



Patron: HM The Queen

President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

RSN

ROYAL SCHOOL
OF NEEDLEWORK

Founded 1872

Trustee Information pack

Autumn 2025

The Royal School of Needlework
Registered charity No. 312774.

www.royal-needlework.org.uk

Join us as a Trustee and Help Shape the RSN's Next Chapter

The RSN is embarking on an exciting journey of change as we strengthen our organisation for the future. We're looking for new trustees to join our board - people who can bring fresh perspectives, strategic insight and the confidence to help guide us through a period of transformation.

We currently have ten trustees all with specific skill sets that match the needs of our strategic direction. We're now particularly looking for someone who has led or advised on major organisational change or property and workspace programmes at a senior level and understand how to turn big ideas into practical, sustainable plans.

An understanding of how organisations plan for and manage their physical environments will help us ensure that the RSN has the right environment to enable creativity, collaboration and growth. You may have experience overseeing projects involving the evaluation, development or adaptation and planning of facilities, working with property professionals to assess needs, explore options and deliver spaces that support long-term goals.

Experience within the heritage or cultural sector would be an advantage, particularly where this has involved balancing operational, financial and stewardship considerations in the context of historic or a community-focused purpose. Your perspective will help us navigate the unique challenges and opportunities that come with preserving and interpreting our heritage while evolving our space and facilities to meet contemporary needs.

This is a unique opportunity to help shape the RSN's future, ensuring we have the right strategy, structures and spaces to continue delivering for the communities and audiences we serve.

If you're a strategic and collaborative thinker with strong governance awareness and a desire to make a meaningful impact by contributing your professional expertise at board level, supporting the executive team while constructively challenging plans and assumptions we'd love to hear from you.

Pip Wood
Chair of Trustees
The Royal School of Needlework

Information about the RSN is contained in this pack along with a role profile and details of the commitment required. There is no need to have a knowledge of hand embroidery. However, we are committed to ongoing improvement, and you must share our determination to excel in all we do. The RSN encourages applications from people of all ages and backgrounds.

To apply for this vacancy, please send your application to Pip Wood, Chair of Trustees, by **Friday November 14th** to p.w@royal-needlework.org.uk and provide the following;

- A comprehensive CV (no more than three pages please)
- A supporting letter addressing the criteria along with your motivation for applying

If you would like to find out more about being a trustee of the RSN, please contact Pip Wood to arrange an informal call.

You can find out more about the RSN on our website at www.royal-needlework.org.uk, and /or by following us on our social media platforms.

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF NEEDLEWORK (RSN)

The RSN was established in 1872 at a small single site in London to revive, preserve and teach the art of hand embroidery. Since our humble beginnings we have expanded our activities and extended our reach worldwide gaining an international reputation for the knowledge, expertise and skills of our tutors and the excellence of work in our professional studio.

No other single organisation covers the breadth of work now undertaken by the RSN. We use our 150 years of remarkable history, knowledge and expertise to teach, practise and promote the art of hand embroidery. We are developing a new strategic plan to grow, develop and extend the reach and impact of our work. As a trustee you can use your skills and experience to help oversee our operation and be part of the team to guide our transformation. We are committed to ongoing improvement, and you must share a passion for our mission and determination to evolve our operation.

Stitching is an international language. For centuries, embroidery has played a compelling role in helping societies and individuals impart knowledge, tell stories and influence behaviour. The practice of embroidery is also increasingly recognised for its therapeutic and beneficial impact on mental health and wellbeing as well as the pure enjoyment of creating a piece of art.

We estimate around 2,000 people undertake a course with us each year. We run a BA Honours degree, validated by Kingston University, teach one-day or weekly leisure courses on-line and onsite across the UK, as well as in the USA and Japan, and offer pre-recorded video courses for

OUR MISSION

To preserve the heritage and lead the development of hand embroidery, enriching lives by inspiring, teaching and innovating to provide the widest access to our knowledge and skills

OUR VISION

To become an inclusive, public facing, creative world-class institute - the 'go to place' for hand embroidery

RSN Degree students at Hampton Court Palace



people to study at their own pace. We run an annual summer school and are introducing a History of Embroidery online course in late 2025 / early 2026.

