

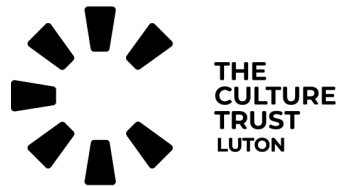


Appointment of

Chief Executive

October 2025 Ref EBWLA

Saxton Bampfylde



Introductory Letter

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive. This is an opportunity to lead The Culture Trust, Luton - a prominent and highly valued part of the town's infrastructure. Our longstanding relationships with local communities inspires an exceptional range of creative and cultural activities.

We highly value our strategic partnership with Luton Council and with our local and national funders. This, together with our own entrepreneurial drive, has grown the Trust's reach and impact.

In our new Chief Executive, we seek a leader with the experience and know how to build on the momentum we have, to strengthen organisational resilience, grow our audiences and increase revenues. We are looking for someone who has an affinity with Luton, its unique heritage, its diverse communities and with the town's vision for its future.

Working across a portfolio of arts, heritage, museums and creative industries you will have every opportunity to make your mark!

We look forward to receiving your application.

Andrea Stark and Robert Smalley
Chair and Co Chair



About us

The Culture Trust, Luton was established in 2008 as a vibrant and progressive independent charity with a mission 'to connect communities through culture'. We do this through our two accredited museums, theatres, galleries, creative workspaces and arts centre in Luton.

We attract over 250,000 visits per annum, operating across three core cluster cultural sites:

- The Hat District (Hat Factory Arts Centre, Hat House and Hat Works);
- Wardown House Museum & Gallery;
- Stockwood Discovery Centre Gardens & Museum.

We connect these local heritage assets and collections with our community through collaboration, co-curation, engagement and care.

The Culture Trust, Luton delivers a cultural programme that is bold in ambition, inclusive by design, and shaped with the people it serves. We celebrate and present the diversity of Luton through a year-round programme that commends contemporary culture. We co-create events, festivals, exhibitions and collections with our neighbours, volunteers and partners and we care for historic buildings, museum collections and sites across Luton. We contribute positively to the social, economic and cultural prosperity of our home-town Luton and surrounding regions. We improve lives, wellbeing and prosperity and contribute towards making Luton a place that is vibrant, exciting, educational and engaging.



OUR MISSION

To connect communities through culture.

OUR VISION

For culture to serve as a catalyst for change, promoting sustainable growth and generating positive impacts in our community and beyond.

OUR STRATEGIC AIM

To balance access to high quality cultural experiences for and with our community with a continued drive to diversify our income and achieve long-term financial sustainability.



How we are run

With an annual turnover of around £3.5m, we are a not-for-profit charity, and we own a trading company which gifts its profit to the charity.

Financial resilience is a core priority for the Culture Trust, Luton. Like most museums, arts venues, and heritage organisations, we have felt the financial pressures of COVID and the cost-of-living crisis in a very real way. To combat this, we are entrepreneurial and increasingly commercially focused, continually reviewing our operation and our offering to come up with new ideas and ensure we are as effective and efficient as we can be to achieve long-term financial sustainability and resilience.

Our approach is underpinned by specialist expertise in the creative culture sector, deep local knowledge, and longstanding partnerships.

We generate funds through our ticket sales of the cultural programme activities, creative workspaces, and events, and through our trading company profit (retail, catering, and property rentals). Alongside this, we have crucial support from our longstanding strategic partnership with Luton Borough Council (LBC) through an annual donation from Luton Rising, with whom we have just secured a new five year funding agreement of £1.65m per annum. We have also just secured an extension grant agreement with Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation (of £332k per annum)

and three-year funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund as a Heritage Development Trust.

Our sites are the main focus for our programmes, activities, trading, operation, and audience development. They are important heritage assets, which all include Grade II listed buildings or grounds of which we are custodians.

We share the care and cost of operating these sites with LBC. The cultural facilities owned by the Culture Trust, Luton, comprise the Hat House creative workspace and Hat Works creative workspace. The Hat Factory, Stockwood Discovery Centre, Wardown House Museum & Gallery, and Cuttenhoe Museum Store are leased.





