



JOIN OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A message from our Chair

Thank you for your interest in joining Kielder Observatory's Board of Trustees as we are refreshing our strategy and preparing for our 20th anniversary year. Our STAR framework sets a clear direction for the next phase of our growth: Sustain, Transform, Amplify and Reimagine. We are looking for trustees who will bring energy, judgement and practical expertise to help us deliver it.

With a much-loved visitor experience, ambitious educational plans, and a growing partnership model beyond our much-loved hilltop site, this is an exciting time to help shape our future. We look forward to hearing from you.

CATH HINDLE

Chair

A message from our Chief Executive

Kielder Observatory exists to spark wonder, deepen understanding and protect our dark skies.

Our new strategy commits us to strengthening resilience, broadening our impact across the region and nationally, and renewing our infrastructure for the next generation.

If you care about science engagement, learning, place and people, and you are ready to contribute as part of a focused, collaborative board, we would love to hear from you.

Ex astris, scientia.

LEIGH VENUS

Chief Executive



About Kielder Observatory

Where we are

Kielder Observatory is a public outreach astronomical facility in Kielder Forest, Northumberland, set within the Northumberland International Dark Sky Park and under some of the darkest skies in Europe. The setting is central to our mission and the quality of the experience we offer.

What we do

We are a registered charity dedicated to promoting public interest in astronomy, advancing astronomy education for all, and maintaining Kielder Observatory to make both possible.

Our primary function is public outreach through on-site stargazing events, talks and hands-on activities at the observatory. In a typical year we stage circa 600 public events for around 15,000 people, alongside private and off-site events. We are supported by a committed volunteer community of around 50.

We also deliver one of the North East's significant STEM schools outreach programmes, working with around 50 schools and around 10,000 pupils through initiatives such as Stellar Futures, planetarium visits and pathways from primary to adult learning.

Our national impact

We are an iconic and beloved institution that turns the UK's darkest skies into vivid, shared experiences of discovery and joy.

We act as a national asset for public engagement in astronomy and dark skies, with strong visitor satisfaction and national media coverage.

Recent highlights include BBC Breakfast, Sky News and Channel 5 features, TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice status, and being rated the top attraction in the Kielder area. We also received a North East Tourism Award (silver) for small visitor attraction.

Expanding our reach

Beyond our dark skies hilltop site we take astronomy out to communities through Kielder PopUps, partnerships with cultural venues and festivals, and collaboration with attractions such as The Alnwick Garden.

We take astronomy to underserved communities, including the West End Refugee Service and HMP Northumberland, co-creating welcoming, hands-on experiences that build confidence, curiosity and a sense of belonging, with sessions delivered on site and in community settings.

We are developing delivery at partner locations including the Twice Brewed Inn to increase access, resilience, and deliver new experiences.



Vision, mission and strategy

Our vision

To be a world-class observatory inspiring connection with the universe, protecting our dark skies, and creating life-changing moments of wonder for all.

Our strategic framework: STAR

- Sustain – Build resilience through environmental responsibility, financial strength and team wellbeing.
- Transform – inspire and empower people through transformative experiences with space, science and nature.
- Amplify – Extend reach, reputation, and partnerships to increase local and national impact.
- Reimagine – Renew and reshape our infrastructure and organisation for the next generation.

We use STAR to guide decisions, align plans and budgets, and define success with clear outcomes and KPIs.



| How we work

Governance

The Board is responsible for strategy, oversight and stewardship, including approval of budgets and policies, monitoring performance and risk, and safeguarding the charity's reputation and assets. The Chief Executive leads operations within a clear Scheme of Delegation. Our Finance & Risk Committee supports the Board's oversight of financial health, audit and risk.

Key points:

- Matters reserved to the Board include strategy, annual budgets, financial regulations, accounts, reserves and key HR decisions.
- Finance & Risk reviews management accounts, risk and compliance, and recommends budgets; the Treasurer chairs this committee.
- Financial procedures include procurement and approval thresholds and two-stage bank authorisation to ensure robust controls.

The role of a Trustee

Trustees provide strategic leadership and good governance so the charity can pursue its purposes for public benefit.

You will:

- Uphold our charitable objects and STAR priorities, agreeing policy, budgets and objectives, and monitoring performance.
- Ensure compliance with charity and charity law, our CIO constitution and internal policies
- Safeguard our people, reputation and assets, including oversight of risk, reserves and investment in line with our policies.
- Champion equity, diversity, inclusion and environmental responsibility
- Offer constructive challenge and specialist advice, working as part of a collaborative board.
- Act as an ambassador for Kielder Observatory.

We process applicant data under our Privacy Policy, available on our website.

Time commitment

- Four Board meetings per year plus one strategy session.
- Committee membership where relevant, typically four to six meetings per year for Finance & Risk.
- Occasional attendance at events.
- Term of office is three years, renewable three times, subject to performance and Board needs.

Meeting locations and access

Board and committee meetings are usually held at our Hexham office or at the observatory. Remote participation is supported.



Who we are looking for

We welcome applications from all backgrounds, and we are keen to diversify the perspectives and lived experience on our Board. We particularly encourage applications from people who identify as global majority, disabled, LGBTQ+, from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and from across the North East.

