



Director of Programmes

November 2025

About the Born Free Foundation

Founded by Virginia McKenna DBE, Will Travers OBE and the late Bill Travers MBE in 1984, the Born Free Foundation aims to stop the exploitation and suffering of wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild. From the start, we've opposed the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigned to keep them where they belong – in the wild. We seek a future where animals and people can coexist, and where threatened and endangered species are protected for generations to come.

We aim to create a kinder, more compassionate world, where people and wildlife live alongside each other in harmony, and without conflict.

We work tirelessly to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect, and are able to live their lives according to their needs.

We promote compassionate conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals.

We seek to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world.

Our Approach

We are bold and ambitious, speaking out and being a trusted voice for wild animals, telling the truth about the reality so many animals face in captivity. Confidently and consistently, we campaign for improved policies and wildlife laws in the UK, EU and around the world.

We use the collective power of our supporters and partners to bring about positive change and increase understanding, so that wild animals are no longer exploited for entertainment or traded as commodities.



We aim to enhance people's appreciation of, and connection to, the natural world, enabling them to live sustainably, so their actions can support, not harm, the wild animals that live alongside them or that we share the planet with.

We work in partnership with organisations that amplify our shared impact. We work together to rescue wild animals from captive suffering and, where necessary, care for them for life.

We ensure our Compassionate Conservation programmes enhance the work of others in the landscapes where we work, to increase our collective, positive impact.

We embrace cultures and knowledge, with long established local teams and collaborations in Kenya, Ethiopia, India and South Africa, and a network from around the world. We support and seek to build capacity in partner organisations wherever we work.

To deliver our 2025-2030 Strategy, we are working on four cross organisational objectives:

- End the exploitation, suffering, and killing of wild animals for entertainment and trade by engaging, educating, and empowering society.
- Rescue and care for individual wild animals, either taken from the wild or born in captivity, working towards their release, where possible.
- Advocate for new or improved policies and legislation to end the exploitation, suffering, and killing of wild animals, strengthen measures aimed at delivering the long-term, sustainable protection of wildlife habitats, and securing greater resources for the enforcement of all relevant laws.
- Work with communities living with wildlife to reduce conflict with wild animals, protect wildlife habitats, and promote sustainable human-wildlife coexistence.

Born Free is a registered charity, headquartered in the UK with extensive programmatic work in Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, India and Cameroon. The charity employs circa 150 people, the majority overseas.

The Role

Role: Director of Programmes

Location: Home working with regular attendance at Born Free Foundation offices in Horsham, UK

Salary: £70,000 to £80,000



- Other:** Individuals must have the right to work in the UK.
- Travel:** Frequent travel to visit the field teams and projects overseas, and regular travel to attend national and international conferences to represent the charity.

Job Summary

Born Free Foundation is looking for a Director of Programmes to lead the Foundation's extensive programmatic activities and lead the organisation as part of the charity's Executive Management Team. The Director of Programmes reports to the Executive President.

This important, new role will provide strategic oversight and direction of our programmatic activities, ensuring they have maximum and sustainable impact in our Key Geographies - Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, India, Cameroon and the UK - and through grant funding partner organisations.

This role has responsibility for leading a multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural programmatic team of approximately 115 staff across the UK, Kenya and Ethiopia, alongside working with key partner organisations in South Africa, India, and Cameroon who help deliver our Tier 1 projects. In addition, Born Free awards a number of smaller grants to other organisations to help fund the delivery of our Tier 2 projects. You will be involved in recommending programme priorities and oversee an annual budget of circa £4m.

The role holder will be accountable for ensuring that programmatic activities deliver measurable impact in accordance with Born Free's strategy and mission, whilst driving operational rigour and inspiring high performance across the programmatic teams. As a member of the Executive Management Team, you will also work with colleagues to ensure the charity delivers our strategy in line with our agreed values and behaviours.

The role holder will lead and support seven current programmatic heads of department and Country Director leads, help monitor, execute, evaluate, and report on the Foundation's strategy (2025-30), and build systems that deliver high performance across all programmes. In addition to the direct reports, the Director of Programmes will also have a close working relationship with the Kenya Country Director who is responsible for the effective delivery of our impact in Kenya, the largest area of programmatic investment we make. The Kenya Country Director also reports to the Executive President.



Candidate Profile

The Born Free Foundation is looking to appoint an individual to lead the charity's programmes for the future and the long-term. The charity welcomes applicants from different backgrounds and with relatable experience, not necessarily sourced from the fields of conservation or animal welfare. Nevertheless, the successful candidate needs to be deeply committed to the mission of Born Free and have an in-depth understanding of programmatic delivery and evaluation.

