



# Exhibition Design Brief

Mineral Gallery - Royal Institution of Cornwall

September 2023

## 1. Introduction

Royal Cornwall Museum has an exciting opportunity to create a major long-term exhibition: Minerals and Mining, highlighting the museum's internationally significant collection of minerals and the importance of geology in Cornwall. The exhibition will inspire, deepen understanding and engage interest in the unique mineralogical landscape of Cornwall.

This exhibition will encourage people to be aware of our geological landscape and understand how it is intrinsically linked to life in Cornwall in the past, present and our future. The exhibition will be based in the Rashleigh Mineral Gallery, enhancing and developing the existing mineral gallery display. It is our ambition to create a space with a **WOW** factor that makes the most of the traditional feel of the existing gallery, and provides a combination of storytelling, showcasing collecting and digital learning to fully engage all audiences. We are keen to retain the current curation and ensure that we continue to support our academic partners, learning programmes and general visitors.

We are keen to employ a more sustainable way of exhibition production and explore ways to repurpose existing (wooden) display cases, consider sustainability and longevity in equipment and fixtures, minimise waste and carbon footprint, and use sustainable materials.





## 2. Background

In January 2020, the museum closed to the public for eight months to start a process of radical change and to carry out emergency maintenance work. The museum leadership team changed, with new Board members, a new co-leadership model with the Executive and Artistic directors bringing in a new vision, operating model, and five-year plan.

The museum hit further challenges in 2022 when a sudden halt in grant funding meant an uncertain future. This moment has passed. We have bridge funding secured and capital grant funding confirmed to invest in the development of the museum. Our focus is on transforming our museum, its sustainability, the physical spaces, the visitor experience, and audience engagement.

By 2026 the Royal Cornwall Museum will have become a compelling visitor destination, a vibrant, thriving multi-arts community hub. It will attract over 60,000 visitors a year and all its activities will be underpinned by a robust, agile, and sustainable operating model.

## 3. About The Royal Institution of Cornwall

The Royal Institution of Cornwall is a community-focussed museum, art gallery and archive which houses nine galleries and holds approximately 1,000,000 objects. The RIC is a membership run charity.

Royal Cornwall Museum cares for many of the most significant objects and archives from Cornwall's history, natural environment and art, that collectively hold the identity of this small nation, providing insight into Cornish life, culture, and global connections. We use our public spaces, collections, and creative programme to make positive change for our communities.

Royal Cornwall Museum is at a pivotal time in its 200-year history. We are embarking on a phased transformation project that will build sustainability to become more financially resilient and secure our future by transforming the organisation into an exciting multi-arts space for our communities.



## Our Vision

Cornwall is unique. The seas and the landscapes, its language and its minerals, as well as countless generations of Cornish people who have lived and worked across this land, have all combined across the generations to make Cornwall a place like no other.

At the very heart of Cornwall and its cultural life, the Royal Cornwall Museum is a centre of exploration and learning. Using the eclectic collections of Cornish culture, art, antiquities, archaeology, science, and natural history we take people on a journey from deep underground, up into the sky, around the world and way back in time. In doing this, we use our collections to help our communities look forward together.

Our plan is to transform the museum into an exciting multi-arts community space, where people come together to share and enjoy creative activities, where they can be inspired to take part and enjoy life-enriching cultural activities.

The role of museums is changing. Our vision and values reflect this change, while recognising that the founding principles that were established back in 1818 still hold true today. The RIC's activities, approach and decision-making will **always** be driven by its charitable objectives, vision, and values.



## Charitable Objectives

To advance the education of the public through the study and knowledge of literature, natural sciences, archaeology, history, ethnology, geology and the fine and applied arts.

## Our Values

- Shared Vision, Purpose Driven
- Collaboration and Imagination
- Open and Inclusive
- Environmentally Responsible

## 2022-26 Strategic Priorities

1. Achieve financial sustainability
2. Build audiences & engagement
3. Secure capital Investment to repair and improve our buildings and our visitor offer
4. Improve care and management of our collections
5. Develop our capacity
6. Environmental sustainability – net zero carbon by 2030

## 4. Project Summary

Gallery Size: 154m<sup>2</sup> (7.5m x 20.5m)

Duration: Permanent exhibition for the Rashleigh Mineral Gallery, expected lifespan 10-15 years

## 5. Project Context

This project is part of a phased transformation of the Royal Cornwall Museum that will create a sustainable visitor destination which plays a significant part in Cornwall's cultural offer and creates a vibrant multi-arts community asset in the heart of Truro.

The project is being funded through Truro Town Deal <https://www.trurotownfund.com/> and forms part of phase 1 of the transformation project.

