

Candidate brief for St Andrews Links Trust For the position of Chief Executive

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About St Andrews Links Trust

St Andrews Links is the Home of Golf and the largest public golf complex in Europe, recognised as one of the world's most iconic sporting destinations. Playing at St Andrews is more than a round of golf — it's participating in the history of the game.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES ST ANDREWS LINKS TRUST

St Andrews Links Trust is the Home of Golf and one of the world's most renowned sporting destinations, where centuries of history continue to shape the modern game. Playing at St Andrews is not simply a sporting experience but an engagement with the heritage of golf itself.

The Trust operates eight distinctive courses, including the Old Course, each offering a unique character and challenge and catering to golfers of all abilities.

Unlike many internationally celebrated venues, St Andrews Links is maintained as a public asset, balancing local and visitor access while upholding the highest standards of course presentation. All surplus income is reinvested into the Links, ensuring exceptional playing conditions and responsible long-term stewardship.

The Trust provides a comprehensive range of facilities, including a leading Golf Academy and Driving Range, multiple clubhouses, restaurants and retail outlets, caddie services, guided walks and high-quality visitor amenities. These integrated facilities are designed to deliver a seamless and memorable experience for all visitors.

Sustainability is central to the Trust's long-term vision. Through its strategy, "Our Journey to a Greener Future", the Trust is committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2040, sourcing 100% renewable electricity, diverting 99% of waste from landfill, managing coastal erosion and protecting biodiversity. These initiatives position St Andrews Links Trust as a global leader in environmentally responsible golf, safeguarding the Links for future generations.





CURRENT STATUS

Between 2022 and 2026, St Andrews Links Trust has undertaken its most significant set of reforms in decades, driven by:

- Population growth and expansion of St Andrews.
- Long-term sustainability and alignment with charitable obligations.
- Strategic modernisation and growth, including digitalisation, course management updates, and improved inclusivity.
- Change to how the SALT Group is structured with a change of employer from St Andrews Links Trust to Home of Golf Limited.
- Preparation for, and hosting of, major championships, especially The 155th Open in 2027.

Over this period, the Trust has strengthened governance and expanding the senior leadership team (commercial, customer experience, communications, operations, golf, IT and digital, legal, estates, greenkeeping; people and finance).

The Trust remains steadfast in balancing heritage protection with modern operational demands, ensuring that the “Home of Golf” continues to thrive for local residents, global visitors, and elite tournaments alike.

RECENT STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS (2025–2026)

Major Expansion of Resident Boundary

In 2025, St Andrews Links Trust revealed the most substantial boundary extension in decades, highlighting the town’s continued growth. The revised boundary encompasses two significant residential projects, such as St Andrews West, which is scheduled for gradual completion over the next 20 years.

From 1st April 2026, residents within the enlarged area who satisfy permanent residency requirements will qualify for reduced-price resident Links tickets. This expansion has the potential to add up to 1,500 more households, significantly enhancing community access to the courses.

Overhaul of Links Ticket Categories

The Trust is undertaking a major restructuring of its ticketing categories—the most significant simplification in decades.

From April 2027 there will be three categories only:

- Resident
- Ordinary (Fife)
- Ordinary

This replaces Resident, North-East Fife, Ordinary, and Open categories.



Enhancements & Restoration to the Old Course

In collaboration with The R&A, a significant programme of course enhancements and restoration is being undertaken ahead of The 155th Open in 2027. This includes restoring historic architectural features that have subtly changed over time. Refining strategic challenges for elite golfers while maintaining accessibility for everyday players. Upgrading the aging irrigation system for better sustainability and agronomic efficiency.



Expansion of the Course Portfolio

In late 2025, St Andrews Links Trust confirmed an eighth course addition to its portfolio through an agreement to take over The Duke's Course, which has been renamed as The Craigtoun Course.

The course has long been a significant golf destination just outside town. The Trust's acquisition consolidates all major St Andrews golf assets under a single management structure. This move significantly strengthens the Trust's strategic presence and offerings, cementing its role as the guardian of golf in the region.

THE ROLE OF THE TRUST

St Andrews Links Trust is the charitable organisation responsible for managing the Old Course and seven additional public courses in St Andrews, operating under an Act of Parliament established in 1974. Its mission centres on preserving the heritage of the "Home of Golf," managing public access, and ensuring sustainability for future generations.

The Trust remains steadfast in balancing heritage protection with modern operational demands, ensuring that the "Home of Golf" continues to thrive for local residents, global visitors, and elite tournaments alike.

