



# UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

## Spirit of Invention: Project Curator Brief

**Contract Dates:** 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – 5<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Closing date for submission of quotation:** 12 noon Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024

### Summary

We are looking to appoint an experienced Project Curator (individual or company) to take the lead on developing a new exhibition and cultural programme to mark the reopening of the Tate Hall Museum at the [Victoria Gallery & Museum \(VGM\)](#). Taking inspiration from The National Archives [Spirit of Invention](#) touring exhibition and incorporating objects and storylines, this redesigned exhibition and cultural programme will expand on the themes, and weave seamlessly into Liverpool stories, highlighting inventions and innovations through cutting edge research (past, present and future) and drawing out the rich and diverse cultural heritage collections through participatory practice and new interpretation.

A Cultural Engagement Steering Group with key University stakeholders will sponsor the exhibition, associated cultural programming and evaluation, providing connection to work across campus. The Project Curator will be supported by the team across the Cultural Heritage (curators and archivists) in Libraries, Museums, Galleries (LMG) as well as University of Liverpool academics conducting innovative and ground-breaking research, with routes to public engagement with research. The Curator will be required to seek authentic and varied perspectives, build relationships and discover objects and stories to furnish the exhibition, building participatory opportunities with students and targeted groups of publics. This exhibition and cultural programme offers an opportunity to experiment with new working practice and steer the VGM into the future. We want to encourage experimentation, spark creativity and inspire innovation, making the VGM a place of conversation as an integral enabler of the University's Strategy 2031.

### About Us

The VGM is part of the Libraries, Museums, Galleries department of The University of Liverpool and is housed in the Victoria Building, sited in the centre of campus. Designed by Liverpool-born architect Alfred Waterhouse, the Victoria Building opened in 1892 and was the University's first purpose-built construction that inspired the term 'red-brick university'. It was used as teaching spaces and offices until its conversion into a museum and art gallery in 2008 as the

University's contribution to Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture. Today it provides the University with a curated centre for public exhibitions and events at the heart of campus.

The first floor of the VGM houses a suite of galleries showing a blend of long-term displays from the fine and decorative art collections and temporary exhibitions. The second floor houses the Tate Hall Museum.

## Purpose of the role

The Project Curator will create new content and interpretation for the exhibition and support the development of an engagement programme. The Project Curator will:

- Work with the Steering group to agree key themes for the exhibition.
- Work with the Cultural Heritage Team to research and source original artefacts and archive material that will help to illustrate the key themes of the exhibition.
- Produce an interpretation strategy.
- Work with a group of 'student curators' to bring new voices and perspectives into the exhibition space.
- Work with the Steering Group and Cultural Heritage Team to develop an activity programme that supports and amplifies planned events e.g. Festival of Science 2025, British Science Week, Literary Festival
- Liaise with academics to understand and creatively interpret current research that could be showcased as part of the exhibition.
- Create original content and interpretation to tell a compelling story that engages diverse audiences and the wider public who may not have previously engaged or visited the VGM or University of Liverpool.
- Work with an Exhibition Designer (to be appointed) to ensure the 'look and feel' of the exhibition reflects the key themes and is innovative in the way content is included and interpreted.
- Work with the Head of Museums and Galleries to create a budget plan that includes all exhibition costs (graphic production, external technicians) as well as costs for loans and insurance, mounting and display requirements, packing and any transportation costs.
- Work with the Cultural Heritage Team to ensure the highest quality and most creative approaches to accessibility are implemented.
- Lead on the development of digital elements within the exhibition, working with partners as appropriate
- Support the development of marketing to target audiences and raise visibility across Liverpool City Region
- Ensure any necessary items are cleared for copyright or licensing.
- Work with the Cultural Heritage Team to develop an evaluation framework.

The Project Curator will be experienced in creating exhibitions of historic and contemporary material which engage diverse audiences and in working with multiple stakeholders. They should have a creative approach to interpretation, use of multimedia and immersive experience. They should also have experience of working with archival and historic material using co-production and participatory practices.

## Background to the project

The Tate Hall Museum has been closed since the first Covid lockdown in 2020 due to significant roof repairs. The VGM has recently commissioned visitor experience consultants [A Different View](#) to create an early masterplan to reimagine the VGM offer and represent broader voices alongside all the cultural and heritage assets in public programmes. This exhibition and development of a cultural engagement programme provides us with an opportunity to test new ways of working as we relaunch the Tate Hall Museum. In particular, we are keen to develop more participatory practice and develop a greater understanding of our impact on audiences. We want to use it as an opportunity to review our internal governance and relationship with research and researchers.

