



The Bishop's Palace
WELLS · SOMERSET

Trustee Recruitment Information



Overview of The Bishop's Palace, Chapel and Moat.

About The Bishop's Palace

Wells - Situated on the edge of the Mendip Hills in the Country of Somerset, Wells is England's smallest city built around the Cathedral of Saint Andrew. Next to, but separate from the Cathedral, is The Bishop's Palace and Gardens.

The Bishop's Palace and Gardens - The eight-hundred-year-old Palace sits at the heart of the medieval city, among fourteen acres of stunning RHS partner gardens. Owned by the Church Commissioners, the site is operated by The Palace Trust which is a registered charity and manages it as a heritage visitor attraction and creates a range of events and exhibitions.

It consists of 14 acres of gardens and the historic palace buildings surrounded by the original curtain walls and moat. It remains the home and offices of the Bishops of Bath and Wells. Open most of the year, the Palace welcomes over 140,000 visitors across the drawbridge, offers a first-class café- The Bishop's Table - and holds regular events, exhibitions and functions. The magnificent gardens are recognised by the RHS as a partner garden. While welcoming visitors from around the world it is also a source of solace, recreation and comfort for local people.

There is a continuous programme of conservation of the site fabric. The retail activities are conducted through a trading company. The Palace's income comes from several sources: entry fees, private functions, special events and its commercial trading activities, currently a venue hire and catering businesses.

Trustees are supported by a team of around 40 highly skilled and experienced professional staff, led by a Chief Executive. The whole operation, in turn, depends on the good will, skill and enthusiasm of around 200 volunteers.

The charitable purposes of The Palace Trust are to preserve, for the benefit of the public, the fabric of The Bishop's Palace and to promote such charitable purposes as will advance the religious and other charitable work of the Church of England. Having said that, the Palace welcomes staff, visitors and volunteers of all faiths and of none.

How we operate and What we Value

Authentic - In all we do we are authentic to the values of the Trust

Welcoming - We welcome all to the Bishop's Palace and Gardens

Inclusive - Mindful of our community and those we welcome from across the world, we offer experiences that resonate with a diverse and developing audience

Innovative - We are creative in our approach to building a sustainable future. We are prudent with our resources and look to adapt to our external environment by seeking new ways to work to build support and learning into all we do.

Considerate - We listen to the needs and expectations of our communities and our customers when making both cultural and commercial decisions.

Meaningful - We strive to make a positive difference to people's lives by working with them. We design experiences and interactions that meets their needs and exceeds their expectations.

Hospitable - We offer comfort and welcome to all.

We value and support

The heritage and culture of our historic environment

The spiritual nature of the site

Our relationship with the Bishops' and their ministry

Our local communities, supporters and visitors

Our whole team of staff, trustees and volunteers

The beauty and fragility of our environment

Strategic Priorities

our work over the next 3 years will cover the following 4 broad areas:

Sustainability - this means our financial, environmental and social sustainability

Conservation

Access & Learning

Welcome & Hospitality

Governance Structure

As a registered charity, the Palace is managed by its Board of Trustees. In addition to one ex-officio Trustee (the Bishop of Bath and Wells) and one nominated by the Church Commissioners, the Board can have up to 13 co-opted members. The Board meets in formal sessions four times a year but Trustees are welcome to attend meetings with the Chief Executive and the senior management, and to visit the Palace informally to get to know staff and volunteers and to see at first-hand how visitors engage with the Palace.

A Time for Change

The Palace Trust worked hard to respond as positively during the Covid pandemic and took seriously its responsibilities to support local people, providing an oasis of calm and beauty during very difficult times. Its achievements were recognised by Visit England which selected it as an exemplary case study in Covid response - a short film describing the experience is available here:

<https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/business-recovery-stories-bishops-palace>

We also took the opportunity to undertake a governance review during lockdown and have implemented the recommendations of that exercise, in ways that best support our strategic plan. Based on a recent skills audit of the current Board and analysis of future skills needs, we are looking to appoint new Trustees as we move forward to articulate our strategy for the Trust's sustainable growth over the next period.

New Trustees

We are now looking to appoint new Trustees. Trustees are normally appointed for a period of four years, with expectation of renewal for one further period of four years.

