



# **Northern Ireland War Memorial Design and Re-fit of the Museum Gallery**

**Invitation to Tender and Statement of Requirement for: Project Management of Spatial Interpretation and Design for Re-fit of the Museum Gallery, 21 Talbot Street, Belfast, BT1 2LD**

**Client: The Council of the Northern Ireland War Memorial (Incorporated)**

**Date for Submission: Friday 17 April 2026 at 5:00pm**

## Part 1 – Invitation to Tender

Tenders are invited by the Board of the Northern Ireland War Memorial (NIWM) for a suitably experienced and qualified lead design consultant to provide interpretative design and associated professional services for the re-fit of the museum gallery at 21 Talbot Street, Belfast. This is part of a project entitled **Home Front Museum: Northern Ireland 1939-1945**, made possible by the award of a Development Grant funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The estimated project value is £45,000 in terms of professional fees plus VAT. The resulting design will be developed with the aim of submitting an application for a Delivery Grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Using money raised by National Lottery players, The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports projects that connect people and communities with the UK's heritage. The Home Front Museum: Northern Ireland 1939-1945 project is made possible with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to National Lottery players, the NIWM has been able to secure funding to begin the process of redesigning and re-fitting its permanent museum exhibition.



## Part 2 – Overview

### 2.1 Background to the Northern Ireland War Memorial

The Council of the Northern Ireland War Memorial (Incorporated) was established as a charitable company in 1950 to provide an enduring memorial to the men and women of Northern Ireland who died in the two World Wars and to commemorate the American presence in Northern Ireland during the Second World War. The original War Memorial Building opened in Waring Street in Belfast in 1963 and subsequently relocated to Talbot Street in 2007. The museum collection achieved full UK accreditation in 2013.

The **vision** of the NIWM is to be an engaging and welcoming museum that provides a window on Northern Ireland's key role in the Second World War and the impact of the war on its people.

The **mission** of the NIWM is to tell the story of Northern Ireland's role in the Second World War comprehensively and authentically through engaging exhibitions, publications, research, outreach and accessible learning programmes. In addition, we maintain war memorials to the fallen in the First and Second World War and the Belfast Blitz. We organise respectful commemorations, provide office and meeting accommodation to ex-service charities, and award small grants to projects which are in line with our charitable objectives.

Our **values** are:

- *Authenticity* – Our collection is at the heart of everything we do to inspire, research and create unique learning experiences, resources and publications.
- *Striving for excellence* – We are responsible for the professional care and interpretation of the collection. We will share our knowledge by presenting the collection and our research to their full potential.
- *Working together* – By promoting teamwork and exploring collaborative ideas we reflect the whole of Northern Ireland, ensuring our activities are wide-reaching and relevant to our varied audiences, both current and new.
- *Showing respect* – We host fitting commemorations which are inclusive of all. We support diversity and a work culture which values and empowers our team and recognises their achievements. We remember our roots and help towards building a more dynamic future for the organisation.
- *Innovative* – We are ambitious and imaginative about finding better ways to do things, embracing technology and partnerships, to share our stories.

## 2.2 Strategic Plan

A Strategic Plan for 2023-27 was agreed by the Board of the NIWM in December 2022. It was developed with input from various stakeholders including trustees, council members, staff, community groups, university students, teachers and museum visitors.

A major outcome of this process was the recommendation to re-fit and update the current museum gallery. What follows outlines the current layout and specifications of the gallery and the expectations for a redevelopment of the displays.

## 2.3 Collection

The NIWM's museum collection focuses on the Home Front in Northern Ireland during the Second World War. It contains a diverse selection of nearly 7,000 artefacts which highlight themes including the following:

- Belfast Blitz, April-May 1941
- American presence and other Allied forces based in Northern Ireland
- Air Raid Precautions and Civil Defence
- Local industries and agriculture
- Ulster Home Guard
- Domestic life
- Irish neutrality

NIWM also holds a growing oral history collection of over 400 interviews with people who have memories and stories relating to the Second World War, including veterans and civilians.

