charisma
CHARITY RECRUITMENT

activate
performing arts

Activate
Chair of Trustees

Candidate pack
June 2026

Image courtesy of Jayne Jackson

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1 Introduction

My time at Activate has been enriched by the commitment, enthusiasm and support of our board and they have been essential to running an uplifting, bold and inclusive organisation.

We have a passionate and experienced team, matched by its Board, and love the work we do with the artists, communities and partners.

We are now working across the UK and Europe, whilst being rooted in the county of Dorset. Our new Chair will be important in helping us navigate the local with the national and European partnerships.

We have a variety of experience and wide representation on our Board, as well as a staff team of people from a range of backgrounds in age, sexual orientation, disability, caring responsibilities, socio-economic backgrounds, and gender. We want to increase that diversity and representation further

I'm looking forward to talking to people about the work that we do and what is involved in the role of a Board member and the leadership role of the Chair here at Activate.

Kate

Kate Wood
Artistic and Executive Director

The Chair of the Board is an important role providing continuity, support, and constructive challenge. The Board support the detailed work of the executive, associates, volunteers, and audiences, while keeping a clear eye on the needs of Dorset and celebrating its people and places.

This is a particularly significant moment to join the Board as our new Chair and the first time we have looked outside our existing trustees in our 35 year history. As we head forwards, we begin shaping our next business plan and preparing for the next NPO funding round. With a growing national and international reputation, Activate is ideally placed to evolve and grow as an organisation while remaining deeply rooted in our core values and mission. A new Chair will have the opportunity to make a real and lasting difference, helping to guide our future direction, strengthen our impact, and ensure we continue to serve our communities with ambition and integrity.

We welcome applications for those who value the arts and who want to work with us to navigate the challenges ahead. This is a vital and exciting time to help shape what comes next for Activate.

Sara

Sara St George
Acting Chair

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About us

Image courtesy of Paul Brewer

2 About us

Activate

Activate Performing Arts is a Dorset based charity that has been producing transformational programmes across the county for nearly 35 years. We celebrate Dorset and promote our natural landscape and sense of place. Some of Dorset's most remarkable urban and rural spots are transformed with experiences that touch hearts and minds like nothing else. At the heart of what we do is a belief that performing arts should be accessible for all – no matter what your experience or background.

For nearly 35 years, we've been promoting, supporting, and producing performing arts projects in our communities. Bringing world-class events to unexpected places, like town centres, village squares, beaches, and hilltops. We bring people together, offer advice, and provide access to learning and resources, including our one-to-one free advice sessions and CPD programmes for creatives working in the performing arts. We're here to help creatives at all levels on their journey towards creating outstanding, inspiring work.

Our aim is to break down barriers and reach the widest possible audiences, while celebrating our natural landscape and sense of place. In everything we do there are just two rules: anything is possible, and everyone is invited.

We pride ourselves on being open and working with others to make the performing arts accessible for all. This happens in many ways, including partnerships with one other organisation or with many. We sometimes lead these groups and sometimes we don't. We are producers, presenters, collaborators or commissioners. Sometimes we are all of these.

We are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and are core funded by Dorset Council and BCP Council. We are in a stable financial position and seek other funding opportunities on a project-by-project basis. As a not-for-profit organisation, we work in many ways and with many partners. Our team may be small, but we're agile, expert and very well connected, with a will to make things happen.

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About us

Our purpose

- Artistic talent - We enable outstanding artists in the performing arts to create inspiring work.
- Togetherness - We strengthen communities through shared experiences that are remembered and talked about for decades.
- Opportunity - We break down barriers that stop people getting involved in performing arts, be that rural isolation, ill health, social deprivation or other obstacles.
- Place - We celebrate our natural landscape and sense of place.

Our mission is to create opportunities for everyone through the performing arts.

Our vision is that extraordinary moments connect and uplift us all.

Anything's Possible and Everyone's Invited

Image courtesy of Roy Riley

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About us

Our work

Activate is an award winning organisation working locally, nationally and internationally. Recognised recently for its contribution to National Landscapes, Activate was awarded the prestigious Bowland Award from the National Landscapes Association.

