

The Leach Pottery

Interpretation Design Brief

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Overview

Purpose of commission	To develop interpretive design for The Leach Pottery redevelopment project, working alongside the Interpretation Lead and interpretation fit-out contractors to deliver a new and enhanced visitor experience across museum, commercial, studio, and learning spaces on site.
Location	Remote working and at The Leach Pottery, St Ives, Cornwall
Budget	£75-£80,000 not including VAT but inclusive of all expenses, with a budget of £530,000 for interpretation build and production
Status	Freelance consultant
Reporting to	Ellie King, Interpretation Lead, and Sara Matson, Project Lead, both of The Leach Pottery on behalf of Libby Buckley, Director

Introduction

Over the next three years, the Leach Pottery will undertake a £9.6 million expansion and redevelopment, which includes the construction of a new environmentally sustainable Learning and Production Centre and Community Hub. The existing museum and gallery shop will be re-imagined and updated. A new central entrance will be surrounded by a landscaped courtyard where visitors can sit, take refreshments and watch potters at work.

Dow Jones Architects have designed a building reflecting the Leach Pottery's history and Cornish location that will provide 500sqm of new and 837sqm refurbished space to support increased pottery production, learning and participation, and improved visitor experience.

The development will provide St Ives with a world-class living heritage site, which will:

- Create a community hub where people can develop their creativity, improve their wellbeing, support each other and bring clay to life through learning opportunities
- Create year-round jobs through apprenticeships, training and increased pottery production
- Conserve the Grade II listed buildings onsite and create a more resilient organisation
- Attract off-season tourism to St Ives through increased museum visitors and commercial course participants

The Leach Pottery has been a destination for training and creative exchange since its founding in 1920. The capital development of the site will secure the continuity of this reputation nationally and internationally with an increased focus on providing access to clay for Cornish communities.



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About The Leach Pottery



The Leach Pottery, founded in 1920 by Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada, is among the most respected and influential studio potteries in the world. Over the last hundred years it has forged the shape of Studio Pottery in the UK and beyond.

The Leach Pottery was reopened to the public as a Museum, Shop and Studio in 2008. As a registered charity, we are an ambassador for pottery, a champion for the handmade, and an open door for communities to access creativity. We are never happier than when we welcome people to our home, whether visiting the Museum and Shop or getting their hands dirty at one of our workshop sessions.

Inclusivity and exchange are ever more important in this changing world. Our dedication to handmade products, created using local natural materials, demonstrates that sustainable practice, beauty, and quality co-exist.

Our Vision

The Leach Pottery is a place of creativity, connectedness and being well, committed to bringing clay to life, celebrating its rich history and supporting a vibrant future for studio ceramics.

The Leach Pottery advances and promotes pottery as an art form using craft and skills to bring beauty, enjoyment and well-being to life. We do this through inspiring, making, training and teaching, engaging people, and promoting the Leach legacy.

Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure that the Pottery continues to thrive for many years to come, providing opportunities to support emerging talent, develop new thinking, and to help everyone access great art.

Our Values are at the core of all our activity, planning and creativity:

1. **Quality & Care** in everything we do
2. **Sustainability** for our organisation and the environment
3. **Creativity** in the work we make, and the work we do

4. **Welcoming** by inviting, understanding and creating friendships & exchange whilst championing inclusivity & diversity
5. **Living Tradition** of cherishing and passing on legacy, knowledge, skills, ethos and the site of the Leach Pottery whilst continuing to evolve and challenge creative boundaries

About the Project

'Being inspired, nurtured and enriched by the Leach Pottery whilst bringing clay to life.'

Since opening 17 years ago, the Leach Pottery has developed an Arts Council England Accredited Museum, a professional team and an active programme. The Capital project we are embarking on, and the associated Activity Plan will enable us to build on this work and take it to another level by inspiring new making and thinking in Studio pottery. We will also build on existing partnerships, develop new ones and focus on our local community by bringing clay to life through making.

