



ARVON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE &
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

CANDIDATE BRIEFING
DOCUMENT

NOVEMBER 2018

Letter from the Chair

Dear Applicant

Thank you for responding to our recent advertisement for a new Chief Executive and Artistic Director. I'm happy to provide some information about Arvon's work and the role of CEO. You may also want to visit our website: www.arvon.org.

A thriving, ambitious arts charity, one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations, Arvon has just celebrated its 50th anniversary. We produce an annual programme of residential creative writing courses at three remarkable houses in Shropshire, Devon and Yorkshire. Tutored by a combination of established and up-and-coming authors, the courses offer a powerful mix of workshops and individual tutorials, with time and space to read and write, free from the distractions of everyday life. A third of our residential weeks are with schools, young people and disadvantaged adult groups. Arvon has been described by Carol Ann Duffy as 'the single most important organisation for sharing and exploring creative writing in the UK.'

If you have any questions about the role or the organisation, please speak to our recruitment consultant, Heather Newill, who will be pleased to help you. She can be reached on hnewill@aeminternational.co.uk or 01728 660026.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,

Jeremy Treglown



JEREMY TREGLOWN, FRSL

Chair of the Trustees

Senior Research Fellow, Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study,
University of London
Professor Emeritus, University of Warwick

Arvon

Free Word
60 Farringdon Road
London EC1R 3GA

1. Introduction

Arvon was founded in 1968 by two poets, John Moat and John Fairfax, with the original aim of providing time and space away from school for young people to write poetry. John Moat wrote that they were inspired to create Arvon "as a place where individuals, and in particular young committed writers, could be given a sanctuary away from ...the creative deprivation imposed by the system of standard education and there offered... the guidance of writers".

The first residential course was run in a community centre in Devon, for a group of 16 - 18-year olds from a range of Devon schools. Totleigh Barton in Devon became Arvon's first centre in 1972.

In 1975 Arvon began running courses at Lumb Bank near Hebden Bridge, Yorkshire, the former home of Ted Hughes. Hughes was a guest on the first course and with his wife Carol played an important role in the subsequent growth of Arvon into a national creative writing organisation. In 1980, in order to raise funds for Arvon he established the Arvon International Poetry Competition. That year his fellow judges were Charles Causley, Philip Larkin and Seamus Heaney. The competition featured on the South Bank Show and received over 36,000 entries. It was won by the future poet laureate Andrew Motion.

From the outset it was the belief of Arvon's leading figures that an Arvon Centre was a 'Free house of the Imagination', and as such was owned by anyone and everyone who opened themselves to being part of its life. Arvon offers a home for creative writing, where anyone, regardless of writing experience, can step away from their normal routine, immerse themselves in the creative process, be inspired by experienced writers and release their imaginative potential.

In 1999, with the help of an Arts Council grant, Arvon acquired The Hurst, the former home of playwright John Osborne, in Shropshire. Arvon also ran courses between 1993 and 2014 at Moniack Mhor near Inverness, Scotland. In 2016, Arvon launched Writers' Retreats at The Clockhouse, a purpose designed building in the grounds of The Hurst.

Past tutors have included Paul Abbott, Beryl Bainbridge, Angela Carter, Iain Banks, Malcolm Bradbury, Hilary Mantel, Michael Morpurgo and Salman Rushdie. Present tutors include Mark Haddon, Melvin Burgess, Malorie Blackman, David Eldridge, Sinead Morrissey, Rachel Seiffert, Kamila Shamsie, Jo Shapcott, Sarah Churchwell and Simon Armitage.

Arvon's courses and retreats, led by established writers, span poetry to playwriting, song to screenplay, fact to fiction, starting to finishing – and grants are available to help with course fees for those who need them. Generations of writers have been inspired by their experience at Arvon. Each year, over 40 courses are run with schools and vulnerable groups, from young people who have experienced bullying to adults recovering from an addiction. Arvon also works closely with teachers to support their professional development. To ensure our doors stay open to all, we rely on donations from charitable trusts and individuals.

An Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, Arvon is run by a talented, wide-ranging and exceptionally committed staff of around thirty, divided between its three rural houses and the London office. The thirteen-strong Board of Trustees is no less diverse and energetic.

Our Vision

We believe creative writing can change lives for the better. Creative writing allows us to harness our imagination and find our voice. It creates new possibilities, new ideas, new futures. It unlocks our potential, our empathy and our hope. And we're keen to share this opportunity for transformation with as many people as possible.