Meet our creative family...

Inside Out Dorset

Our Inside Out Dorset festival is an award-winning international outdoor arts festival that takes place across the county every two years. The festival is free to attend and takes place outdoors with some site-specific performances and a community engagement programme that takes place year-round. Each festival includes international outdoor theatre and dance events across Dorset, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, in a mix of rural, coastal and urban locations, and attracts audiences of 20,000 each festival.

Activate is now on the Artistic Directorate of the national Without Walls consortium, a significant commissioning partnership for new UK outdoor arts. A member of Circostrada and outdoor Arts UK as well as key strategic county wide initiatives such as the Changemakers in Dorset, Towns of Culture and the BCP Cultural Compact, Activate works locally and internationally.

Engagement

We work with community groups, schools and in partnership with a range of organisation from town councils to further and higher education institutions.

European Partnerships

Activate is a member of the LAND European partnership, bringing artists, cultural organisations and scientists together with partners in the Netherlands, France and Slovakia. Key relationships have been developed in Catalonia, Germany, India and Belgium.

The Remix, The Premix and The Originals

The Remix is an inclusive youth performance company open to young people age 12-17, both disabled and non-disabled, from across Dorset. The Premix is a similar group set up for 5-11 year olds. More recently we have established a new group called The Originals for young adults aged 18-25.

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About us

Dorset Youth Dance

Dorset Youth Dance (DYD) is a county-wide youth dance company dedicated to providing high-quality dance experiences for young people passionate about movement and performance.

For Creatives

To create outstanding events and performances, sometimes creatives need support. We help creatives in performing arts make the most inspiring work they can. We tour manage three companies: Lorna Rees Company, Working Boys Club and Tilly Ingram Theatre.

Consultancy work

We also run a consultancy where we support organisations with our expertise in a way that's tailored to their needs, like expert support in producing, writing an arts strategy, ideas for developing audience engagement or access to a network of performing arts specialists. From working across art forms to working with land custodians such as the National Landscapes Association, our team offer a bespoke service to help organisations reach their goals. Our particular expertise is in presenting live events in sensitive landscapes, and we advise on how to do this in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

Image courtesy of Andy Beeson

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Role description

Image courtesy of Paul Brewer

3 Role description

Chair of Trustees

Activate Performing Arts Ltd (Activate) is seeking a new Chair of Trustees. Activate is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and a regularly funded client of Dorset Council and BCP Council. We are a registered charity and company limited by Guarantee.

This appointment is crucial to our success, and we are looking for a new Chair who shares our passion for the arts to help Activate to realise the next phase in our evolution. The position is voluntary, but expenses will be reimbursed. Meeting expenses can be claimed, and access requirements will be supported.

Overview

The role of the Chair is to provide leadership and direction to the Board of Trustees. The Chair's aim is to enable the Board to fulfil its responsibilities for the overall governance and strategic direction of the organisation, ensuring it complies with its governing document and any other relevant legislation, policies or regulations. The Chair will support the Executive Director and staff team in achieving their vision for the organisation. The Chair will provide inclusive leadership to the Board of Trustees and ensuring that each trustee fulfils their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of Activate. The Chair will also support, and, where appropriate, challenge, ensuring that the Board functions as a unit and works closely with the Executive Director to achieve agreed objectives. The Chair will also serve as an ambassador, representing Activate strategically at a local, regional and national level.

Location

Dorset / hybrid

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Role description

Time commitment

- 4x Board Meetings a year, including the AGM.
  - Meetings are 2 hours, plus travel and time is required to read papers and other documents in advance, which can take between 2-3 hours.
- Monthly check-ins with the Artistic & Executive Director (virtual).
- 4x finance sub-group meetings that support the staff and the wider Board (virtual).
- Opportunity to attend various public events, receptions and performances throughout the year in line with the Chair's capacity.
- 1x strategic away day per year.

There are other sub-groups, which the Chair is welcome to attend, although this is not expected. There will also be formal meetings with stakeholders, approximately once a year.

Please note: Board members have limited financial liability of £1.