Summary of the transformation project phases:

	Outline	Funding sources	Complete by
Phase 1	Redevelop the mineral gallery and create a digital lab	Truro Town Deal - funding secured	July 2024
Phase 2	Secure the building fabric; essential repairs to the roof, rainwater goods, rendering repairs and timber replacement.	DCMS Arts Council England MEND - funding secured	May 2024
Phase 3	Complete the redisplay of the ground floor permanent galleries; the Heart of Cornwall Gallery, the Nature Gallery and exterior landscape and garden improvements	Cornwall Council Good Growth SPF decision due October 2023	March 2026
Phase 4	Develop the upper floor galleries, improve physical access from the street front, create a new access core and enhance commercial areas.	Funding to be sought	March 2027

## 6. Project Vision

We want to create an inspiring space where the significance of the minerals in our collection is shared and celebrated in a way that engages many audiences. These will inspire creative thinking, help build connections and promote curiosity and learning.

We would want to create an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

Environmental responsibility is important to us. We want the design to consider and reflect sustainability in approach, materials and delivery. We will retain and enhance the traditional look and feel of the gallery, including the curation and will upgrade existing wooden exhibition cases to make the collection more accessible.

We would like to create a space that evokes museums of the past and creates a sense of awe and wonder. Every object will be accompanied by a physical label, and digital interpretation will be used in an unintrusive way to enhance our understanding by providing storytelling elements that will engage wider audiences along with layered interpretation for specialist audiences.

A digital lab will be incorporated that creates space for expert talks to be live streamed, for live demonstrations using our collections and for film. The lab will support general visitors, special events and school workshops, with flexible seating to support different events.

The project will be realised through a collaborative process with the Royal Cornwall Museum team, stakeholders and consultants working on parallel projects in interpretation planning and brand development. The design of the space will align with our emerging brand and support our interpretation strategy.





## 7. Audiences

The wider transition project sets out the journey we are on to make Royal Cornwall Museum a valued community hub and thriving visitor attraction in the heart of Cornwall. It is our aim to grow visitors from 30,000 2022 to 60,000 visitors in 2026 and engage with more diverse people. This project is a key part of achieving this ambition, alongside our programme of exhibitions and events.

We want the exhibition to be appealing to local people, families, school groups and tourists who already visit the museum, but we want to ensure that, in addition, the exhibition attracts and supports researchers and those with multi-sensory needs.

## 8. Content

The exhibition will develop, raise and address the following key themes:

1. Geological landscape and the minerals of Cornwall.
2. Mining in Cornwall and its social and environmental impacts, historic to present day, and our connections across the globe.
3. Mineral collecting and key people behind the collection.

The exhibition will be drawn from the museum's collections and content developed in partnership with other institutions and partners. The exhibition will reveal the significance of the mineralogical landscape of Cornwall and will encourage people to be aware of Cornwall's geological landscape and understand how it is intrinsically linked to life in Cornwall in the past, present and our future. Key stories will be explored through iconic objects, imagery, and AV (footage on digital panel screens).

The exhibition will use a combination of new and re-used exhibition cases, digital and physical interpretation, individual object labels and more detailed information in digital panels. The exhibition will incorporate a digital learning lab that enables live streamed talks, hands on activities, demonstrations and presentation of film footage. The majority of the exhibition space will retain the look and feel of a traditional museum, encouraging a sense of awe, inspiration, yet comfortable and engaging. The digital lab will sit within the space and will need to complement the main display. The space can be more interactive, inviting people to sit down, take time to engage more deeply in the subject, and feel comfortable.

## 9. Interpretation aims

The exhibition will explore Cornish minerals and mining in an accessible, imaginative, and interactive way:

1. Welcome all visitors, inspire engagement and encourage people to share their own stories, thoughts, and prompt discussion.
2. Create an atmospheric and visually striking space, enhancing the existing design, and develop a vibrant space that promotes connection and inspires the imagination.
3. Tell a clear yet richly textured narrative, drawing out stories to support dialogue and shared understanding.
4. Support a range of visitors and access needs, and show a diverse range of people, creating a sense of inclusion.
5. Take a multisensory approach and use the juxtaposition of objects, stories, AV, artworks etc., allowing multiple ways in and many points of connection.
6. Take an environmentally sustainable approach to the design and delivery that lasts throughout its duration.



## 9. Design approach

The exhibition should reflect the values of the Royal Institution of Cornwall. We are looking for a conscious, sustainable design approach. Designers will need to take a collaborative approach, working with the RIC team in response to stakeholder consultation, the interpretation strategy and brand review.

Accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do. The exhibition needs to be well-lit, with clear and legible text, fully wheelchair accessible, have multi-sensory elements, support neuro-diverse visitors and have seating points with arm rests.

The gallery has a functional LED light track, but internal case lighting needs to be improved.

Security of objects and environmental conditions must be considered with the RIC team.

Designers will be expected to take on the role of CDM /Principal Designer for the project, should be able to demonstrate their capability to dispense that responsibility and should cost for the time it will take.



## 10. The Brief

An experienced Interior / Exhibition Design team is required for the design and build of this project.

### Deliverables

- A detailed design specification developed collaboratively with the Brand design team, RIC team and in response to consultation and the interpretation strategy.
- Delivery of the exhibition design scheme in response to the brief, creating improved interpretation for the mineral collection
- The design, installation, content and set-up of a digital learning lab
- Exhibition lighting
- Co-deliver at least one workshop with the Brand design team



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