



Website Tender

April 2026

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The Forum Trust is an independent charity. Our Charity Number is 1074619.

The Forum is inviting proposals from experienced digital agencies to redevelop our website and subsites.

As we approach our 25th anniversary we're looking at the future of The Forum and our landmark building where people connect with culture, community, and their own curiosity.

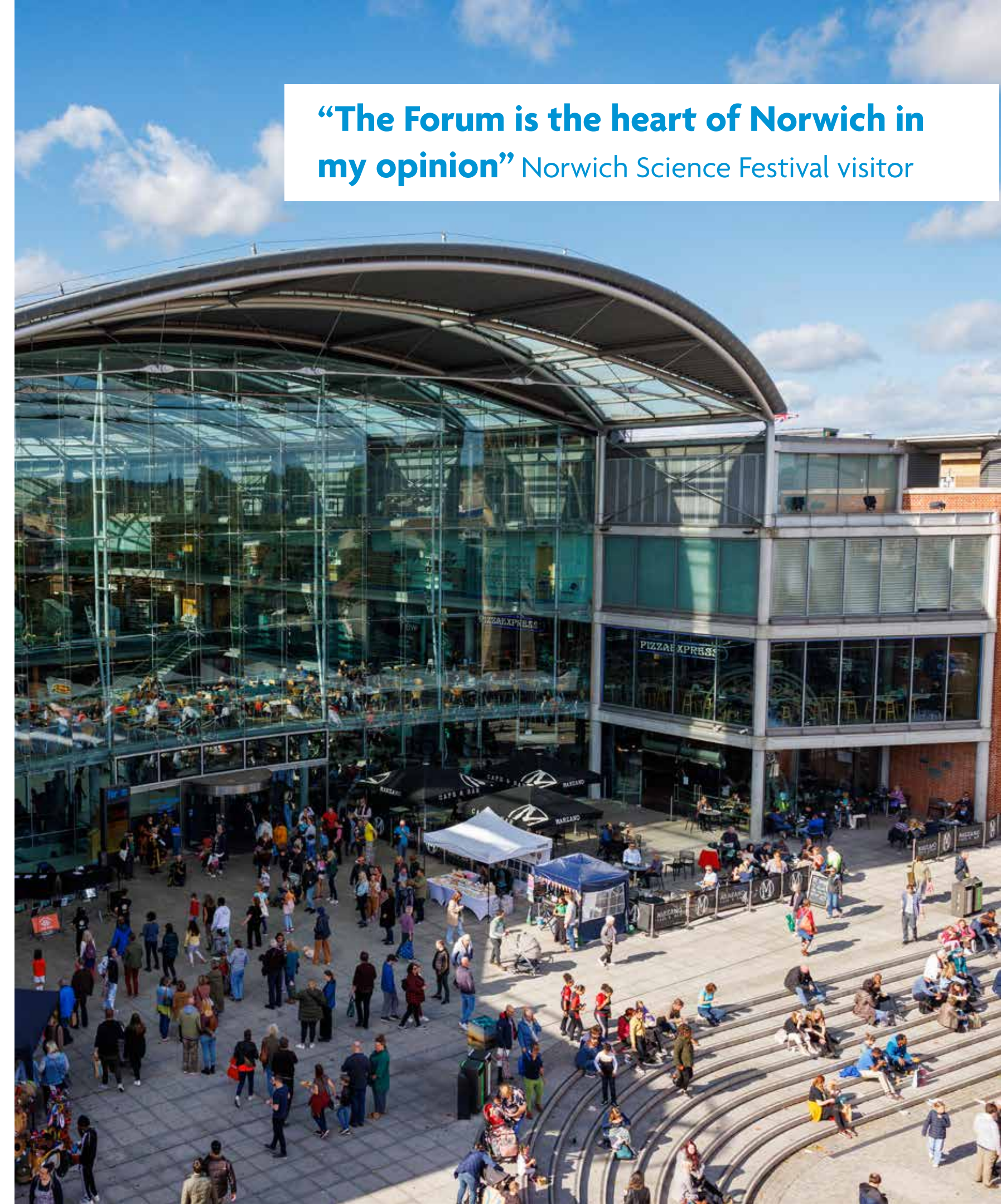
We have an exciting opportunity to redesign our website and subsites to support this next phase of our charity. Our aim is to create a website which clearly and simply communicates the full breadth of The Forum's work - from our cultural festivals and events to the commercial activities that sustain our charity and practical visiting information for our audiences.

