

## THE FUTURE OF THE CONFLICT TEXTILES COLLECTION FEASIBILITY STUDY

### BACKGROUND

Ulster University and Conflict Textiles Trust, have collaborated over the 15 years of the existence of the Conflict Textile Collection, and now share a longer term (2-3 year) joint goal of establishing a permanent repository for the Conflict Textiles collection which will: provide a more durable structure for its future; ensure that the collection is used to its full potential in education, research, awareness raising and exhibitions; and facilitate the continued growth of the reach and scope of the Conflict Textiles collection.

#### **Conflict Textiles Trust**

The Conflict Textiles Collection ([www.conflicttextiles.com](http://www.conflicttextiles.com)) is home to a collection of international textiles, together with books, articles, catalogues, films and other related materials, mainly in English and Spanish, though some are in Catalan, German, Italian, French, Japanese, Portuguese and Dutch. At the heart of Conflict Textiles is 271 documented *arpilleras*, appliqué picture textiles, hand sown from scraps of material, many of them owned by The Trust. They originated in Chile and record the makers' responses to conflicts, often experienced first-hand. It also holds other textiles. The approach has been taken up in many countries, and Conflict Textiles is the primary resource on *arpilleras* internationally.

The Trust has been proactive in its outreach and engagement, having organised and participated in over 300 events since its inception, mainly focused on elements of conflict and human rights abuses, in order to stimulate and motivate all sections of society to use the collection as a source of information, for exhibitions, research and educational purposes. The physical collection is complemented by an online repository hosted by CAIN Archive (Conflict and Politics in Northern Ireland) at Ulster University, making the collection globally accessible. This digital archive includes full documentation of all the textiles which have been part of exhibitions (totalling 414 to date) and all the materials relevant to each exhibition.

Until 2023 Conflict Textiles was a private collection supported informally by a range of organisations, including Ulster University. It was then registered as a charitable trust (registration number: NIC109368). It had already registered copyright on the name, Conflict Textiles, and the Logo in April 2021. It continues to be self-funding in that exhibitions are normally paid for by recipients and at times small honoraria are paid by hosting groups. Most time however is contributed voluntarily by the curator. At present it has no long-term source of core funding.

#### **Ulster University**

Ulster University is the largest university in Northern Ireland with three campuses in the region: Belfast, Coleraine and Derry-Londonderry. For many years the university, particularly in Derry/Londonderry, has had a priority focus on the study of divided societies

and conflict, including action research, community engagement and policy analysis and formulation. The Centre for the Study of Conflict was based on the Coleraine Campus from 1977 to 2000, focusing mainly on the Northern Ireland conflict and working with staff across the university. The establishment of INCORE (International Conflict Research Institute) in 1993, initially linked to the United Nations University, was an indication of the broadening focus of interest in divided societies and conflict beyond Northern Ireland. CAIN (the Conflict Archive on the Internet), established jointly with Queen's University Belfast in 1996 and managed by Ulster University in Derry-Londonderry, provides a comprehensive archive and data base, particularly related to the Northern Ireland Conflict. The Transitional Justice Institute (TJI), created in 2003 with staff based in Derry-Londonderry and Belfast, addresses the judicial issues that arise in the transition from a conflicted society and redressing past abuses of human rights to facilitate the emergence of a fair and just society.

In addition to modules in other courses, the University offers an MSc in Peace and Conflict Studies. In all its conflict-related activities the University has taken a multi-disciplinary approach, including deepening the links between the arts and conflict. The University is currently working on plans to further enhance its support for INCORE in Derry-Londonderry, that will include assuming responsibility for managing CAIN.

### **Conflict Textiles and Ulster University**

The Parties to this agreement recognise that there is a natural synergy between The Trust and the University's broad expertise in, and strategic commitment to enhancing further, their activities in relation to peace and conflict studies, and that there is already a long-standing relationship. Mention has already been made of the location of the Collection's digital archive as an associated site of CAIN since 2015. Since 2021 there has been regular collaboration on publications, seminars, research projects and conferences, such as "Accounts of the Conflict" 2012-2014. Since 2020 there has been a permanent rotating exhibition at The University's Derry/Londonderry Campus Library in collaboration with the John Hume & Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace. A similar exhibition space was established at the Belfast Campus library in 2023 and a third will be opened in the Coleraine Campus library in April 2024, both financially supported by the University. Two Conflict Textiles Trustees are closely associated with The University: Emeritus Professor Gillian Robinson, former chair of INCORE and Professor Brandon Hamber, John Hume & Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace.

