

St Mary's Stockport: Brief for Activity Planning and Volunteer Coordinator role

Location: Stockport, Greater Manchester

Project Value: £2.2 million (£1.7m construction)

1. Church Overview

St Mary's in the Marketplace, Stockport is a Grade I listed, pre-Reformation church and the oldest building in Stockport, within the Market and Underbanks Conservation Area. The chancel and oratory date from 1320, with roof timbers dendro-dated to 1017. The nave and tower were rebuilt in 1817.

St. Mary's now has an aspiration to develop the church into a heritage centre (whilst remaining an active place of Christian worship) with activities aimed at a wide range of ages and interests; and repairs, maintenance and improvements to the building.

We currently host Stockport Heritage Trust. Our ambition is to significantly increase access to heritage by also providing tower tours, self-guided tours, a heritage escape room and a professional cafe or restaurant. We would like to develop a programme of activities that increase engagement with the heritage of the church and the local area for people who might not normally get involved. This will include working in partnership with new and existing partners such as Stockarts, Eat Good West and local schools to increase use of the church for gigs, food festivals and educational tours.

2. Project Overview

We are delighted to have secured funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support a development stage project which will set out costs and proposals for us to take forward to delivery stage. At delivery stage this project will deliver:

- Urgent repairs to roof, gutters, stonework, windows, plasterwork and floor tiles.
- New facilities including heating, entranceways and safe tower access.
- New interpretation within and outside the church to tell the story of the building and people connected to it through heritage escape rooms, a tower tour, self-guided QR code tours, and other potential ideas suggested within budget and capacity.
- A programme of activities that will engage a wide range of people with the heritage.
- Commercial and income generating activities and events that will help to secure financial resilience and ongoing maintenance of the building.
- Potentially establishment of a new organisation to run the activities beyond the life of the project.

The current budget allocated to activities within the delivery phase budget is:

£42,000	Digital Resources and Fit-out
£312,000	Employment of staff
£33,000	Other Activity Plan
£20,000	Publicity

3. Activity Planning and Volunteer Plan Consultant

A consultant is required with demonstrable (3 projects in the last 5 years) experience of working to National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) Development and Delivery Phase requirements. The consultant will also ideally have experience of working in historic and active churches and of working with volunteers.

The consultant must be experienced in team working across disciplines and have a clear understanding of NLHF's priorities for Saving Heritage; Protecting the Environment; Inclusion, Access and Participation; and Organisational Sustainability.

Governance: the consultant will report to Rev. Chris Blunt (client) and Peter McIlhagger of PMC Squared (Project Manager) and will attend regular on line project team meetings (monthly). The consultant should plan for 4 of these meetings to be in person on site. These meetings will be alongside the Interpretation Planning and Historic Research consultant, Business Planner, Evaluation Consultant and Architect/Design Team.

Safeguarding: given this role's work with schools, volunteers and vulnerable or marginalised groups, the consultant must agree to work within the PCC's safeguarding policy or submit their own for approval.

The role will include:

- Work with the wider (non construction) consultant team including interpretation and historical research, business planning and evaluation to ensure a coherent approach to the project. This will include setting out a clear vision for the project and coordinating consultation and public engagement.
- Activity planning and consultation with stakeholders, current users and visitors, and target audiences to produce an Activity Plan.
- Volunteer plan – work with current and new volunteers to support involvement in this stage of the project, set out volunteer roles and create a Volunteer Plan.

The budget for this role is £24,000.

This fee is inclusive of all expenses and disbursements. The consultant must hold Professional Indemnity insurance (minimum £1m) and Public Liability insurance (minimum £2m). The budget excludes VAT.

4. Deliverables for this role

Cross-cutting requirement: activity proposals must be inclusive and accessible for historically marginalised communities, and must align with NLHF's Inclusion, Access and Participation and Organisational Sustainability priorities throughout.

a. Work with wider consultant team

- Deliver a vision workshop for the whole consultant team (including design team) to develop an agreed vision for the project.
- Work with the PM to coordinate consultation across the whole project, supporting the wider team with specific consultation and engagement.
- Provide regular updates on activity planning.

b. Activity planning

- Set out a plan for consultation with stakeholders, current users and visitors and target audiences, and provide a consultation summary.
- Develop strategies to engage the local community with the Activity Plan, fostering a sense of ownership and pride in the heritage centre.

