

**Wedding Partner brief: Invitation to tender**  
**Auckland Castle Trust**  
**May 2012**

**Overview:**

We are looking for a partner to run a wedding business for the Auckland Castle Trust. The partner that we select will be able to provide a full wedding planning service for clients.

**Background:**

Auckland Castle is an 800-year-old Bishop's Palace in the heart of Bishop Auckland. As a private house, it has been closed to the public – until now. We want to bring it to life and make it attractive not only to heritage, art and religious buffs, but also to local people wanting to enjoy it as a resource for them and their families, including for events, weddings and parties. The castle will start a major refurbishment and restoration in 2013, but in the meantime we know that many local people are curious about the Castle and want to see it prior to its redevelopment. The State Rooms of the castle are in a sufficiently good state to be visited, hold events etc, as is the 'Bowling Green' front lawn area. There is a large area of parkland that can also be used for events. We will take ownership of the Castle on 30<sup>th</sup> June, and want to be in a position to open the Castle to event bookings 'from day 1'.

**Our requirements:**

We are looking for a partner who will help us to develop and deliver weddings at Auckland Castle. Our vision is to offer high-end, exclusive and bespoke weddings on Fridays and Saturdays (and other days by appointment) in keeping with our beautiful and historic setting. We don't imagine that any two Auckland Castle weddings will be the same. Our partner will need to embrace the Castle's values of excellence, uniqueness and reliable quality. An added value point would be a willingness to work with apprentices and/or trainees in fulfilment of the Trust's commitment to the development of skills in the local economy.

We have a unique venue, a Bishop's Palace with an inter-connected private chapel, a Throne Room for large events and various smaller rooms for more intimate dining as well as outdoor space for marquees, receptions on the lawn etc. In due course, we will also have a further large area for indoor events, high quality accommodation in a nearby hotel that can be exclusively rented and a private area on site for the bridal party to get ready.

We are looking to establish a three-year contract with a partner who will, on behalf of the Castle, manage the entire planning and delivery process of our wedding business on our behalf.

At a minimum, this will require the marketing of the Castle as a venue on our behalf, and managing the booking of those interested in simply using the Castle

as a venue. On the other end of the scale, this may require a full service product including the provision of all of the elements of a wedding from catering to photography to music to staging.

Our wedding business is a key source of revenue in the Castle's business plan, and we need to ensure that the financial arrangement in which we engage with a partner is advantageous to the Auckland Castle Trust. We will consider proposals from partners as to how this will best work.

At the end of three years we will consider whether we want to take the Wedding Management Service 'in-house' or whether we want to continue to work with a partner to deliver these services.

### **Responding to this tender**

Your response to this invitation to tender should cover the following headings, and any others that you think necessary at this stage:

1. Your interpretation of our requirements
2. An outline of your proposal
3. Project number of weddings to be held at the Castle each year (years 1,2,3 and thereafter)
4. Cost model, including your fee and the basis of this fee
5. Revenue model including proposed pricing for the hire of the venue and likely income per wedding for Auckland Castle trust (rough estimate)
6. Your experience of running similar events, including (as an appendix) any brief CVs that you think may be of interest
7. Reference partnerships or clients (only to be taken up after a face to face discussion)

### **Next steps**

In the first instance, please send an email to [rchackwood@aucklandcastle.org](mailto:rchackwood@aucklandcastle.org), confirming your intention to respond to this invitation to tender.

Please submit your response by email to the same email address by close of play on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June. As a guide, we do not expect your initial response to be longer than four sides of A4 at this stage.

We will write to you by within 7 working days confirming whether or not we would like to meet you to discuss your ideas further.

Ends RCH  
03/5/12