



ARCHIVES: WIGAN & LEIGH: FREELANCE PROJECT CURATOR BRIEF

Contract for: Project Management and curation support for delivery of the National Lottery Heritage Fund - Archives: Wigan & Leigh *Common Threads* - project

Fee: £19,500 plus VAT (inclusive travel & expenses)

Status: Freelance contract

Reporting to: Assistant Business Partner: Archives

Commencement Date: October 2026

Termination Date: March 2028

1. ABOUT ARCHIVES: WIGAN & LEIGH

Archives: Wigan & Leigh is responsible for managing, caring for, and providing access to the Wigan Borough's historic archives, photographic and local studies collections. This service is managed by Wigan Council.

Archives: Wigan & Leigh is based in Wigan Council's state-of-the-art archive facilities which opened in June 2021 within the Grade II listed Leigh Town Hall.

With historic records dating back over 800 years the service collects, preserves and catalogues thousands of records from schools, churches, hospitals, businesses, families, estates, people, and makes them available to the public.

Archives: Wigan & Leigh also includes the following public facilities/attractions:

- An exhibition space dedicated to telling the story of Leigh and surrounding areas in an engaging and inspiring way
- A refurbished searchroom with improved access to collections.
- A Conservation Studio for repairing and digitising archives.
- An education space where schools participate in activities and workshops.

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Common Threads is an exhibition and engagement programme being delivered between September 2026 and March 2028 celebrating Wigan Borough's rich textile

culture and heritage. At its heart is the amazing Victorian dress diary of Tyldesley lady Anne Sykes and key items from the archive collections ([The Dress Diary of Mrs Anne Sykes by Kate Strasdin review – the fabric of Victorian life | Society books | The Guardian](#)).

The project will create new co-produced narratives linked to fashion, design and creativity around these textile focused collections, including through community engagement and socially engaged commissions – all linked to Wigan Borough's historical and contemporary textile culture.

The exhibition will bring to life hundreds of vibrant fabric swatches and personal notes in Anne's diary alongside key artefacts from Wigan Archive Collections to explore dramatic shifts in fashion, and sweeping social change linked to Wigan's textile heritage. Visitors will experience history through the textures, colours, and patterns of Victorian Wigan and how these resonate with contemporary fashion. Common Threads will reveal how fashion connects all of us across generations and continents whatever our background - a universal story of identity, culture, and making.

Project strands include:

- A new exhibition at Leigh Town Hall – to include responses to the Anne Sykes dress diary created by fashion students at Wigan & Leigh College
- Outdoor display boards showcasing silhouettes with designs from the Anne Sykes dress diary – visiting selected sites across the borough
- A talks and workshop programme at Leigh Town Hall and community venues
- Cataloguing of the Spinners Mill Archive by a freelance archivist
- A Digital art commission – working with a local school to create a digital response to the Spinners Mill Archive
- The delivery of a photographic commission in partnership with Open Eye Gallery, mapping fashion tastes and trends across the Borough
- A short-run exhibition at Spinners Mill showcasing the Spinners Mill digital content and new photographic archive

3. OUR REQUIREMENT

Wigan Council is seeking to appoint a freelance Project Curator to work alongside the Archives: Wigan & Leigh team to manage and deliver the Common Threads project. The role will provide additional support to the in-house project team in these specific areas:

- Working with the Archives project team to develop the Common Threads content in the Leigh Town Hall exhibition space. This includes recruiting a freelancer producer to develop digital elements and supporting liaison with

tutors of students on the Fashion & Textiles BTEC course at Wigan & Leigh College, ensuring that project outcomes related to the creation of clothing inspired by textile samples in the Anne Sykes Victorian dress diary are fulfilled.

- Recruitment and management of a socially engaged artist to create a digital art response to the newly catalogued Spinners Mill Archive.
- Support the Open Eye Gallery Producer in the recruitment and management of a socially engaged photographer to document fashion tastes and trends of Wigan residents across the borough to provide a snapshot of local fashion in 2027
- Recruit an artist facilitator to work with two youth groups in workshops to record creatively their response to new photographs
- Work with the Open Eye Producer and Project team to plan the display at Spinners Mill Horrocks Gallery.
- Design, production and installation of freestanding silhouettes of Anne Sykes – working with a freelance designer. These will be located at various locations across the borough, as well as being brought together as a larger installation at selected locations/events.
- Delivery of the Project Plan, ensuring it aligns with project objectives and timelines.
- Management of Project Budget, ensuring all expenditures are tracked and reported accurately to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Management of Project Risk Register, identifying potential risks to the project and developing mitigation strategies.
- Ensuring effective communication and collaboration amongst the project team, including attendance at monthly project group meetings.
- Contribution to project process evaluation by minuting key decisions, recording learnings, monitoring deliverables and organising end of project review with full project team.
- Providing guidance and support to Archives: Wigan & Leigh staff.

