

# Cowper & Newton Museum Business Planning Consultant Team brief



## Cowper And Newton Development Opportunity (CAN-DO)

### 1. Project Summary

The Cowper and Newton Museum invites a business consultant team to work with trustees, staff and volunteers to develop its world-class offer into a pragmatic, achievable business and operational plan.

Cowper and Newton Museum is a charity. The Museum's mission is to conserve, develop and maximise access to its buildings, collections and gardens, thereby promoting the public understanding and enjoyment of Cowper and Newton and their period, and of local life and industry from the earliest times to the recent past. The Museum, which is a Grade II Star listed building, lies within the Olney Conservation Area. The Georgian house and period gardens are a significant draw to its visitors. It is the oldest museum in the area, having occupied the present building since 1900.

**William Cowper** was the leading English poet of the fourth-quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He is best known for his poems, *John Gilpin*, *The Task*, *The Poplar Field*, *On the loss of the Royal George* and *The Negro's Complaint* (in opposition to the slave trade). His best known quotations are: 'Variety is the spice of life'; 'I am the monarch of all I survey' and 'God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform.'

**John Newton** was a slave captain turned leading evangelical and abolitionist. He persuaded William Wilberforce to stay in parliament. He wrote, with Cowper, the Olney Hymns including the best known hymn of them all *Amazing Grace*. He persuaded Cowper to move to Olney and Newton's vicarage can still be seen from the garden of the museum.

*Amazing Grace* and Newton's association with the Evangelical Tradition and the founding of the Church missionary society are often cited as the reasons for visits, especially from American religious tour groups. Other, usually British, visitors cite the quotations and influence of Cowper on currently more famous writers such as Jane Austen and William Wordsworth.

#### **Cowper & Newton Museum offer:**

1. The story of Cowper & Newton and their international impact.
2. An 18<sup>th</sup> century building set in a Georgian conservation area, with attractive and comparatively large period gardens, features & summerhouse.
3. Insights into 18<sup>th</sup> century literature, poetry, and religion.
4. Cowper's attitude to and Newton's part in the slave trade & abolition.
5. Cowper's interest in animals and gardening.
6. A Local History resource and collections especially in relation to the Cottage Industry of Bobbin Lace Making.
7. A temporary exhibition gallery to display work by local artists and craftspeople.
8. Unique museum, archive and library collections and associated Educational and Learning resources.
9. A shop selling high quality and unique items related to the Museum and Garden.
10. The museum has been featured on *The One Show* (2014), *Rule Britannia*, *Music, Mischief & Morals* (2014), *Great Railway Journeys* and *Antique Road Trip*.

Between 2012 and 2013 visitor numbers grew by 34% with approximately 2500 paying visitors per annum (plus children, Friends and re-admissions who do not pay).

Key strengths & weaknesses identified by the trustees:

**Strengths:**

1. The warm welcome visitors receive from volunteers.
2. The helpfulness of volunteers to the organisation.
3. A heightened awareness of the importance of Cowper & Newton in their era
4. The gardens (visitor asset, period features and historic planting).
5. The intimate and homely feel of the property.
6. The museum has full Museum Accreditation and so has gained national recognition in meeting collection, organisational and visitor standards.

**Weaknesses:**

1. A difficult property for the disabled to access above ground floor level.
2. A lack of Sunday opening which is one of the town's busiest days for visitors.
3. A lack of a large enough group space for educational, community and income generating functions.

## **2. Museum Background**

'Orchard Side', the home of William Cowper from 1768 to 1786, was presented to the town of Olney by its owner, Mr. Collingridge, in April 1900. It is vested in a body comprising 12 Trustees, of whom 10 are co-opted and 2 nominated by the Town Council. The declaration of the Trust was regulated and charitable status approved in 1902. The Registered Charity, No. 310521, was formally sealed in 1985.

The Museum was built as two separate stone houses circa 1700 and slightly altered in 1844. A literary museum was started in 1900, and the adjoining Gilpin House, the garden and summerhouse were subsequently added, creating one of Olney's significant buildings, overlooking the Market Place.

The collection has been developed to illustrate the lives of Cowper and Newton and also to encompass the local trades and industries, especially lace and leather, and some local archaeological finds.

The museum is situated in the historic market town of Olney. It is within an attractive rural setting and dates from before the Domesday Book. It is administratively located in the fast expanding Borough of Milton Keynes. As a growth area for housing development there is an opportunity for growth funding to be available.

Olney is 5 miles from Junction 14 of the M1 and some 12 miles from Milton Keynes city centre, Northampton, Wellingborough and Bedford. Good train mainline train connections are available in Milton Keynes (West Coast main line) and Bedford (St Pancras/Gatwick express). Luton Airport is 20 miles away and Heathrow and Stanstead are an hour away by car.

Attractions often visited at the same time as the museum are the John Bunyan Museum in Bedford, Oxford, Cambridge, Cottesbrooke House (Jane Austen's Mansfield Park near Northampton and Sulgrave Manor (George Washington). The museum is also linked via the Milton Keynes consortium to the 4 other heritage attractions in the Borough including Bletchley Park and MK Museum.

### 3. Scope of work

A Team of Business Consultants is required to research, develop and produce a Business Plan for the Cowper and Newton Museum, Olney. The business planning consultants will be required to work closely with the Project Team and Development Manager (DM) to enable and oversee the instigation of the plan, the initial overseeing of the DM and implementation. The DM will be recruited during the Business Planning process and the consultants shall help form their role description, profile and function. The DM role will form an integral part of the project.

