



Chair of Trustees recruitment pack 2026

**ENGLISH
PEN**

FREEDOM
TO WRITE
FREEDOM
TO READ

About English PEN

English PEN is recruiting for a new Chair of Trustees to support us in our mission to protect and promote the freedom to write and the freedom to read in the UK and around the world.

English PEN is one of the world's oldest human rights organisations, championing the freedom to write and the freedom to read around the world. We are the founding centre of PEN International, a worldwide writers' association with 130 centres in more than 90 countries.

With the support of our members – a community of writers, readers, and activists – we exist to defend and campaign on behalf of writers, literary professionals, journalists, and artists who are unjustly persecuted, harassed, imprisoned, and even murdered in violation of their right to freedom of expression. We campaign to change legislation to best protect fundamental human rights in the UK, and we work to increase the plurality of writers being read and platformed in the UK.

We celebrate contemporary international writing through our online magazine, [PEN Transmissions](#), and we award literary grants for translating new works into English.

We bring together outstanding writers, readers, and translators for unforgettable conversations and we celebrate courageous writing with [our annual literary prizes](#) – the PEN Pinter Prize and the PEN Heaney Prize.

We are looking for a new Chair of Trustees to take over from Ruth Borthwick who will step down in December 2026 after five years.

To find out more about English PEN's recent work, please read our [Impact Report 2024-25](#).

Board structure, composition, and terms

The current Board is a group of experienced and dedicated individuals with a wide range of skills and experience from sectors including journalism, campaigning, writing, publishing, organisational development, translation, legal and media.

Trustees are appointed for an initial term of up to four years and may serve for a maximum of seven years and six months.

For details of current Trustees, please visit: <https://www.englishpen.org/board-of-trustees/>.

The Board offers guidance and expertise to the Director of English PEN, Daniel Gorman. Two sub-committees exist to provide more in-depth scrutiny and advice – the Finance and Audit Committee, chaired by the Treasurer, and the Appointments Committee, chaired by the Vice Chair. The President of English PEN is Margaret Busby.



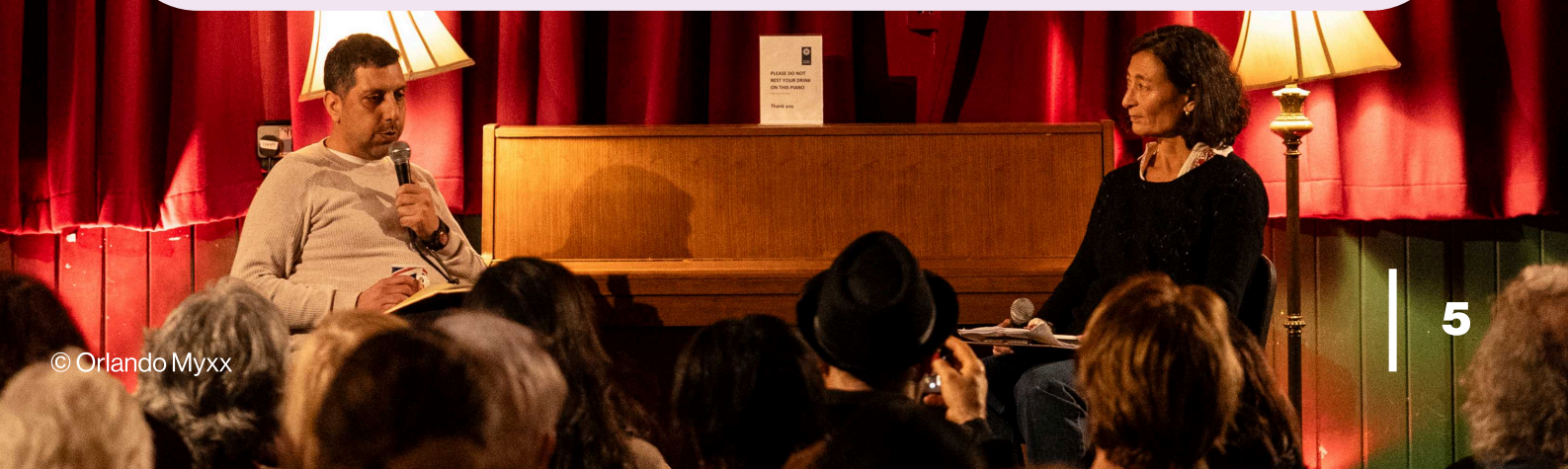
Chair of Trustees responsibilities

- Provide leadership of the Board and set its agenda.
- Ensure the provision of accurate, timely, and clear information to Trustees and ensure the effectiveness of individual Trustees and the Board as a whole.
- Ensure that Trustees are given sufficient time to consider critical issues and given realistic deadlines for decision-making.
- Work closely with the Treasurer and the wider Board and staff team to ensure organisational financial sustainability.
- Ensure that the Board concentrates on strategy and the monitoring of decisions delegated to the Director.
- Lead on recruitment of new Trustees, as needed.
- Ensure that there is a comprehensive induction programme for all new Trustees, supported by the Director.
- Address the development needs of the Board as a whole with a view to enhancing its effectiveness, including regular revision sessions on subjects such as legal status and responsibilities.
- Review their own performance and the performance of the Board and the Director once a year.
- Support and advise the Director on ad hoc matters on an ongoing basis.
- Be an ambassador for and represent the organisation together with the Director.

Trustee responsibilities

As a member of the Board of Trustees, the Chair also shares the following statutory duties with other Trustees:

- Ensure that English PEN complies with its governing document, charity law, company law, and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Ensure English PEN pursues its objects as defined in its governing document.
- Ensure that English PEN applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives.
- Contribute actively to the Board's role in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets, and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard English PEN's good name and values.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of English PEN.
- Ensure the financial stability of English PEN.
- Protect and manage the property of English PEN and ensure the proper investment of its funds.
- Appoint the Director and monitor their performance.



Person specification

We are looking for someone with a clear commitment to the vision, mission, and values of English PEN, as well as the following experience, knowledge, skills, and attributes:

- Significant experience of leading an organisation, at Board or executive level, with appropriate knowledge of corporate and charity governance.
- A clear communicator with an open and inclusive style and with experience of chairing meetings efficiently and effectively.
- Strong interpersonal skills with experience of building a high-functioning and strategic team.
- A strong shared sense of the ethics and values that underpin English PEN's work.
- A thick skin: as an organisation committed to freedom of expression, we operate in a contested area which requires us to take brave stands.
- A strong personal network and the ability to build good relationships with funders and stakeholders.
- Willingness to uphold and follow the principles of public life and the requirements of effective governance.
- Understanding of the duties and responsibilities of Trustees.
- A passion for literature.

Becoming Chair of Trustees

Time commitment

The Chair needs to commit to the equivalent of three to four days per month to perform their duties.

The following meetings normally take place on weekday afternoons and evenings:

- Quarterly Board meetings
- Quarterly Finance & Audit Committee meetings
- Annual Strategy Day
- Annual General Meeting

There will also be the expectation for the Chair to attend and represent the organisation at various public and private events, subject to their availability.

How to apply

Discussion of the role ahead of applying is encouraged. Please email Daniel Gorman, Director at daniel@englishpen.org.

To apply, please send your CV and a brief statement (maximum two sides of A4) telling us about your suitability for the position to recruitment@englishpen.org by 23:59 GMT on Monday 29 June 2026.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to meet with representatives of the Board during the week beginning 13 July 2026.