

Request for Quote: Christmas experience and offer in Kingston town centre

Kingston First are looking to partner with an events and experience provider (s) to deliver unique and interactive Christmas experiences across the town centre in 2025 and 2026.

Background

Kingston First is a business improvement district (BID) which has been operating for the last twenty years in the town centre. We are funded by and represent over 750 businesses and organisations in the town and are dedicated to creating a town where businesses can thrive and people want to be. Our vision is for Kingston to be a vibrant town where everyone has an amazing experience.

Kingston First have been running a Christmas experience in Kingston town centre for a number of years. The main objective has been to be the best Christmas destination outside of the West End, by delivering a programme of events and experiences between mid November - end of December each year. As well as funding and organising Christmas lights throughout the town, we have worked with an external supplier since 2012 to put on a Christmas market, stage and bar, as well as other activities such as curling and children's entertainment. These have, primarily taken place in and around the Ancient Market Place. The external supplier has paid us a fee to use the locations and has worked with us collaboratively to deliver a Christmas experience. The revenue generated from the stalls, bars and curling have been retained by the external supplier. Since 2020 we have moved away from a light switch-on event to focus more on driving footfall throughout the period as opposed to one event.

New opportunity

Our vision for Christmas 2025 is to create and deliver a unique and inclusive Christmas experience across Kingston town centre that excites and motivates new and existing visitors to return throughout the period with unexpected and wow factor experiences and interventions.

We are looking for a mix of free and paid experiences/activities with appropriate arrangements in place with the successful partner to cover our costs. The key principles behind our vision can be found at Annex B

We have secured agreement to use the grounds of All Saints Church in the heart of the town centre. (see site plan at Annex A). The site has previously been occupied by an arts and crafts market provider during the Christmas period and this will be the first year Kingston First has operated within the grounds. We have access to the grounds only and not inside the Church.

Kingston Council own the Ancient Market Place and are currently sourcing a new operator to manage the daily market that occurs here as well as other assets and activations from April 2025. While we expect to work closely with the new operator to create a cohesive experience, we are not looking to introduce and manage any activities in the Ancient Market Place during Christmas. We would like to explore with the successful provider ways in which we can animate and activate the rest of the town in addition to the town lights and light installations we will be delivering.

Provider Requirements

- Be able to meet the requirements of our vision by demonstrating experience of delivering a wide range of Christmas experiences in public outdoor spaces or town centre locations/historically significant locations
- Ability to work to go live date from mid Nov 2025 to early Jan 2026, with proven experience of carrying out necessary risk assessments, working closely with the local authority to seek necessary permissions and attending Safety Advisory groups as required.
- Work closely with the Kingston First team to shape the creative direction of the Christmas experience across the town centre.
- Experience of providing and managing a range of fee paying and free activities, experiences and services.
- Experience of working well with cross sector partners
- Commitment to working with us inline with our values, vision and mission (<https://www.kingstonfirst.co.uk/about-kingston-first/>)

Terms

- Commit to delivering the Christmas experience on behalf of Kingston First for 2025 and 2026 with the opportunity to continue in subsequent years.
- Commit to providing a mix of free and paid for experiences which are to be agreed to by the Kingston First team
- Follow Kingston First's branding guidelines in the look, feel and promotion of Christmas

Responding to our tender

We are looking for submissions to our tender to outline:

- a) Your Christmas ideas and approach to managing a town wide scheme for Kingston, using visualisations to bring your ideas to life
- b) Your working assumptions for installation of your ideas, timelines
- c) Your experience of working in comparable places, including visual examples of these locations
- d) An overview of the teams we'd be working with and their experience
- e) Two references of clients you have worked with in the past two years

We will assess your response based on the following criteria:

- Quality of ideas - 50%
- Team experience - 25 %
- Cost - 25 %

Your submission should be submitted to shareena.merzi@kingstonfirst.co.uk by **COP 4 November**

Timelines

23 September - Tender opportunity live
5pm 4 November - Deadline for proposals
w/c 25 - November - interviews

w/c 9 December - walk around Kingston with successful operator

If you have any questions please contact:

Shareena Merzi
Director of Communications and Corporate Development
shareena.merzi@kingstonfirst.co.uk

Annex A

[All Saint Church maps/site plans.](#)

Annex B

Key principles of our vision

Quality

One of our own reflections and key feedback we've had from visitors is around quality whether that be quality of experience or quality of the market and goods it sells. We want to change this with a key focus on quality in everything we develop and deliver for Christmas 2025 and beyond.

Night and Day

To create excitement and anticipation we want to bring experiences and activity both during the day and night over a period of around 6 weeks. We would be selective on dates of programming to help give people a reason to visit Kingston.

Cohesive

We want to animate different parts of the town, not just the usual suspects, to encourage people to see more of Kingston and to also support indoor venues particularly with the uncertain weather

Inclusive

We want to excite and engage all ages and all abilities with a variety of experiences to enjoy

Community

We want to embrace and nurture the strong Kingston community spirit including with businesses getting them more involved and engaged in a cohesive experience and offer

Sustainability

During Christmas 2023, we began exploring how we could make the Christmas period more sustainable and brought reusable cups to the bar in the Ancient Market Place. We would look to develop our sustainable approach further by using local suppliers where we can, working with suppliers who have sustainable packaging and strong sustainable practices and looking how we can better recycle waste.

Some of the ideas we have come up with are below but we welcome and encourage other ideas that fit with our vision.

- Enchanted woodlands and Santa's grotto/Traditional Carousel
- Christmas story-telling/ Carols/performers by and for the community
- Unique market (something different to what we've seen before in Kingston, local makers and artisans)
- Magical lighting bespoke to Kingston
- Digital art
- Maze/Ice-rink
- Interactive trail
- Bar
- Mixture of free and paid for activities