**Expression of Interest
Provision of Café Services at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens**
 **Introduction**
Norton Priory Museum Trust Limited (‘the Trust’) is the independent charitable trust which operates Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, on a 42-acre site in Runcorn Cheshire. Norton Priory Museum and Gardens has a modern café facility for visitors which is known as the Brooke Café.

As a leading visitor attraction in the region, Norton Priory Museum and Gardens has an active events and hospitality programme, whilst also being a key historical site with national significance. Situated at the end of a business park, the museum offers free on-site car parking and is easily accessible from the local motorway and road network, as well as local footpath and cycle routes.

The museum, which is dog-friendly, currently attracts around 40,000 visitors per year, which includes general museum visitors and those attending special events. The events programme includes annual and seasonal events, including Easter and Autumn events, alongside theatre and concerts. Between January 28th 2025 and March 9th 2025, the museum is hosting Luke Jerram’s Mars installation, which is expected to boost visitor numbers during the six-week period. The museum also holds weddings and other hospitality events throughout the year.

Museum visitor numbers fluctuate through the year, in line with the seasons. Easter through to the summer holidays provides the busiest period, with October and December also benefiting from a busy events programme. The site traditionally closes for Christmas, reopening on January 2nd each year.

The Trust has received feedback from visitors that provision of café services during standard opening hours and for evening and other out-of-hour events is important to them. There is also a desire to be able to place the catering provision closer to the core of the museum and its event programme. This could include cabaret evening events, with snacks and drinks available to attendees, pop-up dining opportunities, afternoon teas and other similar events which bring together food and drink with the museum’s event programme.

The Trust is inviting Expressions of Interest from interested parties for the provision of catering services at Norton Priory.
**About the Brooke Café**
The café is currently being operated by a local community provider. It offers refreshments, homemade cakes and a range of snacks and meals. Current trading hours for the café match museum opening hours, shown in the table below:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Open** *(Year Round)* | **Summer Close***(Mothering Sunday to October)* | **Winter Close***(November to Mothering Sunday)* | **Notes** |
| **Sunday** | 10:00 | 17:00 | 16:00 |  |
| **Monday** | 10:00 | 17:00 | 16:00 |  |
| **Tuesday** | 10:00 | 17:00 | 16:00 |  |
| **Wednesday** | Closed | Closed | Closed |  |
| **Thursday** | Closed | Closed | Closed | Open during school holidays |
| **Friday** | 10:00 | 17:00 | 16:00 |  |
| **Saturday** | 10:00 | 17:00 | 16:00 | Closed on selected Saturdays for weddings |

The café is situated next to the entrance of the building on the ground floor. It is a purpose designed space, opened in 2016, offering glazing and French windows to the front elevation, overlooking the landscaped outdoor seating area. It is a modern, double-height space, with a cathedral style ceiling. The café is served by the museum’s toilet and baby change facility, with its own dedicated toilet facility for café staff.

The cafe is open to museum and non-museum visitors alike and is accessible via the museum as well as via doors connecting it to the outdoor seating area. There are currently 13 tables seating 43 people inside the café, with 8 tables seating 24 people outside. An additional seating area is currently provided in the museum atrium. This is used as seating for visitors with dogs, and seats up to 8 people.

The cafe is served by a large catering kitchen with dishwasher, electric range, upright fridge and freezer. A storage area is also provided. The kitchen has a dedicated access door for staff entry and egress and for receiving deliveries.

The current operator holds a licence for the sale of alcohol at the premises. The Trust is keen that any new operator also has an alcohol licence. The ability to sell alcohol at events is important to provide a full entertainment offer for evening shows.

The current operator provides discount for members of the museum and the Trust would be keen for this to be extended to the Trust and its own staff. The existing menu provides vegetarian, gluten free, dairy free and vegan options, which is something the Trust is eager to see continue.

The café operator will need to be responsible for receiving deliveries and for recruitment and training of café staff, to include First Aid provision.

**Operating costs**
The successful café operator will be expected to meet utility costs for the café. This will include heating, water and electricity costs.

The Trust is open to discussions around different models for income from the café operation.

**Existing events and bookings**The museum benefits from a programme of annual event days / weekends. These days can see a large number of people visiting the site, so the café will need to be able to cope with such days. The table below provides additional information about such events:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of event** | **Month** | **Detail** |
| Easter | April | Runs over the Easter weekend |
| Plant Hunter’s Fair | May or June (1 day) | Incredibly popular event |
| Medieval Weekend | August (2 days) | 2024 event was busiest yet |
| Quince and Apple Weekend | October (2 days) | Has potential to be busiest event of the year  |
| Halloween | October half-term | Events throughout half term |
| Christmas Fair | November (1 day) | Always well attended |
| Christmas Events | December | Events are very busy, with many running in the evenings |

In addition, there is a current regular booking on Fridays which brings additional business to the café every week. **Future developments**

The Trust is keen for the Brooke Café operating hours to align with the museum’s evening events programme. There is also an ambition to consider evening opening for the museum on selected days during the summer season. This would require the café service to be operational, allowing visitors to enjoy food and drink as part of an evening visit.

