



February 2023

mySociety

Chair of Trustees

Recruitment Pack



Can you lend your expertise to a truly unique organisation?

We're looking for a new **Chair of Trustees** for the charity mySociety.

There is no other organisation quite like mySociety. Being a member of our board means you'll be part of conversations and decision-making processes that are never boring — and might just change the world.

In this, our 20th year, we are at a pivotal point in the mySociety journey, having signed off a new strategy that will significantly and sustainably grow the positive impact our UK services have for citizens.

Through this strategy, we'll reach more, and more kinds of people, focusing on those under-served by democracy. We'll be pressing democratic institutions to better meet citizens' needs, making the case with insights from our services and support from the communities that use them. We'll develop new services and features across our core areas of work to drive the democratic transition we need in response to the climate crisis.

If these goals inspire you, then please read on.

About mySociety

mySociety has a mission to repower democracy through the provision of technology, research and data that is used by individuals, journalists, and civil society in more than 40 countries around the world.

Established in 2003, we are a not for profit group operating across the areas of Transparency, Community, Democracy and Climate.

Thanks to our longevity, reliability and concerted community-building, we're widely recognised as a pioneer in the use of online technologies to help citizens take their first steps towards greater civic participation, connecting people and organisations at scale. In the UK, we run a number of popular civic services including [FixMyStreet](#), [WhatDoTheyKnow](#), [WriteToThem](#), [TheyWorkForYou](#), and [CAPE](#), the Climate Action Plan Explorer. We also carry out sector-leading research.



How we work

Our Theory of Change sees us working to connect with other organisations in our areas of operation, to maximise the benefits for both sides, drawing upon each of our strengths to create digital tools and services that are greater than the sum of their parts.

mySociety services help citizens to improve their neighbourhoods and engage with local government, contributing to resilient and flourishing community life; and support

meaningful participation in local and national democracy, supporting new models for direct citizen participation in democratic decision-making. More recently, we've been applying our experience and skills to the climate emergency, with specific focus on offering practical, meaningful support and challenge to local government in their endeavours to reduce carbon emissions.

In the UK our democratic and civic services and programmes serve over 11 million people each year. In addition we support groups around the world to establish and make a success of their own, similar sites. Our software and expertise powers Freedom of Information services in 25 countries around the world, supporting the work of journalists and campaigners to increase accountability and transparency.

mySociety helped kickstart the Civic Technology sector more than 15 years ago, helping to drive its growth and expansion internationally. Our research team aims to establish how, whether and when Civic Technology can make a difference, and share these learnings widely with civil society and governments — and we bring the sector together through our [TICTeC research conferences](#).

Our charitable work is made possible by major grants from funders including Quadrature Climate Foundation, The National Lottery Community Fund, Adessium Foundation, Swedish Postcode Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Community Trust, and National Endowment for Democracy.

About SocietyWorks

Through our wholly owned subsidiary SocietyWorks, we deliver expertise to local government and the public sector by developing digital services that help active citizens support flourishing communities — simply, responsibly and cost effectively.

Profits generated by SocietyWorks are reinvested back into the charity as unrestricted funds where they help support the technology, research and data that is used by individual citizens, journalists, and civil society across the world, openly and for free.

SocietyWorks is trusted by local government, public sector and NGO clients in the UK and abroad to deliver commercial products, such as [FixMyStreet Pro](#), [WasteWorks](#) and [FOIWorks](#), along with commercial access to our data services and custom development work and consultancy.

The small, experienced SocietyWorks team works collaboratively with council and public sector clients to provide outstanding and transparent digital services for citizens. Through user groups and regular research into user needs, we propagate knowledge-sharing and

endeavour to create a community of connected public authorities providing an accessible, consistent and citizen-centred digital experience for the public realm.

CURRENT VACANCY

Chair of Trustees, mySociety

As the Chair of Trustees, you'll help us engage with fascinating and challenging opportunities around expanding the scope of our impact, in responsible and equitable ways. You'll also be able to apply your leadership skills and experience towards the growth and development of a unique charity.

If those are goals that motivate you in the way they motivate our staff and volunteers, we would love to hear from you.

What does the role involve?

The Chair of Trustees of mySociety is a rewarding role, requiring an appropriate level of commitment and time.

- You'll work closely with your fellow trustees and the Chief Executive to decide upon the organisation's priorities, approve and help set budgets and strategy; and you'll be able to represent the organisation amongst your peers and the wider sector.
- You'll provide leadership to the board and ensure that trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the proper governance of the charity. This will include establishing and chairing the annual cycle of board meetings, ensuring the provision of accurate, timely and clear information to Trustees, and that the board as a whole works in partnership with the Chief Executive and senior staff.
- You'll ensure that the performance of the board as a whole and for individual trustees is reviewed at least annually; maintain the focus and commitment of the board, including renewal and succession planning; and help oversee the appointment of new trustees.
- You'll liaise with, and provide support to, the Chief Executive with regard to the organisation's affairs overall, and where appropriate critique and challenge the decisions of the Chief Executive to ensure the charity fulfils its charitable purpose.

