**Additional Information – Volunteer and Operations Manager Recruitment 2023**

***It is an exciting time to join Ripon Museum Trust – a chance to make a real difference to the local community of Ripon and its heritage***!

*Ripon Museum Trust in its 41st year is looking for an ambitious and skilled individual to move our volunteering strategy forward on a number of fronts supporting a major capital development project, a new Arts Council three year programme and our highly successful health and wellbeing agenda. Are you that person?*

*If you have great ideas, a successful track record in delivery and an approach which supports the whole team in learning about improvement then this is the role for you!*

Ripon Museum Trust’s **Vision** is ‘to use our Heritage Assets to Inspire People to Seek a Fairer Society’. Our Museums’ **Mission** is to use the unique trio of the Workhouse, Prison & Police and Courthouse Museums, collections and the stories they tell to help people explore big issues such as fairness, equality, justice and welfare. Through excellent engagement, programming and outreach, together we will inspire people to become compassionate and active citizens, shaping society for the better. We will work for greater participation in our heritage which will enrich lives and improve wellbeing. Volunteering is integral to our organization and we work as one team. We will make a positive impact on Ripon and the region’s cultural and economic capital

Ripon Museum Trust (RMT), established in 1982, runs three museums in the heart of Ripon. We are a Registered Charity and Limited Company. We tell the story of poverty, law, crime, punishment and justice - using a Grade II Victorian Workhouse Museum, Grade II\* Liberty Gaol and Police Station, Grade II\* Georgian Courthouse and a collection of 9000 objects. Community engagement helps us share stories of this unique heritage prompting people to act for a fairer society. We tell the story of the buildings themselves and about the people who lived and worked in them. We put learning at our heart - delivering a changing programme of exhibitions, events, school visits and informal group learning. RMT is an Accredited Museum and a Band One National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) with Arts Council England (ACE).

**Ripon Museum Trust’s key aims for the next 3-5 years.**

Our key aims are:

* Conserve, manage and develop knowledge of our heritage assets, reducing their impact on the environment.
* Deliver excellent programmes of learning and interpretation which cause people to reflect on big issues about fairness.
* Provide excellent visitor services and develop new audiences.
* Develop our skills and networks to strengthen volunteering and to build strong community and participatory resources and ways of working.
* Maximise RMT’s contribution to the cultural and economic capital of the region.
* Increase inclusivity and equality of opportunity and improve people’s health, wellbeing and enjoyment.
* Generate sustainable financial resources and develop a resilient organisation and skilled people
* We deliver a museum experience at three historic buildings in the heart of Ripon City centre.

We open 7 days per week all year round and we are busiest in summer with tourist visitors to the historic city of Ripon and the North Yorkshire rural hinterland. The three museums together form a unique collection of institutions telling linked stories of poverty, crime and punishment, suffering and the beginnings of welfare. We don’t believe there is another such collection of museums doing this in such close proximity with one another in such an historic setting as Ripon. The buildings are all listed and have an abundance of original features. The Workhouse Museum is a significant complex of original buildings and outdoor spaces which set out to show how vagrants and paupers were housed; how they lived and worked. We use traditional object-based interpretation with an audio tour, costumed volunteer guides and period rooms. We have three beautiful gardens at the Workhouse site – all planted using Victorian varieties and approaches. One of these is a productive Victorian Kitchen Garden – the original Workhouse Garden. The Prison and Police Museum retains the original prison cells and yard – all with extensive exhibitions about prison and policing in this region. It is popular with younger visitors who can sit on a real police motorbike, dress up and ‘turn the crank handle’ – a common punishment in Victorian prisons. We host small temporary exhibitions in the larger rooms and cells – the most recent of these have been an ACE funded Art Commission and an exhibition with the Koestler Trust. The Courthouse Museum provides a completely authentic historic environment for delivering mock trials with school children and groups, Visitors can ‘stand in the dock’ and understand how justice was done and it provides a springboard for exploring Ripon’s law and order trail. We have also used the space for a powerful sound piece Art Commission about theft funded by ACE.

Visitor income across our three sites accounts for 40% of our turnover (this is c. 380K per annum). In 2017 we purchased the Main Block at the Workhouse site from North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) to secure its heritage for posterity and we opened up part of the building to visitors in July 2017.

In 2022, we were awarded a further three years as a Band 1 National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funded ACE. This was a huge success for our small organization and since 2018 has transformed the way we work. This programme is worth £142,000 per annum and brings important changes to our staff team, to the diversity of our offer and the audiences we reach. We deliver expanded programmes of learning and outreach to different communities and our work has attracted awards from Sandford and Marsh. In 2021 we appointed our first ‘Community Curator’ to continue to embed this way of working. In 2023 one of our 7 NPO ‘Activities’ will focus solely on supported volunteers and volunteers are integral to the delivery of the rest.

