

TYNE THEATRE & OPERA HOUSE

Volunteer Trustee Recruitment Pack



Welcome from our Chief Executive

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Trustee for the Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust.

The Tyne Theatre and Opera House is a Grade I listed theatre, built in 1867 by industrialist and politician Joseph Cowen, who envisioned 'a Theatre for the People' in the West End of Newcastle. 157 years later, this remains at the heart of our ethos. We're proud to be a warm and welcoming venue, with a varied programme of events offering something for everyone.

The building is owned and preserved by the Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust and run by the subsidiary company, Tyne Theatre and Opera House Ltd. which is wholly owned by the Trust. We are an independent not-for-profit registered charity, with all profits going back into the maintenance and preservation of the building for the benefit of future generations.

Trustees support the Executive Management Team in focusing on strategy to achieve our charitable aims and are an integral part of our governance structure. Tyne Theatre and Opera House is (predominantly) a receiving house and self-funded. We are also proud to be home to Tyne Theatre Productions, Tyne Youth Company, Tyne Theatre Show Band, and Tyne Theatre Voices.

We are recognised for the quality of our shows and for our typically warm 'Geordie' welcome. The theatre is well regarded both locally and within the industry.

We hope you feel excited by this opportunity and feel encouraged to apply. Please do consider carefully your ability to devote sufficient time and effort to the role and responsibilities of a Trustee.

We look forward to reading your application.



Very best wishes,
Jonathan Higgins



Role description

Job title:

Trustee of the Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust.

Reporting to:

Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Responsible for:

Trustees are responsible for the governance of the charity under the governing documents of the trust. Management and administration are delegated to the Chief Executive and staff.

Our Trustees play a pivotal role in setting the strategic direction of the theatre as well as holding management to account; acting in the theatre's best interest and with reasonable care and skill; complying with the governing documents and the law; managing our resources responsibly, and ensuring the charity acts responsibly.

Grade: Volunteer

Liaising with: Executive Team, Board members, staff

Job purpose:

Contribute and support the charitable aims and objectives of the Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust and ancillary activities. Trustees are responsible under the governing documents of the trust.

Benefits:

The position is voluntary but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed and there will be opportunities to attend events and performances which may well be in the evenings or at weekends. Trustees also have access to our seats for a donation scheme, which enables access to events at a reduced rate.



Duties and responsibilities

As a Trustee you will:

Use any specific skills, knowledge and experience to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions. This will include the scrutiny of proposals, leading and initiating discussions, providing advice or guidance on new initiatives and utilising any specialist expertise and experience.

Chair and/or attend bodies given delegated authority by the Board, such as committees.

Participate in Trustee and Chair review processes, including giving and receiving feedback and conducting Trustee recruitment and exit interviews.

Adhere to the principles and processes set out in the Trustee Handbook and the Code of Conduct.

Accountability:

Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust is a charity registered in England, Wales and Scotland, and a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales. As such, the Board of Trustees has full legal responsibility under the Charities Act 2011 and the Companies Act 2006 and is also accountable to a variety of other stakeholders including the Information Commissioner and Fundraising Regulator.

Trustees are also Directors and Members of Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust.

BOARD MEETINGS AND TIME COMMITMENTS

The Board meets four times a year at the theatre in Newcastle and the time commitment is likely to average 1-2 days a month, including reading papers, preparation, and attendance at meetings.

Board meetings are generally held on Thursdays and last for around 3 hours.

Training, development and person specification

Whether you're an experienced Trustee or new to the role, we'll make sure you understand your responsibilities and are confident you're doing the right thing for our charity. Your training follows the Charity Commission guidance and offers a 'core syllabus' covering the basics of charity governance that all Trustees should be familiar with. We work proactively with Trustees to support them in their role.

KEY RELATIONSHIPS

- Chief Executive and Executive Management team
- Chair of the Board
- Company Secretary and Treasurer
- Other Trustees and Directors of the operating company

We want to broaden our Board's skills base, knowledge and networks. We are seeking people who can help us think long term and strategically as well as motivate, support and challenge us as we move ahead. To complement the skills and experience of our existing Board, we are particularly interested in candidates who have a background or expertise in some of the following areas:

- **Chartered surveying**
- **Project management**
- **Project design / procurement**

Whilst we are principally looking for candidates with the skills detailed above, other areas of expertise relevant to the effective management of the Trust may also be considered:

- Fundraising
- Data and IT
- Sustainability
- HR, training and onward development

YOU WILL HAVE:

- A passion for theatre
- A commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Integrity and good judgement
- A collaborative approach to working, proactivity, a willingness to offer constructive challenge and support collective decisions
- Good listening skills and an openness to other views and feedback on own contribution
- Ability to analyse and evaluate management information and other evidence
- Excellent communication skills, and an ability to persuade and influence to promote the interests of the charity
- Experience in monitoring and assessing financial controls to ensure the theatre is operating within appropriate levels of risk
- Assessing and monitoring the business plans for future building developments
- Knowledge and experience relating to charity law and governance

