recognition across Sussex.
- Income is more diversified and financially resilient.
- The organisation is operating with greater consistency, confidence and strategic discipline, resulting in greater impact.
- CPRE Sussex is exercising greater influence on planning, countryside and environmental issues across the county.

Role profile

Director / Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF THE ROLE

To lead CPRE Sussex in delivering its charitable purposes by shaping strategy, directing the organisation’s staff, volunteers, assets and wider resources to best effect, and ensuring the charity is a credible, outward-facing and impactful voice for the Sussex countryside.

The Director / Chief Executive will combine leadership of day-to-day operations with public representation, planning and campaigning influence, partnership-building and support for long-term financial sustainability.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Reporting to | Chair / Board of Trustees |
| Responsible for | Staff, volunteers, freelance contractors and overall organisational leadership |
| Working pattern | 3–4 days per week |
| Location | Sussex-based or genuinely Sussex-commutable, with flexible / hybrid working and regular travel across the county |

The successful candidate will not be expected to do everything personally. But this is a hands-on leadership role at times, and the need is for someone who can combine direction, judgement and practical involvement – making the best possible use of staff, volunteers, trustees, partners and specialist expertise to maximise CPRE Sussex’s impact.

Key responsibilities

Where the Director / Chief Executive will add most value

Leadership and direction

- Lead a small but influential charity with a clear sense of purpose.
- Work with trustees to translate strategy into practical priorities, operational plans and delivery.
- Build clarity, confidence and momentum across the organisation, while keeping resources focused on the areas where CPRE Sussex can make the greatest impact.

External representation

- Act as a visible and credible public representative for CPRE Sussex.
- Strengthen recognition of CPRE Sussex as the leading countryside charity for Sussex, ensuring the organisation is visible, relevant and trusted across the county.
- Build relationships with communities, environmental partners, public bodies, local authorities, elected representatives, members and the media.
- Act as a visible and credible spokesperson for CPRE Sussex, fronting media and stakeholder opportunities where appropriate, and drawing on staff, trustee, volunteer and specialist expertise to strengthen the charity's public voice.
- Represent the charity confidently on priority countryside, planning and environmental issues, while supporting campaigning and evidence-based influence.

People and volunteers

- Lead and support staff effectively, while making good use of volunteers, district leads, freelance support and partner capacity.
- Co-ordinate responsibilities across a small and distributed organisation, ensuring people are well-directed, supported and not overloaded.

Membership and income

- Support stronger membership, supporter and donor development, while helping diversify CPRE Sussex's income base.
- Lead or support fundraising activity across grants, appeals, legacy giving and major donor relationships, and help ensure the charity becomes more financially resilient over time.

Governance and operations

- Work closely and constructively with trustees, prepare clear papers and updates for Board discussion, and ensure appropriate governance, compliance, reporting and follow-through.
- Help improve ways of working where needed, while keeping the organisation practical, well-run and externally credible.

Person specification

What we are looking for

What matters most is the combination of leadership judgement, strong practical leadership, external credibility, commercial awareness and mission fit.

Essential

- Strong commitment to CPRE Sussex's mission, values and purpose
- Senior leadership experience in a charity, membership body, campaigning organisation or similar mission-led setting
- Experience working effectively with boards / trustees and contributing to sound governance
- Ability to direct people, projects and resources across competing priorities
- Strong judgement, communication and practical leadership skills
- Confidence as a public representative with members, supporters, partners, media and decision makers
- Ability to manage and motivate staff, volunteers and freelance support
- Good financial, project and organisational management skills
- Sussex-based or genuinely Sussex-commutable, with a genuine affinity for Sussex and the countryside
- Experience leading people, organisations or programmes through change and transition
- Ability to build trust and alignment across trustees, staff, volunteers and external stakeholders
- Strong emotional intelligence, diplomacy and interpersonal judgement
- Ability to establish and maintain appropriate governance and management boundaries
- Strong commercial awareness and understanding of organisational sustainability
- Knowledge of planning, environmental or public policy issues, or the ability and appetite to develop this quickly and credibly

Desirable

- Previous Chief Executive / Director experience
- Experience of stabilising, strengthening or resetting an organisation in transition
- Membership or supporter-led organisation experience
- Campaigning, policy, planning or environmental experience
- Fundraising and supporter-development exposure
- Media, advocacy or public affairs experience
- Strong digital confidence, including comfort with modern communications and supporter engagement tools

We are open to candidates who can demonstrate transferable leadership strength, sound judgement and a credible connection to CPRE Sussex's mission.

Terms and selection process

Practical information

Key terms

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Role | Director / Chief Executive |
| Reports to | Board of Trustees |
| Salary | £60,000 - £70,000 FTE, pro rata |
| Hours | 3 – 4 days per week |
| Contract | Permanent |
| Location | Brownings Farm, Blackboys, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 5HG – hybrid working |
| Pension | Auto-enrolment workplace pension scheme, in line with statutory requirements |
| Annual leave | 25 days' annual leave plus bank holidays, pro-rated for part-time working |



How to apply

Interested in leading the countryside charity for Sussex

We would be pleased to hear from candidates who combine purpose, judgement, external credibility and the practical leadership needed to help CPRE Sussex thrive.

