



**Quex House  
& Gardens**

HOME OF THE POWELL-COTTON MUSEUM



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# **Finance Trustee Recruitment Pack February 2026**

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## Welcome from the Chair of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in the role of Trustee of the Powell-Cotton Trust. I am delighted to share details of this opportunity to help govern and lead the Powell-Cotton Museum, Quex House and Garden.

The Powell-Cotton Trust (PCT) is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered charity, no.1167318, established in 2016 to govern the Powell-Cotton Museum, Quex House and Gardens. It replaces earlier charitable bodies, which have been in existence in one form or another since 1926.

The PCT has eight Trustees and we are looking to further develop our Board with a new Trustee that can bring specific skills in business finance, charity fundraising, property or investment management.

This is an exciting time to join the board to provide governance and leadership for the Trust during a transformative period. This began with our reopening for the 2025 season in February with the first instalment of a museum-wide renewal and interpretation

project. The extensive collection of late 19th and early 20th century cultural items from East Africa, and religious artefacts from Ethiopia, have been presented to focus on the people and communities which created and used the objects. Until recent years, the galleries included object captions and text panels which reflected the interests, experiences, knowledge and perspectives of the Museum's founder, Victorian explorer and hunter, Percy Powell-Cotton (1866-1940). Now, the galleries have been completely revitalised with fresh interpretation bringing to the fore the objects themselves, their significance, the stories of their original owners and the communities to which they belonged. The revitalised displays are the first results of a long-term collaboration between the Trust and its newly formed Community Advisory Group, aiming to bring accuracy and sensitivity to the presentation of the collections, lives, cultures and beliefs of people in communities whose histories and traditions are centuries old.

2026 marks the centenary of the establishment of the Powell-Cotton Trust; it is an opportunity to reflect on the past, to learn from the collection and our communities, to embed good practice and sector leadership that enable us to secure the success of the next 100+ years of the Trust.

In 2025 we completed a £1.1 million project from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 'MEND' grant fund, which is administered by Arts Council England. This funding was utilised to replace the roof and address maintenance backlogs within the Museum building which had cause significant water damage and mould over previous years. This significant investment will ensure the preservation and upkeep of the Trust's historical artefacts for future generations to enjoy.

Further information about our activity and financial operations can be found in our [Annual Reports](#).

You will be joining the Trust at a truly unique moment as we have just received a very significant inheritance that will provide us with the financial platform to allow us to develop and grow the Trust's profile and offer, building on the success of our achievements to date.

***Ceri Ashley***  
***Chair of Trustees, The Powell-Cotton Trust***

# Our Strategic Statements

## Values

**Social Responsibility:** we strive to operate the organisation with integrity, caring not just for the building and collection ethically, but ensure we facilitate meaningful emotional connections that have a positive impact on our society, environment and community.

**Equity:** we recognise that everyone's lived experience should be valued, both past voices and present, empowering individuals and communities through our positive and pro-active actions.

**Courage:** our ambition is to take bold, innovative and imaginative approaches to our work, enabling open and honest conversations about the collection and connected people.

## Vision

We will be an **inclusive**, engaging and collaborative **centre of excellence** enabling exploration of our **world class collections** and garden to deliver **lifelong learning**, research and **social impact**, locally, nationally and internationally.

## Aims

To achieve our Vision, we will focus on 3 strategic aims:

1. **Financial Sustainability & Governance;** we have just received a significant inheritance that assures our financial future. That said, we recognise that we can't solely rely on this and must engage in actively growing our income from both fundraising and commercially based activities;
2. **Collection Sustainability & Estate Infrastructure;** we must continue to build on the hard work we have already started both in preserving the collection as well as developing the gardens. There needs to be a long-term plan and investment in both, with significant new developments of a Collection, Learning and Research facility;

3. **Impact and Inclusion;** we must continue to develop how we engage our audiences to ensure that we are relevant, available and inclusive to all, raising awareness of the Trust's existence, and evaluating the impact we have on our visitors. We must utilise technology to the fullest extent to make us accessible locally, nationally and internationally.

## The Museum, House and Gardens

The Powell-Cotton Trust (PCT) is an independent charitable trust founded in 1926 and based in Birchington, Kent, which is made up of three distinct but linked elements:

- **The Powell-Cotton Museum**, which has a diverse collection, built up by the Powell-Cotton family and their associates, largely between 1890-1940. Today, the collection includes over 6,000 mammal specimens, 20,000 ethnographic objects, 8,000 archaeological objects, firearms, fine art and furniture, and an extensive library and archive including documents, photographs and film. It also houses some of the world's best dioramas depicting animals in a natural setting.
- **Quex House**, the former Powell-Cotton family home; a Georgian manor with extensive Edwardian alterations. The house contains family possessions which are part of the Museum's collection and is included in tours.
- **Quex Gardens**, consisting of the extensive garden that belongs to the house as well as the walled kitchen garden. The latter is used to grow a wide variety of plants, vegetables and fruits. The gardens enable the Trust to engage with local groups to provide horticultural therapy-based activities to a wide range of disadvantaged and disabled groups from the local community.

