BOARD MEMBERSHIP
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

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Introduction

From time to time, The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd (JRRT/the Trust) appoints further Directors/Trustees to its board and that of its subsidiary company, JRRT (Properties) Ltd. (JRRT (P)), and associated charity, the JRSST Charitable Trust (JRSST-CT). This information has been prepared to provide a general introduction to the Trust.

The Trust is a company limited by guarantee which pays tax on its income, enabling it, unlike charitable trusts, to fund or undertake political & non-charitable campaigning work to promote democratic reform, constitutional change, civil liberties and social justice.

Its wholly owned subsidiary company, JRRT (Properties) Limited holds a portfolio of commercial property, generating rental income.

Directors bring different skills, strengths and expertise to the Board. However such qualities must be coupled with a passionate interest in UK politics, democracy, civil liberties and social justice.

All Directors should recognise and support Quakers’ emphasis on the intrinsic value of each human being.

Directors’ meetings operate on the basis of reaching an agreed way forward on the matters requiring a decision. No votes are taken.

All Directors take on the legal duties and responsibilities of being a company director and charity trustee, which are unpaid, volunteer roles.

1. Current Directors & New Appointments

Directors are appointed on a long term basis with the current retirement age set at age seventy. There are usually seven to ten Directors. The Trust has been successful in maintaining a good gender balance (currently three women and three men). Details of the current Directors can be found on the Trust’s website www.jrrt.org.uk.

All appointments are made by the current Board.

In his Memorandum, Joseph Rowntree gave some guidance concerning new appointments to the board. He stressed that the Trustees should seek to appoint individuals in whose judgement and integrity they had confidence, who would
carry out the work in accordance with the general aims of the Founder, and that the paramount consideration for new Directors should be their fitness for the offices they will have to fill.

2. Time Commitment

Quarterly Meetings
The full board meets quarterly, three times a year in York and once in London. A dinner allowing an opportunity for general discussion is usually held on the Thursday evening before the Quarterly Meeting on the following day. Meetings are usually concluded no later than 3pm on the Friday afternoon.

Directors tend not to miss Quarterly Meetings unless another commitment is absolutely pressing. It is unusual for a Director to miss more than one meeting per year and usual for all Directors to be present at meetings.

Residential Review Meetings
Every two to three years, Directors usually hold a residential review meeting which usually starts with an opening dinner on the Thursday evening and concludes with lunch on Saturday. Review meetings allow Directors more time to reflect on their priorities for the coming period.

Meetings with Applicants
Directors are expected to participate in meetings with applicants at least once a year. These meetings are generally held a week and a half before the Quarterly Meeting in London and run from around 9.00 am to 1.00 pm.

Small Grant Applications
Directors are also placed on a rota to assess and make decisions on small grant applications (up to and including £5,000), which can be received at any time and to which the Trust endeavours to respond within ten days. The office will check whether individual Directors are able to respond within the deadline before sending applications for decision.

Finance Committee
Three Directors (including the Vice Chair of the Trust) serve on the Finance Committee, which meets two to three times per annum. There is an expectation that all Directors will serve on the Committee during their Directorship.

Other Commitments
Other meetings are occasionally held between Quarterly Meetings, usually in London but occasionally in York. In addition to the above time commitments, Directors are encouraged to attend events organised by the Trust or its grantees and associates.
Directorship does take time, especially as the Trust is a director-led organisation. As it is a long term commitment, there is an understanding that fluctuating commitments to family (of all generations), employers or other commitments will affect the time that an individual will be able to give from year to year.

3. Expenses

All reasonable expenses incurred by Directors in carrying out their duties are paid, including the cost of first or standard class travel, childcare, phone calls, broadband charges, stationery etc.

4. Legal Responsibilities

Directors are also trustees of the JRSST Charitable Trust and directors of the subsidiary company (unless there is a good reason why they should not be) and hence have to be aware of their duties as both charity trustees and company directors. These include keeping the funds with which the Trust and charity are endowed wisely and securely invested, applying them in accordance with the Memorandum & Articles of Association and the Trust Deed, and fulfilling responsibilities as employers of three people – the Trust Secretary, the Grants & Projects Adviser and the Administrative Officer.

5. Brief History

Joseph Rowntree (1836-1925) was a Quaker, a Liberal and a successful businessman. In 1859 he took over his father’s grocery shop in York and ten years later he joined his younger brother in the modest cocoa factory on the right bank of the Ouse which was to become the major concern known as Rowntree. He transferred to a new factory on the outskirts of York in 1891. It provided excellent facilities and he pursued enlightened policies for his employees.

Contrary to his personal expectations, Joseph Rowntree became rich in later life as the Rowntree business flourished. In 1904, with the consent of his family, he transferred a substantial part of his wealth to the three trusts with which his name is still associated.

Attached to this guide is a paper prepared for the Dictionary of Liberal Thought, setting out a brief history of the Trust’s activities over the past century. A fuller account can be found in our publication “Trusting in Change”, prepared for our centenary in 2004.
6. **Sister Trusts**

Information on the activities of the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (JRCT) (with whom the Trust shares the Garden House premises) and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) can be found in “The Joseph Rowntree Inheritance”, a joint publication produced with our sister trusts in 2004. The 1904 Memorandum, written by Joseph Rowntree to guide his fellow Directors/Trustees on the establishment of the Trusts, is included in this publication.

JRCT and JRF are entirely independent of JRRT in terms of their Trustees, staff, finances and policies. However, there are opportunities when JRCT and JRRT are able to work together on issues.
Appendix One

THE JOSEPH ROWNTREE REFORM TRUST LIMITED – An entry prepared for the Dictionary of Liberal Thought

Established in 1904 by the Quaker confectionary manufacturer and social reformer Joseph Rowntree, the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust promotes political reform, constitutional change and social justice; it has been by far the largest single donor to the Liberal Party and its successor, the Liberal Democrats.

