



TOWNER

Chair

Feb 2024

Saxton Bampfylde

Proud of our unique place in Eastbourne where the coast and South Downs meet, we create space for experiences that connect, challenge and inspire.



About TOWNER

Towner has been collecting and exhibiting contemporary art for 100 years. It is the largest gallery on the southeast coast and presents an ambitious programme of temporary and collection-based exhibitions, events and engagement activities for 200,000 visitors each year. A winner of Art Fund's *Museum of the Year 2020*, Towner is recognised for balancing its programme with being a free and open community resource. Founded in 1923 by Alderman Towner to create 'an art gallery for the people', this founding ethos remains at the heart of its mission.

Through its 100-year history, Towner's Collection has recorded the artistic voice of the gallery, Sussex and the wider national/international art community and defined the Sussex story through some of the 20th/21st centuries' key artistic movements including arts & crafts, abstraction and more recently moving image, installation and performance.

It reflects artists' evolving interests and concerns around landscape and the environment, including current issues of identity, contested borders, migration and climate. Best known for its modern British art - including the largest and most significant body of work by Eric Ravilious - it also has a growing collection of international contemporary art.

The Learning and Engagement Programme works with individuals and groups, providing artist-led opportunities for exploring creativity and supporting health & wellbeing for families, children and young people, both directly and through schools and community partners. Activities focus on creative process to encourage exploration and ideas generation to build imagination and confidence and deliver health and wellbeing benefits.

Read more about Towner [here](#), and see the latest accounts [here](#).



TOWNER Eastbourne TURNER PRIZE 2023



Recent achievements

During 2023, the gallery celebrated its centenary with Towner 100, a year of exhibitions and events that looked forward to its next 100 years as well as celebrating this important milestone. Exhibitions included *Unseen* of recently acquired collection works and *The Living Collection* which considered Towner's broad and varied history of collecting and exhibiting. *Barbara Hepworth: Life and Art* saw a major survey of the artist's most celebrated sculptures and rarely seen drawings and designs.

As the centrepiece of the centennial programme, Towner has been hosting the prestigious Turner Prize 2023, the world's leading prize for contemporary art. The exhibition which runs until April 2024, is supported by Eastbourne ALIVE, a celebratory community programme focussed on engaging young people in public art, dance, music and community events in collaboration with partners. The first of Arts Council England's Place Partnerships, it commissioned 14 public art works from diverse

emerging artists and established artists. Thousands of children have visited Turner Prize exhibition, including 3500 Year 9 students who have also attended artist-led creative workshops in schools to promote confidence in engaging with contemporary art and develop creative skills.





2024 programme

From May until September 2024 following Turner Prize, the first large-scale exhibition of printmaker Emma Stibbon's work, *Melting Ice / Rising Tides*, will explore the impact on the Arctic and Antarctica from climate change and the direct consequences for Sussex's eroding coastline through Stibbon's drawings, prints and sculptural installations.

Artist Maria Amidu's commissioned artwork *26,778,780 minutes*, a new paper and text-based installation will be presented and acquired for the collection as part of a partnership with iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) which aims to diversify gallery collections and workforces. From September 2024, Towner will present a major exhibition of Canadian artist Kapwani Kiwanga's film, performance, installation and sculptural work. Recognised as one of Canada's most important artists, she will represent the country at the Venice Biennale in 2024. An exhibition of drawings from Towner Collection and public collections will be selected and curated by Liza Dimpleby, senior faculty and board

member of the Royal Drawing School, and David Dimpleby, Towner's outgoing Chair who is retiring after 10 years. The exhibition will illustrate their shared love of communicating with each other through drawing.

The Learning & Engagement programme continues its creative sessions for children and families, schools and adults living with mental health conditions in the gallery and at Willington Trees Community Centre. It is also delivering a new project in Hampden Park at the community centre for 12-18 year olds to promote positive mental health.

Towner will continue supporting Newhaven Enterprize Zone, helping to deliver a cultural strategy and action plan towards Newhaven's twenty-five-year sustainable development plan.





David Nash, *200 Seasons*, 2019, Towner Eastbourne. Photo by Rob Harris

Looking ahead

During this strategy period up to 2027, Towner aims to continue growing its leadership role in building the region's cultural identity: supporting sustainable economic growth and providing tangible benefit for diverse people and places across Sussex and the south coast.

The organisation is entering a period of growth, enabling it to better support its communities through commissioning and other artist opportunities, skills development initiatives and creative engagement activities for children and adults; especially those from Eastbourne's most disadvantaged communities.

Our Goals

1. Build a legacy of Towner 100 and the Turner Prize 2023 to continue changing perceptions of Eastbourne, build audiences and raise aspirations of its communities;
2. Bring broader voices to our board, workforce and volunteers to strengthen organisational culture to broaden access to inclusive cultural experiences and provide an inclusive public space and workplace;
3. Engage with diverse groups, including disabled, the global majority and socio-economically disadvantaged, to increase access to creativity, provide skills & training & deliver health & wellbeing benefits;
4. Promote dynamic business modelling for financial sustainability through partnership, commercial innovation and fundraising and developing new ways of working;
5. Embed a commitment to environmentally sustainable practices across the organisation.





Photo by James Bellorini

Black Robin Farm

Eastbourne Borough Council, in partnership with Towner Eastbourne, has been granted planning permission to create a world-class arts, education and cultural centre in the unique landscape of the South Downs National Park. With initial investment of £12m from the Levelling Up Fund, work will begin on the centre in 2024, with first public access expected for 2026.

