

GROUNDWORK

CHANGING PLACES
CHANGING LIVES



Land of Oak & Iron Trust
Celebrating Heritage, Culture & Landscape



LOIS Project Commissioning Brief

Project Title: Land of Oak & Iron Story (LOIS) – Commission to provide an enhanced heritage experience at the Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre (LOIHC), Winlaton Mill, Gateshead integrated with the vision of the Land of Oak & Iron Trust (LOIT)

Client: Groundwork North East & Cumbria (GNEC) in partnership with the Land of Oak & Iron Trust (LOIT)

Introduction

The Land of Oak & Iron Story (LOIS) aims to safeguard and celebrate the industrial, natural, and cultural heritage of the Derwent Valley and beyond. Building on the success of the original Landscape Partnership Programme from 2016-2020, the project will reconnect communities with their heritage through research, education, conservation, publications, and digital innovation.

As part of this vision, National Lottery Heritage Fund, LOIT and GNEC are investing in capital works to improve heritage interpretation and engagement at the Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre (LOIHC) and across the wider Land of Oak & Iron landscape. This will include updating existing interpretation, creating a digital archive, and delivering innovative technologies that broaden the community's access to heritage.

We are now looking for a supplier who will work with the client and LOIT to design and deliver an appropriate scheme to create, improve access to, and display Land of Oak & Iron heritage. The Map Room within the LOIHC will become a key hub for heritage across the Land of Oak & Iron area. It will;

1. Serve as a dynamic focal point within the Heritage Centre, enabling users to explore stories of heritage sites, natural landscapes, and cultural traditions through accessible, user-friendly platforms. These installations are intended not only to showcase the area's rich history but also to leave a lasting legacy of digital innovation; widening participation and ensuring that the stories of the Land of Oak & Iron remain visible and relevant for generations to come.
2. Be used as a meeting/activity room for a range of other community or commercial activities; and should be readily convertible from one use to another.

Our supplier will refresh the LOIT website and provide training to ensure staff can effectively use all new resources. They will also work with the LOIT Research Group to convert their current SVG mapping data to easily useable and accessible digital formats.

This commission will be key in providing interpretation and heritage resources to connect local communities and visitors with the industrial, natural, and cultural heritage of the Land of Oak & Iron in engaging and inclusive ways.

The total budget for this work is £86,250 inclusive of VAT.

1.The Commission

The following have been identified as requirements:

- A collaborative approach with project partners
- Detailed design and delivery plans.
- Detailed digital designs, including a new platform for mapping data
- All necessary professional fees associated with project delivery.
- A new screen wall(s)
- Signage & Interpretation
- 1 no. monitor
- Upgrade of the existing pedestal touch screens in the entrance
- Corridor/Café/Courtyard Signage & Interpretation

- 2 no. wall mounted Touch Screens
- 2 no. table mounted Map Screens
- Appropriate and flexible furniture, for example an Oak & Iron custom-built map table and chairs, room storage etc
- Ceiling mounted projector & screen
- Updated signage/interpretation at Prudhoe & Consett Visitor Centres.
- Video and sound recording equipment
- Interpretive corten posts at the LOIHC entrance and at Prudhoe and Consett Visitor Centres echoing interpretation across the area.
- LOIT website refresh
- Loading the platform with content and delivering associated training for project stakeholders

Submissions should clearly demonstrate the following:

- a. Integration with current and future digital content (documents, oral histories, mapping images etc).
- b. Work with the Client and LOIT to create clear costed proposals
- c. Provide intuitive touchscreen functionality for all ages and abilities.
- d. Advise and provide a clear plan for accessibility.
- e. Allow for the flexible use of the room for a range of activities including desk-based, theatre style and cleared floor activities.
- f. Provide appropriate interpretation to contribute to the enhanced heritage experience.
- g. Clear, robust and secure proposals for high-footfall, public-use environments.
- h. Training for staff and volunteers to change and update content regularly after fitting and set-up.
- i. Work with the Research Group to to train key group members in the creation of interactive maps.
- j. Work with the LOIT and refresh it's website so it aligns effectively across the commission

Item i. above has a budget of £5,000.

