

THEATRE BY THE LAKE

CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES RECRUITMENT PACK JANUARY 2026



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AN INTRODUCTION

We're looking for a new Chair of the Board of Trustees who shares our passion for theatre and the transformational power of the arts.

This is an exciting opportunity to lead Cumbria's award-winning producing theatre in the heart of the Lake District, as we plan for the future with ambition and focus.

ABOUT US

OUR VISION (the big idea that we deliver on)

Theatre enriches the lives of everyone in Cumbria, and theatre made in Cumbria is celebrated on the national stage

OUR PROMISE (what audiences get from us)

Come together and experience the power of live theatre in an extraordinary place

OUR ESSENCE (felt through every brand expression and experience)

Theatre made with passion in an extraordinary place

“Artistically sharp and stunningly situated”

The New Statesman





Company 25 - The Glitch. Credit Steve Barber

OUR STORY

At our home in Keswick and out across Cumbria, we produce and present nationally acclaimed theatre, made with passion, which is seen by audiences from across the globe.

Our work is rooted in our place, looking out over the idyllic Derwentwater, and aims to be both relevant and accessible to the communities around us.

We champion Cumbrian creativity.

We believe theatre has the power to transform lives and so create vital opportunities for Cumbrian artists, young people and communities to come together, be inspired and explore their creativity. At our venue and out across the region, we strive to make and share great theatre which tells stories, builds communities and celebrates its place. We are Cumbria's leading producing theatre and its largest Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation.

From our origins as 'The Blue Box', the theatre was willed into existence by the local community and opened by Dame Judi Dench in 1999.

Since then, TBTL has established itself as an integral part of the UK regional theatre network, becoming a major attraction for both Cumbrian residents and visitors to the Lake District.

The theatre has a flexible Main House with 400 seats. It also operates a 100-seat Studio, allowing for events of all shapes and sizes. Together, these host almost 400 performances each year. We also generate income from an adjacent and beautifully situated café, enhancing the experience for audiences and visitors, helping to support our long-term resilience and supporting our important role as one of the major tourist attractions in the Lake District.



“A production alive with movement and community spirit”

(Brassed Off, 2024)

THE GUARDIAN



Steel 2024. Credit Chris Payne

OUR STORY

In 2025, we welcomed 75,000 audience members to the theatre, including 99 schools.

We also took **Steel**, a new Cumbrian play by Lee Mattinson, on the road for a national tour of community venues and studio theatres.

We were privileged to win the **UK Theatre Award for Excellence in Touring**, a testament to our strategic approach to engaging local communities, as well as the **Cumbria Life Award for Best Arts and Culture Venue**.

Our co-production of **Pride and Prejudice** has also been nominated for Best Regional Production at the What's On Stage Awards.

In October, we staged our second edition of **CumbriaFest**, showcasing a range of new works by emerging local artists and providing professional development opportunities.

In 2026, we will lead produce a minimum of two new productions, including **Nell Gwynn** (co-produced with Shakespeare North Playhouse / Chester Storyhouse) and **A Christmas Carol**. We are also pleased to be co-producing **Lark Rise to Candleford** in partnership with The Watermill, and **Calendar Girls** with Stephen Joseph Theatre, Bolton Octagon and New Wolsey Theatre.

In August, we will remount **Every Brilliant Thing**, a hopeful play addressing mental health, in our Studio before touring the production to community venues across the county. This is indicative of our socially-engaged approach to producing theatre rooted in place.

You can find out more about our programme here:
<https://www.theatrebythelake.com/whats-on/>



“Beautiful and breath-stopping”

(Steel, 2024)

THE STAGE



Liz and Simon. Credit Amy Bateman

OUR ORGANISATION

Theatre by the Lake is the trading name of Cumbria Theatre Trust Ltd. (CTT), a company limited by guarantee and registered charity. We also have a trading subsidiary TBTL Services Ltd., which oversees the catering and other commercial services.

The governing body of CTT is the Board of Trustees who are simultaneously directors of the company and Trustees of the charity.

The Board delegates the management and artistic operation of the company to our joint chief executives, Simon Stephens (our Executive Director) and Liz Stevenson (our Artistic Director).

The current Chair of the Board, Charles Carter, is approaching the end of his term of office after eight years as a Trustee and six as Chair.

The Board of Trustees now wishes to appoint a new Chair as it looks ahead to the next 25 years and beyond of theatre in Cumbria.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available on the TBTL website.

Our history:

<https://www.theatrebythelake.com/about-us/history/>

Our team:

<https://www.theatrebythelake.com/about-us/team-contact-new/>

Our Board:

<https://www.theatrebythelake.com/about-us/Board/>

Our report and accounts: <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/01874868/filing-history>

ROLE SPECIFICATION

The Chair of the Board of Trustees leads the Board, ensuring the Theatre remains a vibrant, resilient and integral part of the community. This includes safeguarding its future while upholding the fiduciary responsibilities and charitable objectives of CTT.