## 2.4 The Museum

The museum gallery has a floor area of approximately 110 square metres. On entering the gallery, there is a small desk area which accommodates a Visitor Assistant. A supporting pillar is located in the centre of the space.

Linked to the gallery are public toilets, a small kitchen for staff and a store for holding publications, leaflets and other items.

The front of the museum is a glass wall at street level. The building is entered through a secure door which can only be accessed when visitors follow signage to press an intercom button. On entering the building, visitors are welcomed by the Visitor Assistant in an external hallway before being brought into the gallery. This hallway contains an elevator to reach upper floors, a main staircase and a supporting pillar.

The current exhibition tells the story of the Home Front in Northern Ireland during the Second World War using:

- Display cases and artefacts
- Large scale photographs
- Mannequins
- Audio visual installations
- Dressing up area with uniforms and helmets
- Models and facsimiles

The gallery contains memorials which were commissioned in 1963 for the original premises in Waring Street:

- Stained glass memorial window designed by Stanley Murray Scott (1912-1997) of Reed, Millican & Co., Newcastle upon Tyne
- Memorial wall of polished Belgian black marble
- Granite plinth with two leather bound Rolls of Honour listing the names of men and women from Northern Ireland who were killed in the First and Second World Wars

Artworks incorporated into the museum include:

- A two-part copper frieze depicting US forces and local industries by local artist and sculptor James McKendry (b. 1935) which is fixed to the wall of the gallery
- *Blitz Survivors* sculpture by John Sherlock (1933-2020) and *Blitz Memorial* sculpture by Carolyn Mulholland (b. 1944) are on display in the gallery
- *April Showers Bring Forth May Flowers* ceramic piece by Diane McCormick (b. 1966) is displayed on the wall of the hallway before entry into the gallery

Beside the marble wall are three foundation stones which were relocated from the original War Memorial Building in Waring Street.

The current gallery at NIWM was fitted in 2007 and has proved a functional and enduring exhibition space. After almost 20 years, it is proposed that the permanent exhibition should be redeveloped and the content upgraded, revised and modernised.

## 2.5 Scoping Study

The NIWM has already undertaken work in the form of a Scoping Study in 2023-24 which included a site audit and masterplan scoping study and the early development of content wireframing and a narrative framework. As a result of this work, the NIWM has created a draft interpretation plan identifying potential key themes, interpretative mechanisms etc. which formed the basis for the initial National Lottery Heritage Fund application. It is anticipated that this will serve as a necessary starting point for the successful bidder.

## 2.6 Project Objectives

The primary objectives of the museum re-fit are:

- Utilise the gallery space to reach its full potential and allow an increased number and broader diversity of objects from the collection to be on full display
- Present artefacts to their best advantage by using modern techniques and best practice in artefact mounting
- Create engaging and informative object labels and interpretative panels
- Provide exciting and accessible interactives to enhance the visitor experience
- Use energy efficient technologies in accordance with the NIWM Environmental Sustainability Policy.

In 2008, the current gallery received an award for *Best Example of Integrating Artworks into a Building Project* from the Royal Society of Ulster Architects in recognition of the artworks and memorials which were incorporated into the gallery design. The NIWM intends to continue with this approach. While the three foundation stones will be retained, there is scope for their sympathetic and respectful relocation.

Please note there will be a separate tender process to appoint an architect to develop plans to reconfigure the building entrance and facilities adjacent to the gallery in line with recommendations from an Access Audit of 2023.

## 2.7 Museum Project Team

The Museum Project Team consists of four staff (Museum Manager, Finance Manager, Collections Officer, Outreach Officer) and three trustees. Decisions regarding the progress of the project will ultimately be made by the Museum Project Team and they will be supported by and work closely with five other members of staff (Education Officer, Research Officer, Business Support Coordinator and two Visitor Assistants).

