SOUTH WEST HERITAGE TRUST

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES RECRUITMENT

CANDIDATE PACK

OCTOBER 2026

CONTENTS

1 - WELCOME

2 - ABOUT THE TRUST

8 - GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

10 - STRATEGIC AIMS

11 - RESOURCES

12 - KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS

15 - PERSON SPECIFICATION

17 - HOW TO APPLY

18 - TIME COMMITMENT AND REMUNERATION

19 - EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

WELCOME

Dear Candidate

We are delighted to invite applications for the role of Chair of Trustees at the South West Heritage Trust. This is a unique opportunity to contribute to the preservation and promotion of our region's rich cultural heritage. As Chair, you will play a crucial role in leading and guiding the strategic direction of our organisation, ensuring that we continue to protect and celebrate the history and heritage of the West Country.

We are a heritage charity delivering major projects and programmes in Devon and Somerset. We work with people and communities within the two counties to improve life chances, build prosperity, and create a better future. In all we do, we seek to generate a strong return on investment.

As the Trust looks ahead to a range of major projects, including some of national significance, the new Chair will help confirm our commitment to shaping an enterprising, pioneering charity that ensures that the region's heritage is preserved, celebrated and made available for everyone.

We recognise that diversity in all its forms can make the Trust a better and stronger organisation. We welcome applications from people of all ages and backgrounds. We especially encourage applications from minority ethnic people, people with disabilities, younger people, and LGBTQ+ people.

If you are enthusiastic about making a difference and have the dedication to help us achieve our goals, we encourage you to apply. Please find enclosed further details about the role and the application process.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to join the South West Heritage Trust. We look forward to receiving your application.

Yours sincerely

Mike Motum
Chair, Board of Trustees

Sam Astill
Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT THE TRUST

The South West Heritage Trust was created in 2014 as an independent charity and limited company. It is dedicated to preserving and promoting the heritage of Somerset and Devon. We work with many partners, including the principal local authorities of the two counties, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and Historic England to deliver wide-ranging heritage services. In 2023 we were proud to become a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England. Every year we reach many thousands of people in a wide variety of ways.

Through our **Museums Service** we run three Accredited Museums – the Museum of Somerset and Somerset Military Museum in Taunton, and Somerset Rural Life Museum in Glastonbury.

Somerset Rural Life Museum Barn, textiles by the Somerset based textile artist Alice Kettle.

We manage the Brick and Tile Museum in Bridgwater and provide curatorial support to Weston-super-Mare's revitalised museum. Three million museum objects, ranging from geological, Iron Age and Roman collections to textiles and fine art, tell some of the many stories of Somerset and the South West. In partnership with the British Museum we also manage the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Devon, Somerset and Dorset.

photograph: Dr Lucy Shipley from PAS and Iain Sansome

We are the major custodians of written evidence about Somerset and Devon. Our Accredited **Archive and Local Studies Services** have centres in Taunton, Exeter and Barnstaple, where we care for over 10 million archives dating from the 8th century to the present day. 200,000 printed reference works about the South West are held in the Local Studies collections. We also run archive services on behalf of the unitary authorities of North Somerset and Torbay.

Our **Historic Environment Service** supports local authorities, partners and the public by offering planning-related advice and information about Somerset's archaeology and built heritage. We are also responsible for 450 acres of historic landscapes, including Cothelstone Hill in the Quantock Hills, Norton Fitzwarren Hillfort near Taunton, and Deer Leap in the Mendips.

Our **Learning Service** provides opportunities for people of all ages, including those with learning disabilities or affected by dementia. Up to 15,000 children participate each year in workshops for Key Stages 1 and 2. We make authentic heritage objects available to schools for use in the classroom. The service has never been busier.

Our organisational culture is one of working together as a single trust to provide a diversity of heritage services. To achieve this aim we rely on our remarkable staff and volunteers, our Friends organisations, our Supporters and partners, and all those who champion our work.

