



CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

APPOINTMENT BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2026

URBAN TREES FOR ALL



WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in becoming Trees for Cities' next Chair of Trustees. Trees for Cities is the UK's only national charity dedicated to urban trees, and for 33 years we have brought people together to plant and care for trees in their neighbourhoods. Since 1993, over 260,000 people have helped us plant and establish 2 million trees across 100 urban areas. With the climate and biodiversity crises accelerating, and 86% of the population now living in towns and cities, our work has never felt more urgent or impactful.

Urban populations are facing rising temperatures, more extreme weather and declining biodiversity, with the greatest impacts falling on the most vulnerable communities. Trees offer a proven nature-based solution: cooling our streets, cleaning our air, reducing flood risk, fostering biodiversity and supporting human health and wellbeing. Yet access to trees and their multiple benefits is far from equal. Our work is focused on addressing this inequity and ensuring that people in disadvantaged communities feel the benefits of greener, healthier, more resilient cities. We are proud to operate at the intersection of social and environmental justice.

This year we will plant our 2 millionth tree and launch our new organisational strategy, *Trees Matter!* (2025–2030), which sets out our ambition to galvanise people power and create a movement for urban trees and tree equity across the UK. As the impacts of the climate crisis deepen and urgency increases, our role as the UK's only national urban tree-planting charity gives us a vital opportunity to provide national leadership, build mutually beneficial partnerships and drive significant action.

We are incredibly proud of our work - from transforming school playgrounds into greener, healthier spaces to engaging thousands of volunteers in community planting projects. But we are equally proud of how we work: with energy, collaboration, creativity and a deep commitment to inclusion and sustainability.

As our next Chair, your insight, skills and stewardship will help shape the organisation's strategic direction and support the next stage of our growth. You will play a key role in ensuring that we continue to grow responsibly, strengthen our financial sustainability, deepen our impact and remain true to our values. Working closely with our Chief Executive and Board of Trustees, you will help us seize opportunities, build momentum and inspire people across the UK to plant, protect and advocate for trees in the places they call home - building greener and healthier towns and cities for generations to come.

This is a rare opportunity to lead the Board of a dynamic and ambitious charity, working with a team whose energy and commitment will help mobilise social action and create meaningful change. If you share our passion, values and commitment, and bring the experience to help us deliver this ambition, we would be delighted to receive your application.

Janine Hawkins
Chair of Trustees
(2018-26)

Kate Sheldon
Chief Executive



ABOUT US

As an urban environmental charity, Trees for Cities engages people to plant and care for trees in their neighbourhoods – improving people's lives through a simple act that has a deceptively powerful impact on both people and places. We involve people of all ages and abilities through tree-related events, activities, volunteering and training, empowering them to be local custodians of our tree heritage.

Our projects transform local spaces, creating leafy estates, parks, playgrounds and streets that inspire a love of trees and make urban areas more resilient to climate change. We target our activities where trees are needed most, particularly in densely populated or tree-deprived areas.

OUR TREE PLANTING PROGRAMMES

Trees for Cities delivers urban forestry across three core programmes:

TREES FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS: We plant and establish thousands of urban trees each year in parks, housing estates and open spaces. Working closely with partners and communities, we help cool streets, clean the air, support biodiversity and build climate resilience in neighbourhoods that need it most.

TREES FOR SCHOOLS: We transform urban school grounds into greener, healthier spaces through trees, forest gardens, outdoor classrooms and wildlife habitats. More than 350 schools have benefitted so far, helping children connect with nature and improving their wellbeing and learning environments.

TREES FOR STREETS: Trees for Cities runs the UK's only national street-tree sponsorship scheme. We make it easy for residents to sponsor, plant and care for new trees on their streets. Combining digital tools with grassroots engagement, the project empowers communities to play an active role in greening their neighbourhoods.

For more information and videos on our programmes of work, please [click here](#).



OUR VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGY

Our vision is **Urban Trees for All**: cities where everybody can live healthy lives among thriving trees, woods and nature. Our organisational vision is underpinned by our mission to “Make Trees Matter”.

Our strategic goal is to create a **Movement for Urban Trees and Tree Equity**, mobilising significant numbers of people to plant, establish and care for trees where they are needed most, transforming neighbourhoods in areas of low tree equity.

Our guiding principle or North Star: By 2050, everybody should be able to see at least 3 trees from their home, live in a neighbourhood with at least 30% tree canopy cover, and have high-quality, public green space within 300 metres from their home.

Underpinned by our Theory of Change, we will achieve our goal to create a movement through five interlinked strategic pillars, through which we will **influence** and **mobilise** people to **plant** and care for trees, **sustain** the impact and **scale** the opportunities across the UK.

