



CANDIDATE PACK FOR DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in joining YHA.

YHA is a charity and social enterprise that transforms lives forever through travel and real adventure. We want more people – especially young people facing adversity – to benefit from connecting to nature, the outdoors, heritage and each other while staying in our c140 amazing hostels across England and Wales.

I've been CEO of YHA since 2017. It's been a real privilege to lead an inspiring organisation with a rich history of transforming lives.

In 2020, we set out an exciting long-term strategy to ensure YHA grows reach and impact, with a particular focus on those who could benefit the most.

Since then, like many organisations, we have faced very challenging times. YHA was hit hard by pandemic shutdowns, the cost-of-living crisis and steep inflation.

Despite this, we have made real progress putting YHA on the map as a leading national charity, with groundbreaking initiatives that generate income while putting equity, access and inclusion at the heart of everything we do: such as [Generation Green](#), [Outdoor Citizens](#) and the [Festival of Walking](#).

In 2023 we set out our three-year plan to take the steps necessary to secure YHA's long term prosperity. We need a strong base across various media, partners, and funders that we can call upon quickly to make sure YHA has the strong voice it deserves. We need to be better recognised as a go to charity in societal debates about young people, access to nature and the multiple benefits of a thriving youth hostel network. We need to re-energise our story – engaging and involving the next generations of young people to see YHA as a place and resource for them.

As part of this, we are reshaping our senior leadership team to ensure we are fit for the future. As our new Director of External Affairs, you will get to lead and create a world class external-facing corporate communications and public affairs strategy, building influential and impactful relationships with government, funding agencies and other charity and media partners.

You will also lead the development, delivery and communication of priority national level strategic partnerships, alliances and campaigns such as Access Unlimited (responsible for Generation Green) and Hostelling Together (bringing together the not for profit and independent hostelling sector across the UK).

Naturally collaborative, and comfortable across all communication channels, you will lead a small external relations team that punches above its weight, with a brief to strengthen key areas to help us raise our brand, profile and influence further. You will combine strong policy, communications and public affairs experience with demonstrable success at influencing at the highest levels across a broad stakeholder map, and with experience to ensure our profile is hitting key audiences.

This is a key role on our Senior Leadership Team in which you will report directly to me and attend the Executive team. Whether you're already operating in a similar role or looking for the first Director opportunity, key is that you have the skills, experience, desire and passion to contribute to YHA's ongoing success, fostering diversity and inclusivity into the future.

If this sounds like you, I'd love to hear from you!



James Blake
Chief Executive

ABOUT US

We are YHA. We believe in the power of travel and adventure to connect people to each other, to nature and the outdoors, to culture and to heritage.

Since 1930, YHA has operated a unique network of hostels throughout England and Wales — a community of shared spaces, open to all and for the benefit of everybody.

We provide inclusive adventures, in extraordinary buildings, in amazing places — welcoming over a million people each year. Yet we offer much more than accommodation.

YHA is a sector-leading residential provider, a champion of inclusive volunteering and work experience, and an Investors in People Gold employer.

We are a large social enterprise leading the way in sustainable social tourism and nurturing partnerships that deliver impact across multiple sectors and at every level — in our communities, in our regions, and nationally.

Over 90 years on from our pioneering beginnings, our founding principles and determination to achieve social good remain at the heart of what we do.

In the aftermath of the pandemic and context of multiple external crises we are forging ahead with our long-term strategy to increase the scale and breadth of our impact. Our business plan for 2023-26 is structured around recovery and growth through optimisation of resources and network change.

Join us and make your mark on this vital and energetic charity as we continue our journey towards prosperity and long-term sustainability for the benefit of present and future generations.

We are YHA.

Because where you go changes who you become.

OUR VISION

Everyone has access to the benefits of adventure, for the first time and a lifetime.

OUR MISSION

To enrich the lives of all, especially young people, by providing brilliant hostel stays and experiences that improve physical health, mental wellbeing and life skills.

OUR CHARITABLE OBJECT

To help all, especially young people of limited means, to a greater knowledge, love and care of the countryside, and appreciation of the cultural values of towns and cities, particularly by providing youth hostels or other accommodation for them on their travels and thus to promote their health, recreation and education.

OUR HEART VALUES

Helpful – Being helpful is about making life easier for other people, being hospitable and creating a pleasant work environment.

Efficient – Being efficient means being organised, thoughtful in decision-making, hardworking and committed to improvement. As a charity, it's our duty to make best use of our resources.