GOVERNANCE & OVERSIGHT

The Chair ensures that the Board functions effectively by:

- Ensuring CTT operates within UK legal and regulatory frameworks and adheres to best practices in charity governance
- Promoting vigilance around risks to the Theatre's sustainability and ensuring appropriate mitigation approaches are in place
- Clarifying and reinforcing the Board's roles and responsibilities. This includes establishing appropriate Board and committee structures that enable active Trustee engagement in clear decision-making based on sound information
- Supporting Trustee development through relevant training, enabling them better to understand the organisation and their wider responsibilities and so fulfil their role more effectively

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Chair fosters a strong collaborative relationship between the Board and the CEOs ensuring alignment around a shared vision and purpose:

- Working together to evolve the Theatre's direction - its vision values and purpose - in response to experience and changing needs
- Strengthening the Theatre's financial resilience to support its artistic ambitions
- Ensuring the Board possesses a diverse and relevant skill set to guide the Theatre's growth
- Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit across both artistic and commercial dimensions of CTT

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The Chair promotes strong relationships with key stakeholders to enhance the Theatre's impact:

- Maintaining strong ties with Arts Council England (ACE), other funders and influential bodies such as local councils and MPs
- Supporting the development of a committed donor base that shares in the Theatre's vision
- Ensuring the Theatre's work reflects and exceeds the expectations of the Cumbrian community while expanding its reach and deepening local engagement

EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

The Chair plays a vital role in leading Trustees to support and challenge the CEOs and through them the wider staff team:

- Encouraging and constructively challenging the CEOs while respecting the boundaries between governance and executive functions
- Ensuring CEOs receive regular support and formal annual performance reviews and that they extend the same to their staff
- Leading the recruitment of key executive roles (Artistic Director and Executive Director) when necessary

PERSONAL SPECIFICATION

ESSENTIAL

Passionate Commitment:

A willingness to understand and embrace the mission, values and future of TBTL with the drive and vision to lead the organisation forward and positively engage with local and regional communities in Cumbria and beyond.

Governance Expertise:

Solid grasp of governance principles and the business of chairing ideally with an understanding of charity governance from experience as a Trustee.

Proven Leadership Experience:

Demonstrable success in a senior leadership role with the ability to:

- Chair meetings with confidence and clarity
- Sustain relationships with and build consensus between diverse and sometimes avid competing voices
- Motivate and get the best from Trustees and staff
- Lead an organisation through change and ensure financial sustainability

Strategic and Commercial Acumen with Operational Insight:

A track record of strategic thinking while understanding operational and financial detail.

Strong Stakeholder Management and Communication Skills:

Interpersonal and communication abilities with a willingness to listen, challenge and collaborate internally with the Executive team and Board members as well as with ACE, DCMS, local politicians and funders.

Artistic Sensibility:

An appreciation for creative vision and live performance with a genuine interest in the arts and their impact.

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES:

Decisive and responsive:

Sound judgment in urgent or sensitive situations with the ability to act swiftly and transparently while keeping stakeholders informed.

Calmness, humility, stamina and resilience.

DESIRABLE:

Previous Chair Experience:

Experience of chairing a board.

Sector Knowledge:

Understanding of the theatre and arts industry including its business and operational challenges.

Fundraising and Advocacy:

Experience in championing causes securing funding and building influential networks.

LOCATION

TBTL is based in Keswick with regular meetings held both in person and online.

Whilst it is not essential for the Chair to live full time in Cumbria, it is vital that they possess a strong appreciation of the unique challenges faced by the county's often dispersed communities.

The Chair should attend the Theatre as needed to see its productions, build relationships with the CEOs and be known by the staff more generally. Ideally they would develop a deep understanding of the regional context, build strong local connections and advocate actively for the Theatre within its community.

INCLUSIVITY

We welcome applications from everyone regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, belief or disability. TBTL is keen to encourage applications from the Deaf and disabled community or applicants who identify as being of Global Majority heritage.

All appointments will be made on merit following a fair and transparent process. In line with the Equality Act 2010 however, we may employ positive action where candidates from underrepresented groups can demonstrate their ability to perform the role equally well.

HOW TO APPLY

We are working with Nurole on the recruitment of this role. For more information on the application process, please visit the dedicated webpage <https://tinyurl.com/26c823a2>

CLOSING DATE

Midnight Tuesday 10th February

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

This is an unremunerated position. Reasonable pre-agreed expenses are reimbursed.

The expected time commitment is circa two days per month comprising Board meetings, time engaging with the Executive team and attending events and other duties as required with a combination of in-person and online engagement.

Board meetings take place every 2-3 months with an annual Away Day. Most meetings take place at Theatre by the Lake and are scheduled for Saturday mornings. Committees meet every 2-3 months usually on weekday evenings. The Board is open to virtual attendance and most meetings are hybrid although Trustees are expected to attend at least two of these per year in person as well as the Away Day.

The appointment is for an initial term of up to four years which may be renewed at the Board's discretion.



Wizard of OZ 2025. Credit Pamela Raith

**“The most beautifully located
and friendly theatre in Britain”**

The Independent



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theatrebythelake.com

TBTLAKE

Aerial view of The Theatre by the Lake and Derwentwater