

# **KUWAIT NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICT**

## **MUSEUMS DIRECTOR**



**CANDIDATE BRIEFING DOCUMENT**

**FEBRUARY 2017**

## 1. Background

The overall vision for the new National Cultural District for Kuwait (KNCD) is the development of a stunning range of world class facilities to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and artistic activities, support the pursuit of excellence, champion the tourism and creative industries and enhance the international profile, awareness and understanding of Kuwait.

The aims of the project are to:

- Showcase entertainment and the performing arts by creating a world class theatre, music and conference quarter in a spacious parkland setting (Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre)
- Create a new world class museum complex celebrating Kuwaiti, Islamic and Arab culture and history and embracing and showcasing the rich diversity of the world's finest cultural achievements (Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre)
- Restore Al Salam Palace to its former glory and develop a new heritage experience which tells the history of Kuwait through its 15 rulers and allows visitors to follow in the footsteps of the heads of state and VIP's who visited the Palace in the past
- Develop a world class urban park to provide a platform for the cultural scene in Kuwait by encouraging local, international and regional exchange of arts, history and music and provide new Museums to help new and old generations alike understand the story of their homeland and its natural and military heritages. (Al Shaheed Park and Museums)
- Inspire a passion and cultural pride for Kuwait – its past, present and future
- Increase access, awareness, appreciation and understanding of Kuwait's cultural heritage, its people and its stories – acting as a catalyst to change lives for the better
- Document, preserve, present and share Kuwait's culture, artistic activities and history with present and future generations
- Inspire and excite visitors and other users of the cultural facilities, helping them to enjoy the artistic sector and museum collections to the fullest extent, through well-presented and serviced event programmes, world class exhibitions, education programmes and publications and the imaginative use of media
- Create inspirational learning opportunities for all
- Facilitate worldwide access to Kuwait's resources, expertise and research
- Develop partnerships that extend and enhance Kuwait's cultural network and profile regionally, nationally and internationally
- Act as a catalyst for promoting Kuwait as an international and regional cultural tourist destination that takes pride in its culture and heritage traditions

The District has three cultural clusters:

- Western shores: Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre and Al Salam Palace
- Eastern shores: Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre
- Edge of the City Centre: Al Shaheed Park Museums: Habitat Museum and Remembrance Museum

With a capital cost of more than US\$1 billion, the project is one of the largest cultural investments in the world today.

## **Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre**

The Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC) will showcase the performing arts and create a world class theatre quarter in a spacious parkland setting. It was opened by HH Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2016. The centre includes:

- A state-of-the-art National Theatre with three auditoria seating 2,000, 700 and 300.
- A Music Centre with a 1,000 seat capacity
- Concert Hall and a 300 seat capacity Recital Hall
- A Conference Centre with a flexible main hall, a 400 seat Cinema and a Symposium Hall
- A Library and Archive

## **Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre**

A brand new complex of architecturally designed museums due to open in Spring 2018, this facility forms the main part of Kuwait's new museum district. Comprising six main buildings, the museums will celebrate Kuwaiti, Islamic and Arab culture and history. A Natural History Museum will feature wildlife and biodiversity, Arabian wildlife, artefacts from prehistory, and environmental exhibits. A Science Museum will showcase an experimental atrium and house sections on technology and transport, health and medicine, as well as the human body and mind. There will be a Museum of Islamic History and a Space Museum that will feature astronomy exhibits, among others. Finally, a Fine Arts Centre and Theatre will play host to shows, displays and events, becoming hubs for art and culture for locals and visitors alike.

## **Al Salam Palace**

The restoration of the Al Salam Palace, located adjacent to the performing arts buildings, is a cause for great joy and celebration in Kuwait. The original landmark palace, built in the 1960s to accommodate visiting heads of state and foreign dignitaries, was severely damaged during the Iraqi invasion in the 1990s and has been abandoned for 30 years with little hope of repair. As part of its cultural project, the Amiri Diwan (Kuwaiti government) has announced that the palace, its famous chandelier and its extensive grounds, will be restored to their former beauty and splendour. Plans for the palace include a visitor centre, a museum, and a palace garden. The museum section will focus on the 15 rulers of Kuwait who have led the country since its foundation, and these exhibits will be displayed in galleries and the nine palace rooms of the complex.

## **Al Shaheed Park and Museums**

Located on the periphery of Kuwait City, Al Shaheed Park is a key part of the Amiri Diwan's comprehensive cultural project. The largest park in Kuwait, Al Shaheed is intended as a safe location to attract the city's citizens to a platform for the cultural scene in Kuwait by encouraging local, regional and international exchange of arts, history and music.