### **Strengthening the threads of connection for future development**

The Trust and The University value their past collaboration, but the Parties jointly recognise that they are not able to reach their full potential because of the informality of their current relationships and communication between them, and because of the limited funds and personnel available. Both Parties recognise that they would benefit from: a clearer statement of their shared vision; a stronger structural framework; more joint forward planning; regular follow up reviews of activities and consideration of next steps; and overall joint strategic thinking and agreement on new directions that will contribute to achieving the long-term purposes of both Parties.

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### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### BACKGROUND

Conflict Textiles Trust and Ulster University have agreed in principle to the vesting of the Conflict Textiles Collection of over 200 Arpilleras and other textiles, and associated books and other items with the Ulster University (see Background document). The specific arrangements have not been finalised and the Feasibility Study is being commissioned to consider the best way forward and to clarify the most effective means to manage and sustain the collection in order to maintain its significance, and ensure that it continues to be relevant to education, research, policy and public understanding of the negative impacts of conflict through the medium of pictorial textiles.

***In carrying out the Feasibility Study, the conclusions and recommendations should meet specific requirements already agreed by the University and the Trust as set out below.***

#### AGREED BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE COLLECTION

1. The management of the collection is to be organised in such a way that it will remain a living collection that interacts with researchers, students and wider society, and grows in its size, scope and activities.
2. It should be easily accessible on site, and pieces from the collection will also be easily and regularly available for exhibitions, seminars and other events and seminars.
3. Exhibitions of materials in the collection should normally be free to view but those organising exhibitions and other events will be required to cover the costs to the Collection of providing the exhibits and other support services.
4. The Collection and its administration should be located in the North-West of Northern Ireland, either on site at Ulster University or at a suitable location in Derry/Londonderry.
5. The location should be in a convenient location, attractive to people from all sections of the community. It should meet ethical and environmental standards including easy access for the disabled, and environmentally sustainable.

***The Feasibility Study will identify how these requirements can be met at two levels: adequately and ideally.***

***While the Feasibility Study should be made on the basis of meeting these requirements, it will be possible to question them if it seems appropriate and necessary.***

## RESOURCES

In order to maintain and grow the Collection, resources will be needed in relation to facilities, personnel and finance. The University and the Trust have already agreed proposals in each of these areas (see Annex to Memorandum of Understanding)

***The Feasibility Study will review those proposals and consider what will be required in each area and how those requirements can be met to sustain the Collection over the long-term.***

### Facilities

The University and the trust have agreed on what is the minimal space that will be required:

This does not need to be very large, provided it is fitted with appropriate drawers and racks for the textiles. One or two storage rooms will be sufficient, ideally with an additional workroom for administration and sorting of the textiles, particularly when they are dispatched and returned from exhibitions and loans. It should be accessible to the public for consultation by appointment, but would not need to be a drop-in facility.

Ideally there will be access to exhibition space and seminar rooms, possibly shared with other users.

The University is currently exploring some potential locations for the collection. The details of these current explorations will be shared, in confidence, with the success consultant engaged in this feasibility study.

***The Feasibility Study will identify possible locations, including those that the University is currently exploring, consider their advantages and possible disadvantages, carry out environmental and ethical audits, and assess how far they meet the requirements laid out on page one. It will also propose contingency plans, including temporary arrangements if the agreed long term preferred location will not be available for some time, or does not work out in practice.***

### Personnel

The University and the Trust propose:

looking to the future the new body will need two staff: a curator and an administrator/archivist. Also, it will require occasional services of an IT expert, textile artist and a graphic designer.

The University has agreed to consider what personnel resources are already available in house and if resources are available for recruiting externally.

For a number of years the staff of CAIN have provided IT support, but the demands may grow, especially as consideration is being given to a new website using a different operating system from the rest of the CAIN website.

***The Feasibility Study will consider if these arrangements will be adequate, particularly in relation to IT support, and advise on the recruitment of the curator and administrator/archivist, and the basis of their employment.***

## **MANAGEMENT**

The University and the Trust are open to different options for the future custody and management of the Collection:

The Parties are open to The University taking over full management of the collection. Alternatively the collection can be jointly managed by The University and The Trust.

