

MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST



**Candidate Information
Conservation Officer
Mournes Catchments**

Introduction

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in joining Mourne Heritage Trust in this new role, supported by Northern Ireland Water.

This is an exciting opportunity to help deliver practical conservation in the Mournes catchments, including conservation grazing, peatland and wet heath restoration, erosion control, and wildfire resilience.

NI Water aims to protect and restore some of the Mournes' most important upland habitats, particularly in the Eastern Mournes Special Area of Conservation and parts of the Western Mournes ASSI.

These landscapes are vital for biodiversity, peatland recovery, and the supply of clean drinking water.

You will work closely with farmers, graziers, recreational groups and partner organisations, helping to build strong relationships and support conservation on the ground. This is a rewarding role for someone with a passion for upland landscapes, strong practical and analytical skills, and a collaborative approach.

You can learn more about MHT by visiting our website at

www.mournelive.com.

If you are attracted by the idea of using your skills and experience to help improve the Mourne Area of Outstanding Beauty and its impact on the community, we warmly welcome your application.

Nigel McKinney
Chief Executive Officer

Who we are and what we do.

Mourne Heritage Trust was established in 1997 as a charity trust 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 works collaboratively with government agencies, the local authority, 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.

Our board of 17 Volunteer Trustees governs the activities of our team of 21 staff.

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

We deliver on our mission through taking action under the strategic themes below.

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 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

We work to promote regeneration through the development and facilitation of appropriate sustainable tourism initiatives in the Mourne AONB. Creating, awareness and promoting a 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 below.

Strategy, Policy Development and Partnerships

Mourne Heritage Trust's 'Caring for Mourne' framework is guided by the [Mourne AONB Management Plan 2023-2027](#) which sets a vision to protect and enhance the landscape through 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

The Trust represents landscape priorities in 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.

As part of the **Forever Mournes Partnership** with the National Trust, NI Water and Woodland Trust we work on developing more coherent and comprehensive approaches to management of public lands in the high Mournes. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Forest Service and Newry, Mourne and Down Council anticipate in the Partnership as observer members.

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:

- Invasive species control
- Post-storm tree clearance
- Monitoring user numbers and events
- Litter management, high Mournes car parks
- Maintenance of the Play Parks in Tollymore and Castlewellan Forest Parks
- Maintenance of a number of green lanes/rights of way
- Stile, fence and bridge maintenance in the high Mournes
- Maintenance of a number of Interpretive Panels across the AONB

Erosion Control

The Trust has a long-standing commitment to erosion control in the area, particularly associated with path work, fire management, heathland management, and grazing management.

Sustainable Paths

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 comfortable experience for users, while helping to protect the surrounding delicate habitats.

Forest Rangers

Our Forest Rangers work in Castlewellan Forest Park and Kilbroney Park, Rostrevor. They are responsible for maintaining the mountain bike trails in both parks, ensuring they are clear of debris and fallen trees.

Their on-the-ground presence allows them to engage directly with trail users, leading to practical improvements. For instance, a fallen tree was placed at a popular resting spot for tired riders, blending seamlessly into the natural surroundings.

Healthy Heathland

A key part of caring for the Mourne landscape are the ongoing peatland management projects. Increased recreation, climate change, and wildfires have damaged the area, affecting the habitat and their species.

Eroded blanket bog and wet heath are an increasing concern in the Mourne Special Area of Conservation. Early interventions began in 2016-17 with Heritage Lottery funding, we used dams and slow the flow techniques to begin to improve water retention and promote regeneration in two small areas in the Annalong Valley.

The PEAT+ project in the Mourne is up and running. The funding will allow review and repairs to earlier works completed by MHT, development of new restoration management plans using digital technology and an extension to the earlier restoration sites and deliver new restoration work at additional locations. In these high Mourne locations, we will use stones and coir rolls and revegetation techniques along with geo textiles. These dams help control erosion and support faster vegetation growth.

Engagement Rangers

The Engagement Ranger project started as a pilot in late 2021 and ended in Jan 2026. As the name implies, the rangers engaged with visitors in the Mourne, promoting safe and positive experiences for walkers while encouraging them to minimize their environmental impact. Our message aligned with the “Leave No Trace” principles, emphasising the importance of keeping dogs on leads to protect livestock and native species.

