



Appointment of Chief Executive



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

July 2026 | Reference DCAIA

Saxton Bampfylde



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Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as Chief Executive.

This is a role that presents a major opportunity to unlock the potential of Scotland's people, places and economy to create a more prosperous and inclusive nation where education, skills, research and innovation drive transformation while delivering value for money.

Our purpose is to support and enrich an integrated tertiary education, skills, research and innovation system that maximises the potential of Scotland's people, places and economy, and strengthens our nation's impact globally. You will be joining SFC at a pivotal time, providing essential leadership to drive organisational and system-wide transformation, while simultaneously ensure continuity, stability and momentum across the organisation and the sector.

The role of Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council lies at the centre of agendas shaping a future sustainable tertiary education sector and Scottish Government's reform of public services. Your talent and professionalism as Chief Executive will drive transformation with and for the sector within this wider national context and lead to a stronger, more prosperous and inclusive Scotland.

This is an exciting time to join and lead our organisation as its Chief Executive. We are embracing diverse perspectives and working with greater agility to meet the evolving needs of learners and employers and the sectors that support them. We are harnessing the strengths of our talented team at SFC while deepening partnerships across universities, colleges, training providers, employers, business and industry to deliver meaningful change.

We hope you will be inspired by the potential of this distinctive role at a time of significant transformation. Our staff and Board work as one welcoming team, continually and constructively challenging and learning from each other and those we serve; we believe we are at our best when we work in partnership, drawing on a wide range of perspectives, and facing into our nation's opportunities and challenges by leveraging education, skills, research and innovation with purpose and impact.

SFC explicitly welcomes applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics and those with non-traditional career paths.



Professor Emerita Cara Aitchison, Chair



About the Scottish Funding Council

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is uniquely positioned at the intersection of post-school or 'tertiary' education and Scotland's economic future and key to unlocking Scotland's potential.

As the national body responsible for the funding and oversight of tertiary education, skills, research and innovation, SFC must ensure that colleges and universities, and from April 2027, training and apprenticeship providers, develop and deliver the learning infrastructure and outcomes, skills base, and research capability that enable Scotland's people, places and economy to thrive.

SFC is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) operating across a stakeholder landscape of increasing complexity and scale, from the First Minister and Scottish Government through to universities, colleges, sector bodies, independent training providers, business and SMEs. Its reach is broad, its accountabilities are high, and its influence on the nation's standing in the wider world, is profound.

Crucially, the SFC of the future will be a materially different organisation from the SFC of today: this period of transformation represents one of the most significant inflection points in the organisation's history. New legislation, in the form of the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Act 2026 which comes into effect in April 2027, will substantially expand SFC's remit, responsibilities and reach reflecting the challenges of institutional financial sustainability; skills, apprenticeship and industry needs; and public service reform. SFC's role will shift from that of a funding delivery body to a strategic influencer with a mandate to shape, drive and invest in the skills, education and research and innovation system required to deliver Scotland's wellbeing economy.

Alongside this legislative change and recruitment of a new Chief Executive, SFC is also recruiting a new Deputy Chief Executive and developing a new strategic plan to shape and lead the delivery of these new ambitions. The strategic cycle ahead represents an opportunity to position the organisation, not simply as a body that distributes public funding, but as a proactive, strategic and influential investment agency that holds institutions and providers to account for the return on that investment and for the greatest benefit to Scotland's people, places and economy.

SFC will therefore undergo significant change and transformation as we develop our existing relationships with universities and colleges, initiate new relationships with employers and independent training providers, and evolve our services to meet our new responsibilities.

Purpose of the role

As the Chief Executive, you will lead the SFC through a period of transformation, providing clear strategic direction, stability and visible leadership. Working closely with the Board, Scottish Government and key stakeholders, the postholder will ensure continuity, maintain confidence and oversee delivery against SFC's strategic priorities.

The Chief Executive will lead the redesign of the organisation to be capable of delivering both our existing and new responsibilities for providing effective funding and support to universities, colleges and apprenticeship providers across Scotland.

This is a unique opportunity for an incoming Chief Executive to design, shape and lead a redesigned organisation, to develop and implement a new strategy, and to steer the organisation through an exciting period of transformation that addresses the opportunities, needs and demands of a diverse sector that is key to the economic prosperity and wellbeing of Scotland's people, places and economy.

This role will require both outward-facing and organisational leadership, influencing sector wide transformation and working collaboratively with funded bodies and partners as well as driving and supporting organisational transformation.



