



# Chair of Trustees

**PROSPECTUS**  
FEBRUARY 2024



Building confidence in people with learning disabilities – a collaboration with New Forest Mencap and the National Park Authority selling sustainable transport Tour Bus tickets outside the Centre.



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## WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS SAY

**“I love coming here, it just turns off all the noise in my head and I feel so calm.”**

**“I have many caring responsibilities at home, so having a few hours each week, where I can switch off and concentrate on something else, is a lifesaver and really enhances my wellbeing.”**

# Welcome

Thank you for being interested in the role of Chair of the New Forest Heritage Trust and for taking the time to read this short prospectus.

As a Trustee of this wonderful charity since 1990, most recently as Chair, it is time for me to hand over to a fresh pair of hands. I do so with some sadness as this is probably the institution closest to my heart of the many with which I have been involved.

The New Forest is my home and my passion, and this is an organisation which holds the Forest's very essence in its archives. It has such an important role to play in our understanding of what makes this part of the world so very, very special.

As the new Chair, you would be joining at a very positive time for the charity, as we plan a future that will build on the uniqueness of our archive and our enviable location at the centre of one of the nation's most visited and most loved National Parks.

This is a role which comes with responsibility. Responsibility to oversee an informing, educating and entertaining offering to an extremely broad range of visitors who pass through our doors.

At the same time ensuring we have a business model that works, and which enables us to continue collecting, conserving, cataloguing, and co-curating.

We are well placed within a family of charities and agencies forming an ecosystem that cares for the New Forest and its future.

If you care about place, people and the environment and you are someone with verve and inspirational qualities, please do apply for this role - you will not be disappointed by the wonderful team of staff and volunteers who will thrive off your wisdom and enthusiasm to deliver a vibrant future.

**Mary Montagu-Scott DL**  
Chair of Trustees



A hub for all - a fundraising team of veterans with mixed abilities from the Not Forgotten Association pit-stopping at our cafe

# About our charity

Our journey began in 1979 – the 900th anniversary year of the founding of the New Forest by William I. A group of local people formed a charity called the New Forest Ninth Centenary Trust (now called the New Forest Heritage Trust). The Trust spent the next 9 years painstakingly raising the funds needed to reach its first milestone, which was to build the Centre that we still occupy today.

The purpose of the Centre was, and remains, to be a hub where local people and visitors to the New Forest can discover more about the history, customs, people, wildlife and future of this special landscape.

Initially, our archive consisted of a few books and a part-time volunteer archivist. Since then it has grown into a completely unique 50,000-item collection of books, manuscripts, documents, maps, objects, film and oral histories. All donated to us by members of the public, and now catalogued and cared for by two part-time employed specialists and 10-15 volunteers.

The collection is our soul, and our *raison d'être*. Our constant aspiration is to reach ever-better levels of cataloguing it, talking about it, sharing it and purposing it. The infrastructure needed to support the collection comprises the Centre building – which we own outright and debt-free – within which we have a museum, gallery, café and shop. We employ a full-time Director, a Retail Manageress and a Head of Learning, archivists, an administrator, and retail staff.

We are at an exciting time in our evolution, having survived Covid and gradually recovering our annual visitor numbers which are at 150,000, chasing a pre-pandemic peak of 200,000.



Above: Mad-hatter hat making during our 2023 Alice Week, following a donation of books and objects to the Centre by the Lewis Carroll Society. Carroll's inspiration, Alice Liddell, came to live in Lyndhurst and is buried in the churchyard.

## Governance

Our Board of Trustees governs the charity, which is called The New Forest Heritage Trust (charity No. 1186656). The Board consists of a maximum of 12 Trustees, including a Treasurer and a Trustee with a professional background in law. Several Trustees (including the Chair) are also Directors of our wholly owned trading subsidiary called the New Forest Museum Trading Company Ltd, which operates our shop and café.

## Our present areas of focus are:

- To drive forward physical and operational improvements in the archive. At the time of writing we are delighted to have just received a coveted capital grant from the National Archive to help with us with this.
- To plan for a long-term sustainable future by developing a robust business plan built on transformative physical changes we wish to make to the Centre, which will require major grant funding.
- To play an increasingly relevant social role – delivering community benefit and impactful outreach in those areas of life where heritage can make a real difference. These include climate understanding, the young, wellbeing, and championing cohesive values of pride and place. We are also increasingly working with groups who might not normally engage with cultural institutions like ours.

We are an Arts Council England accredited museum and are committed to standards of best operational and organisational practice.



