

# BISHOPSGATE INSTITUTE

Candidate Information Pack,  
Chair of Trustees 2024





## **Welcome from our CEO, Francesca Canty**

Bishopsgate Institute is a very special place. Since I joined in December 2012 I've been inspired by our motto "I never stop learning", which I hope resonates with you too.

The Institute was built in 1894 to provide space and opportunity for people to come together, share and explore. Today the core of our mission and public benefit remains our special collections and archives, which document and celebrate the extraordinary lives of everyday people, including the largest LGBTQIA+ archive in the UK.

We share our collections through curated events, courses and workshops, and anyone can come in and look at our material for free. You will also find items from our collections in exhibitions as varied as The Cult of Beauty at Wellcome Collection, Women In Revolt at Tate Britain, and Radical Landscapes: Art Inspired by the Land at the William Morris Gallery.

Our two In Residence companies are the London Musical Theatre Orchestra and Swing Patrol London and we are the home of equality dance, previously known as same-sex dance. The Institute proudly co-hosts regular The Pink Jukebox and Queer Tango London events and the annual Pink Dancers' Ball and Pink Jukebox Trophy competition.

In the past we have delivered a rich learning programme for adults. This included skills development and incubation of early-career creatives, study days and whole building take-over events, and the kind of lifelong learning study and mindfulness opportunities that yoga, photography, creative writing and dance can bring.

Much of our programme is currently paused, while we rethink the business model that sustained the Institute until the pandemic. Our stunning nineteenth-century building requires love and attention, and it's this building that provides a base and home for the communities we serve. I enjoy how unlikely it might seem that such a Victorian arts and crafts edifice surrounded by towers of glass housing bankers and lawyers is in fact a hotbed of radical collections and celebration, but we still need to keep the lights on and the toilets working.

We're a very small organisation, and our Trustees and staff team are passionate, feisty, highly skilled and collaborative. You'll fit right in if you're inspired by what the Institute does and could do, and by supporting colleagues across the organisation and Board as we plan for recovery and the next 130 years of Bishopsgate Institute.





Ben Ferguson conducts the Sitz of Ragtime, 2016. © Asya Gefter

## About Bishopsgate Institute

For 130 years, Bishopsgate Institute has been a cultural hub for the people of London to come together and learn in extraordinary spaces.

Our beautiful historic building is home to our thought-provoking archives, which celebrate the stories of everyday people who have strived for social, political, and cultural change.

We are a home for ideas and debate, learning and enquiry. We are a haven in the City, where culture, heritage and learning meet. We are open to all, and we are a vibrant, curious community. Our motto is "I never stop learning".

Our spaces are also available to hire for meetings, rehearsals, filming and events of any scale. Each of our spaces has a different character, from our Great Hall (which can host dance events and conferences for up to 500 people), to our traditional Boardroom and secluded library.

We are in an easy-to-reach location in one of London's most dynamic areas, just two minutes' walk away from both Liverpool Street station (and the Square Mile) and Spitalfields Market (and the Shoreditch cultural quarter).

## **Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion**

Inclusion is at the core of our work as we celebrate the stories of people who are often ignored or even marginalised by the mainstream. Bishopsgate Institute is committed to creating an inclusive organisation, where diverse experiences, approaches and views are valued, encouraged and welcomed. We want everyone in our community to know they are heard and belong.

Bishopsgate Institute is committed to championing equality, diversity and inclusion, through our archives, how we recruit, and how we collaborate to deliver our public benefit. We are working towards eliminating all forms of discrimination in order to create a place where diverse opinion and mutual respect genuinely underpin our culture. We aim for our workforce and Board to be truly representative of all sections of society and for everyone at Bishopsgate Institute to feel respected and able to give their best.