Our 2024–28 Strategy

We are in year 2 of our current business plan (2024-8), which consists of four key strategies to advance our strategic aim to balance access to high quality cultural experiences for and with our community with a continued drive to diversify our income and achieve long-term sustainability.

1. **Creative & Cultural Strategy**

We will ensure high quality, diverse, inspiring and impactful engagement in arts, culture, creativity and skills with a focus on families, young people, artists and creative industries. Commercially our focus shall be to encourage audience progression and repeat use, and increasing our donations, ticket sales and volunteering.

2. **Museum, Heritage & Place Strategy**

We will widen public access to Wardown Museum & collections, focus on re-developing Stockwood Discovery Museum and grow the Hat District Cluster by safeguarding more heritage buildings and animating this town centre conservation area.

3. **Enterprise growth & Marketing Strategy**

We will grow incomes and trading by developing more frequent commercial cultural events with a focus on live music, great hospitality, and entertainment at the Hat factory and across all sites to ensure effective marketing for audience growth, leading to customer satisfaction and repeat use.

4. **Organisational & Resilience Strategy**

We will ensure we are financially resilient by promoting the impact of our work, investing in effective and efficient resources to maintain high quality delivery and generate credible and sustained increases in commercial incomes, grants and donations and to fundraise for additionality.



We create a pipeline for Luton's future creatives, audiences and cultural leaders.

Creative Pioneers is a year-long incubator programme supporting early-career individuals in the creative industries who are based in or working in Luton. The initiative provides up to ten selected participants with free workspace, a bursary, and tailored professional development, including one-to-one mentoring, group workshops, and networking opportunities. The programme is designed to support creative practitioners at a pivotal stage in their journey — helping them refine their practice, grow sustainable projects or businesses, and build meaningful industry connections.



"Culture Trust didn't just open a door – they showed me I had a voice worth hearing... I didn't know I could do this in Luton. Now I can't imagine doing it anywhere else."

- Creative Pioneers graduate

What we achieved in 2024 - 2025

272,465
cultural visits

Up from 251,361 last year

"The trust's collaboration with local organisations has revitalised Luton's cultural scene and created real pathways for talent development..."

"Bringing people together across generations, especially young people, is vital and Culture Trust has made space for that to happen."

55% of our income is now generated

Reduced dependency on core funding by 12%

"Culture Trust Luton are seen nationally as a model. They have a financial model that works, they're repurposing historic buildings for creative workspaces, and they're changing perceptions of Luton. Other heritage trusts look to them as an example and a leader."

Launch of Creative Pioneers & Factory Associates

Luton-grown future leaders

43% of our programme

Led by Global Majority, LGBTQ+ or community-embedded creatives

"Without Culture Trust, we'd be just another start-up priced out of our hometown. Now, we're a rooted part of something bigger, creative Luton."

10,000+ young people

Engaged in creative and cultural learning and skills

230+ events across all venues (theatre, music, exhibitions, festivals)

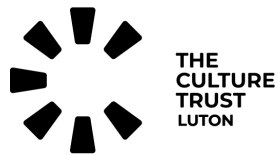
Our commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The Culture Trust Luton believes that culture should be accessible, meaningful and relevant to our local communities, whatever their socio-economic background, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender or disability. Our commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), and our plans for change are based on an audit in 2022 and our statement of intent to advance this agenda. At the heart of this, is our purpose to be a progressive and an entrepreneurial arts and cultural charity with a mission to connect communities through culture. Our over-arching EDI ambition is to mainstream this core agenda across the Trust, as an employer, venue, partner, landlord and commissioner. We want to ensure that the work we do enables a diverse range of people to work and connect with us enabling our community to enjoy, inform, produce and benefit from culture.



"Culture Trust Luton has been an invaluable ally for our LGBTQ+ community, providing essential space for inclusive events and activities that promote acceptance."

- Pride in Luton



Our People

There are approximately 50+ employees across the Culture Trust, Luton.