The Al Shaheed Park Museums – the Habitat Museum at one end and Remembrance Museum at the other –will help new and old generations alike understand their homeland's natural and military heritages. The Habitat Museum is dedicated to the environment and bird migration in Kuwait and the Remembrance Museum provides visitors with more knowledge on the history of Kuwait, its past battles and the Gulf War. In order to preserve the country's historical and cultural values, the museum aims to collaborate with the public by offering dedicated booths where visitors can share their personal experiences to pass on to the next generation.

Further information on the Museums and the Cultural District can be found at:

[www.sshic.com/projects/sheikh-abdullah-al-salem-cultural-centre](http://www.sshic.com/projects/sheikh-abdullah-al-salem-cultural-centre)  
[www.avestagroup.eu/data/1406947al-shaheed-habitatpdf.pdf](http://www.avestagroup.eu/data/1406947al-shaheed-habitatpdf.pdf)  
[www.alshaheedpark.com/](http://www.alshaheedpark.com/)

## **2. The Role**

The role will be responsible for providing strategic and operational direction across all the museum sites in the Kuwait National Cultural District.

There are three museum sites: the six new buildings of the Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Centre (ASCC) comprising the Natural History Museum, Science Museum, Space Museum, Museum of Islamic History, Fine Arts Centre and Theatre; the Al Shaheed Park Museums comprising the Habitat Museum and Memorial Museum; and the Al Salam Palace.

The Museums Director will ensure that the individual museums are established and operate to the highest international standards of curatorial and interpretive excellence, visitor experience, educational outreach, stewardship, academic scholarship, and operations, and that they fully support the Amiri Diwan's ambitions for the Kuwait National Cultural District.

The role will act as advocate and ambassador for the ASCC and other museums, building and maintaining effective relationships with the Amiri Diwan and all stakeholders involved in the KNCD, and developing the profile and reputation of each constituent museum and the complexes as a whole, locally, regionally and internationally.

## **3. Reporting Structure**

The Museums Director reports to the Managing Director of the Kuwait National Cultural District.

The Director is directly responsible for recruiting a senior management team to support them in overseeing the Al Shaheed Park Museums and Al Salem Palace and, amongst others, the areas of Scholarship, Education, External Relations, Commercial Services and Facilities Co-ordination.

## **4. Job Description**

### **Leadership and strategy**

- Provide effective leadership and direction for the ASCC and other museums, ensuring curatorial and interpretive excellence, financial stability and market awareness.
- Develop and implement an overall integrated vision and business strategy for the museum sites, which achieve the Amiri Diwan's stated mission, aims and objectives.
- Provide advice and sector expertise to the Emir of Kuwait and the Amiri Diwan in planning and acquiring collections for the new museums.
- Recruit a team of senior managers for each of the museum sites, aligning the organisational structure for the Museum Division with the ability to deliver on the vision and mission of each museum.
- With the senior team and curatorial staff, set strategies for acquiring, building and interpreting the museums' collections and exhibitions.
- Hold overall responsibility for the care, management, development and safety of the collections and exhibitions in all of the KNCD museums.
- Establish a reputation for academic scholarship and an ambition for the KNCD museums to become centres of excellence and learning.
- Lead on a comprehensive research and development programme for the museums, working with universities, the wider education sector and other partners in the museums

sector to ensure the highest standards of academic rigour and research which underpin the curation, conservation and development of the collections.

- Initiate and develop a community education and outreach programme for the Museum sites, offering school children and the adult population an opportunity to learn about their own and other international cultures.
- Attend key ASCC and museum events as an ambassador and spokesperson for the museums.
- Be accountable for the success of the ASCC and all KNCD museum sites and for securing long-term results.

