



Blackpool Council



AV Content Creation (including Software) Brief/Scope of Works - Overview

Contract Dates: March 2021 to March 2022

Two part procurement process:-

Closing date for Selection Questionnaire: 12.00 Noon 20 November 2020

Closing date for Main Tender submission: 12.00 Noon 29 January 2021

Interview date Main Tender: 10 February 2021

Blackpool Council is seeking a professional and experienced AV company to develop and produce the AV content for Showtown – the museum of fun and entertainment, Blackpool's first museum and heritage based visitor attraction.

Background to Showtown

Blackpool Council is creating Blackpool's first ever museum, Showtown - the museum of fun and entertainment. It will tell the extraordinary, rarely-shared stories of Britain's first mass seaside resort and its unrivalled role in the development of British popular entertainment over the past 150 years.

An immersive and engaging experience aimed at family audiences, Showtown's 1,200sqm of themed galleries are designed by Casson Mann. They feature exciting activities, audio-visuals and displays featuring around 800 items from our Blackpool Heritage Collection and from our partners and supporters including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Music Hall Society and private collections.

The museums consists of six themed galleries:

Beside the Seaside

Visitors are invited to step inside Showtown and into a multimedia stage set of Blackpool's seafront. Watch a stunning 17 metre seaside beach panorama come to life celebrating Blackpool as the first mass seaside resort and its iconic beach. See how holidays have changed, or have they? Perform your own Punch and Judy show and meet some of the characters who have entertained holidaymakers over the last 100 years and gave birth to Showtown.

How's Tricks?

Visitors go behind the scenes in a Blackpool magic shop and have fun exploring practical jokes and magic tricks. Meet some of the amazing magicians who learned the tricks of their trade in Blackpool and discover Blackpool's importance to magic. See the incredible gallery of magicians who have performed in Showtown.

Roll Up! Roll Up!

Our visitors step backstage into the world of circus and listen to stories from incredible circus performers. Find out why Blackpool is an international centre for circus. See stunning circus costumes and amazing props. Then step into our circus ring and become part of the show.

It's Showtime!

Visitors explore a model townscape celebrating Blackpool's theatres and go through the stage door to find out more about the producers and stars of Blackpool's shows and popular entertainment. Have a go at ventriloquism or playing along with George Formby. Are you the next comedy star?

It's Better with the Lights on

Our visitors enter our Lightworks workshop and step into the shoes of the designers and creators of the famous Blackpool Illuminations. Create your own illumination design and discover the history and magic of the UK's oldest and greatest free light show.

Everybody Dance Now

Step onto the dance floor and get dancing. Discover Blackpool's iconic role in dance, from the spiritual home of ballroom to a centre for Northern Soul. See the glittering ballroom outfits and marvel at the skill of their creators and the talent of professional dancers.

A group of three animated animal characters lead visitors through Showtown bringing humour, guidance, information and surprises through their distinctive personalities. They may introduce some of the AVs, form an animated 'screensaver' or heckle each other and our visitors. Together this donkey and seagull trio provide continuity throughout our visitors' experience at Showtown.

Showtown's donkey knows the history and people of Blackpool better than anyone else. She can quote gags and lines from any of Showtown's performers and is on first name terms with the great and the good of the town. Her showbiz swagger mixes with her day-dreaming self. Her mind often wanders and her mouth goes with it. Our donkey is still awaiting her name – unlike the Blackpool's unofficial 'town criers', jokers and hecklers, our seagulls Barker and Spieler. Barker is the chief heckler, cynical, sharp and (seemingly) with all the answers. Spieler is younger, more naïve and prone to make mistakes and cause confusion. Together they are a traditional double act with a master and apprentice-type relationship. It is Showtown's ambition that these three characters are voiced by well-known figures in the northern comedy circuit.

The Showtown venue, itself, is currently in development within in the landmark Sands Resort Venue Hotel building on the Golden Mile, next door but one to Blackpool Tower. The Sands will be Blackpool's first 5* hotel and leisure complex, due for completion in 2021. The museum will then follow. When it opens, Showtown will have a dedicated street-level entrance and shop on Bank Hey Street and will occupy the first floor of the new complex.

Visit www.showtownblackpool.co.uk for more information.

Our Target Audience

Showtown is targeted at both tourists and locals. The primary audience will be families.

