

An architectural rendering of a modern garden space. In the foreground, a paved walkway leads towards a large, open garden area. On the left, a man and a woman are standing and looking towards the garden; the man is pointing his finger towards the distance. In the center, two people are sitting on a low wooden bench. To the right, a man is standing and looking towards the camera. The garden is filled with various plants, including tall grasses and flowering shrubs. In the background, there are more trees and a clear sky. A large, dark wooden pergola structure with a grid of beams is visible, with green vines growing on it. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny, suggesting a pleasant day in a park or garden.

National Centre for Music

Recruitment Pack

Director of Operations & Commercial

Image © RHSPT/Tom Stuart Smith Studio

Key Information

JOB TITLE	Director of Operations & Commercial
CONTRACT	Permanent We recognise this is an unusual role due to the start-up nature; we are open to proposals for alternative structures or contract models.
SALARY	£55,000 - £65,000
HOURS	Full-time
LOCATION	Hybrid (at least 2 days/week from offices in central Edinburgh, until such point as we gain occupancy of or access to our future home, the former Royal High School, Edinburgh, when requirements for in-person working will increase)
REPORTS TO	Chief Executive & Creative Director
START DATE	January 2027 (or sooner if possible)
EMPLOYER PENSION CONTRIBUTION	4%
LEAVE	31 days annual leave inclusive of public holidays



Image © Rhspt/Richard Murphy Architects

SUMMARY

The National Centre for Music (NCM) is a new organisation which will take up home within and operate the iconic old Royal High School at the foot of Edinburgh's Calton Hill. Offering new mid-scale performance and rehearsal spaces, practice rooms, a recording studio, co-working and creative office space, events and conferencing facilities, a cafe and bar, and two acres of landscaped gardens – the first public city centre gardens to be opened in Edinburgh in 200 years – the centre will become an iconic destination and a place where Scotland's musical history is made.

The site is currently managed by the Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT), who are leading the construction project to reawaken this significant Scottish heritage site. When the capital project is completed, the National Centre for Music is expected to become the tenant, run the site and be the organisation through which the public engages, with opening expected in summer 2028.

Our goal is to develop a world class venue where communities unite in creativity and take Scotland's music to new heights. We will devise, curate, programme and produce our own events, as well as collaborate with a range of partners – commercial and artistic; promoters and performers; local, national and international – to deliver initiatives which celebrate, strengthen and increase access to the full spectrum of Scotland's music.

Like all multi-faceted arts spaces, we are striving to create an efficient, sustainable business. Our home, a Grade-A listed heritage site with some of the best views over Scotland's capital city, presents both a huge asset in terms of its appeal as a setting for breathtaking memorable events, and an operational challenge in terms of balancing breadth of offer and audiences, with the innate complexities of running a listed building.

We are seeking a Director of Operations & Commercial who can lead on finely-tuned operational planning, ensure our home is safe and welcoming for all, help us deliver a customer experience that keeps people coming back for more, and configure commercial activities that drive revenue. Together these elements will strengthen our ability to deliver on our artistic and charitable mission for the long-term.

This pack outlines in more detail what we anticipate this role will involve, and what we think would ensure a candidate would be able to flourish in this role. In a brand-new organisation, we also appreciate there will be things we haven't thought of that you will bring to the role to make it your own.

The Director of Operations & Commercial will work very closely with other senior colleagues to plan and implement effective systems, prepare for operations and manage the transition to running a 7-day-a-week public venue. This will be over four key phases: planning and recruitment; mobilisation; launch year; 'normal running'.

You will be pivotal in the development of a trading subsidiary and its associated activities and revenue streams; be the key relationship holder with a Food & Beverage provider; and the mastermind behind how the day-to-day functions of our site develop (both inside and outside) - including building our venue management systems, health and safety protocols, and all compliance.

Another key element of the role in the next two years will be engaging with our future landlord, the Royal High School Preservation Trust, to ensure operational factors are considered and well understood as they progress the capital redevelopment.

Given the early and founding stage of our organisation, experience working in a complex venue is essential to this role. You will also be a key recruiter of future employees so leadership and line management experience is important, as you will ultimately have oversight of colleagues working across Front of House, Facilities, Box Office, and Events.

Taking on this role at this moment will see you become part of the founding story of a new major player in the Scottish music scene, and a major new destination in Edinburgh.

We recognise there are risks that come with a young organisation and we want to reassure candidates that we have secure finances, an experienced Board of Trustees, and appropriate HR, financial and governance structures and policies in place.

