

**Community Engagement**

**Victoria Park & Watercress Fields**

**Ashford**



1. **Introduction**

We are starting work on our second-round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Parks for People programme for Victoria Park and Watercress Fields in Ashford, Kent. To help us engage the community in the development of our project and support our second-round bid, we would like to appoint an experienced community engagement specialist to work with us to develop a friends group for the park, manage communication with the public, collect baseline evaluation data and organise public consultation events.

This brief sets out our requirements, how interested practices should tender, the deadline for responses, and how the tender will be evaluated.

1. **Background Information**

Victoria Park and Watercress Fields are Ashford’s largest and most central municipal park, set in a riverside location within 10 minutes’ walk of Ashford town centre. Although valued as an open space, the park currently fails to play a meaningful role in the social life and fabric of the town and does not enhance the character, identity and vitality of the south Ashford community.

Opened in 1899, the park now includes the grade-II\* listed Hubert Fountain, tree lined walks, a secret garden, play spaces, sports facilities, a community building, the Great Stour river, bridges, a community orchard, the open areas of Watercress Fields, and also forms an important part of the Ashford Green Corridor and pedestrian and cycle route between the town centre and south Ashford communities. The Great Stour river is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, because it is largely natural in character and supports a wide range of submerged, emergent and marginal aquatic plants.

The park faces a number of issues including the quality of facilities, few activities, movement patterns, lack of physical connection with the surrounding high-rise blocks and other housing facing Watercress Fields, and poor links to the town centre. The site also fails to make best use of its built, natural and cultural heritage and does little to connect people to place.

Both the area immediately surrounding the park and the wider town are going through a period of tremendous renewal and expansion - there is significant housing development planned and taking place along the northern boundary of the park and towards the town centre.

This project will assist in unlocking the heritage potential of the site and help to ensure it can meet the needs of existing and future park users. It will provide training and education opportunities and create a sustainably managed park that welcomes the new generation of people arriving in the area.

This project is an exciting opportunity to deliver the Council’s Five Year Corporate Plan, Priorities 3 & 4:

* Active & Creative Ashford: “Planned improvement to key public space and parks – Victoria Park”, and
* Attractive Ashford – Environment, Countryside, and Tourism & Heritage: “To safeguard and conserve our local heritage and areas of outstanding landscape”

The project will also be key in delivering aspects of the recently produced Open Space Strategy and Green Corridor Plan (incorporated into the strategy at appendix 3) – available from our website: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/the-environment/parks-and-open-spaces/open-space-strategy/>. It will also help to improve links to the town centre, in terms of encouraging more people to visit and use the park, creating physical links, better interpretation, and with the opportunity of tandem events between park and town.

The plans submitted to HLF in February 2017 focused on the need to:

* Respond effectively to the pressure of housing growth around the park and reduce the likely associated environmental impacts in the immediate area.
* Create an attractive destination promoting and celebrating flagship open spaces, existing heritage and addressing lost heritage features.
* Instil local civic pride and ownership to the public realm.
* Support the hosting of high quality events, using the trusted local brand of the ‘Create Music Festival’ and others, providing a positive platform for groups, clubs, artists and organisations.
* Encourage engagement from a range of partners that provide ongoing activities for the park in the longer term.
* Fulfilling the Council’s obligation to maintain Victoria Park in optimum condition.
* Ensure the park fulfils its function as a community hub and place for recreational activity including meeting spaces and physical activity.

Community engagement is a core element of the project. Engaging existing and potential visitors in the project will help to foster community cohesion, ensure the capital works and activities address community needs, and help to develop an increased sense of ownership of the park and its facilities.

We recently created an in-house grounds maintenance service called Aspire Landscape Management. They have already delivered a significant improvement in the quality of maintenance standards at Victoria Park and Watercress Fields.

More information is available in the appendix, including:

* Round one application form
* Visioning and Masterplanning Report, December 2015
* Design Report, February 2017
* Condition survey of fountain

The site is approximately 21ha in size and located on Jemmett Road, Ashford, TN23 4QD, grid reference TR 00537 42262.