## **Operations**

- Working with the KNCD Managing Director, Amiri Diwan, Alghanim International and other consultants, architects and contractors, ensure the timely delivery of the completed ASCC museums complex and the Al Salam Palace renovation project.
- Lead the Museums Division management team, creating a positive working environment for employees and ensuring best practice and equality of opportunity. Evaluate and appraise staff, providing training and development where required to enhance productivity and ensure targets are met and outcomes achieved.
- With the senior managers, develop a clear operating strategy for the Museums Division, ensuring that all staff are focused on meeting the strategic objectives.
- Develop a visitor strategy for the museums, overseeing all aspects of their operations and ensuring the delivery of an excellent visitor/user experience.
- Maintain high standards of quality in all areas of operations, in accordance with KNCD policy.
- Prepare annual targets and budgets in association with the Chief Finance Officer, departmental heads and the wider management team.
- Operate annual budget and financial reporting procedures which ensure accountability and effective financial management.
- Take overall responsibility for the management of operational, reputational and financial risk for the museum complexes.
- Ensure all of the Museums are compliant with legal obligations and KNCD policy including Health, Safety, Environment Management, Insurance, Employment Law, Data Protection, etc.
- Develop and lead effective marketing and branding strategies for the museums sites, creating an imaginative approach to building local, regional and international visitors and growing the reputation and brand of the ASCC and other museums nationally and internationally.
- Attend and service meetings as required, providing timely delivery of all relevant creative, financial and managerial reports.

## **Strategic relations and representation**

- Build and maintain positive relationships with all stakeholders including other KNCD senior leaders, the Amiri Diwan, members of the community, and all personnel involved in the capital development and renovation projects.

- Foster and develop the ASCC's relationships with local, national and regional organisations and entities to promote the standing and profile of each constituent museum and the complex as a whole.
- Develop productive relationships with the press and other media, acting as spokesperson for the ASCC, Al Salam Palace and Al Shaheed Museums where appropriate.
- Promote and advocate for the work of the KNCD museums, communicating their mission and aims to all stakeholders and to the general public.
- Continually seek opportunities to develop partnerships with local, regional and international organisations and individuals who will help further the aims of the KNCD museums.
- Represent ASCC and the other museums at a wide variety of relevant meetings, conferences and other public forums, maximising opportunities to convey and gather information that will help build the profile and reputation of the museums and inform recommendations and decision-making for their future benefit.

## **5. Person Specification**

The ideal candidate will have many years' experience in a leadership or senior management position in the museums, heritage, or wider cultural sector. He or she will be ambitious for the success of the new museum sites and attracted by the opportunity to make a significant impact on the international museum scene in the field of Islamic culture. Some previous experience of overseeing a capital development project with knowledge of planning, acquiring and building a collection and/or permanent exhibition would be an advantage.

The experience, skills and knowledge sought are:

### **Experience**

- Extensive experience at the most senior level of arts management within a multi-site or large scale, complex national museum, cultural organisation or similar.
- Experience in shaping and implementing a development strategy for a new business in the museum, galleries or cultural field.
- An experienced strategic planner with creative thinking skills and the ability to see the 'big picture'.
- Experience of building and developing large multi-disciplinary staff teams.
- Experience in financial planning and budgeting for substantial sums.

### **Skills**

- A confident people director who actively leads by example and drives teams from the front and inspires respect.
- An excellent communicator with the ability to develop trust-based relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, internally and externally.
- Good organisational skills, with an ability to prioritise and delegate as appropriate.
- Sound financial and commercial skills, with the ability to manage risk intelligently.
- Strong marketing and media skills.

- Good negotiating and advocacy skills.
- Strong written and oral presentation skills both in-house and in the public arena
- Intellectual rigour.
- Excellent diplomatic skills with the ability to operate naturally and effectively within the highest political circles.
- Ability to act as the ambassador for the KNCD Museums, representing them locally, regionally and internationally.

### **Knowledge**

- A wide range of networks and contacts amongst the international museums sector and a strong public profile and credibility internationally.
- Understanding of the challenges and complexities of leading a multi-site operation.
- Solid written and spoken English.
- Degree level qualification.

### **Desirable**

- Experience of the establishment and launch of new museum, cultural or performing arts facilities.
- Experience of working internationally.
- Interest in and knowledge of the culture in the Gulf region.
- Spoken Arabic.

## **6. Summary of terms**

**Contract:** An open-ended contract terminated by either party in writing at six months' notice.

**Salary:** Competitive compensation aligned to regional market and industry benchmarking. Salary will be paid in US Dollars.

There is no personal income tax or national insurance equivalent in Kuwait.

**Benefits:** An ex-pat package of allowances and benefits will be available to include accommodation and private health insurance.

**Relocation:** A relocation package to Kuwait will be negotiable for the successful candidate.

## **7. Contact**

For further information, please contact Heather Newill, Director, AEM International Ltd at [hnewill@aeminternational.co.uk](mailto:hnewill@aeminternational.co.uk) or +44(0) 1728 660026.