



The Munnings Art Museum Garden Café Tender Brief

Information for applicants

1. Organisational context

The Garden Cafe is based in the grounds of Castle House (The Munnings Art Museum). The museum is owned and operated by the Castle House Trust, a charity established in 1965 to run a museum in the former home of British artist Sir Alfred Munnings (1878-1959) in order to make his work publicly accessible. The Trust owns around 650 oil paintings and several hundred drawings and watercolours by Sir Alfred Munnings which it displays on a rotating basis throughout the rooms of the museum. The museum also contains the furniture and objects once belonging to Munnings and his wife, Violet.

Since 2012 the board of Trustees, under the guidance of a new chairman, has been working to develop the museum's visitor offer and services in order to better promote the museum, its collection of paintings and the forty acres of land which it owns and manages. In 2013 the Trustees appointed the museum's first full-time Director and developed a set of aims:

- To manage the art collection to national museum standards
- To be a financially sustainable organisation
- To provide an excellent and safe visitor experience
- To promote awareness and understanding of Sir Alfred Munnings and his values
- To deliver an engaging exhibition and events programme
- To care for and develop Castle House, its grounds and land to complement the art collection and museum experience

The Trustees and Museum Director are now looking to take the museum's catering offer to a new level to compliment other operational initiatives being implemented to improve and develop the visitor experience at the museum. Though based on the essential service in the café building the museum is looking for a dynamic service provider to support the growth of its programme of events and other income generating activities that support the work of the charity.

For more information about The Munnings Art Museum, please visit our website at www.munningsmuseum.org.uk

2. The Garden Café

The original museum ‘tearoom’ was established in 2009 in response to visitor feedback and a service quality review which highlighted the visitor demand for refreshments to be served on site. Subsequently, and with the support of grant funding, part of the Studio building once used by Munnings to work in, was converted into an appropriate space. In its first year the tearoom was run very successfully by volunteers serving drinks and pre-packaged food.

In 2010, an independent business was licenced to develop the café offer. This has grown into an elegant and tasteful experience which appeals to the museum’s visitors as well as some regular and passing trade. The café business has also supported, when possible, group visit trade both within and outside of usual museum opening hours. Group visit trade is a growing and popular part of the museum’s operations.

The café is now seen as being an integral, and seamless, part the museum’s visitors’ experience, and therefore needs to create an atmosphere and provide a menu that meets their high expectations.

The museum is located just outside the village of Dedham, Essex in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty often called ‘Constable Country’ because of its association with another well-known British artist John Constable. The village benefits from a considerable number of tourists and holiday makers. It is usual for visitors to have made a special, planned visit to the museum often travelling some distance or including it as a holiday activity. The current visitor demographic is aged 55+ with an interest in art, horses, the countryside and historic houses. In 2012 the museum had 5,000 visitors during the open season. In 2013 this rose to 6,400 visitors. Current season figures (beginning of August 2014) show that number of visitors is up again by 600 on the same time last year.

The museum is open 1 April - 31 October, 2pm – 5pm, Wednesday – Sunday and bank holiday Mondays. The Garden Café is operating alongside the museum, trading from 1.30pm-5.00pm on days when the museum is open. In the past, the Café has continued trading, less successfully, during the winter months when the museum is closed.

During August 2014 the museum piloted longer opening hours 11am – 5pm, Wednesday – Sunday and on the August bank holiday. Unfortunately, the Café has been unable to operate during the museum’s extended August hours or on bank holidays. This has caused some negative feedback from visitors.

Capacity

In its current arrangement the café has seating for around 45 visitors at any one time but less than half of these are indoors. There is a small terraced area beside the café with room for several tables and chairs. The museum is able to make available a further four picnic tables and a marquee measuring 4m x 10m.

The café currently operates on a number of domestic food preparation appliances, including oven, fridges, coffee maker. These will be removed by the outgoing business. The incoming licensee would need to provide their own equipment to prepare food.



Café interior food preparation area



Café interior drink serving area



Café exterior terrace



Café exterior entrance

4. The opportunities

The museum is keen to engage a dynamic, creative and forward thinking licensee for The Garden Café and supporting catering services and is open to all suggestions about the development of the café and catering offer which the licensee is confident of delivering successfully.

