

Chair of the Board of Trustees: Candidate information pack October 2021

Modern Poetry in Translation is looking for a new Chair to lead the Board of Trustees and build on the achievements of Chris Meade, who has guided the charity through a period of transformation and expansion over the past five years.

About Modern Poetry in Translation

Modern Poetry in Translation was founded by Ted Hughes and Daniel Weissbort in 1965 with two principal ambitions: to get poetry out from behind the Iron Curtain into a wider circulation in English and to benefit writers and the reading public in Britain and America by confronting them with good work from abroad. They published poetry that dealt truthfully with the real contemporary world. For more than 50 years *MPT* has continued and widened that founding intent.

MPT builds on the first editors' extraordinary achievement. It brings together the best new poetry, essays and reviews from around the world. We aim to give voice to the silenced, exiled and excluded, and create a diverse and creative community of translators, poets and readers.

The editors of the Third Series (2002-2012), David and Helen Constantine, sought to widen and diversify the whole idea and practice of translation. They published transformations and metamorphoses of all kinds: down the ages, across the frontiers and cultures. They increased the rate and scope of *MPT*'s linked activities such as translation workshops, poetry pamphlets and public poetry readings here and abroad.

The Constantines established more formal governance of the organisation and also increased its resilience and efficiency. *MPT* became a registered charity in 2007. After several years as an Arts Council England Regularly Funded Organisation, it was made an ACE National Portfolio organisation in 2012.

In 2013 the editorship of *MPT* passed to Sasha Dugdale. The magazine was redesigned, with reference to the original iconic designs of the 1960s and 70s.

The magazine is currently edited by poet and translator Clare Pollard, succeeding Sasha Dugdale in November 2017.

The Chair's Role and Responsibilities

The Board currently comprises 10 trustees with a broad range of experience and skills. The whole Board meets 3 to 4 times a year with the staff team to set strategy, budgets and to monitor progress. Individual Board members have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and specific trustees assist staff with finance, fundraising, equality, diversity and inclusion, policy development and business planning at appropriate points throughout the year. The Board has responsibility for recruiting senior personnel and forms sub-committees for this purpose.

- Provide leadership of the Board of Trustees in making decisions about the governance and strategic direction of the charity
- Ensure the provision of accurate, timely and clear information to trustees
- Ensure that trustees are given sufficient time to consider critical issues and given realistic deadlines for decision-making
- Ensure arrangements are in place for sound oversight of the organisation's financial affairs
- Support and review the work of the Editor, Managing Editor and staff team, including their appointment and supervision as well as ongoing monitoring of their performance
- Represent *MPT*, fostering partnerships and promoting the organisation to supporters
- Strengthen relationships with existing and prospective donors
- Support the effectiveness of individual trustees and the Board as a whole, directing both an appropriate induction process and ongoing training and development as needed
- Review the performance of themselves, the Board, the Editor and Managing Editor once a year
- Manage succession planning for the Board of Trustees

As a member of the Board of Trustees, the Chair shares the following statutory duties with other trustees and leads in their fulfilment:

- Ensure that *MPT* is well governed and fully compliant with its own governing documents and all relevant legislation, including charity and company law
- Ensure that *MPT* applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives and for the public benefit
- Contribute actively to the Board's role in giving firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets, and evaluating performance against agreed targets

- Safeguard *MPT*'s good name and values
- Review major risks and make appropriate provision for mitigating them
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of *MPT*
- Ensure the financial stability of *MPT* and the proper stewardship of its property, funds and resources

Person Specification

We are looking for someone with a passion for literature from a variety of cultures and a commitment to the vision, mission and values of *MPT*.

MPT is also committed to championing equality, diversity and inclusion in all our employment practices and activities and welcome expressions of interest from all sections of society. We aim to appoint individuals based solely on their applicable skills, knowledge, experience and attitudes.

It is essential that in your written application you give specific evidence, by way of examples, of past personal experience, of each of the selection criteria in Part One of the person specification. These responses will be developed and discussed with those candidates invited for interview, together with the other criteria listed in Part Two.

Part One: Knowledge and Experience

- Demonstrable track record of leading an organisation, at Board or senior management level with appropriate knowledge of corporate and charity governance
- Good knowledge of the type of work undertaken by *MPT* and an understanding of the arts sector as well as the wider voluntary and public sector
- An excellent understanding of, and commitment to, principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in the arts and organisation management

Part Two: Skills and Abilities

- A clear communicator with an open and inclusive style and with experience of chairing meetings efficiently and effectively
- Strong interpersonal skills: able to handle complex, sensitive relationships with a range of individuals and organisations to promote and support *MPT*'s work
- An ability to encourage contributions to the funding of the charity
- The ability to act as a critical friend who empowers and constructively challenges the Editor and staff team
- An excellent understanding of governance and the responsibilities of trustees

- Knowledge of a language(s) other than English is desirable, but not essential

MPT is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and so you may find it useful to consult and/or reference their expectations around Governance and the Investment Principles as part of your application: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/governance-working-investment-principles>

Terms and Conditions of Appointment

Time commitment:

The chair needs to commit to the equivalent of approximately two days per month to perform their duties. There are three to four Board meetings each year, they usually take place on weekday mornings and last approximately two hours. There is also an Annual General Meeting and Board Away Day, this usually takes place during a weekday in November.

Remuneration:

This is a voluntary role.

Expenses:

Reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

Term:

Three years, renewable for up to two further three-year terms

How to Apply

To apply for this post, please submit:

- Your CV
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides of A4) that fully addresses the appointment criteria set out in Part One of the person specification
- Details of two referees whom we would be able to contact at shortlist stage

Please also complete and submit the accompanying equal opportunities monitoring form. The information on the form will be treated as confidential, and used for statistical purposes only. The form will not be treated as part of your application.

The closing date for applications is noon on Friday 19 November 2021.

If you would like to discuss this role in confidence, please email the current Acting Chair of the Board, Andrew Smardon, on: mptchair@btinternet.com

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to meet representatives of the Board in December.