Our Certificate and Diploma accreditation is for more serious stitchers and comprises several modules on different techniques, each with around 40 hours of tuition.

Our Professional Embroidery Tutor Programme prepares participants for a modern career in hand embroidery.



RSN degree student Tomas Asmelash

Our tutors play an important role in delivering our mission and recognising and investing in their participation is critical; we know from research that customers choose to learn with the RSN because of the depth and breadth of our tutors' knowledge and expertise. The RSN Fellowship recognises graduates of our previous Apprenticeship scheme or three-year Tutor programme.

Our professional studio specialises in creating bespoke commissions for fashion, art, royalty and private individuals as well as restoring and conserving valuable historic textiles and bringing heirlooms back to life. All work is undertaken in the UK to a consistent and high standard by RSN trained professional embroiderers and is the only such UK studio with access to such a pool of highly skilled stitchers for large and specialist commissions.

In 2023 we undertook the embroidery for nine items for the coronation of King Charles III, including the design and embroidering of the Robe of Estate for her Majesty Queen Camilla, our patron since 2017, as well as the Anointing Screen for the most sacred moment of the coronation ceremony behind which his Majesty was anointed King.

We further promote hand embroidery through activities such as exhibitions, talks (live and on demand), introductory taster sessions and schools' projects. Our extensive Archive and Collection helps inform and inspire students and hand embroidery enthusiasts. It comprises thousands of embroidered items and designs collected and donated from all over the world and is a fundamental part of our operation. Access to the collection is currently limited but we are cataloguing items and digitised them to make them available online and we continue to add items as quickly as we are able.

Some of the team working on Queen Camilla's Robe of Estate



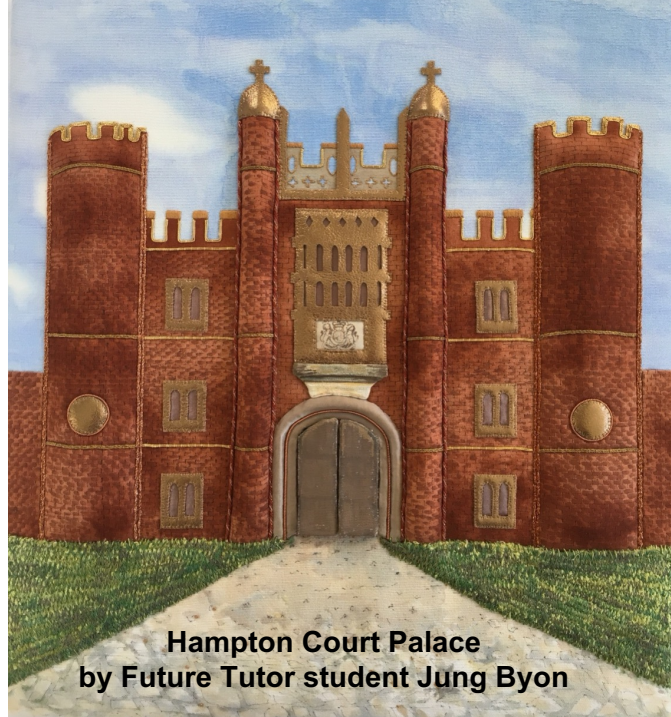
We introduced the RSN Stitch Bank in 2021 to mark our 150th anniversary. It contains around 500 stitches and is a free online resource that aims to digitally conserve a record of every stitch worldwide. It is the largest free database of stitches in the world and is used by embroiderers as well as a wide variety of people such as, curators, and historians of stitch.

An online retail operation and physical store are based at Hampton Court Palace. Every purchase helps support the RSN. The RSN is a registered charity and does not receive government funding. We must earn or raise every penny we spend. We are very grateful to the Livery Companies, Charitable Trusts and individuals who support us.

To ensure hand embroidery continues to be enjoyed by a broad range of people we must ensure our activities are accessible and engaging. We have developed an innovative partnership programme called Fragile Threads which combines art and advocacy to champion biodiversity and are incredibly grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for funding. Using needle and thread to craft powerful messages about the importance of protecting the natural world, it aims to spotlight endangered species, celebrate ecosystems, raise awareness and inspire action to preserve the planet's extraordinary biological diversity.