[Spirit of Invention](#) was TNA's first family focused exhibition. It celebrated creativity, imagination and carefree creation, encouraging confidence in trying new activities, building a resilience to failure and giving visitors a positive and can-do maker mindset. TNA aimed to spark a design movement: to encourage 'outside inventors', people who live outside the traditional field of design and engineering, to develop ideas and have a go at creating for themselves. This exhibition proposed that everyone is an inventor, they may just not realise it yet.

The exhibition used the TNA's Board of Trade design registers, a collection of over 3 million Victorian designs, as its keystone. TNA worked with a panel of co-curators from a local school together with guest curator and inventor, [Ruth Amos](#), to create a how to guide to invention in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Visitors stepped into a fantastical and inspirational world of raw creativity, where they saw the original Victorian design records alongside designs created by contemporary and modern-day creative interpretations of TNA's records. The gallery at TNA became a vessel for creativity and collaboration – moving away from the traditional gallery experience, visitors were invited to use the space as a creative workshop. There were hands-on activities scattered throughout the experience where visitors could brainstorm, collaborate and draw their own designs. By the end of the experience, visitors saw past and current inventions, understood that invention is a non-linear process and often includes failure and they had the confidence and know how to have a go at making.

The exhibition has previously toured to the [Discovery Museum](#) in Newcastle. We want to use the opportunity to host it in the Tate Hall Museum, to include items from across our collections as well as showcase cutting edge research that The University of Liverpool is currently undertaking that is relevant to the main themes of the exhibition.

A full list of loan objects and interactives from TNA will be shared with the successful applicant.

We believe the Spirit of Invention speaks to the values and ambitions of the University of Liverpool past, present and future. The University is aiming to be in the top 100 through its Strategy 2031. Invention is in our DNA and the University can speak of many 'firsts' and Nobel prize winners through its heritage. The impact of innovative research taking place right now will be celebrated through the Festival of Science being hosted at UoL in 2025 and the University is investing in Research Frontiers to push the boundaries of ambition and invention into the future, working with business, the City Region and Global partners. The Spirit of Invention speaks to many University priorities to support student success and enterprise. Our cultural and heritage collections have significant breadth and storytelling potential – the 'what if' question spins

through our strength in Science Fiction, and those Liverpool Firsts and global contributions are often captured through our heritage objects and archives.

## Exhibition themes

The exhibition at TNA was split into 5 themes, however, there is scope for this to be expanded on to showcase Liverpool specific inventions/innovations. This will be agreed with the project team. The TNA exhibition was split into the following themes:

1. The home
2. Wearable inventions
3. Communication
4. The environment
5. Exploration

## Vision

The University of Liverpool's [2031 strategic ambition](#) is that *we will make ground-breaking discoveries that shape the future, empower individuals to become changemakers, and inspire students to fulfil their academic and personal ambitions*. We will do this through our values of being ambitious, collaborative, inclusive, responsible and innovate.

Our vision for the VGM is that it is a place for conversation that encourages experimentation, sparks creativity and inspires innovation. The VGM will be a central place to gravitate to, a go-to place for Liverpool that brings people together. We will be a socially engaged organisation, addressing difference and diversity, grounded in expert practice. We will welcome partners from within the University community and beyond to experiment, create and innovate.

## Audiences

The VGM has largely focused on family audiences and recent activity has been on ensuring neurodiverse audiences are welcomed and included in cultural programming. It will be important to connect the public with research and demystify the work of the University. Opportunities for widening participation are important, supporting long-term student recruitment. Engaging with students (an underrepresented audience) through participatory activities will be important. The University has a large cohort of domestic and international students on the doorstep, and this exhibition should appeal to them and encourage social learning away from their formal studies. Student success and enterprise should be integral to our messaging. In addition to families and students, key audiences identified through Audience Agency profiling are from a 30 minute drive time radius:

### Frontline Families

Frugal, semi-urban renting families, light on arts and culture but heavy on community.

### Trips and Treats

Mainstream arts and popular culture fans influenced by children, family and friends.

## Dormitory Dependables

Regular attenders living in suburbs and smaller towns, invested in heritage activities and mainstream arts and less likely to be attracted by contemporary offerings.

More information can be found on the [Audience Agency](#) website.

