

MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST



Chief Executive Officer Information Pack

Contents

Introduction	3
Who we are	4
Strategy.....	5
What we do	6
How we're organised.....	11
Financials	12
Meet the Board	13
Job Description.....	14
Person Specification.....	17
How to apply	19
Timeline	20

Introduction

Dear Candidate

Thank you for expressing your interest in becoming the new Chief Executive Officer of Mourne Heritage Trust.

Mourne Heritage Trust aims to be known as an excellent provider of locally based, strategic management of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We do this by safeguarding the area's biodiversity, providing opportunities for the public and tourists to enjoy it sustainably in the interests of the local community; protecting and enhancing its built and cultural heritage; and promoting understanding of this special area, locally and globally.

Growing steadily since its beginnings in 1997, the Trust is now widely looked to as an exemplar of best practice and repository of expertise in areas including upland erosion control, heathland restoration and mountain bike trail maintenance, among others. This role - as only the third CEO in the 28 years of the organisation's existence - offers the opportunity to build on this record of excellence

We are looking for someone with senior experience of dynamic organisational environments with highly developed leadership skills

to steer our 18 staff, supported by our 17 volunteer trustee/directors. You will be able to help define and deliver on the strategic vision that will see our organisation deliver even more and even better guardianship of our area, enhancing its positive impacts on the community. With strong people management skills, you will be adept at securing consensus and collaboration with a range of public, private and non profit stakeholders. You can learn more about what we do and how we do it elsewhere in this information pack and on our website at mournelive.com.

We are working with Engage Executive Talent to help with the recruitment process. If you have any initial queries relating to the post, they will be delighted to address them in the first instance.

You will be joining a dedicated team of people who care deeply about the difference our organisation makes to the Mournes. If you are attracted by the idea of using your skills and experience to help improve the area and its impact on the community, we would love to hear from you.

David Maginn

Chair 

Who we are

Mourne Heritage Trust was established in 1997 to meet an identified need for locally based, strategic management of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Spanning 570 square kilometres in the southeast of Northern Ireland, this diverse landscape includes the Mourne mountains, a beautiful coastline, the ancient uplands of Slieve Croob and the foothills and drumlin country in between.



The Trust was formed by a partnership of central government agencies and then, three district councils (the AONB now spans only one Council area, Newry, Mourne & Down). Our Board comprises local business, tourism, farming, environmental, recreational and local community interests. As an independent limited company and registered charity, the Trust is committed to protecting and enhancing this special place.

The board of 17 Volunteer Trustees governs the activities of our executive team of 18 staff. The Trust has a turnover of c£1.1m mainly consisting of grant income, over £800k of which is unrestricted. The vast majority of its £1.1m reserves too are unrestricted, including £0.5m in designated funds to cover staff capacity building, capital investment and volunteer expenses.

Strategy

The Trust's Mission

To sustain and enhance the environment, rural regeneration, cultural heritage and visitor opportunities of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and contribute to the well-being of Mournes communities.

Our Strategic Aims

Natural Environment Enhancement and Protection

Safeguard, enhance and promote appreciation of the quality and diversity of the landscapes and biodiversity of the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and to manage and influence change appropriately.

Visitor Management and Visitor Services

To provide and maintain opportunities for public enjoyment, education and recreation within the Mourne AONB in ways which safeguard the environment and protect land management and community interests.

Built and Cultural Heritage

To identify, promote, safeguard and enhance the built and cultural heritage of the Mourne AONB.

Sustainable Tourism

To promote regeneration through the development and facilitation of appropriate sustainable tourism initiatives in the Mourne AONB.

Creating Awareness and Promoting Understanding

To create awareness and promote greater understanding of the Mourne AONB as a unique and special area to local, regional, national and international audiences.

We deliver on our strategic aims through these key objectives implemented by the activities outlined in 'What we do' below.

What we do

Mourne Heritage Trust's 'Caring for Mourne' framework is guided by the **Mourne AONB Management Plan**, which sets a vision to protect and enhance the landscape through both direct action by MHT and collaboration with key partners.

