



Media Release

£1 Million Project to Research the Cold War in Museums

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National Museums Scotland has been awarded a grant by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) with the University of Stirling to conduct a £1 million research project exploring how the Cold War features in museums in the UK and Europe. It is the largest research grant ever awarded to National Museums Scotland.

The three-year project, entitled *Materialising the Cold War*, will culminate in a major exhibition about Scotland and the Cold War. The exhibition will be accompanied by schools programming, publications and activity to support the museum sector in engaging new audiences with this period of history.

Three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in a climate of international tension, the Cold War is more relevant than ever. Despite its significance however, it is a difficult story to tell in museums because it didn't escalate to the point of direct confrontation. It was a nuclear standoff, a war that did not turn 'hot' in Europe.

As a so-called 'imaginary war' it is not represented in museums as comprehensively as other conflicts. *Materialising the Cold War* will analyse museum collections and displays across the UK and Europe - covering everything from military and social history to technology, art and design - to understand how the Cold War materialised in a specific national context and ask exactly how it features in museums today.

In addition to weapons technology, the project will examine peace and protest material, civil defence collections, and Cold War culture, exploring the material legacies of the relationship between society, technology, and the military.

Dr Chris Breward, Director of National Museums Scotland said:

"The Cold War casts a significant shadow over the second half of the 20th century, yet the intangible nature of this period of geopolitical tension makes it difficult to convey in museums. This generous grant from the AHRC will allow us to work with partners across the UK and Europe to conduct in-depth research into the representation of the Cold War

in museum collections. Among a number of exciting outputs will be the first exhibition to tell the full story of Scotland's place in this extraordinary conflict."

Professor Judith Phillips, Deputy Principal for Research at the University of Stirling, said:

"This is a significant grant and as such recognises the leading expertise of our academics in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. It marks the start of an important partnership and will explore a fascinating time in world history which has helped shape lives today."

Materialising the Cold War will begin on 1 October. The Principal Investigator is Dr Sam Alberti, Director of Collections at National Museums Scotland and Honorary Professor of Heritage Studies at the University of Stirling. His Co-Investigator is Holger Nehring, Professor of Contemporary European History at the University of Stirling.

UK partner organisations for the project are RAF Museums, Imperial War Museums and V&A. International collaborators are the Norsk Luftfartsmuseum in Bodø, Norway and the Allied Museum in Berlin. Representatives from these organisations and other stakeholders will form a specialist Advisory Board.

Ends

10 June 2021



Further information and images from: Alice Wyllie, National Museums Scotland Press Office on 0131 247 4288 or a.wyllie@nms.ac.uk

Notes to editors

1. National Museums Scotland is one of the leading museum groups in the UK and Europe and it looks after collections of national and international importance. The organisation provides loans, partnerships, research and training in Scotland and internationally. Our individual museums are the National Museum of Scotland, the National Museum of Flight, the National Museum of Rural Life and the National War Museum. The National Museums Collection Centre in Edinburgh houses conservation and research facilities as well as collections not currently on display.
 - Twitter: [@NtlMuseumsScot](https://twitter.com/NtlMuseumsScot)
 - Facebook: www.facebook.com/NationalMuseumsScotland
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2. Ranked among the UK's 30 best universities in the Guardian University Guide 2021, the University of Stirling is committed to providing education with a

purpose and carrying out research which has a positive impact on communities across the globe – addressing real issues, providing solutions and helping to shape society. Stirling is ranked fifth in Scotland and 40th in the UK for research intensity (Research Excellence Framework 2014). Interdisciplinary in its approach, Stirling's research informs its teaching curriculum and facilitates opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration between staff, students, industry partners and the wider community.

Among the top 20 UK universities for student satisfaction (National Student Survey), the University's scenic central Scotland campus – complete with a loch and castle – is home to more than 14,000 students and 1,500 staff, representing around 120 nationalities. This includes an ever-expanding base for postgraduate study.

The University has twice been recognised with a Queen's Anniversary Prize – the first for its Institute for Social Marketing and Health (2014) and the second for its Institute of Aquaculture (2019). Stirling is Scotland's University for Sporting Excellence and was crowned UK Sports University of the Year 2020 by The Times / Sunday Times Good University Guide.

As a signatory to the £214m Stirling and Clackmannanshire City Region Deal, the University is driving productivity and inclusive growth across the Forth Valley, and beyond. Through pioneering collaborative solutions to global challenges, researchers are putting innovation, skills, and partnership at the heart of a sustainable economic recovery.

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3. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: history, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, languages, design, heritage, area studies, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £140 million to fund research and postgraduate training, in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits and contributes to the economic success of the UK but also to the culture and welfare of societies around the globe. Visit the AHRC website at: ahrc.ukri.org, on Twitter at @ahrcpress, and on Facebook search for the Arts and Humanities Research Council, or Instagram at @ahrcpress
4. Bheireadh Oifis nam Meadhanan eadar-theangachadh Gàidhlig den bhrath-naidheachd seachad do bhuidhinn mheadhanan bharantaichte. Cuiribh fios do dh'Oifis nam Meadhanan airson bruidhinn air cinn-latha freagarrach.