

National Centre for Music



Recruitment Pack

Hidden Histories Research Consultant



Brief for Hidden Histories Research Consultant for the Royal High School Preservation Trust and the National Centre for Music's project: Awakening Edinburgh's Architectural Masterpiece – A new Cultural and Environmental Destination

1. Project brief

In June 2025, the Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) was awarded funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards the redevelopment of the old Royal High School on Calton Hill, Edinburgh. Part of this £5m award was dedicated to the creation and delivery of an Activity Plan, to engage local communities, stakeholders, partners and audiences in this significant heritage story and destination, and its future. RHSPT's redevelopment will turn the old Royal High School into the home of a new National Centre for Music (NCM). This separate charity is now responsible for managing and implementing the Activity Plan, as it will be through NCM that the public engage with and discover the site and its heritage.

As the Activity Plan gets underway, the National Centre for Music now wishes to appoint an experienced Research Consultant to develop and deliver a research project with the local community to understand and tell the history of the former Royal High School.

2. The former Royal High School/ National Centre for Music (RHS/NCM)

Built in 1829 the old Royal High School (RHS) is one of the most remarkable buildings in Edinburgh and one of the most important neoclassical buildings in Scotland. Its awe-inspiring location gives stunning views of Edinburgh.

The Royal High School Preservation Trust (RHSPT) was formed in 2015 to conserve the history and heritage of the former RHS for cultural and community benefit commensurate with its Category A listing and being part of Edinburgh's UNESCO World Heritage Site. Having sat dormant for over 50 years, RHSPT is now undertaking a major redevelopment of the building, to reinvent it as a cultural destination and iconic arts venue. It will become the home of the National Centre for Music (NCM), - a place where Scottish musical history will be made. NCM will celebrate, nurture and support all of Scotland's musical communities – across all genres. This will be a place for innovative, collaborative programming – founded on partnerships with Scotland's musicians and performing companies, and becoming a new home for music in Edinburgh's world-renowned festival season.

The presently unused grounds surrounding the building will be transformed into flower-filled gardens free for all to enjoy. In an urban oasis, carefully chosen for their colour and architectural form, the atmosphere and opportunity for learning in the gardens will change through the seasons, creating biodiversity and year-round interest.

Although the former Royal High School has not been used as a school since 1968, the name and ethos of the school lives on in the Royal High School that continues to educate local children in a purpose-built school in the west of the city, and engagement with pupils past and present is ongoing. The former Royal High School is close to the city centre with both affluent neighbours in Calton Hill but also socially marginalised communities in Dumbiedykes and Abbeyhill. Given NCM's intention to be a welcoming, inspiring environment for a wide range of communities from different cultural heritages, there is significant aspiration to work with all of these audiences as well as those from within two miles of the site.

3. The ‘Awakening Edinburgh’s Architectural Masterpiece – A new Cultural and Environmental Destination’ project

The project is entering an exciting period having secured £5m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards the £70m development and having recently entered the main construction phase. The ‘Awakening Edinburgh’s Architectural Masterpiece – A new Cultural and Environmental Destination’ project focuses on conserving the celebrated Royal High School on Calton Hill and creating new landscaped gardens surrounding this significant building. The development will adopt a minimal intervention, conservation-led approach, reviving and transforming the building into a hub of arts and culture. Crucially, it will become home to the National Centre for Music (NCM), and thus a nucleus for promoting Scotland’s rich musical heritage.

Therefore the project will:

- Honour the heritage by giving new life to one of the nation’s most prestigious buildings
- Bring joy and purpose to people’s lives through community placemaking
- Fuse Edinburgh’s architecture, gardens and cityscape with exploration of music in Scotland to create a vibrant visitor destination
- Provide an inspiring setting in which to celebrate music in all its forms

4. Scope of work

The Hidden Histories Research Consultant will help to scope and manage the Hidden Histories research projects to enable the NCM staff, consultants and audiences to understand the full history of the former Royal High School.