Whilst the Board of Trustees appreciate the Museum might benefit from major capital investment, the requirement of this brief is to build up the business within the existing site, with modest proposals for capital improvement.

**The main focus of this brief is on future business development and sustainable income, with a clear direction that will enable the museum to capitalise on its internationally important stories to attract more and retain existing visitors.**

The business plan should include the delivery and programme plan, income & expenditure profiles and full resource requirements, an audience development plan and accommodation review.

In summary the outputs of this work are as follows:

Task	Output
<b>Situation and scoping analysis</b> to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• desk research site analysis,</li> <li>• customer research already in existence</li> <li>• stakeholder, customer, trustee and resident focus and idea generation groups</li> <li>• collections analysis, conditions overview, accommodation review</li> <li>• income and expenditure review</li> <li>• Organisational structure and legal aspects</li> <li>• Charitable objectives examined.</li> <li>• Other areas as suggested by the consultant.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial report and presentation to Project Team and key findings reported.</li> </ul>
<b>Visioning workshop</b> with the trustees and sample of stakeholders/users/staff etc (half day).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update report and presentation to Project Team and key findings reported.</li> </ul>
<b>Business Options Report</b> Feedback from situation analysis, visioning to inform business modelling report with options for the board to consider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended Report with options.</li> <li>• Board &amp; key stakeholders presentation</li> </ul>
<b>Business Plan</b> Short term (6 months 1 Nov – 30 Apr) Long term (3 Years 1 May onwards)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans</li> </ul>
<b>Review meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-assessment and plan tweaking workshops with Project Board</li> </ul>
<b>Final 3-5 year Business Plan</b> adopted by Board & Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May 2015</li> </ul>

#### 4. Relevant Experience and Skills

It is required that the team of consultants are flexible in their approach and have excellent communication skills and in addition it is essential that they have:

- Experience of developing business plans within the museum and heritage sector;
- Experience of delivering business plans for volunteer-led organisations
- Demonstrable experience of conducting financial appraisals, developing income and expenditure projections, sensitivity analysis and market penetration analysis for heritage organisations;
- The ability to demonstrate a good methodology for producing an effective Business Plan for the period of project delivery.
- Knowledge of/experience in managing a cultural venue;
- Experience of working effectively with Trustees and volunteers to develop plans for heritage projects including organisational change.

#### 5 Fee

There is a maximum budget allocation of £20,000 for this work, including all consultant(s) time, all related expenses, sub-contractors and travel/subsistence but **exclusive of VAT**.

#### 6 Reporting

The consultant(s) will report to the chairman of the trustees Paul Collins and the other Project team members are:

Mary-Ann Tyrell (Trustee), David Harding (Trustee), Tom Jones (Trustee). Shane Downer (MKC), Marie Kirbyshaw (MKC).

#### 7 How to Tender

The Contract Award criteria will be based on the most economically advantageous tender in terms of the criteria stated below **and consultants shall need to be available to start the work on 1 Aug 2014**. A tender response to this brief should outline (in no more than 10 pages of A4) the following:

	Scoring criteria	Score
<b>Skills &amp; Experience</b> (see section 4 for detail)	<p>At least three years' experience of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• developing business plans &amp; within the museum and heritage sector <u>as a team</u>;</li><li>• financial appraisal, budget management experience for charitable sector</li><li>• successful management of a Museum/ visitor attraction and/or similar cultural venue</li><li>• project management methodology experience</li></ul> <p>Your company/organisational profile outlining the relevant experience and summary CVs of the key people who will work on the project. (These persons shall not be removed from the project without approval from the contracting body)</p> <p>References from two similar projects from the last two years.</p>	35%

<b>Methodology</b>	Method statement: How you propose to deliver the project.	25%
<b>Your Price</b>	Fully inclusive costs including VAT  A breakdown of your budget, days allocated and personnel involved using the task list in section 3 and your method statement.	40%

**Tender returns** on behalf of the Cowper and Newton Museum Trustees should be sent to Shane Downer, Heritage Development Officer, Milton Keynes Council by **noon on Monday 21 July 2014** in both **email and hard copy** to the following:

E-mail address [heritage@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@milton-keynes.gov.uk) ..... **and**

Post to Milton Keynes Council, Arts Heritage and Libraries Team, Saxon Court, 502, Avebury Boulevard, Milton Keynes, MK9 3HS.

**Interviews will be held on 29 July 2014** at the Cowper & Newton Museum, Olney

## 8. Contact Details and Expression of Interests

Any questions regarding the brief can be submitted by e-mail only to Shane Downer at [heritage@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:heritage@milton-keynes.gov.uk) Expressions of Interest would be welcome to gauge the number of applicants.

Site Visits by are by arrangement. Please contact The Cowper and Newton Museum House Manager on [house-manager@cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk](mailto:house-manager@cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk) for availability.

END OF BRIEF, 4 Jul 2014

### NOTE: Funding Background

This project is funded by Arts Council England through its Renaissance Strategic Support Fund for Museums with match funding by Milton Keynes Council.

The Renaissance Strategic support fund aims to address the Arts Council's goals and priorities as set out in *Culture, knowledge and understanding: great museums and libraries for everyone*. The two goals this project aims to focus on are:

- Excellence is thriving and celebrated in museums and libraries
- Museums and libraries are sustainable, resilient and innovative



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