Item j. has a budget of £2,750.

The total budget for the commission is £86,250

2. Scope of Work

The chosen supplier will begin work in September 2026 and shall be completed by November 2026. The following stages are suggested:

2.1. Design & Development

- a. Work with LOIT and GNEC to co-design improvements to spaces, interpretation, user experience and interfaces.
- b. Develop a flexible platform that can be loaded up with the project's initial content and easily updated by volunteers with new content post-installation.
- c. Ensure all accessibility standards are met across the commission, including WCAG 2.1 where applicable.

2.2. Integration

- a. Create and integrate interactive digital maps being developed by the LOIT research group.
- b. Enable offline functionality in case of internet disruption.
- c. Provide a simple content management system (CMS) for LOIT trustees and volunteers.
- d. Refresh LOIT website to align with delivery.

2.3. Installation & Training

- a. Supply, deliver, and install the digital and physical resources at the Heritage Centre.
- b. Train trustees/staff/volunteers to update and maintain the systems.
- c. Provide manuals and technical documentation.

2.4. Support & Maintenance

- a. Provide a warranty and per annum costs for an ongoing technical support package.
- b. Provide options to enable future upgrades and scaling (e.g., additional languages, VR/AR integration, holograms etc).

2.5 Timeframes

- a. The overall LOIS project is over a period of 2 years from May 2026 to May 2028
- b. This commission will be started by 1 September 2026 and must be completed by November 2026.
- c. Strict adherence to timeframes will ensure smooth delivery of the project and alignment with other elements of LOIS project delivery.

3.Deliverables

The successful supplier will be expected to deliver a creative, flexible and enhanced heritage experience at the Land of Oak & Iron Heritage Centre and across the wider area. All work must be robust, secure, and designed for sustained public use within a busy heritage environment.

Alongside the hardware, the supplier must provide a content management system (CMS) that enables Land of Oak & Iron Trust trustees and volunteers to update and maintain the digital mapping platform and interpretation screens with ease. Training sessions will be required to ensure trustees and volunteers are confident in operating the system and refreshing / uploading new material.

A comprehensive maintenance and support plan will be required, setting out clear arrangements for troubleshooting, system updates, and technical support. In addition, the supplier will conduct user-testing to confirm that the installations are fully accessible and functional for a wide range of audiences, producing a short report to demonstrate compliance with accessibility and usability standards.

4.Submission Requirements

Suppliers should provide a clear and detailed approach along with a cost breakdown that itemises fees, hardware, software, installation, furniture, interpretation, website refresh, training and support. Proposals should also set out any ongoing costs for maintenance or upgrades, enabling the client to make an informed decision on value for money and sustainability. Proposals must include a realistic delivery timetable that meets the requirements of 2.5b. above.

Suppliers must be able to demonstrate proven experience in the design and delivery of interactive heritage and digital interpretation projects. They should provide a minimum of two examples of leading similar projects along with references. A strong track record in accessibility and inclusive design is essential. CVs of the key team members who will be involved should be included.

Submissions should demonstrate a clear understanding of the Supplier's responsibility for Health and Safety throughout the project. Details of your approach and experience should be detailed.

Submissions must demonstrate a clear commitment to sustainability, including the use of durable, eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient systems. Finally, Contractors must provide assurances of long-term support, including options for future upgrades and continued partnership working

5.Selection Criteria

Proposals will be assessed by the LOIT and Groundwork against Quality and Cost. Contractors may be invited to a short Teams interview to present their proposals.

- Quality of proposal: 60% (Including clarity, detail, knowledge, experience, skills, capacity, health and safety, sustainability etc)
- Cost of proposal: 40%

All submissions should be marked *Land of Oak & Iron Story* and returned via email to:
GNEC.Development@groundwork.org.uk no later than 24th July 2026.

For an informal discussion about this opportunity please contact Sarah Barton on;
Sarah.barton@groundwork.org.uk or 07483 963 457