It has enabled us to collaborate with diverse groups and invite their communities to contribute their stitches to biodiversity-themed projects. These teach participants new skills and help them better understand the fragility of their surroundings by embroidering their own biodiversity stories. The first project is due to start at the end of October 2025.

We are now embarking on a new five-year strategic plan which will take us into our next stage of development. Four major workstreams to ensure we are fit for the future and leveraging the strengths of all activities will guide us to become the 'go to place' for hand embroidery.



Fragile Threads has been made possible thanks to a £247,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

TRUSTEE ROLE DESCRIPTION

Role Summary

Trustees are accountable for the oversight, governance, financial performance, and leadership of the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) ensuring it fulfils its strategic objectives and charitable purpose.

Role Responsibilities

- Actively participate in developing the RSN's vision and strategic plan. Ensure clear objectives to deliver against the vision and plan are in place and reviewed and updated regularly
- Hold the Chief Executive to account for the effective management of the RSN and delivery of the strategic vision and plan
- Promote the RSN externally to develop its reputation for its leading knowledge and expertise and the excellence of its hand embroidery, safeguard its good name and maintain its public benefit
- Support the communication of strategy to staff, members, donors (and potential donors) and other stakeholders, including actively participating in fundraising activity
- Ensure the RSN complies with its Memorandum and Articles of Association, charity law and other applicable laws and regulations
- Identify and assess risks to the RSN; establish an effective management mechanism in order to manage and monitor these risks. Take appropriate professional advice where there is material risk to the RSN or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the RSN's resources and strive for good practice in governance (including the RSN Code of Conduct)
- Ensure robust financial controls are in place for the day-to-day and long-term management of the RSN and that trustees are kept fully informed of financial performance through timely management information
- Ensure business continuity plans are in place and regularly tested and updated, as necessary
- Ensure that those working on behalf of the RSN (including third party organisations) always abide by the standards of the RSN and relevant legislation
- Participate in the appointment of the Chief Executive and other senior staff; ensure effective recruitment into all posts
- Ensure challenging and appropriate performance objectives are in place for all staff
- Support the RSN's commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion. Ensure succession management plans are in place to ensure continuity of resources
- Operate to the highest standards of integrity and probity, adhering to the Nolan Principles and RSN Code of Conduct. Actively participate in individual and RSN Council performance appraisal
- Participate fully in the work of the RSN Council, including regular attendance at Council meetings, training, and other events
- Ensure that the legal duties of a trustee (as defined by the Charities Act 2011) are fulfilled
- Set the tone for the RSN through personal leadership, behaviour, and performance
- Maintain absolute confidentiality about all aspects of the RSN and RSN Council business

TRUSTEE ROLE: Additional Information

As a trustee you will need to be available to attend:

- 2-3 hour in person/Hybrid meetings at Hampton Court Palace, on a quarterly cycle
- Our annual 'Strategy Day' (also at Hampton Court Palace)
- Ad hoc meetings to review project progress, decide extraordinary matters, etc
- Events to support the RSN, such as fund-raising activities, exhibitions, events

Including preparation time, you should expect to dedicate circa ten days per annum to your work as a RSN trustee (although if you can offer more time there are ad hoc project activities that benefit from the involvement of trustees).

The following skills are also helpful;

- Broad general management or leadership skills, ideally with experience of developing long term business strategies, and good commercial judgement
- Confident and persuasive communication skills, combined with the stature and presence to network with relevant stakeholders
- A strong team working ethic, with ability to motivate and actively engage with stakeholders

You must qualify to act as a Company Director (check out the www.gov.uk)

This is a voluntary role, but expenses for travel are payable on the same basis as staff at the RSN. Trustees serve a term of three years which can be repeated, subject to RSN Council approval, up to a maximum of nine years in total.

Being a trustee is an important job with legal responsibilities, so if you haven't been a trustee before we will provide you with an induction into the role of trustee and the work of the RSN.

The process for the appointment of Trustees is as follows:

- Successful shortlisted candidates asked to take part in an initial telephone interview
- Successful shortlisted candidates will be offered a tour of the RSN operation at Hampton Court Palace, with a member of the senior management team and face to face interview
- Provisional appointment (subject to formal confirmation by the RSN Council of Trustees)
- Assumes Trustee role following RSN Council approval

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