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**Royal School of Needlework Background**

Established in 1872, the RSN is the international centre of excellence in the art of hand embroidery. We offer courses from Degree level (the only degree programme solely focused on hand embroidery), technical courses at Certificate and Diploma level, the Future Tutor programme, which is the route to becoming an RSN Tutor, through to leisure short courses. We operate a Studio which undertakes commissions for conservation, restoration and the creation of new pieces for individuals, the church, the military and the Royal Family. The RSN has a shop for stitching accoutrements, books and kits

The RSN also has an extensive Textile Collection and Archive, these form the basis of exhibitions and talks. Since 2020 we have pivoted the organisation to offer courses and talks online, reaching a worldwide audience. This will culminate in the first online International Summer School in July 2021 operating across three time zones.

Graduates of the Degree and Future Tutor courses have gone on to be featured in awards, publications and exhibitions internationally including winners of the prestigious Hand and Lock award for textile art in 2017, 2018 and 2020.

Although a heritage brand, the RSN is forward looking and seeking to build new opportunities and links in 2022, its 150th anniversary year. We have a comparatively small staff team who are hugely dedicated to the cause.

**Trustees sought in 2021**

As a result of natural turnover, we are seeking three new trustees through 2021. We seek one who has a Curatorial or Archives background. The RSN has a textile collection of over 4000 items and an Archive of thousands of design plus manuscript books and many other materials from our history. Our aim is to raise the money to catalogue the items, digitise and conserve them so that more people may have access to them.

We also seek two people with commercial financial backgrounds who also understand investments. The RSN has many income streams and a complex set up for a comparatively small organisation.

 We have taken the decision to advertise these roles externally to endeavour to broaden the reach for more diverse applicants. We welcome applications from all suitably qualified individuals.

**Trustee Specification and role**

As a non-profit organisation, the role of the Trustee is very important for the RSN. The Council of Trustees is the governing body who have powers of scrutiny and overview of the activities of the RSN as well as agreeing its strategic direction.

The Council comprises

The Chairman

The Hon Treasurer

Up to 12 Council members

The Council meets 6 times a year usually in February, April, June, July/Aug, October and December

As well as the Council there is a Finance and Investment Committee which comprises the Hon Treasurer, the Chairman and up to three members of Council.

The Charities Act 2011 defines charity trustees as those responsible under the charity’s governing document for controlling the administration and management of the charity. The role of the trustee board is to receive assets from donors, safeguard them and apply them to the charitable purposes of the RSN. The trustee board must always act in the best interests of the RSN, exercising the same standard of duty of care that a prudent person would apply if looking after the affairs of someone for whom they have responsibility. The Council must act as a group and not as individuals.

In addition to being a registered charity the RSN is also a company limited by shares and all trustees are shareholders. There are a maximum of 29 shareholders at any time. The payment is £10; this is not returned. There is no financial benefit of share ownership to the individual.

**Duties of a trustee board member**

The RSN takes good governance seriously. The statutory duties of a trustee board member are to:

* Ensure that the RSN complies with its governing document (its Articles of Association\*), charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation of regulations
* Ensure that the RSN pursues its objects as defined by its governing document
* Ensure the RSN applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects.
* Contribute actively to the Council of Trustees by giving strategic direction to the RSN, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets
* Safeguard the reputation and values of the RSN
* Ensure the financial stability of the RSN.

(\*We last had the Articles of Association looked at professionally in 2019 when the Office for Students requested the specific addition of a freedom of speech article )

In addition, each trustee should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the board of trustees reach sound decisions and where appropriate provide advice and guidance on new initiatives or other areas where the trustee has specific expertise.

As part of good governance, every two-three years we undertake a skills audit to ensure the charity has on board the skill support it will need going forward.

The Chairman meets with each trustee individually every two years to ensure they have a chance to review their contribution.

Each year all trustees are asked to contribute to the evaluation of the Chairman and the Chief Executive

This is a voluntary role and trustees receive no remuneration. Reasonable expenses can be claimed, based on the pertaining expenses policy, for attendance at board meetings and other events necessary for the fulfilment of their trustee’s duties.

**Time Commitment**

The Council meets five times a year for half a day, midweek and a further full day which comprises Council meeting and away day for strategic planning and review. These meetings take place at Hampton Court and Trustees are always invited to stay for a light lunch to meet with senior managers.

In addition, trustees are encouraged to attend at least one of the usual end of term shows (there are up to three opportunities to see degree work and one to see Future Tutor and Certificate and Diploma work).

The Finance and Investment Committee meets four times a year for two hours a time midweek in central London.

New trustees will receive a full induction with opportunities to meet all departments, whether in person or online as well as learning about the strategic plan implementation and financial plans

Trustees are expected to attend all board meetings. Papers are usually distributed about five days in advance of the meeting and can be sent in paper format or via email.

Over the last year, all meetings have been held online, with papers circulated electronically. It is hoped, however, that we can return to physical meetings at some point in the near future at least for the Council meetings as this gives the best opportunity for being able to catch up with staff and see the departments at work.

**Person specification**

Each trustee must have

* A commitment to the mission of the RSN
* A willingness to meet the minimum time requirement
* Integrity
* Strategic Vision
* Good independent judgement
* An ability to think creatively
* A willingness to speak their mind
* An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
* An ability to work effectively as part of a team and to take decisions for the good of the RSN

Further information about the role of a trustee can be found in the Charity Commission publication *The Essential Trustee*- What you need to know which can be found on the Charity Commission website https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3

To enquire further about these roles please contact the Chief Executive, Dr Susan Kay-Williams on 07940 177218,

To apply please send a CV and covering letter explaining what you could bring to this role and why you would like to be a trustee to: The Chairman, Mr Andrew Palmer email to susan.kay-williams@royal-needlework.org.uk