If you would like to speak to a member of the team prior to application, please get in touch.

ABOUT the NATIONAL CENTRE FOR MUSIC

VISION

Reawakening a spectacular Scottish heritage site, the National Centre for Music will become an energising force in Scotland's music sector, and an iconic cultural destination. Through our programmes and partnerships, Scotland's musical communities will come together, music will change peoples' lives, and Scotland will stay firmly at the forefront of global musical boldness.

MISSION

To create a nurturing and inspiring environment where Scottish musical history is made.

VALUES

Every sound counts

The explosion of different types of musical approaches, genres and passions that exist here every day is what makes us special.

Curiosity fuels our creativity

Our quest to celebrate the richness of music making in Scotland will never be exhausted – we know there is always more to discover, and we take that challenge seriously.

Join the dots

We are an active connector – bringing different musical perspectives and knowledge together in respectful exchange for everyone's benefit.

Warm and welcoming

We may look grand on the outside, but as soon as you enter, you feel at home. Our spaces all have an uplifting atmosphere, and our friendly team ensure everyone can access, enjoy and participate fully in what we have to offer.

Building for the future

We are creating an organisation that will play a significant role in Scotland's cultural trajectory. People will start to rely on us, so we prioritise long-term resilience and put sustainability (in all its meanings) at the heart of our thinking, to ensure we become an organisation fit for the future.



RESPONSIBILITIES

As a growing organisation, we anticipate that this role will evolve in response to the successful candidate's particular strengths and skills. In addition, the role will develop as the organisation ramps up to opening, supported by recruitment of a growing team (with this role likely to manage direct reports across Front of House, Facilities, Box Office and Events). This role is likely to change significantly over its early years. To give the best sense of this change, we provide a summary of the key phases and responsibilities, as well as a more detailed breakdown by area below.

By time period:	
Planning and recruitment - now till early 2028	• Developing staffing structures, budgets, policies, strategies, operational plans. • Recruitment and procurement of people and services • Familiarisation with the developing building and facilities
Mobilisation - Early 2028 till Summer 2028	• Final recruitment of operational teams • Finalising all operational and technical procedures, policies and strategies. • With your team, colleagues and NCM contractors - building familiarisation, witnessing and training from subcontractors on key building systems, facilities, ICT and specialist installations. • Coordination of early access, fit-out, FFE and a Food & Beverage provider contract. • Planning for launch events and first season of activity.
Launch year - from Summer 2028	• Final training for all staff • Test events • Ongoing refinement of policies and procedures (including seasonal adjustments) • Ongoing reporting, snagging and liaison with landlord and main construction contractor. • Tender process for any remaining building, facilities and technical contracts following conclusion of one-year-post-redevelopment agreements. • Ongoing development of commercial income pipeline, including close liaison with Food & Beverage partner, and securing / stewarding significant events bookings and tourism partnerships
'Normal' operations - from Summer 2029 (one year after launch)	• Ongoing management, streamlining and development of operational and commercial matters. • Line management of key operations staff teams • Longer term planning for repairs and replacements • Ensuring ongoing innovation and implementation of strategic priorities (e.g. sustainability initiatives)

By Area

Strategy & Leadership

- Close collaboration with the senior team on the overall organisational strategy, considering how delivery of our mission can be best strengthened by astute operational planning and business development
- Leading on the development of our commercial operations – managing the contract with a food & beverage provider; shaping a conference, events, tours and experiences offer; overseeing retail; considering innovative income generation strategies.
- Leading on environmental sustainability from an operations lens, considering how systems, procurement strategy, and operational plans contribute to effective carbon monitoring, reporting, and reduction
- Championing accessibility and inclusion across all facets of the role, ensuring systems, customer experience and recruitment live up to NCM's values
- Working closely with the Chief Executive on FF & E and fit-out planning, ensuring that NCM's infrastructure and resources are suitable for its intended public benefit, audience needs and artistic ambitions
- Holding budget authority for operations and facilities expenditure, as well as commercial income generation
- Supporting the recruitment, induction, and development of future staff across operations, facilities, front of house, and events.
- Acting as project lead for the implementation of venue management software

Facilities & Operations

- Overall responsibility for planning and coordinating the management and maintenance of the National Centre for Music, including contributing to reporting to our landlord.
- Leading the tenders and appointment of maintenance contractors and specialist service providers (the latter particularly one year after post-project completion when many mandatory maintenance contracts conclude)
- Developing systems and procedures to ensure the National Centre for Music is safe, well-maintained, and well-presented – giving everyone who visits a positive experience and, in due course, overseeing the implementation and execution of these systems as we move to full operations.

