

Invitation for Expressions of Interest  
**COMMERCIAL EVENT OPERATOR OPPORTUNITY**  
Christmas in Kingston Upon Thames

## **SUMMARY**

- Kingston First are seeking high quality and creative expressions of interest from commercial event organisers to operate an up to six-week live run Christmas event / attraction in the churchyard of All Saints Church in central Kingston upon Thames, a thriving market town that benefits from a 1.5m+ monthly footfall
- The circa 30m x 50m footprint space is situated in a high footfall and highly visible location in the heart of Kingston's shopping precinct, and directly adjacent to the town's major department stores and shopping centre
- The commercial arrangement will be one of a guaranteed annual hire fee payable to Kingston First for the operator's right to occupy the space and monetise the opportunity. The revenue generated from the attraction will be retained by the commercial operator
- A reserve annual "space-only" hire fee price of £25,000 for 2025 and £26,000 for 2026 has been set for the opportunity which covers the hire fees from All Saints Church and Kingston First's costs. Offers above this will be considered favourably
- The attraction can hypothetically operate 7 days per week over a six-week period, however shorter live periods and different operating days / hours schedules are welcomed if preferred by operators
- The initial contract available will be for up to two years, to operate over Christmas 2025/26 and 2026/27, with the option to extend by mutual agreement. The initial contract will be for a minimum of one year of operation
- The event can have both paid and non-paid activities but should have an element(s) that are free to access
- Food and beverage, including alcohol, sales are allowable
- This commercial opportunity will replace a successful Christmas Market offer that has run annually in Kingston Town Centre since 2012
- Kingston First wishes to move forward from the German-style Christmas Market attraction with exciting and fresh content with "wow" factor, and an offer and aesthetic that is best for Kingston.

## **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 hosting a Christmas experience across 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 part of this, a German-style Christmas market - featuring themed stalls, bars, food and a stage - has taken place as a flagship event and a profitable commercial endeavour in Kingston's Ancient Market since 2012.

## THE NEW CHRISTMAS EVENT OPPORTUNITY

Kingston First will not be delivering an Ancient Market Place Christmas offer beyond 2024. Instead, we have negotiated the exclusive use of the churchyard of All Saints Church as a new event site for a flagship long-run event, situated on Clarence Street in the heart of Kingston's shopping precinct. Currently, the churchyard is used for a craft market and German-style bar and curling offer each Christmas season, neither of which will continue beyond 2024, with exclusive rights to the site assignable by Kingston First as part of this process.

Kingston First are seeking a commercial operator to devise, build and operate a high quality and creative Christmas event offer over an up to two-year contract for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 Christmas seasons that ideally moves forward in terms of content and presentation from the current offer.

We envisage continuing our existing commercial model, whereby our commercial partner pays a fee to use the event site and the revenue generated from the bars, food and paid activities are retained by our partner.

## NEW CHRISTMAS EVENT VISION

Our vision for Christmas 2025 and beyond 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.

As part of this – and with a change of venue - Kingston First is looking to **move forward from German-style Christmas Market** that forms the current event offer in the Ancient Market with an event offer that has **both free and paid experiences and activities** that reflect our vision.

While Kingston First recognises that a commercial operator will need to operate the site with revenue earning activities – such as bar(s), food and paid activities - we will favour proposals that **have our vision as follows at its core:**

### **New event creative & content**

We want to move forward from the German-style Christmas Market event offer that has taken place in similar formats since 2012. In this way, we would welcome proposals that have new creative spins and content ideas. The Kingston First team have generated some new event content ideas as examples, but would welcome different ideas:

- Enchanted woodlands and Santa's grotto

- Traditional Carousel
- Christmas story-telling, carols, performances by and for the community
- Light trail / installations
- Interactive trail
- A unique market offering, different to what has seen before in Kingston, e.g. local makers & artisans
- Magical lighting bespoke to Kingston
- Digital art
- Maze
- Ice Rink

### Christmas 2025 Mood board



### Quality

One of our own reflections, and key feedback we've received from current event offer visitors, is around quality - whether that be the quality of the experience or quality of F&B / goods sold. We want to improve this with a key focus on quality 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 the event period.

### 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

We would look to develop our sustainable approach to providing experiences in the town centre 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.

## EVENT SITE & OPERATIONS

### Address

Grounds of All Saints Church, 14-16 Market Place, Kingston upon Thames KT1 1JP - [Google Pin](#)

### Event Site Situation

The event site is located centrally within Kingston upon Thames, a thriving market town with a monthly town footfall of 1.5m+ over the festive period.

