



Chair of Arts Council England

January 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
About Arts Council England	4
Role description	5
How Arts Council England is governed	9

Introduction

The Secretary of State is seeking to appoint the new Chair of Arts Council England's non-executive board.

Introduction from Rt Hon Ian Murray MP Minister of State for Creative Industries, Media and Arts



Culture enriches the lives we lead and has a vital role to play in the sustainable growth of our economy. The Arts Council is the most significant single actor in supporting and shaping

England's creative landscape and cultural economy.

We are looking for an exceptional individual to lead the Board of Arts Council England as its next Chair. This is one of the most significant and visible roles in British public life. You will be joining the organisation at a critical time with the recent publication of the independent review of Arts Council England by Baroness Margaret Hodge.

As Chair, you will be a passionate advocate for the cultural sector, making the case for its vital contribution to our economic growth and social wellbeing. You will provide strategic leadership to the National Council, holding the

Executive to account while supporting them to navigate a complex landscape. We need a leader who can balance the need for rigorous governance and public value while pushing forward an ambitious strategic vision and advocating for organisations across the arts and cultural sector.

The Government is committed to breaking down barriers to opportunity and ensuring our public bodies represent the people they serve. I strongly encourage applications from individuals with a wide range of experiences and backgrounds – whether from the arts and cultural sectors, the wider creative industries, or other fields of business and public service. What matters most is your commitment to the power of culture to transform lives and your ability to lead with integrity, strategic foresight and inclusiveness.

If you have the vision to guide Arts Council England into its next chapter and the drive to champion our creative nation, I hope you will submit an application.

Rt Hon Ian Murray MP

Free Your Mind – Factory International. Photo © Tristram Kenton



About Arts Council England

Arts Council England champions creativity and culture across the country. It develops talent and supports artists, arts organisations, museums and libraries to create, curate and present high quality and ambitious work in villages, towns and cities across England. The Arts Council's work is guided by the principle that everyone, no matter where they live, who they are or what their background, should have the chances and choices that can allow them to explore and develop a rich creative and cultural life. It does this by making sure that there is greater access to the very best in arts and culture in more places.

The Arts Council believes that access to excellent creativity and culture not only inspires us, but brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us, helping us feel proud of the villages, towns and cities we live in. In short, creative activities and cultural experiences make life better.

It supports a wide range of different disciplines: combined arts, dance, libraries, literature, museums, music, theatre, visual art, and digital arts. Through a range of funds, the Arts Council provides investment over the short, medium and long-term for individual artists, arts organisations, museums, and libraries.

Haringey Music – Royal Albert Hall Youth Orchestra – strings – © John Behets 2025



Role description

The Chair will be a leader with a proven track record who has strong knowledge of and a genuine passion for the arts, museums and libraries. Candidates should be highly skilled communicators and effective advocates for the Arts Council and cultural sector, to a wide range of stakeholders including internationally. The Chair should have a sound understanding of how Government operates and be confident engaging Parliament and Ministers.

The successful candidate must be prepared to champion creativity and culture in all parts of the country, working to ensure that citizens are at the heart of Arts Council's decisions. The Chair will also lead on the development of the Council's post-2030 Strategy.

They will also commit to working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to explore and implement the Government and Arts Council responses to the Independent Review of Arts Council England; spearheading

transformation through positive leadership and organisational change and advocating for organisations across the arts and cultural sector.

Beyond these areas, the successful candidate will be passionate about the role the Creative Industries play in delivering economic growth, as well as being a powerful advocate for an arts and culture sector which is accessible to everyone everywhere, with excellence at its heart.

They will be aware of the need to enable creative people and cultural communities to succeed across England, whether that is in areas where Arts Council England have an established presence as a development agency or where their influence is still growing. The successful candidate will also understand the possibilities open to Arts Council England for new and innovative forms of investment, and the opportunities the Government's devolution agenda may bring.