The project has six distinct aims which will help deliver the vision:

1. **Welcome** - Provide a warm welcome to everyone, broadening audiences and deepening relationships.
2. **Celebrate and share the Leach legacy** - capturing the history of the Leach Pottery from a variety of sources and maintaining a living tradition and the site of the Leach Pottery, whilst continuing to evolve and challenge creative boundaries.
3. **Creative Hub** - Establish a creative hub, where creativity through clay will flourish and people can access formal training as well as informal opportunities to learn about and experience the well-being benefits of working with clay.
4. **Restoration of Historical Buildings** - Conserve and restore the historical buildings on the site for future generations to enjoy.
5. **Economic hub & sustainable charity** - Become economically sustainable and able to expand commercial activities in line with ambition and need.
6. **Environmental responsibility** - Take action to reduce our negative environmental impacts, through research and understanding and through adoption of more environmentally friendly technologies and practices.

Each aim underpins activity across the project's spectrum, with specific outcomes and outputs shaping our evaluation framework. This will ensure the capital project will maintain and enhance a unique skills-based heritage asset for the benefit of St Ives and provide the opportunity to develop key areas of the enterprise with a focus on investment in production, learning and improving the visitor experience by:

- Increasing the ability to employ skilled craftspeople, growing the apprenticeship scheme, increasing productivity, and broadening the customer base
- Enhancing the community skills programme- delivering more classes and projects, increasing participation from underserved communities
- Increasing support for local enterprise development – including more mentoring, skills development, and access to international audiences – supporting recovery post COVID-19
- Increasing the capacity of the school's programme and improving the quality of the experience



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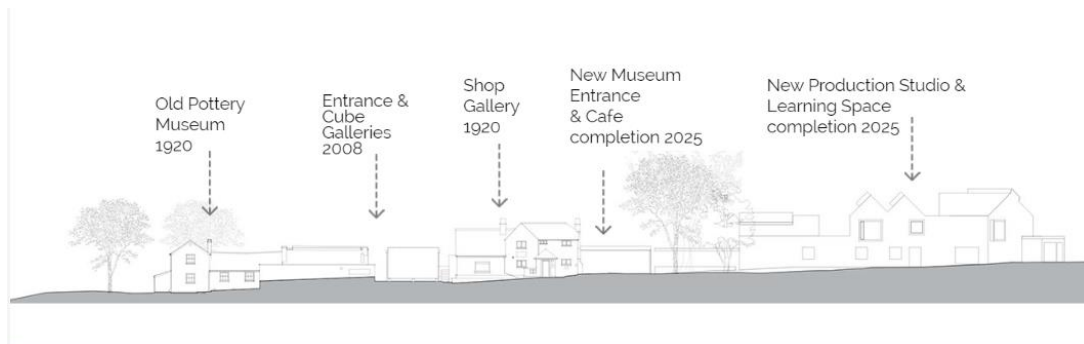
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- Supporting the delivery of more commercial education programmes – attracting visitors throughout the year
- Improving the visitor experience through improved entrance, development of cafe, audio-visual room in the museum, better visitor flows and interpretation, leading to increased visitor numbers and repeat visits
- Provision of multi-use community room for use by the local community
- Reducing environmental impact through the adoption of more environmentally friendly technologies

The project will deliver:

- 1,337 m² of new and refurbished accommodation to support increased pottery production and Learning and Participation activities at the Leach Pottery as well as an improved visitor experience
- An increase in pottery production, sales (onsite and online) including those of local potters leading to an increased turnover providing long-term stability for the organisation.
- Learning opportunities for over 3000 people, with some programmes specifically created for the local community who are currently underserved
- The creation of 10.53 FTE permanent posts at Leach Pottery by 2030/31 including 2 new apprentices per year as well as more opportunities for volunteers.
- Increase in visitors to the site from 8,000 to 15,000, supported by improved visitor experience and increased marketing capacity.

For every £1 invested, £2.62 of benefits will be realised for St Ives.



At the beginning of March 2024, we reached RIBA Stage 5 in the construction programme, and work began on site. Beginning with enabling works (constructing a temporary kiln shed), the new building is being undertaken first and will be completed by November 2025. This will be followed by the refurbishment of Pottery Cottage and renovation work on the historic museum buildings and its 2008 extensions, which will be completed in July 2026.