We are currently working with design agency The Click on a brand refresh project which will be completed in May 2026. This project will feed into the new website and help visually bring together The Forum's many different purposes and festivals.

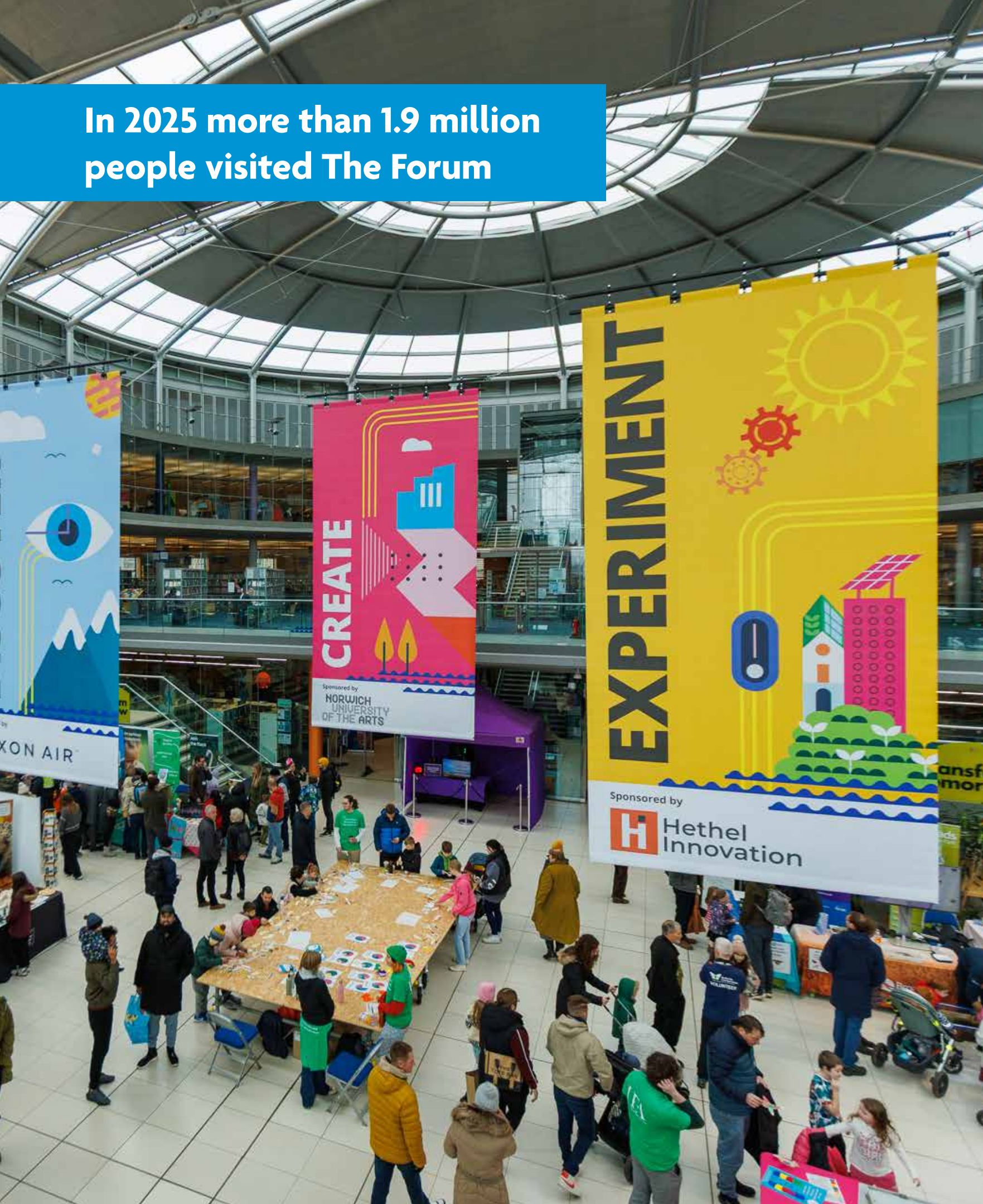
The successful applicant will work with The Forum team to create a user-first, accessible website which supports our organisation going into our next phase of development. We would like to create a productive working relationship with the successful applicant which can continue into the future.

Image: The Forum, Norwich, photo Luke Witcomb

“The Forum is the heart of Norwich in my opinion” Norwich Science Festival visitor



In 2025 more than 1.9 million people visited The Forum



About us

The Forum is a thriving community and cultural hub based in the heart of Norwich run by The Forum Trust. From our unique building, we provide vital social, cultural, and civic experiences for everyone.

