



Catering Manager

Job Description

Reports To:

Tanfield Railway Company General Manager

Location:

The role requires flexibility to work across any location within the Tanfield Railway, predominantly based at East Tanfield Station, with occasional travel to other sites.

Terms:

- Full-time (40 hours per week)
- 28 days annual leave
- Weekend and bank holiday work is required in line with operational needs

Description:

Tanfield Railway, the world's oldest railway, is celebrating its 300th anniversary in 2025. As a major heritage attraction with around 30,000 visitors annually and growing, we are seeking an experienced Catering Manager to lead our food and beverage operations. The ideal candidate will be passionate about both history and hospitality, bringing together the charm of Tanfield's historic setting with exceptional dining experiences for our visitors. This role is pivotal in providing memorable service that reflects the heritage of the railway while ensuring modern operational excellence.

About Tanfield Railway:

Founded in the early 1700s, Tanfield Railway holds a rich place in history as the world's oldest railway. Its guiding principles centre around preserving this legacy while providing a high-quality visitor experience. As we celebrate 300 years, we aim to blend tradition with innovation, offering unique experiences through our steam train journeys, historic sites, and events. The catering team plays a key role in enhancing this experience, from daily café operations to catering for special events.

Key Responsibilities:

Operational Management:

- Oversee daily operations of all catering outlets across the railway, including cafés, pop-up catering, on-train catering and event venues.
- Ensure smooth operation during both regular hours and during large-scale events

such as our anniversary celebrations, corporate functions, and weddings.

- There may be times when you will be required to actively participate in food preparation and service, particularly during busy periods or to ensure service continuity.
- Develop and implement efficient procedures that reflect both historical authenticity and modern service standards to enhance productivity and profitability.
- Manage inventory, purchasing, and cost control while ensuring compliance with all food safety and hygiene regulations.
- Ensure all assigned areas maintain exceptional standards of visitor safety and food hygiene, adhering to relevant legislation and guidelines, including COSHH, HACCP, and food safety certifications.
- Prepare reports for the General Manager, covering areas such as food legislation, COSHH certificates, SOPs, risk assessments, and HACCP plans.
- Serve as a key holder and alarm holder for Tanfield Railway, with potential responsibilities for responding to alarm callouts.

Menu Planning and Development:

- Collaborate with the team to create menus that are inspired by Tanfield Railway's heritage, offering traditional fare alongside contemporary options.
- Use creativity to develop seasonal and event-specific menus, with a focus on enhancing the food and beverage offer while increasing sales.
- Integrate knowledge of historic regional recipes and establish contacts with local food suppliers to create authentic offerings that complement the surroundings.

Staff Management:

- Lead, recruit, and develop a high-performing team of catering employees and volunteers who are passionate about the history of Tanfield Railway and catering.
- Train staff to provide exceptional customer service, fostering a positive working environment that mirrors the railway's aims.
- Ensure staff are well-versed in the history of Tanfield, making them ambassadors who can share stories and engage with visitors.

Customer Satisfaction:

- Build strong relationships with visitors, ensuring a warm, welcoming atmosphere that enhances the heritage experience.
- Handle customer inquiries and complaints efficiently, ensuring all feedback is used to improve the visitor experience.
- Drive sales and ensure profit margins through effective management and wastage control, while maintaining exceptional standards of service.

Financial Management:

- Develop and manage budgets for the catering department, ensuring financial sustainability while supporting the growth of the railway as a heritage visitor attraction.
- Monitor expenses, profitability, and pricing strategies to ensure competitiveness while reflecting the high standards of service.

Event Planning and Execution:

- Coordinate and execute catering services for a variety of events, weddings, heritage days, and private parties.
 - Ensure that catering services enhance the authenticity and historical significance of Tanfield Railway events, from food presentation to service delivery.
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Qualifications and Skills:

- Proven experience in a Catering Manager or equivalent role.
- Strong leadership skills with the ability to inspire a team in a historic, customer-focused environment.
- Experience in managing teams within a busy food and beverage venue, with attention to detail and a focus on delivering exceptional customer service.
- Excellent communication skills, with the ability to lead and train staff and volunteers to reach high standards.
- High levels of attention to detail, numeracy skills, and experience with tills and stocktaking processes.
- Strong knowledge of food safety regulations, including COSHH, HACCP, and holding a Level 3 Food Hygiene Certificate.
- Ability to thrive in a fast-paced environment, especially during high-volume events and seasonal peaks.
- A flexible approach to working hours, with availability for weekends, bank holidays, early mornings, and evenings.
- Willingness to take on a hands-on role when necessary, including food preparation and service, cleaning duties, and opening and closing catering outlets.
- Comfortable wearing traditional costume during events and train operating days.

Desirable Skills:

- Experience working within a tourism or heritage sector, preferably in a catering or food and beverage-led operation.
 - Strong IT skills with proficiency in EPoS systems, Google Drive and purchase management/accountancy systems.
 - Own transportation and full driving licence due to the location of Tanfield Railway.
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This role presents a unique opportunity to contribute to the growth of Tanfield Railway, enhancing its reputation as a world-class heritage attraction while delivering exceptional food and beverage experiences for our 30,000+ visitors each year.