



**Invitation for Expressions of Interest in operating a Cafe
at The Warehouse, Allison Street, Birmingham**



Friend of the Earth (Birmingham) Ltd.
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www.thewarehouse.coop

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Summary

Birmingham Friends of the Earth (BFoE) is looking for a new operator for the recently refurbished cafe within its community environment centre, The Warehouse, on Allison Street in Digbeth.

The new operator will benefit from being part of the “little green community” of tenants, visitors and meeting room users and from more than 30 years history of pioneering vegetarian and vegan catering businesses trading from the premises.

The space is fully fitted out both in terms of the kitchen and seating area although further investment from a new operator in, for example, a display counter and sofas and soft furnishings may be advantageous.

In addition to the main cafe area, the adjacent meeting room can also operate as a private dining room if required and can be booked on a sessional basis for this purpose.

Timetable

Deadline for expressions of interest:	5pm, Friday 4 th January 2019
Presentation to the BFoE Board:	Week commencing 7 th January 2019
Target date for trading to commence:	Friday 1 st February 2019

Rent and Service Charges

For the first year the rent for the space is £12 per square foot. This equates to £1,502 per calendar month paid monthly in advance. A deposit of £4,500 is required to be paid before the lease or licence commences. Medium or longer-term rent increases, break-clauses and contractual arrangements are negotiable but a commitment of at least 3 years, with some flexibility, is expected.

In addition the cafe is re-charged for metered hot water and for electricity usage, which includes both power from the national grid (measured through a sub-meter in the kitchen) and solar power (measured through a separate meter on the cable between the solar panels and the kitchen). For the previous operator this amounted to approximate £600 per month.

At present The Warehouse building as a whole enjoys Business Rates relief on the basis that Birmingham Friends of the Earth and all its tenants are charities or social enterprises. However, if for any reason this rate relief is withdrawn for the whole building, or for the space from which the cafe trades, the cafe operator will be responsible for paying the rates due on the space that they occupy.

About Birmingham Friends of the Earth and The Warehouse

Birmingham has the only local Friends of the Earth in the country with its own building, “The Warehouse”, operated through a Community Benefit Society that is owned by BFoE members.

Originally used as the centre for environmental projects including home insulation and a recycled paper business, the building has also been home to various like-minded community organisations and campaigns groups.



Today, The Warehouse aims to demonstrate and enable people to adopt more sustainable patterns of living and working in the city. This is achieved by providing managed work spaces to community groups and campaigners and to social enterprises including a bike shop, community radio station and the cafe.

During 2018 a major refurbishment of the premises was completed, funded by a community share issue. This enabled the cafe to move downstairs, the creation of a new meeting room suite on the first floor and the provision of full disabled access to all the public areas of the building.

The Warehouse is very well established and much loved by its community across Birmingham, with a diverse and interesting range of tenants, many of whom work together. It is well situated a stone's throw (literally) from Moor Street Station and within the lively, characterful area of Digbeth.



History of the Cafe and recent trading experience

In its original form, the “Rainforest Cafe” began trading in 1988 and was Birmingham's first exclusively vegetarian eatery.

In the intervening years there have been various operators trading as “The Warehouse Cafe” and during that time the offer has extended from a simple lunchtime only service into a full vegetarian restaurant including evenings, weekends and outside catering activities.

The operators worked with various local art and music organisers to provide art exhibitions and music events within the café space and many of these organisers are likely to be keen to continue with this. In recent years, the offer has included more vegan food in line with customer values and this proved popular. The most recent operator left during November 2018 for personal reasons.



Since the move downstairs in July 2018, the cafe had been trading Tuesday to Saturday 12noon – 2.30pm & 5.30-8.30pm and Sundays 12noon-3.30pm. Weekly sales have been around £3,500 from a menu that largely consisted of offering main meals.

The liquor licence lapsed when the business moved downstairs and was not re-applied for. In the previous first floor space there had been a table licence and weekly alcohol sales averaged £500 per week.

What we are offering

Birmingham Friends of the Earth is offering a fully fitted and recently refurbished cafe space including:

- Kitchen c.550 sq ft
- Store room c. 50 sq ft
- Seating area for 60 covers c.900 sq ft

There is also an adjacent meeting room that can be separately booked on a sessional basis as a private dining space for up to 12 diners.



What we're looking for

Customer offer and trading style

In the context of managing the building as a whole, it is important to Birmingham Friends of the Earth that the cafe provides:

- a coffee shop type service from a minimum of 11am-4.30pm Monday to Friday;
- a light lunch menu aimed at other tenants and building users;
- buffet options that meeting room users can book in advance;
- evening opening on weekdays that includes providing access to meeting room users after 5pm and locking up of the building no earlier than 9pm.

We would also encourage a new operator to build on the heritage of the space as a full-service restaurant and to explore new opportunities such as developing a Cafe Bar style offer and to using the space for events and exhibitions as appropriate.

The front of house drinks and snacks offer could be delivered separately from the kitchen and main meals either with two legal entities or by opening the kitchen to “pop-up” type caterers. However, BFoE are looking for a single organisation to take on overall responsibility for the cafe and do not have the capacity to manage interfaces between different organisations trading from the same space.

Legal structures

BFoE requires that the new cafe operator shares our environmental objectives. We also have a strong preference for it to be structured as some kind of Social Enterprise (not least in order to protect the Business Rates relief that we enjoy). This could include a Co-operative, Community Interest Company, Community Benefit Society, Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered Charity or Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

If you are incorporating a new legal entity to operate the cafe, we would encourage you to have a look at the “Select a Structure” tool on the Co-operatives UK website which can help you choose one that is most suitable to what you are planning to do – see www.uk.coop/developing-co-ops/select-structure-tool.

If you adopt a social enterprise or charitable structure you will need to name an organisation to receive any residual assets in the case of a solvent dissolution of the organisation. We would encourage you to name Friends of the Earth (Birmingham) Ltd. or another local environmental organisation.

Lease or Licence commitments

Whether or not the new operator has a lease or a licence to occupy (which is subject to negotiation), it is an absolute requirement that the cafe has an exclusively vegetarian menu and, as much as possible, that food and drinks are sourced ethically (e.g. locally produced, organically grown or Fairtrade certified).

We will also be asking the new operator to consider whether or not to apply for a full liquor licence (covering on, off and table sales of alcohol) within the first 12 months.

How to express your interest in this opportunity

Please complete the application form, which can be found at:
<http://www.thewarehouse.coop/spaces-to-rent/>

If short-listed, you will be invited to present to the Board of Directors of Birmingham Friends of the Earth. This will include providing sample menus and trading projections and may include preparing a sample dish.

If you have any questions or to arrange a viewing, please email:

nasreen@birminghamfoe.org.uk or telephone 0121 632 6909.