To deliver STAR we are especially interested in trustees who bring one or more of the following:

- Financial leadership and charity finance [for Treasurer].
- Governance and board development [for Secretary or Vice Chair].
- Education and learning, including curriculum design and CPD, to grow high-quality pathways from primary to adult learning.
- Digital, data and cyber resilience, and audience-centred innovation in hybrid or immersive experiences.
- Commercial and partnership development, including trading, pricing, contracts and brand partnerships.
- Capital development, estates, accessibility and sustainability.
- Marketing, communications and advocacy to amplify our reach and reputation.
- Fundraising and corporate partnerships to diversify income.

You do not need previous trustee experience. Induction and mentoring are available.



HOW THE BOARD WILL WORK WITH YOU

- Clear STAR-aligned objectives and an annual cycle of meetings.
- Induction covering governance, finance, safeguarding and our programme.
- Access to Board papers in good time and concise management information.
- Opportunities to visit the observatory, partner sites and programmes.

Priority board officer appointments

This recruitment marks an important phase of board renewal. We are seeking a new Treasurer and Vice Chair, and we plan to reintroduce a Board Secretary to support robust governance. You will receive a thorough induction, a structured handover and mentoring from experienced trustees.

Treasurer

[phased appointment over 12 months in line with current Treasurer's retirement]

Serve as trustee and Board lead on financial stewardship, chairing Finance & Risk. Work with the CEO and Finance Executive to:

- Oversee financial strategy and reserves, annual budgets, management accounts and year-end reporting.
- Ensure effective financial controls, procurement compliance and timely reporting.
- Support cashflow planning and scenario modelling aligned to the business plan.
- Advise on risk, audit and regulatory compliance, and recommend actions to strengthen financial health.
- Support income diversification across trading, partnerships and fundraising within the charity's controls.

Qualified accountant or senior finance leader with recent charity finance experience. Confident in chairing a committee, mentoring non-financial trustees and translating numbers into insight.



Vice Chair

[immediate appointment; succession focus]

Deputise for the Chair, help plan agendas and board development, and lead on trustee engagement, appraisals and succession planning, supporting a healthy board culture. Experience chairing a board or committee is essential.

Board Secretary

[open to appointment]

Strengthen our governance cycle and record-keeping. With the Chair and CEO you will:

- Maintain the governance calendar, Board and committee agendas, high-quality minutes and action logs.
- Track policy reviews, filings and compliance deadlines.
- Support trustee recruitment, induction, training and annual board effectiveness reviews.
- Promote good information governance and accessible Board papers.

Eligibility and safeguarding

Applicants must meet Charity Commission eligibility requirements for trustees. We operate within clear delegated authorities, and trustees are expected to observe our Code of Conduct and the Nolan principles.

Roles may be subject to basic checks due to our work with schools and families. We reimburse reasonable expenses.



| How to apply

Please send either:

- A CV and a covering letter of up to two pages, or
- A short video or audio statement of up to three minutes, telling us why you would like to become a trustee, how you would help deliver our STAR strategy, and whether you wish to be considered for Treasurer, Vice Chair or Board Secretary.

The selection panel will be the Chair and two trustees, using a scored matrix against the person specification. The CEO will attend interviews as a non-voting adviser. We will invite all applicants to complete an anonymised EDI monitoring form. It is optional and separated from selection data.

Send to:

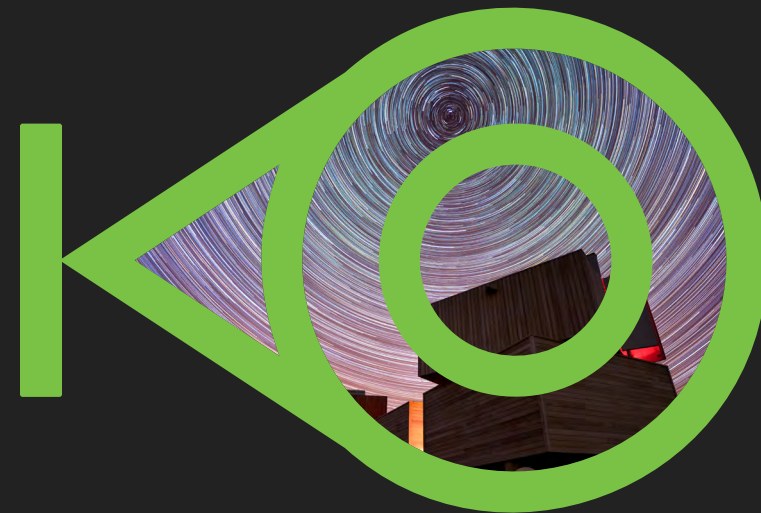
admin@kielderobservatory.org by midnight December 15th 2025.

If you would like an informal conversation with our CEO or Chair, please contact Leigh Venus, CEO at: leigh@kielderobservatory.org

If you need this information in another format, require reasonable adjustments, or the dates offered do not work for you, contact admin@kielderobservatory.org

Data protection and conflicts of interest

Your information will be handled in line with our privacy policy. Please declare any potential conflicts of interest in your application so we can manage these appropriately in line with our policies.



KEY DATES:

Application deadline:

December 15th 2025

Informal conversations:

November 17th - December 14th 2025

Interviews with a panel of trustees and the CEO:

January 5th - 9th 2026

Expected start and induction:

January 2026



kielderobservatory.org

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