

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Your Information Pack



British Exploring Society
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London, SW7 2AR
Charity No: 802196

For further information visit
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ABOUT BRITISH EXPLORING SOCIETY

British Exploring Society is a world-class youth development charity with a unique heritage founded on the belief that challenging experiences can transform lives, empowering and equipping young people with the courage, integrity, skills, resilience and motivation to make the most of their future.

The charity was founded in 1932 by the naval surgeon George Murray Levick, a member of Captain Scott's final Antarctic expedition. Today, it exists as a registered charity (No. 802196). It has an annual turnover of around £1.17 million and 19 Head Office staff based at the Royal Geographical Society in London's South Kensington. Its profile, reach and impact are greatly enhanced thanks to a large and engaged community of enthusiastic volunteer leaders, members, and supporters.

British Exploring Society is looking for a new Chief Executive Officer who will lead it towards its Centenary in 2032, ensuring it has the stable foundations required to fulfil its Purpose, Vision and Mission for many years to come.

Purpose: To help young people unlock self-belief – to Find their Fire.

Vision: For all young people to be able to contribute confidently in the world. We want equal access to challenging learning and adventure in the wilderness as an unbeatable preparation for adult life.

Mission: To grow and celebrate a diverse, inclusive community of young people with the skills, resilience and determination to make lasting positive decisions in their own lives, and to deliver community benefit and positive environmental change.

Values: Courage, Challenge, Community and Self-Belief.



79% of British Exploring Society's members agree or strongly agree that their expedition "changed the course of [their] life"

APPROACH AND IMPACT

British Exploring Society provides young people with challenging expeditions and adventures to remote and wild environments in the UK and Overseas to foster resilience and confidence. Over its history it has run 229 expeditions across six continents and more than 99 locations, including the Arctic, the Amazon, the Himalayas, and deserts across the globe. Today, the charity continues to combine adventure with learning, empowering young people to develop confidence, teamwork, and environmental awareness.

The charity still works with young people aged 14-25 years from across the UK, but the demographic of those beneficiaries has transformed over the past decade. In 2024, 54% of young people who went on expedition declared total household income below £23,000. While any young person can apply to join a programme, British Exploring Society is focused on finding and supporting those from communities lacking access, or the confidence to access, learning opportunities outside the classroom, as well as individuals with poor educational and employment prospects, and young people facing personal, emotional and social difficulties.

Widening access to its programmes has been facilitated by closer working with a variety of other youth organisations, schools and charities, who make referrals and work in partnership with the charity.

Catering to this more diverse demographic has required the charity to think creatively about its processes, financial model, and approach. But the core idea - young people preparing for life by developing resilience and confidence through adventure and learning in a remote wilderness in small self-contained groups - remains the unchangeable heart of the charity's work.

There are three stands to British Exploring Society's approach, reflected in the three colours of its logo.

The results of this approach remain transformative – not just in terms of practical skills and resilience, but in new-found confidence and self-belief. Through their adventures together, the charity's young people forge friendships for life and become part of a unique supportive and continuing community with shared experiences, values and perspectives on the world.



"Fantastic people, breathtaking views, an experience I will never forget. After completing this adventure, it makes me feel like Kyrgyzstan is something I could do..."

- Anonymous feedback from participating in a 'Hitting Your Stride' Activity in 2025

CURRENT CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath have been exceptionally difficult for organisations in the outdoor sector. A number of prominent adventure and expedition providers have been forced to wind up or dramatically scale back their activities. Against this backdrop, British Exploring Society has ensured its survival through tight financial stewardship and the cultivation of a much stronger donor base. However significant challenges remain.

In November 2024, the charity took the proactive decision to restructure its programmes to better meet the needs of young people, and to rebalance its financial commitments.

A particular concern has been the marked increase in young people withdrawing from programmes, often at short notice. This is unquestionably part of a wider epidemic of poor mental health and low resilience being encountered in practically every setting that deals with young people.

The charity's response is an overhauled programme structure. This provides wild pathways to help to build trust and confidence in young people whatever their confidence level:

1) Welcome to Adventure. Online or in-person experiences that are designed to introduce young people to outdoor adventure and give them the confidence to consider further activities.

