

# Chief Executive Appointment Brief

June 2024

“The River Aire will be a thriving river valued for its environmental, social and economic benefits, and which is actively appreciated by the community for its diverse ecology and contribution to flood risk management.”



# Appointment of a new Chief Executive

## Thank you for your interest in the Aire Rivers Trust and for applying for the role of Chief Executive

The Aire Rivers Trust is a registered environmental charity focused on the promotion and delivery of an ecosystem and catchment-based approach to improving the River Aire, its tributaries and catchment



Since our formation in 2011, our influence and impact throughout the catchment has grown, leading to us experiencing rapid growth over the last five years. As a consequence of that growth, and in anticipation of further development of the Trust, the Board of Trustees is seeking to appoint our first Chief Executive. You will bring strategic vision, proven leadership skills and the environmental experience to build on the achievements to date and to plan for and deliver a more sustainable future for the river.

The new Chief Executive will report, through the Chair, to a highly committed and knowledgeable Board of Trustees. The successful applicant is likely to be a person with a sustained record of effective organisational management and communication skills in the environmental field, well-versed in the challenges affecting the sector, and capable of embracing the opportunities now emerging through new environmental and land management policies.

This is an exciting career opportunity in the environmental sector, with flexibility for the right candidate. We are seeking an experienced Chief Executive but would consider someone with relevant experience and the potential to swiftly, with support, reach Chief Executive level. You will need to be ready to step up to new challenges with the motivation and drive to improve the river Aire and its tributaries.

You will have a passion for rivers and wildlife with proven interpersonal, advocacy and fundraising skills to work with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders.

**Wendy Robinson**

Chair, Aire Rivers Trust

# About us...

## Introduction

The Aire Rivers Trust (ART) is a growing grassroots environmental registered charity focused on the promotion and delivery of an ecosystem and catchment-based approach to improving the river Aire and its tributaries. We operate along the whole of the River Aire and its catchment, mostly in West and North Yorkshire.

We bring together organisations across the Aire catchment and foster collaborative working to benefit the environment, wildlife and communities. We are committed to developing a collaborative, partnership approach that maximises the benefits of public, private and third-sector organisations working together with communities to deliver integrated outcomes. Our work focuses on improving fish passage, river clean-ups, removing invasive plant species and improving water quality. We deliver environmental education and riverside access and fun for local people.

The trust has grown by almost sixfold in the last five years (our turnover for last and the current year being around £500k), and this has stressed the organisation such that we are recruiting our first Chief Executive. We aim to stabilise the organisation and develop and implement a longer-term strategy that will enable us to maximise opportunities that arise. The ideal candidate will be inspirational, hands-on and adaptable with the confidence, competence and potential to take our small charity to success at the next level.

ART was founded in 2011 when volunteer local naturalists, farmers, riparian landowners, rowers and anglers came together and agreed to form a trust to safeguard and enhance the River Aire's catchment. Water quality and associated wildlife in the river had been deteriorating for many years, partly because of it having been heavily industrialised since the 1800s, which resulted in it being designated as 'Heavily Modified' throughout most of its length. As well as the ongoing impacts of some land use practices, the catchment was facing increasing threats from sewage discharges from a resident population of around 1,500,000 most of whom live in the lower half of the 148km of the main river. As well as other urban infrastructure developments. This has had significant adverse impacts through a progressive reduction in the number, area and quality of freshwater habitats.

Originally a small organisation, widespread and serious flooding in the catchment on Boxing Day 2015 raised public awareness of the river's condition and catalysed ART's growth in terms of influence and support from funders, volunteers and the public sector. The more recent national demand for better water quality in our watercourses has created a political and economic will that provides clear opportunities to further our aims. We value education and seek to engage people with their watercourses in order to foster value and guardianship for pools, streams and the main river.

ART is the Catchment Host for the River Aire and its tributaries and is an important advocate for biodiversity and water quality in the region. We are also a member of the Rivers Trust, the umbrella organisation that represents 65 rivers trusts throughout the UK and Ireland.

# About us...

## Our Vision and Aims

Our vision is that:

**“The River Aire will be a thriving river valued for its environmental, social and economic benefits, and which is actively appreciated by the community for its diverse ecology and contribution to flood risk management.”**

Our current strategy states that:

- Our primary focus will be projects designed to directly *conserve, protect, rehabilitate and improve* our rivers, with other objects of *education and improving access* supporting this primary focus
- We will plan to deliver these aims concurrently in any projects we develop, whilst recognising that funding constraints will not always support this approach
- We will cultivate and work with partners to develop, fund and deliver projects where our respective aims overlap or complement each other
- We will actively seek funding to develop and deliver a catchment-wide science programme designed to help us and all stakeholders understand and explain the pressures on our rivers.

