



The Bishop's Palace  
WELLS · SOMERSET

# Trustee

2021

The Bishop's Palace,  
Wells

September 2021

# About The Bishop's Palace

## Wells

Situated on the edge of the Mendip Hills in the County 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 120,000 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. In normal times, it attracts visitors from all over the world and in recent times has been 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.

# Our Purpose and Vision



## **Our Purpose**

To conserve The Bishop's Palace for future generations; welcoming all who seek a place of beauty, reflection, and enjoyment

## **Our Vision**

The Bishop's Palace – Protected forever; treasured by all

## **WHAT WE VALUE**

- Our unique site and heritage
- Our local community, supporters, and visitors
- The spiritual nature of the site
- Our relationship with the Bishops and their ministry
- Our warm, hospitable, and engaging welcome
- The quality of our offer
- Our staff and volunteers
- Our environmental impact



# Strategic Aims

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.

Today, The Palace Trust seeks to conserve The Bishop's Palace for future generations: welcoming all who seek a place of beauty, reflection and enjoyment. The charity fulfils its purpose by taking forward detailed actions that meet five strategic objectives, to:

1. Reach more and a wider range of people
2. Be a national beacon for community engagement and wellbeing
3. Realise the next phase of The Bishop's Palace development
4. Invest in a sustainable future
5. Become a centre of excellence in the field of horticulture





## 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 session four times a year but Trustees are encouraged to attend monthly 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.

To find out more about our current trustees please visit <https://bishopsalace.org.uk/info/trustees/>

## 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 are working now to implement the main recommendations of that exercise, in ways that best support our new strategic plan. Based on a skills audit of the current Board and analysis of future skills needs, we are now ready to appoint a group of new Trustees to help us move forward.

# New Trustees



We are looking to appoint up to 3 new Trustees. Trustees are now 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:

- Community Engagement
- Horticulture/ Estate Management
- Fundraising
- Heritage / funding – with a background in Interpretation
- 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 meet the criteria on the person specification.

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# 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 alternate months of the 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 hybrid meeting are supported.

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

## Qualifications and Experience

Experience in at least one of the following areas:

- Financial/ commercial development - with experience of managing/leading visitor attractions
- Community engagement -with experience in working with volunteers to build networks with wide sectors of the community, especially disadvantaged groups
- Heritage / funding - with a background in Interpretation
- Horticulture/ estate management (knowledge and experience of the challenges of maintaining /managing / promoting heritage and other property with emphasis on increasing sustainability)
- Fundraising (including sponsorship, capacity building, application for grants and other sources of income)

## Work-related Personal Qualities

- Empathy with the mission and ethos of The Palace Trust  
*Note: this includes its Christian origins and continuing place within the Church of England but candidates of all faiths or of none are equally welcomed.*
- 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

## Skills and Abilities

- 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 organisation.

Note: previous Board experience is not essential, as support, including access to training, will be provided.

## Work-related Personal Qualities cont.

- 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 part of this unique place, we would love to hear from you. Please send a cv and covering letter to Moira Anderson at [recruitment@bishoppalace.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@bishoppalace.org.uk) outlining what you could contribute to the role of Trustee and your interest in applying. We also ask applications to complete an equal opportunities form which can be found on our website.

If you would like an informal discussion about the role please contact Rosie Martin, Chief Executive on 01749 988111

In return we can offer a 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 closing date for applications is Wednesday 6th October at 5pm 2021

Interviews will be held week beginning 18 October 2021.

The Bishop's Palace is an accessible site.



### More Information

The Palace Trust is a registered Charity (1160830) 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/-/charity-details/5059055/charity-overview>