Specific Experience and Skills Sought

The essential requirement is to be able to operate at a strategic level alongside the staff of a small organisation. Our skills audit and strategic ambitions have also identified the following key areas where we intend to build expertise across the Board and are therefore particularly interested to hear from applicants who can offer experience of:

- Fundraising
- Ownership and conservation of historic Buildings
- Sustainable development of historic grounds and gardens
- Development of new audiences, and of partnerships and networks
- Financial/ commercial development - with experience of managing/leading visitor attractions

What is of equal importance, is that we build diversity of thought and perspectives across the Board. In support of our strategic plan and current Board makeup, we are therefore particularly interested in applications from people of all ages, gender identity, ethnicity and people with disabilities. We are part of the Disability Confident Scheme (Level 1) and in moving towards Level 2, are committed to interviewing all applicants with a disability who meets the criteria on the person specification.

Duties of the Trustee Role

The role of the Trustee is set in the context of best practice in the governance of a charity. This means that inter alia competence is required in four areas:

- Strategic Planning and leadership
- Performance monitoring
- Risk Management & Compliance
- Stakeholder Management

Main Duties and Responsibilities

1. As a member of the Board of Trustees to take corporate governance responsibility for

- a. Strategic Planning and leadership
 - i. Develop and agree the long-term strategy for the Palace
 - ii. Establish and periodically review the Palace's vision, mission and values
 - iii. Set short, medium and long term goals
 - iv. Agree operational plans and budgets
- b. Performance Monitoring
 - i. Ensure solvency and financial strength
 - ii. Monitor progress and spending against plan and budget
 - iii. Evaluate results, assess outcomes and impact
 - iv. Hold executive/operational managers to account in the implementation of the Board's strategic decisions
- c. Risk Management & Compliance
 - i. Take a considered, proportionate and balanced approach to risk management
 - ii. Ensure compliance with legislation and regulation
- d. Stakeholder Management
 - i. Communicate openly, informing people about the Palace
 - ii. Listen and respond to the views of visitors, volunteers, members and the wider local community
 - iii. Consider the Palace's responsibilities to that wider community.

2. Meeting attendance

- a. Formal Board meetings which occur four times a year – normally in February, May, July and November (typically 3 hours long)
- b. Meetings between Trustees and the senior management team – invited 4 times a year (2 hours).

Note: Meetings are presently scheduled within normal working hours but we are committed to improving the diversity of Board members and will review this practice to support new Trustees as necessary. Meetings are generally held at The Bishop's Palace but distanced electronic-based participation will be supported.

3. Involvement, as agreed, in specific projects and/or programmes.

Overall, this can typically mean a commitment of the equivalent of 2 days per month, depending on precise interests taken, but it will vary.

Person Specification, Skills and Abilities:

Key Criteria

Knowledge and Experience	<p>Experience in at least one of the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fundraising (including sponsorship, capacity building, application for grants and other sources of income)• Ownership and conservation of historic Buildings• Sustainable development of historic grounds and gardens• Development of new audiences, and of partnerships and networks• Financial/ commercial development - with experience of managing/leading visitor attractions
Skills and Abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to read and understand financial reports, balance sheets and budgets• Understanding of risk management and compliance• High level management / business / commercial experience / stakeholder management• Project or Programme Management• Ability to operate strategically with the staff of a small organization <p><i>Note: previous Board experience is not essential, and support, including access to training, will be provided</i></p>
Personal Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy with the mission and ethos of The Palace Trust <p><i>Note: this includes its Christian origins and continuing place within the Church of England but candidates of all faiths and of none are equally welcomed.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ability to listen, to identify the salient issues and contribute to discussion with respect for others' contribution• Ability to reflect and contribute something of personal wisdom• Ability to think strategically, to evaluate and communicate proposals succinctly• Patience, tact and discretion• Ability to network effectively

To Apply:

If you would like to become a part of this unique place, we would love to hear from you. Please send your CV and covering letter, outlining what you could contribute to the role of Trustee and your interest in applying, to Moira Anderson, HR Operations Officer at Recruitment@bishopsalace.org.uk.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role, please contact Moira which can arrange for you to speak with the Chief Executive or a member of the Board of Trustees.

In return we can offer comprehensive induction and training. As this is a voluntary post there is no remuneration, other than reasonable travel expenses. Expenses may, in some circumstances, include remuneration for loss of earnings.

The Bishop's Palace is an accessible site.



More Information:

The Palace Trust is a registered Charity (11 60830) and a registered Company (09404519).

More information about The Bishop's Palace can be found at:

<https://bishoppalace.org.uk/>

<https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/03013064>

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charitydetails/5059055/charity-overview>



The Bishop's Chapel and hot boarder in the inner gardens.