Temporary Structure Design Tender: Roundabout Refurbishment

Notification for Expressions of Interest for Invitation to Tender for the refurbishment design of Paines Plough's temporary touring structure, Roundabout.

1. Background: Roundabout and the Creative Foundations Fund

Roundabout is Paines Plough's pioneering pop-up, plug-and-play, in-the-round touring theatre, originally built in 2014 and conceived by former Artistic Directors James Grieve and George Perrin, with design by Lucy Osborne and Emma Chapman in collaboration with Charcoal blue and Howard Eaton, and built by Factory Settings.

It is widely recognised as the world's first fully relocatable in-the-round auditorium of its kind. Over more than a decade Roundabout has toured 60+ locations across the UK, reaching over 150,000 people through productions, workshops, concerts and community-led events, and was named 2015 Theatre Building of the Year at The Stage Awards.

In 2026, Paines Plough was awarded £750,000 of funding from the Arts Council England / DCMS Creative Foundations Fund (CFF) to renovate Roundabout as it enters its second decade of touring. This design tender forms part of the delivery of that grant, with refurbishment work programmed to continue into 2027.

This is not a full redesign. The overall geometry, footprint, and iconic in-the-round style of Roundabout will be retained. The commission is for the refurbishment design of the main structure, incorporating updates to the flooring, seating, winch/support system, lighting rig and fixtures, and sound technology to improve sustainability and ensure the structure is fully fit for purpose.

2. Tender Type and Who This Is Aimed At

This is an open, above-threshold competitive tender, procured in line with Arts Council England Creative Foundations Fund grant conditions and benchmarked against the transparency, fairness and value-for-money principles of the Procurement Act 2023 (see Section 6). Paines Plough is a charitable company and is not, in the strict legal sense, a

'contracting authority' under the Act; however, as a condition of CFF grant funding it is following equivalent open-competition good practice.

The tender is aimed at:

- Professional theatre/event structure design practices, designers and architects, with proven experience of temporary or demountable performance structures;
- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), sole practitioners and micro-businesses are explicitly encouraged to apply, alongside larger practices;
- Applicants must be able to evidence prior work on touring, temporary, demountable or modular seating/staging/flooring systems (theatre, live events, or comparable sectors), including rigging/winch systems, with an understanding of integrated theatre sound and lighting design;
- Consortium or sub-consultant bids (e.g. design lead + structural engineer) are welcomed provided a single lead contact is nominated.
- Expressions of interest (EOI) to tender who are from the creative design and build professions such as theatre or artistic stage design are also welcome. A portfolio of previous works for theatre stage and set design or creative experience in bespoke build design will be required.

3. Expression of Interest (EOI) Process and Timeline

Interested parties should first submit a short Expression of Interest (EOI) confirming eligibility and relevant experience. Shortlisted respondents will then be issued the full Invitation to Tender (ITT) pack.

How to register interest	Email recruitment@painesplough.com with the subject line 'RBT Design Tender – EOI', including applicant name, links to web domains and/or portfolios of prior relevant works, and contact details for the ITT pack.
EOI window opens	12.00 noon on 28 August 2026
EOI submission deadline	23.59 [18 September 2026] - 3 weeks from notice of publication (14 working weekdays).
EOI review / response period	Up to 1 week post the EOI deadline. All applicants are notified in writing of outcome, whether shortlisted or not.
ITT Pack issued to shortlisted bidders	[28 September 2026] – full tender pack, drawings and RBT technical archive shared under NDA where required.
Clarification questions deadline	5 working days before ITT submission deadline; answers circulated to all bidders.
Tender (ITT) submission deadline	[12 October 2026] – minimum 2 weeks from ITT issue, to allow for query period.
Evaluation review and interview process	By 26th October 2026 – Evaluation, review and interview period undertaken, all bidders notified, contract award confirmed.

4. Scope of Design Services: (What will be required to be designed by successful applicants)

Paines Plough is seeking a designer/design team to develop key structural elements of the refurbishment of the Roundabout auditorium, as outlined below. The existing in-the-round configurations and broad internal identity are to be retained – refurbishment works will enhance technical performance, sustainability, audience experience, safety and touring efficiency.

