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# EXETER CATHEDRAL – ARTIST BRIEF – Textile Project

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## Introduction

We are looking for an artist (individual, collective or company) with arts and cultural expertise and experience of working collaboratively with communities in a heritage environment. Working closely with the Cathedral team, the artist will co-create a piece of textile art as part of the interpretation element of a broader 3-year National Lottery Heritage Fund supported Activity Plan.

## Background to the Wider Heritage Fund Project for your Information

The Textile Project is embedded within the *Exeter Cathedral – the 2020s Vision Investing in our Welcome* project associated with the transformation of Exeter Cathedral. Our capital works will ensure our buildings are fit-for-purpose by improving infrastructure for all our users. A new interpretation scheme and Treasures Gallery will bring the history and purpose of the Cathedral to life for everyone. A detailed Activity Plan sets out how we will engage our communities in co-creating events, works of art and interpretation content.

Our aim as an organisation is to create positive development in the following areas: improving our ability to welcome more people to the Cathedral (facilities and quality of welcome); embedding consultation and co-creation into our work; engaging with new audiences; creating a legacy of community cohesion and partnership working.

Our approach is to work in partnership with groups and organisations on our doorstep.

- We will develop the skills and confidence of our staff and volunteers to deliver meaningful activities for - and with - our communities.
- We will work with artists, musicians and creative producers to find new ways to engage people. We will improve the natural environment of the Cathedral for the benefit of all.
- We will use digital platforms to involve children in Devon with primary historic material held in the archives to enrich learning and encourage visits to the Cathedral.
- We will transform our interpretation and visitor experience in order to broaden our reach and appeal. The development of this interpretation will involve diverse voices and bring new perspectives to the history of the Cathedral.



Project Activity is split into two main themes:

## Re-imagining the Cathedral

Using the physical asset as the starting point, this area will focus on the historic context of the capital works, improving the visitor experience and making it more relevant to a wider range of people. It will highlight and increase awareness and appreciation of the less visible assets of the Cathedral, including the library and archive collections. The setting of the Cathedral will also be a focus, taking interpretation beyond the building, exploring how Cathedral Green can be improved within the context of environment and biodiversity, and using it as a focus for developing new and meaningful relationships with local communities.

## People and Place

This area goes beyond the Cathedral estate and into the community to encourage diverse audiences to explore their connections to the Cathedral and its wider city context. It will look at how more people can easily engage with the Cathedral and its collections beyond a physical visit. Through targeted activities, it will encourage diverse communities to use the stories told by the Cathedral and its collections to explore themes of contemporary relevance.

Within these themes, activities are broadly grouped under three umbrella projects:

- The Welcome Project
- The Creative Cathedral
- Environment and Climate Change

Through research and consultation, the following target audiences have been identified:

- *Hyper-local and underserved* – the project will work with partners in order to engage effectively with people who live in adjoining neighbourhoods who face barriers to engaging with heritage. Creative and skills-based activities will be co-created with local partners.
- *Young People (13-25)* – working with young people in and beyond a formal education setting, offering opportunities for creativity, learning new skills and gaining work- related experience.
- *Formal Education settings* (primary & secondary) – working with schools and educators to provide a high-quality set of innovative digital resources for them to use pre- and post-visit as well as in standalone lessons in the classroom. The project will explore ways to bring the archive and library to life in order to enrich the educational lives of students of different ages and learning styles across Devon and beyond.
- *Families (targeting lower income neighbourhoods)* – drawing people to the Cathedral who would not normally visit. Understanding and acknowledging the barriers they face to visiting and provide engaging, creative and enriching activities that appeal to them.

## Project information – Textile Project

We are seeking an artist (individual, collective or company) to deliver a co-created piece of textile art for display as part of our new interpretation scheme. The artist will liaise with the interpretation designers to ensure that the outputs fit with the needs of the scheme.