The café operator also has the opportunity to provide catering and bar services for weddings held at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens. There is also the possibility of providing picnic boxes for outdoor performances etc.

During the summer season, the 2.5-acre Georgian Walled Garden is open to the public between 12pm – 4pm. This may provide opportunities for a pop-up outdoor café, increasing income potential and enhancing the visitor experience.

**Service Provision**

The current service provision focusses on a standard menu, incorporating homemade food, such as soup, sandwiches, quiches and jacket potatoes. The Trust recognises that prices of menu items may need to increase as part of this process. There is a desire to see the Brooke Café becoming a destination in its own right, serving nearby areas including Sandymoor and the new developments at Daresbury Garden Village.

To ensure the best fit for the site’s future catering provision, the Board of Trustees invites interested parties to make suggestions as to the scope and style of catering provision at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens. There is potential to increase the range of food offered and to consider ways in which the café could be more central to the museum and its visitors, such as using produce from the Walled Garden in recipes.

There is potential for the café operator to earn additional income from weddings, corporate bookings, group and other private hire events. The Foyle Room is accessible from the café space and can be set up for catered events.

**Next steps**

More information about Norton Priory Museum and Gardens can be found at online at [www.nortonpriory.org](http://www.nortonpriory.org).

Those interested in submitting an Expression of Interest are encouraged to visit Norton Priory Museum and Gardens to meet with our Chief Executive and to view the café and kitchen, and to gain a greater understanding of the site.

To arrange a meeting with the Chief Executive, please email the Chief Executive, Rob Sanderson-Thomas, at **rsanderson@nortonpriory.org**.

**Formal Expressions of Interest must be submitted using the attached form no later than 9:00am on Monday 18th November 2024.**

Applicants who submit a successful Expression of Interest, will be invited to meet with representatives of the Trust to discuss their proposal. At this stage, a business plan must also be provided.

The Trust will notify those applicants who are not proceeding to the second stage of the process, we will not be able to provide any feedback on their Expression of Interest.

**Questions**

Please contact the Chief Executive via email: **rsanderson@nortonpriory.org**

**Brooke Café: Expression of Interest Form**

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| --- |
| **Your details** |
| **Name** |  |
| **Address** |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Telephone number(s)** |  |
| **Email address** |  |
| **Trading / Business Name** |  |
| **Type of Business***(e.g. CIC, Limited Company, Charity)* |  |
|  |  |
| **Do you intend to retain the Brooke Café name?** |  |
|  |  |
| **Your experience** |
| **Please outline your experience in operating and managing food operations, providing an understanding of what kind of environment this experience has been gained in.** |
|  |
|  |  |
| **What capital investment would you propose to make?** |
| **Proposed Value** | **£** |
| **Please provide details of your proposed capital investment?***What would it cover? Over how long?* |
|  |
| **Would you seek any external funding? If so, please give details.** |
|  |
|  |
| **Operational Detail** |
| **What would the revenue costs of the café be under your operational model?** |
|  |
| **How would you ensure the café was sustainable?** |
|  |
| **What is your proposed staffing structure?** |
|  |
| **What would opening hours would you provide?***Please consider standard opening hours and any additional flexibility which you can offer* |
|  |
| **How would you propose to meet the demands of out-of-hours opening?** |
|  |
| **What is your proposal to pay Norton Priory Museum Trust Limited to operate the Brooke Café?***Please refer to ‘Operating costs’ in the Expressions of Interest text above* |
|  |
|  |
| **Menu** |
| **What kind of items would you include on the menu***If you wish to provide a sample menu, please include this as a separate attachment.* |
|  |
| **Please provide an idea of approximate prices for some standard items on the menu***Please include a couple of examples of both food and beverage items* |
|  |
|  |
| **Social impact** |
| **How will you minimise and reduce food waste?** |
|  |
| **In what ways will your proposal support and promote healthy eating?** |
|  |
| **Are there any social benefits you feel you could bring to Norton Priory Museum and Gardens’ catering offer?** |
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| **Motivation** |
| **Please tell us why you are interested in this opportunity at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens?** |
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|  |
| **Thank you for your interest in providing catering services at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens. Please return this form to** **rsanderson@nortonpriory.org****by 9:00am on Monday 18th November 2024** |