The Forum presents Norwich Science Festival, Norwich Games Festival, Norfolk Deaf Festival, Norwich Book Festival and coordinates Heritage Open Days in Norfolk. These festivals attract more than 500,000 people each year, in a celebration of culture, technology, discovery, history, heritage and creativity. Most of our festival events and activities are free or low cost.

Our iconic building first opened in 2001 after a fire destroyed Norwich Central Library in 1994 and was the landmark Millennium project for the East of England. It is home to Millennium Library, BBC East, On the Stall City, Café Bar Marzanos, PizzaExpress and Norwich BID. Since opening we have welcomed more than twenty-two million visitors.

The Forum Trust is an independent, self-financing charity which doesn't receive regular public funding. Our festivals, community events and the upkeep of our building are funded primarily through income from our car park, venue hire and tenants.

We have a team of approximately 30 permanent staff, alongside another 30 casual staff plus volunteers to help us deliver our activities.

Image: The Explorium at Norwich Science Festival, photo Luke Witcomb

Our values

Collaborative

Relationships are at our core. Our space is filled with partners and our events depend on them too. We bring people together and work with others positively, creatively, and cooperatively.

Welcoming

We're here for everyone, which means making what we offer as accessible, safe, and inviting – for the people who already love us and those we've yet to meet.

Innovative

We're always evolving and diversifying to stay relevant to our audiences. Our small, dedicated team is agile and flexible – just like our spaces – future-focused, and open to bold ideas.

Inspiring

We challenge perceptions, stimulate conversations, and support discovery. We want to feed curiosity, captivate and surprise audiences, and dare people to learn something new.

Images top to bottom: Norfolk Deaf Festival; Norwich Pride, photos Luke Witcomb



Our current websites

- **theforumnorwich.co.uk**
2025: 191k views - Top viewed: What's On | Homepage | Car Park | Millennium Library | Norwich Jobs Fair
- **norwichsciencefestival.co.uk**
2025: 227k views - Ticket on-sale day 7k views - Top viewed: What's On | Homepage | Explorer Dome | The Explorium | Making Rainbows
- **norwichgamesfestival.co.uk**
2025: 70k views - Ticket on-sale day 6k views - Top viewed: Events | Homepage | Plan your visit | Trader and collector day | Mario is 40
- **norwichbookfestival.co.uk**
2025: 46k views - Ticket on-sale day 2.1k views - Top viewed: What's On | Homepage | Jacqueline Wilson | Behind the Scenes | Norfolk Folklore
- **norfolkheritageopendays.co.uk**
2025: 23k views - Ticket on-sale day 2k views - Top viewed: Homepage | Brochure out now | Booking tickets | Daily drop-in events | Plan your visit
- **norfolkmakersfestival.co.uk** (to be archived)

Norfolk Deaf Festival is new to our family of festivals this year and we're hosting on our main site in the interim but will operate like our other festivals in the future. The festival has a website with old content from its last event in 2023 - **norfolkdeaffestival.co.uk**



[What's on](#)



[Visit us](#) ▾



[Venue hire](#) ▾

the
forum

Search



Full menu



Here for Everyone

Our current websites

Our website and festival subsites were originally built in 2020, with the Norwich Book Festival added in 2024. All sites run on a central CMS (Statamic) and share the same structure. The Forum's main site has some additional functionality for venue hire and tenant information.

Following COVID-19, The Forum's festivals returned at different times, and this set up provided flexibility while maintaining a consistent 'family' look. It also offered a cost-effective way to launch new festival sites quickly.

The Forum in-house marketing team manages the website and subsites content, with around 8 internal CMS users. Since launching we've worked with our current digital agency who provide maintenance, hosting and support. We've worked with them to make improvements focusing on What's On functionality, accessibility and automated back-end features which help The Forum team. Strengths include:

- Flexible content features including automated and adjustable booking messages, adding sub-site events to The Forum's main listings, custom blocks.
- 'Collections' of information so copy is added once and can be applied across sites (eg. venue info internal and external, opening times, FAQs, sponsors).
- Venue hire bookings forms automated to each space.

Other systems we use include Ticketsolve, Mailchimp, SurveyMonkey, Momentus Elite, Xero, Google Analytics and Metricool.