Our efforts are currently focused on six key themes:

- Improving fish passage
- Biodiversity enhancement
- Water quality improvement
- Evidence and monitoring
- Access
- Education and involvement.

## Activities

ART aims to work with local volunteers, farmers and landowners in both rural and urban parts of the catchment.

ART has made substantial progress since 2010 and enhanced its reputation through:

- Delivering practical projects to improve biodiversity, water quality and river/floodplain habitats of the River Aire and its surrounding freshwaters
- Working in partnership with other conservation organisations, including Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Building trust and support of landowners and farmers in the catchment
- Working closely with the Environment Agency, local authorities and Yorkshire Water to improve water quality and mitigate the impacts of flooding
- Engaging with volunteers, and
- Working with communities to improve public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of their local river and natural environment.

# About us...

Whilst these activities are likely to remain key to the work of the Trust, a review and update of the strategy is now needed so that it is well-equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead. In order to maintain and build on its achievements to date, the ART must sharpen its focus and plan its activity. It is important to emphasise that this depends on appropriate funding being available to support these ambitions and opportunities provided by new legislation.

## Partnership Working

The ART's team of expert staff, supported by a strong group of local trustees and teams of volunteers, takes a holistic approach to improving the biodiversity of the River Aire and its surrounding freshwaters and catchment.

The Trust's role as Catchment Host facilitates collaboration and partnerships including the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water, Bradford MD Council and local landowners. ART has built momentum over the past years and delivered a wide range of increasingly ambitious projects within the catchment, with financial values ranging from ca £1m downwards.

The following recent projects demonstrate the foundations on which the ART can build:

- community engagement (working with volunteers on practical conservation tasks and citizen science projects)
- fish passage design (weir removal and bypass channels)
- wetland creation
- river and floodplain restoration
- natural flood management (NFM) delivery
- stakeholder engagement (including facilitating a local farm cluster), and partnership building.

## Financial

Our turnover has grown steadily over the last few years as the number and scale of our range of projects has expanded. Turnover has grown from ca. £89.73k in the financial year to end of March 2019, to £574.36k to the end of March 2023 and this has created internal challenges managing the finances of multiple projects, as well as growing sufficient reserves to be confident about organisational sustainability.

All of our projects are fully funded, and careful planning has ensured that we have no current cashflow challenges. One key management objective of the Trust is to grow our Operating Reserves in future years.

A further priority is to secure funding, especially for staff time, in line with our existing objectives, rather than constantly adapting our delivery programme to suit funding opportunities. Retaining our staff and the capital that they represent in terms of skills and knowledge is a key to our success.

# Appointment of the new Chief Executive

The Aire Rivers Trust's Board of Trustees is seeking to appoint a new Chief Executive.

The role presents an exciting opportunity to take the trust forward and to make significant impacts in tackling environmental issues in the River Aire catchment. Opportunities include delivering projects that contribute to implementing the government's 25-Year Environment Plan, developing partnerships that promote integrated catchment management to improve water quality and implementing natural flood management. The role also offers the opportunity to develop existing and new initiatives to offer environmental and relevant funding advice to landowners and farmers in our catchment, including but not limited to ELMS and Biodiversity Net Gain

ART is a charity that operates in a highly professional and business-like way. To be successful, our work requires strong planning, effective people and financial management, efficient processes, as well as proactive marketing and income generation while maintaining the reputation of the Trust through the effective delivery of projects.

The new Chief Executive will have the vision, proven leadership skills and operational experience to review and update the Trust's strategy and to be responsible for designing and delivering a programme to implement the strategy. An understanding of both the challenges and opportunities for securing project funding to ensure the long-term sustainability of ART is essential.

We are looking for an individual with the leadership skills and experience to cover the responsibilities that accompany the role: strategic organisational planning; business development; operational delivery; workforce development; fundraising; and financial management. It is expected that the new CEO will also have environmental knowledge and conservation experience.

The trustees foresee considerable scope for the continued development of ART and the new CEO will be expected to lead and further develop the highly skilled, diverse, and growing team of staff and seize the opportunities offered by the increasing and widespread interest in the environment and sustainability.