For four successive years we have secured funding from the COINs Charitable Foundation to deliver a project we call ‘Volunteering for the Soul’ – this is working with people who do not usually volunteer or engage with museums to make a real difference to their health and wellbeing through supported volunteering. This work has benefitted us as an organisation helping us learn about volunteering and what people need for it to go well.

Diversity has increased since 2013 and not just in respect of audiences as measured via our ACE annual reporting. Our Board, in skills, age and gender is more diverse by targeted recruitment. Through outreach, wellbeing projects, focused volunteering, art installations, working with many local organisations such as YMCA, Harrogate Homeless Project and through opening up Main Block at the Workhouse, we are reaching out to new and diverse audiences.

Volunteering capacity has grown by about 15% but, crucially, it is significantly more focused. Covid made an impact to the demographic and we were fortunate that most of our volunteers returned after lockdowns. Volunteers contribute to all parts of our business; buildings maintenance, gardening, curation, learning and event delivery, role play guides, creating product for our shops, cleaning, finance, administration, marketing and digital input. Without volunteers and their outstanding teamwork in 2017 Main Block would not have opened.

**Health and Wellbeing**

Health and Wellbeing is a growing part of what we do and our ‘Volunteering for the Soul’ project is in Year 4. Developing and further embedding our programming and activities for Health and Wellbeing is central to what we are about. RMT has a strong reputation not only for the size and value of its volunteer input but also as an exemplar in the sector of first-class volunteering and its management. Our volunteers regularly, via surveys, report Health and Wellbeing benefits from their engagement with RMT. We have a part-time post funded by COINs who supports a small number of volunteers with low-level mental health problems and where they have been referred to the museums to aid their recovery and confidence. The definition of additional support has widened since the pandemic and we tend not to want to single people out – everyone has needs in terms of the volunteering experience.

For RMT, volunteering is both a strategic imperative and an economic necessity. Without this very substantial input, the richness of our audience engagement and the economics of the organisation would be very much the poorer. In the last three years, we have been developing this activity into something more formal and with a deliberately wider impact. It is now centred around our Health and Wellbeing agenda. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of health and wellbeing throughout society – especially amongst the elderly, young people whose careers and education have been put on hold/delayed and those with underlying mental and other health problems. Staff have also experienced the pandemic in a number of ways – with challenges of furlough, challenges of remaining in work and separation from loved ones and usual activities.

In 2021 we commissioned, via the Cultural Recovery Fund (CRFG - ACE), a Consultancy report on how health and wellbeing activity might be expanded, recognised and embedded more into all our activities. This work helped us map out possible funding strategies for its development and recommend the tools to measure its impact for individuals and the community at large. Our long-term strategy is to aim to become a national ‘centre of excellence’ in utilising heritage assets to improve wellbeing - a ‘centre of excellence’ from which others can learn and we can make a difference to people’s lives. In 2022 we progressed a unique collaboration with the International Centre for Mental Health Social Research (ICMHSR) at the University of York and the programme started to collect data for an evaluation of supported volunteering at the museums in Ripon, North Yorkshire.

**Our forward plans for volunteering**

These are likely to include; extra staffing resources to support volunteers who have additional support needs arising from their mental and physical health, training and development for staff and volunteers around personal resilience, improved spaces for volunteers to relax, socialize, learn, conduct research, skills shares, volunteer led talks or ​activities, to expand the sense of community between volunteers, and offer opportunities for learning, skill-building and enhancing employability, more equipment to support the expansion of activities which are the most popular for improving people’s mental health (possibly gardening, maintenance). We would expect these activities would also be important and similar for visitors in this regard; providing space for reflection, relaxation and research, delivering activities which enable new social connections to be made; creative art and craft-based making activities, maintenance work, gardening, real and meaningful engagement projects to help the museum produce new things and have a tangible outcome to be proud of.

RMT looks outward in its volunteering activities with ongoing relationships with Ripon Together, Harrogate and District Community Action, the National Trust’s Skell Valley Project and will local partners at Ripon Library, Jenny Ruth, Henshaws, Ripon Disability Forum to name but a few. With the opportunities presented by our ‘Fairer Futures’ project – a £2.25million National Lottery Heritage Fund project (currently funded in its Development Phase in 2023) we can see that volunteering will be further strengthened and central to all we do.