Principal duties

- Provide leadership to the Board, building and fostering consensus to ensure that everyone remains focused on the delivery of Activate's mission and vision.
- Ensure that Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of Activate.
- Ensure that the Board operates within its objectives, and provides a clear strategic direction for Activate.
- Ensure that the Board can regularly review strategic risks and associated opportunities and satisfy itself that systems are in place to take advantage of opportunities and manage and mitigate the risks.
- Ensure that the Board fulfils its duties in regard to sound financial health, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability (Board members approve the annual budget and make sure appropriate financial controls are in place).
- Ensure the Board are overseeing the management of health and safety, following policies and procedures.
- Effectively and efficiently chair meetings of the Board, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision-making process.

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Role description

- Ensure that the trustees are fully engaged, decisions are made in the best, long-term interests of Activate, with the Board taking collective ownership.
- Ensure that meetings are well-planned, meaningful, and reflect trustee responsibilities, and monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.
- Establish and build a strong, effective, and constructive working relationship with the Artistic & Executive Director, ensuring they are held accountable for achieving agreed-upon strategic objectives and have the support they need for their own development.
- The Chair is responsible, with the wider Board, for the recruitment of the Artistic & Executive Director.
- Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board.
- Encourage change where appropriate, and address and resolve any conflicts within the Board.
- Appraise the performance of the trustees and the Board on an annual basis.
- Ensure that the Board is regularly refreshed, including supporting recruitment and induction, and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge, and experience needed to govern and lead Activate effectively, reflecting the communities it serves.
- Represent Activate at external functions, meetings and events.

The Board embraces diversity, supports and creates a welcoming environment where difference is embraced, and everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

Image courtesy of Jayne Jackson

4 Person specification

Image courtesy of Roy Riley

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Person spec

Who are we looking for

Experience

- Strategic development: experience in setting strategic direction.
- Sector knowledge: a passion for the performing arts sector.
- Leadership: experience in a leadership role, ideally with knowledge of navigating relationships with core funders like Arts Council England and local authorities.
- Fundraising: an understanding of fundraising to help evolve Activate's business model.
- Advocacy and networking: experience taking an ambassadorial approach, with the ability to network.
- EDI: a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Board development: experience providing guidance to individual Board members.
- Trustee: previous experience as a trustee and charity governance is essential.

Skills

- Collaborative: able to foster a collaborative environment, ensuring all Board members have an opportunity to contribute, rather than being directive.
- Challenge: able to challenge and debate new perspectives on the business model and other strategic areas.
- Values-aligned: must be aligned with Activate's core values, particularly regarding accessibility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and environmental considerations.
- Outward-looking: possess an outward-looking perspective, focusing on enhancing Activate's presence and networks externally.
- Communication: excellent interpersonal skills.

Qualities

- Positive ‘can do’ attitude
- Inclusive and creative thinke
- Integrity and with strong ethical principles
- A respected leader or emerging leader
- An interest in the performing and outdoor arts
- Analytical skills

Activate is particularly interested in increasing representation on our Board of people who have experienced barriers or prejudice relating to their ethnicity and/or due to having a disability, long-term health condition or from a low socio-economic background. We want to better reflect the people we serve in our communities.

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How to apply

Image courtesy of Roy Riley

5 How to apply

Activate is working exclusively with Charisma Charity Recruitment.

Expressions of interest should be submitted through the **Charisma website** and include:

- A comprehensive CV
- A supporting statement (no more than two pages)

For an informal and confidential discussion about the role, please contact: Katherine Anderson-Scott, Executive Director of Charisma Charity Recruitment on 01962 813300 or email info@charismarecruitment.co.uk.

We welcome and encourage applications from people of all backgrounds. We do not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, colour, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status or other category protected by law.

Closing date: 25 August 2026

Charisma vetting interviews will be completed on an ongoing basis.

Interviews with Activate: September 2026

We are committed to inclusive and accessible recruitment processes. If you have any reasonable adjustments, please confirm in your application, or contact our Operations Teams separately on info@charismarecruitment.co.uk

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