We are deeply committed to inclusive working practices, so during the application process we commit to:

- Paying for childcare and care costs whilst you are at interviews.
- Paying for your travel costs to the office and back for interviews.
- Making any reasonable adjustments – for example ensuring we have a sign language interpreter organised in advance if you'd like them.
- Providing this document in a Word document format readily available to download.
- Offering a guaranteed first stage interview with Inclusive Boards for disabled candidates who meet the minimum requirements for the role.

If there is anything else you are concerned about or think we could provide, please let us know.





## About the role

We are seeking our next Chair of Trustees to take up the role formally in December 2024. The successful candidate will become a Trustee at our October Board, with our current Chair, Nigel Pantling, handing over the Chair role at the end of the December Board meeting.

In these immensely challenging times for charities, culture and heritage organisations — and all of us — Bishopsgate Institute is not alone in grappling with significant financial challenges. Although we are privileged to have a permanent endowment, which exists to ensure the charity can continue to fulfil its objectives, we continue to incur significant operating deficits which cannot be sustained indefinitely. When faced with particularly acute cashflow challenges in spring / summer 2023, we made the difficult decision to reduce our costs including a significant proportion of our staff, resulting in a pause to most of our programme of events, courses, workshops and interpretation of the archives from September 2023. We have also increased the priority of venue hire within the building's many spaces for the immediate future.

Meanwhile, the operating model that had sustained us for decades up until the pandemic needs re-evaluating, and we have begun to consider who our priority audiences could and should be in order to achieve our charitable objectives and public benefit in a sustainable way. This presents an exciting opportunity for our new Chair to build on the Institute's success and unique intellectual property and harness our loyal and supportive audiences to strategically oversee vital change and transformation that will allow

us to keep championing and celebrating the experience of those marginalised or ignored by mainstream society, while not losing sight of the wider learning mission of the organisation.



Bishopsgate Institute Researchers' Room. © Katherine Arundell

## Key Responsibilities

### Governance

- Provide guidance and support for the Chief Executive as well as leadership and experience to the Board of Trustees, enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities for the overall governance and strategic direction of Bishopsgate Institute.
- Chair and facilitate Board meetings, ensuring a range of views is heard, consensus is reached or an appropriate decision-making process is undertaken.
- Bring impartiality, accountability, transparency and objectivity to decision making.
- Prepare the Institute for the future, with a clear understanding of risks, opportunities and the necessary consequent actions.
- Together with the Chief Executive plan the annual cycle and agendas of Board meetings.
- Monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.
- Make decisions on behalf of the Board in matters of urgency between meetings.
- Ensure that the charity complies with its governing document, charity/company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Ensure that the charity pursues its objects as defined by the governing document.
- Ensure the charity uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives.
- Ensure that any fundraising activity carried out by, or on behalf of, the charity is properly undertaken, and that all funds collected are properly accounted for and spent according to the charitable objectives.

### Performance

- Liaise with the Chief Executive to develop the Board of Trustees, carrying out succession planning and recruitment to the Board and ensuring that the Board contains the right mix of professional skills, experience and knowledge and a diversity of representation is fostered.
- Facilitate change and address and resolve any conflict that may arise within the Board and within the organisation, liaising with the Chief Executive as necessary.
- Take lead responsibility on behalf of the Board for the relationship with the Chief Executive and holding her to account for the implementation of plans and adherence to policy.
- Lead the process of managing and appraising the performance of the Chief Executive.
- Ensure the financial stability and longer-term viability of the charity.
- Be an engaged member of committees, when required, as well as any working groups to which they may be appointed.





Bishopsgate Swing in the Great Hall, 2023. © Roswitha Chesher

## Key Responsibilities

### Communications

- Liaise with the Chief Executive to ensure the Board fosters good communication and relationships with staff.
- Ensure the Board sets policies for, and fulfils its responsibilities in, appointment, disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Communicate with external parties to develop strands of funding and resource.

### Organisational Representation

- Safeguard the good name and reputation of the charity and to behave in a professional manner, keeping all activities confidential.
- Advocate for the Institute externally and actively seek platforms, partnerships, donors and fundraising opportunities and key support for the work of the Institute to achieve its strategic plan and objectives.



