



## AV Hardware - Brief/Scope of Works - Overview

**Contract dates:** March 2021 to March 2022

**Closing date for tender submission:** 12.00 Noon 27 November 2020

**Interview date:** 14 and 15 December 2020

Blackpool Council is seeking a professional and experienced AV hardware company to produce/procure, install and fully commission the AV hardware components and their 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 the home of 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 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](http://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.

The Designs have been agreed to RIBA 4 and work packages will be tendered from winter 2020.

## **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 whole 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, the smell of greasepaint, the jugglers are practising, the animals being fed.

The exhibition is very much 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 that forms part of this tender package.

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’.

The AVs planned for Showtown range from single person narratives to complex, layered tableaux and from large scale interactive opportunities to small screen presentations. 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.

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.

It is essential that the AV hardware contractor liaises/works closely with the contractor for the AV content creation (including software) and the main exhibition fit out contractor, throughout this project. All these elements of the Showtown project are being tendered simultaneously.

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.

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 business, Showtown will need to manage the AV system internally. The AV hardware contractor – in liaison with the AV content creation contractor – will 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:**

- Deliver, efficiently and effectively, all Showtown’s AV hardware needs in order to fulfil the ambitions of the new museum attraction
- Provide a seamless service for the AV hardware, working with the AV content and main exhibition fit out contractors
- Provide creative solutions to any challenges/possible opportunities within the scheme

- Ensure that the AV content is installed, commissioned and tested smoothly and efficiently within the hardware supplied
- Ensure the installation process for the AV hardware dovetails smoothly with the main fit out programme
- Work within the allotted budget
- Ensure all AV products 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
- Provide an AV system that is easily and effectively managed by the Showtown team

**Key outputs:**

Schedules that require a Signed NDA before release:

Appendix C - Text Style Guide

Appendix D - Preliminaries & Conditions of Contract

Appendix E - AV Hardware Drawing Packages

Appendix F - 3D Design Drawing Package

Appendix G - Blackpool Graphic Design Specification

Appendix H - Access & Inclusion Policy

Appendix I - AV Software Schedule

**Requirements of the contract:**

- Manage the AV hardware package from brief to installation, commissioning, testing and staff training
- Liaise with the Exhibition Design team during the briefing, production and delivery phases
- Provide and confirm a comprehensive schedule for individual elements of the AV hardware requirements including procurement, commissioning, installation, testing and review stages leading to final sign off by the Exhibition Design team
- Ensure all AV materials are suitably accommodated within the Showtown galleries in line with the ambitions of the design scheme
- Ensure all AV materials can be managed, centrally/behind the scenes, by the Showtown team once the museum is operational
- Liaise with the main exhibition fit out contractor, AV content creation (including software) contractor, interactive makers and the Exhibition Design team throughout the construction period of the contract and, particularly, in the lead up to uploading AVs onto hardware, on-site installation, commissioning and testing
- Attend approval meetings and provide regular progress reports to the Showtown/Museum Project Manager throughout the programme – as per agreed programme/schedule
- Advise client on readiness for Sign off of final stage of the programme
- Managing the project programme effectively and efficiently
- Managing the project budget effectively and efficiently, liaising with the Cost Manager where appropriate
- Complete the AV hardware tender package on programme and to budget
- Provide a detailed user manual complete with maintenance instructions, guidance and appropriate training
- Comply with the 12 month defect liability period for any snagging purposes

**Required Knowledge, Skills and Experience:**

We are looking to appoint highly experienced contractors for the Showtown AV hardware tender. We need contractors with a well-recognised reputation for working within the cultural sector on such skilled work showing 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. Please note, this is not solely limited to the heritage and visitor attraction sectors
- Recognised reputation for the highest standards and quality of work in the supply and installation of integrated AV hardware
- Commitment to accessibility
- Commitment to sustainability
- 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