The Trustees

Led by the Chair, the board of trustees:

- Provide statutory and charitable governance
- Uphold the 1974 Act
- Ensure long-term sustainability and reinvestment
- Approve major strategic issues (boundary expansions, pricing structures, course restorations)

In recent years, governance and charity law have been professionalised, moving from informal volunteerism to a trustee board recruited on a skills basis.

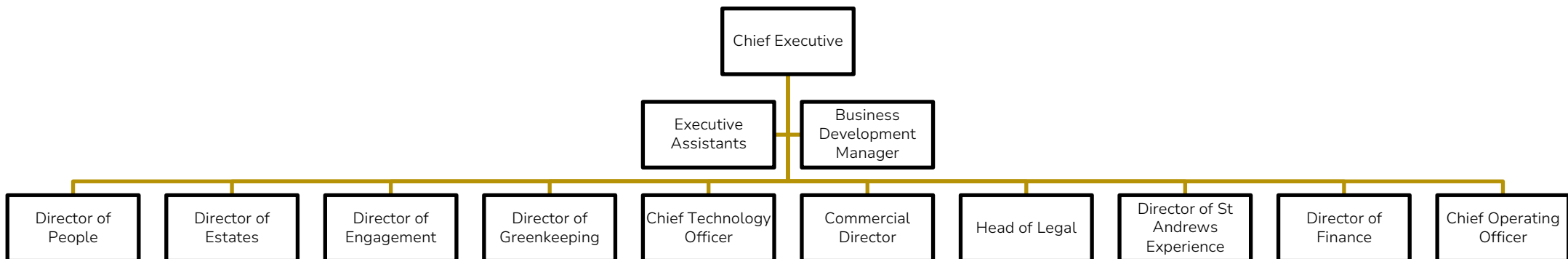
The CEO

- Acts as the key link between Trustees and operational departments
- Leads strategic decision-making and global representation of St Andrews Links

The Executive Team

- Executes strategy
- Manages daily operations (courses, retail, commercial activity, technology, communications)
- Ensures consistency with the Trust's charitable responsibility and brand heritage

CEO DIRECT REPORTS



Opportunity

Following the decision of the incumbent Chief Executive (CEO), Neil Coulson, to take up another role in spring 2026, the Trust has started a search to appoint his successor.

The CEO is the most senior executive at the Trust and is appointed by the Board of Trustees. It is critical that the CEO enjoys a close working relationship with the Chair and board members.

SALT is a globally significant sporting institution and a major operational enterprise.

The Trust's strategy is broadly in place. The priority now is disciplined delivery, operational excellence, and continuity, embedding what has been set, optimising performance, strengthening culture, and ensuring the organisation runs with clarity, pace and control every day of the week.



THE ROLE

St Andrews Links Trust is at a very exciting juncture; the challenges and more importantly, the opportunities facing the new CEO, make this an opportunity which rarely presents itself in global sport. Given the diverse activities of St Andrews Links Trust and its important role in golf, the CEO role is a challenging and multi-faceted one that requires a first-class business executive and team leader, with strong commercial and operational acumen. With golf in a phase of dynamic change, the CEO must ensure that St Andrews Links Trust continues to operate at the forefront of the sport but while also respecting the heritage and history that comes with it.

This is a demanding, high-profile leadership role, not because it requires re-imagining SALT's direction, but because it requires stewarding a complex, seven-day operation with strong governance, clear accountability, and consistent execution.

The Board is seeking an experienced CEO to implement the current strategy and optimise operations, delivering measurable improvements in efficiency and effectiveness, building culture, and leading a strong Executive Management team across a continuous operating environment.

Critically, this appointment is not about resetting strategy. It is about embedding the strategy already agreed, strengthening delivery capability, improving operational grip, and ensuring SALT continues to operate at the forefront of golf while respecting its heritage and responsibilities.



KEY ACCOUNTABILITIES

The CEO will be accountable for the Trust's overall performance and for establishing the clarity, discipline and operating rhythm required to deliver consistently at scale.

Strategy delivery and operational grip

- Deliver the current strategic plan with rigour; translate priorities into execution, performance metrics, and clear ownership across the executive and wider organisation.
- Create and maintain disciplined operating rhythms (planning cadence, decision forums, performance reviews) to sustain pace and reduce bottlenecks.
- Reduce over-centralised decision-making by building clear accountability and empowering leaders with appropriate controls and governance.

