

Recruitment of Trustees – Background information

What does becoming a Trustee of Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings involve?

Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings is a registered charity (Reg. Charity No. 241644) and a company limited by guarantee (Company No. 830659) which was founded in 1963 and opened to the public in 1967. The Company was incorporated on the 10th December 1964 and is governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association. It has an unlimited number of subscribing members, who elect a Council of Management which is responsible for the proper conduct of the Museum. The Council appoints a Museum Director who manages the Museum and appoints the Museum staff within the budget and the guidelines established by the Council. The Museum also depends on a large number of volunteers who support the Museum across all areas of its work.

Avoncroft is an independent museum which relies on its visitors' admission payments, membership subscriptions, profit from its trading arm, Avoncroft Enterprises, and through fundraising for grants and donations.

Avoncroft has rescued over 30 historic buildings and structures over the last 50 years and attracts around 35,000 to 45,000 visitors a year (over the past few years). It employs about 50+ full and part-time staff (with currently the full-time equivalent of 11 core staff) and is supported by over 80 regular volunteers.

What are Avoncroft's plans over the next few years?

In 2017 Avoncroft developed a 20-year Vision to set the overall future of the Museum up to the 2030s.

During this process the Museum's staff, trustees, volunteers and membership adopted the following Vision Statement:

Avoncroft will be the open-air museum of Midlands life that collects and shares the stories, buildings and belongings of Midlands people through the generations

Re-focusing the Museum's objectives to match those agreed in the 20-year Vision has initially taken some time, and a period of transition, with some significant staff changes, has taken place. This is ongoing and recruitment of new Trustees to improve the diversity of the Trustee board is part of this process. A 3-year forward business plan has been adopted and the Museum is currently re-thinking how its business model can ensure the Museum's overall success and sustainability. Future developments will require a major fundraising campaign and all Trustees will be expected to be involved, acting as advocates of the Museum and taking part in events organised as part of this campaign.

2019-2020 Recruitment

We are currently recruiting at least three trustees to fill vacancies on the Museum Council. During this recruitment we are looking to recruit:

- Under represented sections of the Museum's audiences, particularly women and minority groups
- People with particular commercial business experience, such as involvement with comparable heritage, service, leisure or arts sector businesses or charities
- People with experience managing HR, IT or legal compliance areas of a charity or business
- People with experience of professional roles in marketing, PR or business/charity promotion
- People with entrepreneurial skills, those with experience of forming successful partnership working in the third sector and those with experience in the world of heritage and buildings conservation

What are Trustees' responsibilities?

Trustees have the ultimate responsibility for running the charity and ensuring that the development, conservation and promotion of the Museum is kept at the core of its interests.

The Council of Management (Trustees):

- Takes the big decisions about the future
- Sets the right framework for the charity's paid staff and volunteers, so that they can work together to achieve the charity's objectives
- Ensures the charity complies with the law and with regulatory requirements.
- Safeguards the charity's money, property and other assets.
- Trustees don't run the charity day-to-day – that's the role of the Director.

The Trustees set strategic direction and hold the staff to account for the delivery of agreed plans and the efficient management of the charity's resources. Trustees don't work on their own, but share collective responsibility as members of the Council of Management, the charity's governing body. The Council works as a team - decisions must be taken by all the Trustees, acting together, in the interests of the charity as a whole.

Being a Trustee is an important and rewarding role that will involve you taking a key part in shaping our future. It will provide you with opportunities for personal development – at the same time as you bring your skills and energy to the charity's work, you will also gain valuable new experience and knowledge.

What qualities do Trustees need?

Trustees must fully support Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings aims and objectives and be committed to the charity's vision and values. They should be able to devote the necessary time and effort to their trusteeship, and be able to demonstrate the following qualities:

- Integrity
- Strategic vision
- Independent judgement
- The ability to work as part of a team

Am I eligible? Do I need professional qualifications?

An effective board needs a good mix of skills, knowledge and experience, drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. As well as requiring certain professional skills (financial, legal, heritage and business management etc) the Council also relies on the common sense and general experience of Trustees.

The Trustee body should also reflect the Museum's users – who are diverse and come from all backgrounds and ages.

Trustees have to be members of Avoncroft Museum and therefore must be willing to pay the annual membership fee (Currently individual - £20, family- £55) or become a life member (individual £95 or couple £170).

What is expected of Trustees?

All Trustees are expected to attend at least four of the six Council of Management meetings a year, held at the Museum and the Museum's AGM usually held on a Sunday afternoon in July. Trustees may be asked to also sit on a small number of sub committees, the times of which are arranged to suit those attending.

It is possible that the pattern of meetings may change to ensure we can recruit a wide range of Trustees including those who work full-time.

Between Board and Committee meetings, there may be telephone and email contact from time to time. A Trustee induction will be arranged for all new Trustees. Trustees must understand and accept their legal responsibilities as charity Trustees. They must abide by the charity's governing documents.

Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings values diversity and is committed to change to ensure equal opportunity in every aspect of the charity's work. We welcome applications from all sections of the community. To become a Trustee you must be resident in the UK, Channel Islands or the Isle of Man and be eligible by law to be a charity Trustee and company director (see the note below)

How are Trustees chosen?

The following procedure for appointing Trustees was agreed as part of the review of Avoncroft's governance arrangements in August 2014.

"When new Trustees are required, appointments should be made through an application, interview and selection process. When a vacancy occurs a specific job description including the particular skills required should be prepared and circulated by e-mail to all members and volunteers and advertised externally in the local/ national press, inviting applications/ nominations.

Shortlist and interview will be by a small panel – Chairman, Director and one other (an outside person or another Trustee). Appointments to be confirmed at the next AGM.

If a Trustee misses 4 consecutive meetings without permission they should be asked to stand down.

When a casual vacancy occurs for whatever reason the Council should fill that vacancy by advertising if for more than two years or by co-option if less than 12 months. The subsequent appointment should be for the remaining portion of the 3 year period, and confirmed at the next AGM.

What if something goes wrong? Will I be personally liable?

Trustees are ultimately responsible for everything the charity does and are collectively accountable if things go wrong. However, it is highly unlikely for any charity Trustee to be held personally liable unless he or she has acted in deliberate contravention of the rules or has been grossly irresponsible. Provided that Trustees can show they acted reasonably, prudently, and within the law and the charity's governing document, they are unlikely to be liable under charity law.

Are Trustees paid?

Trustees serve as volunteers and receive no payment or expenses for their role.

How long will I serve? Can I resign?

There are up to fifteen members of Council at any one time, though in recent years it has been agreed to limit that to nine to ensure an active and engaged Trustee body. Trustees serve for three years, with the option to stand for re-election on two subsequent occasions. Trustees may resign at any time.

Note on legal eligibility requirements for trusteeship: When preparing to appoint a new trustee, a charity must ensure that the person is qualified to act in this capacity. Some people are disqualified by law from acting as trustees, including anyone described in section 72(1) of the Charities Act 1993. This includes:

- Anyone who has an unspent conviction for an offence involving deception or dishonesty (theft, fare evasion, or falsely claiming benefit, for example)
- Anyone who is an undischarged bankrupt
- Anyone who has been removed from trusteeship of a charity by the Court or the Commissioners for misconduct or mismanagement; and
- Anyone under a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 (see below).
- Anyone who has defaulted on payments under county court administration orders.

It is a criminal offence to act as a charity trustee while disqualified. For further information please refer to the Charity Commission for England and Wales.