The day-to-day running of the charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, who reports to the board. In our executive team, we also have a Director of Customer Experience (responsible for operations, property, marketing, and trading) and a Director of Finance & Resources (responsible for finance, HR, and compliance). The role of Creative Director is currently vacant (responsible for arts, museums, skills and learning, and heritage).

Our Board of Trustees provides governance and is responsible for ensuring that the Trust operates in accordance with company and charity law and is prudently financially managed. As volunteers, Trustees contribute their experience and expertise to the Board's role of determining the strategic direction, policies, and planning of the Trust.

The Board meets quarterly to review charity business and ensure it fulfils its duties and responsibilities. Trustees also contribute to sub-committees, which include Finance, NomCo, HR, Trading and Major Projects.



Context for the opportunity

After a decade of outstanding leadership, our Chief Executive, Marie Kirbyshaw, is stepping down following a period of important development and change. She has led a major capital development programme, entrepreneurial business diversification, commissioned new work, and secured our status as a regularly funded Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation as well as under the Heritage Development Trust programme, whilst navigating the pressures of COVID and rising costs.

Having laid the foundations for our recovery, we recognise that we still have more change and challenges ahead, and so we seek an ambitious Chief Executive who can navigate these, whilst also leading on how museums, arts, and heritage can further guide our work in this field locally and nationally.

The Culture Trust, Luton, is an unusual and complex organisation with fantastic opportunity—operating across placemaking, museums, heritage, and the arts. Among the immediate opportunities is the evolution of the Discovery Centre Museum, a unique and, in many ways, a gem of a project that will be at RIBA Stage 2 by the time of appointment, with a major development in motion. This flagship programme will be led by the new Chief Executive, offering a fantastic opportunity for a new leader to get their teeth into. Alongside it sits the exciting listed heritage site capital project expansion of the Hat District creative industry cluster, exploring the acquisition of a historic factory site. This is bold work, requiring strong partnership building and commercial nous to navigate the opportunity.

Success in these ventures will depend on the Chief Executive's ability to foster strong external relationships and unlock resources. The Trust's key strategic partners include LBC and Luton Rising, as well as Arts Council England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the Architectural Heritage Fund, alongside national cultural networks. Fundraising and income diversification will remain essential priorities: the new Chief Executive will work with a recently appointed temporary fundraising manager to grow support from trusts, foundations, donors, and commercial partners, building resilience and enabling further investment in people and projects.

The cultural leadership of the Trust is equally important. The organisational culture is one of energy, change, and ambition. New curatorial staff, marketing and HR expertise have recently joined, bringing fresh knowledge and drive. There is also a National Lottery heritage funded project called Reconnect that is driving a refreshed customer-responsive approach, ensuring consistent excellence across all touchpoints. There is currently a gap in the leadership team in the form of a Creative Director, with scope for the incoming Chief Executive to shape the executive team going forward.

This role is therefore one of vision, financial resilience, complexity, and versatility, offering a unique opportunity to lead a diverse, multi-disciplinary cultural trust, to drive bold projects that transform place and community, and to shape how museums, arts, and heritage enrich civic life locally and nationally.

Chief Executive

Responsible to the Chair and Board of Trustees, the role of the Chief Executive will be to provide innovative and dynamic leadership for the charity across all platforms, driving strategy and high performing Museums, Heritage, Arts, Culture and Creative Industries.

Leading on strategy and policy, they will ensure sustainable cultural provision, visitor growth, community engagement and financial resilience via the development of income generating opportunities, partnerships and high-quality visitor experiences.

The successful candidate will advocate and promote for The Culture Trust locally, regionally and nationally with networks, strategic partners, communities and stakeholders to ensure purpose, relevance and impact.



