



**THE DONKEY
SANCTUARY**



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CANDIDATE PACK
OCTOBER 2026



ABOUT THE DONKEY SANCTUARY

The Donkey Sanctuary was founded by Dr Elisabeth Svendsen in 1969. Since then, the charity has steadily grown into an international animal welfare organisation at the forefront of transforming the lives of millions of donkeys and supporting the people who care for them. Dr Svendsen's legacy now stretches over fifty years and has helped incalculable numbers of donkeys around the globe lead a better quality of life.

The breadth and depth of our work means that no one in the world knows more about donkeys. We also know our passion for donkey welfare is shared by many others. It is a privilege that the public and our staff, partners and supporters trust us to make ethical decisions for donkeys. We estimate that there are more than 60 million donkeys and mules in the world and we work across the globe, tailoring our approach to meet donkeys' unique challenges in different regions.

In the United Kingdom and Europe, we maintain a network of farms, sanctuaries and holding bases ready to help provide direct care. Our headquarters in Sidmouth, Devon has been at the forefront of donkey welfare for over 50 years and is not just open for visiting but is also a vital educational centre.

We also operate specialist veterinary care centres at our donkey hospital in Devon and donkey clinic in Lamu, Kenya and we help design and fund expertly designed programmes that directly support donkeys and make

our resources and expertise available to donkey-owning communities. The Donkey Sanctuary supports projects in many countries including Ethiopia, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal, sharing expertise, training harness makers and vets to help improve donkey welfare.

Sadly, the biggest crisis facing donkeys today is the global trade in donkey skins. We are urgently leading calls for national governments to take immediate steps to halt the trade until it can be proven to be humane, sustainable and safe. Good Donkey welfare has a powerful impact on peoples lives and the organisation sees that ensuring this impact of peoples lives are maximised. In many countries they provide draft power critical to poorer communities and their impact is disproportionately felt by vulnerable groups in societies; such as women, children and the infirm. Donkeys' lives intersect with people's lives in a manner that means the welfare and livelihoods of both are intrinsically linked.

Ultimately The Donkey Sanctuary is a powerful voice and protector for donkeys everywhere.

VISION

A world where every donkey has a good quality of life.

MISSION

Improving the lives of donkeys every day.





LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Thank you for expressing your interest in The Donkey Sanctuary. We are already one of the world's largest equine welfare charities and, as we continue to work on an ambitious five-year strategy (2023-2027) and develop our next 5 year strategy, it is an incredibly exciting time to join us.

Since its foundation in 1969 The Donkey Sanctuary has grown from a Devon-based charity rescuing UK donkeys from neglect and abuse to an international animal welfare organisation transforming the lives of millions of donkeys and mules, and the people who depend on them for their livelihood.

Today, we have 16 sanctuary sites across GB and Europe with 5,900 donkeys in our care with around 1,800 of these being in guardian homes. We have delivered veterinary, welfare and educational programmes in almost 40 countries around the world, reaching donkeys and mules most in need, which

in turn supports the people who depend on them. Our aim is to help many more of the tens of millions of donkeys and mules worldwide through field projects, research and advocacy, promoting lasting collaborations with communities, partner NGOs, governments, the media and public.

We are, therefore, seeking an individual who will maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity when performing their duties and representing the Charity; and who shares a commitment to our aims and strategic vision.

This is an exciting and unrivalled opportunity to lead our international animal welfare organisation.

Help us make a difference!