Our Values

INCLUSIVE: Everyone is creative. We make spaces that are open to all, where anyone regardless of writing experience, feels welcome and included as part of a community of writers.

INSPIRING: Step away from the routine, be inspired by writers and our beautiful places and release your imaginative potential. Arvon is a place for contemplation, challenge and going beyond what you thought you were capable of achieving.

SUPPORTIVE: Creative writing is a craft that can be learnt, through guidance from experts, and through the peer support that comes from creative friendships with fellow writers. At Arvon, writers teach writers, and everyone encourages each other to become a better writer.

TRANSFORMATIVE: Immersing yourself in creative writing nourishes the imagination, can deepen the connection to self and to the world, and can lead to dramatic change and progress.

Our Strategic Aims (2018 – 2022 Business Plan)

- Broaden and deepen our offer to writers, so that Arvon provides a continuum of support in a writer's journey from beginner to experienced.
- Celebrate and reflect the diversity of modern British society by increasing the reach of our work to writers from all backgrounds.
- Strengthen Arvon's financial resilience and sustainability.
- Renovate Lumb Bank, creating a fit-for-purpose northern hub for writers.

Arvon's Impact

Each year Arvon delivers over 80 residential writing courses in our centres through our public course programme, attended by more than 1,200 aspiring writers. In addition, we host up to 50 residential weeks for schools and community groups, reaching over 700 young people and vulnerable adults.

As a result of our Learning and Participation Programme (schools, young people and community groups), independent evaluation shows that attending an Arvon week has a transformative effect on participants, explicitly relating to:

- young people's wellbeing
- raised educational attainment
- enhanced creative capacity
- changes in attitude
- deepened engagement with writing and learning

Grants Scheme

To ensure that we support the most diverse range of voices possible in attending our public courses, Arvon administers a grants scheme, judged by financial need and applicants' commitment to developing their writing. Each year, we award up to 150 grants providing access to creative writing training for those on low incomes, who come from marginalised groups, or who face challenging lives due to ill health or other reasons. Our grants are supported by investment income from our endowment fund, individual supporters, corporate donations and a growing number of Trusts and Foundations.

Financial Overview

Arvon's annual turnover is approximately £2m and includes an unrestricted grant of £388,000 per annum from Arts Council England. The houses and their grounds are wholly owned by the charity, with a charge over them from Arts Council England, while the London office is rented. There is also a small capital endowment. The charity raises substantial additional income each year from Trust and Foundations, sponsors and donors, in addition to the funds raised from the courses.

Further information on Arvon can be found at: www.arvon.org

Further information of Arvon Staff and Trustees can be found at: <https://www.arvon.org/about/meet-the-team/>

Arvon is committed to openness and equality of opportunity in every activity, from the way we employ staff to the way we deliver services. It expects board members, managers, employees and contractors to ensure that every individual with whom we come into contact is treated with dignity and respect.

2. The Role

The role of Arvon's Chief Executive & Artistic Director is to provide inspirational leadership, strategic direction, artistic vision and to lead the long-term financial stability and growth for the organisation.

The Chief Executive & Artistic Director reports to the Chair of the Board of Trustees and works closely with the Trustees in developing the strategic direction of Arvon and in achieving the charity's aims. The Chief Executive & Artistic Director is directly responsible for a senior management team of six: Director of Finance & Resources, Head of Learning and Development, Head of Communications and Digital, Centre Director (Lumb Bank), Centre Director (The Hurst) and Centre Director (Totleigh Barton).

Key Responsibilities

Leadership, Staff Management and Team Building

- Provide exemplary leadership, vision and motivation for Arvon and its staff, creating a positive and inclusive working environment and ensuring best practice and equality of opportunity.

- Lead recruitment of key staff and the line management and appraisal of the Senior Management Team, ensuring regular meetings to monitor performance against the Business Plan.
- Facilitate at least two full team meetings across the year, bringing all Arvon staff together to evaluate the achievement of the organisation and to build effective working relationships.
- Visit the writing houses on a regular basis to meet the Centre Directors and their teams in order to build strong working relationships.