The Museum, House and Gardens governed by the Trust (PCT) are situated in Quex Park; Quex Park is owned and managed independently of PCT and has been developed to include several other commercial and educational enterprises. The wider estate continues to operate arable farms and a commercial and residential property portfolio.



## **The Museum**

The Powell-Cotton Museum at Quex Park was established in 1896 to house natural history specimens and cultural objects collected by Percy Powell-Cotton on his expeditions to Asia and Africa. Powell-Cotton was a pioneer in the use of the diorama to display mounted animals against backdrops of their usual habitats. Today, these natural history dioramas are unique and outstanding examples of a form of display that is increasingly rare.

The Museum evolved from a single diorama within the original pavilion (pictured below), to eight dioramas contained within three galleries today. The first diorama was started in 1896, and the final diorama was completed in 1955. The Museum was developed over a long period from 1896 and it opened to the public from the early 1900s. Various phases of expansion and construction took place over the subsequent years including the creation of additional galleries and opening parts of Quex House in the early 1970s.

## **The Collection**

The Collection can be broken down into nine categories: Natural History, World Cultures, Archaeology, Ethnobotany, Weapons, Fine and Decorative Arts and Furniture, Social History, Archives, Photographs and Film.

The strength of the natural history collection is in mammal material – around 6,500 animals from Africa and India, collected between 1889 and 1940. The Museum also houses an internationally significant primate collection (picture above) including lowland gorillas and chimpanzees representing all developmental stages, monkeys, galagos, and pottos. The collection also includes birds, reptiles and amphibians. The Museum displays some of the oldest and largest taxidermy habitat dioramas in Europe.

The Museum's collection also includes over 20,000 ethnographic objects, collected between 1891 and 1966, that focus on Africa and Asia. Prominent collections include those from South Sudan, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Uganda. The bulk of the collection is attributed to Percy Powell-Cotton, however, significant collections were contributed by Fred Merfield (Gorillas and Chimpanzees), and by extended Powell-Cotton family. Diana and Antoinette Powell-Cotton are responsible for one of the largest Angolan collections in Europe, numbering approximately 2,600 objects. Closer to home, the Museum also holds items of local interest including approximately 8,000 archaeological finds from the Thanet coastline and an archive of supportive material including over 30,000 photographs and 40,000 documents.



## **The Gardens**

The gardens at Quex House were originally laid out in the fifteenth century when the first manor house was built, but were extensively remodelled throughout the nineteenth century, so that the present design contains strong Regency, Victorian and Edwardian influences. The gardens were designed to be viewed from the main withdrawing room on the first floor of the house, from where lawns radiate around a central vista.

The established parkland contains numerous ornamental specimen trees and a sunken fountain garden. On the upper terraces of the lawn, there are some fine specimen trees, including two venerable King James Mulberries and an ancient Sophora Japonica. Surrounding the upper terraces is an extensive shrub border and a vibrant Edwardian herbaceous border against a south wall.

Hidden behind the high, old brick walls of the herbaceous border is an exceptional example of a Walled Victorian Garden, which had later commercial use as a market garden. Many original features of its historic use remain and featured within the Walled Garden are collections of tender exotics, fruit trees, cacti, succulents and pelargoniums. Surrounding the gardens is a woodland walk, contrasting with the more formal pleasure grounds of the mansion.

# Trustee Role Description

<b>Location</b>	Birchington, Kent, UK.
<b>Time commitment</b>	Minimum of four board meetings per year with Trustees attending at least two onsite in-person meetings per year. Additionally, attend and contribute to Working Groups or Committees on specific topics as required. Represent the Trust at various events and meetings with key stakeholders as required.
<b>Reporting to</b>	The Chair of the board of Trustees.
<b>Terms</b>	Trustees serve a four-year term to be eligible for reappointment for one additional term (optional).

The Powell-Cotton Trust's **charitable purpose**:

"The charity's objects are to advance education for the benefit of the public by

- the provision and maintenance of a museum in or near Birchington for exhibiting specimens of natural history and ethnography (particularly such specimens collection by Percy Horace Gordon Powell Cotton, Esq,) and, if the Trustees think fit, specimens of other sciences and of the fine and useful arts (the Museum),
- the extension and enhancement, conservation, storage and maintenance of the collection of specimens belonging to the Museum, and
- the promotion of education in subjects relevant to the specimens belonging to the Museum and the use of such specimens in research."

General Trustee responsibilities as advised by the **Charity Commission**:

- Ensure that the PCT complies with charity law, and with the requirements of the Charity Commission as regulator.
- Ensure that the PCT does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in its constitution and that it remains true to the charitable purpose and objects set out.
- Comply with the requirements of other legislation and other regulators such as the Equality Act, Health & Safety, employment law and data protection as data controller.
- Act with integrity and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of PCT funds or assets.
- Ensure that the PCT is and will remain solvent.

- Use PCT funds and assets reasonably and only in furtherance of the Trust's charitable objects.
- Take special care when investing the funds of the charity, or borrowing funds.
- Use reasonable care and skill in their work as Trustees, using their skills and experience as needed to ensure that the charity is well-run and efficient.
- Consider soliciting external professional advice on all matters where there may be material risk to the charity, or where the Trustees may possibly be in breach of their duties.

