

real world and the virtual

will still be taking place this year - in one form or another. are welcoming visitors and plans for Open Cambridge.

The hugely popular Open Cambridge heritage weekend is set to go ahead this year in September as a virtual festival with a series of free online events, from podcasts and films to virtual tours, written stories, walks and talks.

Now in its 13th year, the annual three-day event celebrates the heritage and history of Cambridge, offering curious visitors a rare opportunity to see some hidden gems and to learn more about the city's extraordinary past. It is part of the national Heritage Open Days scheme, which offers special access to places that are normally closed to the public or charge admission.

Open Cambridge is run by the public engagement team at the University of Cambridge. This year, in the face of the coronavirus lockdown, the team is inviting the community to suggest engaging and creative ideas that showcase people of Cambridge and its surrounding villages. Alternatively, people can submit photographs of Cambridge for an online gallery, or write a short article about an interesting or little-known feature of the city.

The invitation is open to anyone keen to share their knowledge of wildlife, sites and places that are not always accessible to the public or rarely visited, and stories and people that traditional history has overlooked or forgotten.

Coordinator Sue Long said: "This is a hugely exciting opportunity for the whole community to come together and put on a fantastic online festival that presents Cambridge in a new way. We want people to get involved in this celebration of our beautiful city, the stunning architecture, exquisite gardens, and its rich past. We're keen to showcase all Cambridge has to offer, its big and little wonders, and we are very much looking forward to people's suggestions."

"For me, the essence of Open Cambridge is getting inside buildings, looking behind those walls and going to places that wouldn't normally be open. People often say things like, I have walked past that fence every day and I never knew what was behind it, and then I went there on Open Cambridge weekend and it turned out to be a beautiful garden."

"I know that this year we won't be

able to recreate that atmosphere - the smell and look of the place, whether you are going into an old library or the new Cambridge Mosque.

"So what we really want for this virtual Open Cambridge is to hear those interesting stories about places and for the community to get in touch and say what you would like to see."

"I'm also hoping this will inspire people who have never worked with Open Cambridge before to send in footage of places that the public don't normally see, perhaps because they are part of a private home or it's somewhere that might be dangerous for groups to go inside."

"The university will be offering online access to quite a few places such as libraries and museums but we would also really like to hear from the town side of life. There must be lots of people in Cambridge who have all sorts of interesting stories."

The most important point for people wanting to get involved is to keep the digital offerings simple, short and eye-catching. Anyone suggesting an idea must be able to facilitate, record, write or film the suggestion, bringing 'the story' to life for an online audience.

Examples for Open Cambridge and how to help

Building/garden tours

Churches, mosques, pubs, shops, colleges, faculties, museums, video chats with gardeners, conservators, historians and cemetery tours

Items/discoveries

Librarians and their favourite book in their library, archivists and the most fascinating object in their collections, an important discovery that has taken place in a college/building/pub

Roles

City and college roles, such as who keeps the place going (gardeners, porters, butlers, bursar, proctors, the mayor and city council leaders

Virtual walks

Self-guided walks or tours and scavenger hunts featuring important historic locations

Sports videos

Workouts, walks or classes

Those submitting a proposal may like to use the Heritage Open Days 2020 theme, 'Hidden Nature' for

inspiration. The Open Cambridge team is also keen to include events around the theme of sport and leisure, with a working title 'Open Sport'. All suggestions for this theme are welcome.

Events submitted and accepted will appear on the Open Cambridge website during the event weekend only.

In the past, events have included a wide range of walks, talks, tours and exhibitions at numerous locations, including a peek behind the scenes at the Cambridge Mosque on Mawson Road and the ADC Theatre, a rare tour of the Marshalls' hangars, and fun and games at the Cambridge fire station.

Specialist guides have offered tours of Cambridge University colleges' gardens, museums, galleries, and libraries. In addition, The Society of Cambridge Tourist Guides have led walking tours, bringing the rich history of the city to life by introducing visitors to some of the people and places

that have made the city what it is today.

Open Cambridge is also inviting people to submit either their favourite lockdown photo of Cambridge or simply their most creative or unusual photograph of the city. Those submitting photos can write a short story.

Sue added: "We're looking for something very local and very personal. It doesn't need to be too polished or slick. We want real people's stories, real lives. Anyone can come forward and offer something - we are looking for something anyone could do on a smartphone."

The closing date for event proposals is July 20. Once the proposal is accepted, the digital content will need to be submitted by Monday, August 17.

Photographs and related short articles (500 words or less) can be submitted until August 28.

To submit a proposal or photo, email opencambridge@admin.cam.ac.uk.

