Chief Executive Officer

Recruitment brief

Trebah Garden

July 2026

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive Officer at Trebah Garden

Trebah is one of Cornwall's most treasured visitor attractions and one of the finest subtropical gardens in the world. Set within a spectacular valley leading to its own private beach on the Helford River, Trebah welcomes more than 110,000 visitors each year and has become an important part of Cornwall's cultural, environmental and tourism landscape.

Like many organisations, Trebah has experienced significant challenge and change over recent years. However, thanks to the commitment of our staff, volunteers and trustees, the organisation is in an exceptionally strong position. Visitor numbers continue to grow, our finances are robust, and we have built a successful and sustainable business model that enables us to invest in the garden whilst remaining true to our charitable purpose.

We are now seeking an outstanding Chief Executive to lead Trebah into its next chapter.

This is not a role requiring wholesale change. The foundations are strong, the strategy is clear, and the organisation is performing well. What we need is an experienced and credible leader who will build on this success, unite and inspire our talented team, and ensure that Trebah continues to thrive for generations to come.
You may come from a visitor attraction, hospitality, leisure, tourism or broader commercial background. Whilst an appreciation of horticulture and heritage is important, we are more interested in your ability to lead people, manage a successful business, build strong relationships and act as an ambassador for a much-loved organisation.

If you share our passion for excellence, our commitment to stewardship and our belief in the power of great leadership, we would be delighted to hear from you.

Robert Dudley-Cooke
Chair, Trebah Garden Trust

About Trebah Garden

Trebah Garden is an internationally recognised sub-tropical garden and registered charity situated on Cornwall's south coast, close to Falmouth and the Helford River

Created over nearly two centuries, the 26-acre garden is renowned for its rare and exotic planting, dramatic coastal setting and year-round visitor appeal. Today, Trebah welcomes visitors from across the UK and beyond, offering an outstanding visitor experience that combines horticultural excellence with retail, catering, events and educational activities.

Whilst Trebah is first and foremost a charity dedicated to preserving and enhancing this remarkable landscape, it is also a highly successful commercial operation. Income generated through admissions, membership, retail, catering and events enables the Trust to protect the garden whilst investing in its future.

The organisation has undergone significant development over recent years, strengthening its commercial performance whilst remaining firmly rooted in its charitable objectives and values.

The results speak for themselves. During 2025/26 visitor numbers increased by 2% to 113,000 , whilst total income grew by 15% to £3 million. The Trust generated an annual surplus of £330,000 and continues to maintain strong reserves, providing a secure platform for future investment and long-term sustainability.

Today, Trebah is financially strong, operationally mature and highly respected across the tourism, horticultural and charitable sectors.

Our heritage

Annual report & accounts

Business structure

Trebah Garden Trust is a registered charity, number 1000067

- The Council of Management administers the Charity and must have a minimum of 7 members and a maximum of 12 members

- There are currently 12 members

- The Council meets normally every 3 months

- There are two sub-committees, principally a Management Committee which meets more regularly to whom the day-to-day management is delegated.

- In addition, there is a Garden Committee which covers gardening matters.

- These sub-committees report to the Council of Management and all strategic and policy decisions are made by the Council of Management with advice from the sub-committees.

Organisational chart

Council of Management

Mr Robert Dudley Cooke (Chair) + Council of Management, Management Committee & Garden Committee

CEO
Vacancy

Leadership team

Interim Finance Manager
Danielle Burnford

Operations Manager
Tony Finnigan

Head Gardener
Darren Dickey

Marketing Manager
James Lewis

Garden Shop, Plant Centre & Nursery Manager
Debbie Dickey

Visitor Experience Manager
Tracy Campbell

F&B Manager
Dylan Dudbridge-Hay

Events Manager
Joss Presdee

Facilities Manager
Simon Thomas

Gift Shop Manager
Jan Lewis

The Finance Manager, Operations Manager and Head Gardener can deputise in the absence of CEO

Our values

At Trebah Garden we are very clear about who we are and what we stand for as an independent charity

Our charitable purpose is to: “preserve, enhance and recreate the gardens at Trebah” and “to promote the education of the public on matters connected with the arts and sciences of garden land”.

How this translates into action through our staff, volunteers and trustees is very important. Having agreed values that are applied to all aspects of our work will inform how we need to behave to deliver our purpose appropriately. For this reason, how we deliver our plans and objectives is equally important to what is being delivered and why.

Trebah’s values should run through everything we do and be central to our business plan. They will help inform how we develop the garden, the visitor experience - including commercial elements – our approach to education and cultural programming, our brand and how we communicate with our visitors, members and the wider community.

Trebah relies on visitor support to uphold these principles, ensuring the garden’s future for generations to come.

Trebah Values

Trebah Garden

At Trebah we are very clear about who we are and what we stand for as an independent charity. Trebah Values should run through everything we do and it's the responsibility of every one of us on the team to make sure that they do.