ART is a member of the Rivers Trust movement. The new CEO will be expected to work with the Rivers Trust and its members to help deliver its vision by bringing together the people, knowledge, data and intelligence to help rivers thrive again not only for us but for future generations.

# Chief Executive – the role

<b>Job Title:</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Reports to:</b>	Chair of The Aire Rivers Trust
<b>Direct Reports:</b>	Operations Manager (0.8 part-time) Office Administrator (0.6 part-time)
<b>Salary:</b>	£50,000 pa or pro-rate
<b>Hours:</b>	37.5 hours per week (or potentially 0.8 FTE)
<b>Location:</b>	Greengates, Bradford
<b>Contract:</b>	Permanent, subject to performance
<b>Annual leave:</b>	24 days paid holiday per year plus public holidays
<b>Pension:</b>	Subject to negotiation
<b>Notice period:</b>	Three months (each way)

## The role

- To lead and develop the Aire Rivers Trust (ART) to work towards our agreed catchment vision: *'The River Aire will be a thriving river valued for its environmental, social and economic benefits, and which is actively appreciated by the community for its diverse ecology and contribution to flood risk management'*
- In partnership with the Board of Trustees, to play a vital role in shaping and implementing our strategic plans and vision.
- To be the public face of the Trust and represent the organisation at external events and within the Rivers Trust movement
- To ensure that the Aire Rivers Trust is financially stable and a viable operation with a mixture of income streams, and
- To oversee both the development and morale of staff and relations with principal stakeholders and key funders.

# Chief Executive – the role

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES & ACCOUNTABILITIES

### Operations

- Lead and work with the staff team with empathy and passion to implement the Trust's strategy for improving the Aire and its tributaries
- Develop and lead the Trust's fundraising strategy to obtain ongoing funding for our work
- Proactively develop and build relationships with organisations and individuals outside the Trust who are essential for furthering our aims
- To report on ART activities to the Board regularly and to ensure that any issues of consequence are brought to their attention immediately
- Report regularly to the Board of Trustees on progress against the Trust objectives, the sound financial management of the organisation and the meeting of any statutory requirements (e.g. Health and Safety)
- To support the Operations Manager in the general management of the Trust – ensuring that staff, systems and processes are in place for the effective running of the organisation and its work programmes by its current aims, charity law and any relevant best practice guidance
- To develop a pipeline of deliverable projects and to fundraise for them in line with the Trust's strategy for regenerating the River Aire and its catchment
- Act as Chair of the Aire Catchment Network
- Have overall accountability for the effective running of the Trust's finances, including preparing an annual budget for consideration by the Board
- Manage existing and develop new relationships and partnerships with various organisations and individuals to help ART strategically grow the delivery and impact of its programs – including local government, NGOs, funders, local community networks and the press. In particular, continue our positive relationships with the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and neighbouring Rivers Trusts
- Have overall accountability for continued improvements in the Trust's data, knowledge, and evidence collection to help steer and monitor the effectiveness of our work.
- Lead on the Trust's communication strategy – ensure our range of messages are communicated to our various audiences consistently, most effectively and cost-efficiently
- To collaborate with the Trustees to maintain the Trust's Risk Register and work with the Trustees and the Operations Manager to ensure that risks are identified and managed appropriately
- To function as Safeguarding Officer, ensuring that the Trust operates in line with best practice in this arena and managing safeguarding breach reports

### Management and leadership

- In conjunction with the Operations Manager, lead the development of a culture within the trust that delivers clarity of roles within the staff team whilst encouraging flexibility
- Guide and give direction to the Trust's talented and dedicated staff to enable them to identify new projects within their areas of expertise.
- Delegate effectively



# Chief Executive – the role

- Lead and inspire the ART team to deliver ambitious, high-quality work and fulfil their professional potential and development
- Ensure CPD for Trust staff that is relevant, useful and developmental
- Manage commissioning of professional (e.g. HR, Legal) services ensuring quality and value for money and being the main point of contact
- Ensure that personnel matters are managed effectively including correspondence, dispute resolution, sickness monitoring, disciplinary processes, policy and the employee handbook
- Ensure compliance to all Trust systems, guidelines & policies
- Ensure compliance with employment law and carefully and consistently consider risk and risk mitigation
- Responsible for Health and Safety, including appointing the named competent person
- In addition to the elements in this job description, this role also includes such other duties as the Trustees may from time to time reasonably require.

