

Articulating our Pilot Whale: breathing new life into old bones

Poet's Brief

In October 2019, Leeds Museums and Galleries will be putting its Long-finned Pilot Whale skeleton back on display after a long absence at Leeds City Museum. As part of a programme of events and activities celebrating the hanging of the whale, we would like to commission a poet to work with the curators at Leeds to create a poem to mark the occasion.

We anticipate that material and inspiration for the poem will be gathered from individual research and from phone and email conversations with the curators and conservator. The poem would be delivered by 30th September 2019.

The poem needs to be no longer than 20 lines, and suitable for a general readership (please see below for further guidance). It is likely that it will be printed on to the wall around the whale display. Copyright would remain with the author, but Leeds Museums and Galleries would be able to use it for print and online marketing, education and PR purposes.

The fee is £700. This project is kindly funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society and the Friends of Leeds City Museums.

Application

To tender for this project, please send a short covering letter outlining your interest in the project and three examples of your work to clare.brown@leeds.gov.uk (or by post to Clare Brown, Leeds Discovery Centre, Carlisle Road, Leeds, LS10 1LB) by 5pm on 16 August 2019. The successful applicant will be notified by 25 August 2019.

Further context

Our Long-finned Pilot Whale skeleton was collected in 1867 in Leith, Scotland and has a grim history. Fishermen spotted a pod of these whales, managed to strand them and then shot and bludgeoned them all to death.

With over 350,000 people passing through Leeds City Museum annually, this is a great opportunity to engage audiences with the history, biology, conservation and plight of UK Pilot Whales.

The whale's other interpretation (text panels) will be aimed at a wide range of audiences, focusing on how the whale lived and died, as well as how attitudes and behaviours towards whales have changed in the past 150 years. We will increase our conservation message on the back of this exhibit - we would like the public to go away thinking about the impact of fisheries and the persistence of plastic in the marine environment.

This particular whale has a tragic history and we intend to use it to not only connect visitors to our

heritage as a fishing/whaling nation but also as a country of animal lovers and a people who are interesting in bettering ourselves and our environment. Displaying this mammal will allow us to tell the story of the change we have seen in the UK in our attitude to the environment in general and marine life in particular.

Leeds City Museum is a large city centre museum with displays of natural history, social history, archaeology and world cultures. It won the Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museum of the Year Award last year and caters for a wide and diverse audience. We seek to attract and work with the under-fives and their carers, multigenerational families, young people, schools, higher and further education groups, adults and older people. They may be local to Leeds, or they may come from further afield. They may have additional support needs.



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