

**SHEILA
MCKECHNIE
FOUNDATION**

**UNLEASHING
SOCIAL POWER**

SMK Chair Recruitment Information Pack

April 2025

www.smk.org.uk

@smkcampaigners

Our history

The Sheila McKechnie Foundation (SMK) was set up in June 2005 in memory of legendary campaigner, Sheila McKechnie.

Describing herself as a “fully paid up member of the awkward squad”, Sheila led both Shelter and Which? combining a grasp of detail with a watertight argument to lead formidable campaigns. She had a high public profile and was known and loved – and feared - by many within civil society and beyond.

Her spirit, and the rigour of her approach, inspire us at SMK today.



Helping campaigners to thrive

Campaigning is vital to a healthy society. We help campaigners to thrive.

In a free and hopeful society, people need to know they have the power to make a difference: that they are able to envisage change and can push for that change to happen.

For nearly two decades, we have helped all sorts of individuals, causes and charities to find their power as changemakers – as campaigners.

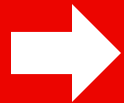
We **support, connect** and **champion** these campaigners, equipping them to go after the social change they seek.

And we see the difference it makes. The people we're lucky enough to come into contact with – through our training, our awards, our research and our networks – do extraordinary things. They dream of a different world, and then they bring it about.

They inspire us, and others, to hold on to the hope that comes from knowing that **change is possible.**



About our approach



Supporting everyone working for social change

SMK takes a big picture view of campaigning and social change. We recognise that campaigners are trying to change lots of different things – from helping someone access their rights to changing policy or attitudes at a national scale.

We also recognise that there are lots of ways to campaign from awareness raising and community organising, to movement building and political lobbying. We know that social change typically happens when lots of people use different tactics across this broad ‘eco system’ of change.

Our job is to help campaigners and changemakers of all kinds – whether working on their own or in big organisations – understand more about how social change happens and how to design their campaigns to have the best chance of success.

At the same time, we want to build a better understanding of what social purpose campaigning is, and why it matters. And build a sense of community and solidarity among those pushing for change.

The truth is, we are all campaigners – when we need to be. Whether making sure a child gets the support they need at school or trying to shift global climate policy, this is all campaigning. And SMK is here for all of you.

What we exist to do



Support

Giving you tools to work out what actually works in campaigns.

SMK provides support to help campaigners like you think and plan clearly. Our training and consultancy support is rooted in a unique analysis of how social change happens, and expertise in a wide range of campaign disciplines.



Connect

Strengthening connections across the campaign community.

SMK has touchpoints across diverse campaign communities and disciplines. We build connections – to find common cause where it exists, better understand our differences, and share knowledge, resources and insights for change.

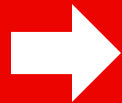


Champion

Protecting your right, and the space, to campaign.

SMK works to protect your space to campaign – calling on politicians to uphold your right to speak out, clearing away unreasonable barriers.

How we are funded



Support and Finances

SMK is supported by a wide range of funders who contribute to a mix of projects and our core costs. We generate a significant part of our income through our training activities and some consultancy work. This is supported by a small number of loyal associates.

Our most recently published Annual Report is available [here](#). Our annual turnover is c£0.6m and we operate on limited reserves.



John Ellerman
Foundation



OAK
FOUNDATION

the
Tudortrust



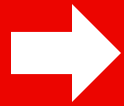
Heatherwick studio



Blagrove
investing in
young people



Our Governance



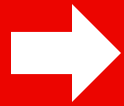
SMK is a registered charity in both England & Wales and Scotland and a registered company limited by guarantee. We also have Shelia McKechnie Trading, which is a subsidiary trading company. Our ten-person Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of SMK providing inclusive leadership in pursuit of our aims, objectives and goals in accordance with our governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines. Board meetings are usually held in central London with the majority of other business conducted online.

We have a small staff team, currently led by an interim Chief Executive, Katie Roberts who is in post till the end of 2025. This follows the departure of our previous Chief Executive in February. SMK is based in office space kindly donated by Shelter in its Old Street office in central London.

Our current Chair, Pete Moorey, steps down in June 2025 after nearly five years chairing SMK and seven years on the Board. He is available for an informal conversation about the role on request.

We are also in the process of recruiting a new Treasurer as our current postholder, Stuart Davis, steps down after seven years on the Board.

Our next priorities



2024 into 2025 has been a challenging time for SMK. Changes in the funding environment; a drop in trading income; on-going challenges to SMK's work on power and solidarity; and extended sick leave in SMK's small team has had an impact. Two very significant decisions were made by the Board to secure SMK's future: the first, to step back from our work on power and solidarity, and the second to pause our policy and research work. These changes led to redundancies and other team members seeking new opportunities.

In March 2025, Katie Roberts joined as interim CEO with a remit to guide the organisation through a period of transition with a strong focus on financial sustainability, fundraising, and operational delivery. Great progress has already been made on rebuilding and refocusing the team.

We anticipate an incoming Chair will want to work with other trustees and the staff team to undertake a strategic review of the role of SMK in a fast-changing environment. This will build on what has been achieved in our first 20 years.

It will include recruiting a permanent Chief Executive; refreshing our strategic ambitions and work programme; and securing the financial and other support SMK needs to provide the organisational resilience necessary to deliver our ambitions for all those involved in campaigning and driving positive social change.

