ABBOTSFORD

THE HOME OF Sir Walter Scott

Volunteer Trustee with finance/accountancy experience
Abbotsford, Scottish Borders

Our charity was established in 2007 to act as a guardian of Sir Walter Scott's legacy; Abbotsford in the Scottish Borders, or as Scott called it his "Conundrum Castle". It was where he wrote classics such as Rob Roy and Ivanhoe, where he created a style of architecture which swept the country, Scots Baronial, and where he experimented with garden and landscape design. The need for what we do has never been greater, as fewer children study their own history or pick up a book at school or home.

The Opportunity

This role will suit someone with professional accountancy qualifications and experience of audited accounts. We will be particularly interested to hear from women and professionals in the midst of their career. Previous experience working or volunteering with a charity, a heritage or cultural organisation is un-necessary.

Your expert understanding will ensure that trustees exercise their financial responsibilities. You will act as lead trustee on overseeing the annual audit, and advise on financial procedures, regular financial reporting and forecasting.

We are now looking for an exceptional individual to join our Board as a volunteer Trustee.
You will act as lead trustee on overseeing the annual audit, and advise on financial procedures, regular financial reporting and forecasting.

You will join a highly experienced and influential Board. Aspiring to a balanced Board, we will be particularly interested to hear from women and professionals in the midst of their career. Trustees are unpaid, but may claim expenses.

The Role

You will act as lead trustee on overseeing the annual audit, and advise on financial procedures, regular financial reporting and forecasting.

This will involve chairing the Trust's Audit Committee, which meets once a year to receive draft charity accounts and audit reports for The Abbotsford Trust and its subsidiary Abbotsford Trading Company. The Committee is responsible for recommending accounts for approval to the Board of Directors, and for making recommendations on the appointment of auditors.

You will exercise oversight of the Trust's financial management throughout the year through membership of the Executive Committee, which meets up to 10 times a year to receive financial reports from management. Trading Company management accounts are the responsibility of a separate Trading Company Board.

The Board meets quarterly.

All Trustees have regular contact with the paid management team, providing them with guidance and support, and working through the Chief Executive to direct operations and strategy. In this role your primary relationship will be with the Chief Executive and the Finance & Admin Manager.

Background - The Abbotsford Trust

The Trust is financially secure, however growing cost pressures and constrained spending by visitors to Abbotsford since Covid ended require the Trust to achieve ambitious annual fundraising goals in order to deliver a full programme of high quality work at Abbotsford and beyond. From 2027 the Trust intends to launch an ambitious campaign to increase its Endowment Fund to provide a secure long term contribution to meeting core costs.

The Trust has a strong volunteering community; currently some 115 volunteers work alongside some 30 paid staff. All trustees are volunteers, and the charity has since its founding, benefitted from having a lead finance trustee from an accountancy background. This opportunity has arisen due to the retirement of such a trustee after 10 years supporting the charity.

In 2025 the Trust's turnover was circa £1m, and its subsidiary Abbotsford Trading Co Ltd's turnover was circa £500,000. The majority of revenue is derived from visitor expenditure at Abbotsford, and an Endowment Fund contributes circa £200,000 annually towards costs. The Trust in 2026 aims to raise £368,000 through donations and grants to meet the gap between earnt revenues, Endowment Fund income, and committed costs.

The Trust is a partner in a sister charity The Faculty of Advocates Abbotsford Trust. This stems from Sir Walter Scott and his descendants placing much of Scott's world class historic collection into an ownership arrangement with Scotland's ancient legal body and founder of Scotland's National Library. As a result, today we have a thriving partnership with Scotland's advocates. This role will have no responsibility for the partner trust's finances.

Although relatively modest in scale, the charity's finances are surprisingly complex. This is due to the variety of trading activities, and from managing a broad range of donations and grants. Charity audit rules are also increasingly stringent and complex. Trustees and senior management are keen to benefit from the support, insight and guidance you would bring to the charity's finances.

We are fortunate to have a very healthy volunteering and working culture across all parts of the organisation. Trustees, staff and the wider volunteer community are motivated, ambitious, creative, and very supportive towards each other. Challenge is encouraged, but in a positive and constructive way.

Best of all is that we are all rejuvenating interest in one of western culture's most significant writers and cultural influencers - Walter Scott - and caring for one of the world's foremost writer's houses. The need for what we do has never been greater, as fewer children study their own history or pick up a book at school or home.

Put it this way - we love volunteering and working at Abbotsford - it gets under your skin, be warned!

Please apply/express interest having read the role description provided at https://www.scottsabbotsford.com/support-us/volunteer-opportunities/trustees-and-advisors

The Chief Executive leads on recruitment practicalities, with trustees of the Executive Committee responsible for making appointment recommendations to the Board.
In practice this usually entails an initial informal meeting or discussion with the CEO, followed by meeting a trustee, followed by a committee recommendation.
We aim to make an appointment during 2026.