Paul Lunn
Chair – Board of Trustees

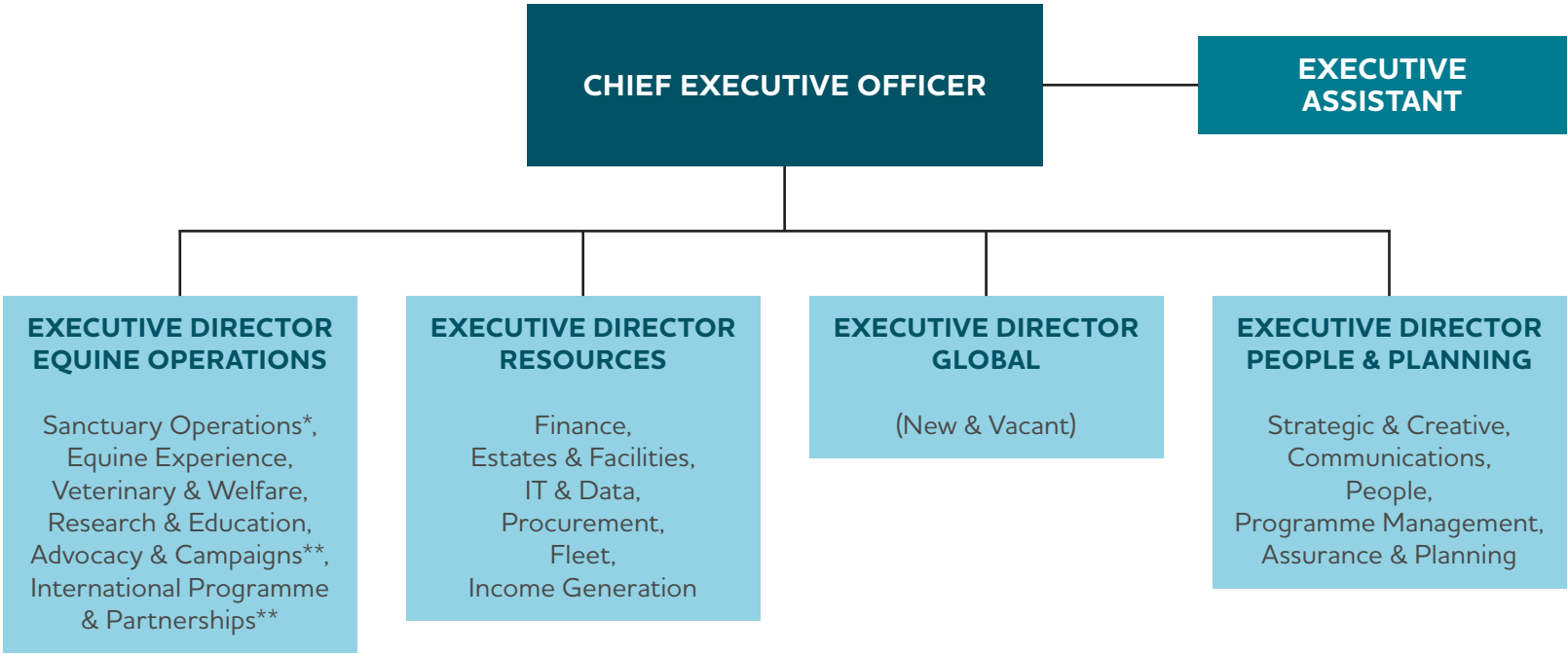
OUR PEOPLE

We are committed to ensuring the health, wellbeing and development of our 780 employees at home and abroad. Our people demonstrate their commitment, creativity and passion daily. All have roles vital to the care, education and sanctuary work, bringing a wide range of skills and knowledge.

We are a substantial charity in sector terms, and have grown into one of the largest employers, landowners and a popular visitor attraction in East Devon. In addition to our 780 global staff members, we have around 175 active volunteers and work with funded partners in almost 40 countries.

Our Head office is based in beautiful countryside in an area of Outstanding Beauty in East Devon.

SENIOR LEADERS ORGANISATION CHART



**Including Ireland, Spain, Italy and Europe.*

***Expectation is these areas will move under the Executive Director Global once appointed.*



OUR VALUES

WE PUT DONKEYS FIRST

Every decision we make, we make for donkeys – this difference is our strength.

WE ARE INQUISITIVE

Like donkeys, we are endlessly curious and natural problem solvers. Our expertise is built on the belief that no obstacle is too great, no insight is too small.

WE ARE COMPASSIONATE

We understand and respect the perspectives of others – making ethical decisions that our people, partners and supporters trust us to make.

WE DO THE RIGHT THING

We understand that the welfare of donkeys, people and planet are inextricably linked. We lead by example and take accountability for delivering our commitments.

WE WORK TOGETHER AS ONE

Just as donkeys instinctively know how to work together, wherever we are in the world, whatever we do, we are one sanctuary.

OUR STRATEGY AND IMPACT

The Donkey Sanctuary is reaching the conclusion of its most recent strategic period (2023 to 2027) in which we grew substantially in both impact and income. The Donkey Sanctuary has made a transformational difference to the lives of so many donkeys around the world.