## Part 3 – Statement of Requirement

The requirement is for an experienced design team to project manage the spatial interpretative design and refit of the NIWM museum gallery at 21 Talbot Street, Belfast, BT1 2LD (approximately 110 square metres).

The consultant will be expected to undertake the following:

- Comprehensive design services including the development and visualisation of initial concepts and detailed progression of all design content;
- Identification and development of an agreed interpretative approach;
- Reference to best practice in comparable attractions;
- Understanding of audience need and target audience/s demographic/s;
- Design of accessible space and understanding of the access requirements of different visitors;
- Site visits as appropriate with museum staff and stakeholders;
- Delivery of an exhibition design with learning potential that aligns with best practice in the facilitation of museum education programmes and links to lifelong learning;
- Exploration of interactive learning opportunities (high and low tech, multi-sensory) with future proofing considered as far as is reasonable;
- Design drawings to RIBA Stage 4;
- Detailed budgets for implementation and installation for agreed design option;
- Project management including financial cost control and management and supporting NIWM in the administration and management of works contracts;
- Specification, procurement support and coordination of specialist suppliers appointed by NIWM;
- Recommendations and guidance on maintenance and future care and upgrading of displays;
- All work should be conducted in line with the NIWM Environmental Policy and seek to deliver an environmentally sustainable space, with low-impact products and, where possible, recycling and waste minimisation.

In general, the interpretation must be accessible and inclusive, engaging a wide range of audiences and reflecting diverse perspectives. Design proposals should maximise opportunities for formal and informal learning, intergenerational engagement and community participation. Content should be future proofed where possible, particularly with regards to technology and environmental sustainability. Digital elements should be maintainable using in-house capacity where possible and avoid reliance on proprietary systems with high lifecycle costs. Display and mounting solutions must align with recognised conservation standards and ensure appropriate environmental protection of artefacts.

All proposals should demonstrate alignment with National Lottery Heritage Fund investment principles and evidence long-term public benefit.

The NIWM intends to appoint an external agency to undertake a community consultation exercise with stakeholders during the exhibition design process. The consultant shall work within a structured co-design framework enabling community participants, volunteers and stakeholders to actively shape interpretative outcomes.

## Part 4 – General

The consultant shall maintain Professional Indemnity Insurance appropriate to the nature and value of the services. Services shall be performed with reasonable skill and care in accordance with the standards expected of a competent professional experienced in museum and heritage projects.

The consultant shall provide design risk management and advisory services in accordance with the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (NI) 2015. Statutory duties relating to construction works, supply of goods and site operations shall rest with the relevant works contractors appointed separately by the NIWM.

### 4.1 Liaison with the NIWM

Close and effective liaison with the Museum Project Team will be essential to the development of the fit-out. The consultant must clearly demonstrate how they would propose to approach the issue of liaison with the client over the course of the design and fit-out process. The consultant will also be expected to cooperate with and support when required the other professional consultants (including architect, quantity surveyor, mechanical and electrical engineer and any other statutory or specialist advisors) who will be appointed directly by the NIWM via separate procurement exercises.

All matters concerning day-to-day project management will be addressed in the first instance from the consultant to the Museum Manager. The Museum Manager will address them for prompt action to the Museum Project Team and when required to the Board of the NIWM.

The consultant should provide brief reports on the design proposals at agreed stages in the process. The Board of the NIWM shall be kept informed of progress at different stages throughout the process and the consultant may be asked to attend a pre-determined number of Board meetings to make brief reports. This should include graphic representations of the design which the NIWM will be permitted to use as part of a community consultation process.

### 4.2 Collaborative Approach

The consultant should ensure that the design process involves ongoing opportunities for collaborating with museum staff and other relevant stakeholders.