Black Robin Farm, situated on a former dairy farm, and embedded in the rolling South Downs landscape, will transform lives by connecting communities and visitors with the outstanding nature, landscape and cultural heritage of the Downslands for health and wellbeing. It is planned to be a new type of culture centre bringing art and landscape together as a new eastern gateway to the South Downs.

It will offer a new destination for 100,000 visitors and participants per year within five years, revitalizing Eastbourne's visitor economy and bringing sustainable growth to the town and more broadly to East Sussex. Visitors will engage in the cultural heritage of the South Downs through public artworks in the landscape, exhibitions, creative activities, artist and maker events and a high quality, locally sourced and sustainable food and drink offer. Black Robin Farm will be designed with sustainability and site specificity at its core, by Stirling Prize shortlisted architects Feilden Fowles, with a commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.



Artist drawing by Finian Reece-Thomas. Photo by Feilden Fowles



The role of Chair

It is ten years since Towner became an independent charity in 2014, during which time it has transformed from a local gallery with 60,000 visitors annually to a significant cultural institution with a national and international profile attracting 200,000 visitors each year.

David Dimbleby has led this transformation as Chair and will step down in September 2024.

This is an exciting time to join as Towner's next Chair, as the gallery enters a new phase in its history as a central player in the development of the story of Sussex. Working with the Trustees, Joe Hill, Director & CEO, and the Executive Team, the new Chair will shape Towner's strategic direction and take it to the next exciting chapter of its illustrious history.

Key duties and responsibilities

- Provide strategic leadership, chairing Board meetings, brokering effective debate and collective decision-making. Ensuring that Trustees continue to be fully engaged and that decisions are taken to maximise Towner's lasting impact. Working closely with the Director & CEO to give direction to Board activities and to ensure meetings are well-planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of the Trustees;
- Build and maintain relationships with important stakeholders in government/related bodies (including Eastbourne Borough Council, Arts Council England and the Charity Commission), across the visual arts arena, in the local community and with businesses, trusts and individuals;
- Act as an ambassador for Towner, promoting the current offer and future vision, working closely with the Director & CEO to build strategic alliances and networks and increase funding and raise the profile of the organisation. Act as a spokesperson for the organisation and represent the gallery at external meetings and events;
- Support fundraising through sourcing potential donors and encouraging and supporting others to do so; meet with potential and existing donors;
- Develop and maintain a strong working relationship with the Director & CEO, ensuring that they are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives. Meet regularly with the Director to maintain an overview of Towner's affairs and to ensure the Director has the opportunity for professional development and appropriate external professional support;
- Lead on Board recruitment and development, monitoring the effectiveness of the Board as a whole and its sub-committees and ensuring the skills and experience of individual trustees are fully utilised;
- Work in partnership with the Director & CEO and the Board to set and regularly review the strategic aims, mission and values of the organisation. Lead the process of recruiting a new Director & CEO should a vacancy arise;
- Support the development of the business plan and the evaluation of performance against agreed targets, including the Investment Principles outlined in Arts Council England 'Let's Create Strategy 2020 - 2030';
- Ensure major risks are reviewed and responded to appropriately by the organisation;
- Ensure that Towner complies with charity law and company law and the organisation functions within the legal and financial requirements of a charitable trust and any other legislation or regulations that apply to it.

Person specification

The successful candidate will be a dynamic and communicative leader and will bring all or most of the following attributes:

- Excellent relationship-building and communication skills. Willing and able to take on the important ambassadorial role for Towner and to represent the gallery across a wide range of external stakeholders including funders, partners, and policymakers;
- Capacity for strategic thinking for ambitions and longer-term development of Towner as an internationally renowned arts organisation;
- Passion for the visual arts and the power of art to transform lives;
- Sufficient time, energy, enthusiasm, drive, and determination;
- Ability and contacts to support philanthropic and other forms of fundraising;
- Experience of working at Board level, ideally with prior experience in a chairing capacity, whether in the commercial, public, or not-for-profit sectors;
- Strong understanding of governance and the role of a non-executive Chair, with a focus on leading and developing the Board;
- Understanding of the financial drivers at play in arts organisations.





John Akomfrah, *Vertigo Sea*, 2021, Towner Eastbourne. Photo by Rob Harris

Terms of appointment

This is an unremunerated role, though reasonable expenses may be reimbursed.

The Chair is appointed on a four-year term. The maximum is two terms plus an additional two years if strategically important, to a 10-year term limit.

Board meetings are held at the gallery 4 times a year (in March, June, September and December), currently on Mondays 11am to 1pm (under review).

Board papers and reports are circulated a week before the meeting. Typically, these can take 30 minutes to read.

The overall time commitment for this role is expected to be 2-3 days a month.



How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Towner on this appointment

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **EBMNA**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on Friday 22nd March 2024.

Key dates of the process

Preliminary interviews with Saxton Bampfylde: w/c 1st, 8th & 15th April 2024

Final interviews with Towner: Friday 10th May 2024

Towner is committed to promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone can be themselves and succeed on merit. We strive to ensure that opportunities to work and develop at Towner are open to all. We treat all job applications equally, regardless of age, disability, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other equality characteristic.

As a Disability Confident Committed Employer, we are committed to offering an interview to candidates with a disability who meet the essential criteria for the role.

**The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.*

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

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Photo by Marc Atkins