

The Role

This is not a conventional third sector CEO role. The Chief Executive of Humanist Society Scotland leads an organisation that operates simultaneously as Scotland's national humanist charity, its largest humanist ceremony provider, and one of its most active secular advocacy voices. The post-holder must be as comfortable standing at a graveside supporting a bereaved family understanding the weight of what celebrants do and what it means to the people they serve as they are presenting to a Scottish Government Minister or chairing a staff meeting.

Accountable to the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the effective leadership, operational management and strategic development of HSS. This is a values-driven leadership role requiring strategic vision, operational credibility, financial acumen and exceptional interpersonal skill across very different communities: celebrants, members, staff, funders, politicians and the public.

This appointment comes at a moment of genuine opportunity. With growing public appetite for non-religious ceremonies, a committed celebrant community, an active membership and a strong campaigning identity, HSS has the foundations for significant growth. The new Chief Executive will be expected to lead a period of purposeful change — consolidating recent organisational development, reinforcing internal culture and confidence, and driving forward ambitious plans for ceremony growth, income diversification and civic influence. The Board is looking for someone who can hold both the vision and the detail, and who understands that in an organisation like HSS, how you lead is as important as what you deliver.

Key Responsibilities

The responsibilities below are indicative of the scope of the role.

1. Celebrancy and Ceremony Development

- Provide strategic leadership of HSS's celebrant community Scotland's largest network of humanist celebrants ensuring consistently high standards, strong professional support and a culture of excellence.
- Drive growth and revenue in ceremony volumes across weddings, civil partnerships, funerals and naming ceremonies, working with the celebrant community and external partners to increase reach, accessibility and geographic coverage across Scotland.
- Develop and strengthen celebrant training, accreditation, continuing professional development and mentoring infrastructure treating the celebrant community as one of HSS's most important assets.
- Champion ceremony as the strategic heart of HSS's mission and its primary earned income stream, ensuring it is resourced, valued and developed accordingly.
- Build productive relationships with venues, local authorities, healthcare settings, care homes, hospices and other partners to expand ceremony pathways, particularly in end-of-life care and non-urban communities.
- Maintain and enhance HSS's standing as signatories of the European Humanist Wedding Standard and members of the European Humanist Services Network.

2. Strategic Leadership

- Develop and implement HSS's strategic plan in close partnership with the Board, with particular focus on ceremony growth, income diversification and the expansion of HSS's civic influence.

- Lead the organisation through a period of purposeful change, building internal confidence and operational planning, external credibility and stakeholder trust.
- Identify and act on opportunities to extend HSS's reach and relevance across Scottish communities, particularly with non-religious individuals currently unaware of or underserved by HSS.
- Represent HSS publicly as its principal spokesperson on humanist values, secularism, ceremony and civil society advocacy — in media, at Parliament, and across national and international networks.

3. Income Generation and Financial Sustainability

- Develop and lead a strategic programme of income diversification, reducing reliance on any single revenue stream and developing sustainable models including earned income from ceremonies, grant funding, training, membership and events.
- Work with the Board and Finance function to ensure robust financial modelling and management, transparent reporting and long-term fiscal resilience.
- Develop and manage commercial partnerships, licensing arrangements and service offerings that are consistent with HSS's values and mission.
- Explore and develop new income streams including digital products, CPD provision, consultancy and corporate engagement that align with HSS's expertise and public profile.

4. Change Management and Organisational Development

- Lead the organisation with care and confidence through a period of transition, ensuring staff wellbeing, operational continuity and organisational stability are protected throughout.
- Build and embed a positive, inclusive and high-performing internal culture that reflects HSS's values in how we work, not only what we campaign for.
- Develop and implement sound internal systems, policies, processes and governance frameworks that support organisational effectiveness and regulatory compliance.
- Ensure that change is managed transparently, with appropriate communication to staff, the Board, members and the celebrant community at every stage.

5. Stakeholder Engagement and Civic Advocacy

- Build and maintain productive relationships with the Scottish Government, local authorities, faith and belief organisations, civil society partners and the media.
- Represent HSS's values and interests in national and international humanist networks, including Humanists International and the European Humanist Services Network.
- Cultivate strong relationships with the HSS membership and celebrant community, ensuring their voices inform organisational decisions and strategic priorities.
- Sustain and develop HSS's public profile as Scotland's authoritative voice on humanism, secularism and non-religious ceremony.

6. Operational Management

- Provide effective day-to-day leadership of the HSS staff team, fostering a culture of trust, diversity, accountability, learning and continuous improvement.
- Oversee all operational functions including building an operational SMT including finance, HR, digital infrastructure, communications and member services.
- Ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory and governance requirements, including OSCR, Companies House and data protection legislation.

7. Board Liaison and Governance

- Work in close and transparent partnership with the Board of Directors, providing high-quality information, analysis and recommendations to support effective governance.
- Support the Board in fulfilling its legal and fiduciary responsibilities as an OSCR-registered charity. Ensuring all Board Governance is in place and complies with both regulation and legislation
- Maintain clear, timely communication with the Board Chair on all strategic operational and governance matters.
- Ensure that HSS's values are embedded across governance, staffing and operational practice.

Person Specification

Essential

The following criteria represent the non-negotiable requirements for this post. Candidates who cannot demonstrate all six essentials will not be progressed to interview.

- Significant senior leadership experience in the third sector, membership organisations, civil society or a directly comparable environment with a demonstrable track record of organisational impact.
- Proven experience of leading change with credibility, care and the confidence of staff, volunteers and stakeholders including through periods of uncertainty or transition.
- Strong track record in income generation or earned income strategy, with experience of developing or diversifying revenue across more than one stream.
- Exceptional communication skills including public speaking, media engagement, political relationship-building and written advocacy with the presence to represent HSS with authority at national level.
- A genuine, demonstrable commitment to humanist values: reason, compassion, human dignity, personal liberty and social justice. This commitment must be evidenced, not assumed.
- Sound financial literacy and experience of budgetary oversight and organisational financial management.
- Familiarity with Scottish charity law and OSCR regulatory requirements.

Desirable

- Experience of, or deep familiarity with, the ceremony, celebrancy or pastoral sector — or a demonstrated understanding of its significance to communities across Scotland.
- Experience of working with or leading a freelance, volunteer or credentialled professional community.
- Track record of policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement across government, civil society and belief/non-belief sectors.
- Experience of digital transformation, platform development or organisational technology strategy.
- Experience of media and public affairs work at national level.

Inclusion statement: Humanist Society Scotland welcomes applications from individuals of all backgrounds, identities and lived experiences. Commitment to humanist principles is essential; formal affiliation with humanism prior to appointment is not. We are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our work and our organisation.