

RSA



RECRUITMENT OF TRUSTEES

May 2026

Reference:VBZRA

A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Thank you for your interest in joining the RSA as a Trustee. We are recruiting two new members of our Board at a genuinely exciting moment in our history, and I hope this brief gives you a clear sense of what we are building and why these roles matter.

The RSA was founded in 1754 as The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. For over 270 years we have been at the forefront of social progress: planting 60 million trees, initiating the Great Exhibition, creating the Royal Academy of Arts and the Blue Plaques scheme, pioneering public examinations, and coining the word "sustainability". We were the first Royal institution to admit women. Our Fellows have included Benjamin Franklin, Marie Curie, Judi Dench, David Attenborough, Tim Berners-Lee and Nelson Mandela. Our Patron is HRH The Princess Royal.

We are in the midst of a deliberate reset. Our identity is sharpening: the RSA is the home of creativity applied for the good of all. We convene the most interesting minds, bring the arts to bear on real problems, and find the places where creativity and commerce meet to produce genuine solutions. Not just ideas, but action.

Central to this renewal is our Fellowship. With close to 30,000 members worldwide, the Fellowship is one of the RSA's greatest assets — and one of its greatest opportunities. We have recently appointed a new Director of Fellowship to lead this work, and we

are looking for a Trustee who can provide strategic oversight, mentorship and challenge as we transform our membership from a passive affiliation into an active movement.

We are also at the beginning of building a serious philanthropic capability. The RSA has a remarkable story to tell, an extraordinary building at the heart of London, and a Fellowship full of people who believe in what we are doing. We need a Trustee who can help us translate that into meaningful philanthropic income — someone who understands both the art of fundraising and the practical reality of how an institution like ours can use its assets, its relationships and its heritage to attract generous support.

Both of these are voluntary roles, but they are far from passive ones. We are looking for people who will engage closely with the executive team, bring genuine expertise to bear, and hold us to account as we pursue an ambitious agenda. If you are energised by the prospect of helping to shape one of Britain's oldest and most distinctive institutions, I very much hope you will apply.

David Joseph CBE

Chief Executive, Royal Society of Arts

WHAT IS THE RSA?

The Royal Society of Arts is the home for creativity for the good of all.

Founded in 1754 in a Covent Garden coffee house, the RSA has spent more than 270 years turning possibility into progress. We were granted a Royal Charter in 1847 and today are proud to have HRH The Princess Royal as our President.

The RSA has always been a place for restless minds, and the creativity that powers innovation and progress. Artists, designers, engineers, reformers, entrepreneurs, technologists and cultural leaders have found a home here as Fellows. They have included Adam Smith, Dame Judi Dench, Vivienne Westwood, Edmund Burke and Karl Marx; Marie Curie, Deborah Meaden and Tim Berners-Lee; David Attenborough, Mona Chalabi and Demis Hassabis. Their diversity tells an important story: the RSA is not ideological. It is practical, curious and outward-looking.

We were the first society to admit women, and to welcome people of any class, ethnicity or nationality. Convening across boundaries is core to who we are. A potter sits next to a programmer; environmentalism meets AI; tradition meets reform. We believe progress comes from bringing different perspectives into meaningful dialogue and then acting together.

Across everything we do, one belief endures: ideas matter most when they are tested in the open and put to work in the world.



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THE ROLES

We are seeking two new Trustees to join the RSA Board at a pivotal moment in the organisation's development. Each brings a distinct area of expertise, but both will contribute fully to the collective governance of the charity and share a commitment to the RSA's mission. One will be a Trustee with expertise in Fellowship while the other will bring a track record of Development and Fundraising.

These are voluntary positions. Trustees receive no remuneration, though reasonable expenses may be claimed in line with the RSA's expenses policy. All Trustees must be Fellows of the RSA; if you are not currently a Fellow, this does not preclude an application, but you must be willing to become one.

The estimated time commitment for each role is one to two days per month, encompassing Board meetings, reading papers, and engagement with the executive team. The Board meets four times a year, with an additional annual away day. Trustees are also expected to attend the RSA's Annual General Meeting in October each year.

Both Trustees will report to the Chair of the Board.

Role 1

The RSA's Fellowship is its heartbeat, close to 30,000 members worldwide who have chosen to associate themselves with the idea that creativity, applied thoughtfully, can change the world. But the RSA has faced retention challenges. Fellows need a clearer value proposition and a more compelling reason to belong. We have recently appointed a new Director of Fellowship to lead the transformation of our membership from a passive affiliation into an active, engaged movement.

This Trustee role exists to provide the strategic oversight, challenge and mentorship that this work demands. This Trustee will work closely with the Director of Fellowship and the CEO, providing experienced guidance as the RSA redefines what it means to be a Fellow and rebuilds the value

proposition that underpins it.

This is a role for someone who is genuinely ambitious for what the RSA's Fellowship could become, and excited by the challenge of transforming a large, established membership community.

The role may be filled on a co-opted basis, meaning the successful candidate could begin ahead of the AGM in October 2026 if both parties wish. We are aiming to conclude this appointment by the end of July 2026.

