

Interpretation and Exhibition Design Consultancy

Role: Interpretation and Exhibition Design Consultant

Location: Home/office based; ability to travel to Devizes for meetings

Reporting to: Programme Manager

Contract: January 2024-May 2025 (anticipated end of project's Development Phase), with potential extension to span the project's Delivery Phase (early 2026-2030)

Wiltshire Museum is seeking to procure services for interpretation and exhibition design for The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) supported *Assizes for Devizes: Unlocking Wiltshire's Stories* project.

Assizes for Devizes is an ambitious large-scale redevelopment project to revitalise the currently derelict Devizes Assize Court as a community hub and new home for the Wiltshire Museum and its internationally important collections. The project is a collaboration between Wiltshire Museum, which will manage the project and run the building, and the Devizes Assize Court Trust (DACT), which owns the building.

Development funding of £300,748 has been awarded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to help Wiltshire Museum, working closely with the Devizes Assize Court Trust, to progress plans for the project before applying for a full National Lottery grant in summer 2025. If successful, work would start on the Assize Court building in late 2026/early 2027, with a target opening date of 2030.

Wiltshire Museum is seeking an experienced Interpretation and Exhibition Design consultant service in the Development Phase to work with our Project Development Team to develop a fully costed interpretation plan and exhibition design specifications for a NLHF Delivery Phase application.

A consultancy service will be required in the Delivery Phase to implement the interpretation plan and take the exhibition design specifications forwards. The Interpretation and Exhibition Design Consultancy will span the Development Phase and up to five years of the Delivery Phase, with a break clause between. The Delivery Phase contract extension will be contingent on a project review and successful round two application to the NLHF.

Anticipated budget for the Development Phase, including expenses and excluding VAT: £35,000.

Anticipated Delivery Phase budget for fees, including expenses and excluding VAT: £200,000
Estimated total for exhibition fit out is: £1,700,000

I. Background on the collections

Our collections tell of Wiltshire's exceptional stories, including geology, natural history, art, archives, photographs, books and agricultural and industrial history. We have an active contemporary collecting policy, responding to themes such as climate change, driving forward work with community groups to pilot co-production approaches and ensuring that our collections are relevant and representative. We actively encourage research, each year we welcome 30 post-graduate researchers to our Archaeology collections and over 200 to our archive collections.

Initial consultation shows that local people consider our Museum and collections as a valued resource, giving a powerful sense of pride, building civic identity, boosting tourism and generating economic benefits, as well as sharing local stories and memories.

The Museum's archaeology collection is the largest and most important part of all the collections, and it is extensively researched by post graduate students. It covers all periods of human history in Wiltshire and its strength lies in its prehistoric material, from the Neolithic to Iron Age. The archaeology collection includes the finds from over 800 excavations, the most significant of which are from the hundred or so early Bronze Age barrows excavated in the early 19th century by Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington I. The early Bronze Age collection is of exceptional importance because of its size and range; the uniqueness of many of the objects; the fact that it includes many prestige items, including objects made of gold, amber, jet and shale; its association with the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site, and its relevance to the history of archaeology. The museum also holds an important collection of coins, the most important of which are the coin hoards deposited between the Iron Age and Civil War period, as well as the Saxon and Norman coins struck at Wiltshire mints.

The art collection comprises original watercolours, drawings, oil paintings, prints and engravings. The collection consists primarily of works by Wiltshire artists, who were either born in or have other associations with Wiltshire; and works depicting Wiltshire subjects. The strength of the collection lies in its topographical material. This collection also has close links with the archaeological collection, with numerous views of Stonehenge and Avebury and other archaeological monuments.

The recent history collection focuses on life in Devizes and the surrounding parishes, since the 17th century. The main subject areas are local trades and industries, domestic items, education, law and order, agriculture and sport. The strength of the collection lies in the objects relating to the history of Devizes and Avebury. A more recent addition to the recent history collection is the Wiltshire Life Society Collection, transferred to the Collections Trust from the Lackham Museum of Agriculture and Rural Life Trust in 2010.