Joseph Rowntree (1836–1925) was born into the family of a Quaker grocer in York. He built his younger brother Henry’s small cocoa business into a major manufacturer of sweets, chocolate and cocoa, employing nearly 7,000 people by the time of his death. His Quaker faith motivated him to show a genuine concern for his employees and their welfare; Rowntrees was one of the earliest companies to develop a pension scheme, in 1906, and profit-sharing, in 1923.

Rowntree’s Quakerism led him into various forms of social service and contact with York’s poor, and his flair for accountancy, which partly lay behind the success of his company, was part of a passion for statistics which led him to collect figures about the wider context of social conditions. Although his son Seebohm’s study of poverty in the York slums was to make him better known as a social researcher than his father, his work drew on Joseph’s earlier studies of pauperism, illiteracy and crime. Like many late Victorian nonconformists, Joseph was a total abstainer from alcohol and a passionate believer that drink was an important cause of poverty and misery.

Rowntree was a committed Liberal and, together with other members of his family and associates, effectively controlled the local association and the Liberal group on York council in the Edwardian era, as well as being influential in surrounding areas. However, unlike many other wealthy Liberal businessmen, he did not give large sums to the party’s central organisation, probably because he was not interested in securing any honours for himself or his family. Instead, he used his wealth to establish, in 1904, the three trusts that still bear his name, in the firm belief that money should be spent on projects of social use rather than for one man’s benefit. The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust mainly concerned itself with grants to various Quaker activities, while the Joseph Rowntree Village Trust (now the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) was established initially to establish a model housing estate at New Earswick as an ideal community of all classes.

The third of the trusts, however, the Joseph Rowntree Social Service Trust Ltd. (now the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd.), was explicitly set up with a view to influencing political debate, and was deliberately not made into a charity in order
to pursue this goal. Rowntree was determined that the high-minded Liberal press should not be squeezed out by its Tory rivals, and the Trust’s most famous acquisition was the weekly, the *Nation*, which it owned from 1907 to 1923. Under its editor H. W. Massingham, it promoted not just Liberalism, but the New Liberal reorientation towards social reform in the Edwardian period that Rowntree supported; it effectively became the house journal of New Liberal intellectuals such as L. T. Hobhouse and J. A. Hobson.

The Trust also bought and supported regional Liberal newspapers, such as the *Northern Echo* and *Yorkshire Gazette*, though a foray into Fleet Street was less happy. After heavy losses during the First World War, the Trust’s newspapers were merged into the Westminster group in 1921. After Seebohm became chairman of the Trust in 1938, however, he scaled down its subsidies to the papers and initiated direct grants to the ailing Liberal Party, starting a tradition that continues to this day and making the Trust the party’s largest long-term benefactor in the post-Second World War era.

The Trust also, however, continued its focus on social research. After the war, the Acton Society Trust was created to analyse the implications of the burgeoning welfare state for liberty and the individual. Support was also forthcoming for the development of a university in York. The Trust’s links with the Liberal Party and Liberal Democrats were strengthened through some of the directors who were influential in the 1960s and ’70s, including Richard Wainwright and Jo Grimond, both Liberal MPs, and Pratap Chitnis, former head of the Liberal Party Organisation.

In order to improve the quality of parliamentary opposition, in the early 1970s the Trust introduced a scheme for financing assistants to leading frontbenchers in the House of Commons. Known as the ‘chocolate soldiers’, most of the appointees were later to make significant contributions to public and parliamentary life. The Wilson government later formally incorporated the scheme into the workings of the House of Commons when Labour assumed office in 1974.

In the 1970s the matter of media ownership and control was a major issue, and a number of pressure groups, concerned to defend the principle and standards of public service broadcasting, were brought together under the aegis of the Standing Conference on Broadcasting, which played an important part in the subsequent appointment of the (Annan) Royal Commission and its deliberations.

The Trust took on an international dimension when it initiated a series of specific grants to liberation movements in Africa. The political and welfare wings of such movements were assisted in Rhodesia, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. Similarly, fledgling democrats behind the Iron Curtain were later to receive
grants, including Solidarity in Poland, for whom a printing machine was purchased.

Another successful innovation was the taking on of 9 Poland Street in the West End of London, to provide accommodation for many of the small, single-issue pressure groups that were mushrooming at the time. Described in the press as the centre for ‘the counter-civil service’, 9 Poland Street provided a home for Friends of the Earth, the Low Pay Unit, the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, the Tory Reform Group and the 300 Group, among many others.

Since the 1970s one of the main interests of the Trust has been constitutional reform. Progressive elements in most of the political parties in Britain have been assisted and many pressure groups aided in their endeavours – including the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which spearheaded the case for a Scottish Parliament, and Charter 88, the most successful pressure group of the 1990s, according to The Sunday Telegraph. A series of State of the Nation surveys was initiated to monitor public opinion on a range of democratic issues.

Collaboration with the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust has extended to the struggle against racism and the re-emergence of extreme right wing elements in British politics and the co-founding and funding of the POWER Inquiry in 2004 to celebrate their centenary, which continues the efforts to foster and extend the realisation of a modern, inclusive participatory democracy in the UK.

TREVOR SMITH
2006

Professor Trevor Smith was a Director of the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust Ltd. from 1975 to 2006 and Chair from 1987 to 1999. He is an honorary professor at the University of Ulster where he was Vice-Chancellor (1991-99). He has also taught at the Universities of Exeter, Hull, York, California State (LA) and London (QMW). A past President of the Political Studies Association, he was knighted in 1996 and appointed a life peer in 1997 (Liberal Democrat).