Principal Responsibilities

- Lead the charity's vision, values and strategic direction, working closely with Trustees to ensure a creative and resilient organisation which connects communities through culture, ensuring cultural provision and maximising cultural engagement to improve the quality of life for individuals and to contribute to a strong social and economic environment in Luton.
- Support the Chair of Trustees to ensure that the Board and sub-committees are equipped and informed to lead the direction setting for the charity, enabling effective and appropriate governance, including leading on reporting, research, business planning and organisational development.
- Drive the successful development of income generation through successful fundraising and partnership development to support the Trust's resilience and growth.
- Build and maintain key relationships and communication pathways with stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally. Be an ambassador and spokesperson for the Trust and demonstrate impact and promote the values of the Trust across all pathways.
- Contribute to the development of, and learning from, best and innovative practice and support and encourage the senior team to be leaders in their respective fields.
- To be lead custodian of all heritage, museum collections and assets, including creative workspaces and commercial trading spaces. Plan and ensure strategic capital improvement and high-quality upgrading to meet needs and aspirations for cultural use and growth. To provide specialist skills and leadership on projects and funding that ensure heritage care and the conservation of the Trust's heritage buildings and Luton Council collections and property leased to the Trust.
- Work and negotiate with strategic funding partners to ensure that outcomes and KPIs are aligned and delivered for the benefit of visitors / community and users and for the long-term sustainability of the charity.
- Translate the charity's strategic direction into a business plan with clear priorities underpinned by agreed outcomes and performance measures of success required for delivery. Work with and support the Director of Finance and Resources to ensure an informed financial plan for the strategy, both capital and revenue, and oversee the delivery plans for the team.
- Provide leadership across the organisation and ensure Equity, Diversity and Inclusion is embedded into all aspects of business and cultural planning and provision of programmes, partnerships, recruitment, customer experience and audience development.
- Ensure a joined up supportive working environment across the charity, setting a clear, agreed framework that encourages creativity and contributions from colleagues, high performance, exemplary communications at all levels and enabling the team of staff, volunteers and the board to thrive and flourish.

Person Specification

Knowledge and Experience

- Substantial senior management experience in a comparable multi-faceted cultural organisation or service, including having managed large budgets and resources and operating in a strategic management role.
- Substantial experience in formulating and successfully implementing cultural strategies and business plans with KPIs and measured impacts.
- Successful experience of initiating and generating income through partnerships, fundraising, visitor growth and spend and commercial initiatives.
- A track record of cultural fundraising, particularly capital projects, is desirable.
- Prior understanding of the charity sector and its governance and funding models.
- Knowledge of, and track record within, the cultural sector to provide sound professional advice and guidance to the board, staff and partners on cultural matters.
- Prior experience of leading a cultural organisation, service, or venue, with a knowledge of museums, heritage and collections, is desirable.
- Experience of leading high-quality cultural programmes and/or events.
- In-depth knowledge and experience of embedding Diversity, Equality and Inclusion best practice, and ability to lead on integrating policies and best practice into business plans, strategies, service delivery and employment practices.

Skills, Abilities and Attributes

- Substantial ability to lead an organisation towards financial sustainability, resilience and growth.
- Exemplary communication skills, with the ability to consult widely at all levels, build effective and productive partnerships internally and externally; bringing political awareness; effective engagement and negotiation with tact, diplomacy.
- Substantial advocacy skills including written work and presenting reports on complex issues to mixed audiences.
- Ability to provide clear, decisive and positive leadership to all those working within the Trust and its partners and users, enabling skills and talents to grow within a clear and agreed framework.
- Skills to influence, advocate for and enthuse about culture. Able to give articulate, comprehensible and persuasive presentations to a wide variety of audiences.
- Substantial management and decision-making skills: able to make sound business decisions in a complex, challenging and changing environment.
- Able to organise and undertake a diverse workload, manage constant and often conflicting work demands, lead independently and with minimal support to meet competing deadlines and targets.

We will consider any reasonable adjustments under the terms of the Equality Act (2010), to enable an applicant with a disability (as defined under the Act) to meet the requirements of the post.



Terms of Appointment

Location: Luton. This is a site-based role.

Salary: £90,000.

Pension: contributory pension scheme.

Annual leave: 27 days – exclusive of bank holidays.

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.



How to Apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to The Culture Trust, Luton on this appointment.

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

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 **Thursday 23rd October 2025.**

* 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.





Saxton Bampfylde