



Patron: HM The Queen
President: HRH The Duchess of Gloucester

The Royal School of Needlework: Championing an important heritage craft



Can you help us deliver our strategic ambitions and evolve for the future?

Trustee Recruitment Information Pack

Board members bring a variety of skills and experience to help drive organisations and the RSN is no exception. **We're looking for three new trustees** to join our board who can bring fresh perspectives, strategic insight and specific experience to help us navigate a significant period of organisation transformation.

**Closing date for applications:
Monday May 25th, 2026**

The Skills we are looking for

Trustees work collaboratively with fellow Board members and the executive team to support strategic decision-making, provide constructive challenge and help ensure the RSN has the structures, strategy and resources needed to thrive and navigate the opportunities and challenges of preserving heritage while evolving to meet contemporary and future needs.

We are seeking to appoint **three new Trustees** to join our Board at an important point in our development. Alongside two clearly defined areas of expertise aligned to our current strategic priorities, we are also keen to appoint a third Trustee who can bring either a broad, all-round perspective or a specialist skill set they believe would add value to the RSN.

1. Fresh perspectives, strategic insight and the desire to make a difference

Can your expertise, whether in leadership, commercial strategy, education, marketing, finance or another area, strengthen our work, complement our existing Board and help turn big ideas into practical, sustainable plans and support the delivery of our strategic ambitions?

This is a unique opportunity to help shape the RSN's future, ensuring we continue delivering for the communities and audiences we serve. If you have a desire to make a meaningful impact by contributing your professional expertise at board level, we'd love to hear from you.

2. Property and workspace planning/major organisational change

Do you have a strong understanding and current or previous professional experience of the UK / southeast property sector and a clear grasp of market conditions, regulatory considerations, and risk management? We are considering a range of space options for delivering our operations and want informed guidance and support 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.

Can you help us navigate the complexities of maximising our existing space, splitting activities across different sites and/or relocation? This includes advising on feasibility, timescales, costs, and stakeholder implications, as well as supporting due diligence, third party arrangements and negotiations. Your insight will help ensure the process is carefully planned, minimises disruption, and results in premises that are fit for purpose, enable creativity, collaboration and growth and align with our mission and future ambitions.

3. Fundraising and income development

Can you bring a strong and informed understanding of the funding landscape for charities, particularly in the cultural and education spheres, including the range of public, private, and philanthropic funding sources available? Ideally, you would have practical experience, either as an advisor or executive, of securing funds for major projects requiring significant investment, whether through grants, donations, partnerships, or capital campaigns. Can you help us think strategically about long-term financial sustainability, assess funding risks and opportunities, and contribute insight into how ambitious projects can be realistically financed and delivered?

As an arts and heritage charity we must balance the cultural, social, and educational value we provide with the unique challenges of artistic and heritage objectives, stewardship considerations and financial resilience to ensure funding strategies align with our mission, values, and public benefit.

About the RSN

The RSN was established in 1872 to revive, preserve and teach the important heritage art of hand embroidery. No other single organisation covers the breadth of work now undertaken by the RSN and we have earned an international reputation for our knowledge, expertise and skill.

From BA degree and career focused courses to serious leisure stitching, beginner sessions, schools' programmes and collaborative projects, we aim to provide the right level of tuition for a wide range of people. We also run a retail operation, professional embroidery studio and have an internationally significant textile collection and design archive to rival that of national museums.

We help launch and support careers in fields such as fashion, costume design and embroidery practice and tuition. The practice of embroidery is also increasingly recognised for its therapeutic and beneficial impact on mental health and wellbeing and along with other crafts is enjoying a resurgence in popularity and practice. Embroidery also plays an important role in world history and talks, exhibitions and academic courses help provide its historical context and inspire contemporary relevance.

Throughout our history we have undertaken 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 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 leverage the strengths of all activities will guide us to become the 'go to place' for hand embroidery.

- Fit for the Future: Achieve financial sustainability
- Celebrate Artistry & Heritage: Promote, develop and grow our Collection & Archive:
- Learning through Stitch: Step change our education provision
- Collaborate & Engage: Connecting our people, customers and students

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.

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

You do not need a knowledge of hand embroidery, but you should share our passion to deliver and improve the outcomes and benefits of our activity.

How to Apply

If you would like an informal chat about being an RSN trustee, please contact our Chair of Trustees, Pip Wood.

To apply please email your application to Pip Wood, by

Monday May 25th 2026

p.w@royal-needlework.org.uk)

providing your CV (no more than two pages please) and supporting letter on why you are interested in joining our board.

Successful shortlisted candidates will be invited to an initial Teams interview.

Key Responsibilities & additional Information

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. Key responsibilities are;

- Active participation in developing our vision and strategic plan. Ensure clear objectives to deliver this are in place and reviewed and updated regularly.
- Hold the Chief Executive to account for effective management, operations and delivery of agreed plans
- Ensure we comply with our Memorandum & Articles, and relevant laws and regulations
- Identify and assess risks and establish an effective management mechanism to manage and monitor these. Take appropriate professional advice where needed.
- 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 and monitor performance.
- 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

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 and our annual 'Strategy Day' (also at Hampton Court Palace), ad hoc meetings to review project progress and decide extraordinary matters, etc and events to support the RSN, such as fundraising activities, exhibitions, etc

Including meeting 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).

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.

You must confirm you qualify to act as a Company Director (please check 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.

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The RSN encourages applications from people of all ages and backgrounds.