The primary research carried out in 2015 and repeated in 2016 revealed that:

- the audience profile is not a traditional museum visitor profile
- local and tourist markets were very similar
- traditional museum visitors are our hard to reach group
- value for money is vital
- nostalgia is key and
- animation and activity are important

Potential audiences were segmented using Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's Culture Segments. The research showed that Showtown's potential audience profile is:

- Primary: Entertainment and Expression
- Secondary: Perspective, Enrichment and Stimulation
- Tertiary: Affirmation, Essence and Release (our hard to reach audiences)

Museum operation

The Museum will be open all year round, from 10am-5pm, with the potential for extended opening hours in summer, in line with other indoor attractions across the resort.

There will be an admission charge (an annual season ticket, to gain the advantage of gift aid). The adult ticket price is anticipated to be £7.95. All Blackpool residents will have free entry.

The Museum will be operated for the Council by an arm's length Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, led by a Board of Trustees and a CEO.

Project costs and funding

The project costs are c.£13m. Funding is a mix of public and private sector. We have already secured £4m from the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund, £1.5m Growth Deal Funding, £4.4m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and £1.75m from Coastal Communities Fund.

We are also seeking funding from private sector grants and donations fundraising. Blackpool Council is committing £1m to the capital costs, as well as already having invested significantly in the project's development to date.

Programme

Works are due to start on site by December 2020, and Showtown will open to the public for the 2022 tourist season.

Design Team

The internal design team consists of the Head of Heritage, leading on the overall capital development alongside the Project Manager, Basebuild Project Manager leading on the Basebuild

works and overall design co-ordination and QS services for the basebuild. We have contracted the services of Casson Mann to design the exhibition and Buttress Architects for the basebuild.

The Commission

Overview:

The concept of the exhibition is a behind the scenes view of what makes Blackpool famous – what it takes (and has taken) to put on the summer season. It's the people, the professions, the skills, the history and importantly, the audience – that huge, critical mass of working class British holiday makers.

The space is designed to be like a journey around Blackpool. Visitors arrive at 'the prom' – a linear gallery from where they then move into the galleries to explore 'the town'

Through its exploration of Blackpool, Showtown is a celebration of both the British seaside holiday and British popular entertainment that has international resonance.

The idea of a privileged behind the scenes view is key to the concept so, for example, you are not looking at a Punch and Judy Show (you can do that outside on the actual promenade) but rather you are inside the Punch and Judy booth, listening to the Professors who make the magic happen, touching the puppets, hearing the crowds outside. Similarly, in the Circus area, the visitor does not enter through the ticket office - they 'sneak round the back', lifting up the tent flap to find themselves behind the ring where the clowns are putting on their makeup, there is the smell of greasepaint, the jugglers are practising, the animals being fed.

The exhibition is aimed at a family, cross-generational visit – children, parents and grandparents. But it is not saccharine or patronising. It is as robust in its humour as Blackpool is.

The exhibition is also not set in any one time and it does not present a linear time line or chronology. Instead, it celebrates the threads and attributes that are consistent throughout Blackpool's history and cherry picks the best examples. Hence the exhibition is very much a montage approach both in museum content and design style.

Collection objects are displayed both within cases and on open display. These are supported by a wide range of props and accessories to enhance the narrative. A host of 2D graphic assets are displayed to best advantage as well as providing source material for our illustrators' large scale wall treatments.

A wide range of AV opportunities greet visitors across the galleries from the moment they step through the doors of Showtown. These offer the means of sharing, in a creative way, more assets with visitors than can be accommodated elsewhere within the gallery displays. Each AV element is described in the AV schedule for Stage 1 (SQ) of the procurement process. Each is covered by an individual Exhibition Design Sheet (EDS) and these will be provided to the shortlisted contractors at Stage 2 of the procurement process. These provide a description of each AV with supporting imagery and – in most cases – reference links for further information.

Key design ambitions of the AVs are to embrace their varied narrative roles, from full-on storytelling to ambient effects; to awaken the senses and take visitors on emotional journeys and to create a sense of place – with a twist (behind the scenes). The AVs range in type from animations, through historic footage to newly commissioned film. Their formats are diverse, from very large wall projections to small screens. In some areas the AVs need to work with surfaces and screens as physical elements within the story – where a group of ballroom dancers makes a projection surface or a screen is a ‘mirror’.

Running throughout Showtown are the trio of animated characters – a donkey and two seagulls. These provide introductions, interventions and comedic commentaries.