Executive leadership, culture and capability

- Lead, develop and align a strong Executive Management team capable of running the business effectively and efficiently.
- Act as coach and mentor to the Executive Management team; build capability at all levels and shape structure as needed to support delivery.

- Establish a culture where standards are clear, collaboration is habitual, expertise is respected, behaviour sets the tone and values lived day-to-day rather than expressed as slogans.

Operational and asset stewardship

- Manage a large and complex portfolio of properties that are a national asset and globally significant location.
- Build capital delivery capability for post-Open programmes, including major course irrigation, clubhouse modernisation and other course projects.
- Ensure operational decision-making is timely, accountable and proportionate, supporting strong delivery tempo across a high-volume, seven-day operation.

Financial and commercial performance

- Manage Trust revenues with responsibility for budgeting, profitability, cash flow, expansion and growth.
- Strengthen commercial control and long-term brand development; coordinate commercial activities and events; build robust relationships with commercial partners.
- Drive adoption of new technologies that enhance experience and operational effectiveness, in a way that aligns with SALT's purpose and standards.

Stakeholder stewardship and community trust

- Maintain strategic continuity and build harmonious relationships with the people of St Andrews and key stakeholders including The R&A, Scottish Golf, Scottish Government, Fife Council, Visit Scotland and others.
- Bring sound judgement, credibility and restraint: prioritise trust, maturity and political awareness over visibility or “noise,” especially where community confidence and regulatory relationships are critical.

Working with the Board (Governance)

The CEO will work with a knowledgeable, engaged and invested Board of Trustees. The successful candidate will:

- Demonstrate a strong understanding of governance and the boundary between governance and executive management.
- Welcome constructive challenge, engage transparently, and work with Trustees in a direct, collaborative manner, never around them.
- Ensure best-practice governance is embedded throughout the organisation and work constructively with regulators and oversight bodies.



LOCATION & REMUNERATION

The CEO is based on site and candidate will be expected to live within a reasonable daily commute. An attractive salary will be offered to the successful candidate.



The Individual

The next Chief Executive will serve as a stabilising force, guided by strong values and operational excellence. This person will be grounded, authentic, and emotionally intelligent, fostering clarity and trust through daily actions. The ideal candidate will have a commanding presence and consistently uphold a credible set of values that are clearly understood, accepted, and supported by every member of the Trust.

THE CEO WILL BE:

- Operationally disciplined: sets clear priorities, establishes accountability, maintains pace, and makes sound decisions in a complex, seven-day environment.
- Culturally intelligent: leads subject matter experts without ego; builds cohesion, psychological safety and standards through how they show up, listen, and act.
- Steady and resilient: able to hold firm to what matters, navigate competing stakeholder interests, and make difficult decisions with maturity.
- Credible and politically aware: adept at adapting communication style for different audiences and demonstrating sound judgement in sensitive relationships.

This is not a role for a strategist in search of a strategy. It is for a CEO who can steward a locally rooted and globally important institution with care, discipline and consistency.



ESSENTIAL CRITERIA

Candidates will demonstrate:

- Proven CEO (or equivalent senior leadership) experience leading a substantial organisation with strong operational and commercial complexity.
- Exceptional commercial and business acumen, including setting and delivering robust budgets and building long-term financial sustainability.
- Strong operational expertise, including the ability to manage multiple priorities and major projects concurrently and effectively.
- Board-level experience and confidence engaging with national and local government representatives and diverse stakeholder groups.
- Demonstrable capability in embedding best-practice governance and working constructively with regulatory bodies.
- High emotional intelligence and the ability to listen, build trust, and lead expert teams in a collaborative, low-ego manner.
- Strong communication skills (written and verbal) and the ability to adapt style to audience with political awareness and sound judgement.

The ability to play golf is advantageous but not required. Candidates should have an understanding and appreciation of the game and St Andrews' place within it.



Search Process

APPROACH CANDIDATES

We will have an initial discussion with you over the phone to determine your interest and suitability for this role, and discuss a little about your background and aspirations.

INTERVIEW CANDIDATES

Once your interest and suitability has been determined we will arrange for you to meet with the partner leading this search.

SHORT LISTING

Having met with candidates who will differ on experience, ambition and background, we will put forward a number of candidates whom we feel most meet the criteria.

MEETING OUR CLIENTS

St Andrews Links Trust will meet the candidates on the shortlist. This will give you the opportunity to really understand

the role, the company culture and their expectations of you. You will more than likely have multiple meetings with key stakeholders to get a feel for the business.