2) Finding Your Feet. A chance for young people aged 14-21 to experience their first nights under canvas and to learn essential outdoor skills with experienced Leaders.

3) Hitting Your Stride. A true wilderness adventure where 'Fires' (groups of 10-12 young people) survive in a remote UK environment with the support of talented and knowledgeable expedition Leaders.

4) Ready to Explore. A full-scale expedition programme overseas or in the most remote and challenging areas of the UK, where young people face challenges, acquire outdoor skills, and undertake projects with content relevant to their lives and to the fragile environments that they explore.

As a result of these changes, the charity can now look to the future with renewed optimism and ambition. However, it knows that it will have to continue unlocking additional sources of income, and that it must remain supple in its programmatic approach, as the needs and attitudes of the UK's young people continue to evolve.

For more information, visit britishexploring.org, read the charity's latest [Annual Report](#), watch the short video to the right about a Young Explorer's journey, or listen to the new podcast 'The Basecamp Broadcast'.



"Having that space to share my feelings with my team and Leaders every day has given me encouragement in the future to express my feelings with friends and family."

- Young Explorer Naffie

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Chief Executive Officer reports to the Chair of the Trustee Board ('Council') and has overall responsibility for all aspects of the strategic and operational leadership of British Exploring Society, ensuring that it continues to deliver positive outcomes for young people and that it makes productive and collaborative use of its network of members, leaders and supporters to achieve the charity's short-term and long-term objectives.



Key Responsibilities

- 1) Vision, mission and strategy:** Articulate the charity's vision and mission; lead the development of strategy, long-term objectives and business plans to implement the vision and mission; maintain a view of the external environment, particularly the needs of the young people the charity works with; anticipate major trends that could positively or negatively impact the charity.
- 2) Operations:** Oversee all operations and charitable activities to ensure the charity delivers planned outcomes and results, in line with its overall strategy and mission.
- 3) People:** Lead and motivate British Exploring Society' staff and volunteers, creating an environment where people can successfully deliver agreed objectives and plans, while fostering good employee engagement; leading the organisation through change as required in order to respond to the needs of beneficiaries more effectively.
- 4) Communications, advocacy and stakeholder management:** Lead external communications for British Exploring Society, building its profile and reputation as a leading youth development charity; develop strong relationships with key partners, supporters, members and other key stakeholders.
- 5) Fundraising:** Play a leading role in fundraising activities, managing senior relationships with major donors, trusts, foundations, and corporates.
- 6) Values:** Ensure that the charity consistently applies its values and maintains a high level of social responsibility in everything it does.



"After the expedition I really do feel that I have a greater sense of self-confidence. The expedition has made me happy with who I am and confirmed the journey I want to embark on."

- Young Explorer Nye



Key Responsibilities cont.

7) Risk management and compliance: Develop and implement an effective risk management framework; put in place appropriate policies, procedures and working practices to mitigate key risks; ensure compliance with all legal requirements and relevant industry best practice; ensure appropriate measures are in place to safeguard the wellbeing of the young people the charity works with. In line with the charity's safeguarding commitments, the Chief Executive will be required to undergo an enhanced DBS check and undertake appropriate training to act as a Safeguarding Lead, should the need arise. The charity aims to have a minimum of three trained Safeguarding Leads at all times.

8) Finances: Ensure that strong financial management and controls are in place; develop and implement plans to ensure the charity's long-term financial sustainability.

9) Corporate governance: Work pro-actively and collaboratively with the Chair, Council and Sub-Committees, to promote effective and appropriate governance, and to ensure that British Exploring Society continues to fulfil its charitable purpose.

10) Duty: The Chief Executive will be included in the Duty Officer rota during periods when the charity is running 24-hour support services for its expeditions and adventure programmes. Staff are professionally trained to undertake this role, manage incidents, and support other team members. The Chief Executive is expected to be available for relevant training and to remain contactable during expedition and adventure periods, in the event that a serious incident requires escalation to the highest level of leadership. This role requires a minimum of two days per week to be office-based, including attendance at the all-team day on Tuesdays in South Kensington.