The event site is across the road and in direct line of sight of Kingston's two major department stores (John Lewis and Fenwick) and its largest shopping centre (The Bentall Centre) to the North.

The event site also sits at the head of the Clarence and Church Street pedestrianised shopping areas to the east, and adjacent to the ever-popular Ancient Market Place and riverside areas to the south and west.

*Fig 1: Wider location*



*Fig 2: Close proximity*





### Site boundaries & considerations

See link here for previous Christmas event plans in the Churchyard: [All Saint Church maps/site plans](#).

The boundaries of the event site are roughly indicated in the below area. Please note that public access via paths around the church building must be maintained to allow for church business as usual (BAU) and general pedestrian flow through the church site.

Fig 3: Usable event area



### Indicative Operations Schedule

The following is based on initial scoping of the new site and church's availability, and pending discussions with potential commercial partner / confirmation of the church's BAU activities. Please also note that shorter live phase runs and limited operational days / hours will be considered if preferred by commercial operators.

Indicative 2025 operations schedule:

- Build: Monday 10 November – Wednesday 19 November

- Live phase: Thursday 20 November - Sunday 4 January (shorter live phases will be considered)
  - Closed 25 December
  - Normal operation times 10:00 – 23:00 daily (subject to license)
  - Various low-volume church service times to be implemented, see day-to-day church schedule as stands for an indication [here](#)
- Breakdown: 5 – 9 January

### Event site considerations

These are the main considerations / parameters known at time of writing, but is not intended to be an exhaustive list with further conditions anticipated once full scoping with a preferred commercial partner is undertaken:

- **Mature trees:** are present within the event site, these are potential assets for a Christmas activation, but consideration will need to be given to the protection of the upper tree / limbs, potential root compaction etc
- **No heavy goods vehicles on the grounds:** due to paving and access widths, deliveries will need to be made externally and manually handled in / out
- **Iron gates or stone walls:** no build or interventions on these fixtures
- **Music:** background music only and potential volume reductions during church services and events
- **Lights:** will need to be assessed to ensure they are not an undue risk to those that are epileptic or photosensitive
- **Walkways & ground protection:** nonslip surfaces and / or overlays required throughout with handrails where appropriate must be used
- **Licensing & planning:** Premises License and Planning Permissions will need to be sought by the commercial operator, however there is precedent for these permissions and they are not foreseen to be a major obstacle subject to the usual processes, plans and management paperwork being undertaken.

### Event site facilities

The site is offered as a blank canvas greenfield site with no infrastructure or production offered as part of the hire fee. There is the potential for some existing limited mains power to be available from the church, use of which would be rechargeable, details of which can be explored pre-contract.

## KINGSTON FIRST SUPPORT

Kingston First is uniquely placed and committed to helping a commercial partner make the new event offer a creative, commercial and operational success. We can provide support in the following ways:

**Planning & Operational Support:** Kingston First are networked and hold relationships within Kingston Council and local businesses to assist in the planning and delivery phases of the event offer. Kingston First will assist in introductions, sell-in and liaison with council teams and local

businesses to help ensure a smooth event planning process. For context, Kingston Council are supportive of activities over the Christmas period and therefore may be an opportunity to extend existing planning consent which would further streamline the planning process with Kingston First's assistance.

**Marketing & Communications Overlay:** Kingston First will support our commercial partner's marketing and promotional efforts for the event including via:

- **Seasonal campaign:** prominent position in our Winter / Christmas seasonal marketing campaign
- **Social media support:** 28,000 following across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- **Local media:** utilising our local media and influencer relationships
- **Physical:** banner, hoarding and other physical marketing assets can be explored around the town centre
- **Future opportunities around Kingston:** Kingston First are seeking a genuinely collaborative ongoing relationship with our commercial partner. Within the Christmas season and beyond there is scope for a successful partner to work on exciting commissions and / or similar commercial opportunities within the town centre.