Key Responsibilities of the Arts Council England Chair

Leadership & Governance:

- Lead a prominent national organisation through transformation, ensuring that change is delivered and embedded successfully.
- Ensure National Council members effectively fulfil their governance duties and maximise impact.
- Maintain a clear understanding and commitment to the Council's arm's-length operation from the Government.
- Be accountable to the Secretary of State and Parliament for Art Council England's work.

Strategy & Policy Oversight:

- Provide decisions, advice, counsel and support to the Executive on advocacy, policy and strategy.
- Support and challenge the Executive and Accounting Officer to ensure efficient and effective resource utilisation.
- Possess a sound appreciation for balancing national overview, strategy and policy with local presence and delivery.

Stakeholder Relations & Advocacy:

- Collaborate with the Government to ensure effective delivery of its priorities.
- Advocate for the Arts Council and wider cultural sector with senior policymakers, elected mayors, local government, MPs, and the media, as well as other key stakeholders domestic and international.

The chair is bound by the [Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies](#), which covers your conduct in the role and includes the [Nolan Principles of Public Life](#).

Location:

Meetings generally take place in our Birmingham office, though may periodically be scheduled at other locations around the country, with at least one meeting each year in our headquarters in Manchester.

Time commitment:

Two days per week

Remuneration:

£60,000 pa

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Photo Pamela Raith © RSC



Board Composition

Arts Council England is an independent charity, registered with the Charity Commission, as well as an arm's-length non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Council is established as a distributor of National Lottery funds under The National Lottery Act 1993.

The National Council

National Council is the main governing body, or non-executive board. National Council members are also the trustees of the charity.

It consists of 15 members, including the Chair and the five Area Council Chairs. The Council membership also has finance and management expertise from both the public and private sector, as well as creative and cultural practitioners and managers.

Joining the National Council

Creative professionals, arts organisations, museums and libraries contribute to people's joy and wellbeing; they drive local economies; and they maintain our international reputation as a nation of innovators. As Chair of Arts Council England's National Council, you will

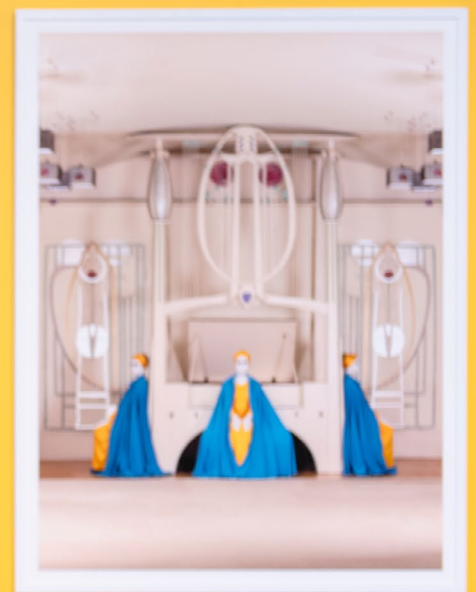
play a significant role in shaping the future of our national cultural life.

As Chair, you will gain a unique perspective on the wide-ranging benefits of arts and culture and deepen your understanding of the sector's national contribution: the high-quality jobs that Arts Council England's investment and development work helps create, and the many economic benefits of its work. You will also see firsthand the direct impact of this work on the lives of individuals and the health of communities around the country.

Creativity and culture have always been one of our nation's greatest strengths and most powerful assets, and the Arts Council will continue to act as a champion for all that all those working in England's creative and cultural sector do internationally.

Arts Council England has embraced its role in promoting the importance of cultural education for young people, and the social and economic benefits of encouraging lifelong participation for everyone. Taking part in creative activities and enjoying cultural experiences has a measurable impact on health and wellbeing. It allows us to express ourselves by drawing on our own

Installation of Nationhood Memory and Hope at Impressions Gallery (C) Faye Hatton 2025



experiences and perspectives to build better understanding between each other and create a stronger sense of community making us proud of the place we live.

