



Opportunity: Artistic Director

We're seeking a new Artistic Director to take Winchester Poetry Festival into our next Festival year.

This exciting and creative opportunity will allow you to help shape and develop Winchester Poetry Festival (WPF), ensuring it remains one of the south coast's standout cultural charities and events, securing Winchester's place firmly on the UK's – and the world's – poetry map.

We're starting to plan our activities for the next two years, and are keen to find the right person to fill the role following on from our previous Artistic Directors (including Clare Pollard, Sasha Dugdale and Sarah Hesketh).

If you're successful, you'll work with our Festival Manager and Board of Trustees to develop activities and design our weekend-long festival to take place in 2027. Owing to WPF's current funding cycles, this is a two-phase opportunity. Please see the Role Description, Duration and Fee sections below for more details.

Overall Role Description

The following describes the role as a whole, but please note the two-phase approach.

In this role, you will:

Phase One (from March 2026)

- Propose a concept/theme(s) for the 2027 Festival for approval by the trustees.
- Support the Festival planning processes, specifically the artistic visioning and associated programme development.
- Identify, brief, and secure the in-principle commitment of poets and other contributors to the Festival.
- Contribute to our statement of artistic vision for inclusion in principal funding application(s).

Phase Two (2027 – subject to funding)

- Confirm the commitment of those poets and other contributors who agreed in principle to participate.

- Programme events for the festival, working within the budget and time frameworks set by the Board.
- Identify and secure the commitment of key creative partners, and in particular, national and international poets/organisations.
- Contribute copy for Festival publicity and national promotion, and social media content where required.
- Attend the Festival and host key events.
- Contribute to post-Festival evaluations.

Additionally, you'll also:

- Report to the Board of Trustees (day-to-day via our Chair, Jane Bryant).
- Attend Board meetings and meetings with trustees as required (often online), plus promotional and taster events as required.
- Work closely with our Festival Manager to organise the Festival and fulfil the above activities.
- Attend our Festival weekend, leading elements as agreed with the Festival Manager.
- Act as the initial contact for key creative partners where applicable.
- Be the initial contact for all artists.
- Be the key liaison as identified for the Festival activity schedule.

Person Specification

We're looking for someone who:

- Is well-versed in contemporary poetry.
- Has extensive and active networks among poets, publishers, and literary organisations (e.g. other festivals and poetry promoters, The Poetry Society, and the literature development community).
- Takes a developmental and inclusive approach to building audiences.
- Understands what makes a successful festival/event.
- Possesses a flair for programming.
- Enjoys building partnerships and working collaboratively
- Is well organised.
- Is confident, flexible, and approachable.
- Has strong interpersonal skills.
- Understands the importance and value of using an organisational business plan to achieve specified outcomes, including artistic, social, educational, and financial.

Ideally, you'll also have experience in and understanding of:

- Evaluation, and how this can inform future planning with the Board of Trustees.
- PR/media work.
- Event management.
- Fundraising.
- The current structure of the cultural sector.

About Winchester Poetry Festival

At Winchester Poetry Festival, we pride ourselves on making poetry exciting, accessible and enjoyable for all. We believe in the power of poetry to connect communities, amplify voices, celebrate human creativity and broaden horizons. You can find out more about who we are, what we do, and our values on our [website](#).

Duration and Fee

Owing to WPF's current funding cycle, this is a two-phase opportunity.

- 1) **Phase One (from March 2026):** an initial commission of £1,000 for specific visioning and programming work (initial programme to be ready by the end of July 2026). This needs to inform our proposed funding applications, including to Arts Council England.
- 2) **Phase Two (2027):** a fee of up to £4,500 for further development and delivery work during the festival year, subject to funding.

The overall role is intended to cover a period of up to two years on a freelance basis, phased as indicated above.

Phase One will commence on confirmation of contractual details.

Agreed travel expenses are available in addition to fees.

How to apply

To apply, upload your current CV and share a short piece of writing (up to 300 words) outlining what interests you in the role, and what you could bring to the Festival.

This can be submitted via a Google Form accessed via the link below:

[Apply here](#)

Please complete and submit your application by **23:59 on Friday 30th January 2026**.

We will be in touch with more information shortly after the application deadline.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited for an informal interview over Zoom between 2nd and 13th February 2026.

More information

To discuss the role, or for more information, please contact
hello@winchesterpoetryfestival.org

Equal Opportunities

We have an active equal opportunities policy. No job or role, applicant or employee,

shall receive less favourable, or more favourable, treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristic, identity or background.

As well as individuals, we welcome applications from those wishing to apply jointly.

Thank you very much for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you!