Four interconnecting themes form the basis of the management plan:

- Mountain, Countryside and Coast
- Historic Environment
- Sustainable Communities
- Enjoying, Appreciating and Understanding the Mourne AONB

Our core activities dictate what we do on a day-to-day basis. However, we are frequently funded to carry out specific project work. Here is a flavour of what we are currently working on.



Countryside Services

Our Countryside Service team carries out a variety of tasks across the AONB. Their day-to-day activities vary by season and, increasingly, by weather conditions.



Activities include:

- Maintenance of high Mourne car parks and amenity sites
- Litter control
- Maintenance of a network of green lanes/public rights of way and long-distance routes including the Mourne Way and Newcastle Way
- Stile, boundary, including stone wall, and bridge maintenance
- Post-storm tree clearance
- Invasive species control
- Maintenance of Interpretive Panels across the AONB
- Monitoring user numbers and events

Sustainable Paths

The Trust has a long-standing commitment to and expertise in erosion control, particularly focussed on the high Mournes.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought a surge in visitors to the Mournes, straining popular walking routes. Some areas already faced

challenges, underscoring the need for a strategic path management approach. Thanks to increased support from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, we now have a dedicated Upland Team in place from 2024.

The long-term sustainability of paths is crucial. They must accommodate growing visitor numbers and be robust enough to endure extreme weather, which is increasingly common. Additionally, paths should provide a good experience for users, while helping to protect the surrounding delicate habitats.



Forest Rangers

Our Forest Rangers work in Castlewellan Forest Park and Kilbroney Park and the adjoining Rostrevor Forest. They are responsible for maintaining the mountain bike trails, some walking trails and bridleways in both parks, ensuring they are in optimum condition and, when required, clearing debris and fallen trees—especially as storms become more frequent.

Their on-the-ground presence allows them to engage directly with

users, leading to practical improvements to improve experience of the trails. This can extend beyond care of the trail surfaces themselves. For instance, a fallen tree was ingeniously fashioned into a seat at a popular resting spot, blending seamlessly into the natural surroundings.



Healthy Heathland

A key part of caring for the Mourne landscape is the heathland management project. Increased recreation, over and then under-grazing, and wildfires have damaged the area, affecting the habitat and species. The Healthy Heathland project has focused on developing best practices tailored to the Mournes.

Eroded expanses of peat are an increasing concern in the Mournes. To tackle this issue, numerous dams have been created to improve water retention, stabilise peat hags and promote regeneration. In the high Mournes, we have used stones and large coir

rolls—made from coconut husks—to build these dams. These dams help control erosion and support faster vegetation growth.

Engagement Rangers

The Engagement Ranger project started as a pilot in late 2021. As the name implies, the rangers engage with visitors in the Mournes, promoting safe and positive experiences for walkers while encouraging them to minimise their environmental impact. They also help monitor visitor movements and behaviours to inform our path work and other services.

As more people visit the Mournes for recreation, some may not be fully prepared in terms of equipment and knowledge. Even experienced walkers can face challenges, making it crucial to be ready for any situation. Our message aligns with the “Leave No Trace” principles, emphasising, among other things, the importance of keeping dogs on leads to protect livestock and native species and sticking to paths to minimise impact.





Sustainable Tourism

“Caring for Mourne” involves working with local businesses to promote Sustainable Tourism principles. The Trust’s focus on sustainability began with the Natural Resource Rural Tourism Initiative (2003-2007), during which the area earned the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism—the first in the British Isles to do so.

Over the years, substantial funding has supported additional projects, including our implementation of the Mourne Signature Project, one of Tourism NI’s key initiatives into the 2010s. Our National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Mourne Mountains Landscape Partnership (2013-2017) invested around £3 million into local projects focused on the Mournes’ natural, built, and cultural heritage.

More recently our sustainable tourism work has involved visioning and planning for further visitor infrastructure development including, with NI Water, a Masterplan for the Silent Valley Mountain Park.