Through our work we have:

- Transformed the lives of donkeys worldwide through community and partnership work to improve the way donkeys are treated, including harnessing, dentistry and farriery.
- Played a pivotal role in several countries standing against or halting the development of the skin trade.
- Human impact – Donkeys have been a cornerstone in human existence and they still prop up entire communities today, ferrying water, food and crops.
- Research – From research projects to workshops and published books, our expertise and resources help animal welfare professionals to care for donkeys and mules.
- During 2025 we improved the lives of over 2 million donkeys. Over 930,000 were reached through provision of advice, research, education, training and knowledge sharing, and a further 1.1 million via 25 international projects across 5 key regions.
- Generated £59.6m in income and welcomed over 400,000 visitors to Sidmouth, maintaining strong progress towards our cumulative income ambition.

Our focus is now on developing the new global strategy for our next 5 year strategic period and the expectation is that the CEO will lead on this.





THE ROLE

ROLE:

Chief Executive Officer

LOCATION:

The post is based at The Donkey Sanctuary Sidmouth and the post holder, whilst having some flexibility to work from another location would normally be expected to be on site the majority of the time.

SALARY:

Highly competitive

BENEFITS:

26 days of annual leave (plus bank holidays), Contributory pension (Employer 10.5%, employee 4.5%), life insurance at four times annual salary, Healthshield and Bupa Private Health Cover.

Flexible working patterns will be considered for the right candidate.

JOB SUMMARY

The CEO is responsible for the development of and implementation of the approved strategic plan and operational leadership of The Donkey Sanctuary and protecting our unique status as a world leader in donkey welfare. The CEO will be accountable for the delivery of the plan, while maintaining day to day leadership of all the charities activities. This requires excellence in leadership, operational oversight and continual improvement. The CEO will be key to ensuring the charity's compliance with laws, regulations including the approved policy framework and acting at all times in the best interests of The Donkey Sanctuary.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

LEADERSHIP

- Leading by example, supporting and inspiring all employees and volunteers of The Donkey Sanctuary at home and abroad and securing their loyalty and commitment to the charity's aims, objectives and ambitions;
- Working with Senior Leadership Team to ensure the effective contribution of all staff to the delivery of the charity's objectives;
- Promoting a working environment that is healthy, safe, flexible, creative and welcoming to attract, retain and support high calibre staff able to deliver consistently excellent achievements;
- Promoting an inclusive, ambitious and supportive culture;
- Seeking out, developing and maintaining effective working relationships with all relevant organisations and individuals to promote the work of the charity and facilitate the implementation of its strategic objectives;
- Being a guardian of the reputation of The Donkey Sanctuary;
- Uniting staff under a 'one Donkey Sanctuary' culture and taking responsibility for ensuring that the social, cultural, working and animal welfare environment of the charity is fit for purpose;

STRATEGY

- Working with the Board in relation to the development of the charity's strategic vision and be responsible for leading the implementation of it;

- Ensuring that in aspects of life with The Donkey Sanctuary, our activities and our actions adhere to our values;
- Seeking out and implementing opportunities for innovation and ensuring that The Donkey Sanctuary remains at the forefront of positive change at home and abroad;

RESOURCES AND BUDGETS

- Promoting the sound financial management of The Donkey Sanctuary's financial resources to ensure the continued availability of surpluses for investment into core mission;
- Advising the Trustees on the distribution and/or utilisation of resources and having responsibility for the management of these resources;
- Holding executive accountability for the financial leadership of the charity, including forecasting and strategic budget leadership;

COMMUNICATION AND INFLUENCE

- Developing, maintaining and promoting the profile of The Donkey Sanctuary at home and abroad;
- Connecting the organisation internally to ensure that all staff and volunteers are on the same journey by engaging, and being seen to engage, with all levels within The Donkey Sanctuary;
- Ensuring effective communication of the charity's objectives and activities both internally and externally, at home and abroad;

- Developing strong relationships internally and externally including collaborations and partnership working with like-minded organisations and policy makers;

GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

- Liaise with the Board to ensure that the charity's overall governance structure, policies and procedures are appropriate and effective, taking remedial measures and implementing changes as necessary;
- Attend all meetings of the Board and the formal sub-Committees of the Board. Prepare a written report in advance of each Board meeting detailing matters of interest and concern regarding the charity's activities during the previous period; the Board works on the principle of "no surprises";
- Ensure that effective operational policies and processes in all the charity's functions are developed and maintained. Review and update scope and content to meet legal, regulatory and best practice needs;
- Oversee the development and practical application of all organisational policies and procedures e.g. with regard to health and safety, equality and diversity, and safeguarding;
- Ensure that the charity complies with best practice in all areas of operation including inter alia: Safeguarding, Health & safety, Employment law, Data governance, and Financial and tax laws;



SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

ESSENTIAL

- Proven track record of leadership, fundraising, financial management and successful delivery of strategic plans in international environments;
- Track record of team building and management at a senior level and a commitment to continuous improvement;
- Experience of the not-for-profit environment;
- Understanding of the issues and policy context in which The Donkey Sanctuary operates at home and abroad;
- Ability to communicate, influence and persuade to stakeholders at all levels and build persuasive arguments based on data, logic and objective merits of solutions;
- Ability to build and sustain professional working relationships with a wide range of people both inside and outside the organisation;
- Compassion, empathy and respect for donkeys and mules, and for those who work with them;

- Positive, pro-active and dynamic;
- Committed to best practice and with a drive for continuous improvement;
- Maintains performance, professionalism and composure when under pressure;
- Personal resilience required for a global CEO NGO role.

DESIRABLE

- Experience as a not-for-profit CEO;
- Existing network of contacts within key stakeholder organisations including government at home and abroad, aid agencies, NGOs, and other relevant corporates;
- Awareness of contractual and legal issues relating to funding, employment and charity status;
- Empathy with a grass-roots bottom up approach to animal welfare and promoting a sustainable environment;
- Pre-existing pride and passion for The Donkey Sanctuary recognising its achievements;
- Change management experience.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

The board of The Donkey Sanctuary are seeking a new CEO to lead it through its next evolution. The successful candidate will be an experienced leader, comfortable in operating within an increasingly global organisation. They will oversee an organisation with a make-up of overseas programmes and physical facilities that require different approaches to oversight. They will understand how to get the best out of staff and build and be able to demonstrate the approach of compassionate leadership and help drive ambition and inspiration through the organisation. Critically they will be able to quickly understand the organisational model and build a strategy for the next five years, gaining the remit from the board to do so.

The right individual will be adept at operating and communicating at the nexus of sectors and issues that relate to the welfare of donkeys. Key to this existence at the nexus of sectors is a high degree of competence as a networker, able to generate leads and deliver results against them. They will be a good orator and be able to mobilise and inspire audiences, ensuring that the organisation is seen as the voice for donkeys globally. They will be principled, passionate and able to sell a strategic vision and communicate this to different stakeholders internally and externally. They will be able to build bridges and deploy diplomacy as well as be able to communicate hard truths and negotiate effectively. Self-aware and culturally attuned, they will be comfortable in global forums and working internationally.

The individual will be able to inspire staff and take them on the strategic journey with global ambition. Equally the new CEO should be able to shepherd all of the organisations stakeholders through the next strategic period. Of critical importance is tying together the organisation culture overseas with the one based in the UK and providing coherence and unity between the two. They will understand how to foster accountability across the leadership team of the organisation. They will be on-site, visible, available to staff and collaborative.

The organisation benefits from a stability of income and as such the future strategy will be evolutionary in nature; essentially maintaining trajectory and improving in quality and professionalism, while providing the stability of a mature organisation. The key strategic change will be toward more impact in low to middle income countries where donkey welfare requires attention.

The right individual can come from any sector or background as long as they are credible in the role. They need to be passionate about animals and their place in society. The individual will have a track record of working successfully with boards and have an enthusiasm in working with them to steward the organisation. The organisations interaction with the board revolves around committee work as such the CEO should feel comfortable in this environment. In return, the CEO can expect a level of autonomy, but must also be comfortable with the board engaging more broadly with the executive if needs require.





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 the 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-Document Name-Date (mmyy)-Organisation e.g., Pat-Jones-CV-1026-TheDonkeySanctuary or Pat-Jones-CoverLetter-1026-TheDonkeySanctuary.

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.

TIMELINE

- Closing Date: 27th November 2026
- First Stage Interviews: TBC
- Final Interviews: TBC

SELECTION PROCESS

All candidates will receive an update regarding their application after the closing date. We advise candidates to add the Oxford HR Consultant email address (see below) to their safe senders list and regularly check their spam folder.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

Equality and diversity are at the core of The Donkey Sanctuary’s values. We strive to embed equity, diversity and inclusion in the choices we make and the way we work every day.

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 jsawyer@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.

Learn more at: oxfordhr.com





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