In the first instance, however, the following is essential to the museum's current needs:

- Refreshments provided in the café building for walk in visitors 1 April – 31 October, Wednesday-Sunday 12.30-5pm.
- Catering for group visits by appointment outside museum open hours 1 April – 31 October, 10.30am-5pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, 10.30am-12.30pm Wednesdays – Sundays. 1 November – 31 March, 10.30am-5pm by negotiation.

In addition:

- Willingness to discuss catering for special events. This would be subject to arrangement but the museum anticipates developing its event programme to around ten events per year. This would range from art workshops and learning events for both children and adults from between 10 and 30 people, evening events in the museum for up to 100 adults to events in the grounds for up to 200 people. Times would vary from 2 hours to a full day.
- The museum is also looking to develop opportunities for private hire of Castle House for evening events and apply for a premises licence.

3. The relationship between The Munnings Art Museum and The Garden Café

The museum owns the building in which the cafe operates. Because of its charity status it is able to licence the building for use as a café but it is not able to lease it.

The opportunity for a licensee to develop the catering offer at The Munnings Art Museum is a unique one and whilst we understand that having autonomy is vitally important, we also want to provide the supportive environment needed to ensure that success from a business perspective is achieved. Regular meetings between the museum and the licensee are considered vital in understanding performance and developing needs on both sides.

4. Rent and additional cost implications

The licensee will be expected to pay their share of overheads and a percentage of turnover as rent. Rent will be only payable during trading times i.e. the museum would not expect to collect high levels of rent during the winter months when it does not require a regular café service. Details will be agreed at the beginning of the licence and reviewed regularly.

7. Tender Requirements

In order to apply to deliver the services outlined above, applicants will need to submit 1 x tender application comprising of no more than 6 pages of A4, in Arial with a font of no less than size 11.

Applicants must:

- Provide their name, address, contact number, e-mail address and link to website (if applicable)
- Provide a brief overview of why the organisation is interested in taking on the running of The Garden Café and catering services.
- Provide an overview of their organisation, details of previous experience relevant to the opportunity on offer, including information relating to all staff involved, qualifications and level of experience and skills
- Provide details of staffing structure and approach to management and any additional proposed opening hours for the café (days and times),
- Demonstrate an understanding of catering provision in the tourism / heritage sector and in turn the need for the café and any supporting services to provide a seamless experience for the visitor.
- Provide suggested menu options or broad overview of offer (example menus can be attached as an appendix, suggested prices must be included).
- Additionally, applicants should include one example of suggested catering options for special events or private hire of the museum to demonstrate an understanding of the museums future needs and how they may be met.
- Provide an overview of business plan/approach (can be included as a separate appendix or as part of the application) to include projected turnover for the first year.
- Applicants should clearly demonstrate how the café will balance a robust business approach with its complimentary position to the museum.

Please note that the above list is not exhaustive, applicants must ensure that they respond to all of the above within their applications whilst also addressing the needs identified throughout the tender brief. Application should be submitted to Jenny Hand by no later than 3rd November 2014 at 5pm by e-mail at jenny.hand@munningsmuseum.org.uk

Applications received after this date will not be considered.

8. Tender Process

Assessment of tender applications will be in two stages namely:

1. Tender applications
2. Panel Assessments: Shortlisted applicants will be invited to present their plans to an assessment panel comprising of the Museum Director, the chair of the board of the trustees and one other representative of the board.

Please see below the proposed timeframe for the application process.

Tender brief released 22nd September 2014

Application deadline 3rd November 2014

Shortlisted applicants meet with assessment panel w/c 17th November 2014

Final decision communicated w/c 24th November 2014

Contracts commence as soon as practicable after the above date

Review Period

Please note that a standard part of the tender contract will be the implementation of a four month review period that will include an eight week review meeting with the Museum Director. During the first four months of the contract, the Trust will reserve the right to release the provider from the contract with immediate effect. Beyond this four month period, notice of three months will be required by either party to terminate the contract unless there is a contravention of it.

If you have any questions relating to the tender process or a general query regarding the opportunity on offer, please contact Jenny Hand 01206 322127 or e-mail at jenny.hand@munningsmuseum.org.uk.

9. Visiting The Garden Cafe

As part of the tender process, we will offer the opportunity for prospective tenants to come and visit the facility in order to gain a better understanding of the opportunity on offer. If you would like to visit the premises prior to submitting your application, please contact Jenny Hand to arrange an appointment. Please note: visits will be subject to availability and should be arranged as far in advance as possible.

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