- The chosen artist will co-create a new textile work that will feature as a key object in the Treasures Gallery. Content for the work will be developed in consultation and through active engagement with members of the Exeter and Devon community, including the Tapisers of Exeter Cathedral (a volunteer group), and will proceed from the 'fabric' theme and 'big moments' strand in the interpretation framework. The artist will work directly with groups and participants to develop the piece in response to themes and strands in the interpretation and Activity Plan.

### Inspiration

In developing their engagement work and the piece itself, the commissioned artist will use as a reference point the textile collection of the Cathedral including vestments, rondels, flags, banners and altar cloths and the way that some of these items have been reused and repurposed over many years. The rondels, designed and made by the Exeter Cathedral Tapisers over the last 30 years, sit right around the nave plinth and tell a history of the nation, and the cathedral from its origins to the present day through words and pictures.

These 'big moments' in the life of the cathedral should be a source of inspiration and reference for participants in thinking about their personal 'big moments' including the impact of Covid19, and how they might express and capture them in textile form. This content strand should also support participants in exploring the relationship between personal milestones and the purpose and function of the Cathedral – such as in birth, marriage, and death – and the part that the cathedral can play as a place of refuge and sanctuary, supporting people in their emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

These interactions are part of the 'warp and weft' of the fabric that ties the cathedral together with the community: the warp being the vertical strands of the cathedral's traditions and ceremonies, providing a framework and regular structure through which the weft of individual lives can weave.

### Context

The intention is for the final piece to be displayed within a section of the new Treasures Gallery that explores the cathedral as a place of sanctuary, supporting individual and communal wellbeing through offering refuge, safety, and security. It is essential, therefore, that this setting remains a live consideration throughout the development of the piece.

## Output

The production of the textile work should reflect on what makes our histories – individual and collective – and tell a story about the things that anchor us, keeps us well, and how we experience events that disrupt and disturb those structures.

Although the cathedral will be led by the practice and expertise of the commissioned artist, it is suggested that, in form, the final work could have echoes of the fabrics used to cover an altar and the way in which, when seen lain flat, they mirror the shape of a triptych (a large central panel, smaller wings on either side, and a predella) – a format often made to convey a multi-part narrative and to hang above an altar. The way in which the physical sections of a triptych capture different episodes in a story could also support the artist and participants in their exploration of the connection between major life events for individuals (birth, marriage, death) and the functioning of life in the cathedral.

The relationship between these visual and material reference points could be further strengthened through the work's colour palette by drawing on those designated for altar frontals and vestments in the different seasons of the church calendar as a further reference to the structure and rhythm of cathedral life.

We welcome applications from artists from a range of textile disciplines, for example you may specialise in tapestry, weaving, patchwork, felt work or embroidery. Co-creation and heritage learning outcomes are key elements of this project and we expect these to be addressed within any response to this brief. We would expect the artist to identify key partners from our target audience to work with as well as engaging with at least one of the important community partners we already have in place.

Your key point of contacts at the Cathedral will be the Community Outreach and Partnerships Officer with whom any changes to approach, delivery or programme will need to be agreed in advance of any changes being made. Project milestones and outcomes will be agreed with the Community Outreach and Partnerships Officer at the start-up meeting after appointment.

Monitoring meetings will also be agreed at this stage. As we will expect the successful artist to undertake both quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the project, the evaluation process will also be discussed and agreed at the start-up meeting.

There are also a number of other briefs which form part of the wider Heritage Fund Activity Plan and we would be happy to receive expressions of interest from Creative Producers or groups of multi-disciplinary artists who might wish to deliver some or all of these projects collectively.

## Role and key tasks

- Lead and produce the project from initial brief to evaluation
- Embed co-creation and heritage learning into the process
- Work closely with the interpretation designers to ensure the outcomes are fit for purpose
- Work closely with the Community Outreach and Partnerships Officer to ensure all elements of the project are delivered effectively
- Ensure clear and effective communications between all parties, including cathedral staff
- Manage and report the project budget, ensuring that spending is appropriate and controlled
- Compile and disseminate information for the project; including relevant risk assessments and timetables.
- Adhere to marketing deadlines to ensure the project is promoted effectively
- Work with the project evaluator and the wider team on the evaluation of the project, including gathering and analysing feedback as required.

