



The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust

Charity number 209206

Chair of Trustees



**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

The MBE for volunteer groups

The Kennet & Avon Canal Trust is seeking a new volunteer Chair of Trustees to take on the task of leading trustees, staff and volunteers in the work of this small charity to Protect, Enhance and Promote the Kennet & Avon Canal. The current Chairman is planning to stand down at the end of 2018 after 6 years in this fascinating and rewarding role.

Background

The Trust was formed in 1962 (having been an association since 1951) when the canal had become derelict along most of its 87½ mile length. Having prevented government plans to formally close the canal, the Trust set about restoring it. This was achieved by lobbying, fund-raising, millions of hours of volunteer work and partnerships with British Waterways and the local Councils. The passion was sustained for 28 years and the volunteers were finally rewarded when HM the Queen re-opened the canal in 1990. Work continued in close partnership with British Waterways (now the Canal & River Trust) to complete the work needed to assure the future of the K&A. With the aid of a £25m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, this was achieved in 2003. The restoration has been a huge success and today the canal is used by all members of the community, including walkers, cyclists, anglers, canoeists, boat enthusiasts, and nature lovers.

The Kennet and Avon Canal Trust now aims to 'Protect, Enhance and Promote' the canal. It is organised in 8 branches which together run 4 passenger boats, 4 boats specially designed and built for disabled users, a youth training boat, the historic Crofton Pumping Station featuring the world's oldest working Beam Engine, 5 cafes, a museum and an archive of the canal's heritage.

The Trust has 7 staff (6 FTE) and around 300 volunteers. There are currently 9 trustees and 3 directors of the Trust's trading company. Turnover in 2017 was £1.1m (an atypical year, 2016 turnover of £576k is more usual). Total funds at the end of 2017 were £1.4m.

Expressed in the language of the Charity Commission, we have 4 objects:

1. promote, facilitate, and assist in the conservation, protection and improvement of the Kennet and Avon Canal and its associated watercourses, towpaths, structures and buildings;
2. advance the education of the public in general of the significance of the Kennet & Avon Canal and its associated structures
3. protect and conserve, objects, sites and buildings of archaeological, architectural, engineering or historic interest on, in the vicinity of, or otherwise associated with the Kennet & Avon Canal
4. promote and facilitate recreational use of the Kennet and Avon Canal by a wide section of the community in order to improve conditions of life for the public

The Role

The Charity Commission describes the role of a Chair as follows:

The chair usually:

- helps plan and run trustee meetings (and in a membership charity, members' meetings)
- takes the lead on ensuring that meetings are properly run and recorded
- takes the lead on ensuring that trustees comply with their duties and the charity is well governed
- might have a second or casting vote if a vote on a trustees' decision is tied, but only if this is specified in the charity's governing document
- may act as a spokesperson for the charity
- acts as a link between trustees and staff
- line manages the chief executive on behalf of the trustees

In the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust (KACT), the Chairman's role has traditionally been to oversee the good running of the Trust, to agree direction and policies with fellow trustees and to work with and unite the branches around a series of common goals.

Essential Tasks

1. Chairing of a monthly 2-hour trustees meeting for 11 months a year. Trustees meet physically every 3 months in Devizes and other meetings take place online.
2. Close liaison with the (staff) Trust Administrator to oversee Trust governance and to advise/rule on policy. Currently achieved with a weekly visit to Devizes and more frequent email/phone contact. Ensure staff understand trustee's views and vice versa.
3. Guide trustees in good governance and setting strategy and policy. Ensure trustees are briefed on finances, trading activities, H&S issues and members'/volunteers' views.
4. Create a relationship with each of the 8 branches, supporting local committees, and ensuring branches work within Trust policy and that Trust support is provided to branches in their work. Some branches are directly represented by trustees who achieve this. The chair needs to ensure the voices of other are heard.
5. Build a relationship with key external bodies and represent the Trust and the interests of the waterway with these:
 - a. Canal & River Trust – owners and statutory maintainers of the K&A
 - b. The 3 Councils supporting the K&A – West Berks, Wiltshire & BaNES
 - c. The Heritage Lottery Fund – currently funding Crofton
6. Lead on media engagement – print, radio, TV, social media
7. Communicate with members and volunteers – in bulk through the magazine and email, and individually through email and face-to-face contact.
8. Attend a range of Trust events – festivals, steamings, volunteer events, branch visits

9. Encourage and support collaborative working across the Trust and help resolve disputes and problems.
10. Write the annual trustees report for the accounts, agree this with auditors and present to members at the AGM.

Tasks currently carried out by Chairman that could be transferred to others

1. Authorisation (using online banking) of all payments over £1000 and stand-in during absences of the Trust Administrator for other payments.
2. Participation in the Crofton Project Group delivering the Lottery funded 'Our Crofton Story' project.
3. Filing of some statutory returns with Companies House and Charity Commission
4. Part of first line IT support team
5. Oversee recruitment and staff contracts
6. Director of Enterprise, the Trust's trading company
7. Participation in the Swindon, Wiltshire & Oxfordshire Canal Partnership
8. Giving talks on behalf of the Trust
9. Negotiate and sign Trust leases and other agreements

Trust Council
May 2018