

A large audience is seen from behind, silhouetted against a bright stage. The stage is illuminated by several powerful spotlights that create strong beams of light. A disco ball hangs from the ceiling, reflecting the light. The audience is standing in rows, looking towards the stage. The overall atmosphere is one of anticipation and excitement.

Theatre Royal Plymouth Chair of the Board & Trustee Recruitment Pack

Thank you very much for your interest in joining the Board of Theatre Royal Plymouth.

As the largest producing theatre in the South West, Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP) plays an important anchor role in the cultural life in the city of Plymouth and the wider region.

We are supported by Arts Council England and Plymouth City Council, and take our role in making Plymouth a great place to live and work very seriously.

A number of our longstanding board members are nearing the end of their term of office and so we're looking for five new Trustees. The specific areas of skill and experience required can be found later in this document.

Additionally, in April 2026, my own role will evolve to be Patron, so we are also looking for a new Chair to lead the board in the years ahead.

Theatre Royal Plymouth believes in the widest sense of diversity, and we want our Board of Trustees to reflect that. We are therefore keen to receive applications from potential new board members across the spectrum of age, disability, socio-economic background, and racial identity.

Please note that the deadline for sending us your expression of interest is **Friday 14 November 2025**.

We are looking forward to hearing from you.



Dame Darcey Bussell DBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Image credit: Steve Haywood



Welcome

In the late 1970s, and early 1980s, Plymouth City Council very bravely decided to embark on building a major theatre for the city. Many thought this was a terrible idea. The fundraising was relentless, the challenges were many, and the opposition was loud and vocal. 43 years on, many millions have walked through our doors and many more millions of pounds have been contributed to the city and South West regional economy because we exist.

I have always enjoyed a close working relationship with the trustees of the organisations I have led. In this board development programme I'm looking for critical friends, those who know and love TRP and those who do not.

We will be a stronger and more resilient organisation if we build a board of people diverse in their skills and diverse in their backgrounds.

I can guarantee that the years ahead will be exhilarating. In exchange for your time and insights, we'll ensure you feel part of our team and a key figure in our success.

James

James Mackenzie-Blackman
CEO & Artistic Director



Image credit: *The Devil Wears Prada* (2024) by Matt Crockett

About Theatre Royal Plymouth

As the South West's principal centre for performing arts, we present a year-round programme of world-class and distinctive productions on all scales.

Our longstanding relationships with Birmingham Royal Ballet, Matthew Bourne's New Adventures, National Theatre, Rambert, Royal Shakespeare Company, Welsh National Opera and our membership of the Dance Consortium ensures that the people of Plymouth and across the region regularly access live performance of national and international standing.

Theatre Royal Plymouth specialises in being the starting place of many large-scale productions bound for the West End or touring. We present a broad range of theatre, both from the commercial and the subsidised sector – including classic and contemporary drama, musicals, opera, ballet and dance. We have three performance spaces: The Lyric (1,300), The Drum (146) and The Lab (50).



Image credit: Steve Haywood

As a registered charity we provide art, education, and community engagement throughout Plymouth and the wider region. We engage and inspire our many communities through performing arts, and we touch the lives and interests of people from all backgrounds in a number of ways, including:

- By the breadth of the shows we create and present.
- Through extensive creative engagement programmes, partnering with and learning from diverse communities who otherwise feel theatre is not for them.
- By embracing the vitality of new talent, giving voice to emerging and established artists to push new boundaries and make brave decisions.
- By providing dynamic cultural leadership for the city of Plymouth.

Our work with young people and communities is extensive and radical, taking place across all our venues and beyond. Our Creative Communities programme is housed in our state-of-the-art Production and Learning Centre, TR2, which is also where we build sets, props and costumes for our own productions and many West End and touring shows.

We are a longstanding Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and are in receipt of funding from Plymouth City Council.



Image credit: *The Key* (2024) by Steve Haywood

Our Vision & Mission

Our Vision

Together with the people of Plymouth and the South West we will make waves in our ocean city, ensuring we're the most ambitious and creative community in the country.

Our Mission

We bring people together to create, make, build and present world-class theatre.



Image credit: *The Artist* (2024) by Mark Senior

Our Values

Collaboration

Valuing each other in the way we work, communicate and spend time together.