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, funding has supported additional projects. For example, the Mourne Mountains Landscape Partnership (2013-2017) invested around £3 million into local projects focused on the Mourne’s natural, built, and cultural heritage.

Wildfire Management

The Mourne uplands have endured a long history of wildfires, impacting the area in various ways over the years. In 2007, the Safer Mourne Partnership was formed to improve coordination among different organisations. Its goal is to address fire and crime issues through education and community fire safety advice. The partnership includes representatives from the Mourne Heritage Trust, NI Fire & Rescue Service, PSNI, Forest Service, National Trust, and Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Today MHT still supports a Mourne Wildfire group and contributes to the development of the new NI Wildfire Plan and framework launched by Minister Muir April 2026.

Our Team

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.

Projects and Participation Team

Landscape Services Development Manager

Sustainable Tourism and communications Manager (Part-time)

Area Ranger

Conservation Grazing Ranger

Volunteer Officer

Engagement Ranger (Part-time)

PEAT+ Project team x 3 fixed term contracts until March 2029

Countryside Operations Team

Senior Countryside Officer – AONB Services

Senior Countryside Officer – Forests

Senior Countryside Officer – Upland

Countryside Officers x 7

Coordination and Support

Chief Executive Officer

Office Manager

Finance and Administration Officer

Application Process and Advice

Timeline & How to Apply	
Application submitted online along with Monitoring forms	Monday 6 th July 2026 at 12 noon
INTERVIEW DATE	16 th July 2026
Interviews (may include a seen or unseen task)	

The application process uses Microsoft Forms. You should complete the form in **one session**, as there is **no option to save and return later**. All questions marked with an asterisk are mandatory; the form will not submit unless these are completed.

We recommend drafting your answers offline and then pasting or typing them into the form. Sections for essential and desirable criteria have **character limits**, which include **spaces, punctuation and symbols**, so concise and clear responses are best.

A list of the questions and their character limits is provided below to help you prepare your answers in advance.

Essential Criteria

30. Level six third level qualification in a relevant subject and at least 2 years' relevant full-time experience, or the part-time equivalent, **or** 5 years relevant work experience full-time (or equivalent part-time experience) in an environmental/ecology/land management role. It is the responsibility of the applicant to demonstrate the relevance of qualifications and work-related experience. (600 characters)
31. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of upland management requirements associated with designated sites and priority habitats, particularly acid grassland, wet heath and peatland management. (600 characters)
32. Demonstrable knowledge of herbivore husbandry, welfare and grazing needs. (600 characters)
33. Knowledge of environmental and agricultural issues and initiatives that may impact on grazing and site management. (600 characters)
34. Experience of overseeing or undertaking practical countryside works, including implementing health and safety policies and procedures. (600 characters)
35. Experience of building and maintaining effective relationships with landowners and farmers, brokering solutions and solving problems. (600 characters)
36. Ability to communicate effectively, both in writing and verbally, including presentations, report writing and engaging with a diverse range of people at all levels. (600 characters)
37. Effective organisational skills, including the ability to plan, manage and prioritise your workload, meet deadlines, and organise meetings and events. (600 characters)

- 38. High level of computer literacy, with a good working knowledge of Microsoft Office applications including Excel, PowerPoint and Word. (600 characters)
- 39. Experience of digital mapping and surveying using ArcGIS or QGIS, with a track record of data analysis and desk-based research. (600 characters)
- 40. Full clean driving licence.

Desirable Criteria

- 41. Experience of managing contractors to carry out capital site works. (600 characters)
- 42. Proven track record of field surveys, including Phase 1 and Phase 2 JNCC vegetation surveys. (600 characters)
- 43. Experience of fire management prevention issues, response or training. (600 characters)
- 44. Experience of developing DAERA Environment Fund farm plans. (600 characters)
- 45. Experience of acting as the secretariat for stakeholder group or forum meetings. (600 characters)
- 46. Mountain leadership or related skills qualifications. (600 characters)

Equality Monitoring

Along with the Application Form, you will be asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring. Shortlisting of applications will only consider employment history and the essential and desirable criteria questions. Mourne Heritage Trust is an Equal Opportunities Employer and all applications for employment are considered strictly on the basis of merit.

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 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.

GDPR

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

**Mourne Heritage Trust is a Registered Charity (105840) and a
Company Limited by Guarantee (NI032946)**