Our services are funded by core grants from Somerset Council and Devon County Council, by a wide range of contracts and by commercial activity. We also raise new income and attract grant investment from generous funders.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution

The South West Heritage Trust vested on 1 November 2014 as an independent company limited by guarantee with charitable status. Its charitable objects are:

- the advancement of education;
- the promotion of arts, heritage, culture and science including by the preservation and safeguarding of such land, buildings, structures, archaeology, objects, records or books as may be of historic or educational interest or significance; and
- to provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure-time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances, with the object of improving their conditions of life.

The Trust has heritage responsibilities previously carried out by Somerset Council (formerly Somerset County Council) comprising the Archives and Local Studies, Museums and Historic Environment Services, and by Devon County Council comprising the Archives and Local Studies Services. In addition, it has contracts to supply a range of heritage services to local authorities in Torbay, North Somerset, Weston-super-Mare, Yeovil and Bath & North East Somerset.

A subsidiary trading company, South West Heritage Trust Trading Company Ltd was also formed on 1 November 2014.

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees has 12 members who meet quarterly (meetings in March, June, September and December) to discuss the progress of the organisation and to agree its strategic direction. The Chief Executive (who is not a trustee) is appointed by the Board to manage the Trust from day to day.

The Leadership Team and the Staff

The Leadership Team meets formally on a monthly basis to ensure consistent and collaborative management of services and the delivery of the Business Plan. The Leadership Team currently consists of the Chief Executive, the Head of Somerset Archives and Local Studies, the Head of Devon Archives and Local Studies, the Head of Museums and Engagement, the Head of Historic Environment and Regulation, the Head of Finance and Governance and Head of Development and Partnerships. There are some 100 staff (70 FTE) based at five main sites. A Staff Forum representing staff teams meets online every eight weeks to discuss staffing-related issues. We also depend fundamentally on the work and dedication of more than 100 volunteers.