The natural sciences collection is smaller and was mainly donated by individual botanists and geologists, and there are specimens from the whole of Wiltshire. Of particular importance are the fossil and herbarium collections.

The Archive and Library is one of the largest and last surviving independent county repositories in the UK. The collection originates from the acquisition of the John Britton library of topographical and antiquarian books and manuscripts and the subsequent founding of WANHS in 1853. It is primarily a local studies collection of books, journals, newspapers and other printed items including photographs, postcards and maps relating to Wiltshire. There is also a document collection consisting of both printed material and original manuscripts. Particularly important areas of the collection include the papers and annotated books by early antiquaries and historians such as William Stukeley, Sir Richard Colt Hoare and William Cunnington I

More about the collections: <https://www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk/collections-highlights/>

2. The Brief – Development Phase

Wiltshire Museum wishes to appoint an Interpretation and Exhibition Consultant Design to work with the project team in the Development Phase to produce a fully costed Interpretation Plan and Exhibition Design specifications that meet the equivalent of RIBA Stage 3 for a NLHF Stage 2 application.

The successful consultant will work closely in the Development Phase with the Programme Manager, Museum Curator, Project Engagement Officer and Museum Director, alongside the wider Project Development Team.

Monthly progress updates will be required by the Programme Manager during the Development Phase.

We expect many aspects of this role can be undertaken virtually. Attendance at Wiltshire Museum will be required for an initial startup meeting and review of current displays.

The following outputs in the Development Phase will be required:

1) Interpretation Plan

The Project Development Team will produce the Interpretation Plan, coordinated by the Museum Curator. The appointed consultant will mentor the Curator and other key project staff in developing the plan to ensure it meets NLHF criteria and supports the development of dynamic, inclusive narrative experiences. The plan will find innovative ways to incorporate and spotlight the Museum's Designated collections, developing and building upon the outline concept design study undertaken for the funding bid, and setting out a clear and innovative interpretation approach for the project. It will be developed in response to consultation and the identified needs of our current and priority audiences. The plan will link closely with Activity Planning and Exhibition Design specifications, so that the needs of our audiences, our co-production projects and community engagement work are incorporated and embedded throughout.

See NLHF guidance: <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/good-practice-guidance/interpretation-guidance>

2) Exhibition Design specifications

To be produced by the Interpretation and Exhibition Design consultant, working with the project team. The specifications will be up to RIBA Stage 3 or equivalent, working closely with the Architectural Design team to ensure the building and exhibition design are interlinked. The specifications need to consider the environmental implications of any proposals and how they align to our Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

Considerations

The appointed consultants will need to consider:

- Accessibility and inclusion in all aspects of planning and designs.
- The long-term sustainability of practical outputs post-completion.
- Incorporating co-production opportunities into interpretation planning.
- Creating stories and experiences that engage a wide range of people, with collections and narrative that are from the distant past.
- How best to create displays that draw upon the strength of the Museum's Designated collection.

- How to incorporate interpretation themes into the outside space of the Assize Court, including working with artists, creative practitioners and community groups on interpretive interventions.
- How best to engage visitors with the story of the Devizes Assize Court's history of justice and injustice within the space confinements.
- How to engage visitors with the distant past and bring objects that are not natural 'storytellers' to life.
- Multimodal and layered approaches to interpretation that make stories of the distant past compelling, engaging and relevant, invoking a sense of place and pride.
- How to draw effectively on the latest sector development in interpretation, including digital technologies, interactives and opportunities for active participation within the scope of the project.
- Display elements, including:
 - low levels of technical maintenance
 - environmental sustainability in all aspects
 - appropriate lighting
 - environmental conditions and conservation

Development Phase outputs/deliverables

The following will be required:

- Lead a startup meeting with the Project Development Team to establish a working programme and project roles and responsibilities, and provide initial guidance on interpretation and design planning.
- Review initial interpretation and activity work undertaken pre-application, including outline objectives.
- Work with the project team in undertaking a review of themes, key messages and objects and begin developing a strategy for interpreting and displaying this content.
- Foster a clear understanding of Museum's current, potential and priority audiences, working with key staff and other consultants to ensure a collaborative approach to interpretive planning and that inclusion is at the core of the project.
- Feed into consultation sessions and workshop plans, including presenting outline designs to stakeholders, such as project advisory groups, as required.
- Produce visuals for a public consultation exhibition scheduled for mid-2024.
- Liaise with other consultants throughout the process, especially the appointed Architectural Design team and access consultant, and the Activity and Business Plan consultants – to ensure interpretation planning and exhibition design are interlinked with the development of the Activity Plan and Business Plan.
- Work with the Cost Consultant to produce detailed costings for the interpretation plan and the exhibition development and delivery.
- Provide information and costs on design proposals for the NLHF Development Phase Review and attend if required.
- Interpretation Plan mentoring:
 - Provide guidance on developing an interpretation plan up to RIBA Stage 3, including document structure.
 - Work with key staff to establish a strategy for consultation with audiences and stakeholders to ensure interpretation planning is driven by audience needs, including supporting an 'ideas station' portable exhibition to capture community views on suggested interpretation themes.

- Work with key staff to interpret results of consultation and establish how these will shape both the interpretation plan and co-production projects.
- Support the Museum Curator in coordinating the development of the interpretation plan in year 2, as required.
- Explore and develop proposals for incorporating outdoor interpretive spaces behind and in front of the Assize Court building.
- Exhibition Design development:
 - Develop an understanding of the Devizes Assize Court site and proposed architectural design, including opportunities and constraints of the site and how these affect possibilities for exhibition design and visitor flow.
 - Develop a solid understanding of the Museum's collections and provide guidance and advice on how best the collection can be displayed, considering access and conservation requirements and space restrictions.
 - Liaise with the project team and Architectural Design Team to ensure the interpretation and exhibition requirements are creatively considered and agreed, in line with the development of the building architectural design.
 - Produce comprehensive Exhibition Design specifications that meet requirements for an NLHF Stage 2 application.
 - Encompass a range of interpretive media (print, digital, audio, video, object handling etc.)
 - Give guidance to staff in selecting object lists.
 - Identify lighting, electrical and AV needs.
 - Develop a full cost plan for 2D and 3D exhibition installation and fit-out.

3. Delivery Phase brief

This contract includes a break-clause between the Development and Delivery Phase. The Delivery Phase contract is contingent on a successful Delivery Phase application to the NLHF and performance review. The details of the Delivery Phase brief will evolve during and in response to work undertaken in the Development Phase.

The successful consultant will work closely in the Delivery Phase with the Programme Manager, Project Manager, Museum Curator, and Museum Director, alongside the wider Project Delivery Team.

Monthly progress updates will be required by the Programme Manager during the Delivery Phase.

Delivery Phase Outputs/Deliverables:

- Designs to RIBA 4 (technical design):
 - Undertake detailed cost check work.
 - Produce the technical design for exhibition design.
 - Provide guidance to Museum staff in identifying and appointing subcontractors, including procurement of fit-out contractors.
 - Liaise closely the Architectural Design Team and with all contractors and partners.
 - Provide guidance to staff on creating interpretive text, which will be produced by Wiltshire Museum staff.
- RIBA 5 interpretation and exhibition fit out work:
 - Oversee exhibition and internal fit out, including managing relevant sub-contractors.

- Undertake snagging.
- Undertake detailed cost check work, working with the Project Team.
- Supervise relevant electrical, AV and cabling required.
- Produce guidelines and documentation for maintenance of all elements of the displays.

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The successful consultant will work closely in the Delivery Phase with the Programme Manager, Project Manager, Museum Curator, Project Engagement Officer and Museum Director, alongside the wider Project Delivery Team.

Monthly progress updates will be required by the Programme Manager during the Delivery Phase.

4. Contract management

We expect the Development Phase consultancy support for Interpretation and Exhibition Design to begin in January 2024 and be completed by May 2025 (anticipated Development Phase completion date is early June 2025).

The anticipated Development Phase budget is £35,000 to include all expenses, but excluding VAT.

The anticipated budget for the Delivery Phase is:

- Fees, including expenses and excluding VAT: £200,000.
- Estimated total for exhibition fit out is: £1,700,000.

This outline budget was produced to support our NLHF round 1 application.

The contract will be let by the Wiltshire Museum.

The consultancy will be managed on a day-to-day basis for Wiltshire Museum by the Programme Manager.

5. Skills and experience

Experience

- At least 5 years of experience in interpretation related work
- Track record of developing creative and engaging interpretation plans for museum projects (preferably those with a predominantly archaeological collection) informed by audience consultation.
- Experience of supporting/mentoring teams in producing interpretation plans and strategies.
- Experience of identifying and developing proposals for creative consultation and co-production opportunities linked to interpretation planning.
- Experience of producing robust cost plans.

Knowledge

- Understanding of the role of interpretation within a museum/heritage environment.
- Understanding of NLHF guidance and funding requirements.
- Understanding of co-production, co-creation and co-curation.
- Understanding of the interlinked nature of activity planning, interpretation planning and exhibition design.

Abilities

- Outstanding communication skills with the ability to articulate a vision, strategy or idea clearly and concisely with a vigorous eye for detail.
- Ability to support/mentor an organisation over a sustained period.
- Report writing.

6. Award criteria

Submissions will be assessed against quality (60%) and cost (40%) basis. The quality score will be made against the following criteria:

- Clear methodology and innovative approach to developing the plan and specifications. (30)
- Evidence of delivering interpretation and exhibition design and installation for a museum/cultural capital project within the past 10 years. (20)
- Evidence of the ability to deliver the project on time and within budget. (20)
- Clear approach, methodology and principles for successful mentoring. (10)
- Understanding of the aspirations, purposes, potential and desired outputs and outcomes of the project and those of the NLHF. (10)
- Demonstratable understanding of the National Lottery Heritage Fund process. (5)
- Consideration of what social value your services will provide, including social wellbeing and environmental impact. (5)

7. To apply

You are asked to submit:

- A CV and outline of previous relevant experience.
- Response to the brief that succinctly demonstrates how you would approach the project, including explaining the knowledge, skills and experience you have to meet the requirements outlined in the brief.
- Personnel and resources you would devote to the project, including an identified lead contact.
- Project fees including expenses and a statement of daily rates.
Please give as much detail as possible in terms of cost, including personnel, rates and itemised costs, VAT. We envisage that some/most of the consultancy will be performed online via virtual meetings and over email as and expect this to be reflected in the statement of approach
- Names and contact details of two referees.

Candidates who do not explore all elements of the key competencies and consultant's outputs will not be considered for the role.

Procurement Timeline

Key event	Date
Invitation to tender issued	24 th October 2023
Site visits for tenderers	Wednesday 15 th November and Friday 17 th November
Q&A deadline	Each Friday, 5pm.
Q&A responses posted	Each Monday by midday
Final clarification deadline	Friday 24 th November, 5pm.
Deadline for receiving tenders	5 th December at 5pm
Shortlisting	6 th – 8 th December
Tender presentation	Week of 11 th December
Approval and notification of contract	Week of 18 th December
Contract commencement	3 rd January 2024

Proposal return deadline: Tuesday 5th December 2023 at 5pm

Please email any questions regarding this brief to: Nicola Trowell, Programme Manager nicola.trowell@wiltshiremuseum.org.uk. Please contact us to inform us that you may be interested in submitting a tender. We will ensure that you are informed of clarifications as they are published. Your information will be kept confidential, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

Quotations may be submitted electronically with the email header stating: "Interpretation and Exhibition Design Consultant Tender".

Please send completed tenders to: nicola.trowell@wiltshiremuseum.org.uk.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to attend a presentation and interview process week beginning 11th December.