## Overarching aims and objectives of the exhibition and cultural programme

- Support new methods of programming for the VGM, creating participatory models that build evidence of engagement and partnership
- Understand our audiences and attract new visitors by creating an inspiring, welcoming and safe spaces
- Engage people with current innovative research being undertaken by The University of Liverpool
- Provide our students with opportunities to engage in socially impactful experiences, experiment and fail safe
- Create opportunities for public engagement with research through different stages of the research lifecycle
- Deepen understanding of the national landscape of inventiveness through cultural and heritage collections, TNA and connection to the British Science Festival
- Raise the visibility and relevance of the University's cultural offer for internal and external stakeholders, supporting the University to take next steps in realising the strategic vision for the VGM

## Learning outcomes

The following learning outcomes were designed for the TNA exhibition.

### Knowledge and understanding

- Know what an invention is.
- Understand that we are all creative and have talent.
- Understand that everyone is an inventor.
- Understand that the heritage collections are a creative resource that can ignite imaginations and inspire the next generation of thinkers, makers and inventors.
- Failure is an important part of creating.

### Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity

- Enjoy seeing visual designs from the TNA collections and makers responses to those designs.
- Feel inspired by the productivity and entrepreneurial spirit of those from the Victorian period.
- Have fun! Making should be playful – visitors should feel a sense of enjoyment when experimenting and trying something they may not have tried before.

### Skills

- Provide visitors the opportunity to develop a 'maker mindset' – give visitors the tools to go away and have the confidence to try and create themselves.

- Collaborate – working together to make something – developing communication skills and social interaction.

## Believe

- I am creative and inventing is inclusive and for everyone, including me.
- Feel optimistic about the future, feel that the worlds challenges are solvable, and invention will be a key part of any change (big or small).
- People with a spirit of invention mindset will make the future better.

## Key Dates

The exhibition is scheduled to run from September 2025 to September 2026.

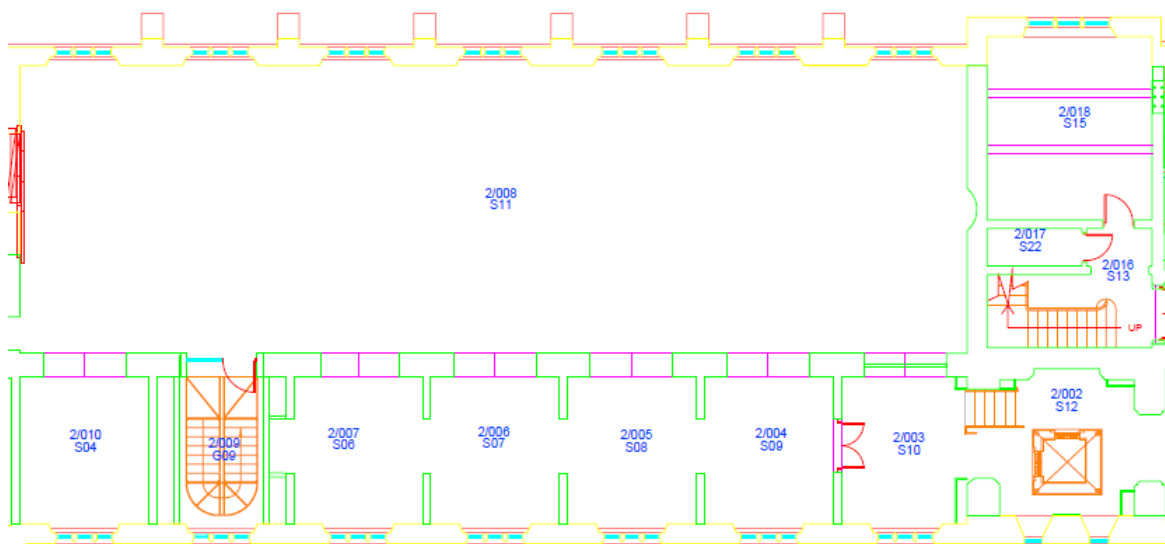
Install will take place between 4<sup>th</sup> August and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025