- Liaise with the Interpretation Design Consultants to finalise the stories that need to be told in the RHS/ NCM.
- Work with other Researchers, consultants and the NCM team to ensure that the full suite of stories is being researched.
- Develop a project(/s) with local community groups / members and associated staff to research the stories around the former Royal High School that have not been identified easily, with particular reference to uncovering stories about Royal High School pupils and/or staff who are from the Global Majority, women or LGBTQI+.
- Work with the community group(s) to identify sources and undertake the research.
- Provide appropriate, sensitive support to enable people with lived experiences of protected characteristics to participate – particularly considering the research subject matter.
- In response to the research above, work with the Community Engagement Officer to create packages of research that can be used as inspiration for a variety of co-created projects.
- Identify speakers to deliver talks, tours and live streams about the history of the former Royal High School and its staff and pupils.

5. Outputs

The Research Consultant will:

- Develop a project plan for the delivery of the research above.
- Identify the areas of research to be undertaken and the outputs for each area of research (essay / dissertation / PowerPoint / film / identification of imagery or other assets etc).
- Work with the community group partners to create a programme that meets both partners' needs.
- Ensure that the research is delivered on time, on budget and on brief.
- Ensure the research is delivered in a way that means it can be used by secondary schools, youth groups, community groups and RHS/NCM volunteers in an engaging way to interpret the stories
- Ensure the research is delivered in a way that it can be used by the Interpretation consultants.
- At the end of the appointment, compile a wrapping-up report to summarise the work completed and signpost and opportunities for future research.

6. Background information and supporting documentation

The following documents will be provided as a starting point for the work:

- The National Lottery Heritage Fund Round 2 Application
- The Activity Plan
- The Interpretation Plan
- The Architect's and Landscape Architect's RIBA Stage 4 reports



7. Management of the commission

The commission will be managed by the Director of Partnerships.

8. Experience, knowledge and skills required

Experience

- Extensive experience of researching hidden heritage.
- Experience of working with community groups to undertake research.
- Experience of managing community groups to deliver to a deadline.
- Experience of using primary research to provide engaging interpretation (digital, physical and/or through public programmes).
- Experience of working with interpretation designers.
- Experience of delivering publicly funded projects on time and on budget.

Knowledge

- Knowledge of methodologies for undertaking research, including of how to interpret data to uncover stories.
- Knowledge of different types of outputs for historical research.
- An understanding of the challenges and opportunities of undertaking historical research suitable for the public domain with community groups.

Skills

- Ability to communicate historical research of the highest quality.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Proven track record in project management, delivery and evaluation.

9. Budget

There is an indicative budget for this work of £16,000 (excl. VAT) inclusive of all expenses. A fixed fee proposal is required as stated in the tender requirement (section 10 below). Consultants must make RHS/ NCM aware from the outset if they are VAT registered. In addition to this budget, there is separate dedicated resource available to support costs associated with partner / volunteer / community participation in the research, including but not limited to travel, refreshments, print, and technical equipment.

The appointment will be on the basis of a freelance consultancy contract and it is anticipated that the project will be delivered within a period of approximately fifteen months.

10. Requirements of the submission

- Approach to the project.
- Methodology.
- CVs of proposed team members.
- Evidence of track record relevant to this brief.
- Two client references.
- A fixed fee showing your daily rates between individuals, number of days spent on each task and including all fees and expenses.
- Projected timescale.
- Two references.

11. Date of submission and timetable

Brief Advertised	Friday 21 January
Closing date	Friday 20 February at 12 noon
Interviews	w/c 9 March
Start date	As soon as possible following appointment

The submission should be emailed to hello@ncmscotland.org.uk

12. Terms and conditions

We will require evidence of Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurance cover up to £1m.

13. Further information

For further information, please contact hello@ncmscotland.org.uk.



Using money raised by National Lottery players, The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports projects that connect people and communities with the UK's heritage. The 'Awakening Edinburgh's Architectural Masterpiece – A new Cultural and Environmental Destination' is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to commence work transforming Edinburgh's iconic old Royal High School into a new National Centre for Music.