- You'll conduct the annual appraisal of the Chief Executive and support their performance (with board support); and when necessary you will lead the process of recruiting the Chief Executive.
- You'll work closely with the Chair of SocietyWorks Ltd and its board of non-executives to ensure that the shareholder interests of mySociety are understood by that subsidiary board.
- Supported by the Chief Executive, you'll lead the trustees in their role as the final point of appeal for any complaints related to our UK sites (WhatDoTheyKnow.com in particular), and may be required from time to time to make recommendations relating to specific cases that reach this point.
- As a trustee you are required to ensure that our charity is well-run, solvent, operating within the law, and making the right strategic decisions. Information from the Charity Commission on your legal responsibilities can be found here: [gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved). As a charity that handles personal data and Freedom of Information requests, we are also regulated by the [Information Commissioner's Office](https://ico.org.uk/).
- You will need to chair quarterly board meetings, attend relevant committee meetings, and be happy dealing with the associated emails and documents – a commitment of about one day per month. Board and committee meetings are usually held online, but we are beginning to return to some in-person meetings, and these usually take place in London. If access to these could present a problem, we will always accommodate remote participation. Associated agendas, papers and other documents are accessed and contributed to using mySociety's secure online systems.
- You'll help us continue to diversify our board and team across a range of occupational and personal backgrounds, ensuring we deliver on our equal opportunities policy in ways that reflect the diversity of our users and work programmes.
- Occasionally, unfolding events may require your input as they arise, with varying degrees of urgency. For example, legal threats and queries being referred to the board for comment will ideally be processed within a timeframe that prevents lengthy hold-ups for staff.
- You'll be welcome to join us at our annual retreat, and events such as TICTeC (The Impacts of Civic Technology Conference) - again, these are beginning to return to an in-person format after having shifted online during the pandemic, but we are

committed to continuing to provide remote access alongside all in person meetings.

What we're looking for in a Chair

As our new Chair, you'll work closely with your fellow trustees, the Chief Executive, and the senior management of mySociety to help shape and direct the growth and development of an influential and impactful global charity. We believe that the right Chair for us will:

- be passionate about our mission with a vision for the impact that mySociety can have. [Essential]
- be an advocate for democracy, care deeply about the climate emergency, understand the vital importance of transparency, or see the possibilities in community. [Essential]
- understand a little about the potential of data, digital technologies and research in our areas of operation, even if you don't have direct experience with them. [Essential]
- have experience of chairing effective charity board meetings in a calm, collaborative and inclusive manner. You will have strong facilitating, listening and objective summarising skills, whilst also being able to offer constructive challenge. [Essential]
- be comfortable representing mySociety publicly and be prepared to speak on our behalf from time to time. [Essential]
- have an empathy and understanding of the democracy world along with a desire to energise citizens to act. [Essential]
- be willing to put in a little time learning about [the organisation's history](#) and [culture](#). [Essential]
- bring links to fundraising networks and other channels and relationships that could support mySociety. [Desirable]
- have experience of working within the civic tech landscape, or the citizenship and democracy sector. [Desirable]
- have experience with digital-first, remote-working, organisations of our size. [Desirable]

Your duties

All trustees are required to ensure that the charity is well-run, solvent, operating within the law, and making the right strategic decisions. Information from the Charity Commission on trustees' legal responsibilities can be found at:

[gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved).

As a charity that handles personal data and Freedom of Information requests, we are also regulated by the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) (ICO). Ultimately, trustees are responsible for ensuring the organisation is compliant with current Data Protection law. Systems and processes are in place within the organisation to ensure that responsibilities under this law are met.

We are interested in appointing trustees from a range of diverse occupational and personal backgrounds.

Trustee roles are voluntary and therefore unpaid, but reasonable expenses will of course be covered.

Are you and mySociety made for one another?

We suspect that if you have read this far, you'll already know whether mySociety sounds like the sort of organisation you'd be keen to join. You may also be interested in finding out about our [existing board members](#).

Importantly...

- We want to bring trustees on board from a range of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Our tools are used by multiple, intersecting demographics, and the composition of our board of trustees who set the strategic direction of our organisation should reflect this reality.
- Even if you do not fulfil every requirement outlined above, we'd encourage you to apply for this role – we are committed to nurturing and aiding the development of our board members.

- If there are any barriers to either participating in the recruitment process or delivering aspects of the role itself, which you feel might exclude you from applying, then please contact us. We are keen that our processes are inclusive and that we do not miss out on great candidates.
- Got questions? Drop an email to Yolanda Gomes on recruitment2023@mysociety.org.

How to apply

To apply for the position of Chair of Trustees, mySociety, please [visit the job listing](#) and **submit your application by 16 April 2023**. Your application should include your CV and a covering letter that outlines why you are interested in the role and what you will bring to it.

We are monitoring our recruitment processes to ensure we are doing everything we can to encourage applications from people of all backgrounds. We would ask you to please complete our optional equalities monitoring form. The information you share in the form will be anonymous and will not influence the assessment of your application.

We will shortlist all applications anonymously. So **please use your initials rather than your name on your CV and cover letter**, and don't include identifying details such as your name or email addresses on these attached documents.



