



## **Re-Form Heritage: Re-Evaluating Past Practice for a Resilient Heritage Future Heritage Interpretation Consultancy Brief**

### **Introduction**

Re-Form Heritage is an independent charity which specialises in the restoration and rejuvenation of heritage buildings at risk of decay or demolition. Re-Form Heritage's objective is to transform historic buildings into local assets, creating job opportunities and catalysing wider social and economic benefit. Re-Form Heritage owns and manages Middleport Pottery and Harper Street in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. It also owns the Old Duchy Palace in Lostwithiel, Cornwall, which is operated by our partners at the Cornish Buildings Preservation Trust.

Middleport Pottery, situated on the Trent and Mersey Canal in Stoke-on-Trent, was built by Burgess and Leigh in the late nineteenth century. The Grade II\* listed pottery is the last working Victorian potbank in continuous production in Stoke, the traditional home of the British ceramics industry. After 130 years, Middleport Pottery remains home to world-famous 'Burleigh' pottery. Middleport Pottery is now an award-winning visitor destination based in the heart of the Potteries.

Re-Form Heritage is inviting proposals for a heritage interpretation consultancy as part of the National Lottery Heritage Fund-funded project "Re-Form Heritage: Re-Evaluating Past Practice for a Resilient Heritage Future". This grant will allow Re-Form Heritage to undertake a comprehensive top to bottom review of several key financial and operational activities in order to re-establish financial sustainability while also strengthening our operational resilience in the wake of the Covid pandemic. While the need to establish long-term financial sustainability in a post-lockdown environment is the immediate driver of the timing of the project, we also intend to address staff operational capacity and the outdated nature of several aspects of the visitor engagement offer, many of which have not been updated or reviewed since the site opened to the public in 2014. The charity believes that financial sustainability, operational capacity, and visitor engagement are interlinked, and need to be reviewed as part of an integrated whole rather than in isolation.

### **Consultancy Details**

The heritage interpretation consultancy will lead a review of the current use of heritage interpretation at Middleport Pottery, a Grade II\*-listed 19<sup>th</sup>-century ceramics factory and visitor attraction in Stoke-on-Trent. The goal is to work with the Head of Operations & Engagement, Heritage & Learning Manager, the charity's Chief Executive, and other relevant staff to identify how the interpretation offer could be refreshed and improved to drive increased footfall and income. Entry to the site is currently free, but the interpretation areas require an extra 'heritage trail' ticket to access. The site's interpretation offer has not been updated since the site first opened to the public in 2014, and is almost entirely static; for example, there is little use of digital media.

The core tasks of the consultancy will include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Reviewing the current overall heritage interpretation offer at Middleport Pottery with a view to increasing site footfall
- Reviewing the use of interpretation space at the site
- Reviewing the display of heritage objects at the site
- Considering how the interpretation could be modernised
- Reviewing visitor flow at the site, and between Middleport Pottery and the charity's adjacent Harper Street site (a restored 19<sup>th</sup>-century workers' housing terrace)
- Making recommendations on the marketing of the interpretation offer to the Marketing & Communications Manager, including on current ticketing
- Supporting implementation of recommendations on immediate changes to update the interpretation offer
- Making recommendations on longer-term steps to update the interpretation offer
- Outlining a budget for both immediate changes and longer-term steps.

The consultant will be expected to write a report summarising their review and recommendations. The report should clearly outline and differentiate between recommendations on immediate changes to the heritage offer and recommendations on longer-term steps that will be delivered outside the time frame of this project. We already anticipate that the longer-term changes will require additional funding applications to support delivery.

**Consultancy duration:** 40 days (across a 9- to 10-month period, depending on consultant start date); the consultancy must be completed by the end of July 2024

**Consultancy Fee:** Up to £400 per day (plus expenses); maximum available budget (including expenses): £20,000

**Location:** A mix of on-site and remote working; the consultancy will require some visits to Middleport Pottery in Stoke-on-Trent.

**Contacts:** Head of Operations & Engagement Lucy Siebert ([lucy.siebert@re-form.org](mailto:lucy.siebert@re-form.org)) and Heritage & Learning Manager Victoria Astridge ([victoria.astridge@re-form.org](mailto:victoria.astridge@re-form.org)).

Queries should be directed to Lucy Siebert ([lucy.siebert@re-form.org](mailto:lucy.siebert@re-form.org))

## The Selection Process

Consultants will not be selected solely on the basis of price as other factors will also affect the success of the project. The following, in no particular order, will be taken into consideration in the selection process and should ideally be addressed in any tender document:

- Relevant experience
- Price
- Quality of work
- Financial management
- Ability to complete on time and within budget
- References
- Flexibility of approach

- Approach to working with the client
- Current workload and capacity to undertake this project

Competitive tendering exercises will be used to ensure value for money is achieved, taking into consideration proposed fees and quality of service. Tenders will be received and reviewed by relevant members of the management team. There will be shortlist of candidates selected for interview with tours Middleport Pottery available on request, to support shortlisted candidates in their preparation for the interview process. A final decision will be made following interview; it is anticipated that interviews will include a presentation on the tender proposal.

**Initial tenders to be received no later than Friday 22 September.** Tenders should offer a clear outline of how the consultant proposes to approach the work and a proposed initial timeline of work.

Tenders should be submitted to Head of Operations & Engagement Lucy Siebert (lucy.siebert@reform.org). Any enquiries about this project should also be directed to Lucy Siebert.

### **Selection Timeline**

22 September - Deadline for tenders

29 September - Shortlisting completed by Dr Alasdair Brooks (Chief Executive), Lucy Siebert (Head of Operations & Engagement), Victoria Astridge (Heritage & Learning Manager)

9 October - Interviews with Dr Alasdair Brooks (Chief Executive), Lucy Siebert (Head of Operations & Engagement), and Victoria Astridge (Heritage & Learning Manager)