## Specifications

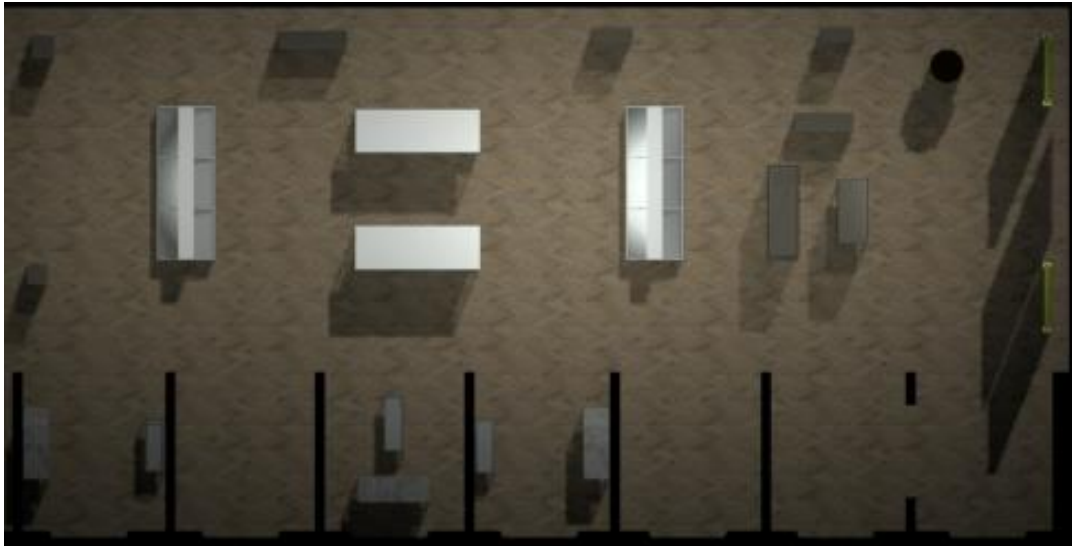
The Tate Hall Museum is a large space on the second floor of the VGM. It consists of a large central space (space reference 2/008 S11) that is approximately 26m long by 12m wide with smaller alcove rooms to one side of it. These alcove spaces are flexible spaces that can be blocked off from the main space if required and have been used previously for school workshops as well as art film showings as part of Liverpool Biennial 2018.

There are display cases currently in the museum, however, these can be moved if necessary to provide more flexibility in the space.

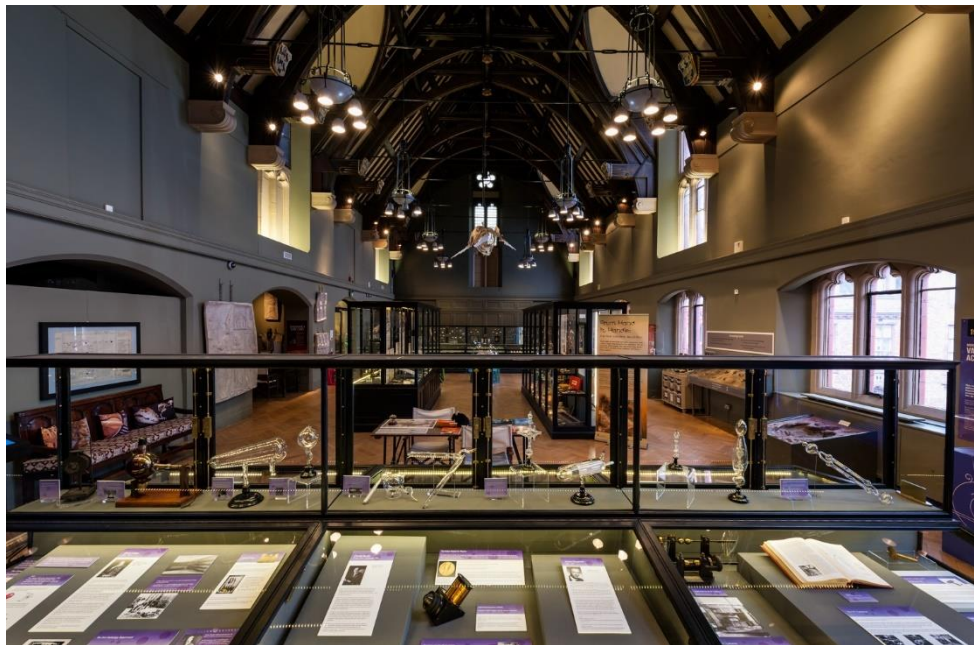
A [360° online gallery](#) is available that shows the space prior to closure in 2020 for roof repair works. A floorplan is also shown below.



Visitors enter the museum via 2/003 S10. 2/009 S09 is a fire escape. The below image shows the space with the current display cases in situ (large white rectangles). Cases shown in the alcove spaces can be disregarded. The fire escape is shown as a space on this plan (second alcove from the left) and should be disregarded.