After receiving a £3.49m National Lottery Heritage Fund (Delivery Phase) award in June 2024 to support our capital and activity programmes, an allocation of £530k + VAT was made for interpretation and exhibition materials.

Proposed Visitor Experience

The team at The Leach Pottery have developed an overarching interpretation framework for the site, identifying the key aims and objectives, desired character of the site, and overarching interpretation themes for content.

Aims and Objectives

For the Organisation

- To create a more welcoming space for visitors, with easier navigation and orientation, a more welcoming entrance, and clearer information about the Leach offer
- To create a space which lives up to, and communicates, the international reputation of The Leach Pottery
- To develop a site which empowers staff across the organisation to fulfil their work

We would like Visitors to Know

- Why pottery important as a craft
- That Leach is synonymous with pottery
- About the local and global connections of Leach: East, West, North, and South
- That Leach is trying to be a sustainable organisation – in its production processes, our connection with clay as a natural material, and in our values as an organisation

We would like Visitors to Feel

- Joy and fun as a sense of stimulation, enrichment and enjoyment from connecting with clay, having a go, and finding appreciation in the beautiful
- Creativity, curiosity, and imagination
- Pride, especially for local residents
- Connected to local and global networks in the past, present, and future – promoting the idea that Leach is a living heritage asset
- Welcome, safe, able to ask questions, and not be judged
- Inspired in feeling the enjoyment and love of clay
- Emotionally and almost spiritually connected to craft and all that flows from it as a practice and a concept

We would like Visitors to Do

During the visit, we want visitors to:

- Bring clay to life
- Come together with others through making
- Hold pots, buy pots, and love pots
- Have the opportunity to touch clay, make something with clay, and engage in other craft activities

After the visit, we want visitors to:

- Be inspired to make
- Become part of Leach as a living heritage asset – with the idea that ‘we are all one Leach’

- Continue to bring clay to life
- Support studio potters and pottery as a craft

Key Characteristics and Qualities

- Pride and joy are the prioritised emotional experience of the site.
- There should be stimulation and enrichment for visitors – communicated by having a go with clay, and feeling the way potters feel
- We would like to communicate a sense of the ‘flow’ experience of pottery, which can feel spiritual, transcendental, and revelatory
- There should be peace and contemplation and a way to disconnect from the outside world at Leach
- Internal excitement, inspiration, and inquisitiveness by creating connections with clay
- There may be anticipation for the visit from those on a ‘pilgrimage’ to Leach, and enlightenment at connecting with the dynamic experiences available

Key Content Themes

The overarching theme for the Leach Pottery interpretation is:

The Leach Pottery has a long and continued tradition of developing artist-potters and celebrating the ethos that everyone can be creative with clay.

It is proposed that there are five main interpretive strands, as follows:

1. **People** – Bernard Leach, his friendship with Shoji Hamada, potters at the studio and the worldwide connections, and the ethos that at Leach, ‘everyone can be creative with clay’
2. **Processes** – The basics of clay, the process of making a pot (physical, chemical, spiritual), and the experience of working with clay, the Leach method, and experiments with more sustainable making
3. **Pots** – Standard Ware, aesthetic and usable qualities of pots, the ethos of making as an embodied, joyful experience
4. **The Pottery** – Leach at St Ives, the St Ives community, and global and local connections between East and West, the Leach Pottery offer on-site, pottery production and sustainability
5. **Principles and Philosophies** – Bernard Leach’s influences and inspirations, what it means to be an ‘artist-potter, the embodied experience of working with clay, the unique Leach method/influence on pottery, ideas about sustainable making and Leach as a sustainable organisation

In further development, there are two key interpretive devices we would like to use across site to create a visitor-centred sensory and emotional experience. These are:

- The idea of ‘What is a pot?’ Used as a device to encourage visitors to see pots as the product of the person who made them, and their influences, choices, and approaches in the process of making. We will explore different ideas of ‘what is a pot’ across the site,

concluding with visitors forming and contributing their own ideas of ‘what is a pot’ by the end of the visit.

