



Governance Development Consultant

Introduction

Chester House Estate is embarking on a transformative project to establish an independent charitable trust. This initiative, driven by the need to protect and maximise our cultural, tourism, and heritage assets, has been supported by the executive team and aligns with strategic objectives to ensure long-term sustainability and community engagement. We are seeking a highly experienced consultant to lead this project from October 2025, with the goal of having the trust operational by Summer 2027. This project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) is seeking an experienced consultant to deliver a comprehensive proposal that will guide the future governance of Chester House Estate (chesterhouseestate.org). This work builds directly on the findings of the **May 2023 Feasibility and Scoping Report**, which identified governance options and critical considerations for transitioning the estate to an independent charitable trust. The next step is to produce a detailed blueprint to enable council decision-making on the most effective governance structure and to outline a phased implementation plan for the chosen model.

The goal is to secure the estate's long-term sustainability, enhance its cultural and heritage offerings and maximise its operational potential through a robust, legally compliant and financially viable governance framework. This work will present options for the North Northamptonshire Executive of how best to proceed with the governance of Chester House Estate, including the potential of keeping it operated by the council.

Our consultant will:

1. Develop a comprehensive proposal document that evaluates governance options, including legal, operational and financial implications. ensure compliance with all legal, financial and procedural requirements, particularly those relevant to local authorities, such as procurement regulations and subsidy control (formerly state aid).
2. Provide clear recommendations to NNC for the most effective governance model.

3. Outline a detailed roadmap for implementing the preferred model, addressing asset transition, trustee recruitment, staffing TUPE and operational setup.
4. Enable informed decision-making by NNC's Executive Board and Full Council through well-structured presentations and supporting materials.

Scope of Work

- **Refinement of Options:**
 - Build on the scenarios evaluated in the 2023 report, including full asset transfer, hybrid models and continued council ownership.
 - Define the pros, cons and feasibility of each option based on updated legal, financial and operational insights.
- **Legal Framework:**
 - Ensure compliance with Charity Commission regulations, NNC legal/HR, employment law (e.g., TUPE), and The National Lottery Heritage Fund agreements.
 - Draft key governance documents, including roles for trustees and legal agreements for asset ownership and management.
- **Financial Planning:**
 - Provide detailed cost analyses for each governance option, including: Start-up and operational costs for a charitable trust, Council's ongoing financial commitments under each model, Long-term sustainability through diversified funding (grants, donations, income generation).
- **Operational Transition:**
 - Recommend staffing models, including the potential transfer or secondment of council staff under TUPE.
 - Address systems integration, contracts and policies for a smooth transition to a trust.
- **Risk Management and Mitigation**
 - Identify risks associated with each governance option, including financial, operational and reputational considerations.
 - Develop mitigation strategies, such as securing funding commitments and building stakeholder support.
- **Stakeholder Engagement**
 - Work closely with: NNC's Head of Culture, Tourism, and Heritage. Legal and financial advisors, NNC HR Team, NNC Transformation Team and Community stakeholders, staff and volunteers.
 - Create a communication plan to manage expectations, gather input and build consensus.

- Develop a **phased implementation roadmap** that includes: -
Trustee recruitment and onboarding.
- Legal registration of the trust with the Charity Commission.
- Asset transfer schedules and contractual arrangements.
- Milestones for the operational launch of the trust.

Key Deliverables

- **Comprehensive Proposal Document:**
 - Evaluation of governance options with detailed analysis.
 - Legal, operational and financial frameworks.
 - Recommendations based on best practices and alignment with council priorities.
- **Supporting Materials:**
 - Risk assessments, stakeholder engagement plans and legal templates.
 - Executive summaries tailored for presentation to NNC's Executive Board and Full Council.
- **Implementation Roadmap:**
 - High-level timeline and key milestones for transitioning governance to the preferred model.

Responsibilities

- Analyse and integrate the findings of the 2023 Feasibility and Scoping Report into the proposal.
- Facilitate consultations with council teams, legal experts and community representatives.
- Provide regular updates to NNC's project board and adjust deliverables based on feedback.
- Prepare and deliver presentations to NNC's Executive Board and Full Council.

Required Skills and Experience

- **Governance Expertise:**
 - Proven experience in designing and implementing governance frameworks for cultural or heritage organisations.
 - Familiarity with charity law and TUPE requirements.
- **Financial Acumen:**
 - Expertise in financial planning and sustainability for heritage or nonprofit organisations.

- **Project Management:**
 - Track record of managing complex, multi-stakeholder projects within tight deadlines.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:**
 - Strong interpersonal skills for building consensus and securing stakeholder buy in.
- **Sector Knowledge:**
 - Understanding of the heritage sector, including funding opportunities and operational best practices.

Budget and Timeline

- **Budget:** £20,000 plus VAT.
- **Timeline:**
 - **October 2025:** Start
 - **End of March 2026:** Submit final proposal to NNC's Executive Board.
 - **April 2026:** Present findings to Full Council.

How to Apply

Applicants should submit:

- A detailed CV highlighting relevant experience.
- Examples of similar projects completed.
- A proposed methodology and approach tailored to this project.
- The application should present the number of days allocated to each task.

Deadline for application is Friday 12th September 2025 at 5pm.

For additional information and to submit the application, contact Head of Culture, Tourism and Heritage – jack.pishhorn@northnorthants.gov.uk