Authentic – Authenticity combines the qualities of honesty, trustworthiness, and transparency. It's about being genuine and straightforward.

Respectful – Respect is about valuing the time, energy, opinions, achievements and working styles of colleagues, volunteers, and supporters. It's about promoting equality and inclusivity.

Team-spirited – YHA is one team. And for the health and success of the team, we take individual responsibility, show personal leadership qualities, and collaborate towards our goals.

OUR COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY

As part of our 10-year strategy – 'Adventure. For the first time and a lifetime.' - we are ensuring that equity, diversity and inclusion is at our centre. Whilst our history is rooted in access – to nature, the outdoors, culture, heritage, and travel – we recognise that access to these public assets is not equitable.

And so, moving forward, we are taking great steps in:

- Ensuring that 'all means all'. Through feedback from a wider range of users, we can shape our service improvements to create access for everyone.
- Diversifying the make-up of our staff body. Through the development of a significant internal training programme and a focus on new recruitment approaches, we are growing the capacity and culture to support our EDI work.
- Focusing proportionately more resource on those who are both excluded but could also benefit the most from our services. By targeting special schools and alternative provision in our education programme and working closely with our Housing Association and Action for Children partners, we can grow access for those previously unable to reach us. Generation Green is only the start of these efforts.
- Amplifying the voices of a wider group of staff, users, partners and communities in support of the wider cause of EDI. This has been developed in our Outside Voices project.
- Contributing to and learning from the evidence base – of both challenges and solutions. Through collaborative work, we share our data and writing to feed into the work of others.
- Working with partners and community groups to develop the capacity of charities and networks led by those with a range of lived experiences. Through our partnership with Natural England, we have developed our community of practice, [Outdoor Citizens](#).

To learn more about our organisation's 10-year strategy: 'Adventure. For the first time and a lifetime', please visit [here](#).

A link to our annual report and accounts can be viewed [here](#).

Our hostels and services give access to nature to over one million people each year, and as an organisation, we are committed to protecting the environment for future generations to enjoy. To learn more about our sustainability goals and achievements, please visit [here](#).

ORGANOGRAM

To see our Senior Leadership Team structure [click here](#).



JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title:	Director of External Affairs
Reports to:	Chief Executive Officer
Direct reports:	Corporate Affairs Manager; Senior Brand and Communications Manager; Governance Manager; Oversight of YHA's external PR team; One vacant post previously covering Wales' business development and public affairs.
Relationships:	Internal: CEO, Board of Trustees, Executive Management Team and SLT members, other internal stakeholders External: Government Ministers and officials; voluntary/public sector partners and stakeholders; charitable trusts and grant bodies, legal advisors, YHA's members, Company Members and Ambassadors; national and local media, other third parties. The majority at CEO/senior leadership level.
Financial responsibility:	Small corporate communications and governance budget: contributing to income generation to support a c.£55m turnover organisation.

ROLE PURPOSE:

A key member of the Senior Leadership Team, you'll lead our external-facing communications, policy, public affairs, governance and PR work, in support of delivering the YHA Ten Year Strategy: Adventure: For the First Time and a Lifetime in England and Wales.

As YHA recovers from the pandemic and the energy, inflation and cost of living crises, we need to ensure we are firmly positioned as a leading national charity for young people, integral to the continued recovery of society.

We need a strong base of support – politically, from the media, partners, and funders that we can call upon quickly to make sure YHA has the strong voice it deserves. We need to be better recognised as a go to charity in societal debates about young people, access to nature and the multiple benefits of a thriving youth hostel network.

We need to re-energise our story – engaging and involving the next generations of young people to see YHA as a place and resource for them.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES:

You'll lead and create a world class external-facing corporate communications and public affairs strategy, building influential and impactful relationships with government, funding agencies and other charity and media partners.

- You'll lead and inspire a small high-performing team responsible for YHA's overall brand, internal and external communications, PR and media engagement, corporate and public affairs, policy, parliamentary, stakeholder engagement and governance.
- You'll lead and establish YHA's multi-channel corporate communications strategy to develop YHA's profile and ensure YHA is firmly positioned as a leading national charity for young people, working closely with fellow Directors responsible for fundraising and supporter engagement and commercial sales and marketing to help maximise income generation and impact.
- You'll develop YHA's media presence and profile, including leading on modernising YHA's digital and social media strategy, and you'll be responsible for managing strategic crisis communications planning and execution, and associated reputation management.
- You'll lead the development, delivery and communication of priority national level strategic partnerships, alliances and campaigns such as Access Unlimited (responsible for the groundbreaking Generation Green initiative) and Hostelling Together (bringing together the not for profit and independent hostelling sector across the UK): helping develop YHA's national profile and identify opportunities for new markets and funding streams.

