

Invitation to Tender for Exhibition Design & Fit Out

Viking

York Museums Trust & the British Museum

Responses to be returned by: 15th July 2016

Please send to: Natalie McCaul, Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York, YO1 7FR

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1 Background

1.1 Project Background

In 2008, the British Museum and York Museums Trust jointly purchased the Vale of York Hoard; the most significant Viking discovery in 150 years. Sharing responsibility for the curation, care, research and interpretation of this amazing collection of objects cemented a strong partnership between the two institutions.

Between 2012 and 2015, under the care of the British Museum, the hoard travelled across Europe as part of an international touring exhibition about the Viking World. During discussions around the return of the hoard to York for summer 2015, and inspired by a desire to celebrate and promote the partnership – at the heart of which lies the Vale of York hoard – the idea of a joint exhibition about the Vikings in Britain was born.

Developed by YMT's archaeology curators with support from experts at the British Museum, this project will bring together two of the most significant and internationally recognised collections of Viking Age material in Britain for the first time to create a unique exhibition about the impact of the Vikings across the UK. Subsequent to being displayed in York, the exhibition will travel to four other venues, providing a unique opportunity for visitors across the UK to see these iconic objects in their local areas for the first time. This ambitious project will provide an opportunity for each partner venue to include objects from their own collections, creating a dynamic exhibition which will tell a strong local story with each incarnation.

1.2 Collections

The Yorkshire Museum

The Yorkshire Museum was created by the Yorkshire Philosophical Society as a repository of antiquities and scientific specimens from the county of Yorkshire. Opened in 1830, it was one of the very first purpose built museums to be constructed in this country. The accredited Yorkshire Museum is now administered by the York Museums Trust on behalf of the City of York Council. We hold and care for Nationally Designated collections of archaeology, geology and natural history. The Yorkshire Museum's archaeology collections are recognised internationally.

York's Viking heritage is of national and international significance. As Royal Capital of the Danelaw, Jorvik was a political, religious and commercial centre of great importance. The city's role as a thriving economic hub is reflected in its industrial quarter, where excavations at Coppergate brought York's Anglo-Scandinavian archaeology to the attention of the world. The city's unique soil conditions have preserved masses of amazing objects that simply do not survive from other Viking settlements.

Comprising assemblages from modern excavations, antiquarian and chance finds, the Yorkshire Museum's collection emphasizes the importance of Viking York. The vast majority of finds relate to the everyday life of the people who lived and worked in Jorvik and its

hinterland. Many of the stunning works of art that form the highlights of this collection are world-renowned. Other, less famous pieces are equally important as they reflect the daily lives, hopes, fears and aspirations of the regions' Viking inhabitants. In recent years the most significant additions to the collection have derived from discoveries made by metal detectorists, which have offered unique insight into Viking Yorkshire and its place in the wider Viking world. Highlights of the museum's Viking collection include the Coppergate archive, the Vale of York Hoard, the Ormside Bowl, the Bedale Hoard, the York gold arm-ring, a very rare and fine silk hat imported from Iran and miraculously preserved by York's waterlogged soils and the only fragment of Viking carving in Britain from a datable archaeological context.

The British Museum

The British Museum was founded in 1753; the first national public museum in the world. From the beginning it granted free admission to all 'studious and curious persons'. Visitor numbers have grown from around 5,000 a year in the eighteenth century to nearly 6 million today.

The Museum's unparalleled Anglo-Saxon and Viking collections range from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, and from North Africa to Scandinavia. A newly refurbished gallery which tells the story of early medieval Europe showcases many of these treasures, including a number of significant Viking hoards including those from Cuerdale, Penrith, Halton le Moors and the Vale of York. The gallery's centrepiece is the Anglo-Saxon ship burial at Sutton Hoo, Suffolk – one of the most spectacular and important discoveries in British archaeology.