By inspiring action, showcasing delivery, strengthening communities, and building financial resilience, we will move from isolated interventions to systemic change. To achieve this, we are evolving from a project-led charity into a movement builder, focusing on five key strategic pillars:

- **INFLUENCE:** Build powerful partnerships to increase awareness, commitment and resources for urban trees, particularly in areas of low tree equity.
- **MOBILISE:** Enhance digital reach and engagement to inspire people to give their voice, time and money to plant, protect and advocate for trees.
- **PLANT:** Deliver precision urban forestry by targeting areas with low tree canopy cover and high deprivation, integrating trees and nature to support climate resilience, health and biodiversity.
- **SUSTAIN:** Empower communities, children, young people and volunteers with skills, knowledge and opportunities to care for trees, boosting local capacity and long-term stewardship.
- **SCALE:** Strengthen our financial resilience, diversify income and grow unrestricted funding to support sustainable growth.

Together, these pillars will enable us to make Trees Matter, address tree inequity at scale, and create leafy, liveable cities for current and future generations.

We will launch our 2025-2030 strategy *Trees Matter!* in March 2026 and plan to hold a stakeholder engagement day in May or June, which our new Chair is warmly invited to attend.

OUR PEOPLE

Trees for Cities has a team of 42 committed staff who are led by a talented Senior Leadership Team (our Executive Committee), and an experienced and committed Board of eight Trustees.

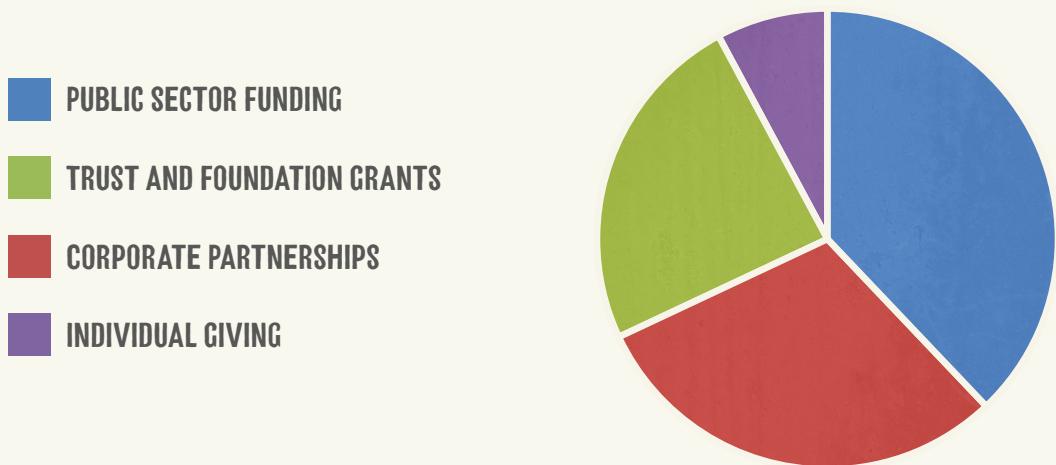
We have a warm, inclusive and vibrant organisational culture with Trustees encouraged to experience our community tree planting events when available. Our staff team is highly motivated by the cause and well supported by the organisation.

Further details on our people can [be found here](#).



OUR FINANCES

Our income is made up of a range of revenue streams from central and local government, businesses, trusts, foundations, lottery, landowners, developers, and individual supporters.



Income in 2024/25 was £5,381,036

The charity has experienced significant growth over the last five years, and we plan for steady, conservative growth through the new strategic period, focusing on building diverse and sustainable income in line with our ethical funding policy.

Like many charities operating in a complex funding and operating environment, 2024/25 was a year of significant challenge due to the closure of many grants and uncertainty following the general election. With a deficit and unplanned use of unrestricted reserves, we took decisive steps to reset the organisation's cost base, improve operational resilience and focus on long-term sustainability. It was a year of learning, adaptation and bold action that required operational and financial adjustment, which ended with a clear path forward, new funding partnerships in place, and renewed confidence in our ability to continue to deliver high impact work while building long-term financial resilience. We are on track to make a surplus this financial year, with a further surplus forecast next year, as we rebuild our unrestricted reserves and invest internally to support future growth.

As we look forward, we expect income growth through strong potential for expansion through Corporate Partnerships, continued success with Lottery, Trusts and Foundations, and increased activity in Individual Giving. Our strong brand and reputation mean that corporate organisations often approach us for partnership opportunities. Current examples of large-scale and/or multi-year partnerships include People's Postcode Lottery, National Lottery Heritage Fund, BUPA Foundation, CBRE and Bauer Media Outdoor.

