Role Specification

Rivertime Boat Trust

Chair of the Board

2026

The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service

The Rivertime Boat Trust was created by Pat and Simon Davis 20 years ago (2006) with the aim of enabling disabled/disadvantaged people to have access to the River Thames. They launched a pioneering project to build a bespoke wheelchair accessible motor cruiser and '*Rivertime*' was launched in 2008.

The Charity has grown significantly since 2008 and *Rivertime* has now welcomed over 35,000 passengers on board since her launch with 2,500 passengers in 2025 alone. The Charity has also expanded its work to include children's education: having gained *Learning Outside the Classroom* accreditation, SEND school children are now able to take part in an immersive learning experience through partnerships with local educational teams learning about, and fostering a passion for the river, its wildlife, fauna and flora.

The positive effects of green social spaces on the health and wellbeing of individuals is well recognised but little is documented on the benefits of time out on water. A Rivertime Boat Trust evaluation project in 2025 demonstrated the value of this to Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. Academic, health and wellbeing objectives were found met, as well as sensory, communication and behavioural needs supported. Wheelchair access was noted to enable all young people to participate equally, promoting inclusion and confidence.

Rivertime Boat Trust is taking another innovative leap forward by commissioning a second boat which will enable more people to benefit from a day on the river. With sustainability at the heart of the project, the new vessel will be electrically powered.

The new boat will broaden the geographical areas where the Charity can operate and expand the number of people who can enjoy all the benefits that the River Thames offers.

Role Overview

- **Role Title:** Chairman of the Board of Trustees
- **Commitment:** Part-time (approx. 5 days per month and four trustee meetings per annum)
- **Location:** Henley area (Board meetings and events)
- **Purpose:** Governance, high-level fundraising, and strategic advocacy for disabled/disadvantaged children and adults

Key Responsibilities

Leadership & Governance

- Lead the board of trustees to ensure the Charity follows its core mission.
- Ensure the makeup of the board of trustees gives a broad and balanced mixture of skills, interests and experience.
- Set the Board agenda primarily focusing on strategy, performance, value creation, culture, stakeholders and accountability (ensuring that decisions relevant to these areas are reserved for the board).
- Run board meetings fairly and keep discussions focused, ensuring that each trustee's views are heard and valued.
- Ensure the fitness and propriety of the trustees.
- Ensure that trustees receive accurate, timely and clear information, including on the Charity's current performance to enable the Board to make sound decisions, monitor effectively and provide advice and ensure the continuing success of the Charity.
- Oversee the induction and development of new trustees.
- Guide the Manager and Skipper and offer regular support and review to them and other employees and volunteers as appropriate.
- Ensure the Charity follows all legal rules and its financial duties.
- Uphold the highest standards of integrity, probity and risk management.
- Lead regular Board Effectiveness Reviews and act on the result as appropriate.

Fundraising & Donor Cultivation

- Lead in raising money from donors, trusts, and corporate partners.
- Use personal and professional networks to open doors for new funding.
- Host and speak at fundraising and other charity events.
- Inspire high-net-worth individuals to support in the Charity's work.

Advocacy & Representation

- Act as the public face and lead ambassador for the Charity.
- Build strong links with community leaders, local government, and media.
- Speak with passion and authority on issues affecting disabled/disadvantaged children and adults and explain how ***Rivertime Boat Trust*** makes a real difference for them.
- Foster open and inclusive discussions which appropriately guide and challenge the Charity Manager and Managing Skipper

<u>Ideal Candidate</u>

Experience & Background

- **Networked:** Strong connections to business leaders, donors and influential communities who can support the cause.
- **Fundraiser:** Proven success in securing major gifts, sponsorships, or large-scale donations would be advantageous.
- **Cause-Driven:** A deep, genuine interest in improving the lives of disabled/disadvantaged children and adults.

Skills & Qualities

- Driven, enthusiastic and a proactive approach to leading the Charity's growth and development.
- Natural authority, strong presence, and the ability to command respect in any room.
- Excellent listening skills and the ability to bring the board members together.
- Deep understanding of corporate governance principles, regulatory frameworks, and statutory responsibilities of a Chair and Board Directors/Trustees.
- Demonstrated capability to lead a Board effectively, fostering a culture of openness, constructive challenge and collaborative decision-making.
- Proven strategic thinker with the capacity to balance long-term vision with the need for effective oversight and risk management.
- Ability and desire to dedicate sufficient time and commitment to the role, including attending meetings in person.
- Bring a business / strategic perspective, financial acumen and a commercial mind-set to the board, as well as planning, organisation, and management skills.

Term

- Three years, renewable by mutual consent

Applications

All applicants should visit: https://rivertimeboattrust.org.uk/chairperson where a CV and covering letter can be uploaded. If you have any questions regarding the role these can be sent to the Operations Trustee at office@rivertime.org.uk.

Trustees

Chair (Interim)

Jonathan Hobbs joined the board at the charity's inception.

Jonathan is the MD at Hobbs of Henley, one of the longest running family businesses on the Thames and has been a Trustee since *Rivertime*'s inception.

He is also a governor at the Oratory School and a Royal Waterman.

Since taking over the Hobbs business from his father, Jonathan has brought in many changes, increasing the size of the Hobbs rental fleet with both day boats and larger passenger boats and more.

Hobbs of Henley kindly supports 'Rivertime' in many logistical ways from their base in Henley.

Guy Fisher – Re-Joined the Board in 2025.

Guy was initially introduced to ***Rivertime Boat Trust*** by fundraising for the charity (a row from London to Paris in 2010) and he subsequently volunteered both aboard and administratively for ten years. Following a stint on the Board, he stepped own to manage the charity for six months in 2023, before re-joining, and he has since been instrumental in implementing new systems and a new website.

Guy has used and loved the river since childhood, and he has operated two boat hire businesses on the Thames, amongst other ventures. He is an experienced fixed-seat rower and continues to get out on the river regularly.

Ian Lazarus - Joined the Board in January 2026

Ian has enjoyed the River Thames from his earliest childhood when the charity founders, Pat and Simon Davies, would take Ian and his family on their boat every summer.

Today Ian is a partner in an executive search firm in London, Sterling James. Ian has worked in the US as well as the UK, he has a BA from the University of York and an MBA from INSEAD.

Ian has always been passionate about conservation as well as people and he was a trustee and then Senior Independent Director of the Durrell Trust (2012-2018). He is currently a trustee of Whitley Fund For Nature (2016-present). Ian is also a governor of junior school for girls.

Dr. Diane Smyth - Joined the Board 2023.

Diane is a retired consultant paediatric neurologist and neurodisability specialist. Many of the children and young people in her care had severe learning and/or physical disability.

During her career she played a pivotal role in establishing a nationally standardized paediatric neurodisability training programme from which all children and young people coming on board Rivertime will have benefitted. She was a key instigator of strengthening the process of transfer of young people's care from paediatric to adult services.

After joining the RBT Board she initiated an Evaluation study looking at what might be the benefit of outings on Rivertime to disabled and disadvantaged children and young people. The findings have shown a positive impact on behaviour, learning and social communication skills.