Below is an image inside the museum with the large display cases visible.



## Key Governance

Project Sponsorship: Cultural Engagement Steering Group (reporting to Heritage Arts and Culture Committee)

Project Operations: Cultural Heritage Team (Libraries, Museums, Galleries)

Exhibition designer: To be appointed

## Meetings

Monthly project meetings (variety of in person and online) will be held to track progress and solve any issues that may arise. The Project Curator will be required to visit various stakeholders

particularly between November 2024 and March 2025. A schedule for these meetings will be developed with assistance from the Cultural Heritage Team.

## Interpretation

The Project Curator will produce introductory, and theme texts as required for the exhibition. The University of Liverpool will hold copyright over the exhibition interpretative material.

## Person specification

The individual or company will be experienced in creating exhibitions of historic and contemporary material that engage diverse audiences. They should also have experience of working with archival and historic material and developing multi-media interpretation. Demonstrable experience of the following is essential:

- A proven track record of designing and delivering museum displays and exhibitions.
- A proven track record of designing and delivering cultural programmes.
- A proven record of working co-productively with a range of stakeholders to produce museum displays and exhibitions.
- Knowledge and experience of working with a range of media, including interactive digital assets.
- Excellent self-monitoring and motivational skills.
- Excellent planning and communication skills.
- Experience in writing and producing interpretative texts.
- Capacity to meet the proposed timeline and deliverables within the agreed budget.
- Excellent communication skills and ability to work in a team.

## Budget

The total fee for the role is £25,000 inclusive of VAT to cover all costs including travel.

This fee does not include graphic production, exhibition design or AV hardware. These costs will be covered by a separate exhibition budget. An additional budget for cultural engagement programming will be made available, as well as a budget for participatory activity for engagement with research.

## Payment

The fee will be split as follows:

- 25% upon appointment.
- 25% halfway through the project.
- 50% on completion.

## How to apply

Your submission must include:



- No more than 4 sides of A4 providing an outline proposal of your approach to delivering the brief, including the skills you would use to deliver the project. Please also include evidence of demonstrable professional experience of working in the sector.
- A proposed budget for the work and how you envisage you will manage your time.
- Submit a portfolio of up to 3 similar/relevant projects as case studies.
- An outline timeline for the project based on the August 2025 install and final exhibition opening 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025.
- Two referees with whom you have worked on similar projects. Please ensure they are in a position to provide a reference/testimonial for the team members you propose (if applicable) for this project.
- CVs may be attached in addition to your proposal.

Your price must be inclusive of all disbursements and exclusive of VAT.

For further information on the project or any enquiries regarding the role contact the project sponsor, Joanne Fitton, Deputy Director Libraries, Museums, Galleries:

[joanne.fitton@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:joanne.fitton@liverpool.ac.uk)

Please send your proposal to Nicola Euston, Head of Museums & Galleries:

[nicola.euston@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:nicola.euston@liverpool.ac.uk) by 12 noon on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

## Selection process

Proposals will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Response to brief 45%
- Skills, knowledge and experience 45%
- Value for money 10%

## Assessment criteria

Assessment of the extent to which the response demonstrates and evidences:

- Robust delivery proposal.
- Previous experience and successful delivery.
- Sector specific knowledge and experience.
- Adequate resources/capacity to deliver the brief.
- Clear and robust contingency plans to ensure continuity of service and sufficient cover.
- Appropriate plans to manage and coordinate activity.
- Quality commitment throughout proposal.
- Appropriate consideration given to working and communicating effectively.
- Contract price.

## How we will evaluate your submission:

Proposals will be evaluated using scores that reflect the extent to which the responses address the published assessment criteria.

0	No response provided / does not address any of the issues.
1	Very poor response with minimal issues addressed.
2	Poor response with few issues addressed.
3	Satisfactory response with majority of issues addressed.
4	Good response with all issues satisfactorily addressed.
5	Outstanding innovative response.

## Insurances

Evidence of public liability and professional indemnity insurance is required by the University.

## Due diligence

The preferred individual or company will be subject to due diligence checks before commencement of the project. This may involve (but not limited to), financial viability/risk checks, a site visit, checking references / testimonials, checking capability and trace record and, where appropriate, speaking to organisations who will be involved in supporting the individual or company, for example sub-contractors, regulatory agencies etc.

References / testimonials will be sought and the VGM reserves the right not to enter into a contract with an individual or company should any of the references or testimonials prove unsatisfactory.