Key Tasks

- Building a strong working relationship with the Chair of the Board and with the Chair of the Development Board;
- Preparing a strategic / business plan and annual budget for approval by Council;
- Delivering and if necessary, adapting, annual operational plans to meet agreed targets;
- Ensuring that the charity meets or exceeds all legal, statutory and regulatory obligations;
- Recruiting and managing members of the Senior Leadership Team;
- Supplying regular reports to Council and attending trustee and sub-committee meetings as required;
- Representing the charity and advocating for its work with external stakeholders, including speaking and presenting at events on behalf of the charity;
- Stewarding major partners and donors, and introducing new potential donors and partners to the charity;
- Establish and monitoring key performance indicators of the charity's impact and financial health;
- Remaining aware of risks and shifts in the external environment which are of material potential impact on the work and wellbeing of the charity;
- Championing and safeguarding the brand, values and reputation of the charity, its staff, volunteers and members at all times.



"British Exploring Society isn't just one expedition; it is a supportive foundation and acts as a gateway to the rest of your life."

- Young Explorer Jasmine



PERSON SPECIFICATION

The CEO must be both an inspiring leader and a good manager. We are looking for someone who can see the 'big picture' and who can think strategically. But they must also have strong attention to detail and be able to grapple with day-to-day operational challenges. Above all, the CEO must be a passionate champion of British Exploring Society's core intent – keeping everything it does anchored towards unlocking the self-belief of young people, even as it continually adapts and iterates to respond to the changing needs of its beneficiaries, and the evolving environment in which it delivers its programmes.

The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate evidence of the following skills, capabilities and experience:

Purpose, Vision, Mission and Values

- experience of working with young people, either in an executive capacity or as a volunteer;
- an adventurous streak and a real passion for the outdoors;
- comfort communicating with and managing an extraordinarily wide community of stakeholders;
- an understanding of risk and of the key principles of safeguarding.

Leadership and Management

- proven experience of leading and managing a range of different business functions and activities at a senior level within a charity, social enterprise, business, or public sector organisation;
- the ability to grow organisational capacity and capability through developing, coaching, inspiring, and motivating high-performing teams;
- a collegiate and consultative approach to planning and decision making;
- experience of developing and implementing strategies and business plans that successfully meet short and long-term organisational objectives;
- experience of effective, outcomes-driven partnership development;
- an appreciation of governance best practice and of how to work with a Board.



"Many times I've heard that 'problems are like climbing a mountain', and there is something so rewarding and freeing knowing I've actually done that!"

- Young Explorer Grace



Financial and Fundraising Nous

- a strong understanding of financial management and effective controls;
- a track record of developing sustainable financial business models;
- experience of fundraising and/or income generation – potentially including working with major donors, trusts, foundations and/or corporates.
- the ability to cultivate strong relationships and to leverage existing networks, working in partnership with the Development Committee, the Trustees, and the wider membership.

Exceptional Personal Qualities

- an open, warm, engaging, approachable, and personable style;
- a joyful and positive outlook;
- drive and resilience;
- excellent communication, public speaking, influencing, and networking skills;
- a love of problem solving, coupled with the ability to remain calm in a crisis;
- honesty and authenticity;
- attention to detail;
- conviction and clear thinking, but with the humility and curiosity to listen, collaborate and experiment.

Exceptional Personal Qualities

The following are desirable but not essential:

- a postgraduate qualification in business administration or another relevant subject;
- prior experience in a charity environment, including an understanding of charity governance and regulation;
- experience of working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- international and cross-cultural experience;
- experience of working in a member-based organisation;
- expertise in tech and digital transformation;
- experience of motivating and leading large groups of volunteers.



"It smashes down barriers, builds resilience, boosts confidence and self-esteem."

- Chloe Moul, Senior Social Leader

APPOINTMENT DETAILS AND HOW TO APPLY

British Exploring Society is being assisted in this appointment process by the executive search firm Society (www.society-search.com). It is envisaged that the new CEO will take up their position in around February 2026, which is when the current CEO, Honor Wilson-Fletcher, steps down after ten years in post.