- The idea that ‘Leachness’ is not one fixed ideal, but is evolving and ever-changing, due to the influences and connections of everybody who engages with Leach. By promoting the idea that ‘everyone can be creative with clay,’ we are keen for the visitor experience to be the start of a visitor journey of engaging with pottery as a craft and, potentially, influencing ‘Leachness’ in the future.

The Leach Pottery Spaces for Interpretation

Interpretive design covers several different spaces across the site, including museum, commercial, learning, and studio spaces. The various spaces and anticipated requirements for interpretation design are as follows:

Space	Out of Scope	Interpretive Design Requirements
Entrance space, including reception and café	Architects will complete a full fit out with lighting	Welcome information boards, signage, graphics, and any additional interpretation elements in space (e.g. videos, café table stands, vinyl)
Shop	Architects will complete a full shelving fit out with lighting	Signage, additional graphics as required (e.g. vinyl), plus templates for commercial information and artist bios
Selling exhibition space	Architects will complete a full shelving fit out with lighting	Signage, additional graphics as required (e.g. vinyl) plus templates for commercial information and artist bios
Learning spaces	Architects will complete a full fit out	Signage, any additional graphics supporting site-wide interpretation, which is likely to be on the external building and in entrance spaces
Working pottery studio	Architects will complete a full fit out	Signage, any additional graphics supporting site-wide interpretation, which is likely to be on the external building and in entrance spaces
Introductory museum exhibition space (with Government Indemnity Scheme spec cases)	Basic lighting	Full interpretive design for cases and shelving layouts, fittings and fixtures, mounts, full graphic panels and other interpretation elements, plus lighting design
Indoor Stairwell	N/A	Any additional graphics (e.g. vinyl) and signage
Outdoor spaces	N/A	Outdoor interpretation panels, signage, layout and display of co-produced community tiles, and layout of rest areas
The Make Space	Basic lighting, existing cases	Full interpretive design for cases and shelving layouts, fittings and fixtures, mounts, full graphic panels, design of interactive make spaces for

	and shelves if usable	visitors, additional interpretation elements as required, and lighting design.
The Old Pottery	The Old Pottery is a 'living museum' type space and architects will have completed restoration and conservation works	Additional shelving and cases where required, layouts, fittings, fixtures and mounts where required, graphic interpretation panels, and lighting where required. We expect this space to utilise several interpretive devices including AV, Augmented Reality, Projections and Soundscapes) to create an engaged sensory and tactile experience for visitors.
The Cube Gallery (temporary exhibition space)	N/A	Minimal permanent interpretation, but to include basic layout of cases and shelving, fixtures and fittings, and any permanent interpretation (e.g. vinyl graphics)
Cross site elements	N/A	All signage and navigation, providing a coherent site look and feel
Marketing and commercial elements	N/A	We would like to conduct a review of current branding and for the designers to develop some broad branding guidelines for the organisation, plus a series of templates for marketing and commercial materials for use in the shop, café, and reception areas (e.g. pricing labels, artist biographies, activity and event posters)
Digital	N/A	We would like the designers to develop a broad template for digital materials to provide a coherent look and feel in digital spaces, including the website and online shop

This list is indicative and may be subject to change as the project progresses.

Scope of Works

Considering the interpretation framework and site requirements above, the scope of works for this tender are as follows:

- Reviewing plans and documents and becoming familiar with the aims and objectives of the project, the client team and the significance of the collections
- Attend online and onsite meetings as agreed, with the client, architect and wider design team
- Provide timely information to the client, architect and design team, as requested
- Alongside the Interpretation Lead, revise the RIBA 3 Interpretation Framework and develop the concept designs for all display and interpretation areas on site
- Development of design up to RIBA Stage 4-7 as required for production and delivery