### **PCT responsibilities & tasks**

- To further the aims of the Trust, in keeping within its charitable objectives.
- To take part in formulating and regularly reviewing the Trust's strategic aims.
- Consider the Trust's vision and values, strategy and major policies at all times
- Contribute specific skills, interests and contacts and support the Trust in all of its activities.
- Follow the Trustee Code of Conduct at all times, particularly when exercising the functions of the trustees, or any of its committees, sub-committees, groups.
- Attend meetings of the Board of Trustees.
- Reflect the trustees' policies and concerns on all its committees, sub-committees, and groups.
- Be an active member of the Board of Trustees in exercising its responsibilities and functions.
- Maintain good relations with senior managerial staff.
- Take part in training sessions provided for the benefit of the trustees.
- Fulfil such other duties and assignments as may be required from time to time by the Board of Trustees.

The position is unremunerated although reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

PCT is committed to equality, and we value the diversity of our volunteers and staff.

### **Commitment**

- Trustees serve for a fixed term of four years with the option for a second term.
- The PCT meets at least four times a year with Trustees expected to attend at least two onsite in-person meetings per year.
- Attend meetings in between as required, some of which will be virtual.

- Where possible, we provide hybrid meetings for attendance onsite or virtually.
- Trustees are expected to take on specific tasks and activities.
- Trustees are expected to undertake training and to develop relevant skills and knowledge as required.
- To be effective Trustees need to commit the necessary time which, as well as meetings, equates to a couple of hours preparation reading papers prior to each meeting plus an average of a couple of email discussion/exchanges a month.
- Trustees must adhere to the Museum Association Code of Ethics and all the Museum's policies.
- Trustees must commit to undertake relevant governance and charity training.
- Trustees are expected to adhere to the Nolan Principles of Public Life.

## Person Specification and Finance Specialism

The Trust is aiming to be cost neutral within 5 years, with 55%+ of its annual c.£1.2m costs coming from investments/property/legacy interest, and the rest from commercial and charitable activity. As such, the Trust is actively seeking a trustee with specific skills in business finance, charity fundraising, property, or investment management.

### Investment Portfolio

The Trust currently holds investments across a broad portfolio, managed through Rathbones. The primary objective of our portfolio currently is to provide a growing income and the potential for long-term capital growth. The portfolio is maintained over a long-term horizon over 10 years with a Medium risk profile and Balanced investment objective. It currently provides us an estimated yield of 2.37%. We wish to increase this and review the type of businesses we hold stock in to ensure we are balancing an ethical approach to investing that aligns with the Powell-Cotton Trust ethos, but that generates a return to support the funding of the Trust's operations year on year.

### Property Portfolio

The Trust owns 20 properties across Thanet with a further 13 in London. These currently generate a rental return of c.60%. We have secured property management services to oversee the rental of these properties and plan to retain these for the immediate future.

## Legacy and Reserves

A further consideration is our legacy from a recent inheritance. This will be c.£7m received over a total of 8 years, with interest. It is important this is invested and monitored closely as the reserves will support the running of the Trust's operations over the coming years as it transitions to become more commercially diverse and successful in generating an income to cover core cost.

It is **essential** that trustees should:

- Have the ability to think strategically and creatively, demonstrate objectivity, good judgement and analytical ability.
- Be willing to learn.
- Have good communication, team-working and inter-personal skills.
- Be tactful, diplomatic and able to build relationships.
- Be fair, impartial and open to new ideas.

It is **desirable** that Trustees have:

- An interest in natural history or ethnography and in museums and heritage.
- Experience of trusteeship/committee membership of a charity or other voluntary organisation.

# Recruitment Process

For an informal discussion with the Chair or a member of the Board, please contact the CEO to arrange: [sarah.corn@powell-cottontrust.org](mailto:sarah.corn@powell-cottontrust.org).

To apply for the post, please send a CV and covering letter explaining how you meet our requirements and why you are interested joining the Board, to: Ceri Ashley, c/o [sarah.corn@powell-cottontrust.org](mailto:sarah.corn@powell-cottontrust.org).

Candidates will be invited for a site visit which will be an opportunity to meet some of the PCT Board and team members. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to observe a Board meeting with an aim to formally appoint at that meeting.

Appointments will be made subject to receiving satisfactory references, which will only be taken up if an applicant is invited to become a Trustee.

There is no fixed **closing date** and we will keep the vacancy open until a suitable candidate has been appointed.

Prior to being formally appointed, applicants will need to confirm that they are eligible to be a Trustee by confirming that they:

- Are not disqualified from acting as a charity trustee or company director, have not been removed from serving as a charity trustee, or been stopped from acting in a management position within a charity.
- Have not been convicted of an offence involving deception or dishonesty (or any such conviction that is legally regarded as spent) and have not been involved in tax fraud.
- Are not an undischarged bankrupt or have not made compositions or arrangements with creditors from which they have not been discharged.

A DBS check will not be made on applicants invited to become a Trustee of the PCT.