

IF Oxford

Trustee Recruitment 2026

IF Oxford is seeking up to three new trustees to join its board, with the expectation that one will develop into a future chair of the charity.

This document contains the full role description and recruitment information; also available here: <https://if-oxford.com/trustees>

At a glance:

Organisation: Oxfordshire Science Festival (IF Oxford) — registered charity no. 1151361

Role: Trustee (volunteer), with a leadership pathway to chair

Responsibility: Development and oversight for a charity that delivers IF Oxford, an annual collection of 100+ events and activities across dozens of venues in Oxford and beyond in October

Remuneration: Voluntary and unpaid. Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses reimbursed by agreement.

Time commitment: Approximately 8 days per year

Meetings: Typically 4–8 per year, online and in person

Board: Currently 7 trustees plus the Festival Director (CEO)

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1. About IF Oxford

IF Oxford is the science and ideas Festival in Oxford and its region — one of the UK's oldest science festivals, running continuously since 1992. It is produced by Oxfordshire Science Festival (charity no. 1151361), an independent charity with no institutional parent and no endowment.

IF Oxford is built on the belief that science and ideas belong to everyone. The programme connects topics, disciplines and communities — from cutting-edge research to everyday experience — and actively seeks the widest possible range of voices, perspectives, audiences and curiosity.

Each October, 80–150 events and activities take place across 25–45 venues in Oxfordshire, engaging tens of thousands of people. In 2025, the Festival engaged 33,000 people through 85 events, with 630 contributors and audience satisfaction consistently above 95%. Around a quarter of visitors are aged 8–14 (Key Stages 2–3); one in five have never attended a science event before.

See IF Oxford Programmes and Output and Impact Reports: if-oxford.com/past-festivals

IF Oxford is a member of the UK Science Festival Network and of the Oxford Cultural Anti-racism Alliance, alongside 25+ cultural organisations across the city; <https://oxcultureantiracism.com>

The Festival is governed by a Board of Trustees and led by a full-time Festival Director (CEO), working with a wider network of freelancers, volunteers and partners.



2. Why we are recruiting

We are seeking up to three new trustees to join our board, with the expectation that one will develop into a future chair. Our current chair, Ian Thompson, who has led the board since 2017 and stewarded the charity through significant change, will step back from the chair at the 2026 AGM — while continuing as a trustee. We are building the board deliberately and thoughtfully for the next chapter.

This is also an opportunity to consider how new trustees can strengthen the board's connections across the wider Festival ecosystem — bringing relationships, networks and perspectives that deepen IF Oxford's reach and impact.

This is a genuine opportunity to shape the future of one of Oxfordshire's most distinctive cultural assets — and to do so as part of a skilled, committed and collegial board.

3. About the role

Trustees of IF Oxford carry the standard legal duties of charity trustees: acting in the best interests of the charity, protecting its assets, ensuring compliance with charity law and the governing document, and contributing to sound financial stewardship.

Full details are at if-oxford.com/trustee-policy and on the Charity Commission website gov.uk/become-charity-trustee.

In practice, trusteeship at IF Oxford means more than governance. It means bringing your networks, your experience and your enthusiasm to bear on a festival that genuinely matters to its community. Trustees act as ambassadors, advisers and advocates — supporting the Festival Director (CEO) in building relationships, securing income and strengthening the festival's position across the Oxford and Oxfordshire ecosystem. The Festival Director currently operates without a permanent management team, making the board's active support and strategic partnership particularly valuable.

The board currently comprises seven trustees and the Festival Director (CEO), working with a wider network of freelancers, volunteers and partners. Trustees work collaboratively, with collective decision-making and a culture of open, constructive discussion.

4. Key responsibilities

Governance and compliance

To contribute to effective board leadership, ensuring IF Oxford operates within charity law and its governing document. To attend and actively participate in board meetings — typically four to eight per year, a mix of online and in person — bringing constructive challenge and collective judgement to strategic decisions. To ensure the board maintains appropriate skills, diversity and succession planning.

Strategic leadership

To support and challenge the Festival Director (CEO) in developing and delivering short, medium and long-term strategy. To help ensure the charity is financially viable, legally compliant and mission-focused. To monitor that board decisions are implemented effectively.