- Ensure that the design for galleries, displays, and interactives are appropriately durable and can cope with visitor footfall and handling by visitors of all ages
- Work with Interpretation Lead to:
 - Develop layouts, floor plans, elevations and case and shelving layouts for the required spaces
 - Regularly consult with architects and capital works design team (initially with Project Lead and Director)
 - Develop detailed interpretation plans including objects, text, AV elements, and interactive experiences
 - Develop specifications for interactive, digital, or sensory experiences and support the commission and delivery of these elements
 - Identify materials and methods of construction
 - Develop a detailed cost plan for construction
 - Respond to audience consultation regarding interpretation and design, including co-production groups
 - Checking as-built dimensions and specifications before installation
 - Develop a detailed timeline with key milestones of exhibition design, production and installation
 - Support with obtaining permissions for use of third party materials including drawings, photographs, film/video, digitised data, oral testimony and audio
- Create a range of visuals for exhibition designs, including concept visuals for public consultation and presentation to stakeholders
- Development of power, data, and lighting design for gallery spaces that integrate with the proposed services and architectural lighting track designs
- Development of showcase layouts, object mounts and bespoke hanging systems (where relevant) for selected display objects
- Fully develop required graphics and artworks ready for production
- Take responsibility for health and safety aspects of the exhibition design, including implications for their installation, operation and maintenance
- Advise on the tender brief for the build contractor, including requirements, budget, cost plan, and workflow
- Collaborate with Interpretation Lead and Project Lead and appointed build contractor on the production and delivery of interpretation build
- Liaise with the Project Lead and the architect on capital build works across the site to ensure a coherent visual identity and the continuation of capital elements such as lighting, fit-out, and layouts
- Liaise with the project team, staff, trustees, volunteers, project board, architects, build contractors where required, etc
- Support compliance and quality checks and snagging on site
- Respond to issues as appropriate in the defects period schedule
- Deliver progress updates as agreed throughout and support post-delivery project review

Outputs

- Outline statement of proposed design approach
- Concept drawings and other required design elements for a revised RIBA 3 Interpretation Framework following any further NLHF or client feedback
- RIBA 4 Technical Designs based on approved RIBA stage 3 designs – including visualisations, full layout, elevations, materials and construction
- All graphics and artworks, including text panels, images, signage, and online elements
- Brand guidelines and marketing templates
- Templates and guide for online spaces look and feel
- Provide production information and specify work packages for full production costing and tender process
- Supply relevant tender response information
- RIBA 5 construction issue designs
- RIBA 5-7 support the fit-out with site visit(s) (advise the Interpretation Lead and Project Lead on installation and quality checks)
- Compile a snagging list with the Interpretation Lead and Project lead
- All close-out information, including a comprehensive O&M file, as-built drawings, final artwork files, all raw and finished audio, AV and digital content, and staff and volunteer training; assist with Health and Safety updates as required

Distribution and Creative Commons

- All documents, plans and designs must be provided in a format suitable for electronic distribution and for hardcopy reproduction as needed
- All new digital content developed for the exhibition will be subject to Creative Commons licencing requirements. For more information, please see the NLHF'S [Advice on understanding our licencing requirements](#)

What We Are Looking For

We are keen to appoint an interpretive designer who can produce a cross-site design concept that speaks to the vision, values, and ethos of The Leach Pottery. We are therefore looking for a design team who:

- Can relay a cohesive vision for the best cross-site visitor experience of this unique site
- Are creative and imaginative, and experience working with arts and crafts organisations is desirable
- Shows alignment to the project's vision and ethos of the Leach Pottery as a place where everyone can be creative with clay
- Has experience of working with natural materials to produce a design which is in harmony with the Leach Pottery site in terms of studio pottery production and craftsmanship
- Has experience of working alongside architects to ensure coherence between capital works and interpretation design across site
- Has experience of developing sensory and tactile experiences for permanent displays