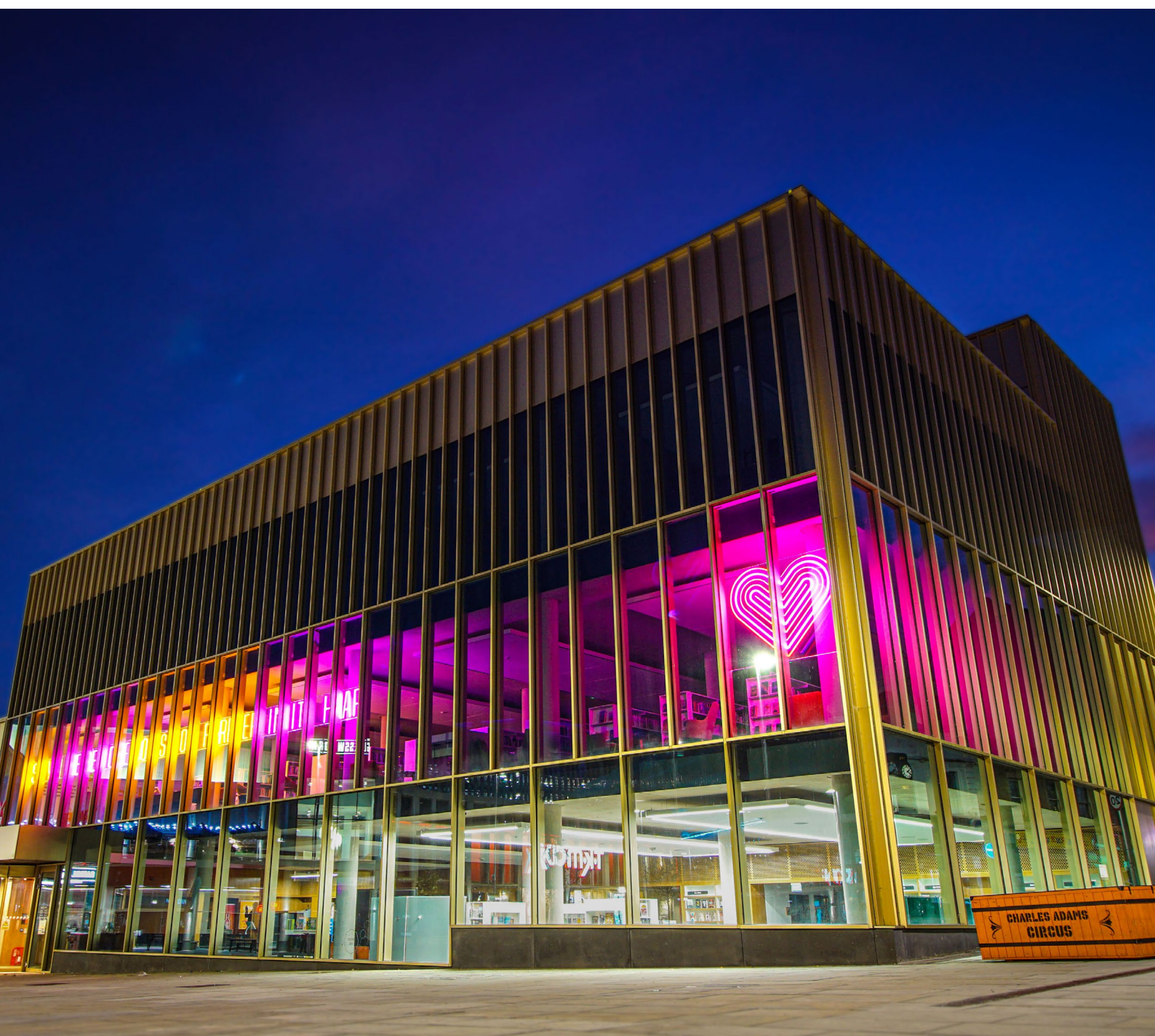
The Arts Council is confident about the role arts and culture can play in creating a better world for all of us. In this role, you will have the chance to carry that optimism into a new era for the organisation; to build on the strong relationships it has developed with stakeholders, and to further grow the resilience of the sector and its approach to identifying new funding streams.