## Knowledge, Skills and Experience

- Proven track record of producing high-quality projects in the creative sector
- Experience of delivering creative heritage projects in a historic context
- Experience of community engagement and co-creation
- Understanding of working parameters within a heritage context
- Knowledge of participatory arts practices
- Experience of working in a relevant textile medium
- Demonstrable interest in, and understanding of, the themes set out in this brief
- Ability to swiftly establish strong working relationships with a wide variety of people and groups
- Creative, positive approach to planning and problem solving
- Flexibility to adapt to the needs of each project as they evolve over time

## National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcomes for this Project

NLHF Outcome	Outcome No.	Project Outcomes
A wider range of people will be involved in heritage	O.HP.3	Young people, lower income families, socially isolated and vulnerable individuals will participate in cathedral heritage activities for the first time, and will recommend the programme of creative and enjoyable activities to others
People will have greater wellbeing	O.W.1	The Project will offer an increased sense of individual well-being and impact physical and mental health by providing opportunities to meet people and positively contribute to the local community.
	O.W.3	The Project will help to promote individuals' sense of place and identity which will lead to a sense of community empowerment and improved cohesion.
	O.W.4	The project will offer an increased sense of individual well-being and impact physical and mental health by providing opportunities to undertake creative and hands-on heritage activities
People will have developed skills	O.S.5	Participants from our target audiences will learn creative heritage skills associated with storytelling, writing, research, giving guided tours and interpreting history through art, craft and making. Many of these skills will be useable outside this project and are designed to build confidence and contribute to wellbeing
Heritage will be in a better condition	O.HC.2	The Project will provide enhanced opportunities for heritage-based recreation and activity.
Heritage will be identified and explained	O.HE.1	The heritage will be better explained through a range of interpretation and activities targeted at a wide range of audiences.
People will have learnt about heritage, leading to changes in ideas and actions	O.HL.1	Attitudes and preconceptions about the Cathedral will be challenged. People will engage in meaningful ways with the Project for its heritage and community value rather than simply as a place of worship.

## Project timetable

Milestone	Date
Application deadline	Thursday 15 February 2024
Interviews	Wednesday 6 March 2024
Start-up meeting	Thursday 28 March
R&D and Delivery	April – November 2024
Review & Evaluation	November/ December 2024

## Contract and Fee

Artist fee c.18 days @ £220 (including R&D and any travel and expenses)	£3,960
Materials	£3,040
<b>Total</b>	<b>£7,000</b>

A payment schedule will be agreed once appointed. The successful candidate / company will be expected to manage their own hours to ensure that the project is delivered on time and within this overall budget. The successful candidate / company will be expected to have public liability insurance of at least £2 million.

## How to Apply

**You can apply with a written proposal (maximum 2,000 words) or via audio or video (max 10 mins).**

We want to remove as many barriers to applying as we can, so, if there's another method you'd prefer to use please let us know.

## Selection Criteria

We will assess applications via the following criteria:

- Knowledge, skills and experience that demonstrate the best fit with the brief
- Clarity of approach for delivering the contract and reaching underserved communities
- Value for money

Please ensure you include:

- Details of how you meet the specification for the creative brief, to include your knowledge, skills and experience.
- At least two examples of similar projects you have delivered.
- An outline of your proposed approach to the project and the methodologies you would apply.
- A breakdown of resources (time and fee) with a proposed timetable.
- Your contact details including telephone number and email plus contact details for two referees (references will not be requested without your permission).

The successful candidate will be required to complete safeguarding training and an Enhanced DBS check.

**Applications to be submitted to: [ljs.spencer@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:ljs.spencer@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)**  
**Deadline for applications: Thursday 15 February 2024.**