4. KEY DELIVERABLES

As part of this scope of work (in addition to supporting the delivery of the strands outlined in section 3), the Project Manager will be required to deliver as a minimum:

- A Project Execution Plan (based on agreed Project Plan)
- A Project Risk Register
- A Project Programme
- Project Budget scheduled breakdown to inform National Lottery Heritage Fund drawdowns
- Client monthly reports (outlining status on delivery of project plan, budget, programme and risk register)
- Record of project delivery and key learnings to inform project evaluation

The Project Manager will be required to attend regular project team and monthly steering group meetings and work with archives staff, project consultants and partners online and / or in Wigan to deliver this contract.

The Project Manager will be expected to work closely with the Evaluation Consultant on the capture of project process evaluation, deliverables and learnings.

5. KEY INFORMATION

The copyright for any original material the contractor produces during the duration of the project will be the property of Archives: Wigan & Leigh and Wigan Council.

The Project Manager will:

- work from their own premises but will also be required to attend sessions and meetings at Leigh Town Hall and across Wigan Borough as necessary.
- be expected to provide their own IT equipment to enable them to fulfil the requirements of the contract, including access to a computer/laptop, the internet and phone, and Google Drive access.
- be expected to provide any materials that they require for the contract. Archives: Wigan & Leigh may be able to provide basic stationary supplies upon request.
- support Wigan Council and funder requirements and share work with project partners as directed by Wigan Council.
- comply with the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Acknowledgement Guidance within all their outputs.
- be required to have professional indemnity insurance (min. £250k). The Project Manager will be asked to produce copies of their current insurance certificates.
- be responsible for managing their own health and safety and those they work with, complying with all relevant legislation. Site specific health and safety regulations should be adhered to.

6. QUALIFICATIONS, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

We are seeking individuals with a proven track record in delivering similar contracts.

Essential

- Strong experience and substantial track record of project management in the culture and/ or heritage sector.
- Demonstrable experience of creating and monitoring a Project Plan.
- Experience of working on National Lottery Heritage Fund projects.
- Experience of successfully developing and delivering new exhibitions.
- Experience of partnership working and developing schemes in collaboration with external organisations.
- Experience of successfully developing and delivering audience development projects that engage new audiences and increase venue visitor figures.

Aptitudes & Abilities

- Strong organisational and planning skills.
- Experience in budget management and financial reporting.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills.
- Ability to think creatively and to encourage others to do the same
- Ability to analyse data to reach reasonable conclusions.
- Able to meet deadlines under pressure.
- Strong IT skills.

Knowledge & understanding

- Knowledge of best practice in project management
- An understanding of the working environment for archives and heritage collections.

- Strong understanding of how different kinds of data can be used to inform evaluation.
- Knowledge of heritage and collections management.

Attitude & Motivation

- Commitment to engaging local communities with culture and heritage.
- Highly self-motivated with the ability to drive the project forward and maintain high standards.
- Ability to negotiate, persuade and advocate.
- Friendly, helpful attitude.
- Take ownership of any task and see it through to completion.

7. TIMETABLE

Key dates from the project programme are outlined below:

Activity	Date
Contract start	October 2026
Deinstall current exhibition	January 2027
Common Threads exhibition launched at Leigh Town Hall	June 2027
Cataloguing of Collections by appointed freelance qualified archivist	October 2026 – February 2027
Socially engaged artist to create a digital response to the newly catalogued Spinners Mill Archive.	September 2027 – Jan 2028
Delivery of Photography commission	June 2027 – December 2027
Touring of Anne Sykes silhouette display boards across the borough	April 2027 – October 2027
Support delivery of series of workshops and talks connected to key exhibition themes. Delivered at Leigh Town Hall, and other venues	June 2027 - February 2028

Exhibition at Spinners Mill showcasing new digital commission and photography archive	February 2028
Organisation of project team review and final evaluation report received	March 2028
End of contract	31 st March 2028

8. BUDGET AND FEES

Wigan Council will be the employer for the commission. The main contact will be the Assistant Business Partner: Archives.

The total fee for this contract inclusive of travel and expenses has been set at £19,500 plus VAT, based on a rate of £275 a day over approx. 70 days – working pattern to be agreed on appointment.

The expectation is that this contract is delivered on a freelance part-time basis as required. The contractor will be responsible for their own travel expenses, tax, National Insurance and pension contributions.

A payment schedule with instalments against key milestones will be agreed between the contractor and Wigan Council at the commencement of the contract. Wigan Council operates 30-day payment terms. All invoices will be paid by 30 days from the date of issue of the invoice. Payments will be made by BACS.

9. METHOD FOR SUBMISSION

Please submit a tender proposal that includes the following:

- Your interest in the commission
- Details of your approach to the commission and a methodology for how you would undertake the work outlined above (maximum 2 A4 pages).
- An outline of relevant project management experience and details for a maximum of three comparable heritage projects undertaken in the last five years – clearly outlining your role within the project.
- Two references.

The deadline for proposals is: Midnight Sunday 4th October - by email to Helen Raymond at archives@wigan.gov.uk

Interviews to take place Monday 12th October 2026.

Submissions will be scored in line with the weightings as laid out below.

Criteria	Weighting
Interest in commission	10%
Methodology and Approach	30%
Experience	40%
References	Not scored
Capacity	20%

For further information or to arrange an informal conversation about the contract, please contact Helen Raymond, Assistant Business Partner - Archives at helen.raymond@wigan.gov.uk