Our strategy is ambitious in its aim to maximise impact, and achieving this requires healthy and consistent revenue. To support this, we have invested in our fundraising and marketing capability to harness the growing momentum from funders and individuals who are increasingly motivated to support environmental programmes.

To read our latest annual accounts, please [click here](#)

OUR ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

Our organisational values define the charity's identity and guide decision-making. These values are directly linked to the leadership behaviours the organisation aims to embed across all teams and our Board.

- **HEART** – Acting with purpose, joy, and passion for trees and nature.
- **OWNERSHIP** – Taking initiative, accountability, and pride in work.
- **EMPATHY** – Fostering respect, trust, and belonging.
- **INNOVATION** – Applying creativity and data-driven insight to make an impact.
- **COLLABORATION** – Uniting people and communities for collective change.

OUR APPROACH TO EDI

Trees for Cities places Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at the heart of its work, recognising that environmental and social justice are deeply connected and that disadvantaged communities, children and young people face the greatest barriers to accessing the multiple benefits of urban trees. The organisation is committed to ensuring that its staff, volunteers and programmes reflect and engage the diverse communities it serves, fostering trust, meaningful dialogue and a values-based approach to decision-making. Through improved data, inclusive workplace practices, training, collaboration and continuous learning, Trees for Cities will strengthen its EDI practice, remove barriers to participation, and remain open and transparent about progress and challenges as it works to ensure fairer access to urban trees and nature.

We welcome opportunities to bring a diverse range of people, intersectional insights and experiences to our mission and are interested in meeting Chair candidates with lived experience of the themes Trees for Cities operates within. We are keen to hear from individuals who are under-represented in charities based in London and in the environmental sector. This may include people from Black, Asian and other ethnic backgrounds, candidates with disabilities, people from lower socioeconomic or educational backgrounds, or those based in regions outside South East England.

For further details on our approach to EDI, please [click here](#).



OUR GOVERNANCE AND THE CHAIR ROLE

Our Board of trustees is recruited for their diverse skills covering finance, IT, HR, fundraising, marketing, urban forestry, impact, urban planning and EDI. Under the leadership of our current Chair, and in close partnership with our CEO, we have made significant improvements to our governance policies and practices. We now have an established Board subcommittee structure, including our Finance and Risk subcommittee and our new Fundraising and Marketing subcommittee.