Applications should consist of

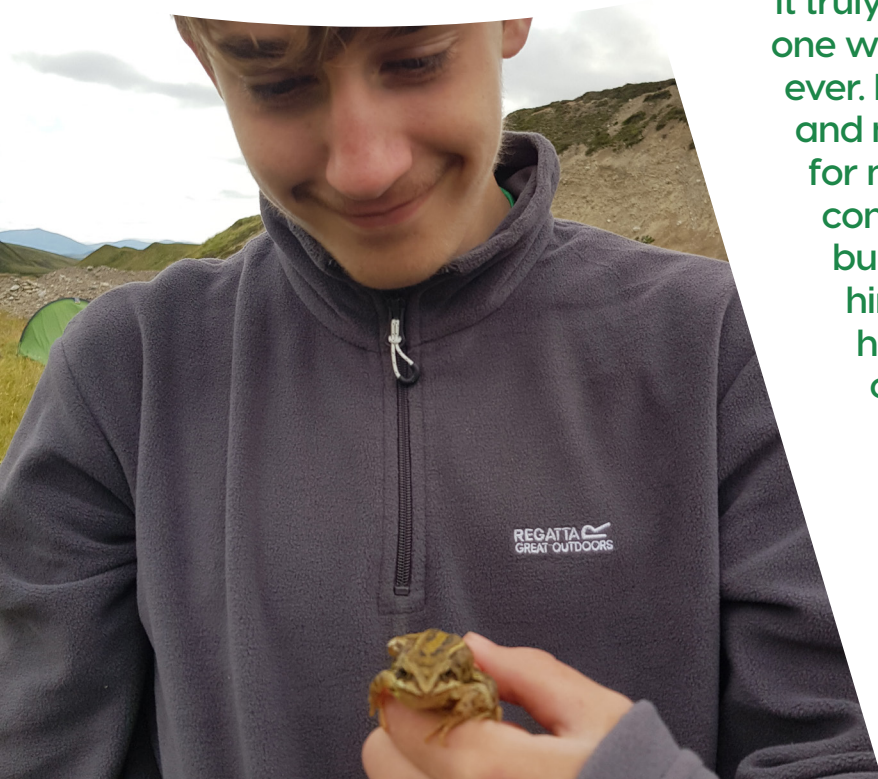
- a concise covering letter (ideally no longer than two pages), addressing the criteria in the Person Specification;
- an up-to-date curriculum vitae;
- names and contact details of three referees (although referees will only be approached at the final stage of the process, and only with your express permission)

General advice on how to write [a strong CV](#) and [strong covering letter](#) can be found on Society's website.

To upload your documents via Society's website, [click here](#).

"It truly has been his own experience and one which I know he will remember for ever. He's been challenged and pushed, and made friends that he will keep for many years, and I'm sure that the confidence and resilience that he's built through the experience will stand him in good stead for when he leaves home for university in the next couple of years."

- Sheila, Young Explorer Guardian



"British Exploring Society gave me the opportunity to be myself without judgment, I was more than just a label for the first time in my life."

- Young Explorer Hannah

Appointment Details cont.

The deadline for receipt of applications is **midday GMT on Monday 6th October 2025**.

Longlisted candidates will be invited to meet with a representative of Society during **the week commencing Monday 13th October**.

Shortlist candidates will be invited to attend formal interview with the Nominations Committee at British Exploring Society during the week commencing Monday 3rd November.

An appointment will be made subject to receipt of satisfactory references and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The appointed candidate will be offered a salary of between £80,000 to £90,000 GBP (gross) per annum, however there may be some level of flexibility if required.

For the right candidate, British Exploring Society is happy to consider requests for part-time, hybrid, and/or flexible working arrangements.

We are committed to ensuring that anyone can access our application processes. This includes people with hearing, sight, mobility, and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to this document in an alternative format, wish to apply in a different format, or need any other reasonable adjustments made for you (including at interview), please contact us at inclusion@society-search.com. We also welcome suggestions or comments about any more general access improvements we should consider.