Take pride in Trebah

Inspire others, value our community, celebrate successes, take ownership

Deliver results

Be friendly, be open and inclusive, keep our promises, be creative and innovative, learn from our mistakes, make it happen

Exceptional service

Deliver exceptional customer service, improve accessibility, be respectful, communicate clearly, give recognition and feedback

Think long-term

Learn from the past, consider the long-term impact of our work today, embrace change

Act like a charity

Remember we are a charity, communicate that we are a charity, grow support for Trebah, manage our risks

Protect the environment

Consider conservation, safeguard the environment, reduce waste, consider our environmental impact

The opportunity

This is a rare opportunity to lead one of Cornwall's most successful and admired visitor destinations

Reporting to the Chair and Council of Management, the Chief Executive Officer will provide strategic and operational leadership across all aspects of the organisation, ensuring that Trebah continues to deliver an exceptional visitor experience whilst safeguarding its long-term sustainability.

The successful candidate will inherit an organisation with strong foundations. Trebah has evolved into a sophisticated and commercially successful operation, generating annual revenues in excess of £3 million whilst maintaining healthy reserves and operating without borrowing.

Our next Chief Executive's focus will be on leadership, stewardship and continuous improvement rather than major transformation.

You will lead an experienced and committed team, many of whom have dedicated years of service to Trebah. Building on the work already undertaken to strengthen organisational culture and align colleagues around shared values, you will continue to foster a collaborative and supportive environment where people feel valued, empowered and united behind a common purpose.

Alongside internal leadership, you will act as the public face of Trebah, building relationships with visitors, members, partners, funders, local communities and stakeholders across Cornwall and beyond.

This is a role for an individual who combines strong commercial judgement with excellent people leadership, someone who understands how to balance operational excellence with long-term stewardship of a unique and much-loved charitable asset.

About you

We are seeking an experienced and values-led leader with the credibility, judgement and presence to lead a successful organisation through its next phase of development

You do not necessarily need a horticultural background. More important is your ability to lead people, manage complex operations and oversee a successful visitor-focused business.

You may currently be working within tourism, hospitality, leisure, heritage, retail, culture or another customer-facing environment where commercial performance and exceptional visitor experiences go hand in hand.

We are particularly interested in candidates who can demonstrate:

Leadership & people management

- A track record of leading and developing high-performing teams
- The ability to inspire, motivate and unite colleagues around shared values and objectives
- Experience of building strong organisational cultures and creating environments where people thrive
- A collaborative and inclusive leadership style

Commercial & financial acumen

- Experience of leading financially successful organisations.
- Strong understanding of budgeting, financial planning and performance management.
- Confidence in overseeing investment decisions, financial risk and long-term sustainability.
- The ability to balance commercial performance with organisational purpose.

About you

Strategic & operational leadership

- Experience operating at senior leadership or chief executive level
- Ability to translate strategy into effective operational delivery
- Strong decision-making skills and sound judgement
- Experience of managing multiple priorities within complex organisations

Ambassadorial skills

- A natural relationship builder
- Comfortable representing an organisation externally
- Experience of working with boards, stakeholders, partners and communities
- Strong communication and influencing skills

Most importantly, you will understand the importance of protecting what already makes Trebah special whilst ensuring the organisation continues to evolve and flourish.

Role details

This is a full-time leadership role based at Trebah Garden

Salary: £65,000 - £70,000

Location: Trebah Garden, Cornwall

Contract: Full-time, permanent

Whilst the majority of working hours will be undertaken during the working week, the nature of a visitor attraction which is open to the public 7 days a week means that some flexibility is required.

As a member of the senior leadership team, the Chief Executive will be expected to maintain a visible presence across the organisation, including occasional weekends, events and peak visitor periods.

Trebah operates a senior management duty rota to ensure leadership presence whenever the garden is open, and the Chief Executive will participate in this alongside colleagues.

The successful candidate will be expected to spend significant time engaging with staff, volunteers, visitors and stakeholders across the organisation and will be a visible and accessible leader.

Why join Trebah?

Trebah offers a unique combination of purpose & performance

You will have the opportunity to lead a nationally recognised visitor attraction, a thriving charitable organisation and a dedicated team of people who care deeply about what they do.

Few leadership roles offer the chance to combine commercial success, environmental stewardship, community impact and one of the most spectacular working environments in the country.

This is an opportunity to make a lasting contribution to an organisation that is already exceptional and to help ensure that Trebah continues to flourish for generations to come.

How to apply

If you are interested in this opportunity we encourage confidential conversations with our recruitment partners **Public Leaders Appointments** in advance of your application, details below:

Anna Jay, MD
anna@publicleadersappointments.com
07904 236 348

Melissa Stewart, Associate Consultant
melissa@publicleadersappointments.com

In order to apply, please submit a CV which should be supported by a covering letter of no more than 3 sides of A4.