The Foundation is seeking an established leader with a sound track record of ensuring programmatic delivery across field programmes, engaging communities and influencing the policy space. They will be an authentic, emotionally intelligent, energetic leader, with proven grounding in the principles of programme delivery in a similar working environment, able to lead established experts and inspire teams to greater impact. They will be a values-driven individual, committed to sustainability, inclusion and equity, leading with humility and integrity, while setting an impeccable example and maintaining necessary authority. They will be equally at home (and adept at) engaging with village elders as they will be working at government and inter-governmental level, or with donors and communicators to mobilise support. They will embody Born Free's spirit of transparency, integrity, courage and kindness while being ambitious about the impact that the Foundation can achieve in a critical next decade for wild animals and nature.

The individual will be a quick learner, able to analyse and make decisions in a fast-paced organisation. They will be able to process insights, analyse and use the tools at hand to work with colleagues to make the right decisions for maximum effectiveness and impact. They will be competent in analysing and managing risk, and be a skilled mediator and negotiator, able to engage with all audiences effectively. Critically, they will understand the difference between enabling and disabling management, process and procedure.

They should have experience of working in dynamic environments and have proven ability and understanding of the challenges involved in implementing programmes in multiple overseas locations and cultures, able to deliver effective and supportive remote management that inspires and empowers. They will, themselves, be resilient, with experience of working in field conditions and able to lead in response to external situations that may threaten the charity's programme work.

Working with the Head of Comms and PR and her team, the individual will be an adept communicator, confident in public speaking, experienced with the media, and able to create their own content and present effectively.

Working with the Director of Fundraising and her team, the individual will preferably have experience of business partnerships, interacting with fundraising and communications teams, and have the ability to marshal effective face to face engagement with important donors.



The role holder will have a close working relationship with the Executive President, to whom the role reports, and will promote the high-achieving, values-driven culture of Born Free.

The individual will be required to undertake regular international travel to assess and monitor programmes and projects across the entire Born Free programmatic portfolio.

Responsibilities and Accountabilities

1. Programmes, Impact and Delivery

- Lead the further design, development, implementation and innovation of programmes, in line with Born Free's mission and strategic priorities, to ensure the greatest impact and best possible outcomes for wildlife and communities.
- Ensure coordination across programmatic departments, consistent and transparent communication and delivery of strategic priorities across programmatic teams.
- Monitor, evaluate, and support the quality and impact of global programmes, including through regular international travel to programme sites.
- Identify emerging priorities, threats, and opportunities which may affect Born Free's work globally and advise the Executive Management Team accordingly.
- Translate strategy into scalable, impactful, fundable programme models and projects, adaptable to different regions or ecosystems.
- Provide leadership, oversight and support for the effective delivery of our diverse programmes, ensuring quality, impact, and compliance with internal standards, donor requirements and accepted best practice.
- Develop and implement robust and proportionate Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) frameworks to support programmes delivery, reporting and decision-making in line with the Foundation's Strategic Plan.
- Drive adaptive management practices – ensuring that evolving programmes are evidence based and ethically sound.
- Support the creation of dashboards and analytics tools that provide the Board and leadership with actionable insights.
- Drive day-to-day efficiencies across programmatic departments.
- Leverage existing, emerging and new technologies, including specifically, AI where relevant, to improve programmatic outputs, tracking, and team alignment.

2. Leadership

- Lead, motivate and develop a high-performing, integrated programmatic team, championing a culture that is agile, open to learning, and operationally innovative.



- Be responsible for programmatic human resources, including capacity building, ensuring adherence to organisational standards and culture in compliance with best practices of HR Policy and Procedures and the Staff Handbook.
- Be responsible for efficient and affordable resource allocation of people and charity assets to deliver programmatic and organisational objectives, working within financial envelopes set by the CFO and the EMT.
- Encourage best practice knowledge sharing and process adoption across the charity.
- Promote an inclusive, participatory approach that seeks out and reflects local knowledge and community engagement.
- With colleagues, including the Executive President and Kenya and Ethiopia Country Directors, build effective relationships with key stakeholders, including existing and potential delivery partners, local NGOs, government bodies, research institutions, and indigenous communities who share our values.
- With others, represent Born Free externally, including to build profile and to influence discussions in line with our strategic priorities and that will help achieve our long-term objectives for wild animals.

