

The Sussex
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Join our team

Chief Operating Officer

Chief Operating Officer

Job description

Job Title: Chief Operating Officer & Deputy CEO

Location: East & West Sussex

Responsible to: Chief Executive Officer (vacant)

Responsible for: Executive Management Team

Hours of Work: Part time (24 hours per week)

Salary: £80,000 FTE (actual salary for 24 hours per week is £52,000)

Date Written: June 2025

Introduction

The Sussex Archaeological Society (trading as Sussex Past) is believed to be the oldest archaeological society of its kind in England, founded in 1846. The Society operates six high-profile, heritage visitor attractions and gardens across Sussex, curates six accredited museums and facilitates research through its archives, libraries and small research grants. The Society cares for ten Listed Buildings, six Scheduled Monuments, and a Registered Park and Garden, offering a comprehensive archaeological and heritage experience for visitors and Members.

As a registered charity, the Society's objectives are to:

- ◆ Promote the study of archaeology by encouraging participation, engagement and research into the archaeology and history of East and West Sussex.
- ◆ Maintain and make accessible - museums, historic sites, monuments, collections and properties in the counties of East and West Sussex for the benefit of the public.
- ◆ Advance education and life-long learning opportunities for children and adults in archaeology and history.

The Society is currently going through a significant phase of modernisation and development, focusing on ensuring financial sustainability, enhancing visitor engagement and driving growth.



The Post

The Board of Trustees seeks a dynamic and experienced Chief Operating Officer (COO) to oversee the Society's daily operations, ensuring the delivery of financial efficiency and effectiveness, use of sustainable practices and attainment of the highest standards of visitor engagement and historic property management.

Initially reporting to the Chair of the Board of Trustees (whilst the CEO position is vacant), the COO will lead a skilled senior management team focused on optimising business performance across all of the Society's heritage properties and commercial ventures.

The COO will play a vital role in implementing the Society's strategic plan, ensuring the organisation remains agile, effective, and responsive to sector and wider trends. The postholder will also deputise for the CEO as and when required.

Key Accountabilities

Strategic Planning & Leadership

- ◆ Lead and develop a high-performing, geographically dispersed executive management team, promoting excellence at all times and encouraging continuous improvement.
- ◆ Oversee day-to-day operations across historic properties, visitor attractions, and commercial activities to maximise charitable and commercial outcomes.
- ◆ Manage outsourced central services functions, including Accounting and Finance, HR, and IT, ensuring seamless operational support.
- ◆ Collaborate with the CEO and Trustees to shape and deliver the Society's strategic plan and organisational goals and deputise for the CEO where required.
- ◆ Champion staff development, training, and a culture of learning in order to maintain a motivated, skilled workforce.
- ◆ Support and deliver investment projects that enhance visitor facilities and heritage conservation.
- ◆ Build and strengthen sustainable volunteer teams, integrating volunteers into the core operational model and continually enhancing community engagement.
- ◆ Promote and embed Equality, Diversity & Inclusion across the organisation, fostering a culture where all staff feel valued and included.
- ◆ Develop partnerships with local stakeholders and heritage organisations, fostering collaborative relationships and community engagement.

The Post continued

Financial & Commercial Management

- ◆ Develop and implement an effective commercial strategy that fosters innovation and continuous improvement, informed by visitor trends and sector benchmarks. Specifically leading all revenue-generation efforts, optimising income from ticketing, retail, catering, events, licensing, and other commercial streams.
- ◆ Oversee financial management by line-managing outsourced finance services, ensuring effective budgeting, forecasting, and cost control.
- ◆ Establish and manage a fundraising function to diversify income and support strategic initiatives.

Governance & Risk Management

- ◆ Ensure full compliance with the Society's Health & Safety policy, safeguarding, and regulatory requirements, promoting a culture of risk awareness and statutory responsibility.
- ◆ Lead the organisation's risk management processes, ensuring risk assessments are in place and mitigation strategies implemented across all operations to enable all staff to take an active role in ensuring the health and safety of all within the workplace.
- ◆ Support the CEO and Trustees by providing accurate, timely reporting to enable effective governance and decision-making.

Visitor Experience & Engagement

- ◆ Lead the implementation of a visitor experience strategy across all of the Society's heritage properties, ensuring a welcoming, engaging and enjoyable environment at all times.
- ◆ Develop and deliver a family-friendly visitor experience, ensuring the Society's heritage properties cater to younger audiences while maintaining historical integrity.
- ◆ Regularly evaluate the visitor journey and implement improvements in signage, orientation, and engagement strategies to align with accessibility and branding.
- ◆ Work closely with the individual property directors to deliver engaging and impactful education programs both for schools, children and adults.
- ◆ Oversee and develop the membership programme ensuring value for members, to deliver growing membership engagement and income.