DUE DILIGENCE

As you will appreciate, you will have conducted due diligence on St Andrews Links Trust and they will expect us to do the same for the candidates who they anticipate would really bring that 'something special' to the business.

OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE

St Andrews Links Trust puts together the offer which we convey to you. We will fully support you through your resignation period and beyond.

ONGOING COMMUNICATIONS

We like to maintain contact with all candidates from a search. If you have been

successful in this activity we will meet with you after your first month to ensure that your expectations have been met. If you have not, we will ensure that you gain full feedback and we will maintain a relationship with you for the future.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

We aim to ensure that each and every stage of the search process is as inclusive as possible and we work to support St Andrews Links Trust in their own commitment to inclusivity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

We guarantee that any approach we make to you and any discussions we have will be in the strictest confidence. Any discussions will be conducted under the terms of a formal nondisclosure agreement.



About Odgers

Odgers was founded in 1965. We offer integrated executive search and leadership advisory services through our 59 offices in 33 countries. During our 60-year history we have developed functional and sector expertise and built a global network of relationships. We are deeply rooted in our local markets, which we combine with global perspective and reach, enabling us to serve clients across six continents.

What we do matters; our work impacts peoples' lives and drives our clients' success. It is a privilege to help build the world's best leadership teams, a trusted role we never take for granted.

This ethos underpins our commitment to our clients and candidates and motivates our colleagues to strive for excellence in all we do.



Candidate Charter

TALENTED PEOPLE ARE OUR LIFE BLOOD

Whether we approach you about a specific opportunity, or you contact us to share your biography and career ambitions, we want you to have a constructive experience of engaging with Odgers.

We recognise that we have a commitment to you as well as to our client, and we undertake that our dealings with you will be professional, courteous, rigorous and honest. We will:

- Approach you after considered analysis and in relation to roles where we think there is a strong match. Your time is valuable; we don't want to waste it.
- Work to make your candidacy as strong as it can be.
- Represent you effectively and discreetly to our client, based on accurate information that you give us in confidence.
- Be inclusive, open and fair-minded.
- Keep you informed, communicating outcomes promptly, and giving fair and honest feedback where we can.
- Celebrate your success in the event of a successful outcome, and share any lessons in the event of disappointment.
- Take a long-term view, recognising that you have a multi-year view of your own career. Where possible, we will help you fulfil your ambitions.
- Embrace continuous improvement, for example by carrying out regular independent audits of those we shortlist for roles.

If ever you feel we have not lived up to the letter or spirit of this charter, please tell us. We want to know. Email our Global Chief Executive Officer KScrope.CEO@odgers.com.



How to Apply

KEY DATES

Following a long list meeting of the Selection Panel, successful candidates will be invited to attend preliminary interviews with Odgers w/c 20th April.

The final interview process with St Andrews Links Trust will take place from during w/c 11th – 25th May.

Closing date for applications is 13th April.

HOW TO APPLY

In order to apply, please submit a comprehensive CV along with a covering letter which sets out your interest in the role and encapsulates the aspects of your experience relevant to the required criteria. Please include current salary details and the names and addresses of three referees. Referees will not be approached until the final stages and not without prior permission from candidates.

The preferred method of application is online at:
www.odgers.com/95540

If you are unable to apply online please email:
alex.borthwick@odgers.com

All applications will receive an automated response.

All candidates are also requested to complete an online Diversity Monitoring Form which will be found at the end of the application process. This will assist St Andrews Links Trust in monitoring selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. Any information collated from the Diversity Monitoring Forms will not be used as part of the selection process and will be treated as strictly confidential.

PERSONAL DATA

In line with GDPR, we ask that you do NOT send us any information that can identify children or any of your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, data concerning health or sex life and sexual orientation, genetic and / or biometric data) in your CV and application documentation. Following this notice, any inclusion of your Sensitive Personal Data in your CV/application documentation will be understood by us as your express consent to process this information going forward. Please also remember to not mention anyone's information or details (e.g. referees) who have not previously agreed to their inclusion.



CONTACT DETAILS

For a conversation in confidence, please contact:

Andrew Lees
andrew.lees@odgers.com

We are committed to ensuring everyone can access our website and application processes. This includes people with sight loss, hearing, mobility and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to these documents in alternative formats, please contact emma.burnett@odgers.com.

Also, if you have any comments and/or suggestions about improving access to our application processes please don't hesitate to contact us response.manager@odgers.com.



Where Leadership Matters.