Wildfire Management

The Mournes has a long history of wildfires, impacting the area in various ways over the years. In 2007, the Safer Mournes Partnership was formed to improve coordination among different organisations. Its goal is to address fire through education and preventative land management. We work closely with NI Fire & Rescue Service, providing specialist equipment – such as our Argocat all-terrain vehicle – and expert knowledge. We also engage as required with PSNI, Forest Service, National Trust, and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Priority species biodiversity enhancement

Our most longstanding area of biodiversity work is establishment of small-scale native woodland through our Trees for Mourne initiative. This sees us growing native trees and collaborating with local landowners in an agri-forestry approach. We also work to nurture red squirrels at a number of sites and to propagate and plant out the genetically unique Mourne juniper. Pollinators and wildflowers are other areas of focus at present. Some of this work involves collaboration with local schools and community groups.

Volunteers

An enthusiastic band of volunteers assists greatly with aspects of our remit. A volunteer path team is out weekly in all weathers and a nursery team helps nurture trees

and other native flora at our tree nursery and garden in Silent Valley. The adjacent historic Gatelodge that is currently undergoing renovation will provide an even better equipped base for both volunteers and staff, while we hope further to develop our tree nursery at nearby Dunnywater. Our volunteering opportunities have also catered for corporate groups, student placements and special needs groups as well as individuals seeking more informal ad hoc engagement and commitment.

Partnerships and Influencing

Collaboration is key to achievement of the goals set out in our AONB Management Plan.

Since 2022, as part of the **Forever Mournes Partnership** with the National Trust, NI Water and Woodland Trust, with whom we have a Memorandum of Understanding, we have provided a structure for developing more coherent and comprehensive long-term approaches to management of public lands in the high Mournes. This has included attracting funding for a suite of scoping studies and strategies that provide an invaluable baseline of knowledge for future strategic management and further engagement with central government on a vision for the future. Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Forest Service and Newry, Mourne and Down

District Council participate in the Partnership as observer members.

We have worked recently with major landowners to complete a Conservation Management Plan for the Eastern Mournes Special Area of Conservation, one of the outworkings of which is collaborating closely with NI Water and a local farmers consortium on grazing management in that area.

Further to our collaborative ethos, the Trust represents landscape priorities in numerous local, national, and international forums, and contributes to policy development and sharing best practices. MHT is an active member of the **Landscapes NI** Network, working together with 15 other organisations to promote landscapes and associated policy and practice in Northern Ireland.

The Trust has also been active in the Europarc Federation, National Landscapes Association (UK umbrella body for AONBs) and Irish Uplands Forum. In addition we have participated in European funded initiative including the Interreg **Northern Periphery ASCENT project**.

We expect soon to have a European PEACE+ project entitled Peat Plus approved for funding.

How we're organised

Mourne Heritage Trust staff encompass diverse skills ranging from leading edge practical landscape and visitor infrastructure management, through development and management of conservation strategies and projects, to engagement and participation. As well as being experts in their fields, the teams led by the CEO are adaptable and agile, working collaboratively to achieve MHT's various environmental and people focused outcomes. Mourne Heritage Trust takes a 'can-do' approach to the many challenges facing our precious landscape and our collegiate ethos facilitates the innovation and adaptation required.

Projects & Participation

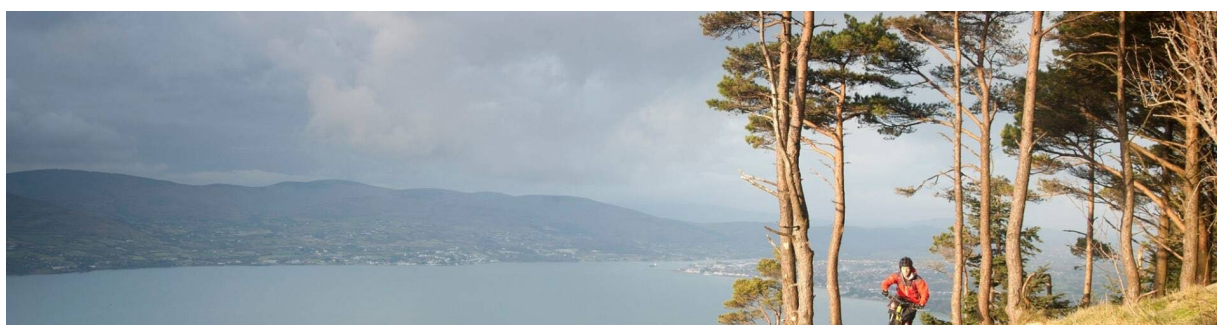
- **Landscape Services Development Manager**
- **Sustainable Tourism and Communications Manager (part-time)**
- **Area Ranger**
- **Grazing Ranger**
- **Volunteer Officer**
- **Engagement Ranger (part-time)**
- *Subject to funding confirmation expected in late Spring – PEAT plus officers x 3*