If you would like to apply for this role at CPRE Sussex, please send the following:

- An up-to-date CV outlining your employment history, academic and professional qualifications, and contact details
- A Supporting Statement (no more than 2 x A4 pages), which:
 - Explains your interest in becoming the Director / Chief Executive of CPRE Sussex.
 - Demonstrates how you meet the criteria outlined in the Person Specification.

If possible, please combine the CV and supporting statement into one document (Word or PDF).

Please submit your completed application to executive@harrishill.co.uk by **9am, Monday 13th July 2026**.

If you require any further information, please contact our recruitment partner, **Jenny Hills at Harris Hill** at executive@harrishill.co.uk.

Recruitment and appointment timeline

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Applications close | Monday 13th July 2026 |
| Shortlisting meeting | Monday 20th / Tuesday 21st July 2026 |
| First-stage interviews (remote) | Thursday 23rd / Friday 24th July 2026 |
| Second-stage interviews (in-person, Uckfield) | w/c 27th July 2026 |
| Informal meet-and-greet for finalist candidate | w/c 3rd August 2026 |

Please state in your application if you have any commitments during the interview period that may coincide with these dates, or if you require any special provisions should you be called forward for interview.

Selection process



First-stage panel interview

Leadership, judgement, practical leadership and trustee fit



Final-stage assessment

Presentation and deeper discussion on first-year priorities, public leadership and strategic judgement



Informal meet-and-greet

A final chemistry and confidence stage with an opportunity to meet the wider trustee board.

Advertising copy

Director / Chief Executive – CPRE Sussex

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Location | Sussex-based or genuinely Sussex-commutable, with flexible / hybrid working and regular travel across the county |
| Salary | £60,000 – £70,000 FTE, pro rata |
| Contract | Permanent, 3–4 days per week |

A rare chance to shape the future of Sussex’s countryside.

About CPRE Sussex

CPRE Sussex is the countryside charity for Sussex. An independent county charity and part of the wider CPRE network, we have a respected county-wide voice and strong local roots, alongside the support of national CPRE.

Our work brings together planning influence, campaigning, membership, volunteering, events and practical countryside projects. From responding to major developments and local plans to building public support through communications and community activity, CPRE Sussex plays a visible role in shaping the future of place across the county.

This is a significant moment for the organisation. Following a period of change, new staff capacity and recent investment, CPRE Sussex is building on growing confidence, a stable financial platform and renewed momentum. The next Director / Chief Executive will help translate that foundation into greater influence, stronger cohesion and more sustained impact.

As our next Director / Chief Executive, you will:

- **Strategy & Impact:** Work with trustees to turn CPRE Sussex’s mission into clear priorities, practical plans and measurable outcomes.
- **Governance & Finance:** Provide confident oversight of governance, compliance and reporting, while ensuring resources are directed to the greatest effect.
- **Operational Leadership:** Lead a small, part-time and distributed team with clarity, pace and good judgement.
- **Income Generation:** Strengthen membership, supporter engagement and fundraising to build a more resilient, diversified income base.
- **Community & Partnerships:** Build trusted relationships with communities, partners, local authorities, public bodies, elected representatives and volunteers.
- **Brand & Profile:** Act as a visible and credible public voice for CPRE Sussex on planning, countryside and environmental issues, and position us as the leading countryside charity for Sussex.
- **People & Culture:** Maintain alignment and focused, constructive working relationships across trustees, staff, volunteers and external supporters.
- **Change & Development:** Help shape the next phase of organisational development following a period of transition and growth.

Who you are

- A seasoned senior leader with strong commitment to CPRE Sussex's mission and purpose.
- A credible external representative, comfortable engaging with media, decision makers, partners and supporters.
- Experienced in leading people, projects or organisations through change and transition.
- A thoughtful communicator with sound judgement, diplomacy and strong interpersonal skills.
- Confident working with boards or trustees and supporting robust governance.
- Commercially aware, with an instinct for membership, supporter development and financial sustainability.
- Organised, practical and able to direct finite resources to where they will have greatest impact.
- Experience of campaigning, planning, environmental or public policy work would be highly desirable, alongside strong digital confidence and/or charity fundraising exposure.

Why CPRE Sussex?

- You will be joining a respected Sussex charity with genuine relevance to planning, land use and countryside protection.
- There is strong momentum to build on, including a stable membership base, recent public profile growth and visible practical projects.
- The organisation has substantial reserves and recent investment in capacity, providing a strong platform for the next phase.
- You will work with a committed board, engaged staff and active volunteers who care deeply about the charity's future.
- This is a rare opportunity to shape both an organisation and the wider countryside debate across Sussex.

Closing date for applications: 9am, Monday 13th July 2026

For full details of the role including how to apply, please download the full appointment brief. 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.