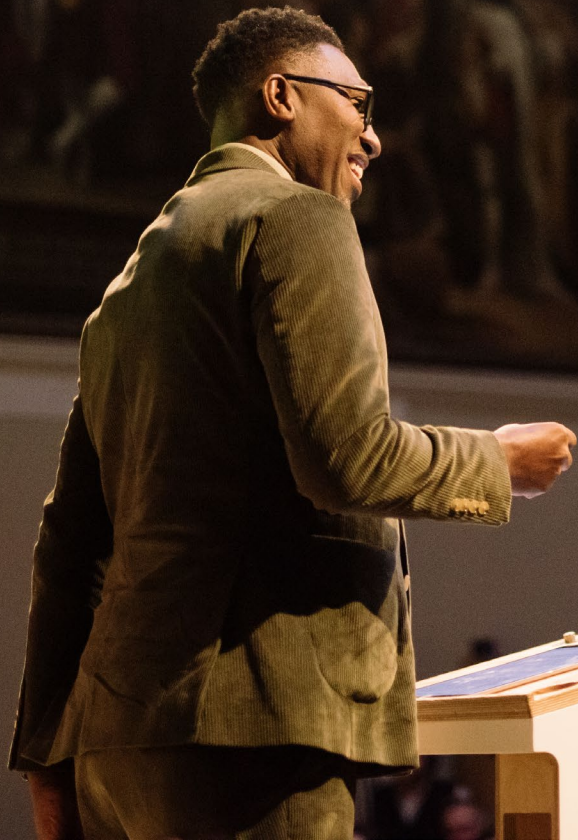
Role 2

Philanthropy is a significant and largely untapped opportunity for the RSA. We have the ingredients: a compelling mission, a remarkable story spanning 270 years, an extraordinary Grade I listed building in the heart of London, and a Fellowship of nearly 30,000 people who include some of the most creative, influential and generous individuals in public and professional life. What we do not yet have is the infrastructure, the relationships or the culture of philanthropic giving that would allow us to realise that potential.

We are building that now. We are in the process of appointing a new Head of Fundraising, and we intend to establish a philanthropic advisory board to support this work. This Trustee role is foundational to that effort. We are looking for someone who can help shape the RSA's philanthropic strategy from the ground up, bring the networks and credibility that will attract significant donors and supporters to our cause, and work alongside the Head of Fundraising as we build the capability this organisation needs.

The home of ideas

Where people drive real change



DUTIES AS A TRUSTEE

All RSA Trustees share the following responsibilities, in addition to any specialist role they may hold:

- Ensure that the RSA complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Ensure that the RSA pursues its objects as defined in its governing document.
- Ensure the RSA applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects.
- Contribute actively to the Board of Trustees by giving firm strategic direction to the RSA, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard the good name and values of the RSA.
- Ensure the financial stability of the RSA.
- Serve as an advocate for the organisation as required, including for specific issues or events.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

TRUSTEE I

What You Will Do

- Provide strategic oversight and governance of the RSA's Fellowship and membership strategy, ensuring it is ambitious, evidence-based and aligned with the organisation's mission.
- Act as a mentor and sounding board for the Director of Fellowship, drawing on your own experience of membership growth, retention and value proposition development.
- Challenge and support the executive team as the RSA shifts its thinking on membership, holding the organisation to account for progress against its ambitions.
- Bring an informed perspective on the competitive landscape for membership organisations and help the RSA understand where it sits within it.
- Represent the Fellowship voice at Board level, ensuring that the interests and experience of Fellows inform strategic decisions.
- Contribute fully to the Board's collective governance responsibilities, including compliance with charity law, financial stewardship and safeguarding the RSA's values and reputation.

Who We Are Looking For

- We are looking for someone with a genuine track record in membership, ideally at a senior level in an organisation where they have driven transformative growth or renewal. That might be a commercial membership or subscription business, a professional body, a cultural institution, or a charitable membership organisation, what matters is that you have done this at scale and understand the craft of it: the data, the value proposition, the retention mechanics, and the human dimension of belonging.
- The successful candidate will be willing to invest time working with the Director of Fellowship and the Chief Executive.



The RSA has been turning possibility into progress since 1754. From pioneering invention and design to shaping social change, we are a place for ideas, action, and connection.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

TRUSTEE 2

What You Will Do

- Provide strategic governance oversight of the RSA's fundraising and philanthropic activity at Board level, ensuring it is well-governed, ethical and aligned with the charity's objects.
- Work closely with the Head of Fundraising to develop and implement a philanthropic strategy, helping to prioritise audiences, propositions and approaches.
- Help establish and shape a philanthropic advisory board, drawing on your networks to identify and attract individuals who can support and amplify the RSA's fundraising efforts.
- Provide advice and guidance on how the RSA's assets — including its historic building at 8 John Adam Street — can be used to support and enhance philanthropic income, whether through events, naming opportunities, or other creative approaches.
- Draw on your understanding of how institutions with a strong heritage and academic character make compelling cases for philanthropic support and help the RSA articulate its own case with confidence.
- Contribute fully to the Board's collective governance responsibilities, including compliance with charity law, financial stewardship and safeguarding the RSA's values and reputation.

Who We Are Looking For

- We are looking for someone with meaningful experience of fundraising or philanthropy, ideally gained within a complex institution where they have had to make a compelling case for support. That might be a university, a learned or professional society, a cultural organisation, a major charity, or any other institution where philanthropic income is significant and the work of building donor relationships is taken seriously. We are keen to look broadly and will consider candidates from a range of backgrounds.
- Of particular value will be experience working within or alongside a building of significance — someone who understands how a heritage asset can be used creatively to attract donors and generate income, and who is alive to the opportunities that the RSA's home on the Embankment presents. Equally valuable will be experience of the landscape of UK and international major giving, including high-net-worth individuals, family foundations and corporate philanthropy.

HOW TO APPLY

Saxton Bampfylde is acting as an employment agency advisor to the RSA on these appointments. Candidates should apply for this role via www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **VBZRA**. Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is **Friday 5 June 12:00**.

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

Inclusion Statement

As a social change organisation, the RSA believes everyone, regardless of visible or invisible difference, should be welcomed to participate in creating a better future.

We aspire to maximum inclusion in our work and endeavour to challenge systemic inequity and all forms of discrimination. We therefore welcome applications from anyone who is committed to our vision and values and can demonstrate the skills, competencies, and experience required for the role.

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