Audience & Visitor Experience

- Be a key voice in the development of a Customer Experience Plan, ensuring everyone who engages with NCM has a warm and welcoming interaction
- Develop the required training and induction procedures to support the growth of Front of House, Events and Facilities Teams, in particular, and begin the recruitment of these teams later in 2027.

Compliance, Risk and Health & Safety

- With the Chief Executive and the NCM Board, maintain a robust risk assessment and reporting system, and embed a culture of transparency.
- Be the executive lead for NCM's health and safety management system, supported by competent advisors and ensuring clear responsibilities are understood across the organisation.
- Working closely with specialist advisors and the Chief Executive, ensure all relevant licences, permits, and regulatory compliance, including premises licensing, fire safety, and public liability are in place, and report on this to the NCM Board.
- Develop and maintain organisational policies relevant to operations, health & safety, and compliance, including training manuals.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

This role will be fundamental in ensuring a smooth path to operational readiness and that NCM quickly gains a reputation as a great place to visit, to work and to be part of. This is a senior role that will have to manage a high degree of complexity and commercial responsibility. We are looking for someone with clear leadership credentials and experience in comparable settings. Being inspired by NCM's mission and values is also really important, as you will be developing and leading the teams who will shape how people's experience at NCM. Given that many of our systems, structures and relationships are still emerging or to be established, we're also seeking someone who is not daunted by a blank page, who can think innovatively and who knows what not to do.

Ultimately, we are looking for someone who can demonstrate the following capabilities and a passion for the possibilities this role represents.

Skills and Experience required for this role

- Substantial experience in a senior operational leadership role in a venue, cultural organisation, or complex public-facing environment.
- Proven ability to lead, motivate, and develop teams.
- Strong knowledge of health & safety legislation and compliance in a public venue context, with relevant qualifications or demonstrable expertise.
- Experience managing facilities and building maintenance, including in contract negotiation and procurement.
- Track record of growing commercial income streams, with financial acumen and budget management experience, including collaborative target setting.
- Familiarity with premises licensing, public entertainment licensing, or similar regulatory frameworks in Scotland.
- Experience with catering or hospitality operations, including licensing.
- Proven track record of implementing practices which prioritise accessibility and inclusion.
- Experience developing or implementing environmental sustainability initiatives.

The following would also be an advantage:

- Experience of working within or on a capital project
- Involvement in a new organisation or start-up environment
- Technical knowledge relevant to a live music environment
- Knowledge of Scottish Government Fair Work principles, Musicians' Union regulations and how these integrate into a cultural venue environment
- Understanding of the Scottish arts funding environment, including Creative Scotland requirements.
- NEBOSH, IOSH, or equivalent health & safety qualification.

The characteristics of someone we think would flourish in this role

- Someone comfortable with leading and making complex – and often swift - strategic decisions
- A collaborative person, who likes to tackle problems with others and who values open communication
- Someone with an exceptional eye for detail and who works in a highly organised way
- A calm individual who is not phased when things don't go as planned
- A compelling communicator who enjoys or can adopt a sales role when required
- Someone energised by a fresh slate and blank page, who doesn't mind using their initiative

HOW TO APPLY

Please email hello@ncmscotland.org.uk with 'Director of Operations & Commercial' as your subject header, attaching:

- a copy of your CV
- a covering letter of not more than two A4 pages (or a short video or audio recording of not more than 7 minutes in length), which responds to the following prompts, as well as giving us any other relevant information as to your suitability for the role:
 - Please explain something you learnt in a recent role that you think could be applicable to this position and organisation
 - Please tell us about an example of successful income generation or diversification that you are particularly proud of
 - Please tell us how you would describe your management style, and why you think this would work well in an organisation like the National Centre for Music

You do not have to give individual answers to each of these points if you would rather weave them through your letter. These are just to give a guide as to what we want to understand about your approach, experience and passion.

CVs and Covering Letters will be anonymised before initial review by the shortlisting panel. As indicated above, if you do not feel comfortable sharing a written submission, we are also happy to accept video or audio recordings of a covering statement. If you choose to submit a recording, the shortlisting panel will hear your voice (and, if you submit a video, know what you look like) but will not have access to your name or personal details.