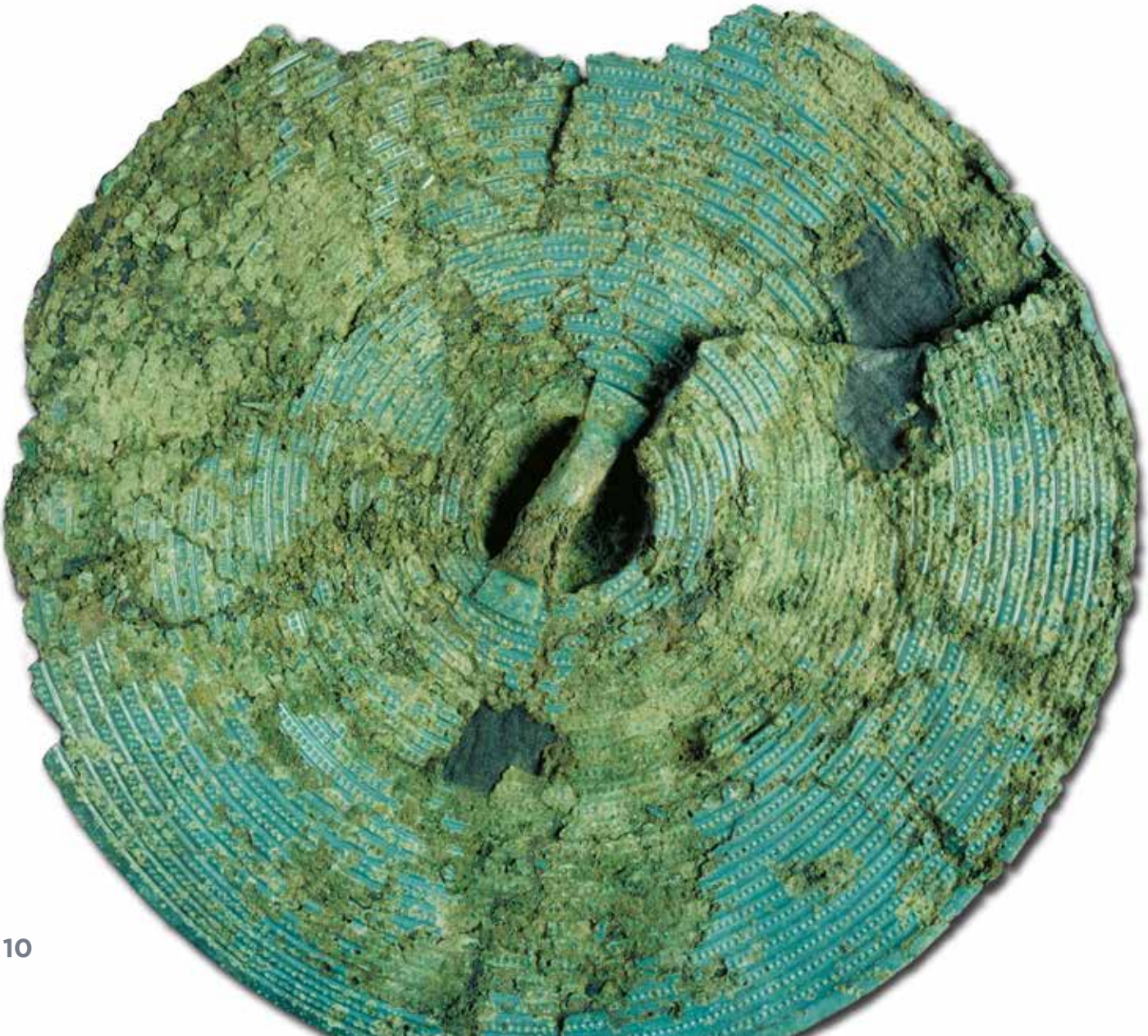
STRATEGIC AIMS

Constitution

The Trust's five-year strategy, 2025-30, focuses on three major outcomes:

- Supporting People and Communities: We will support, empower and enrich people and communities.
- Protecting Our Heritage: We will preserve, protect and enhance our heritage, keeping it safe and accessible now and in the future.
- Building a Thriving Trust: We will develop our identity as a leading regional charity and heritage business to increase our impact and drive our growth.

In achieving these outcomes we will be: inclusive; professional; collaborative; inspiring and responsible.



RESOURCES OF THE TRUST

- A gross annual budget of c. £5 m and a variable capital budget.
- Up to 100 staff.
- The visitor-based and administrative sites managed by the Trust including the Devon Heritage Centre, the North Devon Record Office, the Somerset Heritage Centre, the Museum of Somerset and Somerset Rural Life Museum.
- 450 acres of landscape heritage sites.
- c. 3 m museum objects relating to Somerset and North Somerset.
- c. 10 m archives relating to Devon and Somerset, together with related local studies collections.
- The online Somerset Historic Environment Record containing information about more than 35,000 sites and monuments in Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND TASKS

Governance arrangements

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the Trust, acting as its governing body. Trustees are legally responsible for directing the affairs of the Trust, ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering its charitable objects. Some Trustees are also directors of the Trust's associated charitable company. Trustees are not paid, but reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Three Trustee committees take place quarterly to examine and deal with complex issues of the charity, with powers to exercise authority where delegated by the Board:

- The People Committee – deals with all issues relating to human resources, terms and conditions and remuneration of staff
- The Audience Engagement Committee – deals with the strategic direction and targeting of marketing, PR and communications
- The Finance Committee – receives reports on income and expenditure and related activities to monitor financial stability and progress against the business plan
- The Trading Company – oversees and supports the Trust's commercial actvities.

The Board may consist of a maximum of thirteen Trustees. Two of the Trustees are nominated respectively by Somerset and Devon County Councils.