# Person Specification

## Experience

- Significant experience serving on boards, preferably with previous experience as Chair.
- Understanding of the heritage, culture or adult learning sectors.
- Knowledgeable about charity law, accounting and corporate governance.
- Good financial acumen, with the confidence to interpret financial information (there is no requirement for a formal qualification).

## Skills and abilities

- Exceptional, inclusive and energising leadership skills; able to cultivate effective collaboration but also comfortable in taking responsibility for difficult choices.
- Highly effective relationship building abilities with the ability to foster consensus.
- Sound judgement with high capacity for self-reflection.
- Comfortable with change management and big picture thinking, focused on future proofing the Institute to ensure we can fulfil our charitable objectives for the decades to come.

## Attributes

- Authenticity, empowering, respectful, supportive and collaborative.
- A strong personal commitment to the work of Bishopsgate Institute and its charitable aims.
- The ability to work effectively in partnership with the Chief Executive, knowing when to step in and step back, as well as when to challenge and when to support.
- Excited to give the time and energy needed to the challenges and opportunities ahead for the Institute with a willingness to act as an ambassador, advocate and leverage networks where appropriate.
- Personally passionate about diversity and social justice and the potential for archives and special collections to celebrate and showcase less mainstream stories and identities.



Heaven Nightclub, 14 Dec 1979. © Robert Workman Archive,  
Bishopsgate Institute



# Key Additional Information

## Location

Board Meetings are held at:  
Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, London.

## Time Commitment

The role requires an initial minimum commitment totalling approximately three days per month. This is expected to reduce over time and may vary depending on time of year and organisational needs. This will include the following:

- The Board usually meets quarterly, in person at the Institute on Monday early evenings.
- The Chair is expected to serve on at least one of our sub-committees, which also meet four times a year, or more frequently, if needed.
- Other meetings may be required to support key staff and to maintain relationships within the Institute's stakeholders and communities.
- Attending Institute events, as required, as a member of the Bishopsgate Institute team (and bringing guests).
- The Chair may also be expected to represent the Institute at various advocacy and cultivation events and in meetings with key stakeholders. Supporting the fundraising of the organisation is an important task to achieve the strategic plan and objectives.
- Other ad hoc commitments as required by the charity

## Terms of appointment

The initial appointment is for a two-year term, renewable once for a further two-year term. Please note that Trustee terms are up to two terms of three years, which is longer than the Chair.

## Remuneration

This position is unremunerated, although reasonable expenses can be covered.



Zine-making workshop, Bishopsgate Institute Library. © Pihla Pekkarinen

## How to Apply

**Apply online:**  
[inclusiveboards.co.uk/opportunities](https://inclusiveboards.co.uk/opportunities)

**or send your CV and cover letter to:**  
[bishopsgate@inclusiveboards.co.uk](mailto:bishopsgate@inclusiveboards.co.uk)

by: Sunday 28th April 2024, 23:59

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Inclusive Boards on behalf of Bishopsgate Institute. If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following:

- A detailed CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- A covering letter (maximum 2 sides) highlighting your suitability for the role and how you meet the person specification. Please note that the covering letter is an important part of your application and will be assessed as part of your full application.
- Details of two professional referees together with a brief statement of their relationship to you and over what period of time they have known you. Referees will not be contacted without your prior consent.

If you have further questions after reading this pack, please email [bishopsgate@inclusiveboards.co.uk](mailto:bishopsgate@inclusiveboards.co.uk) or call **0207 267 8369**.

Timelines (subject to change)

- Search launch: 13 March 2024
- Application Deadline: 28 April 2024
- Fireside chats with Bishopsgate CEO and Building tour: w/c 10 June 2024
- Interviews: w/c 17 June 2024
- Decision: Late June 2024
- Successful candidate joins Board as a Trustee: October 2024
- Successful candidate takes up the role of Chair: December 2024