A key ambition within Showtown is to bring together many voices within the galleries. These can be well known celebrities, icons of the entertainment world and members of Blackpool’s communities. All have an equal share in presenting Showtown and its storylines to our visitors. It is our expectation that the AV contractor will either have talented and versatile, in-house, scriptwriter(s) available or will sub-contract this work. The Design Team is keen to liaise with the contractor on the tone and nature of the script ‘voices’ to ensure they complement the overall scripting and the aims and ambitions of Showtown. A Showtown style guide is available.

In looking to achieve this, Showtown has ensured that contributions to the galleries content truly reflect this ambition. The range of AV elements plays a key part of this endeavour to ensure the widest possible representation within Showtown. It is our hope and belief that this will lead to recognition and ownership of Showtown by its community of visitors.

Throughout the galleries, there are significant opportunities to involve current and former performers that are and have been key to Blackpool’s success. This is an important strand of the Showtown project. We are committed to involving and reflecting Blackpool’s talents wherever appropriate.

Opportunities include working closely with key contributors - a ventriloquist, a magician and others - in order to capture the core content of an AV or interactive element. Alternatively, they may also involve linking/working with talented local performers and individuals to create support material. This is especially pertinent in a range of AVs such as the evolution of popular dance Aunt Sally projection – where talented local dancers could provide the choreography and dancers to capture the content. The Showtown team has a well-developed network of current and former performers that will help inform options in this area.

The AV contractor needs to be able to demonstrate how they have worked flexibly around such close collaborations, including respecting and supporting collaborators’ needs, expertise and professional experience. The Showtown team is looking for a contractor with an active interest and desire in creative collaborations on the AV elements. We believe this will bring energy, relevance and local pride to Showtown that goes beyond narrower definitions of Social Value. The appendix on Social Value provides current thinking in this area. This element will form part of the scoring for within the procurement process. The Showtown team will be available to provide some guidance and support around particular participants.

Blackpool Council and the Showtown team champion fair pay and working standards. For professional appearances and collaborative work there is an expectation that Arts Council and/or

Equity Rates will be paid for such input. The contractor should allow for the cost of such involvement within their bid. There is a ring-fenced element of up to £70,000 in the budget to support this.

There are two, distinct, co-creation elements within this AV tender working with the Showtown Learning and Engagement team. One involves working with a group of young people, in a facilitated setting, on a film about two particular sideshow performers, Jolly Alice and Colonel Barker (Pro_2.1.2). The other is to produce a film on circus performers (Pro_3.2.1) the music for which is to be commissioned by the Showtown Learning and Engagement team. The composer is highly significant for the Blackpool circus setting and will write the accompanying musical score in collaboration with the AV contractor. These are part funded through Showtown's Learning and Engagement Activity Plan. Joint working arrangements for these two elements will need to be clearly mapped at the scheduling stage and agreed by both the AV contractor and the Showtown team.

The team behind Showtown is committed to enabling access to as wide an audience as possible, as is Blackpool Council and the organisations providing funding support for the development. The Showtown Access and Inclusivity Policy and the linked Showtown Style Guide are included in the tender documents and will make useful reading as part of this tender.

Part of the commitment to widening access is to undertake testing/consultation for areas of the Showtown exhibition. To date the graphics and exhibition designs have been tested with focus groups. Samples of AV elements will also be presented to relevant focus groups after the first edit stage, working in conjunction with the Showtown Learning and Engagement team.

Showtown is keen to ensure that AV material gathered within this contract, but not used in final edits, can be available for other possible uses – eg temporary exhibitions, talks and presentations, website content etc.

Across Showtown the suite of AV elements is accompanied by manual interactives for all ages and a broad range of photo opportunities. There is something for everyone, whatever their age and interests. Showtown will be a theatrical, immersive and fun 3 dimensional environment.

As an ongoing concern, Showtown will need to manage the AV system internally. The contractor – in liaison with the AV Hardware contractor – will be expected to ensure this is built into the system. It is expected that the contractor will provide training for staff, a maintenance plan and maintenance manuals. There is a 12 month defect liability period (following practical completion) to cover any snagging issues. The lifespan of the galleries is 10 years.