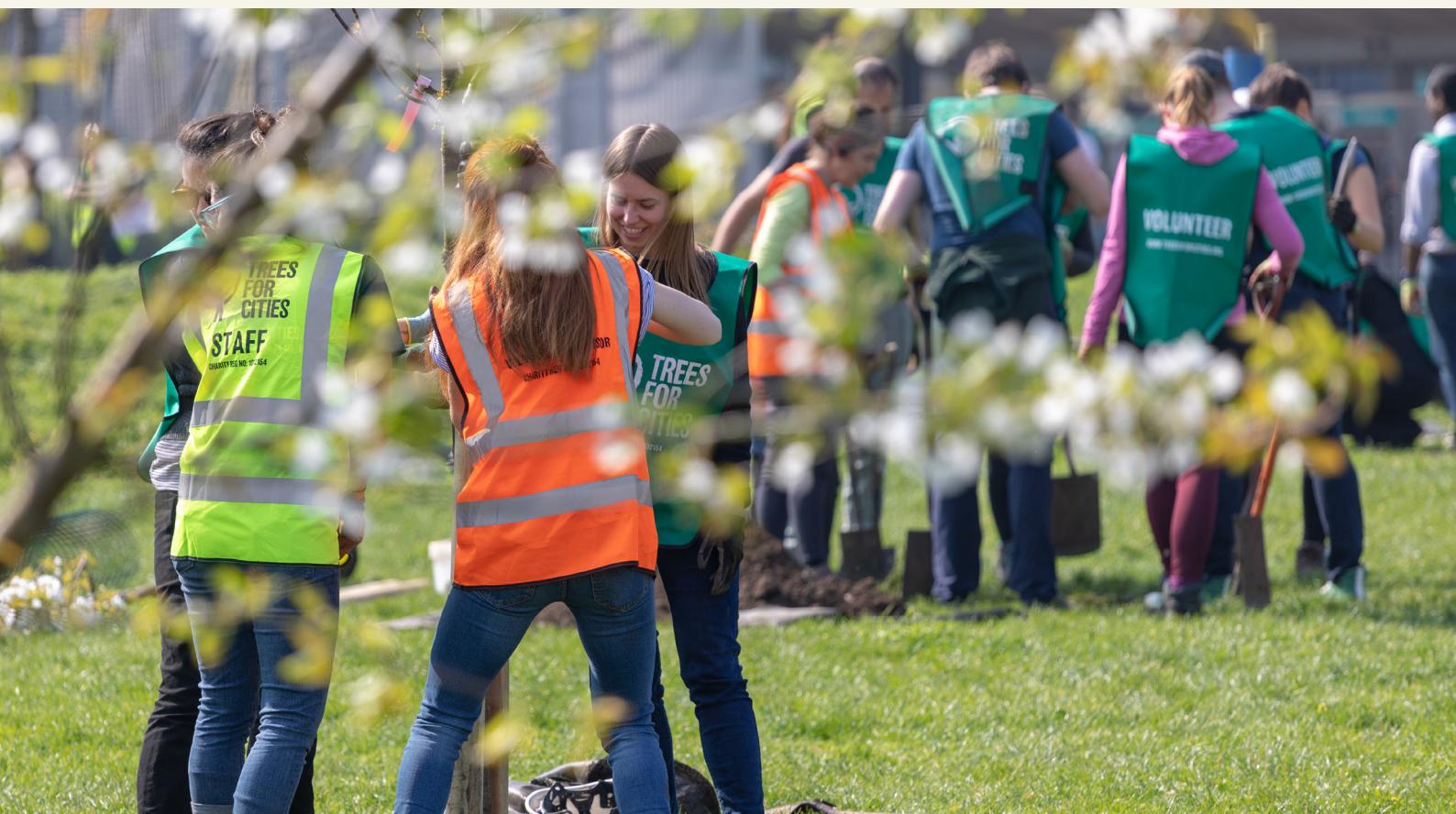
The new Chair will play a key role in continuing this strong governance as we implement our new strategy. The coming years will include important organisational moments, including an office move in December 2026 and succession planning for trustees whose terms end in 2028. Supporting the Senior Leadership Team to strengthen our unrestricted reserves and ensure long-term financial sustainability will also be an important focus.

We enjoy open and trusting relationships across the Board and between trustees and the Senior Leadership Team. Trustees provide constructive challenge and meaningful support, guided by our organisational values, which sit at the heart of how we work. We are seeking an experienced, relational leader who cares deeply about our mission, feels a strong connection with our new strategy, and has the experience to continue strengthening our healthy governance culture. You will help galvanise the Board whilst also ensuring the CEO and staff feel supported and valued in their endeavours.

This is a rare opportunity to lead the Board of a dynamic, growing charity at a pivotal moment. Our current Chair, Janine Hawkins, will step down in 2026 at the end of her second term, having successfully led the charity through two strategic periods and receiving Third Sector's Charity Chair of the Year Award in 2023.

We are seeking an exceptional individual to become our next Chair of Trustees, providing strategic direction and strong governance to ensure Trees for Cities continues to thrive. Your leadership will help us address some of the most pressing challenges of our time: climate change, biodiversity loss and the unequal access to trees and green spaces.

Alongside the experience outlined in the person specification below, ideal candidates will understand the dynamics of small but ambitious organisations and know how to balance opportunity while managing risk and limited resources. Experience in environmental, sustainability or urban greening sectors is welcome but not essential; what matters most is integrity, the ability to lead and inspire, and a commitment to driving meaningful impact.



CHAIR TIME COMMITMENT

Whilst some flexibility may be required, the Chair time commitment is likely to be one to two days per month on average, depending on particular activity and the strategic and governance cycle. More time may be required at the start of the term to build new relationships.

Key dates in the diary each year include:

- **Quarterly Board meetings** held in-person in London (typically Wednesday afternoons in February, May, September, December).
- The **September Board meeting** is combined with a Board strategy meeting on an annual Board away day.
- **Triannual Finance and Risk Sub-Committee meetings** (typically online in February, April and September).
- **Additional meetings and support** for the Chief Executive and senior leadership team as required.
- **Induction and ongoing training.**

TERMS

- Voluntary position; reasonable expenses reimbursed in line with our expenses policy.
- Term: 4 years, renewable for a second 4-year term in line with our Articles of Association.



ROLE DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE OF ROLE

The Chair of Trustees will provide leadership to Trees for Cities' Board, ensuring that it operates effectively, fulfils its legal and governance responsibilities, and supports the charity to achieve its strategic mission to make trees matter.