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## **WHAT OUR LEARNING PARTICIPANTS SAY**

**“An excellent way to use a museum and gallery, and perfectly pitched”**

**“There is so much to learn about where we live, and nowhere else offers anything like this; you do it in such an age-appropriate and engaging way.”**

**“It’s been exactly what she needs - her confidence has grown so much.”**



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## WHAT OUR VISITORS SAY

**“Incredible place. Very friendly staff, superb museum (free) with lots for the kids to do. Lovely shop with gift ideas and reasonably priced. With the bonus of a great cafe. Please leave a donation - this great little place is charity run.”**

# Role overview & description

The Board are seeking to appoint a Chair with the passion and qualities to drive the organisation forward through a period of very exciting change into a fresh phase of our successful history.

This is a voluntary, not a paid position.

The key elements of the role are:

- To oversee and ensure an effective and fully-functioning Board.
- To provide support and oversight of the Director.
- To collaboratively set the vision and direction of the organisation and to inspire the Trustees, staff and volunteers to deliver it.
- To act as a figurehead for the organisation, helping to maintain and broaden its network of relationships with individuals and organisations whose support and friendship is needed.

## Governance

The Chair will guide and facilitate good decision-making at Board level, leading quarterly Board meetings, encouraging and listening to co-Trustees, upholding the Trust's mission, and steering recruitment of new trustees and senior staff to ensure that the organisation is run by a team of talents.

There is a need to be open and accessible to senior staff, a guide and mentor to the Director, and to be enthusiastic and visible to all staff and volunteers.

## Direction

The Chair will have a grasp of the charity's finances and operations and will have the experience and skills to shape the vision and objectives of the organisation. Delegating trustees to focus groups and sub-committees and empowering staff to deliver tangible goals is an important part of the role.

## External relations

Acting in an ambassadorial capacity is an important element of the role – promoting the organisation's message and objectives at appropriate times and in impactful forums. Funders and backers will want to feel assured of a steady figure at the head of the organisation and that the charity is exciting, forward-thinking and investible.

## Character and skills

Above all, the Chair needs to be a person whose personal values and standards align with Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life – Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership.

Museums and heritage sector experience is not essential for this role, but an understanding of charities, and a love of culture, landscape, community and social purpose is vital.

Professionally, the Chair is likely to have held successful governance roles, ideally having a questioning and entrepreneurial flair, astuteness, and be someone with natural warmth, charisma and an ability to inspire.





Purposing our collection – a group from brain injury charity, Headway, handling and talking about objects from our archive, supported by a conservator from the Hampshire Records Office.



One of our most important museum displays is of the New Forest Embroidery – a remarkable pictorial history threaded by 60 local people in 1979.



# Are you our next Chair?

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the role with our Director, Angus Harley, he can be reached at:

**angus.harley@newforestheritage.org.uk**  
or on **023 8028 6159**.

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the role with our current Chair, Mary Montagu-Scott, Mary can be reached at:

**chair@newforestheritage.org.uk**

## Interested?

If you would like to be considered as our next Chair, please write to us at: **chair@newforestheritage.org.uk** outlining your background and how you can help us move forward. Please also include as much information about yourself as possible by way of a CV if you find this easiest.

As a first stage, we will then invite short-listed applicants to visit us to meet our current Chair, Director and some of the team.



The New Forest Heritage Trust is registered as a Charity

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E: office@newforestheritage.org.uk

## Some of the partners and charities we've been working with:



**Headway** is a local charity that provides support, advice and rehabilitation for sufferers of acquired brain injuries. We have been holding a variety of haptic activity workshops for sufferers including conserving and handling old maps and documents, and New Forest inspired craft workshops.



We share knowledge and information with the **Hampshire Records Office** and collaborated successfully with them on a project funded by the **Hampshire Archives Trust** to conserve and catalogue a unique collection of social history records given to us by New Forest family.



We provide opportunities for local people supported by **Mencap** to gain in skills and confidence by helping us with our front of house services and with archive cataloguing.



We are strong supporters of **New Forest Marque** – a food and produce scheme championing local producers and traditional practices. We stock their produce and crafts and collaborate with them on projects and exhibitions which promote their members.



Each year we offer **Brockenhurst College** final year photography and design students the chance to take over our gallery to exhibit their final year projects. We make our collection available to them as inspiration for their work and to provide them with the chance to understand the social worth and creative opportunities presented by archive material.



We are active members of **Folio** - a diverse collective of professional arts and cultural organisations based in the New Forest, which exists to create new ways for people to experience and benefit from the arts and to seek out and grasp opportunities only open through collaboration.



We have had a close relationship with the **National Park Authority** since its inception and we work on joint initiatives and are active members of the Authority's Visitor Communications Group.