Image: Silver Wings: The US Army Air Forces in WWII Norfolk, Norfolk Heritage Open Days, photo Luke Witcomb





Aims

User-centred - We want to take a fresh look at how our websites are structured. Our aim is to better communicate what The Forum is and what we do, to increase engagement and reach new audiences. This would be guided by an initial user research phase and could potentially include bringing our sites together under one URL.

Accessible - The Forum building was built with accessibility in mind. We want our digital presence to be the same. We want to be a first-class example of online accessibility - aiming for WCAG AAA pass where possible, AA minimum.

Integrate our box office - We currently use Ticketsolve as our box office platform and want to enhance its integration with our website to improve functionality, user experience and avoid duplication.

Reliable and adaptable - The Forum operates year-round and is a flexible space with a wide programme of events. Our website must be reliable, robust, and cost-effective with the ability to adapt to accommodate changes - for example, a new tenant, new festivals or new systems.

Efficient - As a small team delivering major events, we would like to maximise our website to support all our team - including intuitive backend functionality, ways to avoid duplication and automated features which reduce administration time.

Sustainable - The Forum has made a pledge to work towards net zero and we need a low carbon website solution.

Image: Patois by Jeanefer Jean-Charles, Norfolk and Norwich Festival, photo Keiron Tovell

Website users

Visitors to the building

Events both Forum organised or event hires | Millennium Library | cafe and restaurant | car park | toilets | tenants (shops, BBC East or Norwich BID)

Visitors to Forum festivals, events or projects

Festival events at The Forum or an external venue | outreach projects

Contributors and partners

Exhibitors, speakers, artists and organisations taking part in a Forum produced festival or project | sponsors and funders | partners

Venue hirers

Local businesses | charities and not-for-profits | artists and craft sellers | market organisers | training providers | performers | community groups

Image: Jacqueline Wilson at Norwich Book Festival, photo Luke Witcomb



Content types and functionality

Here are our initial ideas and thoughts by content type however this would be guided by the user research/discovery stage.

- **Homepage** - clear and easy to navigate, simple menu structures, flexible and adaptable content, capacity to add dynamic content (eg. video)
- **What's on** - easy to navigate and filter, searchable, clear layouts, be able to select a date range and easily see what's on today/this week, automated archiving of old events
- **Event pages** - clear key info (date, time, price, venue, booking), integrate Ticketsolve, automated features such as showing low availability and sold out tags, ability to add other booking options for external events, set launch time, hirers and library portal to add their own events information, ability to resize images in the CMS
- **Visiting information** - opening times, map of the building, clear accessibility information
- **Venues hub** - external venue pages which include key visiting and accessibility information and map, potentially automatically updated from their Google listing
- **Venue hire** - clear venue specifications, at a glance technical details, booking forms, contact details, FAQs and booking policy, hirers hub where they can potentially submit details for screens/digital advertising
- **News** - blog style, dated, filterable by subject, set launch option
- **Meet the team** - photos and introductions to the team
- **Emergency notification bar** - simple message to appear on all pages
- **Outreach and learning** - options for dynamic content, participation forms, event collections, project results and outcomes
- **Sponsorship and partnerships** - options to add key partner logos in key places, sponsor logos and messaging
- **Email sign-up** - easy to sign up to our e-newsletters via Mailchimp
- **Vacancy/Work with Us** - for jobs and contributors, dated listings, automatically removed, application form
- **Tenants** - intro, opening times, contact details. The library could be different as it has multiple areas (eg. BIPC, American Library)
- **Car park** - opening times, price info, map, could include integration with our parking counter (current API with Skidata)
- **Policy, terms and conditions pages** - easy to navigate and find information or jump links to key details in long text
- **Donations function** - adaptable to each festival, currently donations are taken through Ticketsolve
- **Customisable forms** - GDPR compliant, secure forms with the option to create new forms in-house
- **About us** - adaptable, content blocks (eg. featured pages, url blocks, links), improved history pages, contact and feedback features
- **Search** - full website search and separate What's On page search of events, compatible with voice search and AI summary
- **Assistive technology** - We are trialling Signly who have sponsored Norfolk Deaf Festival 2026, other recommendations welcomed

Challenges

How to communicate all we do?

We need a site that's easy to navigate while supporting many different functions and audiences. We need to communicate what's in our building, the projects and festivals we produce and our outreach programme taking place across the county.

How do we present our building and what happens here alongside our different festivals? Could everything live under one URL? Can we still give each festival the flexibility to tailor content for its audience this way?

Long and complicated What's On listings

The What's On pages are the most viewed and needs to showcase lots of very different events in a succinct layout. It needs to be an intuitive process for visitors to find events and to book tickets. The festival programmes have 80-200 events, venue hire and library events are between 25-35 each month.