A joint oversight body has been proposed to ensure that the Collection can continue to provide and grow the unique activities and services that are already identified with Conflict Textiles.

***The Feasibility Study will consider the most appropriate ownership arrangements and line management arrangements for staff.***

***It will explore the strengths and limitations on the proposal for a joint oversight body to be established with representation from the University and the Trust and propose membership and working arrangements for it to be able to oversee the future development of the Collection.***

## **Financial Sustainability**

The Initiative is not yet costed or funded, and at present it has no long-term source of core funding. The Conflict Textiles Trust did receive an initial donation of £11,000 and smaller donations for specific projects. Current activities, such as exhibitions, are normally paid for by recipients, and at times small honoraria are paid by hosting groups. Time however is contributed voluntarily by the trustees, mainly by the curator, and the University supports the collection with contributions in kind. The value of these contributions has never been calculated.

As well as options for the overall management of the Collection, there are several options for the financial model within which the Collection operates: as a stand-alone body; as part of the University; or as part of a shared facility, within which it may be able to access resources from the overall funding endowment of the centre; or other options that may be identified. The aim is to make the Collection financially sustainable with a range of income and support streams available to maintain it into the long-term, including charitable donations, contributions in kind, charging for services, etc.

***The Feasibility Study should:***

- 1. realistically calculate the actual costs of the management and activities of Conflict Textiles Trust, including the financial value of contributions in kind from the Parties;***
- 2. estimate the level of demand and cost involved for occasional services such as a textile artist or a graphic designer, and specialist IT support.***
- 3. Consider, in the context of the different management models, what items of expenditure in the future can reasonably be expected to be provided in kind or from University resources, in whole or part;***
- 4. on that basis provide a budget going forward at the current level of activity and with a 25% increase in activity, highlighting unfunded costs, if any;***
- 5. examine different business models for achieving financial sustainability, identifying the possible sources of financial support for each item of future expenditure, including contributions pro bona and by charging for services; and***
- 6. suggest how additional funds could be raised for any shortfall, identifying possible sources of funding.***

***The Consultant will offer a session on funding strategy for those who will be involved in the management of the Conflict Textiles Collection.***

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Consultant will be provided with full access to relevant University Staff and Trustees of Conflict Textiles Trust. They will also be provided, in confidence, with information on current initial discussions regarding one potential location for the collection.

The University and the Trust will agree with the consultant a list of other informants and will endeavour to assist in gaining access to them.

***The report will include a proposed Memorandum of Agreement for the future management of the collection to ensure it continues to be an innovative and vital hub for research, education and public awareness.***

***The report will be submitted by 30 November 2024 and the consultant will be available for an in person discussion of the Study during the first two weeks of December 2024.***

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### CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

#### BACKGROUND

Conflict Textiles Trust and Ulster University have agreed in principle to the vesting of the Conflict Textiles Collection of over 200 Arpilleras and other textiles, and associated books and other items with the Ulster University (see Background document). The specific arrangements have not been finalised and the Feasibility Study is being commissioned to consider the best way forward and to clarify the most effective means to manage and sustain the collection in order to maintain its significance, and ensure that it continues to be relevant to education, research, policy and public understanding of the negative impacts of conflict through the medium of pictorial textiles.

#### Procedures for Implementation

1. It is anticipated that the study will require 25 days.
2. The fee, to be negotiated, should include any expenses incurred.
3. The report will be submitted by 30 November and the consultant will be available for an in person discussion of the Study during the first two weeks of December.
4. Professor Brandon Hamber, the John Hume & Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace, will be the point of contact for the consultant
5. A background paper on the initiative and terms of reference for the study are attached.

**Expressions of interest** to carry out the study are hereby invited from suitably qualified and experienced consultants:

1. In preparation for your expression of interest, please consult the following two accompanying documents: Feasibility Study Background; and Feasibility Study Terms of Reference.
2. The expression of interest (2 pages) should describe relevant experience, proposed methodology and approach to be taken and costings (excluding VAT).
3. A Curriculum Vitae should be provided.
4. Interviews may take place, if necessary.
5. Expressions of Interest should be forwarded by email to Ruth Kyle, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University: [r.kyle@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:r.kyle@ulster.ac.uk) by **5:00pm on Friday 19 July 2024**.

#### Further Information

If you would like further information on the feasibility study, please contact Professor Brandon Hamber, Ulster University at: [b.hamber@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:b.hamber@ulster.ac.uk)