A. Integrated external structure and winch system.
B. Refurbished flooring system, with adaptability to a range of surfaces, including uneven and outdoor.
C. Modular seating system adaptations to retain existing aesthetic, while improving installation and transportation requirements, with investigation into alterations to footprint and number of seats.
D. Accessibility improvements, using 2025 Access Audit of the existing structure.
E. In consultation with other designers and contractors, considering improvements to sound and lighting systems, to ensure technology is up to date and fit for purpose.

6. Procurement Notice Details

ACE code reference	Department for Culture, Media and Sport / Arts Council England Creative Foundations Fund – Grant Ref: [TCFF-00827011] Department for Culture, Media and Sport / Arts Council England Creative Foundations Fund – Grant Ref: [TCFF-00827011]
ACE Tender notice	This procurement is being undertaken in accordance with the procurement requirements applicable to the organisation and the conditions of the public funding supporting the project. The Tender value is above that of the Arts Council UK Threshold
Tender notice reference	This tender is subject to the Procurement Act 2023 because the project is funded by Arts Council England and DCMS Below - threshold notice, published with reference to Procurement Act 2023 good-practice standards (see Section 2)
Total value estimate (excl. VAT)	Up to the value of £24,000. Design fee only (fabrication/build costs procured separately). Indicative range to be confirmed by Paines Plough finance team.
Total value estimate (incl. VAT)	£28,800 (VAT at prevailing rate, currently 20%).
Contract dates	Design commission: Start: 28th October 2026 Provisional design completion and sign-off date: 28 November 2026:

	Consultative design management ongoing through the fabrication and manufacturing /installation phases of the project following the combined design process of each phase of the refurbishment programmed to be completed by 07 June 2027.
Procurement category	Services – design consultancy.
CPV classifications	71327000 Load Bearing Structure Design Services: 71200000-0 Architectural and related services; 71300000-1 Engineering services; 7132000 Engineering Design Services: 71328000; Verification of Load Bearing Structure Design Services 79930000-2 Specialised design services; 92000000-1 Recreational, cultural and sporting services (indicative – to be confirmed against Find a Tender classification lists at publication).
Contract location(s)	Design work: remote/UK-wide with site visits to Paines Plough's offices if required. Online meetings.
Participation / SME suitability	Open to SMEs, micro-businesses and sole practitioners; no minimum turnover threshold applied; consortium bids welcomed.
Tender type	Electronic submission only by email (see Section 7).

7. Submission, Documentation and Award Criteria

Associated documentation required with EOI submission:

- Company/practice profile and relevant portfolio (touring, pop-up or demountable structures);
- Names and CVs of the proposed design/engineering team;
- Indicative fee proposal and programme;
- Two references or case studies from comparable prior contracts.

Submission process?
EOI by email to **recruitment@painesplough.com**
Electronic PDF submission only; hard copies not accepted.

Award criteria

Quality of design approach	25% – method statement, understanding of retained geometry, buildability, touring durability, and approach to the winch/rig and lighting upgrade.
Cost	25% – value for money against indicative budget.
Relevant experience/ track record	30% – evidenced prior to work on comparable demountable structures, references.
Sustainability & accessibility	20% – approach to suggested use of materials, weight/transport efficiency, inclusivity of design.

8. Contacts and Associated Documents

- Tender enquiries: James Gibson (Roundabout Project Manager at Paines Plough): recruitment@painesplough.com
- Associated tender documents (drawings, RBT technical archive, CFF grant summary): issued to shortlisted bidders with the ITT pack. Or if specific knowledge is required during EOI phase to help assist EOI submissions, please contact James Gibson.
- Full Invitation to Tender ITT, containing all information required to bid.

9. Equality, Diversity, Sustainability and Reporting

Paines Plough welcomes applications from designers of all backgrounds and is committed to fair, transparent access to this opportunity; applicants may request reasonable adjustments to the EOI/ITT process by contacting the tender enquiries address in Section 8. Bidders should set out, where relevant, their approach to sustainable materials, transport and end-of-life reuse of components, in keeping with Arts Council England's Environmental Responsibility grant conditions.

As this tender is delivered under the CFF grant, Paines Plough is required to report on procurement process, value for money and delivery milestones to Arts Council England. The successful designer will be asked to support this by providing brief progress updates at agreed milestones and by retaining records (drawings, cost breakdowns, correspondence) that may be requested for grant audit purposes. The RIBA 2020 Plan of Work stages are being used by Paines Plough as the delivery framework for this project and should therefore be followed/ used as a template by those tendering services for the project.