1.3 YMT Project Team

Project Leader	Natalie McCaul
Project Champion	Alison Bodley
Curator of Numismatics	Andrew Woods
Yorkshire Museum Manager	Melody Beavers
Head of Learning	Emma King
Head of Marketing	Charlotte Kindesjo
Digital Team Leader	Martin Fell
Building Services Manager	Geoff Hutchinson

2 The Brief

2.1 Background

A design company is required to develop and deliver **Viking**; a touring exhibition managed and curated jointly by the Yorkshire Museum and the British Museum.

The exhibition is planned to open in York in mid-May 2017, for a six month period. When the exhibition closes in York, it will tour to 4 other museum venues across the UK. At each venue the exhibition will run for between 4-6 months. The tour will finish in July 2019.

Tour venues, in order, are:

- Venue 1: Yorkshire Museum, York
19th May 2017 – 29th October 2017
- Venue 2: University of Nottingham Museum, Nottingham
November 2017 – April 2018 (exact dates TBC)
- Venue 3: Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen
May 2018 – October 2018 (exact dates TBC)
- Venue 4: Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Birmingham
November 2018 – March 2019 (exact dates TBC)
- Venue 5: Norwich Castle Museum, Norwich
April 2019 – July 2019 (exact dates TBC)

High profile archaeological collections from the Yorkshire Museum and British Museum will travel to all venues for display. At each venue, curators will have the opportunity to include additional artefacts from their own collection or those brought in on loan, in order to add a distinct local dimension to the exhibition narrative with each showing. Approximately 18 display cases will be used within the exhibition, but showcases will not travel. Each venue will use their own existing display cases. It is important to note that these will be variable across each venue in terms of their size and construction.

The design company will need to design and build an exhibition structure that can be re-used across ALL venues. It will need to be easily disassembled and reassembled, be moveable, fit within each specific exhibition space, provide flexibility for additional objects/information at each venue and above all be robust.

It is expected that the successful design company will have a strong track record of design and delivery of touring displays and creative problem solving within a tight budget, in addition to working with high-value archaeological collections of international significance.

2.2 Budget

The total cost for the exhibition build will be split across each of the five receiving venues, including the Yorkshire Museum.

The budget for this project will be up to £100,000. This budget is to include exhibition design and build and production of high quality interactives, as well as the dismantling and reassembly of the build at each venue and completion of any general maintenance work needed before the beginning of each exhibition opening.

2.3 Exhibition Location

Venue 1:

Yorkshire Museum

400 sq m

Permanent gallery in the basement of the Yorkshire Museum.

Large open gallery space with in-situ medieval architectural remains, plus three additional side rooms.

Venue 2:

University of Nottingham Museum

390 sq m

Three rectangular gallery spaces.

Venue 3:

Aberdeen Art Gallery

500sq m

Addition to Aberdeen Art Gallery currently under construction; due to re-open winter 2017 with a brand new purpose-built temporary exhibition space.

Venue 4:

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

400 sq m

Water Hall temporary exhibition space, across the street from the main museum. Large open gallery space with movable modular walls. Limited access; doorway is 1 metre in width.

Venue 5:

Norwich Castle Museum

300sq m

T-shaped airy and lofty temporary exhibition space with Panelock screens to divide spaces as necessary.

It is expected that the successful design company will visit each museum and work closely with the Yorkshire Museum and other tour partners to ensure the most suitable build across all sites. Given the variation in size, layout and access across each venue, it is vital that the

successful design company have a proven track record of problem solving to develop flexible displays across a range of challenging spaces.

2.4 Exhibition Concept

Viking is a unique touring exhibition, combining world-renowned objects from the British Museum and York Museums Trust's Anglian, Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Anglo-Scandinavian collections for the first time. The exhibition will focus on Britain, offering a reassessment of the Viking Age. It will give audiences an immersive view of how the Vikings transformed the political, economic, artistic, social and religious climate across the UK.

The exhibition will showcase some of the finest early medieval objects from Britain, with over 100 British Museum and Yorkshire Museum pieces on display. It will provide a unique opportunity for visitors across the UK to see iconic objects in their local areas for the first time. It will also give partner museums the opportunity to include objects from their own collections to add a local dimension and context for visitors.