- Incorporate feedback and ideas from church stakeholders and local community groups into the plan.
- Design a diverse and engaging programme of activities that align with NLHF standards and priorities and our Development Phase Bid, including ideas such as:
 - o Tower tours and self-guided tours (including digital components).
 - o Heritage escape rooms.
 - o Craft club nights.
 - o Food-themed heritage events.
 - o Book club nights.
- Draw on historic research (provided by the Interpretation Planning and Historic Research consultant) to identify the key stories and history that will connect to different audiences through the activities.
- Work with the business planning team to identify which activities and events will generate income and which will require future budget after the completion of the project and provide a job description for activity-related post holders at delivery stage.
- Provide sufficient design briefing information for the proposed activities to allow the designers to coordinate and inform budgets, the Activity Plan, and capital costings for the delivery phase.
- Prepare a comprehensive Activity Plan and Action Plan, including detailed descriptions of proposed activities, target audiences, delivery methods, and costings.

c. Volunteer plan

- Design a strategy to recruit volunteers for key project activities, including heritage tours, cafe operations, workshops, and events.
- Develop volunteer role descriptions and recruitment materials tailored to diverse age groups and skill sets.
- Create and deliver creative resources for church team members on volunteer management, covering recruitment, onboarding, motivation, and retention.
- Establish clear processes and tools for volunteer supervision, communication, and feedback.
- Develop a plan to retain volunteers through recognition programmes, development opportunities, and ongoing support.
- Foster a culture of appreciation and inclusivity within the volunteer programme.
- Provide insights and data to support the business plan, ensuring the volunteer programme is integrated into operational and financial planning.
- Prepare a Volunteer Plan, outlining recruitment, training, retention, and engagement strategies.
- Submit progress updates to the project team and a final strategy document for inclusion in the NLHF Development Phase bid.

5. Essential Experience

The consultant will require a range of skills and experience including:

- Demonstrable experience delivering NLHF-funded (or comparable) activity planning, ideally in historic churches or similarly listed buildings. Demonstrable with 3 projects in the last 5 years.

- A strong track record of inclusive community engagement and co-creation with under-represented and marginalised groups, and of volunteer recruitment, training and retention.
- Proven ability to produce costed, deliverable plans (Activity Plan, Volunteer Plan) that balance community engagement with commercial sustainability.
- Strong cross-team coordination, communication and reporting skills, given this role's responsibility for aligning the wider consultant team, business planning and evaluation.

6. Timeline

The project team are currently working towards a May 2027 submission of the application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The consultant must also allow for a NLHF mid-term review.

Key milestones (dates to be confirmed unless stated):

- Appointment of consultant team – Sept 2026
- Audience research and stakeholder consultation – Oct–Dec 2026
- Draft Activity Plan, Interpretation Plan and Volunteer Plan – for mid-term review (date to be confirmed by NLHF)
- Final plans, costings and Delivery Phase narrative agreed – March 2027
- NLHF Delivery Phase submission – May 2027

7. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed against:

- Understanding of the brief and proposed approach
- Relevant experience and track record (case studies)
- Team skills, capacity and value for money

8. Submission

By Friday 25th September, interested consultants should submit an application to include: CVs, relevant experience and a methodology for the work. Methodologies should be no more than 6 sides of A4 and CVs no more than 2 sides of A4 per person. Interviews, if required, will be held by video call on Monday 28 or Tuesday 29 September

Applications should be sent to: c.blunt@stockportparish.net and copied to peter@pmcsquared.co.uk and stephen.roche@pmcsquared.co.uk

It is expected that those intending to bid for the work should at least call Rev. Chris Blunt (07503 706906), The Rector of Stockport and Brinnington, to discuss the project prior to submission. Subject to existing commitments, visits to see St. Mary's and discuss face to face are also encouraged.

To assist, if requested, the PCC will supply digital (pdf) copies of:

- The other briefs being sent out that make up the full package of work; and
- Our initial Expression of Interest for the project.