Ambassador and advocate

To act as an ambassador for IF Oxford, representing the charity at events, meetings and with key stakeholders. To use your personal and professional network to support the Festival Director (CEO) in building relationships and pursuing funding opportunities. Strong networks within STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine), SHAPE (social sciences, humanities and the arts), NGO, educational, research or cultural communities in Oxfordshire and beyond are particularly valuable.

Support to the Festival Director (CEO)

To provide regular contact between meetings and act as a sounding board on strategic, operational and staffing matters. To assist with financial planning and budget oversight. To contribute to HR matters as they arise.

Board administration

To prepare for and attend board meetings. To contribute to the annual Trustees' Report included in the charity's financial statements.

5. Person profile

The board maintains a skills matrix and will refer to it in selecting new trustees. We are not looking for a single type of person or background — we are looking for the right combination of qualities, experience and commitment across the board as a whole.

Essential

- Commitment to IF Oxford's mission and values — public engagement with science and ideas, in all their complexity, for everyone.
- Experience of leadership at board or senior organisational level, with the ability to think and act strategically.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills, and the ability to build positive relationships with a wide range of people.
- Understanding of governance, fiduciary responsibility and the duties of a charity trustee.
- A background in one or more of: STEM, arts and culture, education, business, public policy, community engagement or the wider Oxford and Oxfordshire innovation ecosystem. STEM expertise is welcome; so is deep knowledge of arts and culture, and sensitivity to political, social and cultural issues. We are not looking for a single type of experience.

Desirable

- Experience in the charity or public sector.
- Knowledge of finance, fundraising, legal frameworks or business development.
- Experience of marketing, public relations or public engagement.
- A strong personal network in Oxfordshire's STEM, SHAPE, NGO, educational infrastructure, research or cultural communities.
- Experience of operating across disciplines or communities — comfortable connecting ideas, people and organisations that don't always talk to each other.

The right values

We are looking for people who believe that curiosity is a public good; that science and ideas belong to everyone; and that a great festival is built on trust, openness and the honest pursuit of knowledge. You do not need to be a scientist or engineer. You do need to care.



6. Time commitment and remuneration

Trustees typically attend four to eight board meetings per year — a mix of online and in person — with preparation time for each. A presence at Festival events during October is warmly welcomed. Regular contact with the Festival Director (CEO) takes place between meetings. Occasional representation at events or external meetings may be requested.

Total estimated commitment: Approximately 8 days per year

Remuneration: Voluntary and unpaid

Trustees are entitled to claim reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out their duties — including travel, accommodation and care costs, by agreement. Expenses are not a form of trustee payment; they are a reimbursement of costs properly incurred in performing the role, in line with Charity Commission guidance (CC11).

7. What IF Oxford offers you

A meaningful role at the heart of one of Oxfordshire's most distinctive and genuinely independent cultural institutions. A skilled, committed and collegial board. The chance to engage with one of the UK's most distinctive independent science festivals, and to play a genuine part in shaping its future.

You will join a charity that has delivered 34+ years of public engagement with science and ideas; that reaches into communities across the region; and that is genuinely independent — beholden to no institution, no funder and no single agenda.

8. How to express your interest

Please send a brief expression of interest — no more than one page — describing your interest in the role and how your experience and networks align with what we are looking for. There is no formal application form.

Enquiries and expressions of interest: trustee@if-oxford.com

Festival Director (CEO): Dane Comerford — dane@if-oxford.com

Full trustee policy: if-oxford.com/trustee-policy

Full details: if-oxford.com/trustees

Informal enquiries are very welcome. Please do not hesitate to get in touch before submitting your expression of interest.

Next steps

A conversation with the Festival Director (CEO) and with the Chair of Trustees.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

IF Oxford is committed to treating all volunteers, partners and applicants equally and fairly. We welcome expressions of interest from all backgrounds, disciplines and communities, and particularly encourage interest from people whose perspectives are currently under-represented on our board. IF Oxford is a member of the Oxford Cultural Anti-racism Alliance and holds Disability Confident Committed status.

All disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria will be offered an interview under the Disability Confident (Committed) scheme, in line with the Equalities Act 2010. Only applicants with a legal right to work in the UK will be considered. As part of the recruitment process your data will be collected and processed in accordance with IF Oxford's Data Management Policy: if-oxford.com/about/policies/data-management-policy

IF Oxford Ltd is a company limited by guarantee (no. 7189165) and a registered charity (no. 1151361) in England and Wales.

Past Festival Programmes and Reports if-oxford.com/past-festivals