Countryside Operations

- **Senior Countryside Officer – AONB Services**
- **Senior Countryside Officer – Forests**
- **Senior Countryside Officer – Upland**
- **Countryside Officers x 7**

Coordination and Support

- **Office Manager**
- **Finance and Administration Officer**
- **Programmes Monitoring and Coordination Officer**



Financials

Here's a snapshot of our accounts at 31 March 2024. Further details on our accounts over the last three years can be accessed by clicking on the links below to our annual reports.

	Note	Restricted funds 2024 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Total funds 2024 £	Total funds 2023 £
Income and endowments					
Donations & legacies	2	-	402,575	402,575	230,513
Investments	4	-	7,501	7,501	244
Charitable activities	5	166,010	404,231	570,241	885,555
Other income	3	2,761	-	2,761	2,950
Total income		168,771	814,307	983,078	1,119,262
Expenditure					
Fundraising	6	-	2,804	2,804	2,721
Charitable activities	7,8	179,459	831,211	1,010,670	1,072,236
Other		-	-	-	-
Total expenditure		179,459	834,015	1,013,474	1,074,957
Net income/(expenditure)		(10,688)	(19,708)	(30,396)	44,305
Extraordinary income					
NILGOSC exit pension scheme surplus	9	-	-	-	436,400
Net income/(expenditure) after extraordinary income		(10,688)	(19,708)	(30,396)	480,705
Transfers between funds	12	(9,440)	9,440	-	-
Net movement in funds		(20,128)	(10,268)	(30,396)	480,705
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds at 1 April 2023	16	91,826	1,113,919	1,205,745	725,040
Total funds at 31 March 2024	16,17	71,698	1,103,651	1,175,349	1,205,745
	Note	£	2024	£	2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	13		175,715		152,520
Current assets					
Debtors	14	223,289		1,114,957	
Cash at bank and in hand		941,428		147,657	
		1,164,717		1,262,614	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	15	(165,083)		(209,389)	
Net current assets			999,634		1,053,225
Total assets less current liabilities			1,175,349		1,205,745
Net assets			1,175,349		1,205,745
Charity Funds					
Restricted funds	16		71,698		91,826
Unrestricted funds:					
General funds	16	589,651		1,113,919	
Designated funds	16	514,000		-	
Total unrestricted funds			1,103,651		1,113,919
Total funds	16,17		1,175,349		1,205,745

Annual Report March 2024

Annual Report March 2023

Annual Report March 2022

Meet the Board



Robert Agnew	Farmer and Former Civil Servant
Didi Baxter	Local Tourism Business
Alastair Chestnutt	Local Tourism Business
Laura Devlin	Elected Rep ¹ (Newry, Mourne & Down District Council)
Seamus Doyle	Civil Servant and former Local Elected Representative
Sean Fitzpatrick	High Mournes Farmer
Glyn Hanna	Elected Rep ¹ (Newry, Mourne & Down District Council)
Isabel Hood	Environmental Consultant and former Educator
Maureen Killen	Health and Social Care Officer
David Maginn (Chair)	Local Tourism Business and Farmer
William John Martin	Farmer and former Local Elected Representative
Vincent McAlinden	Environment Consultant & former Outdoor Instructor
Geoff Simmons	Professor at Ulster University
David Thompson	Environmental Consultant
Jill Truesdale	Elected Rep ¹ (Newry, Mourne & Down District Council)
Ian Watts	Former Local Government Officer & Angling Rep

¹ Council elected representatives now opt to sit on MHT in their own right rather than as nominated representatives of Council (the latter having been the case for the period to 2015 in which the Mourne AONB spanned three separate council areas).