Business & Financial Strategy

Together with the Director of Finance and Resources:

- Lead development and updating of the Business Plan for approval by the Board, incorporating clear goals for performance management and targets for income, audiences, quality assurance, diversity and equality monitoring.
- Lead implementation and monitoring of the objectives set out in the Business Model Review.
- Lead the annual budget setting process and oversight of financial control.
- Ensure the delivery of regular management accounts.
- Lead development and implementation of strategies to secure the most effective use and improvement of Arvon's buildings.
- Ensure Arvon operates within the relevant charity law and financial regulation.
- Regular review and updating of risk register.
- Seek out and identify potential new business and income streams and develop these in partnership with the Senior Management Team and in consultation with the Trustees.

Artistic Direction

- Lead Arvon's artistic policy in order to further its objectives in regard to creative writing and the arts more generally.
- Lead the team of Centre Directors and Learning & Participation staff in devising the annual programme of courses, retreats and both local and national partnership initiatives.
- Manage the programming team to ensure that agreed artistic direction and policies are met.
- Lead the agreed strategy for audience development and ensure its implementation.
- Oversee the development of Arvon's digital strategy.

Fundraising and Development

- Build relationships with new and existing partners and benefactors including sponsors, government agencies, literature organisations and major funders. Act as Arvon's key contact with Arts Council England.
- Work closely with the Head of Development to ensure that Arvon meets the fundraising targets set in conjunction with the Finance Committee and the Board.
- Lead fundraising events, as appropriate.
- Cultivate creative partnerships which develop the organisation and its aims.
- Inspire and motivate Arvon Friends and individual donors.

Advocacy

- Represent Arvon effectively at public forums and events as appropriate, acting as Arvon's public face.
- Contribute to the smooth running of Free Word, Arvon's London base.

Quality Assurance

- Manage the staff to ensure that the tutorial and residential experience of Arvon students is of high quality.
- Ensure adequate course evaluation systems for students and tutors and the complaints procedure, and act on the conclusions.
- Lead direction and monitoring of the effectiveness of Arvon's procedures in achieving the organisation's equality aims and ensure open and equal access to all Arvon courses, advising Trustees where changes are needed.
- Ensure the maintenance and improvement of the Arvon properties and grounds in conjunction with the Properties Committee and Centre Directors.

Governance

- Work with the Chair to ensure that Arvon's Board is accountable, well informed and effective in supporting the organisation.
- Ensure that the Executive plays a part in the selection and appointment of Trustees when vacancies occur.
- Ensure reporting on organisational progress to the Board and implementation of decisions made by the Board at its meetings.
- Propose to the Chair and the Board of Trustees any changes in the strategic direction and policies of the charity.

3. Person Specification

The ideal candidate will have the following experience, skills, qualities and knowledge:

Experience

- Demonstrable experience in the successful leadership, management and development of teams.
- A track record of leading on strategic planning and delivery to high standards.
- Demonstrable experience in managing significant budgets.
- A track record in initiating, developing and maintaining effective partnerships.
- Proven ability in developing and establishing new commercial revenue streams.
- Experience in, and enthusiasm for the arts and cultural sector.
- Experience of advocacy, fund-raising and ideally an understanding of Art Council England's policies.

Desirable

- Experience of working within a charity, not-for-profit organisation or comparable business.
- Experience of leading and delivering a major capital project.

Skills and Qualities

- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- Openness, adaptability and resilience.
- Powerful ambition to help the charity grow in scope and reputation.
- Ability to work with a Board of Trustees.
- Ability to travel regularly to the regional writing houses.

Knowledge

- Understanding of and commitment to Equal Opportunities.
- Willing to embrace new technology and digital trends, demonstrating an understanding of their relevance in the future development of Arvon's activities.

4. Summary of Terms of Employment

Contract	Permanent full-time contract
Salary	Up to £64,000 pa, dependent on experience
Notice period	Six months' notice
Probationary period	Six months, with one month's notice
Pension	5% employer contribution into Arvon's Automatic Enrolment workplace pension scheme; 3% employee contribution.
Holidays	25 days a year plus statutory bank holidays. Arvon closes between Christmas and the New Year and this holiday is included in the 25 days entitlement.
Location	Free Word, Clerkenwell
Relocation	A relocation package will be negotiable.

5. How to Apply

Please send a CV and covering letter (no longer than 3 sides of A4), stating why you think you are suitable for the job and how your experience matches the job description and person specification, to Heather Newill, Director AEM International, on hnewill@aeminternational.co.uk or by post to AEM International Ltd, 10 Church Street, Framlingham, Suffolk. IP13 9BH. Please complete and include the Equal Opportunities Form with your application.

All applications will be acknowledged.

Application deadline: Monday 31st December 2018