We work openly and honestly together. We communicate regularly with each other, listening and making sure we understand people's needs. We value and respect the relationships we have with colleagues, artists and partners and celebrate our shared successes.

Creativity

Being imaginative in everything we do.

We use our knowledge, experience and judgment to explore doing things differently. We aim to empower everybody in the organisation to adopt a flexible, open-minded and imaginative approach.

Quality

Taking pride in achieving excellence.

We take responsibility for and pride in what we do, recognising each other's good work. We consistently exceed expectations in all we do and ensure that everyone has the skills to achieve excellence.

Diversity

Embracing the diversity among our people and community.

We embrace and value difference and individuality treating everyone as equally important. Together we are stronger and more effective.



Image credit: Paraorchestra (2024) by Dom Moore

Company Structure

TRP is led by our CEO & Artistic Director, James Mackenzie-Blackman, who works closely alongside Helen Costello, Deputy CEO, Finance and Operations and Liz King, Deputy CEO, Producing and Programming.

James, Helen and Liz form the Executive, who are supported by a Strategic Leadership team. They head up a staff team of around 350, based in our theatre building and in our production facility, TR2.

Our existing board have a range of interests, expertise, experiences and networks that they bring to their role of Trustee.

You can read more about our Executive team and our existing trustees [here](#).



Image credit: *The Key* (2024) by Steve Haywood

Who We're Looking For

Members of the Board need to have a strong interest in the work of TRP, expertise in their professional field, and the ability to devote sufficient time to perform Board duties satisfactorily. As a whole, we want to have the necessary skill set to support TRP's mission and purpose effectively, but we also need to ensure we reflect a wide range of voices and the many points of view and lived experience of those who work with us, visit our stages, or live and work in the city or South West.

In this board recruitment exercise, we are specifically looking for the following professional experience:

- 1. Qualified Accountant.** Specifically in respect of Shona Godefrey completing her final term of office in 2027. This new appointee will Chair the Finance, Audit and Operations Committee of the Board.
- 2. A current leader of a large building-based theatre in the United Kingdom.** This could be an existing Artistic Director, CEO or Executive Director.
- 3. A community leader, or someone with local government experience from outside of Plymouth.** This is in respect to the impending local government reorganisation and the likelihood that Plymouth City Council's boundary will expand, or that Plymouth and Devon could become part of a combined authority. Someone such as a School Head from a well-respected Devon school, or a charity sector leader from Devon or Cornwall.
- 4. A Plymouth business leader with a commercial business background, perhaps in hospitality.** This person would also serve as a trustee for our trading subsidiary, Talklight.
- 5. A trustee with experience of fundraising** and/or with a network of contacts who have the potential to support the charity.



Image credit: Dom Moore

Key Responsibilities

A Trustee is responsible for ensuring the charity delivers its mission, within the resources it has, by guiding and supervising the Executive team.

As a Trustee, you will read the written reports sent out before each board meeting, and come to the meetings prepared to ask questions, discuss, and act as critical friend to the team to ensure that the charity is being run well.

You will work closely with the Executive team, taking a strategic overview of the organisation's planning and programme, and ensuring that the company operates to the highest professional standards.



Image credit: Dom Moore

As a Trustee, you will:

- Ensure that TRP complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation, and pursues its stated objects.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the charity, including maintaining proper financial control and using its resources in pursuance of its objects.
- Appoint the Executive and monitor their performance.
- Together with the Executive, create a clear strategic direction for the organisation, jointly setting overall vision, mission and values, defining strategic objectives and agreeing targets, and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Maintain and ensure effective Board performance.
- Safeguard the reputation of TRP.
- Protect, manage and adequately insure the property and funds of the charity.
- Approve and monitor the implementation of internal policies (eg Health & Safety, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Safeguarding, and Grievance & Disciplinary procedures) and ensure that risk assessments for all aspects of the business are undertaken/updated effectively.
- Attend company events and performances, and be an active ambassador for the organisation.
- Support fundraising activities, which could include supporting TRP personally, introducing potential donors and networks, and attending fundraising events.



Image credit: *The Key* (2024) by Steve Haywood

You don't need you to know everything about TRP, and being a Trustee, upfront; what we do need from you is a commitment to the values and mission of TRP, and the desire and ability to bring your skills and experience to support these aims.

We will work with you to make sure that there is a detailed induction, and we will discuss what support you might want in your first months, such as a buddy system, to make sure that you have everything you need to play a fully effective role on the Board.

