

Chief Executive

Position Profile

September 2025



Welcome From Jill Paterson, Chair of the Board	3
Our Organisation.....	4
Our Culture	5
The Opportunity	6
Remuneration and Annual Leave	9
The Recruitment Process.....	9

Welcome From Jill Paterson, Chair of the Board

Thank you for your interest in joining our team as our new Chief Executive. I'm delighted that you're considering this opportunity to lead Planning Aid Scotland into its next exciting chapter.

At Planning Aid Scotland, we believe that people should be at the heart of planning. As both a charity and social enterprise, for over 30 years we've been proudly helping people across Scotland shape the future of their places, making the planning system more accessible and inclusive to everyone.

Our recently published [Strategy](#) outlines an inspiring plan for the next three years, built firmly on our core values of **integrity, impartiality, collaboration, inclusion, and innovation**. Our vision is bold: an inclusive society where communities are truly empowered to shape decisions about their places. To achieve this, we focus on three key areas, making sure to prioritise approaches that address the climate emergency across all areas of our work:

- **Inclusive participation:** We help people feel confident engaging with the planning system through practical advice, training, and upskilling.
- **Community-led planning:** We enable greater local participation in planning and placemaking, ensuring communities feel genuinely heard when it comes to the planning decisions made about their area and making sure everyone has a voice in the conversation.
- **Learning and innovation:** We're committed to continuously evolving to meet the changing needs of the communities that we serve.

What makes this all possible is our incredible community of skilled individuals. Alongside our dedicated staff team, we're supported by a network of over 400 members and volunteers. Together, we deliver a free, impartial **Advice Service** to help people with planning issues; provide **training** on Scotland's planning system and community engagement skills; work closely with local groups to build capacity and support the development of their own **community-led plans**; and design and deliver inclusive **community engagement** programmes.

This is an exciting time to join our team. Having recently finalised our new Strategy and laid the groundwork for establishing ourselves as a Centre of Excellence and Innovation, we're perfectly positioned to build on the positive impact we have made across Scotland and take it to the next level.

We are seeking a dynamic, inspiring leader who shares our passion for putting communities at the centre of planning decisions. Someone who can build on the strong foundations we have established, while bringing fresh ideas and energy to guide us on this journey.

Thank you,

Jill Paterson

Chair of the Board

Our Organisation

At Planning Aid Scotland, we believe that people should be at the heart of planning. As a charity and social enterprise, our purpose is to create an inclusive society where communities are empowered to shape decisions about the places in which they live, work, and play.

Planning can affect all aspects of our lives – our homes, our travel, our workspaces, our leisure activities, our health and wellbeing – but engaging with the system can be complex and intimidating. That's where we come in.

From answering planning queries through our Advice Service, to training professionals on the planning system, to helping communities have their voice heard in local planning decisions, we bridge the gap between people and planning authorities – making the system more accessible, inclusive, and fair for all.

Our impact

For over 30 years, we have supported communities across Scotland. This past year alone, we helped people from Dumfries to the Shetland Islands, from Ayrshire to Aberdeenshire. Guided by our core values of integrity, impartiality, collaboration, inclusion, and innovation, this year we achieved significant milestones:

- **[Advice](#)**: We resolved over 1,000 planning queries from individuals, business start-ups, and communities who contacted our Scottish Government funded Advice Service. Our team of staff and volunteers (chartered and retired planners) provided trusted, expert advice to help them confidently navigate the planning system.
- **[Training](#)**: We delivered over 20 tailored training sessions for community groups, Community Councils, Elected Members, charities, and public bodies. Topics included the Scottish planning system, Local Place Plans, community engagement skills, and mapping tools – improving understanding and participation in planning processes.
- **[Community support](#)**: We facilitated a series of community engagement events in Garve and Stonehaven, delivered mentoring and training sessions on Local Place Plans for seven communities, and supported the development of seven community-led plans focussing on active travel. These initiatives empowered communities to participate meaningfully in local planning decisions.
- **[Volunteering](#)**: Our network of volunteers contributed more than 900 hours of support. From assisting with our Advice Service, to facilitating community engagement events, and mentoring young planners – their contribution has been invaluable to our operations. In return, we provided them with a range of CPD events on topics such as Online Mapping Tools, Inclusivity in Planning, and Facilitation Skills Training.