The work of Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the development agency for creativity and culture in England. It champions, develops and invests in creative activities and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. The Arts Council supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.

The Arts Council is currently preparing its response to the recommendations of the Independent Review by Baroness Margaret Hodge, which will shape its future operation and strategic goals.

Barnsley Library @ the Lightbox Photo © Barnsley Library



How Arts Council England is governed

National Council

The National Council is Arts Council England's main governing body, or non-executive board. National Council members are also the trustees of the charity.

National Council is currently supported by five Area Councils which advise it on and promote the work of the Arts Council in the five English regions: London, the South East, South West, Midlands and the North.

Together all Area Councils fulfil a similar role – ensuring that the work of the Arts Council continues to be informed by a diverse range of perspectives from artists, arts organisations, museums, libraries, local authorities and other key stakeholders across the country. Chairs of each Area Council also serve as members of the National Council.

Peace at Last, OperaUpClose. Photo © Marc Gascoigne



The role of the Council

The role of the Arts Council's National Council is to:

- determine and uphold Arts Council England's mission and objectives
- be accountable to the Secretary of State for fiduciary matters and delivering the charitable objectives
- agree high level priorities and strategies
- approve Arts Council England's Grant-in-Aid and National Lottery accounts
- monitor delivery of Arts Council England's strategy against stated priorities
- advocate for the arts and culture

Collectively the Council is expected to embody:

- artists, arts and culture practitioners and managers
- finance and management expertise, public and private sector experience
- the Chairs of the Area Councils

The Arts Council is strongly committed to building a more diverse council. Its ability to represent England's diverse national identity and include a range of voices is key to ensuring that the Arts Council's programmes meet the creative and cultural needs of everyone.

The Executive Board

National Council is supported by an executive leadership team, which is led by Darren Henley, the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer. Darren Henley leads an Executive Board which includes two Deputy Chief Executives and four other Executive Directors. The Arts Council's Executive Board is responsible for developing the long-term strategy of the Arts Council and for the day-to-day running of the organisation. Further details about the Executive Board are available on the [Arts Council website](#).

Criteria

Essential Criteria

- **Leadership:** the ability to set strategic vision and drive forward priorities of Arts Council England, with a strong track record in relevant senior leadership roles.

- **Experience:** a strong track record of delivery on significant policy issues within the private, public or voluntary sectors, including navigating significant change or innovation.
- **Knowledge:** a clear understanding of the work, priorities and challenges of Arts Council England and the context within which it operates; and demonstrable expertise of the cultural sector.
- **Judgement:** effective decision-making skills with the ability to critically analyse a wide range of information to make clear and objective evidence-based recommendations to support the delivery of Arts Council England's objectives.
- **Relationship building:** ability to work closely with the executive board and build strong stakeholder relationships, including with Ministers and Senior Government officials and across the cultural sector.
- **Communication:** excellent communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to listen, accept challenge and constructively challenge others in discussions with clarity and respect.
- A demonstrable commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion, both at senior and organisational level, ensuring an inclusive culture is felt by all within the organisation; as well as factoring nationwide perspectives into all decision making.

The successful candidate must also demonstrate their commitment to working with the Department to implement the Government and Arts Council responses to the Independent Review of Arts Council England.

Desirable Criteria

- Experience as a Non-Executive Chair of an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), cultural or creative industries organisation, large Charity or Public Body.

How to apply

In order to apply you will need to create an account or sign in to the [HM Government Public Appointments website](#)

Once you are logged into your account, click on 'apply for this role' and follow the on-screen instructions. To apply, all candidates are required to provide:

- equality information
- information relating to any outside interests or reputational issues
- a Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- a supporting statement
- a short professional biography (150 words)

We will ask you to check and confirm your personal details to ensure your application is accurate.

You will also have the opportunity to make a reasonable adjustment request or apply under the disability confident scheme before you submit your application.

For full details please see the advert on the [HM Government Public Appointments website](#)

Les Girafes in Bradford by Sherman Rabbit. Photo © Patrycja Maziarz

