# London set to open £220 million spy tunnels museum with James Bond connection



London is set to unveil a significant new tourist destination deep beneath the bustling streets of High Holborn, as plans to open a museum dedicated to the city's historic spy tunnels gain momentum. This secretive network, known as the Kingsway Exchange Tunnels, was initially constructed as an air raid shelter during the Blitz but later served as a base for the Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War II—a clandestine organisation founded under the direct orders of Winston Churchill.

According to the current proposals, the tunnels will be transformed into a major exhibition space that aims to attract up to three million visitors annually. The project, which has been under discussion for several years, is backed by a partnership between The London Tunnels and the Museum of Military Intelligence. The museum will provide a modern and high-tech experience, showcasing a wealth of historical artefacts, original equipment, documents, and personal accounts related to military intelligence.

The development has a projected budget of approximately £220 million. This investment not only promises to breathe new life into a once-forgotten corner of London but is also anticipated to stimulate local economies by as much as £80 million per year. The initiative will create around 40 onsite jobs and aims to offer educational opportunities, including free visits for local schools, reinforcing the site’s value as both a historical and educational resource.

The Kingsway Tunnels have an intriguing connection to popular culture; it is believed that Ian Fleming, the author of the James Bond novels, drew inspiration from these tunnels during his time as a liaison officer within the war effort. The narrative around the tunnels hints at a broader cultural significance, as they are synonymous with espionage, intrigue, and the covert operations of the British military.

Planners envision a museum experience that embraces immersive exhibitions and interactive structures, allowing visitors to engage with key moments from the UK's military history—from the Battle of Britain to espionage during the Cold War, and even contemporary operations against terrorism and conflict. In addition to the main exhibition, plans include unique features such as educational facilities and potentially an underground bar, designed to enhance the visitor experience further.

The project has already garnered the necessary approvals from the City of London Corporation, marking a critical step towards realising what promises to be a fascinating glimpse into the past in one of the city's most symbolic locations. Work is scheduled to commence in 2027, with the grand opening anticipated in 2028. As London prepares to welcome millions to this hidden historical gem, the Kingsway Tunnels look set to become a central narrative in the story of British intelligence and resilience.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/london-spy-tunnels-kingway-exchange-museum-opening-b2760628.html), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/londons-blitz-shelter-tunnels-become-new-tourist-attraction-2025-01-29/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/london-spy-tunnels-kingway-exchange-museum-opening-b2760628.html), [[3]](https://www.building.co.uk/news/wilkinson-eyre-unveils-plans-to-transform-secret-london-spy-tunnels-into-220m-visitor-attraction/5125371.article), [[4]](https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/london-tunnels-holborn-blitz-b2693275.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[6]](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/londons-220m-attraction-in-secret-world-war-ii-tunnels-gains-planning-approval-12-06-2024/), [[5]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4nnjv4r294o), [[7]](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/plans-are-taking-shape-for-an-extravagant-new-tourist-attraction-inside-londons-world-war-ii-era-tunnels-180986147/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/london-spy-tunnels-kingway-exchange-museum-opening-b2760628.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/londons-blitz-shelter-tunnels-become-new-tourist-attraction-2025-01-29/> - Plans are underway to transform London's World War II-era tunnels beneath High Holborn into a major tourist attraction. The mile-long tunnels, constructed during the Blitz, were never used as shelters but later served as a spy headquarters where Ian Fleming worked in 1944. The project, estimated at £120 million, aims to attract up to 3 million visitors annually and is expected to open by late 2027 or early 2028. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/londons-blitz-shelter-tunnels-become-new-tourist-attraction-2025-01-29/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.building.co.uk/news/wilkinson-eyre-unveils-plans-to-transform-secret-london-spy-tunnels-into-220m-visitor-attraction/5125371.article> - Architects Wilkinson Eyre have unveiled plans to redevelop London's secret spy tunnels into a £220 million visitor attraction. The Kingsway Exchange Tunnels, which inspired James Bond's 'Q Branch', will feature immersive exhibitions, interactive structures, and preserved original equipment. The project aims to host up to two million visitors annually and is expected to open to the public in 2027. ([building.co.uk](https://www.building.co.uk/news/wilkinson-eyre-unveils-plans-to-transform-secret-london-spy-tunnels-into-220m-visitor-attraction/5125371.article?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/london-tunnels-holborn-blitz-b2693275.html> - Plans are in place to develop London's World War II tunnels beneath High Holborn into a new tourist attraction. The tunnels, which served as a shelter during the Blitz and later as a spy headquarters, will be transformed into a memorial, museum, and entertainment space. The project is estimated to cost around £120 million and aims to attract up to 3 million visitors annually, with an expected opening by late 2027 or early 2028. ([the-independent.com](https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/london-tunnels-holborn-blitz-b2693275.html?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4nnjv4r294o> - Plans to open London's secret spy tunnels to the public have been approved by the City of London Corporation. The Kingsway Tunnels, built in 1942 as an air raid shelter and later used by the Special Operations Executive, will be transformed into a vast tourist attraction. The development includes educational facilities, exhibition spaces, and an underground bar, with Camden Council's approval still pending. ([bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4nnjv4r294o?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/londons-220m-attraction-in-secret-world-war-ii-tunnels-gains-planning-approval-12-06-2024/> - The City of London Corporation has approved a £220 million plan to develop a cultural attraction in the deep-level subterranean wartime shelter tunnels under High Holborn. The project includes restoring the site and installing interactive screens and other features, with an expected opening in 2027. ([newcivilengineer.com](https://www.newcivilengineer.com/latest/londons-220m-attraction-in-secret-world-war-ii-tunnels-gains-planning-approval-12-06-2024/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/plans-are-taking-shape-for-an-extravagant-new-tourist-attraction-inside-londons-world-war-ii-era-tunnels-180986147/> - Plans are underway to transform London's World War II-era tunnels beneath High Holborn into a tourist attraction. The project, led by Angus Murray, aims to open by late 2027 or early 2028, featuring a memorial to the Blitz, a museum, an art gallery, and a bar. The £120 million overhaul is designed by Wilkinson-Eyre. ([smithsonianmag.com](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/plans-are-taking-shape-for-an-extravagant-new-tourist-attraction-inside-londons-world-war-ii-era-tunnels-180986147/?utm_source=openai))