Some of the most exciting Anglo-Saxon and Viking discoveries ever made will be showcased in the exhibition. Highlights will include the York Helmet, the Vale of York hoard and the Lewis Chessmen. Alongside these treasures we will display other significant hoards including Bedale, Cuerdale and Silverdale as well as beautiful works of art in stone and metal and incredibly rare perfectly preserved leather shoes, silk hats and woolly jumpers.

Our ambition for the exhibition is to engage existing and new audiences with the Vikings; to explore how and to what extent Viking culture influenced or altered life for the people who encountered it, to examine how Viking culture itself changed across two centuries in Britain and ultimately, to think about what it means to be Viking.

2.5 Exhibition Themes and Suggested Structure

The exhibition interpretation will be developed and delivered by YMT curators, supported by specialists at the British Museum.

- **Before the Vikings**
This introductory section will explore life in both Britain and Scandinavia before the arrival of the Vikings in Britain. Exploring key themes such as how society was organised, who ruled, how people lived – what they made, how they traded, what they wore, what they believed - will ground the exhibition in the existing Anglian and Anglo-Saxon way of life, providing a platform for understanding what life was like in Britain and what the Vikings might have encountered when they first arrived. Similarly, examining how life played out in Scandinavia – how did people rule, how did people fight, what did people make and trade, how did people dress, what did people believe in – will highlight from the outset some of the differences in lifestyle and outlook between Vikings and Anglo-Saxons.

In this section, partner venues will have the opportunity to include an object/objects from their collections when they host the exhibition.

- **Why did the Vikings come to Britain?**

Tackling past and current academic thinking, this section will examine the complex question of the motivation behind the Viking invasion and settlement of Britain.

This section will be interpretation led, no objects will be used.

- **Raiders to Settlers**

From the first raid on the monastery at Lindisfarne in AD 793, through seasonal incursions to sack rich settlements, to the organised invasion by the Great Viking Army in 865, this section will examine how and why the Vikings conquered and settled in Britain. The narrative will explore how the Vikings travelled; looking at their skill as seafarers and warriors and how this aided their eventual conquest of Britain. Within this section we will also showcase key objects such as the Ormside Bowl and the Bedale Hoard to highlight the wealth of Britain and its appeal to the Vikings as a place for settlement.

- **Transformation**

This section will be the heart of the exhibition and will focus on exploring the impact of the Vikings across Britain; examining how, and to what extent, they transformed life in different areas. Incorporating national, regional and local perspectives, it will highlight the extent to which the existing political, religious, economic, artistic and cultural landscape was transformed through contact with Viking people. Within this section we will showcase two large and significant hoards – the Vale of York Hoard and the Cuerdale Hoard.

In this section, partner venues will have the opportunity to include an object/objects from their collections when they host the exhibition.

- **Legacy**

This section will explore the end of the Viking period, assessing their continuing influence into the Norman period and beyond. It will look at written sources and objects to highlight how the Vikings were represented by their predecessors, setting the scene for the final section of the exhibition.

- **Legend**

Within this final, closing section of the exhibition we will build upon the previous section, looking at how modern perceptions of the Vikings have been shaped, and what they might be. Bringing the narrative through to modern day, we will explore how Vikings have been interpreted and understood in the recent past

(EG: in 19th century York) and how we portray Vikings today in popular culture including film, TV, literature and events.

In this section, museum objects will be displayed alongside objects collected and loaned for display from the wider community to showcase how the public has engaged with Viking history in recent years.

2.6 Design Services Required

The designer's services:

- The design, planning, cost planning, fabrication, delivery and installation of the fit-out scheme for the exhibition spaces.
- It is expected that the build will include construction of moveable partition walls, plinths for stonework to be mounted on, plinths/surrounds for display case integration, panels for graphics and text, a flexible labelling system and incorporation of interactives (digital and non-digital).