Person Specification

The ideal candidate for this role will have the following:

Criteria	Competency	Essential/ Desirable
Experience & Knowledge	Proven experience leading complex, multi-site operations within the heritage, tourism, or visitor attraction sector, with a strong focus on high-performance culture and accountability.	Essential
	Expertise in financial management, including budgeting, reporting, cost control, and driving commercial performance across diverse income streams.	Essential
	Skilled in developing visitor-focused strategies that enhance engagement, education and enjoyment, with an understanding of audience development and appreciation for archaeology, history, and collections.	Essential
	In-depth knowledge of heritage property management, including conservation, maintenance, and the protection of historic buildings and assets.	Essential
	Strong track record in governance, risk management, safeguarding, and health & safety compliance, with experience collaborating effectively with Trustees, senior leaders, and external stakeholders.	Essential
Skills & Abilities	Strategic leadership and operational management capabilities with a results-driven and future-focused mindset.	Essential
	Commercial acumen with a proven ability to identify and capitalise on income opportunities across multiple revenue streams.	Essential
	Strong project management skills, with the ability to lead complex initiatives and manage competing priorities effectively.	Essential
	Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, capable of building productive relationships at all levels and across sectors, with the ability to foster cross-functional collaboration and unify teams around shared goals and values.	Essential
	Skilled in strategic thinking, problem-solving, and informed decision-making, with a focus on continuous improvement and innovation.	Essential

Continued overleaf

Person Specification continued

Criteria	Competency	Essential/ Desirable
Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging	Demonstrated ability to lead inclusively, creating a culture where all staff feel a sense of belonging and are empowered to contribute to business success.	Essential
	A clear understanding of the Equalities Act, with the ability to apply its principles practically in policies, operations, and staff engagement.	Essential
Experience & Qualifications	Degree or equivalent professional qualification in heritage management, business, cultural leadership, or a related field.	Desirable
	Knowledge of the regional cultural and heritage landscape in Sussex and the surrounding areas.	Desirable
	Experience of capital projects, site development or heritage-led regeneration would be an advantage.	Desirable

See Appendix below to view The Sussex Archaeological Society Governance and Executive Structures.

How to Apply

If you are an experienced and dynamic leader with a passion for heritage and operational excellence, we invite you to apply for the role of Chief Operating Officer (COO) with The Sussex Archaeological Society.

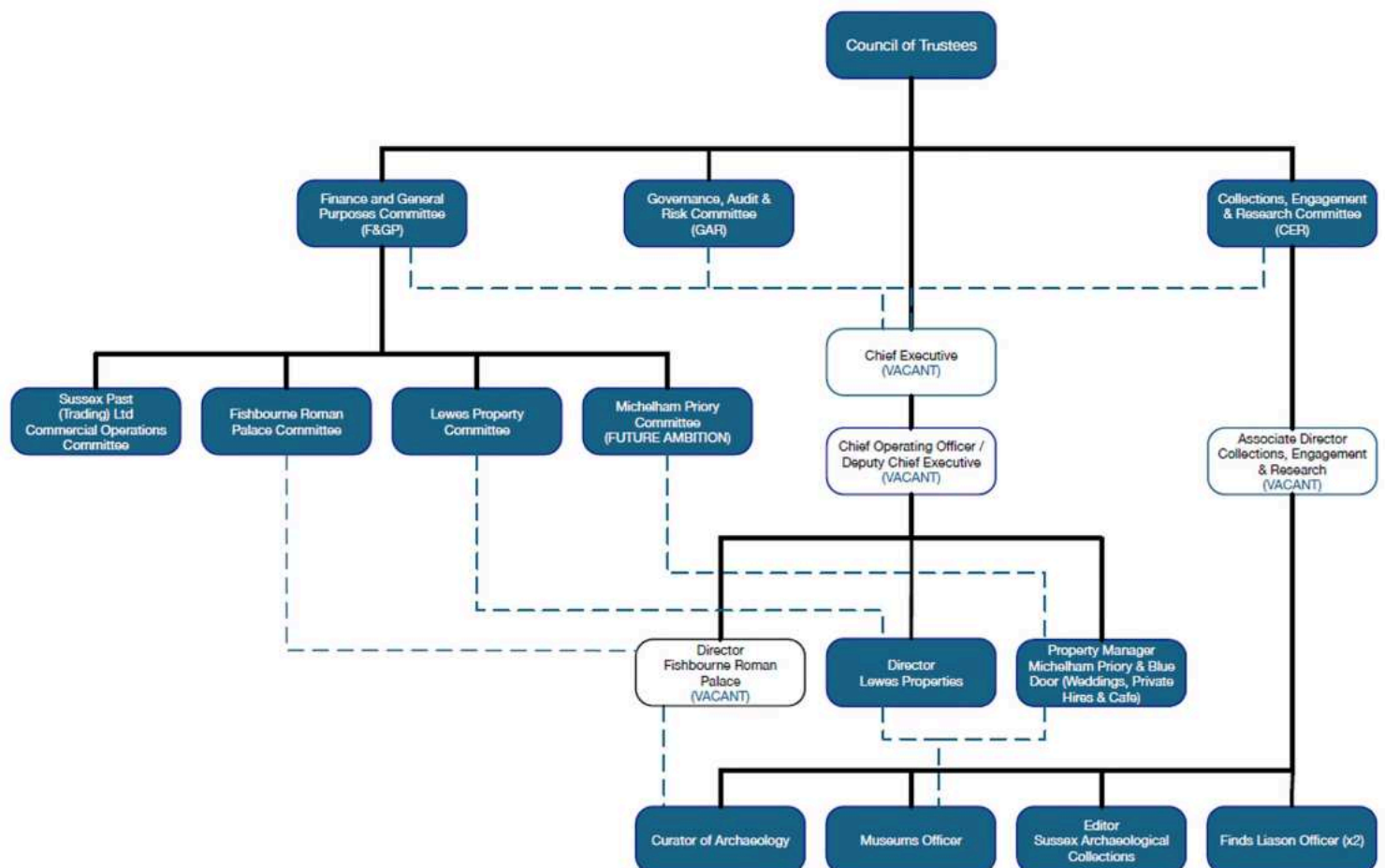
The deadline for applications is Monday 4th August at midnight. Click the link below to find out more and apply.