3. Operational and Financial Management and Compliance

- Oversee activity, departmental, and overall programmatic budgets, ensuring efficient use of resources, financial affordability and accountability, and maximum impact proportionate to the investment.
- Support fundraising efforts, contributing to donor proposals and reports, and, where relevant, represent programme plans and impact to current and potential funders.
- Align programme activities with funding cycles and donor expectations, mitigating delivery risks.

4. Risk, Governance and Compliance

- Ensure our key programmes (which focus on our primary species and primary geographies) comply with legal, ethical, environmental, and safeguarding standards across all operating jurisdictions.
- Ensure that the agreed third-party projects that we support demonstrate impact, excellent financial management and safeguarding policy management.
- Identify and, with relevant colleagues, manage programmatic risks (e.g., political, ecological, reputational), escalating where necessary.
- Provide reports to the Executive President, the Executive Management Team, and Board on programme performance, impact, and strategic alignment.



5. Representation and Advocacy

- Serve as a key media and public event spokesperson for the charity on programme-related matters.
- Represent the organisation in global networks, forums, and high-level stakeholder meetings.
- Advocate for evidence-based, ethical programmatic practices and contribute to policy dialogue, where appropriate.

Key Skills and Experience

Skills and Knowledge

- A relevant degree and/or extensive experience across one (preferably more than one) of the following disciplines: conservation; animal welfare; environmental protection; community engagement; development; sustainability; ecology; or related fields.
- Outstanding communication, presentation, negotiation, influencing, and stakeholder engagement skills.
- A clear applied understanding of MEAL Systems (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning).
- The ability to produce audience-specific, accessible reports which support all levels of programmatic understanding.
- Excellent interpersonal and leadership skills, with the authority and confidence to manage performance, make bold decisions that are in the best interests of Born Free, and address disciplinary matters effectively and sensitively.
- A strong understanding of safeguarding and risk management.
- A good appreciation of Policy and how Policy can support or help craft other programmatic activities and their impact.
- Able to establish, build, and maintain successful collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders and partners.

Experience

- Proven experience designing, delivering and scaling programme delivery in an impact-focused or operationally complex environment.
- Experienced and confident international traveller.
- Proven line-management of senior level staff.
- Experience of managing significant financial resources, allocating them to achieve the maximum impact.



- Strong operational and strategic leadership, with the ability to codify delivery models, build scalable systems, and maintain momentum and quality
- Experience of working internationally across diverse cultures.
- Ability to foster a high-performance culture, and collaborate effectively with other leaders and support functions.
- Demonstrable experience of planning and managing significant budgets.
- Established network of contacts within the not-for-profit and, where appropriate, other external stakeholders, including Government decision-makers.
- Demonstrable experience managing programmes, supporting the creation of compelling grant applications, reporting outcomes, and assessing impact.

How to Apply

All correspondence, at this stage, should be via Oxford HR. To apply for this post, click on the "Apply" button on the job advert page, complete our online application form, and submit your CV and cover letter as two different documents, which should be prepared before applying as they will be considered in the application process.

The cover letter should be no more than two pages long and explain why you are interested in this post and how your skills and experience make you a good fit.

The document should be saved in PDF in the following format: Your First Name-Your Last Name-Documents Name-Date (mmyy) e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-1125-BornFreeFoundation or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-1125-BornFreeFoundation.

Please note that all our clients recruiting in the UK are legally obliged to confirm that the appointee is eligible to work in the UK. As of 1 January 2021, government's new regulations will apply. For further information visit the Home Office website at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/work-visas>.

Timeline

Closing Date: 2nd January 2026

First stage interviews: Online - 15th and 16th January 2026

Final interviews: In-person at our Horsham Office - 4th - 6th February 2026



Selection Process

All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the role email to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.

Equality Statement

Equality and diversity are at the core of the Born Free Foundation's values. Staff are expected to work collectively and individually to promote a constructive and sensitive approach to others from a variety of backgrounds, where the work of others is valued and respected.

Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please email at jmulu@oxfordhr.com in the first instance.

About Oxford HR

Oxford HR is a B Corp certified leadership consultancy. Having worked within a diverse range of institutions, from not-for-profits and charities to governments and corporate environments, we've seen the powerful impact that the perfect team can have.

Finding innovative leaders can be a challenge; and yet their transition into leadership is vital to an organisation's mission and success. We work across the globe to search for and support remarkable leaders and teams, improve their board effectiveness and support on a range of leadership functions.

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