1. **Our requirements**

We need to appoint an experienced community engagement specialist to carry out the following tasks:

* Identify and meet key local people with a variety of skills and experience to form the basis of a friends group
* Create and develop the friends group for the park, including monthly meetings &/or activities, as well as establishing the resources, training and support needs of the group, and associated costs, for inclusion in the round two bid to HLF
* Identify and build relationships with key volunteers, such as graduates, interns and apprentices, as well as establishing the resources, training and support needs of volunteers for inclusion in the round two bid to HLF
* Organise and promote two significant public consultation events, including:
	+ Planning, promoting and delivering the events
	+ Coordinating with other members of the project team who will produce consultation materials
	+ Establishing ways for the public to comment on plans
	+ Summarising the outcomes of the consultation in written report
* Manage project communication including monthly email updates, social media posts and website updates
* Advocate the project to a wide range of local organisations, encouraging partnership working and widespread engagement
* Undertake baseline data collection to inform project evaluation, including
	+ A survey of at least 100 park users to establish existing users’ perceptions of the park
	+ People counts to establish the number and profile of visitors
	+ Analysis of the results
1. **Programme**

Friends group

* First meeting in March 2018 followed by seven additional monthly meetings or activities until October 2018

Public consultation events

* One significant standalone public event in the park in April 2018
* Coordination of project presence at the Create Music festival in July 2018

Project communication

* Organise and send out 8 monthly project updates by email and social media
* Organise and display 4 project updates on site, in addition to the two public consultation events
* Keep the website up to date with project progress

Baseline data collection

* Carry out an onsite visitor survey and people counts across 14 days (date to be agreed)
* Collate and analyse the data
1. **Wider project team**

The successful tenderer will be expected to work collaboratively with other members of the project team in developing our second-round application to HLF. Other key members of the team will be:

* ABC Client Officer
* Consultant Project Manager
* Consultant producing Activity, Interpretation and Evaluation Plan
* Consultant producing Conservation Plan and Management & Maintenance Plan
* Consultant design team including landscape architect, architect, engineers and QS

We will consider tenders for both the Activity and Interpretation Plan and the Community Engagement Officer from the same organisation.

1. **Project Outputs**

Draft(s) and final outputs should generally be provided to us electronically in PDF format.

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1. **Insurance**

The successful tenderer will be expected to have Public Liability Insurance (no less than £5m) and Professional Negligence Insurance (no less than £1m).

1. **Data protection**

The successful tenderer will be expected to work closely with Ashford Borough Council’s Data Protection Officer to ensure all data is collected in accordance with governing rules and regulations.

1. **Tender process**

**Tender programme**

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| --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Date** |
| Tender issued | 20 November 2017 |
| Tender returns due | 6 December 2017 |
| Tender evaluation | 7 December |
| Interviews | w/c 18 December |
| Kick off meeting | w/c 15 January 2018 |

**Tender submission**

To be considered for this project, you will need to submit:

1. A brief method statement that sets out your approach (two sides of A4).
2. A programme setting out key tasks, how long you expect them to take and demonstrating you can deliver within our timescales (two sides of A4).
3. Examples of similar projects that you have completed (e.g. HLF-funded, historic parks, similar budget; no more than three sides of A4).
4. A fee proposal to provide the services outlined in the brief, as well as any additional allowances you feel may be necessary to achieve the end result. Please provide a day rates for additional tasks if needed (one side of A4).

**Tender evaluation**

Your tender submission will be evaluated as follows:

* 70% of your score will be based on the quality of your tender submission (i.e. your response to question 1 (weighted 30%), 2 (weighted 10%) and 3 (weighted 30%).
* 30% of your score will be based on your fee proposal (question 4) where the lowest price will score 30% and higher prices will score less as a percentage of the lowest price

Your response to questions 1, 2 and 3 will be marked using the following scale:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Judgement** |
| **0** | Statement is unsuitable and / or suggests unacceptable risk |
| **2** | Statement fails to meet requirements in a significant way |
| **4** | Statement fails to meet requirements in some way |
| **6** | Statement meets all the requirements (“par”) |
| **8** | Statement exceeds requirements and adds some value  |
| **10** | Statement exceeds requirements and adds significant value |