Person Specification

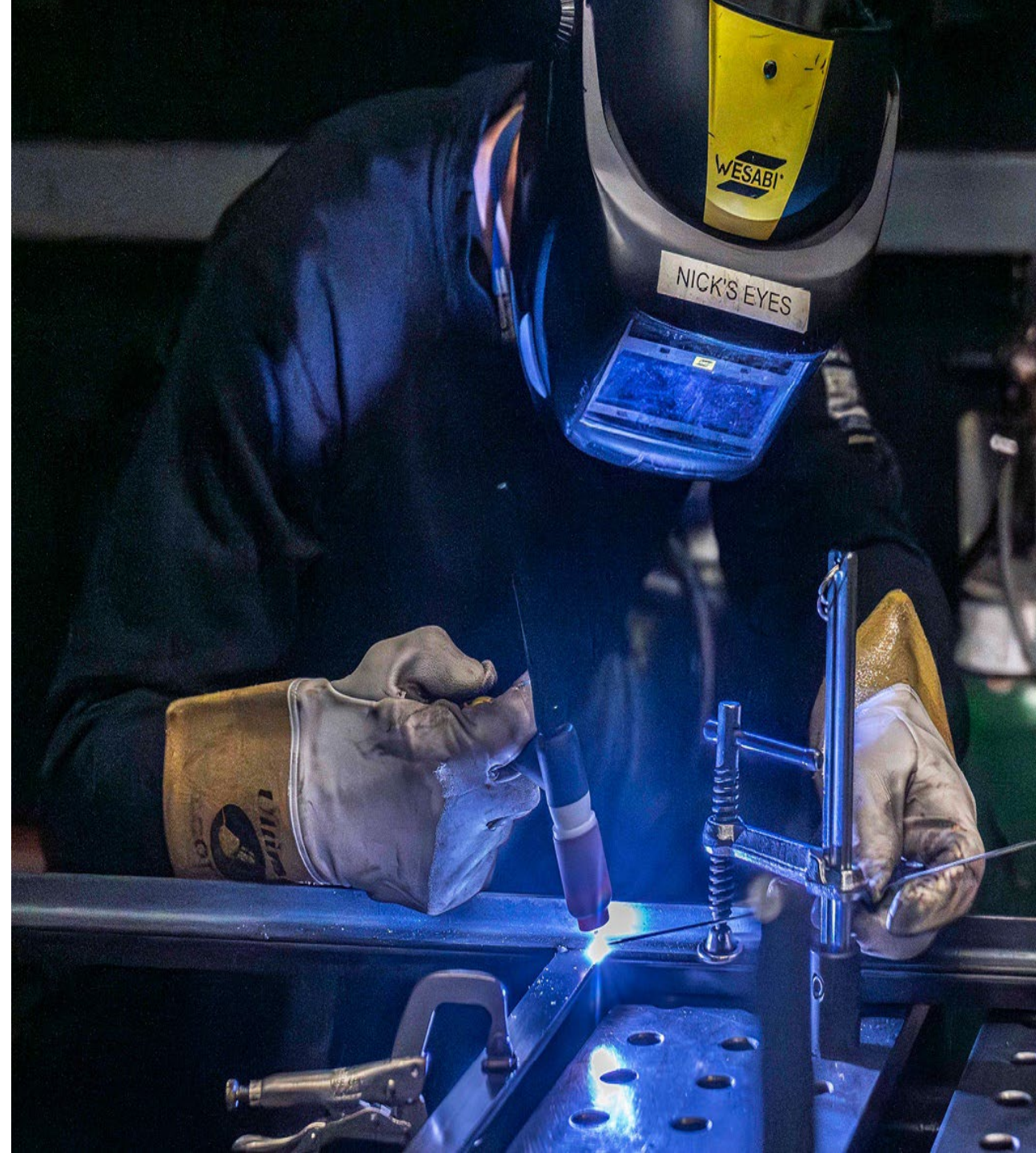
Key Experience

Strategic Leadership

- Significant senior leadership experience within a complex organisation, with responsibility for substantial budgets, multiple functions and diverse stakeholder groups.
- Proven ability to set strategic direction, secure shared outcomes through collaborative leadership with external stakeholders, and achieve results.
- Proven ability to build, lead and develop high-performing teams and inclusive cultures in order to drive and deliver successful outcomes at organisational and sector level.
- Ability to provide visible, credible and inspiring leadership during periods of organisational change.

Financial and Resource Management

- Experience of being responsible for substantial budgets and/or overseeing the distribution of significant public or private funding.
- Deep understanding of governance, accountability, risk management and value-for-money principles in order to secure accountability and best value for public investment.
- Demonstrable track record of ensuring effective stewardship of resources and delivering organisational sustainability.



Person Specification

Sector Knowledge

- Well-developed understanding of the further and higher education, skills, research and innovation landscape, and its contribution to social, cultural and economic outcomes.
- Knowledge may have been gained through experience in Scotland, elsewhere in the UK, or internationally within relevant sectors.

Stakeholder Engagement and Influencing

- Exceptional communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to build trusted relationships across a wide range of stakeholders.
- Ability to influence and negotiate with partners and stakeholders from across SFC's operating environment while modelling principles of good governance and high ethical standards.
- Ability to represent the organisation effectively with government, sector leaders, partners and external stakeholders.

Governance, Judgement and Political Acumen

- Ability to advise SFC's Board and government stakeholders on strategy, policy, delivery and organisational performance.
- Strong understanding of governance, public accountability and decision-making within a complex political environment.
- Sound judgement, analytical capability and evidence-based decision-making skills.

Personal Attributes

Resilience and Personal Effectiveness

- Calm, resilient and solutions-focused, with the ability to lead effectively under pressure, care for others under pressure and manage competing priorities.
- Highly motivated to deliver positive outcomes and lead through complexity and ambiguity, acting as a role model for the organisation's values.
- Self-aware leader who demonstrates integrity, authenticity and a commitment to personal and organisational learning.

Values

- Deep personal commitment to advancing inclusion and belonging.
- Demonstrates the highest standards of integrity, ethics and public service.



Terms of appointment

- Salary: c£160,000
- 30 days' annual leave plus 13 public holidays
- Civil Service Pension Scheme: competitive employee/employer contribution rates, generous benefits.
- Edinburgh-based, with regular Scotland-wide stakeholder engagement.

Process:

- w/c 17th August: First stage interviews with Saxton Bampfylde
- w/c 14th September: Shortlist meeting
- w/c 21st and 28th September: Executive Assessments and in-person Panel interviews

Due diligence:

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.





How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the Scottish Funding Council on this appointment.

For further information about the role, including details about how to apply, please visit roles.saxbam.com using reference **DCAIA**. Alternatively email Belinda.beck@saxbam.com.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and completing an EDI monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is **noon on Tuesday 11th August 2026**.

Thank you for your interest in the role.

* The EDI monitoring form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

• **[Read our guide to writing cover letters](#)**