This year marked several important milestones for our organisation. We published our first [Impact Report](#), reflecting on the positive difference we have made for communities across Scotland this last year, and we updated our [Strategy](#) to provide a clear vision to focus our efforts over the next three years. We have also been working towards establishing Planning Aid Scotland as a Centre of Excellence and Innovation – a bold step forward in sharing best practice, driving innovation, and championing collaborative learning across the sector.

Our Culture

How and where we work

Our staff team has a friendly and supportive working culture that prioritises wellbeing and flexible working. Whilst the work can be busy and demanding, we believe that a happy team produces the best work.

We have an office in Edinburgh city centre. We currently have 10 staff members (a mix of full-time and part-time), who are encouraged to work flexibly between home and the office.

The office is principally used for/by:

- our weekly in-person all staff meeting (known as 'Together Tuesdays')
- staff working in the office
- holding meetings with partners and other external stakeholders
- staff preparing materials for training events etc

Together Tuesdays

On Tuesdays, we have weekly team meetings when we come together in-person to the office in Edinburgh and prioritise face-to-face internal meetings and meeting as a team. On that day we minimise external calls where possible and prioritise collaborative team working.

Commitment to learning

One of our strategic priorities as an organisation is a commitment to being a learning organisation. This focus on learning from what we do allows all team members to contribute ideas and feedback and enables us to test, trial and innovate new ways of working to deliver better outcomes and a happier team.

4-day week policy

We have also adopted a 4-day working week practice which has created a better work life balance for the team at no detriment to the organisation. As a full-time post holder, you will work 32 hours, Monday to Thursday.

The Opportunity

Overview

Reporting to the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive will be responsible for the leadership and management of the operational and the financial affairs of the organisation including developing, promoting and facilitating strategies, objectives and deliverables. It will be the Chief Executive's responsibility to ensure that the organisation continues to maximise and evidence its impact, ensuring reflective learning is embedded throughout. As Company Secretary, the Chief Executive takes responsibility for the organisation's legal and statutory requirements.

The Chief Executive will ensure that Planning Aid Scotland continues to be an inclusive and learning organisation. Encouraging greater shared understanding and cooperation amongst planning practitioners, elected members, officers and community members and promoting greater diversity is also an essential part of the job.

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategic Leadership

- Lead the implementation of the organisation's Strategy and ensure all work aligns with the strategic priorities: Inclusive Participation, Learning & Innovation, Community-led Planning and Climate Emergency.
- Shape long-term vision and strengthen the position the organisation holds as a national leader in inclusive planning and placemaking.
- Build upon our values-led culture based on Integrity, Impartiality, Collaboration, Inclusion, and Innovation.

2. Delivery of Strategic Priorities

- Inclusive Participation: Ensure delivery of a high-quality impartial advice service, quality training and inclusive community engagement programmes, with a focus on seldom-heard and marginalised groups.
- Community-led Planning: Advocate for, empower and support the delivery of community-led plans and meaningful participation in Local Development Plans.
- Learning & Innovation: Champion reflective learning, continuous improvement, digital planning innovation, evidence-led practice and the establishment of our Centre of Excellence and Innovation.
- Climate Emergency: Embed sustainable practice across the organisation, reduce carbon impact, and prioritise approaches that address the climate and nature crises.

3. Operational Management

- Oversee effective delivery of core services: advice, training, community engagement, and volunteering.
- Ensure financial sustainability (including a continued focus on innovative business development and diversifying income streams), efficient resource management, and compliance with charity and company law.
- Maintain robust policies and procedures for governance, risk, and quality assurance.

4. External Representation & Influence

- Act as chief ambassador and spokesperson for the organisation with government, councils, community councils, public bodies, community groups, and partners.
- Influence national policy to strengthen inclusive planning and placemaking systems.
- Build cross-sector collaborations, including leadership within the Scottish Alliance for People and Places.

5. Organisational Development

- Lead, support, and develop staff and volunteers through training, mentoring, and professional growth opportunities.
- Foster an inclusive, collaborative, and high-performing workplace culture.
- Ensure communications and outputs are accessible, engaging, and impactful.

6. Governance & Accountability

- Report to the Board on strategic progress, risks, and organisational performance.
- Provide evidence of the organisation's impact and outcomes.
- Uphold strong governance, ensuring compliance with legal, financial, and charitable obligations.