Scope of future works

The auditorium

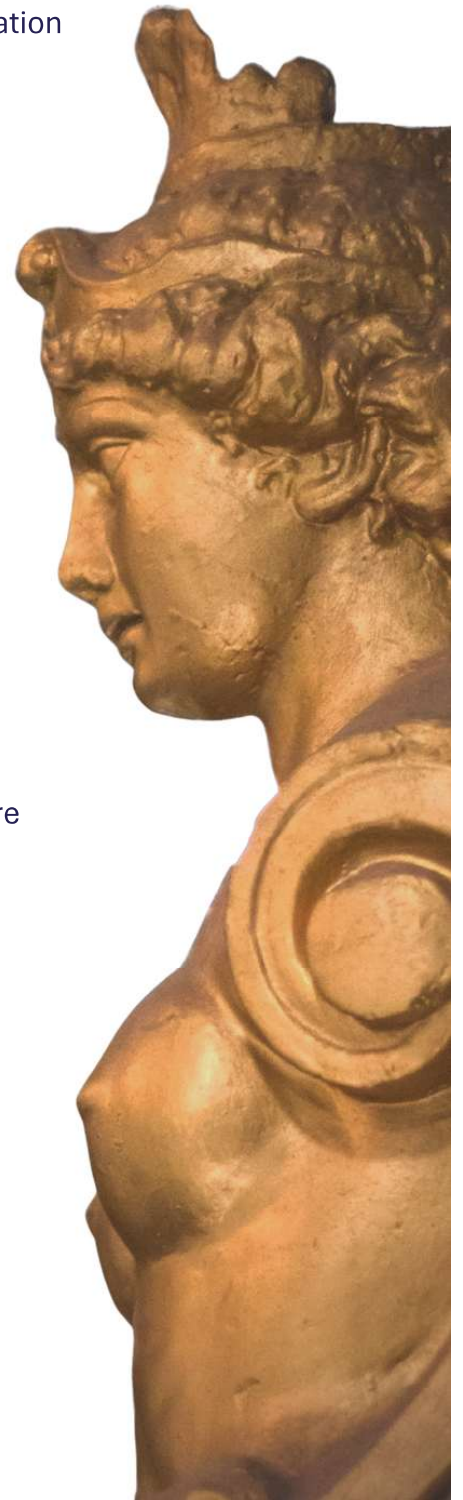
The main auditorium of the Theatre has had little capital investment since the fire of 1985. Our recent project to re-seat and restore the Gallery has already started the work of bringing the original layout and colour scheme back.

Whilst delightful and historic, the auditorium decor is very tired - once described by John Gielgud as "tattered magnificence". The decoration is not the only aspect of the auditorium in need of upgrading, as the space can be uncomfortable, inaccessible, and difficult. We must respond in a manner empathetic to the 21st century.

We plan on using a significant amount of community engagement, which has already been trialled during our Gallery restoration project. Specialist decorative techniques will be taught by experts as we work through the many levels and restore the auditorium back to its 1901 state. The year 1901 was when the Theatre Royal Newcastle re-opened after its auditorium was destroyed in a fire. The Tyne Theatre & Opera House auditorium was significantly redecorated then as well.

The stage machinery

We will also complete the final phase of the historic stage machinery restoration project. Since we received a grant to restore some of the machinery in 2022, we have retained the services of our Master Carpenter who has continued to work with our team of Volunteers on re-commissioning much of the equipment. This final stage of work will complete a project first begun in 1986 after the fire, and once finished will represent the most complete example of this kind of stage machinery anywhere in the world. This is what makes our Theatre very special and different from all the rest.



Westgate Music Hall restoration - Phase 2

Volume and access

The creation of a new venue while the theatre remains operative is a complex puzzle and will be delivered in carefully planned stages. First, separating walls will be removed to reveal the original volume of the space. The space will have a flat floor, with a restored datum on Westgate Road level for improved access into both the new venue and the theatre. We will also introduce lift access to the cellar levels below.

The stage and proscenium

We will restore the surviving stage of the Westgate Music Hall (the only remaining nineteenth century music hall in Newcastle), which currently has toilets and a bar built on top of it. We also want to re-connect the stage to the main house stage by opening up the wall between them, which has been bricked up since 1919. The bricks will be then recycled and put back where they were removed from - a proscenium wall for the Westgate Music Hall.

Pit Bar and cellars

A less glamorous but nevertheless vital piece of the project is to restore the subterranean spaces, which have been out of the public domain for over 20 years. In doing this we will create new much needed community facilities, as well as relocate the toilets and bar cellar space, which we will lose in the restoration of the stage. The underground bar area has gone by several names in the past, but historically known as the “Pit Bar” - a name derived from the area of benches in the rear Stalls, originally known as the Pit, which connected with the cellar bar with a staircase.

Back of House and Front of House

The Theatre’s ongoing improvements to guest and visitor experience will also continue. The Preservation Trust is investing in restoring the Gallery toilets to a high standard in 2026, and other toilets, hospitality areas, and dressing rooms will follow suit.



Schedule

The project will be spread over four financial years, with two slightly extended summer closures so as not to incur a significant loss of earnings and audiences. Events can be programmed around the work schedule, and the large footprint of the whole site allows the Theatre to minimise business interruption.

