

CHAIR JOB DESCRIPTION

Objective

The Non-Executive Chair will hold the REL Board of Directors (“the Board”) and REL CEO to account for the delivery of REL’s mission and vision, providing inclusive leadership to the Board, ensuring that each board member fulfils their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of REL. REL is at the forefront of agri-tech enterprises on the globally recognised Rothamsted campus.

The Chair will support, and, where appropriate, challenge the REL CEO and ensure that the Board functions as a unit and works closely with the REL Management Team to achieve agreed business plan objectives.

He or she will also act as an ambassador and the public face of REL in partnership with the REL CEO.

Principal responsibilities:

Strategic leadership

- Provide leadership to REL and its Board in developing the REL strategy and vision, providing clear strategic direction, and ensuring that REL delivers to the requirements and aims of each of its shareholders.
- Build a strong relationship between the individual shareholders to support harmony and consistency of approach to deliver the Campus vision and objectives.
- Ensure that Board of Directors fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of REL as well as facilitate Board meetings and discussions.
- Ensure the REL Board of Directors approves a realistic and credible business plan in a timely manner.
- Ensure that the Board regularly reviews major risks and associated opportunities and satisfies 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 sound financial health of REL with systems in place to ensure financial accountability.

Governance

- Ensure that the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for REL and its shareholders.
- Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board of Directors.
- Encourage positive change where appropriate.
- Address and resolve any conflicts within the Board. The Chair shall have a casting vote in the event of equality of votes.
- Ensure that the Board of Directors is regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern and lead REL effectively.
- Work within the agreed policies and procedures adopted by REL, including compliance with the adopted Articles and Shareholder Agreement.

External relations

- Raise REL profile in creating and enhancing links with potential sponsoring organisations, particularly at the local level but also with regional and national stakeholders.
- Act as a spokesperson for the organisation when appropriate.
- Represent REL at external functions, meetings, and events.
- Facilitate change and address any potential conflict between shareholders and with external stakeholders.

Efficiency and effectiveness

- Chair meetings of the Board of Directors effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision-making process.
- Ensure that Directors are fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of REL and that the Board takes collective ownership.
- Foster, maintain and ensure that constructive relationships exist within and between the board members.
- Work closely with the REL CEO to give direction to Board aims and objectives, and ensure meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of board members.
- Monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.

Relationship with the REL CEO and the management team

- Establish and build a strong, effective, and constructive working relationship with the REL CEO, ensuring s/he is held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives.
- Support the REL CEO whilst respecting the boundaries that exists between the two roles.
- Ensure regular contact with the REL CEO and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about concerns, worries and challenges.
- Liaise with the REL CEO to maintain an overview of REL affairs, providing support as necessary.
- Conduct an annual appraisal and remuneration review for the REL CEO in consultation with other members of the board and key stakeholders.
- Ensure that the REL CEO has the opportunity for professional development and has appropriate external professional support.

Rothamsted brand

- Help promote the Rothamsted brand as a key national and international centre for research, innovation, and enterprise.
- Assist in the creation and maintenance of an enterprise culture within the Rothamsted Campus.

Further investment

- Work with shareholders to contribute to the long-term vision and goals for the Campus.

Person specification:

In addition to the qualities required of a board director, the Chair must also meet the following requirements:

Personal qualities

- Demonstrate a strong and visible passion and commitment to REL, its strategic objectives and cause.
- Personal gravitas to lead a newly formed public-private collaboration with a mission to be a world-leading campus for agri-tech science and translation.
- Exhibit strong inter-personal and relationship building abilities and be comfortable in an ambassadorial role.
- Demonstrate tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively.
- Strong networking capabilities (including relevant contacts) that can be utilised to help develop and grow the REL brand as well as achieve its strategic objectives and vision.
- Ability to foster and promote a collaborative team environment.
- Ability to commit sufficient time to the role.

Experience

- Experience of holding senior board positions in other organisations ideally within the agri-tech sector or worked in a senior position, alongside government support, to improve the competitiveness of the agri-tech sector.
- Experience of dealing with public bodies both at central and local government level, both in terms of securing funding and obtaining planning.
- Experience of operating at a senior strategic leadership level within an organisation.
- Experience of corporate governance and working with or as part of a Board of Directors.
- Experience of external representation, delivering presentations and managing stakeholders.
- Significant experience of chairing meetings and events.
- Financial acumen.

Knowledge and skills

- Broad knowledge and understanding of the Agri-Tech sector and current issues affecting it.
- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate staff and bring people together.
- Financial management expertise and a broad understanding of finance issues.
- Good understanding of corporate governance issues.