Job Description

Job Title	Chief Executive Officer
Location	Based in Newcastle, Co. Down, additional flexible office and meeting space will soon be available at the renovated Silent Valley Gatelodge. Some homeworking is accommodated.
Reports to	MHT Chair and Board
Responsible for	All staff
Contract Duration	Full time permanent, with 6-month probationary period
Hours per Week	37.5
Salary	Starting salary £60,763 ² (NJC scale 49-53 plus car allowance ³ i.e. £60,763 – £65,428). 7.5% employer pension contribution.
Leave entitlement	25 days plus public holidays

Job Purpose

- Be the lead Officer and Chief Accounting Officer of the Mourne Heritage Trust.
- Be the principal policy and strategy adviser to the Trust's Members and implement their Mission, strategies and goals.
- Meet the responsibilities of the Trust as set out in the Service Level Agreements or grant aid conditions of all funders including Core Funding Agencies.
- Secure the staff and other resources needed to deliver quality, cost effective integrated services within the Mourne AONB and to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, biodiversity, ecosystem goods and services and built and cultural heritage.
- Work collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to deliver a sustainable form of management which will realise the full potential of the Mourne AONB's special qualities for the benefit of the communities and businesses within it and the visitors to it.

² As with local government in Northern Ireland, MHT follows National Joint Council Scales. Pay scales are updated annually in line with agreements arrived at through that body reflecting cost of living and other considerations.

³ Car allowance is paid as a monthly cash sum. All work-related mileage is paid in line with local government NJC rates.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership and Direction

- Help shape the Trust's Mission, policies and objectives brokering agreement with funders and Board and ensure that these are made a reality by providing a clear sense of direction and purpose throughout the organisation.
- Further develop and lead an effective and competent Staff Team to deliver the strategic objectives of the Trust.
- Promote the effective management, continuous professional development and training of all Trust staff and ensure that all staff are appropriately empowered and their performance regularly appraised.
- Be accountable for the delivery of the Trust's strategic objectives. To ensure that clear priorities are identified in line with the Operational Plan and that action plans or projects are undertaken are in line with these.

Effective Service Delivery

- Ensure workforce planning is aligned to the organisation's needs and those of its funders and a culture of investing in people is prevalent that enables all to reach their full potential in line with the organisation's values.
- Ensure appropriate budget and resource planning and management strategies are in place and kept under review.
- Ensure that best practice is implemented and innovation encouraged in all areas of the Trust's activities.
- Ensure that operational risks are effectively managed and mitigated.
- Ensure the organisation deploys digital and ICT resources optimally to support efficient operations, enhance service delivery and supplier management, and facilitate effective communication.

Working with the Trust's Members

- Lead the strategic planning and implementation processes with the collaboration and approval of the Board.
- Work with the Chair and Board of Trustees to provide the essential link between the staff and Board.
- Be the Trust's principal policy advisor and ensure the provision of timely and effective advice on policy options and professional matters.
- Ensure high quality governance, compliance with statutory requirements, financial and risk management in line with the law and Charity Commission guidance.
- Ensure timely, accurate and transparent financial and operational performance reporting to the Board.
- Ensure Members are appropriately trained and briefed in order to fulfil their respective roles.

External relations and partnership working

- Be the Trust's key representative in relation to the local community, relevant public, voluntary or private organisations interested in or working in the area.
- Maintain effective relationships and develop collaborative partnerships with key stakeholders and partners in the public, private and community sectors and with statutory agencies to deliver common aims and objectives.
- Together with the Trust's Members and senior staff to develop external relations aimed at promoting the Trust's strategic objectives and generally advance the cause of the Mourne Heritage Trust.
- Ensure that the Mourne AONB's voice is heard effectively at local, regional and national levels.
- Ensure that the communities within the Mourne AONB are well informed about relevant issues and views are accounted for in planning and delivery of services.