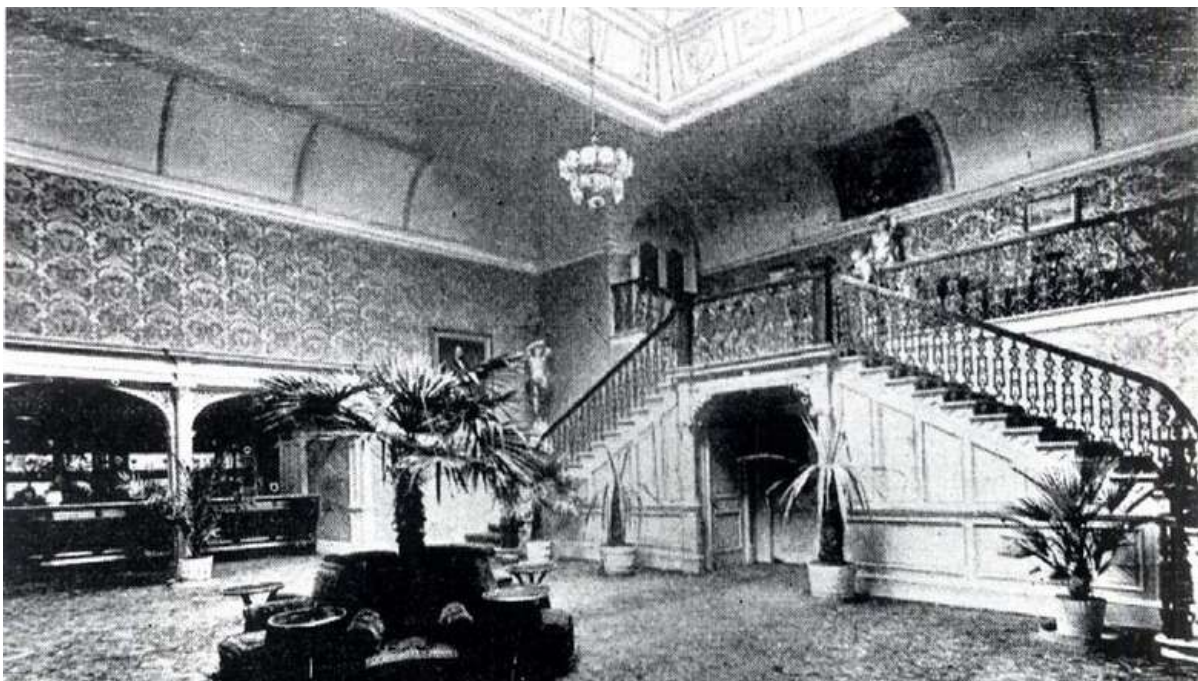
Pit Bar and cellars

The Pit Bar and cellars area has to be refurbished first to provide facilities, before we can demolish the toilets and the bar which were built on the Westgate Music Hall stage. Once this has been done we can restore the connection between the two stages and use the recycled bricks to reconstruct the proscenium wall.

Westgate Music Hall restoration

Then we can start working on the reclamation and restoration of the new auditorium and the historic stage. This will close the theatre's main bar, during which time the use of pop-up bars and seat delivery service for refreshments will be necessary.

Whilst the new venue works are going on, we can restore the main auditorium and the stage machinery throughout the whole capital programme.



The Grand Saloon ca. 1895

Funding

The National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded development funding of £556,793 to the Trust which will enable the us to develop a detailed application for a full £5 million grant in the next stage of the process. The total project budget will be in the region of £7.2m, when match funding from the Trust is taken into account.

Business plan

To support sustainable development, we have produced a business plan that sets out a coherent 10-year strategy that brings together capital transformation, organisational strengthening, and an expanded community programme, which will protect irreplaceable heritage while widening cultural participation across Newcastle.

Fundraising strategy

The project will also be supported by a new revised fundraising strategy, which will aim to strengthen the existing fundraising schemes, expand on legacy giving and corporate sponsorship strands, and bring in additional funding from other grant-giving trusts and foundations.

By 2035, Tyne Theatre & Opera House will be:

- Conserved and safeguarded for the next 50 years
- Fully step free, welcoming disabled audiences, families, and older adults
- A thriving community and heritage hub, supporting inclusive, co-created activity
- Financially resilient, with diversified income and strengthened reserves
- A key civic anchor, contributing to Newcastle's cultural identity, wellbeing and local economy.



How to apply

Please email Riikka Heiskanen at riikka.heiskanen@ttoh.uk to arrange an initial informal chat before submitting your CV with covering letter.

Candidates should be available to attend a tour of the theatre with an opportunity to ask questions and meet with the Executive Team over a coffee prior to applying.

Interviews to be conducted during September 2026
Closing date for applications is 31 August 2026

Ideally candidates will attend the November Board meeting (as an observer) with a view to starting the role in January 2027.

We are committed to a diverse and inclusive board, and we actively encourage applications from groups underrepresented in sector leadership, particularly people with disabilities and from the global majority. We also encourage applications from all age groups.