CLOSING DATE for applications: 12 noon, Wednesday 28 October

First interviews will take place in w/c 9 November and can be done online or in person.

For an informal conversation in advance of applying, or to ask any questions, please contact hello@ncmscotland.org.uk

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

We are committed to ensuring everyone has access to the same resources and opportunities in applying for this role. If you have any access requirements, or we can do anything to help you feel more supported in your application, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will make any reasonable adjustments we can.

To give everyone the best chance of demonstrating their suitability for the role, we will share the core interview questions a few days in advance of first interviews.

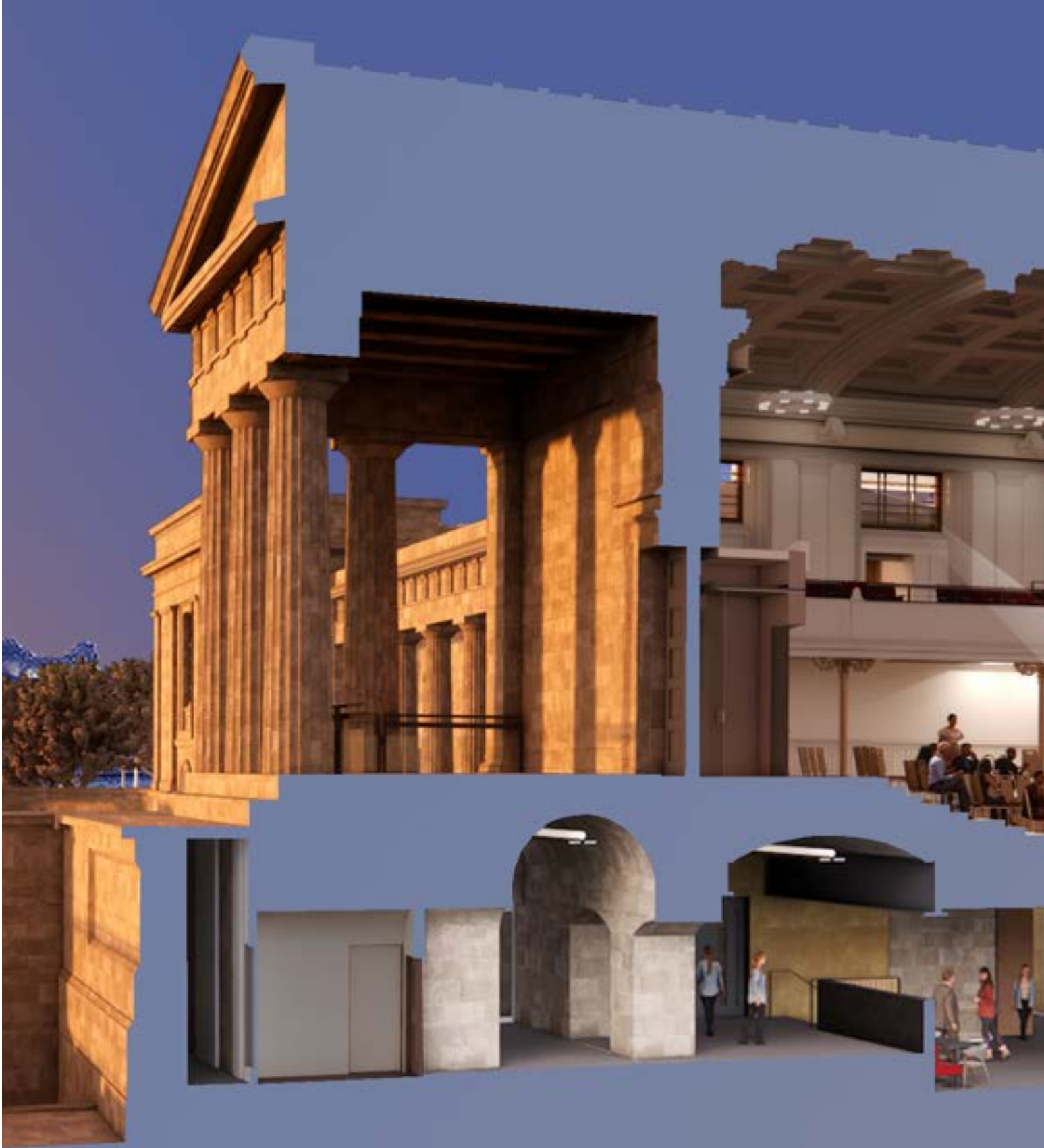


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