

# Freelance Exhibition Designer



## ABOUT WITNEY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM:

Witney Museum is a two floor volunteer run social history museum which opened in 1996. The museum is situated in a traditional Cotswold stone building that was once the home of Malachi Bartlett, the proprietor of a well-known building firm.

For most people, the first mention of Witney is closely followed by the word 'blanket'. For hundreds of years, the town has been associated with the manufacture of blankets. You will find within the Museum doors a 'treasure trove' of rich history about the blanket history and the people who were part of it.

Witney, having a population of over 27,000 people has a main high street, shopping centre alongside an open market which has operated within the town for many years. The local area gets many tourists, but also have a core group of residents with a strong interest in their town.

Since 2002 when the last blanket factory closed Witney has gone through a huge transformation. There are many new families moved in and it is operating very much as a commuter town. The Museum has been working to engage with these new residents and has been working to become a leading place of cultural engagement in the town. The goal is to encourage pride and to increase cultural activities for all three audiences within Witney. After two years of planning and engagement activities the Museum are now ready to develop their offer.

## BRIEF:

Witney and District Museum is a volunteer run museum. In 2024 they were awarded a National Lottery Heritage Grant for their project 'Witney's got wool and what else?' which seeks to focus on the history of Witney from the last closure of the last blanket factory up to the modern day. The main project outcomes include:

- Increasing the visitor numbers to the museum
- Digitising the collection records and reviewing the collection store
- Reviewing the displays and developing a dynamic exhibition space that can be updated by the volunteer team
- Collecting 20 new oral histories
- Ensuring that all the documentation is in place to support the day to day running of the museum.

- Mentoring the Trustees to ensure they are able to support the development of the museum after the projects end.

We are seeking a Freelance Exhibition Designer to support the project team in designing and installing an exhibition space in our upstairs gallery which can:

- Showcase our collection which includes a large number of photographs, negatives, slides and ephemera
- Enable exhibition to be changed and updated easily updated by the volunteer team
- Protects the collection and ensures it is secure
- Ensures a creative, accessible, and engaging visitor experience

### **Key deliverables**

The Exhibition Designer will be working closely with the Trustees, Management Committee and freelance project team to ensure that the newly designed gallery meets the projects wider objectives.

The museum building is a Grade 2 listed building owned by the Bartlett Taylor Trust so some restrictions apply. The upstairs gallery is only accessible by stairs.

Key deliverables include:

- To work closely with the project team and volunteers throughout the design process, ensuring that volunteer ideas and insights actively shape and inform the development of the exhibition. This could include:
  - Attending Quarterly Project meetings
  - Attending Trustee Meetings to keep them up to date with developments
  - Running a consultation session with the volunteer team to better understand the needs of the museum
  - Working closely with the Project Manager and Exhibitions and Collections Consultant through out the development and delivery of the project
- Create an Exhibition Design Plan that includes:
  - A creative, accessible, and flexible exhibition layout for the upstairs gallery to include up to 3 temporary display areas, a pop up display area and a permanent blanket display
  - Accommodates changing exhibitions that can be updated by volunteers with minimal budget

- Allows an area in the middle of the room to be used for group activities such as visiting school groups or volunteer events
- A listening post or similar digital output to access clips from the museums new oral histories
- Has clear signage and interpretation including signs to acknowledge our Lottery funding
- Considers the lighting in space
- Offers interactive elements to increase engagement particularly with family audiences
- Suggest and source modular, cost-effective display systems that fit within the project budget and support sustainable practice by using durable or reusable materials. These should be:
  - Easy to rearrange or reconfigure for changing exhibitions.
  - Suitable for showcasing the museum's collection of ephemera, including negatives, photographs, and paper documents
  - Accompanied by thoughtful recommendations for materials, fixtures, and fittings that make the most of available resources.
- Installation of Initial Exhibition including:
  - Hands-on support for installing the first exhibition under the new design framework ready for an April 2026 opening
  - Coordination with volunteers and staff during the installation process including timely and clear communication with the volunteer team
- To support the long term resilience of the museum:
  - Create simple Volunteer Guidance documents or templates to help volunteers update or maintain displays independently.
  - Run a short training session or workshop for the volunteer team to support in their upskilling this could be on:
    - General principles of display and design,
    - How to install objects to best effect,
- Ensure accessibility and Visitor Flow Enhancements including:
  - Ensure the space is welcoming and accessible to a wide audience (including DDA/Equality Act considerations).
  - Design that improves visitor navigation and engagement particularly with our younger and family audiences
- Support in the interpretation and graphic design development including:
  - Support or advise on layout of labels, text panels, and interactive elements

- Alignment with the museum's storytelling and community voice (including the 20 new oral histories and community work with MyVision and Henry Box school)
- Provide project documentation to support with NLHF reporting

Exhibitions in the space will be focused on Witney's local history and the planned 2026 displays include:

- Local Photographer Arthur Titherington
- Isabelle Spencer (Deputy Head of Henry Box School and founding member of Witney Dramatic Society which celebrates it's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year)
- The Pharmaceutical company that is one of the the biggest employers in Witney today
- A blanket display

### **Exhibition Budget:**

£25,000 display costs

Up to £6000 for digital outputs such as a listening post.

An additional contingency is available pending approval from NLHF.

**FEE:** £12,000

As a freelancer you will be responsible for your own tax implications.

The museum is open 10am-4pm Wednesday -Saturday with volunteer activity also taking place on Monday and Tuesdays.

From October-March the museum is closed for the winter with collections care work taking place.

Some weekend and evening work may be required.

**KEY RELATIONSHIPS:** The Exhibition Designer will be working alongside Witney and District Museum Volunteers, Trustees and a Freelance Project Team.

**FLEXIBLE WORKING:** This role is a hybrid role with some time require to be onsite to work with the volunteer team and over see installation

**LOCATION:** Gloucester Court Mews, 75 High St, Witney OX28 6JA

## **PERSONAL SPECIFICATION**

### **Essential**

- Minimum of 2 years' experience in exhibition or spatial design, with a strong portfolio of creative, visitor-focused work.
- Experience of working collaboratively with teams to deliver exhibition or display projects from concept to installation.
- Clear and effective written and verbal communication skills.
- A working knowledge of design software such as Adobe Creative Suite and/or CAD software, as well as Microsoft Office (Outlook, Word, Excel).
- Understanding of designing for accessibility and inclusive visitor experiences.
- Able to work on own initiative and manage time effectively to meet project deadlines.

### **Desirable**

- Experience of working in the museum, heritage or arts sector.
- Experience of working with volunteers or supporting non-specialist teams to update or maintain exhibitions.
- Experience of working with trustees or community-led organisations.
- Understanding of working with different communities and specific needs those communities may have to access the museum.
- Interest in Witney's local heritage and knowledge of the area, or a willingness to learn.
- Familiarity with sustainable or low-cost exhibition design approaches suitable for small or volunteer-led museums.

## **HOW TO APPLY:**

Please provide a CV and expression of Interest outlining:

- An outline of your approach to developing an exhibition plan
- At least two examples of past work which demonstrates the relevant skills and experience needed for this project
- A light touch budget breakdown of fees and expenditure
- Details of two referees

Questions and application responses should be sent by the 1<sup>st</sup> September to [admin@witneymuseum.org.uk](mailto:admin@witneymuseum.org.uk). The closing date is the 7<sup>th</sup> September at midnight.

Interviews will take place the week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> September.