The new Chair will oversee the successful embedding of our strategy, ensuring its impact and navigating any iterations that may be required, subject to ongoing learnings and any regulatory developments.

The Chair will work collaboratively with the Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team and act as an ambassador for the charity to foster strong relationships with stakeholders.

KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Specific duties of the Chair of Trustees:

- Provide leadership to the Board, ensuring that Trustees fulfil their legal duties and responsibilities for the robust and effective governance of Trees for Cities.
- Chair Board meetings effectively, encouraging open and constructive debate, and ensuring decisions are made in the best interests of the charity and in-line with organisational values.
- Foster a collaborative team environment in which all board members have an equal voice and where the expected standards of behaviour are clear and exemplified.
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to support, challenge, and hold them accountable for delivering the strategic plan.
- Ensure the Board sets and reviews the charity's strategic direction and monitors performance against agreed objectives.
- Represent Trees for Cities externally, acting as an advocate and ambassador to enhance the charity's profile and influence.
- Lead the process for Board recruitment, induction, and development, ensuring diversity and inclusion are embedded.
- Oversee the appraisal of the Chief Executive and ensure proper arrangements for their remuneration and support.
- Ensure compliance with charity law, company law, and other relevant regulations.
- General duties of Trustees:
- Ensure the organisation pursues its stated charitable objects and complies with its governing document and relevant legislation.
- Safeguard the good name and values of Trees for Cities.
- Ensure resources are applied effectively and exclusively in pursuance of charitable objectives.
- Ensure the charity maintains duty of care for staff and volunteers
- Protect and manage the property and funds of the charity and ensure robust financial stability.
- Sit on Board sub-committees and attend internal and external events as required.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

| | ESSENTIAL | DESIRABLE |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Substantial experience in senior leadership role. | X | |
| Experience in a Chair, Vice Chair and/or Trustee/Non-Executive Director role which includes chairing Board or Board committee meetings. | X | |
| Strong understanding of the legal responsibilities of trusteeship including compliance with charity law, charity management and best practice in governance. | X | |
| Strategic thinking and ability to lead discussions on complex issues. | X | |
| Understanding of charity finance including reserves and risk management policies, with strong business acumen. | X | |
| Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to inspire, build consensus and manage diverse viewpoints. | X | |
| Experience of senior-level coaching or mentoring, in a formal or informal capacity. Able to work effectively with the Chief Executive, knowing when to step in and step back, as well as when to challenge and when to support. | X | |
| Independent judgment and willingness to challenge constructively. | X | |
| Display personal humility. Low on ego, offering important soft skills such as listening, empathy and a sense of humour when appropriate. | X | |
| Tact, diplomacy, and ability to foster trustee and respect. | X | |
| Commitment to Trees for Cities' mission, goal and values. | X | |
| Ability to devote sufficient time and energy to the role. | X | |
| Knowledge of environmental, sustainability, or urban development sectors. | | X |
| Experience in stakeholder engagement and advocacy, particularly in fundraising. | | X |



HOW TO APPLY

To arrange an informal and confidential discussion to explore the role in more detail, please contact Ami Jenick at People Beyond Profit via email ami@peoplebeyondprofit.co.uk or phone +44(0)7957316541.

To formally apply, please upload your CV along with a 1000 word (max) supporting statement, outlining why you are interested and how you meet the points in the person specification via the following link: www.peoplebeyondprofit.co.uk/jobs/tfcchair

Please ensure that you have included any dates when you will not be available or might have difficulty with the recruitment timetable.

EDI in this recruitment process:

In line with our desire to build an inclusive and diverse Board, Trees for Cities' recruitment processes seek to ensure a fair and inclusive recruitment process. We aim to take deliberate steps towards accessibility and equal opportunity to interview and recruit the very best people. If there is anything we can do to help you apply and participate in this recruitment process – please ask and we'll do what we can to accommodate.

CLOSING DATE:

11 March 2026

PEOPLE BEYOND PROFIT ONLINE CONVERSATIONS:

17 March – 15 April 2026

CEO ONLINE 'FIRESIDE' CONVERSATIONS:

17 – 24 March 2026

TREES FOR CITIES INTERVIEW DATES:

FIRST STAGE IN-PERSON TRUSTEE PANEL:

27 April 2026

FINAL STAGE COFFEE WITH CEO AND CURRENT CHAIR ON ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

28, 29 April, 5, 6 May 2026.

People Beyond Profit are committed to supporting our clients build more inclusive teams. To understand how we are performing, we ask that you kindly complete the brief equal opportunities questionnaire when you submit your application via our website. Please be assured that your responses are kept confidential, separate from your candidate record, are not part of any application you make.