## COMMERCIAL PARTNER REQUIREMENTS

Our chosen commercial partner will need to be able to demonstrate the following:

- Be able to meet the requirements of our vision by demonstrating experience of delivering high quality and creative experiences in public outdoor spaces, town centre locations and / or historically significant locations
- Ability to deliver the winter 2025/26 and 2026/27 events, with proven experience of creating event management plans and carrying out necessary risk assessments
- Ability to work closely with the local authority to seek necessary permissions and engaging proactively with, and to the satisfaction of, the Safety Advisory Group
- Work closely with the Kingston First team to shape the creative direction of the Christmas experience
- Experience of successfully producing, promoting and managing a range of fee paying and free activities, experiences and services
- Experience of working productively with cross sector partners
- Commitment to working with us in line with our values, vision and mission (<https://www.kingstonfirst.co.uk/about-kingston-first/>).

## OPPORTUNITY TERMS

- The contract will be for up to two-years to deliver the Christmas event on behalf of Kingston First for Christmas 2025/26 and 2026/27, with the opportunity to continue in subsequent years by mutual agreement. The contract will be for a minimum of one-year.

- The reserve price for the annual space-only hire fee is £25,000 for 2025 and £26,000 for 2026 (which covers the site hire fee to All Saints Church and Kingston First's costs), however offers above this will be considered favourably.
- Commitment to providing a mix of free and paid for experiences which are to be agreed to by the Kingston First team
- 100% of the 2025 hire fee will be required on signing of contract to secure the opportunity
- A £5,000 refundable reinstatement bond will be payable before tenancy of the site commences, held against the remediation of any damage to the event site
- Follow Kingston First's branding guidelines in the look, feel and promotion of Christmas
- Uphold the requirements of the landowners All Saints Church, a first version of which is included in the *Even Site & Operations* section above
- Produce the event management plans and risk assessment for the event, including the gathering of safety documentation from all 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers and operators, to the satisfaction of Kingston First and the Safety Advisory Group.

## RESPONDING TO THE OPPORTUNITY

### Stage One: Expressions of Interest

We are initially seeking concise written expressions of interest to the opportunity. There is no stipulated word count, however we value our potential partners' time in submitting proposals, therefore we welcome to-the-point submissions providing they are specific and cover the areas outlined below.

Potential partners are encouraged to ask questions per the timeline below and if needed to site visit the All Saints Churchyard in advance of submitting proposals to check suitability and feasibility of ideas. Any clarifying question answers will be shared with other interested operators on request.

The form of response, e.g. written document or presentation slides, is the choice of responders however should include:

- Your proposed hire fee offers for both Christmas 2025/26 and Christmas 2026/27 for the All Saints Churchyard site, based on the indicative operational schedule outlined in *Event Site & Operations* section of this document, and your desired contract term (one or two years)
- Relevant organisational background information and case studies of producing and delivering high quality and creative experiences in public outdoor spaces, town centre locations and / or historically significant locations, including production shots and images
- Your overarching concept, ideas and approach to devising, promoting and managing a new Christmas event offer on All Saints Churchyard and how it delivers on our goals as outlined in *New Christmas Event Vision* section of this document
- Format and content overview including an indication of free and paid elements of the event offer
- Your working assumptions for build, operations and breakdown schedule for the event. The maximum operating schedule for the event is outlined above in the *Event Site & Parameters* section.
- An overview of the team Kingston First would be working with and their experience.



- Two references of clients you have worked with in the past two years. Kingston First will only contact references for those reaching the final selection stage of the process.

Our team assess your response based on the following weightings of criteria:

- Quality, suitability and feasibility of event ideas - 50%
- Organisational experience - 25%
- Commercial hire fee offer - 25%

Your Stage One submission should be submitted as so to [shareena.merzi@kingstonfirst.co.uk](mailto:shareena.merzi@kingstonfirst.co.uk) **by Friday 28 February 2025 @ 5pm.**

Kingston First will review expressions of interest as they are received and may look to enter preliminary conversations with operators ahead of the official deadline. However, no final decisions will be made until after the final Stage One submission deadline.

### **Stage Two: Operator Meetings & Selection**

A small shortlist of responding organisations will be invited to meet with the Kingston First team in person on-site in Kingston to discuss their proposals further. At this stage, both parties will be able to ask further clarifying questions, and discuss creative ideas and ways of working together. There may be the need for either party to respond with more detail with written responses post this meeting. A final selection of a commercial partner will be made at this stage subject to contract, due diligence and reference checking.

### **Timelines**

- Thursday 16 January 2025 - Commercial opportunity live
- Tuesday 18 February @ 5pm - Deadline for clarifying questions
- Friday 28 February - Deadline for Stage One proposals
- Early March - In-person meetings undertaken with shortlisted organisations
- Late March 2025 - Commercial partner appointed / contract drafted & signed

### **Contact**

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