

CHAIR OF THE FRY ART GALLERY

Overview

Location

Saffron Walden, Essex

Remuneration

The role of Chair is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although expenses for travel may be claimed.

Tenure

3 Year term, at the end of which the Chair is eligible for review and re-appointment up to a maximum of three consecutive terms.

Time Commitment

Up to 12 Board meetings per year, and the AGM of the Gallery. The Chair is also expected to attend 2 meetings per year of the North West Essex Collection Trust by invitation. The Chair should also expect to visit the gallery at least monthly to stay in touch with the Keeper of the Collection and the Gallery Operations team of volunteers. The Chair will represent the Charity as needed with external stakeholders.

Reporting To

The board of Trustees of the Fry Art Gallery Society, currently consisting of 11 members.

Role Description

Objectives

The Chair will hold the Trustees to account for the Gallery's mission and vision, providing inclusive leadership, ensuring that each trustee fulfils their duties and responsibilities for effective governance.

The Chair will lead the board, ensuring a shared and collaborative culture, will recognize and manage the contribution of individual trustees, will set the style for board behaviours, and will recruit new trustees and move on those whose terms have been completed.

They will act as an ambassador for the Gallery and be the public face of the Gallery.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

Provide leadership to the Gallery, ensuring the maximum impact for its stakeholders who include members, visitors, funders, volunteers.

Ensure Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for effective governance of the charity.

Provide strategic direction, and ensure the committee is effective and operates to fulfil its charitable and museum objectives and obligations.

Governance

Uphold effective governance arrangements, working within agreed policies to ensure that risks are identified and managed, regulatory and professional standards are upheld, and that the financial health of the organization is guaranteed.

Chair meetings effectively, ensuring decisions align with the Gallery's best interests and objectives.

Relationship with Trustees and Volunteers

Foster, maintain and ensure that constructive relationships exist with and between the Trustees.

Establish and build strong working relationships with the Keeper of the Collection and the Gallery Operations volunteer team, promoting a constructive, inclusive and trusting environment.

External Relations

Act as an ambassador for the charity, maintaining supporter networks and representing the Gallery externally.

Attend the meetings of the North West Essex Collection Trust.

Explore and initiate fund raising activities for the Gallery.

Additional Information

The above list is indicative only and not exhaustive. The Chair will be expected to perform all such additional duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role.

Person Specification

Personal Attributes

- Demonstrated passion and commitment to the Gallery's mission and values.
- Strong interpersonal, collaborative, and relationship-building skills.
- Ability to commit time to conduct the role well, including travel and attending events out of office hours.
- Strong networking capabilities that can be utilised for the benefit of the charity.
- Commitment to growing the Fry Art Gallery's reach and influence.
- Commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Experience

- Experience of operating at a strategic leadership level within an organisation.
- Experience of chairing meetings and hosting events.
- Experience in governance of a charitable organisation.

Knowledge and Skills

- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate contractors and volunteers and bring people together.
- Financial management expertise and a broad understanding of charity finance issues.
- Knowledge of the art sectors (preferable).
- Familiarity with the local area and its artistic traditions (welcome but not essential).

ABOUT THE FRY ART GALLERY

The Gallery was constructed in the 1850s as a purpose-built art gallery. It currently houses a collection of around 3,500 objects consisting of pictures, ceramics, textiles, books and other materials that were made by artists who have lived and worked in North West Essex and have achieved recognition at a National Level.

The Fry Art Gallery Society is constituted as a not-for-profit independent charity, a Charitable Incorporated Organization (CIO), no. 1167717 established in 1985. Its mission is to foster appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions of the works in its Collection, publications, talks, and other forms of public engagement. It is important to note that ownership of the works in the Collection lies with the North West Essex Collection Trust, on whose behalf the Society acts.

Two important principles of the foundation of the Gallery are that entry is free of charge to the public, and that it is largely staffed by volunteers. These are seen as cornerstones of its charitable mission.

Additional, paid, curatorial assistance is provided by a consultant 'Keeper of the Collection' who works on average 1.5 days a week, and a part time gallery cleaner. Other professional services, such as conservation, security and environmental, are bought in as required.

The opportunity

We are seeking a new Chair to build on the successes of the gallery's 40 year history. Starting from a strong foundation you will position the Gallery to make a bigger and more visible impact. As Chair you will hold the Trustee committee to account for the gallery's mission and vision to all its stakeholders, provide inclusive leadership and ensure the effective governance of the charity. You will offer guidance and support to the volunteers, model the gallery's core values and act as an ambassador.

We are interested in candidates from a broad range of backgrounds and life experiences who demonstrate a clear passion for 'our' artists and commitment to the Gallery's vision. You will have a track record of operating at a senior level in executive or non-executive roles and have some experience of charity governance. You will bring a clear and demonstrable commitment to the Gallery as well as strong interpersonal, collaborative and relationship building skills. You will be a compelling advocate externally, able to work in partnership with the other trustees to manage key stakeholder relationships. We are looking for someone inclusive who combines good judgement with excellent strategic thinking, as well as the capacity to think creatively and offer fresh perspective.

There is a preference for those with some knowledge of 20th century art. Familiarity with the areas of North West Essex is welcome but not essential. The most important requirements for the role are the requisite skills to Chair and a passion for our cause.

The Chair is also a Trustee

Trustees have certain legal, and financial duties under charity requirements. The requirements of certification by Arts Council England also place responsibilities on the Trustees. Even though many of these duties are delegated to volunteers who may not be trustees, the committee must make clear decisions about such delegation.

The ultimate responsibility for every aspect of the Gallery's operation lies with the Trustees. They are responsible for directing the affairs of the charity, ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.

The Role of all Trustees

- To ensure that the Gallery always complies with its governing document including its objects as defined in, charity law, museum accreditation and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- To set and maintain vision, mission and values, and ensure good financial health, administration and accountability.
- To develop strategy in line with objects and strategic aims, ensuring evaluation of impact.
- To recruit and support the wider team.
- To promote and advocate for the Fry Art Gallery.
- To act in the best interests of the charity, never in the interests of themselves or another organisation.

Summary of Trustee responsibilities

- To attend all committee meetings.
- To attend the Fry Art Gallery AGM and any extraordinary meetings.
- To prepare appropriately in advance of meetings.
- To participate actively and constructively in meeting discussions and decision making.
- To foster a positive working relationship with other Trustees and paid contractors.
- To develop and maintain up-to-date awareness of the Gallery and its activities, as well as wider arts and museum developments.
- Participate as necessary and appropriate in any sub-committees or working parties the Board may set up.
- Delegate day-to-day management and operation of the Charity to relevant volunteers and contractors, whilst remaining aware of performance.
- In addition to the above duties, use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have that will assist the committee to reach sound decisions.

What next?

Candidates should submit a CV and statement outlining their interest in and suitability for the role to David.oelman@fryartgallery.org by 19th December 2025.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview on Wednesday 7th January 2026, at the gallery.

If you are excited by this opportunity but feel that you may not be in a position to consider becoming our Chair at the current time, we would still very much love to hear from you, in order to keep you informed about future trustee opportunities.