The Trust's Charitable Objects, defined in its Articles of Association, are as follows:

- The advancement of education;
- the promotion of arts, heritage, culture and science including by the preservation and safeguarding of such land, buildings, structures, archaeology, objects, records or books as may be of historic or educational interest or significance; and
- to provide or assist in the provision of facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their youth, age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the object of improving their conditions of life.

Principal tasks and duties of trustees

Accountability; Legal and Financial Duties

- Ensure that the Trust complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulation
- Ensure that the organisation pursues its charitable objects as defined in its governing document and uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects
- Regularly monitor performance against the annual budget and support appropriate management action designed to achieve agreed levels of financial performance and ensure financial stability
- Ensure that the charity's governance is of the highest possible standard, and that it is openly and transparently accountable to funders, customers and stakeholders

Policy and Planning

- Ensure that the charity has a clear vision, mission, values and strategic direction
- Contribute actively to the activities of the Board of Trustees in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets, and evaluating performance
- Approve and review the business plan, focusing on key issues and providing guidance on new initiatives
- Ensure that all significant risks associated with the Trust are recognised and that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place

Advocacy

- Safeguard the good name and values of the Trust, acting as an enthusiastic and well informed ambassador
- Champion excellent customer service
- Promote the Trust, its activities and its needs, to the public, private and voluntary sectors so as to enhance the Trust's profile and assist with its fundraising activities and income generation

Participation

- Support the Trust not only through participation within its formal decision-making structures but through engagement with its events and programmes, e.g. promotional initiatives and exhibition openings.

Legal duties of trustees

Compliance – Trustees must:

- Ensure that the charity complies with charity legislation and prepares Annual Returns and accounts as required by law
- Ensure that the charity does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in its governing document and that it remains true to its charitable objects
- Comply with the requirements of other legislation and other regulators which governthe activities of the charity
- Act with integrity, and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of charity funds or assets

Duty of Prudence – Trustees must:

- Ensure that the charity is and will remain solvent
- Use charitable funds and assets reasonably, and only in furtherance of the charity's objects
- Avoid undertaking activities that might place the charity's endowment, funds, assets or reputation at undue risk
- Take special care when investing the funds of the charity, or borrowing funds for the charity to use

Duty of Care – Trustees must:

- Exercise reasonable care and skill in their work as trustees, using their personal skills and experience as needed to ensure that the charity is well-run and efficient
- Consider getting external professional advice on all matters where there may be material risk to the charity, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties

Duties of Directors

Trustees are also company directors and they have duties and responsibilities set out in company law. Chapter 2 of Part 10 of the Companies Act 2006 (2006 Act) codifies certain common law and equitable duties of directors. In summary, the seven general duties under the 2006 Act are:

- To act within powers
- To promote the success of the company
- To exercise independent judgment
- To exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence
- To avoid conflicts of interest
- Not to accept benefits from third parties
- To declare an interest in a proposed transaction or arrangement

PERSON SPECIFICATION

We will be seeking a combination of the following in our next Chair:

Passion and Commitment

- A genuine commitment to the heritage, culture and communities of Somerset and Devon and to the purpose of South West Heritage Trust.
- An interest in the role heritage can play in civic life, learning, place-making, economic development and community wellbeing.
- A commitment to the Trust's public purpose, values and long-term sustainability.
- Passion for the South West and an understanding of the region's distinctive character, opportunities and challenges.
- In partnership with the CEO, a willingness to devote sufficient time to the role, including building relationships across the organisation and representing the Trust externally

Leadership and Governance

- A strategic leader with the ability to see the bigger picture, shape long-term direction and guide organisations through change.
- Experience operating at Board level, either as a Chair, Trustee, Non-Executive Director or in a comparable governance role.
- A sound understanding of the respective roles of governance and executive management, and the ability to maintain appropriate boundaries between the two.
- The ability to further develop an inclusive, effective and high-performing Board culture characterised by openness, trust, challenge and collaboration.
- Experience supporting organisational development, transformation, succession planning and governance effectiveness.