How do we keep the What's On easy to navigate for visitors with a complex mix of events with varied set-ups, timings, booking options, venues, producers and organisers? How do we make the backend efficient for staff?

Balancing our charitable purpose with our commercial strands

We want to be clear about what we do but also maximise our commercial strands which support the charity. How do we strike a balance between what we produce and income generation without over complicating the site?

Keeping visitor information clear

We want visitor information to be easy to find and understand - with lots of spaces, events and different audiences this is a challenge. How do we keep it concise and adaptable? How can we support our front of house team, making it easier for visitors to find answers to their questions before visiting?

We're not the library

There is a common misconception that The Forum is the library. From our current web stats we can see how many people use our site to get information about the library.

How do we support the library (a key element of our building) and our other tenants, provide visitors with the information they want and make it clear The Forum is a separate organisation?

Making a robust and future-proof site

As a charity we need a web solution which can be kept up-to-date by our in-house team cost-effectively. With ever updating and improving systems we need a site built to be flexible and adaptable.

Can we streamline any aspects of how we work? What information or work can we combine? Are there improvements we can make to the systems and processes we use (box office, venue hire booking system, email)?

Requirements

- User research and discovery phase including facilitating focus groups - The Forum can support recruiting participants
- Design and development of new website for The Forum and its festivals using an industry standard CMS (eg. Wordpress)
- Create a website with the latest best practice which is flexible and adaptable to last at least five years
- Aim to create WCAG AAA pass website, AA minimum
- Integrate with our box office system Ticketsolve
- Explore the potential to integrate with other systems if it provides either better user experience or administration efficiencies (eg. venue hire Momentus Elite, finance Xero)
- Content review and redesign where needed with support from The Forum team
- Manage transfer process including content, redirects and optimise SEO
- Site must be fully compliant with GDPR and cookie regulations
- Set up analytics, including GA4, to track KPIs
- Test new site for usability, speed, security, and mobile responsiveness
- SEO strategy following launch and robust bug fixing stage
- Training for Forum staff on CMS and a 'how to' guide including best practice guidance
- Ongoing reliable, secure and sustainable hosting with sufficient bandwidth for peaks in traffic
- A support and maintenance package with a proactive best practice approach to updates and improvement. SLA to include clearly defined support response times and costs

The Forum will provide

- An internal project lead and a website working group with representatives from all areas of the organisation who can be consulted.
- The Forum team can assist with recruiting participants for focus groups or user testing if required working with our community partners.
- To note, The Forum has an external IT provider Breakwater IT, who provide organisational IT support.

Timeline

Tender opens: Thursday 30 April 2026

Tender questions deadline: Thursday 14 May 2026

Tender submission deadline: Tuesday 26 May 2026

Short list confirmed: Thursday 4 June 2026

Interviews: Thursday 18 June 2026

Appointment of successful applicant: Friday 26 June 2026

Project start: Thursday 2 July 2026

Estimated website launch date: Tuesday 2 March 2027

Bug fixing and SEO strategy implementation: until Friday 30 April 2027

Project build timeline to be confirmed with appointed vendor.

Budget

The budget for this project is £40k.

Image: The Arena at Norwich Games Festival, photo Luke Witcomb



Applications

Submit a proposal in pdf format to **marketing@theforumnorwich.co.uk** by **5pm Tuesday 26 May**. Please include the following information:

Organisation overview

- Introduction to your company, including staff and their technical expertise or experience relevant to the project
- Sustainability and inclusion statements/policies if available
- Links to three relevant websites you have produced, in particular in the arts, cultural or charity sector

Design and build approach

- Include an overview of your approach to UX/UI design and user research, CMS functionality, the timeframe for delivery, and your working process with clients, including how you manage feedback and sign-off

Costs

- Itemised breakdown with reference to requirements including any limitations within the quote
- Annual hosting, support and maintenance package (including details of response times for major issues, future development costs/support fees, cancellation process)

Evaluation criteria

The Forum team will evaluate all proposals based on the following criteria:

- Relevant experience and technical expertise
- Suitability of the proposal and design approach
- Value for money
- Accessibility and sustainability approach
- Ongoing hosting, support and maintenance proposal
- Organisational values, in particular a commitment to sustainability and inclusion.

Contact

If you have any queries contact project lead, Kerry Leathley, by Thursday 14 May. Email kerry.leathley@theforumnorwich.co.uk