The museum staff shall collaborate with the consultant and be actively involved in the following:

- Research and writing of narrative content (e.g. labels, panels, interactives etc.)
- Sourcing images
- Selecting artefacts for display
- Arranging any required loans from other public and private collections

### 4.3 Timescale

The NIWM seeks a programme of work that will bring this phase of work to completion by early 2027 to align with the Delivery Stage Application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Proposed project stages are as follows:

- April 2026 – Appointment of consultant
- November 2026 – Development Phase Review with The National Lottery Heritage Fund (plans to be completed by this point to RIBA work stage 2 and significant progress made towards RIBA Work Stage 3)
- February 2027 – Submission of Delivery Phase application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund

There may be the option for a contract break which will allow the re-engagement of the supplier should the Delivery Stage application be successful, and previous work be of satisfactory quality. The estimated value of this contract extension is £62,500 of professional fees plus VAT. This Delivery Phase contract will require the successful tender to deliver the agreed design fit-out. Including:

- Tender management for fit-out contractors, and preparation of tender report/s for work valued at £50,000 or greater;
- Management of fit-out; and delivery to RIBA Work Stage 7.
- Continued collaboration with museum staff and other stakeholders.

## Part 5 – Tender Response

Tenders are invited by the Board of the Northern Ireland War Memorial and are to be submitted to Museum Manager Michael Fryer at [manager@niwarmemorial.org](mailto:manager@niwarmemorial.org) by 5:00pm on Friday 17 April 2026. Any clarifications or associated questions should be submitted to the same email before 5:00pm on Monday 13 April 2026. Queries can be submitted in writing, and we are happy to meet in person or via Zoom with potential bidders to explore the requirements in more detail.

## 5.1 Evaluation Criteria

Tender submissions will be assessed by the panel using the following criteria and weightings and evaluations will be based on:

	Criteria	Weighting
1	Understanding of the NIWM redevelopment project	15%
2	Demonstrated experience of collections-based museum interpretative design, fit-out and project management including examples of similar projects that have been delivered on time and on budget.	25%
3	Experience of key staff working on this project, including CVs	15%
4	Design methodology and concept	20%
5	Outline proposed schedule of costs and cost management approach, demonstrating value for money.	25%

## 5.2 Scoring

Evaluation criteria 1, 2 and 3 will be scored in accordance with the following matrix (Maximum score of 75%):

	Interpretation
9-10	<b>Excellent</b> – The tender clearly demonstrates detailed and comprehensive understanding of the requirement and provides strong and relevant evidence of the capability and experience needed to deliver the work in accordance with the statement of requirement.
7-8	<b>Good</b> – The tender demonstrates a good understanding of the requirement but may require ongoing guidance and has provided evidence of the capability and experience needed to deliver the work in accordance with the statement of requirement.
5-6	<b>Adequate</b> – The tender has demonstrated the basic understanding of the requirement but will require ongoing guidance throughout the delivery of the project and while it has provided some evidence of the capability and experience needed to deliver the work, there are some concerns that this may not be in full accord with the statement of requirements.
3-4	<b>Poor Response/Limited Evidence</b> – The tender has failed to demonstrate sufficient understanding of the capability and experience needed to deliver the work in accordance with the statement of requirement.
0-2	<b>Unacceptable</b> – The tender does not comply with the requirement contained within the invitation.

The proposed schedule of costs will be scored by ranking tenders in descending value of overall costs. The lowest priced tender will be awarded the full 25%, reducing by each subsequent tender pro-rata until the most expensive.

### 5.3 Interviews

Following shortlisting, a selection of consultants will be invited to deliver a presentation to a panel drawn from NIWM trustees and management. Details regarding the requirements of the presentation will be shared with invited bidders.

Presentations will be made on **Tuesday 28 April 2026** with the successful contractor being notified following a special Board meeting of the Trustees of the NIWM.

Please note that information provided in tender documents, including pricing schedules will be incorporated into the formal contract.