# Chief Executive – the role

## Person specification

Essential competencies:

### Strategic Leadership

- Flair for strategic forward planning and developing both the organisation and its staff, and
- Ability to lead a team with emotional intelligence and empathy in order to inspire and empower it.

### Profile and management skills

- Knowledge of the development, resourcing and management of environmental improvement programmes and community engagement
- The ability to negotiate, build networks, make effective contacts at a high level, and work constructively with the media
- The ability to prepare and present reports and budgets clearly, precisely and concisely
- The ability to comprehend complex information across a range of topics, and
- The ability to prioritise a heavy workload and to react in a rapidly changing environment, remaining flexible and calm in all situations
- Sound skills in delegation that is appropriate and sometimes ambitious with a firm commitment to CPD.

### Financial management skills

- The ability to improve ART financial and project reporting systems, and
- The ability to interpret management and project accounts and prepare succinct, but comprehensive reports to the Board.

### Creativity and Innovation

- A talent for Innovative thinking and an aptitude for developing creative fundraising and business opportunities.

Applications will be judged on the basis of the demonstrable skills, experience and expertise listed below:



# Chief Executive – the role

Skills, experience and expertise	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Demonstrable experience of the ability to think strategically in a range of organisational areas (e.g. planning work programmes, funding, communications).	E
Experience in freshwater ecology and an understanding of the issues relating to water environments, water quality, water-related biodiversity and habitat management.	E
An understanding of charities and the voluntary sector	E
Demonstrable experience of managing programme and project delivery.	E
An understanding of finance and financial reporting and past experience of fundraising, including initiating large funding bids.	E
Ability to prioritise and manage workload and time, juggling requirements of a varied role with the ability to manage and oversee the many areas of the Trust's work simultaneously.	E
Excellent written and verbal communication skills.	E
Experience with the media and social media.	E
Excellent presentation and public speaking skills.	E
Demonstrable experience of communicating with and engaging stakeholders across different types of organisations and communities and forming partnerships.	E
Able to occasionally work outside usual business hours	E
Full current UK Driving licence and use of own car	E
Legal authority to work in the UK	E
Existing knowledge of the River Aire catchment	D
Working knowledge of Charity, Employment and Health & Safety legislation	D
Knowledge of the planning system and environmental permitting.	D
Ability to use and understand scientific data – e.g. water quality or ecological data	D
Working knowledge of QuickBooks	D

# Chief Executive – the role

## General notes

The post-holder will be expected to spend time on site as well as undertaking other travel in the River Aire catchment, and occasionally beyond. Therefore, a full, current UK driving licence and daily access to a vehicle covered by business insurance is essential.

This position may occasionally require working during evenings, at weekends and on public holidays. The Trust operates a time-off in lieu system.

The post-holder will be expected to carry out the job responsibilities in an environmentally responsible manner, ensuring as little damage to the environment as possible. ART aims to ensure that all resources are used effectively and efficiently. The post-holder will be expected to apply “sound value for money” principles and follow green procurement principles in undertaking the purchasing or supply of goods and services.

## How to apply

If you would like to apply for this position, 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) demonstrating how you meet the criteria outlined in the Person Specification and outlining why you are interested in working for the Aire Rivers Trust

Please submit your completed application, in PDF format, to [ChairofTrustees@AireRiversTrust.org.uk](mailto:ChairofTrustees@AireRiversTrust.org.uk) to arrive by 5pm on Monday 8th July.

ART is an equal opportunities employer; we value diversity and welcome applications from all sections of the community. We are dedicated to encouraging a supportive and inclusive culture amongst the whole workforce. It is in our best interest to promote diversity and eliminate discrimination in the workplace. When we select candidates for employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit, it is based on their aptitude and ability. We ask individuals to complete a monitoring form to help us monitor the diversity of applicants. It will be separated from your application and will not be seen by anyone involved in recruitment for this position. Find the form here <https://bit.ly/DiversityMonitoring>

## Next steps:

Closing date for applications	Monday 8 <sup>th</sup> July
Shortlisting meeting	Friday 12 <sup>th</sup> July
First interview with ART	Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> July

Interviews will be in person at our Greengates offices. Please state in your application if you have any commitments during the interview period that may coincide with these dates, and if you need any reasonable adjustments at any point in the recruitment process.

If you require any further information, please contact Wendy Robinson at [ChairofTrustees@AireRiversTrust.org.uk](mailto:ChairofTrustees@AireRiversTrust.org.uk)