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# Old Deptford Library

## Archive Consultant Brief



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April 2026

### 1.0 Overview

The Arthouse Partnership is inviting tenders from a suitably qualified Archive Consultant to assess and preserve the archive as part of the repair and renovation project at the Partnership's home – the old Deptford Central Library. The project successfully achieved a Development Phase grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund).

The appointment is for the Development and Delivery Phase. This document sets out the scope of work required for the Development Phase only. At this stage in the process, we do not know if any additional work will be required in the Delivery Phase. Should it be identified that this additional work is needed, then this scope will be developed and agreed at the end of the Development Stage. We would then anticipate commissioning this work from the appointed consultant at that time.

The Consultant is required to work in consultation with the Partnership and other appointed professionals – in particular the Activity, Engagement and Interpretation Consultant and Project Manager.

### 1.1 Role Purpose

The Project Archivist will be responsible for the professional assessment, preservation, and organisation of the existing archive held at Old Deptford Library. The role will ensure the long-term physical and intellectual preservation of the collection, improving its accessibility for future generations while working within recognised archival standards and best practice.

### 1.2 Person Specification

#### Essential:

- Professional qualification in archives and records management or equivalent experience.
- Demonstrable experience of working with historic or heritage archive collections.
- Knowledge of artists archives and copyright including NHLF guidelines on Creative Commons Licensing.
- Strong knowledge of archival preservation principles and standards.
- Experience of arranging and cataloguing archival material.
- Ability to work methodically, independently, and to agreed project deadlines.
- Excellent written documentation and reporting skills.

#### Desirable:

- Experience working with library or local history collections.
- Knowledge of working with artists or artist studio archives.
- Knowledge of community or place based heritage projects.
- Experience advising on digitisation or access projects.
- Familiarity with funding or grant supported heritage work.
- Experience of working on NHLF projects.

#### Values and Approach:

The Archivist will bring a sensitive, inclusive, and respectful approach to working with historic material, recognising the cultural and community significance of Old Deptford Library and its collections.

### 1.3 Fee

Please provide a fee and breakdown as per the Form of Tender. We have an £8k budget, exc. VAT for the Development Phase.

We are flexible on how you approach this – you can choose full time for a shorter period, 1 day a week for a longer period, or anything in between.

## 2.0 About the Project

### 2.1 Who we are

The South East Arts London (charity number: 1162739) and Lewisham Art House Limited (Registered Society, 28058R) partnership have secured major funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver its ambitious plans to repair and renew the Carnegie Grade II-listed Old Deptford Library (ODL).

The £368,000 development grant was awarded to develop its “Creativity, Access and Cooperation: A future for the Arthouse partnership at the Old Deptford Library” project which will reinvigorate and celebrate the ODL. The project will maintain and extend its current function as a community arts centre and artists’ studios – the ‘Arthouse’ – by building on our heritage of, and commitment to, creativity, access and cooperation. The project will launch a new chapter for the building and its contemporary arts and community programme.

This is a conservation-led building project, which will improve our heritage management through training and increased staffing, deliver powerful community arts and heritage programming, increase visibility on the street and through communications, and loudly celebrate our building and its story.

By improving spaces and facilities for artists and the public, embedding the building and programme firmly into the townscape and local area, enhancing our work with local residents and partners and taking full advantage of the opportunity to take on a long- term lease for the ODL, we will develop a sustainable operating model that both protects our built heritage and our unique history of cooperation.

Over the next 18 months or so, we will develop detailed plans to unlock a further £2.8M from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and secure match funding of £1.4M.

The project is being delivered through the Lewisham Art House (LAH) and South East Arts London (SEAL) partnership.

LAH is an artist-led cooperative, established in 1992. Since March 1994 it has occupied the Old Deptford Library, registering it as an Asset of Community Value.

Within it, LAH has 46 artists’ studios, a gallery and a workshop, and delivers a programme of artist development, education and outreach, open house heritage events, and contemporary visual arts and music events/workshops. It works in partnership with a range of community/creative partners including Goldsmiths College, Deptford X, Youth Build, Heart n Soul and Brockley Max.

SEAL, the charity, was established in 2014 by LAH in order to take on a full repairing lease on the Old Deptford Library and to control the extent of their liability for future repairs. SEAL consists of seven board members, including one “resident artist member” which ensures connection and communication between the two bodies. Both parties are supported by the work of the General Manager who acts for both.

The ODL was designed by the architect Sir Alfred Brumwell Thomas, whose previous commissions included Belfast’s City Hall and Woolwich town hall. It opened on 18 July 1914. It is a grand building in the baroque revival style, with façades of Berkshire bricks, with porticos, entablature and balustrade in Portland stone. It has three floors and a footprint of c.1440m<sup>2</sup>.

The external and interior condition is poor with major repairs required to the roof and external elevations, and to original features including timber parquet, marble staircase and foyer, book lift, original oak shelving, and treatment/repairs of timber doors and Morris & Co. windows. The walls also require replastering/painting.