Your cover letter should outline your motivations for applying, and highlight how your skills, knowledge and experience meet the requirements of our new CEO.

Applications to be submitted to **applications@publicleadersappointments.com** by midday on Tuesday 4 August 2026 with reference 'Trebah'.

Please also provide contact details for two professional references. Referees should be people who can comment authoritatively on you as a person and as an employee or and will not be contacted without your prior consent.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are all integral to our organisational ethos and values. It is critically important to us that every Trebah employee works in an inclusive environment which has a culture of mutual regard and respect.

We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds.

Timetable
Deadline for applications: Tuesday 4 August 2026
Visit and interviews – onsite:
Tuesday 8, Wednesday 9 & Thursday 10 September 2026

CEO role profile

Trebah Garden

This is a full-time, permanent, 40h per week role

This role will require some flexibility in working hours, including some weekends and evening activities

Salary: £65,000 - £70,000 per annum depending on experience

Responsible to: The Chair and Council of Management

Financial responsibility: Responsible for a gross turnover budget of over £3m per annum and associated expenditure, across Trebah Garden Trust and trading subsidiary Trebah Enterprises Limited.

Line management: Finance Manager, Operations Manager, Head Gardener and Marketing Manager.

Scale and scope of the role: The successful candidate will have full executive responsibility for this high-profile visitor attraction and will support the trustees in achieving the Trust's charitable aims.

Internal/external relationships: Internal: All staff, Trustees and volunteers. External: Cornwall Association of Tourist Attractions (CATA), Great Gardens of Cornwall, local community and relevant external stakeholders.

Benefits

- 32 days annual leave entitlement, with long service increments
- Contributory pension scheme
- Life Insurance – 4 x annual salary
- Company sick pay scheme
- Health cash plan offered through Simply Health
- Working in an area of outstanding natural beauty
- Free entry to the garden during opening hours with friends and family
- Generous staff discounts within Trebah Enterprises
- Free entry to partner attractions within the CATA association.

Trebah Garden Trust is an equal opportunities employer

Key responsibilities

Trebah Garden

1. Strategic

- Lead the continuous development of the longer-term Business Plan for Trebah Garden Trust and its wholly owned trading subsidiary, working with the Council of Management and Leadership Team.
- Ensure the organisation operates in accordance with the Vision and Values of the charity.

2. Garden Development & Project Management

- Working with the Garden Committee and Head Gardener you will provide enthusiastic support in the presentation of the garden, its plantings and facilities.
- You will oversee the successful delivery of projects.
- Help create an events, educational and activities programme that is innovative, interesting and supports our charitable aims.

3. Financial/Commercial

- Working with the trustees to drive financial performance by helping to set objectives and leading our teams to achieve challenging financial and non-financial targets.
- Maximise the contribution from all our activities and facilities – admissions, membership and events and our significant Catering and Retail Enterprises.
- Ensure our membership franchise is engaged fully and valued.

4. Managing people/teams

- Drive strong performance by inspiring others, creating a positive and productive environment for our teams.
- Recruit and develop talented and enthusiastic people

5. Conservation and Sustainability

- Be a strong advocate for and help to develop Trebah's drive and commitment to sound environmental practice, enhancing our strong green credentials.

Key responsibilities

Trebah Garden

6. Managing Risk/Regulations

- Be familiar with and ensure compliance to charity and accounting rules and regulations.
- Assess and manage risk effectively, including Health and Safety legislation, compliance, fire, security and emergency procedures.
- Manage and regularly review the charity's Risk Register.
- Regularly review our operations and facilities to ensure we provide a safe and welcoming environment for our visitors and workforce.

7. Brand/Marketing/PR

- Ensure Trebah's brand and profile are proactively and positively managed through the press, social media, website and newsletters
- Help develop and support the marketing plan
- Take a leading role in Trebah's relationship with relevant external organisations and the local community

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

Trebah Garden

- Developing and implementing vision and strategy
- Competent in the formulation and management of complex budgets.
- Proven commercial negotiating skills and well-developed capabilities in property and project management.
- Extensive operational experience in visitor operations, visitor experiences and/or customer service delivery.
- Being able to demonstrate strong leadership and communication skills to motivate and empower teams to deliver results.
- Able to demonstrate at least 3 years' experience and results in a senior management role, ideally in a visitor attraction or other business in the hospitality sector.
- Practical experience in the management of operational risk and change.
- A forward-thinking and accomplished collaborator, adept at building effective relationships, both within and outside an organisation.
- Able to perform strongly in written and verbal communications and to be an effective ambassador and spokesperson for the Trust.
- A skilled planner – with an analytic and enquiring mind - you will be able use information to inform plans and inspire others to deliver strong financial results and an excellent visitor experience.
- A natural motivator, able to coach effectively, setting stretched targets to drive performance, helping managers and their teams to achieve their potential.
- Good IT skills necessary to analyse and manage performance and undertake presentations.
- Horticultural and / or hospitality background and proven experience and results.