The process will include:

Stage 1: Concept Brief

Initial development phase to:

- Establish detailed brief with client
- Visit all five hosting venues
- Agree budgets for each display discipline within the scheme
- Agree mechanisms for cost planning and control
- Agree a timetable for design development, production and display installation
- Confirm M&E requirements

Stage 2: Concept Design

Full development of the exhibition content with the exhibition team

- Prepare concept designs (3D, graphics, interactives)
- Prepare concept designs for lighting (working with existing lighting at each venue)
- Prepare cost estimates for design proposals
- Consultations with project team
- Consultations with all statutory bodies (H&S etc)

Stage 3: Detail Design

Final design

- Working drawings and specifications of display scheme should be supplied in a digital format that allows YMT to easily view and circulate as well as produce A3 hard copies

- Graphic templates and artwork to be supplied via Dropbox. These detailed drawings should also be sent to YMT in hard copy at A3

Stage 4: Implementation and Completion

Exhibition installation and M&E works

- Supervision of off-site fabrication and liaison with contractors (including printers and specialist interactive suppliers). Suitable contractors will be chosen in conjunction with YMT. YMT already have some long term partnerships with contractors which may be of use for this project
- Supervision of on-site installation
- Snagging
- Issue of completion certificates

Stage 5: Touring the Exhibition

Exhibition install and maintenance across all five venues

- De-install and disassemble exhibition build at the end of each venues term, transport exhibition materials and then reinstate the exhibition in each venue, across the life of the tour
- Conduct structural checks of walls/plinths and undertake general maintenance of the build upon arrival at each venue, in advance of exhibition opening

The exhibition design will require consideration with regard to the exhibition infrastructure such as the environmental conditions for objects, the security needs of the high-profile objects included, lighting, and power supplies for multimedia interactives.

The exhibition must comply with all relevant legislation such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Health and Safety Regulations, and seek to implement good practice.

2.7 Exhibition Tone and Interpretative Approach

The exhibition interpretation will be developed and delivered by YMT curators, supported by specialists at the British Museum, with input from partner museums as appropriate.

The exhibition will be focused on the strength and quality of the objects included and these will be used to drive the narrative, however, the tone of the exhibition will need to be hands on and interactive, with multi-layered interpretation, in order to bring the objects, their stories and the narrative to life for a range of audiences. We aim to create an exhibition which is sensory, visually strong, interactive and experiential, to appeal to all learning styles.

The following techniques could be employed:

- Object display
- Graphic panels
- Reconstruction drawings
- Varied labelling, including panels and object labels
- Layered interpretation

- Maps, graphic or interactive
- Film, documentary style
- Digital media, such as atmospheric sound
- Experimental new digital technology, such as an immersive VR experience
- Physical interactives, such as costumes, games, activities
- Opportunity for visitor participation/feedback

All gallery equipment will need to be robust and easily replaceable.

2.8 Key Relationships

YM Archaeology curatorial team

Exhibition/Curatorial team at addition venues

2.9 Timetable

The timetable is driven by the aim to open the exhibition in York on 19th May 2017.

ACTION	DATE
Brief released	17 th June 2016
Tender returns	15 th July 2016
Interview notification	1 st Aug 2016
Interviews	w/c 5 th Aug 2016
Initial meeting	15 th August 2016
Contractor site visits	By 16 th September 2016
First concept/initial timetable established	9 th September 2016
Concept design and ME works established	21 st October 2016
Final design agreed	16 th December 2016
Preparatory works on site at YM	From 27 th March 2017
Exhibition install	3 rd April 2017
Exhibition opens in York	19 th May 2017

3 Application Process

The response to the brief should include:

- A design vision for the overall exhibition
- Suggestion of interpretative techniques/interactives within the budget
- A comment on the proposed timetable
- A breakdown of costs and fees
- A list of the personnel that will be working on the project and their roles
- Details of previous and current work relevant to the project and two referees
- Professional insurance and indemnity certification

To discuss the project and request further details of each venue please contact natalie.mccaul@ymt.org.uk (01904 687675)

Applications should be emailed directly to Natalie McCaul at natalie.mccaul@ymt.org.uk with an additional hard copy sent by post to Natalie McCaul at Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York, YO1 7FR by **15th July 2016**