The parties’ joint aims are to:

- Secure the Lease in order to repair and renew the ODL; preserving it for future generations, and making it function better for artists and communities within the borough of Lewisham and its environments.
- Protect, adapt and strengthen the Cooperative Society/Artist Membership model which has proven to have significant impact on local communities, building management and artist development, and to become more resilient in the future.
- Commission external advisers to assist the Parties in their adaptation and renewal plans, including architects, consultants with expertise in conservation, business and activity planning within the local environment/relevant sector.
- Plan programmes that renew LAH’s objectives for social/community/art impact and access, and enable those objectives to be realised.
- Collaborate on fundraising activities and applications required to deliver these objectives.
- Develop a business model which is able to generate sufficient income to cover all future maintenance and repair costs.

## 2.2 The Works

SEAL and LAH will repair and renew the Grade II-listed ODL, maintaining and extending its current function as a community arts centre.

This is a conservation-led building project improving spaces and facilities for artists and the public, embedding the building and programme firmly into the townscape and local area, enhancing our work with local residents and partners and taking full advantage of the opportunity to take on a long-term lease for the ODL. We will develop a sustainable operating model that both protects our built heritage and our unique history of cooperation.

### 2.2.1 Repair & renew the Grade II Old Deptford Library on Lewisham Way

The ODL is in a poor state of repair. This project focuses on immediate repairs, with the bulk of funds allocated to the roof. Other repairs include external elevations, timber window/door repairs, dealing with damp, and internal repairs/finishing/floors.

With regards to new works, these focus on facility upgrades and new greening and access works at both the front and rear. Our aim is to create a more impactful and welcoming arrival to the ODL, and to inspire new vision for Lewisham Way creating an improved connection between two town centres – New Cross and Lewisham.

### 2.2.2 Upgrade public facilities & spaces

Currently facilities, heating and lighting are in a poor condition (or non-existent). This project seeks to address this by installing new services, complete reordering of the principal public areas (gallery and community workshop space), with improved toilet and kitchen facilities. It will use the original configuration (the former News and Periodical Rooms) to inform the new layout so that the heritage can be better understood. It will also install new studio space partitions for artists that better align with the historic building whilst not losing the potential for income and creativity.

### 2.2.3 Create & equip new shared/open access areas

At present, access for the general public is limited to the front ground floor spaces. Through this project, we want to open access to other areas. This will include the creation of a new reception/open-access area (where the original reception desk was within the Lending Library) which will be open to the wider community and provide views into artist studios at ground level.

### 2.2.4 Digitise our archive to enable new heritage-inspired programming

Our archive is rich and tells our heritage story. We want to increase access, through digitisation/interpretation, and use it to inspire new programming including a “Discuss and Disseminate” series of activities and events.

### 2.2.5 The heritage-inspired community arts commissions, in collaboration with targeted communities and other stakeholders (please note this is under review)

*“The Lewisham Arthouse has been an amazing and accessible opportunity for Heart n Soul’s young learning disabled and autistic artists...These works have gone on to be shown and used as part of the Imagine Children’s Festival at The Southbank centre.”*

We want our heritage story to inspire new community arts/engagement experiences, and we want to support our artists and partners to help us with this. This project therefore includes funding for a series of heritage-inspired community arts commissions. The briefs would ask artists to respond in collaboration with targeted communities, to our heritage themes of 1) A struggle for space: A public good; 2) Pioneers: Open-Access, “Extra-Mural” & Cooperative; 3) Reclaim & Resist: The interconnection of arts and civic movements.

## 2.3 Timetable

The timetable for the project as a whole is anticipated as follows:

RIBA Stage 2 Presentation	May 2026
RIBA Stage 3 Presentation	September 2026
Development Phase: Review Meeting	September 2026
Development Phase: Stage 2 Deadline	November 2026
Delivery Phase: Capital Works start	May 2027
Delivery Phase: Completion date	July 2029

## 3.0 Schedule of Service

### 3.1 Development Phase

#### 3.1.1 Archive Assessment and Preservation

- Survey and assess the condition, scope and significance of the existing archive.
- Identify preservation risks and prioritise materials requiring urgent intervention.
- Identify and, where appropriate, implement preservation measures, including re-housing, environmental monitoring and basic conservation actions. Agree a budget for the above measures.
- Work with artist members to develop methodologies for sharing materials in their personal archives related to Lewisham Art House.
- Advise on long-term storage, handling and care of archival materials in line with UK professional standards (e.g. PD 5454:2012, BS 4971:2017).

#### 3.1.2 Arrangement and Description

- Arrange and catalogue archival materials in accordance with professional standards (e.g. ISAD(G)).
- Create finding aids and documentation to improve intellectual control and access.
- Ensure accurate documentation of provenance, context, and content of the archive.
- Deliver an audit report of the existing archive.

#### 3.1.3 Collections Management and Standards

- Work in line with recognised archival and heritage sector standards and best practice.
- Develop or contribute to archive policies and procedures, including preservation and access guidelines.
- Maintain clear records of work undertaken during the project.

#### 3.1.4 Access and Engagement (as appropriate)

- Develop strategy that would enable a 'living archive' to grow with the artists and wider community.
- Contribute to discussions around future access, interpretation, or digitisation opportunities (where in scope).

#### 3.1.5 Collaboration and Reporting

- Work closely with project partners, consultants, staff, co-operative members and volunteers where appropriate.
- Provide regular progress updates and a final project report outlining outcomes and recommendations for future care of the archive.
- Deliver a proposed costed approach for the delivery phase.
- Input into the Activity Plan where appropriate.

Please see below a photograph of the scope and scale of the current archive material:

