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Planning

Exhibition Design Consultancy

Royal Armouries Museum

UK2: Preliminary market engagement notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

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Scope

Description

Procurement Description - Anticipated Contract Scope

The Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds is seeking to engage with the market in advance of a formal procurement process for the appointment of a world-class exhibition design consultancy. This opportunity forms a key part of the institution's Armouries 700 initiative - a transformative, multi-phase capital programme.

The Royal Armouries intends to appoint a single exhibition design consultancy to support the full programme of works from concept development through to final delivery and handover. However, the progression of each stage within the project is subject to the successful securing of external funding, and to formal review points. At these key gateways, both the Royal Armouries and the appointed Designer will review progress to confirm that funding remains in place, the project scope is still required, and the working relationship continues to be productive and aligned. Should funding not be secured, or if either party is not satisfied at a review stage, the Royal Armouries reserves the right to pause, alter the scope, or terminate the contract without proceeding to subsequent phases.

Overview

This contract is for the design and delivery of a major re-display and reinterpretation of approximately 4,740 m² of permanent gallery space over five floors within the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds. The appointed design team will play a central role in the phased transformation of the museum, helping realise our ambition to revolutionise how visitors engage with the UK's national collection of arms and armour.

The total anticipated value of the exhibition design contract is estimated at £14.2 million (net of Vat) £15,064,000 (inclusive of Vat) across all phases of delivery. The appointment will begin with an initial development phase and is expected to extend, subject to review gateways, through to final installation and handover in 2032.

Key Outputs and Deliverables

The Designer will lead the creative and technical development of new permanent galleries, supporting interpretative, digital, spatial, and environmental design across:

- 4,740m² of permanent exhibition space including War, Peace, Tournament, Self Defence, and Asia/Africa galleries
- A new immersive, multi-functional performance space
- Ground-floor interpretive installations to enhance early visitor engagement
- Integrated digital and physical interactives
- Participatory design areas reflecting co-creation with community groups
- Display systems to accommodate over 75,000 collection objects and rotation capacity

The exhibition design scope includes but is not limited to:

- 2D and 3D exhibition design
- Digital interactive and immersive environments
- Lighting design
- AV integration and art direction
- Interpretative design (including wayfinding, signage, and orientation)
- Engineering and M&E consultancy for exhibition fitout
- Cost consultancy and programme phasing advice

- Fire, access, and CDM advisory services
- Stakeholder engagement visualisations and prototyping

Procurement Phases

The design contract will be structured in phases, aligned with the museum's funding programme and National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) application process. These include:

1.Initial Development Phase (Present - March 2026)

- oReview of existing studies and design brief development
- oVisualisation and interpretative concept design (RIBA Stage 0-1)
- oElemental cost plans, programme advice and stakeholder engagement materials

2.NLHF Development Phase (Sept 2026 - March 2028)

- oRIBA Stage 2 development of proposals
- oDetailed interpretative, phasing, fire, access, and environmental strategies
- oStakeholder consultation and support for NLHF Stage 2 submission

3.Delivery Phase - Three gallery zones:

- oZone 1 (Sept 2028 - Feb 2030)
- oZone 2 (Feb 2030 - July 2031)
- oZone 3 (July 2031 - Nov 2032)

Each phase will require full RIBA Stage 3-7 design and delivery, including oversight of fitout contractors, detailed specifications, on-site installation support, and defect remediation.

Design Priorities

All design proposals must adhere to the Royal Armouries' core principles, including:

- Collection-focused storytelling: Foregrounding objects to unlock narratives across four interpretative pillars - Design, Make, Use, Impact.

- Inclusive and participatory design: Co-creation with diverse community representatives, researchers, and audience advocates.
- Multi-sensory engagement: Designing for immersive, performative, playful, and reflective experiences.
- Sustainability and accessibility: Complying with the Bizot Green Protocol and exceeding statutory accessibility standards. Passive environmental controls, low-energy solutions, and minimal structural interventions are expected.

Audience & Impact Goals

The redisplay aims to:

- Attract over 500,000 visitors per annum
- Significantly grow underrepresented and diverse audiences
- Embed inclusive narratives that resonate with local and global communities
- Establish the museum as a national destination and cultural anchor in the North of England

Operational Integration

Designs must allow for continued operation of the museum throughout the build period, support flexible programming (e.g., live performances, school visits, corporate hire), and ensure future maintainability and adaptability.

Supplier Engagement Goals

This early market engagement aims to:

- Gauge market capability and interest in delivering a high-profile, phased exhibition design project
- Inform the development of the procurement strategy, lot structure, and timeline
- Encourage partnerships between design consultancies and specialist subcontractors (e.g., digital, lighting, access)

Interested parties should consider how they would propose to:

- Mobilise a multidisciplinary design team with relevant experience

- Collaborate with the Royal Armouries team and external stakeholders
- Integrate interpretative, environmental and commercial requirements
- Ensure continuity of quality and budget control over an 8-year delivery programme

Next Steps

We invite interested suppliers to register their interest and contribute to the market engagement process. Responses will inform the forthcoming tender documentation and may influence the final procurement approach. A formal call for competition under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 is anticipated later in 2025.

To view this notice, please click here:

<https://neupc.delta-esourcing.com/delta/viewNotice.html?noticeId=949438157>

Total value (estimated)

- £14,220,000 excluding VAT
- £15,064,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 December 2025 to 30 November 2032
- Possible extension to 30 November 2033
- 8 years

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 71220000 - Architectural design services

Contract locations

- UKE42 - Leeds

Engagement

Engagement deadline

1 July 2025

Engagement process description

The Royal Armouries is preparing to procure a multi-disciplinary exhibition design consultancy to deliver a major, phased redisplay of its permanent galleries at the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, as part of the Armouries 700 capital programme. To inform the forthcoming procurement strategy and foster early collaboration, we are undertaking a Preliminary Market Engagement (PME) with interested suppliers.

This engagement invites responses from exhibition design consultancies, design-led consortiums, and specialist collaborators experienced in delivering ambitious, inclusive and collection-focused cultural projects. Through this process, we aim to refine our approach, test market capacity, and promote strong alignment between our vision and the delivery model proposed by the market.

Scope of Engagement

The purpose of this engagement is to:

- Introduce the design opportunity for the Armouries 700 gallery redisplay project (approx. 4,740m² of gallery space)

- Share a draft Design Brief for early comment and refinement
- Gain insight into market capability, appetite, and delivery models
- Invite early feedback on potential challenges or risks associated with the proposed timeline, scope or budget
- Support the development of an informed procurement approach and tender documentation
- To obtain feedback on the draft Design Brief, scope or timeline
- Initial thoughts on potential delivery risks or constraints

Engagement is non-evaluative and non-competitive and does not form part of any future selection process.

Planned Engagement Activities

Suppliers will be invited to participate in the following activities as part of the PME process:

- Virtual Market Engagement Briefing Webinar

Monday 17th June 2025 at 2:30 PM (BST)

Hosted via Microsoft Teams

A live session open to all interested parties, presenting the project scope, procurement timeline, and key requirements. There will be an opportunity to ask questions, share comments, and request further clarification on the design brief.

- Design Brief Distribution

A full version of the draft Design Brief will be sent to interested parties ahead of the webinar to enable informed discussion and feedback.

How to Express Interest

Suppliers who wish to participate in the engagement process, attend the webinar, or submit questions and comments should contact:

martin.hughes@armouries.org.uk

Subject line: PME - Exhibition Fit-Out Design

Please include in your email:

- Contact name, organisation, and role
- Contact details (email and telephone)
- Indication of availability for the webinar on 17th June 2025

Important Dates

- Deadline for Expression of Interest (to attend webinar or request briefing pack):

12:00 Noon on Thursday 12th June 2025

- Virtual Market Engagement Webinar:

Monday 17th June 2025 at 2:30 PM (via Microsoft Teams)

- Distribution of Briefing Pack and Teams Invitation:

Beginning immediately and finishing Thursday 13th June 2025

- Deadline for Feedback :

Friday 28th June 2025 at 5:00 PM

Location and Format

All engagement events will be conducted virtually. Please note:

- All sessions will be held online via Microsoft Teams
- No site visits will be held at this stage of the process
- A preliminary design briefing pack will be issued electronically upon registration

Who Should Respond

This engagement is open to:

- Multi-disciplinary exhibition design consultancies

- Creative partnerships or consortiums
- Architects or interpretive designers with relevant museum or gallery experience
- Organisations or individuals specialising in digital media, accessibility, lighting, sustainable design, or co-creation strategies relevant to gallery design

We particularly encourage responses from teams with demonstrable experience working on high-value, phased cultural or heritage capital projects, including those involving co-creation, storytelling, live performance, and inclusive interpretation.

Future Procurement

This engagement is for information and planning purposes only and does not commit the Royal Armouries to any course of procurement or award. Participation in this process will not affect any future application to a formal procurement procedure.

Details of the tender opportunity, selection criteria, and contract structure will be confirmed in the Invitation to Tender Documents.

If you have any questions regarding this PME or wish to clarify the opportunity before responding, please get in touch using the email address provided.

We look forward to engaging with the market and exploring innovative, inclusive, and sustainable ideas to help deliver this once-in-a-generation transformation of the Royal Armouries Museum.

Contracting authority

Royal Armouries Museum

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PCCZ-9656-MDZP

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Contact name: Procurement Department

Email: procurement@armouries.org.uk

Region: UKE42 - Leeds

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government