Skills and Personal Qualities

- Excellent judgement and the ability to navigate complex, multi-stakeholder environments with confidence and integrity.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, with a collaborative and diplomatic approach.
- High levels of emotional intelligence, curiosity and self-awareness.
- The ability to build consensus while also being prepared to provide challenge and make difficult decisions when required.
- A natural relationship-builder and ambassador for the Trust who can establish credibility and trust with trustees, executives, staff, partners and funders.
- An inclusive leadership style that values diverse perspectives and enables others to contribute effectively.
- The ability to inspire confidence, create space for discussion and bring people together around a shared purpose.

Essential Skills and Experience Criteria

1. Demonstrable leadership experience, either as a senior executive, Non-Executive Director, Chair or Trustee, with the ability to provide strategic direction and effective governance.
2. Experience of leading through complexity, balancing multiple stakeholder interests, competing priorities and organisational change.
3. The ability to build strong, trusting and productive relationships, including acting as a supportive and constructive partner to the Chief Executive.
4. Outstanding communication, influencing and consensus-building skills, with the ability to unite people around a shared purpose and champion the mission, heritage and future ambitions of South West Heritage Trust.
5. Strong judgement, integrity and emotional intelligence, combined with commercial awareness and financial acumen, with the confidence to provide constructive challenge, oversee organisational sustainability and make principled decisions when required.
6. Experience of working with public-sector bodies, publicly funded organisations or adjacent to similarly complex partnership environments.
7. Credibility as an external ambassador, with the ability to engage effectively with funders, local authorities, strategic partners and wider stakeholders.

HOW TO APPLY

GatenbySanderson has been appointed as our executive search firm to assist with this appointment. You will be asked to submit the following:

- A CV outlining your career history, key responsibilities and achievements, tailored to the information in this pack.
- A Statement of Suitability (no longer than two pages) explaining:
  - your motivation for applying for this role
  - how your skills, qualities and experience demonstrate your suitability, with reference to the criteria in this pack
- You will also be asked to complete a Diversity Monitoring Form as part of the process.

If you experience any issues with your online application or require any reasonable adjustments, please contact chezelle.ntim@gatenbysanderson.com

The Panel will assess your application against the criteria set out in this pack and identify those demonstrating the strongest alignment with the role. A subset of candidates will then be invited to an initial interview with GatenbySanderson to explore their skills and experience further.

Shortlisted candidates will be advised of the outcome as soon as possible thereafter.

Please note: due diligence searches will be undertaken on shortlisted candidates.

Recruitment Timetable

Role close Monday	**16th November**
Preliminary interviews with GatenbySanderson	**w/c 30th November & w/c 7th December**
Stakeholder panels and final interviews	**Early January 2027**

Enquiries

If you have any specific queries about the role not answered by this specification, please get in touch with our recruitment advisers at GatenbySanderson:

Jennie Wood, Lead Researcher: Jennie.wood@gatenbysanderson.com or Rebekah Herz-Bauman, Partner: rebekah.herz-bauman@gatenbysanderson.com

TIME COMMITMENT AND REMUNERATION

The Chair role is a voluntary appointment requiring an average commitment of 1-2 days per month, including attendance at Board meetings, committee meetings where appropriate, strategic planning sessions and ambassadorial activities on behalf of the Trust. There may be occasions where additional time is required to support specific projects, stakeholder engagement or significant organisational developments.

While this is an unpaid position, reasonable travel and other expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of the role will be reimbursed in line with the Trust's expenses policy.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We recognise that diversity in all its forms can make the Trust a better and stronger organisation. We welcome applications from people of all ages and backgrounds. We especially encourage applications from minority ethnic people, people with disabilities, younger people and LGBTQ+ people. We also seek to ensure the Board has an appropriate gender balance.