Apply now



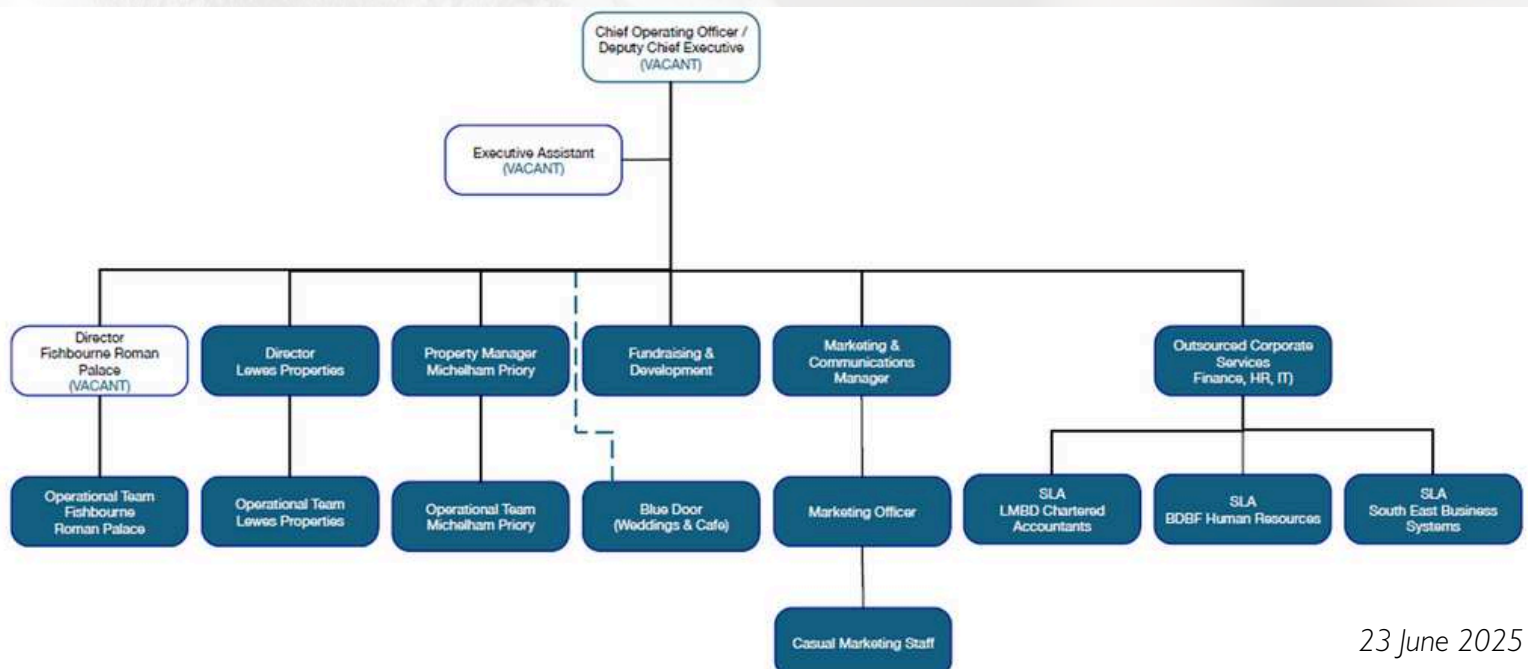
Appendix

The Sussex Archaeological Society Governance Structure



23 June 2025

The Sussex Archaeological Society Executive Structure



23 June 2025