Finance and Resource Management

- Maintain appropriate financial management systems to ensure that the Trust's finances are properly managed and to enable regular financial reports to be provided to the Board of Trustees and annual external audit.
- Generate income for the organisation through grants, collaboration with public, private and third sector partners, ensuring relations with key funders are well managed and consistent with MHT's values.
- Lead the preparation and management of the annual budget as part of the strategic plan for approval by the Board of Trustees
- Ensure that financial reports and processes are in place and routinely monitored to ensure probity and accountability for all those charged with managing budgets in the organisation.

No job description can cover every issue which may arise and subsequently the post- holder may be expected to carry out other duties broadly consistent with those itemised above.



Person Specification

Essential Experience

- A minimum of three years' experience of operating successfully at senior management in public, private or voluntary sector.
- Experience of high-level strategic planning, developing strategic goals and objectives and a proven track record of delivering high quality services.
- Track record of motivating and developing others through example, personal commitment, persuasion and empowerment.
- Experience of encouraging innovation and new approaches whilst managing risk.
- Knowledge and understanding of the public/not-for-profit sector acquired professionally.
- Knowledge and understanding of Environmental Issues and Rural Affairs acquired professionally.
- Experience at a senior level of financial management systems within the private, public or voluntary sector and of reporting on financial matters.
- Proven ability to apply well developed written and oral communication, negotiation and influencing skills.
- Effective office-based Digital and ICT skills including with the Microsoft Office range.
- A current driving licence and use of a car for business purposes, or have access to a form of transport which will permit the applicant to meet the requirements of the post in full.

Desirable Experience

- Experience of working to a Board or Members or at a Board level.
- Experience of leading a diverse workforce, managing complex budgets and other resources.
- Experience of managing change within a complex operational environment.
- Proven experience, understanding of and demonstrable commitment to partnership working.

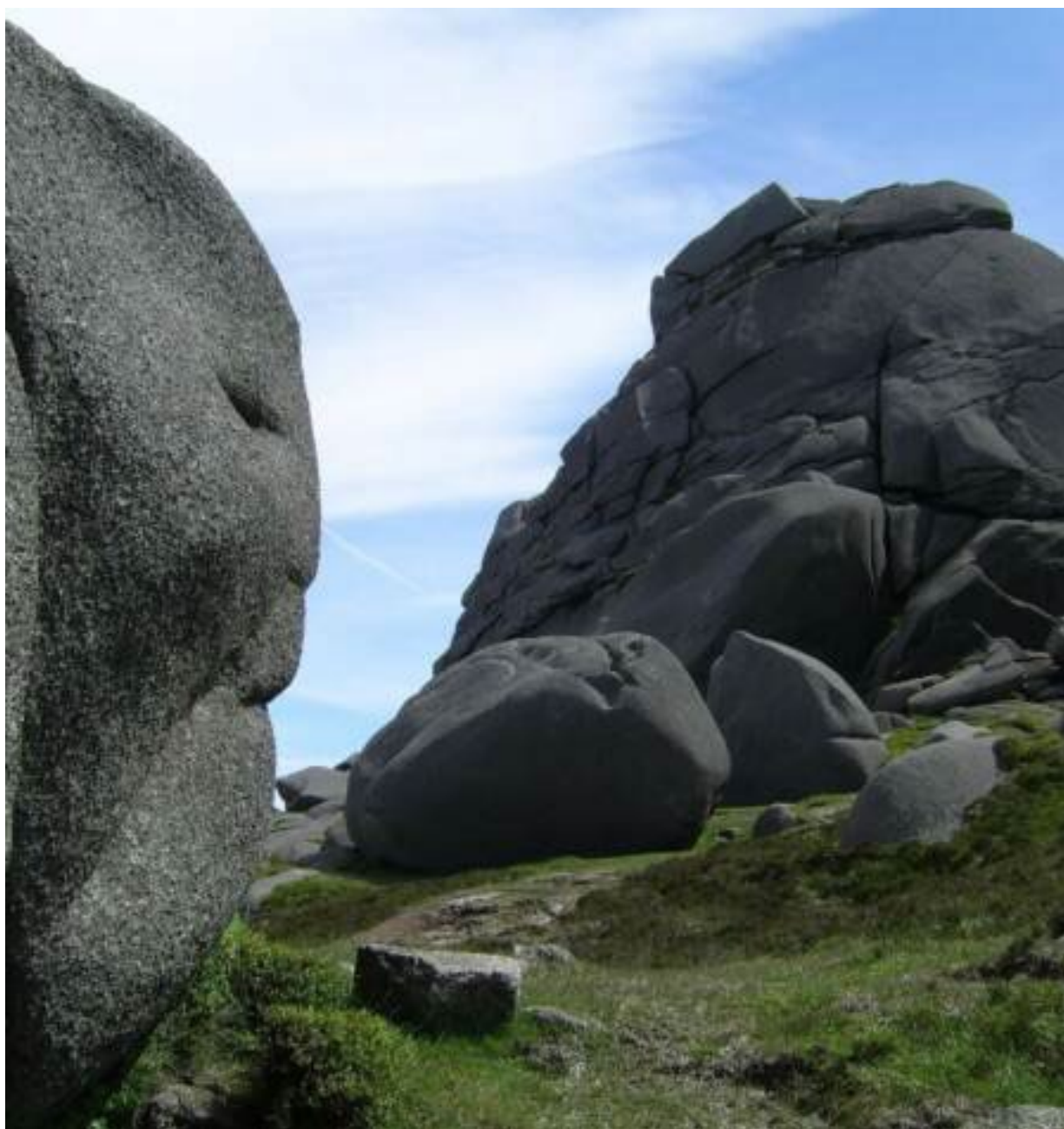
Cntd..