- Working closely with the Chief Executive, you'll develop YHA's policy, public and corporate affairs strategy in both England and Wales, building contacts with government to support successful influencing and lobbying, including taking forward the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Hostelling and managing key corporate events and leading the development of YHA's Ambassador programme.
- You'll have overall responsibility and accountability for YHA's governance framework and structures, including working closely with CEO, Chair and Board of Trustees to evolve YHA's governance to meet the needs of the Board and Charity Commission guidelines.
- You'll lead overall on our relationship with international hostelling organisations, working closely with the Chief Executive to ensure YHA maximises the benefit from its membership of Hostelling International.

You'll be a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, reporting directly to the CEO and attending the Exec.

- You'll attend relevant trustee, board meetings and sub committees, and ensure they are properly supported.
- You'll ensure service excellence to all internal and external stakeholders and customers, role modelling our HEART Values.
- You'll provide strategic guidance and best practice on issues relating to corporate reputation.
- You'll build internal relationships with fellow Directors on the Senior Leadership Teams that help develop YHA's performance and profile.
- You'll have overall responsibility for internal communications within YHA, supporting staff engagement across the network and with YHA's central teams, and helping develop consistent messaging across all teams.
- You'll have overall responsibility for internal communications, and for managing strategic crisis communications planning and execution, and associated reputation management.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

- You'll have significant experience at senior level of successfully leading policy, communications or campaigning functions in an organisation of comparable size and complexity.
- You'll be an inclusive and dynamic leader, experienced and confident in line management, with the ability to nurture talent, inspire a team and establish and act on strategic priorities.
- You'll have a track record of successful political and/or policy influencing work, including through relationship-building, advocacy, lobbying and a solid understanding of government and policy in Westminster and Cardiff.
- You'll have a track record of building effective relationships with senior colleagues internally and externally.
- You'll have demonstrable experience and understanding of integrated corporate communications with clear impact measurement across both physical and digital channels.
- You'll have a track record of successfully influencing public policy, and a solid understanding of government and policy in Westminster and Cardiff.
- Experience of leading on strengthening equity, diversity and inclusion practices that have contributed towards meaningful change within your organisation or team.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- You'll possess outstanding interpersonal and influencing skills with high levels of political awareness and experience of building and sustaining effective senior stakeholder networks and relationships amongst government and the charity and/or hospitality sectors.
- You'll be an expert oral, written and digital communicator, capable of developing engaging and high-quality content across different media, and a high-impact presenter experienced in pro-active and reactive media interviews and public speaking.
- You'll be highly organised and able to balance multiple conflicting priorities at pace.
- You'll be digitally savvy and demonstrate a track record of applying new digital tools.

STYLES AND BEHAVIOURS

- A strategic thinker able to contribute effectively to organisational direction.
- Be committed to embedding the values of equity, diversity and inclusion in everything that you do.
- A commitment to continuous innovation and creativity.



TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

SALARY

The package for this role is up to c.£82,000 per annum and includes a car allowance of £5,400.

CONTRACT

This role is on a full-time permanent basis.

LOCATION

Home based, but with the ability to travel regularly to our HQ in Matlock (c 1/month); to London and to our network across England and Wales

PENSION

Pension is 3% & 5% contribution (Employer/Employee).

ANNUAL LEAVE

28 days excluding Bank Holidays increasing to 29 after 1 year with 2 additional days for 10 years' plus service.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

Private Health Care provided by AXA.

HOW TO APPLY

We hope you will consider making an application. If you have questions about the appointment and would find it helpful to have an informal conversation, please contact chris.milo@starfishsearch.com and we will be happy to arrange a call. To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/yha-dir-ext-affa/> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge and experience criteria.

We actively encourage applications from candidates from underrepresented communities. YHA is committed to providing equal opportunities and creating an inclusive environment for everyone.

We would also be grateful if you would also complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Closing date:	Friday 8th March 2024
Preliminary interviews online:	w/c Monday 25th March and w/c Monday 1st April 2024
Final Panel interviews in person:	Thursday 18th April 2024