Role of SMK's Chair

The Chair will hold the Board and staff team to account for SMK's mission and vision, provide inclusive leadership to the Board and ensure that Board members fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of SMK.

The Chair will line manage and support the Chief Executive and ensure that the Board functions as a unit and works closely with the Chief Executive and staff team to achieve agreed objectives. They may also be asked to act as an ambassador and a public face of SMK in partnership with the Chief Executive and the Board.



Responsibilities of SMK's Chair

Strategic Leadership

- Provide leadership to SMK and its Board, ensuring that SMK has maximum impact
- Work with the Chief Executive to develop and review SMK's strategy and ensure effective monitoring and delivery
- Ensure the Board fulfils its duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of SMK
- Ensure that the Board is able regularly to review major risks and associated opportunities, and satisfy itself that systems are in place to take advantage of opportunities and manage and mitigate the risks

- Ensure that the Board fulfils its duties to ensure the sound financial health of SMK, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability and sustainability
- Ensure SMK meets its obligations as a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee

External Relations

- Act as an ambassador for SMK along with other Board members
- Act as a spokesperson for SMK when appropriate
- Help to address potential conflicts with external stakeholders which may arise



Responsibilities of SMK's Chair

Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Board effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality, inclusivity and objectivity to the decision-making process
- Ensure that the Board is fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of SMK and that the Board takes collective ownership
- Foster, maintain and ensure that constructive relationships exist with and between the Board and between trustees and staff
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to give direction to Board policy-making and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of the Board.
- Monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.

Governance

- Ensure that the governance arrangements are working effectively
- Ensure development of the knowledge and capability of the Board
- With the agreement of the Board appoint the Vice Chair and the Chair of the Resources Group and work constructively with them in these roles
- Appraise the performance of the Board on a regular basis
- Ensure that the Board is regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge, diversity and experience needed
- Act in the best interests of SMK at all times upholding the charities' values in accordance with the trustee Code of Conduct and SMK's Solidarity & EDI commitments.



Responsibilities of SMK's Chair

Relationship with the Chief Executive and Staff Team

- Provide line management of the Chief Executive including holding them to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives, conducting an annual appraisal, and ensuring the opportunity for professional development
- Ensure regular contact with the Chief Executive and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns, worries and challenges
- Liaise with the Chief Executive to maintain an overview of the SMK's activities, providing support as necessary
- To have a visible leadership role with the wider staff team, providing support, encouragement and challenge as needed
- Be closely involved in the recruitment of the Chief Executive and senior staff as required.



Person Specification

Personal qualities

- Demonstrate a strong and visible passion and commitment to SMK, its strategic objectives and cause
- Exhibit strong interpersonal and relationship building abilities and be comfortable in an ambassadorial role
- Demonstrate tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively
- Provide strong networking capabilities that can be utilised for the benefit of SMK, including with funders, policy makers, politicians and partners
- Ability to inspire trust and confidence from within the campaigner community
- Ability to foster and promote a collaborative team environment
- Ability to commit the time needed to conduct the role well, including travel and attending meetings and events out of office hours



Person Specification

Experience

- Operating at a senior strategic leadership level within an organisation
- Charity governance and working with or as part of a Board
- Experience of fundraising and generating a range of income support
- External representation, delivering presentations and managing stakeholders
- Campaigning and campaigners
- Significant experience of chairing meetings and events



Person Specification

Knowledge and skills

- Broad knowledge and understanding of campaigning and social change, civil society and the current issues affecting it
- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate and inspire staff and volunteers and bring people together
- Financial management expertise and a broad understanding of charity finance issues
- Good understanding of charity governance issues



About the Role

Reporting

The Chair is responsible to the overall Board.

Time commitment

The Board currently meets a minimum of four times per year with one additional Board and staff strategic planning day held in the summer. These meetings are usually in person.

The Chair will additionally sit on the Resources Group which also meets four times a year. These meetings are usually online.

The Chair is also expected to have regular meetings with the Chief Executive and to represent SMK at various events and meetings with key stakeholders.

The Chair will need to be able to devote additional time to SMK as the need arises. The overall time commitment is flexible and is likely to be an average of two days a month as a minimum.

The Chair is appointed by the Board for a three year renewable term up to a normal maximum of six years.

Training

Training can be provided following induction. There is an option to request further development support subject to available resources.

The Board assesses its own performance annually, and monitors its diversity, skills and experience profile as part of SMK's wider commitment to Solidarity & EDI.

Remuneration

The role of trustee is voluntary and not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although reasonable expenses for travel may be claimed.

Location

The majority of SMK meetings are in London and online.



How to Apply



Deadline

- 10th June, 2025

How to Apply

- Submit an expression of interest no more than two pages and a CV to recruitment@smk.org.uk
- This inbox can also be used to ask any questions or chat with the team.

Interviews

- First round interviews are expected to take place on 26th June
- If required, the second round interviews are expected to take place on the 1st / 2nd July.

Thank you!

SMK welcomes applications from anyone who can meet the above requirements. We are committed to equality and providing a diverse and inclusive workplace. We particularly welcome applications from those who are significantly underrepresented in our sector, including disabled people and individuals from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. We are happy to discuss any accommodations or adjustments needed to support your application or participation in the interview process. Please let us know how we can assist.

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