7. Partnership & Stakeholder Engagement

- Maintain and strengthen relationships with community groups, councils, community councils, Scottish Government, charities, public bodies, and other stakeholders.
- Ensure services remain responsive to community needs and the evolving planning system.
- Promote the organisation as a trusted and impartial partner in planning and placemaking.

About You

You are a proactive, solution focused leader who combines energy, vision and creativity with the experience of leading an organisation to deliver on its strategic priorities.

You can demonstrate relevant expertise in planning/placemaking and community engagement. You are an excellent communicator and experienced networker with a proven ability to foster collaboration, creating strategic alliances to maximise impact.

Planning Aid Scotland is an equal opportunities employer. Inclusion is one of our core values and we believe that diversity makes us stronger. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and life experiences. If you require any adjustments to take part fully in our recruitment process, please let us know and we will support you.

Essential Criteria

Knowledge & Experience

- Proven senior leadership experience in the voluntary, public, or related sectors, with a track record of delivering strategic priorities.
- Strong understanding of community engagement, planning systems, or placemaking in Scotland (or similar policy/advocacy environments) including the challenges and opportunities presented in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

- Experience of influencing policy and representing an organisation at senior levels with government, councils, public bodies, and other stakeholders.
- Demonstrated success in organisational management, including financial oversight, governance, risk management, and compliance.
- Experience of building inclusive services that reach and empower seldom-heard or marginalised communities.
- Track record of leading teams, staff, and volunteers to achieve high performance and positive workplace culture.

Skills & Abilities

- Excellent strategic thinker, able to balance long-term vision with operational delivery.
- Strong communicator and ambassador, confident in engaging with diverse audiences including communities, decision-makers, and media.
- Ability to inspire and motivate others through collaboration, innovation, and inclusive leadership.
- Strong financial and resource management skills including income generation and/or fundraising.
- Skilled at building partnerships across sectors and fostering effective collaborations.
- Ability to evidence and articulate organisational impact.

Personal Qualities

- Committed to the organisation's purpose of creating an inclusive society where communities shape decisions about their place.
- Values-driven leader who demonstrates our values of Integrity, Impartiality, Collaboration, Inclusion, and Innovation.
- Resilient, adaptable, and able to lead in a demanding, fast-paced, changeable external environment.
- Inclusive and reflective, with a commitment to continuous learning and improvement.
- Focused on addressing the climate emergency and promoting sustainable practices.

Desirable Criteria

- Knowledge of Scottish charity law, governance, and regulation.
- Experience of digital innovation, especially in planning, engagement, or service delivery.
- Established networks within planning, community engagement/development, or related policy areas.
- Understanding of climate and nature-related challenges in the context of planning and community engagement/development.

In addition, the successful candidate should have:

- The flexibility to travel, when necessary.
- The flexibility to attend occasional evening and weekend meetings.

Remuneration and Annual Leave

Key information about the role

This is a full-time role. Please note we operate a 4-day week working policy – see the section ‘Our Culture’ for further information. As a full-time post holder, you will work 32 hours, Monday to Thursday.

Salary

- £66,285.13 - £83,479.34
- Scale 53 – 64
- Appointments are generally made at the start of the salary range.

Pension

- Employer contribution is 8.5%
- Employee percentage contribution is (employee’s age/10) -1

Annual leave

- 30.5 days, increasing with service to a maximum of 34.5 days
- The annual leave allowance has been adjusted to reflect the four-day week which now operates for full-time staff: this means that 30.5 days equates to approximately 7.6 weeks of leave
- The public holiday entitlement has been added into the total annual leave allowance to allow more flexibility, therefore annual leave is inclusive of all public holidays and includes the office closure between Christmas and New Year.

The Recruitment Process

For more information or an informal discussion with the current Chief Executive or a board member, interested candidates should contact Johanna Boyd, Chief Executive in the first instance: E: johanna@pas.org.uk

How to apply

Interested candidates should provide a tailored CV and covering letter, detailing your motivation for the position, as well as completing the Equal Opportunities Monitoring form. Applications should be submitted by email to Jenny Pendreigh: E: jenny@pas.org.uk.

Key dates

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| • Application closing date | 5pm 14 October 2025 |
| • Shortlisting | 14-17 October 2025 |
| • Video assessment exercise for longlisted candidates | w/c 27 October 2025 |
| • Interview date for shortlisted candidates | w/c 3 November 2025 |