Key objectives:

- Work in an innovative way, pushing the boundaries to create dynamic, memorable and exciting AV products that reflect the core pillars of fun and entertainment that are key to Showtown's ethos
- Create a varied suite of AVs that awaken the senses and take visitors on an emotional journey – from full on storytelling to ambient atmospheres
- Provide software design, development and production for all AV elements in Showtown
- Provide AV content including scripting (where required), storyboarding, filming and animations, editing and installation

- Create AV productions, in line with the requirements of the AV schedule, which celebrate Blackpool's cultural stories and increase access – wherever possible - to the 2D assets from Blackpool and popular entertainment collections in creative ways
- Ensure that all AV productions appeal to Showtown's target audiences
- Ensure all AV productions are accessible to as many people as possible
- Complement and enhance the interpretation and 3D design, in particular the behind-the-scenes approach to storytelling, as designed and created by Casson Mann
- Work within the allotted budget

Key outputs:

Schedules that require a Signed NDA before release:

Appendix B – Final Script

Appendix C – Access & Inclusion Policy

Appendix D – 3D Design Drawing Package

Appendix E – Blackpool Graphic Design Specification

Appendix F – Text Style Guide

Appendix G – AV Hardware Schedule

Requirements of the contract:

- Develop a cohesive design language. For example, each gallery might have a different theme and different style but it is important that there is some cohesion to the overall vision of Showtown's AV products
- Work with the exhibition graphic design style developed by Why Not Associates; the branding and wayfinding by True North and Placemarque and in conjunction with the Showtown style guide
- Manage the AV production process from brief to installation, commissioning and staff training
- Liaise with the Exhibition Design team, Showtown Curatorial and Learning and Engagement teams during the briefing and design phase
- Provide and confirm a schedule for individual elements of the AV requirements including the development, production and installation programme detailing the stages, review and comments periods and final sign off by the Exhibition Design team and Showtown team
- Present AVs at all key stages of the process for agreement to proceed – as per agreed programme/schedule
- Provide agreed sample AVs, at first edit stage, for focus group testing and feedback
- Engage an experienced scriptwriter, with a proven track record, that can demonstrate an ability to write for our target audiences in order to reflect the voice of Showtown
- Work to develop the donkey and seagull characters from the brief provided, into animated personalities and hand over all rights to their characterisation
- Work collaboratively and flexibly with performers (former performers and so on) to create the content for certain elements of this brief as agreed by the Exhibition Design team, Showtown Curatorial and Learning and Engagement teams
- Work collaboratively and flexibly with the Showtown Learning and Engagement team, facilitators and participants on the two co-creation strands of the project
- Managing the project programme effectively and efficiently
- Managing the project budget effectively and efficiently, liaising with the Cost Manager where appropriate
- Pay appearance fees, Arts Council and/or Equity Rates to third parties involved in providing input into the collaborative AVs.

- Liaise with the networks contractor, Exhibition Design team and AV hardware contractor throughout the construction period of the contract and, particularly, in the lead up to uploading onto AV hardware and on-site installation and testing
- Attend approval meetings and provide regular progress updates to the Showtown/Museum Project Manager throughout the production period
- Provide usage rights for all content created by the contractor (during the contract) in addition to the final edits
- Advise client on Sign off of final finished versions
- Liaise with the Main Exhibition Fit Out contractor, AV hardware contractor and the Exhibition Design team to ensure all AV materials are suitably accommodated within the Showtown galleries
- Supply media in the required format agreed with the AV Hardware contractor in order to ensure all AV productions are effectively uploaded, tested and commissioned in a timely manner in preparation for the launch of Showtown
- Complete the AV production tender package on programme and to budget
- Comply with the 12 month defect liability period for any snagging purposes.

Required Knowledge, Skills and Experience:

We are looking to appoint experienced, talented and creative practitioners with a proven track record of working within the cultural sector and demonstrable evidence of the following:

- A proven track record of working on large scale AV projects within complex networks including multimedia interactives and visual experiences. This is not limited to the heritage and visitor attraction sectors
- Recognised reputation for the highest standards and quality of work in film production and animation
- Working with 2D and 3D assets as integral parts of AV productions
- A proven track record of scriptwriting that reflects project ambitions and the associated tone of voice
- Extensive experience of working successfully in a collaborative and flexible manner
- Excellent planning, programming and communication skills
- Excellent and extensive experience in budget management
- Excellent and extensive experience in risk management
- Accredited to ISO 9001 or similar – Quality Management Systems – or provide evidence of quality management processes within the organisation
- Accredited to ISO 14001 or similar – Environmental Management – or provide evidence of quality environmental management processes within the organisation