We expect all trustees to have an awareness of, and adhere to, Nolan's Seven Principles Of Public Life – namely Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

If you do not already have Trustee experience, you might find it useful to have a look at the Charity Commission's guidance [here](#) on how to be a good Trustee.



Image credit: *The Creakers*, (2024) by Pamela Raith

Chair of the Board

We're looking for a dynamic and collaborative leader to be our next Chair.

In the spring of 2026, Dame Darcey Bussell's role at TRP will evolve to 'Patron' and so, in addition to the Trustee roles, we are looking for a Chair to lead our Board.

You will have leadership experience in a professional organisation and a demonstrable understanding of the key role of good governance in a successful charity like TRP. We imagine that you will already have worked with Trustees, from the perspective of either a Trustee or an executive, but you don't need to have previous experience as a Chair.

You will have the ability to be a compelling and credible ambassador for the organisation locally, regionally and nationally.



Image credit: Steve Haywood

In addition to the responsibilities shared by all Trustees, the Chair has a particular leadership role, which may be summarised as follows:

- Inspiring and leading the Board: ensuring that Trustees have accurate information, chairing meetings and ensuring that open, respectful dialogue leads to clear decision making.
- Working with the Committee Chair's, and Executive team, to ensure the financial stability and resilience of the company.
- Supporting the CEO & Artistic Director, ensuring their wellbeing, acting as their critical friend, and providing guidance and appraisal.
- Nurturing an organisational culture of mutual respect and wellbeing.
- Ensuring strong governance and full compliance with the governing document and Charity Commission and Companies House requirements.
- Leading on external relations on behalf of the Board; acting as ambassador and spokesperson as appropriate, and supporting with fundraising activities.



Image credit: *Paraorchestra* (2024) by Dom Moore

Time Commitment

As Board members are recruited for specific skills and experience, they are asked to contribute their expertise to advise and support members of staff on an ongoing basis, working closely with the Chief Executive and other staff as appropriate. There are five formal meetings of the Board each year, and an annual strategy away day.

Trustees often bring additional value and expertise to the organisation outside the context of the formal meetings. Trustees will also join a sub committee of the board (e.g. Audit and Risk) to contribute their expertise as appropriate. From time to time there will be key events to attend, such as fundraisers and performances.

Board members are elected for an initial period of three years.

Being a Trustee is not just about what you can give to a charity, but also what you can gain from the experience. It's an opportunity to gain experience and insight into different sectors and ways of working, to grow personally and professionally, and to be part of a dynamic and committed leadership team. You will also get to know about our learning and engagement programme, and see a lot of great theatre!



"I get a lot out of being a Trustee at TRP. As well as being able to use my experience and expertise to support the leadership team, I have also learnt a great deal about running a successful theatre; about delivering to the Arts Council strategies and national policy for the arts.

I've learnt about the challenges of funding and delivering our charitable purpose, and the commercial pressures of making new work.

As a Trustee I have had the opportunity to attend national and regional conferences and training events; professional development bespoke for TRP Trustees, and I have widened my personal and professional networks, learning a lot from my fellow Trustees.

All in all, a great experience."

Bronwen Lacey, Vice Chair

Image credit: Dom Moore

Next Steps

If you'd like an informal and confidential chat about this role, please do email recruitment@theatreroyal.com. Emma Tayler, Head of Governance & Business Support will receive your correspondence and direct you to a member of the Executive or relevant trustee.

Application Process

To begin the conversation, we are asking you to send us an expression of interest. This can be a letter of no more than two pages. Alternatively, you are also welcome to send a video or audio of no more than five minutes via wettransfer.com to recruitment@theatreroyal.com

Please make sure you tell us:

- Why you would like to join the board.
- What you think you would bring to the organisation and how your skills could support the board and team in achieving its vision.
- A bit about yourself, including the work you do and your previous experience.

The closing date for expressions of interest is Friday 14 November 2025, 12:00pm (noon).

We want everyone who believes they can contribute to TRP's Board of Trustees to feel welcome to apply.

It is our responsibility to make the application process accessible, and to give you the information you need to decide whether you might be suitable. If you require the pack or any further information in a different format, or have questions before you apply, please get in touch with us via recruitment@theatreroyal.com



Image credit: *The Greakers* (2024) by Pamela Raith



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