Knowledge and Skills

- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to exercise judgement and make soundly based decisions.
- Ability to identify and effectively communicate key matters that will affect the Mourne AONB in the future and develop strategies to meet them.

Attributes

- Drive, energy and enthusiasm.
 - Strong leadership skills.
 - Entrepreneurial and business management skills.
-



How to apply

Please forward a **CV, maximum three A4 sides**, together with a completed **Supplementary Questions form** available from www.engageexec.co.uk, ensuring you have included mobile, work and home telephone numbers, as well as any dates when you will not be available or might have difficulty with from the recruitment timetable. You will also be asked to submit a separate **equality form** (see below).

The deadline is **Noon on Monday 9 June 2025**. Applications should be made by email to: **apply@engageexec.co.uk**

Contact Patrick Minne on 07792 509003 if you have any queries about the role or the application process.

Equality Monitoring and Criminal Convictions Disclosure

Along with the CV and Form, you will be asked to complete and return the Equal Opportunities Monitoring and Criminal Convictions Disclosure Form in a separate document. Neither of these will be disclosed to anyone involved in shortlisting your application.

Disability

In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act a person is disabled if they have, or have had, "a physical or mental impairment which has, or has had, a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day to day activities".

If you consider yourself to have a disability relevant to the position for which you are applying, please contact Patrick Minne so that we can process your application fairly, make any specific arrangements for your interview, and make any necessary reasonable adjustments or adaptations, or provide any aids to assist you in completing the duties of the post if appointed.

Equal Opportunities

Mourne Heritage Trust is an Equal Opportunities Employer and all applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

By submitting an application for this position, you are consenting for your personal information to be processed and used for the duration of this recruitment campaign.

Timeline

CV, Supplementary Questions and Equality Monitoring and Criminal Convictions forms to be submitted

Noon, Monday 9 June 2025

First Interviews

Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 June 2025

Second Interviews (may include a seen or unseen task)

Tuesday 24 and/or Wednesday 25 June 2025

Final Interviews

Wednesday 2 July 2025



Please address any enquiries relating to the advertised position, and your submission, to Mourne Heritage Trust's recruitment partners:

Patrick Minne



Tel: 07792 509003

Email: patrick@co3.org.uk



Enquiries unrelated to this recruitment can be addressed to:

Mourne Heritage Trust

19 Causeway Road,
Newcastle,
Co Down,
BT33 0DL

Tel: 028 437 24059

Email: mht@mourne.co.uk

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