- Shows alignment with the Leach Pottery's values as a sustainable organisation, and experience developing sustainable design solutions
- Has experience of utilising digital interpretive solutions in a considerate manner to produce visitor experiences that feel disconnected from technology
- Has experience working with build contractors and supporting project management of interpretation build and production
- Has experience of developing interpretation across diverse spaces, including entrances, cafés, shops, and online spaces
- Has experience working with organisations with living heritage assets and commercial operations
- Has experience of working on projects which have co-produced elements
- Shows alignment with Universal Design Principles to develop inclusive and accessible spaces across sight, physically, intellectually, and cognitively. Experience working with traditionally underserved audiences and incorporating audience needs into designs is desirable

Budget Information

- The design budget allocated to this work is **£75-80k**. This is a fixed fee (i.e. not subject to proportionate increase along with build costs) and will cover all elements outlined above: it is inclusive of expenses but exclusive of VAT
- The project has allocated a budget for all interpretation build elements outlined above at **£530k**. This includes the purchase of all display cases, shelving, lighting, graphic production, and procurement of any additional interpretive elements, such as AV
- The Interpretation Lead and Project Lead will manage the budget at The Leach Pottery, but it is expected that we will collaborate with the Design Team and Interpretation Build Contractors on the allocation
- Final sign-off for all budget spending is by the Director of The Leach Pottery
- All procurement and commissioning of additional elements outside of the design brief will be done directly by The Leach Pottery, but we anticipate collaboration between the Interpretation Lead, the Designers, and the Interpretation Build Contractors on the specifications for these elements

Proposed Timeline

The anticipated timeline for this work is outlined below. This is subject to change, especially with regards to the schedule for the completion of the capital works build. A more detailed timeline will be developed as the project progresses.

Deadline	Activity
Thursday 6th March 2025	Tender for design brief goes live
Midday Monday 7th April 2025	Deadline for submissions midday
W/C 7th April 2025	Shortlisting process

Thursday 24th and Friday 25th April 2025	Round one online interviews
Tuesday 6th to Thursday 8th May 2025	Round two on-site visit and interviews
Friday 9th May 2025	Award of contract
Mid-June 2025	RIBA 3 Interpretation Framework signed off
September 2025	Out to tender for build contractor
October 2025	The Leach Pottery Museum spaces close
December 2025	RIBA 4 completed
January 2026	Commissioning of additional interpretation elements (e.g. display cases, AV, sensory and digital experiences, mount maker)
February 2026	All technical drawings completed ready for production
March 2026	Production starts
June 2026	On site install begins
August Bank Holiday 2026	Partial opening (entrance, café, shop, Temporary Exhibition Gallery)
October Half Term 2026	Full opening
30th November 2026	End of contract

How to Apply

The deadline for applications is Monday, 7th April 2025, at midday.

Please submit applications to Project Lead, Sara Matson by email at projectlead@leachpottery.com

To apply for this contract, please submit a proposal document including the following:

1. Details of direct relevant experience, including examples of similar work delivered within the last 3 years
2. Information on your assumptions and opportunities of the brief, including your understanding of the project vision and what we are looking for
3. Your proposed approach to the project, including methodology and timetable, and how you intend to support achievement of the scope of works
4. Your fee proposal (fixed lump sum) plus a budget breakdown via the outlined scope of works and outputs. Please also include the day rate of team members for the project and proposed expenses, plus a rate card for additional work beyond the scope
5. Name and contact details of 2 clients from similar work who can be contacted for a reference
6. Information on professional insurance and/or indemnity cover
7. A summary CV of proposed team members for the project

For any further clarifications or questions about the brief, please contact Sara Matson, Project Lead, via email at projectlead@leachpottery.com



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Assessment Process

The decision to award a contract will be based on our assessment of the following criteria:

Award Criteria	Weighting
Value for money	25%
Quality of response to the brief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension of Brief • Method • Budget Breakdown • Programme 	25%
Affinity/fit with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the project vision (including craft ethos) • demonstration of desired criteria 	35%
Demonstration of previous work and experience	15%

Shortlisted candidates will be first invited to an online interview to present their proposal to the interview panel. A second round of interviews will take place on-site, including a walk-round and familiarisation of the site followed by an interview.

The Leach Pottery is run by the Leach Pottery (St Ives) Trust limited, a registered charity (No. 1111263) and is an accredited museum (2386).