

The purpose of this Contract Notice is to invite potential and interested suppliers to formally express interest in participating in this procurement by completing a Dynamic Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (DPQQ) found on the Defence Sourcing Portal (DSP) linked to this Notice.

Background:

The Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) Multi Helicopter Platforms (MHP) Project Delivery Team has a requirement for a contracted crewed capability that can provide a medium-lift Support Helicopter (SH) capability to meet Fleet Operational Standards and Training (FOST) and Navy Command (NC) requirements. The project has a security classification of Official Sensitive.

Requirement:

The requirement is to provide a contractor owned rotary wing Air System (AS) service for the Royal Navy (RN), providing point-to-point flights delivering military and non-military personnel to enable the conduct of operational sea training and supporting tasks, including transportation of freight. The service will be operated on a Military Registered Civil Operated Aircraft (MRCOA) contract basis.

Please Note: The Authority requires the successful bidder to be ready to deliver an initial service to specified ships from 1 April 2026.

The Contractor will be required to:

1. Provide crew for the Military Registered AS to fly up to 500 hours per annum based on one assured task line.
2. Deliver tasking by day and night, throughout the year and in adverse weather conditions within the South Coast Exercise Areas (SCEXAs) and wider UK Flight Information Region (FIR).
3. Provide an AS with an endurance of a minimum of 2.5 hours (objective 3.5 hours) and a capability of 200 nautical miles of range with full load & fuel.
4. Provide an AS with a capacity and internal load of minimum 500kg (objective 1000kg), 1m³ (objective 1.5 m³) internal space, or minimum 6 (objective 16) passengers with baggage and/or equipment (100kg each); External Underslung Load minimum 1000kg (objective 1500kg).
5. Provide an AS with the capability to integrate with all civil and NATO Maritime, Land and Air communications and navigation requirements.
6. Provide a service capable of operating from the contractor's Main Operating Base (MOB) to RN, Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) and International Partner Nation (IPN) vessels at sea.
7. Hold a European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)/UK CAA Part 145 Aircraft Maintenance Organisation Approval (Rotary Wing) and maintain that for the duration of the service. Note – The contractor will be required to hold a MAOS MRP Part 145 Approval in accordance with MRP RA 4800 Annex A for the duration of the service.
8. Hold EASA/UK CAA Part M/Part CAMO Continuing Airworthiness Management Organisation Approval and maintain that for the duration of the service.
9. Act as the ASCDO and hold an associated DAOS approval for the duration of the service.

The relevant Cyber Risk Assessment code is RAR-803565955 and the cyber risk profile has been rated Very Low. Potential tenderers for this contract will be required to complete a Supplier Assurance Questionnaire (SAQ) at the Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) stage of the competitive process. The Authority intends to include DEFCON 658 "Cyber" and DEFSTAN 05-138 "Cyber Security for Defence Suppliers" in any contract that results from the future tendering process.

In addition to the Cyber Security matters above, any contract that results from the future tendering process shall include the following security requirements:

- DEFSTAN 05-139 - Cyber Security and Resilience of Products, Systems and Services.
- DEFCON 76 - Contractor's Personnel at Government Establishments.

The planned timeframe for issue of the ITN for this requirement is 3-5 months from publication of this advert.

Your response submitted via the DSP should only contain information with the Security Classification Official Sensitive or below. If your response contains information with a Security Classification higher than Official Sensitive, please contact the Authority for appropriate submission instructions.

Air System Type:

The Authority has considered the types of AS that may be able to deliver the proposed service based on the user requirements and the following priority considerations:

- 1) The AS must have been the subject of a prior Military Registration to reduce the Authority's risk and complexity in the registration process.
- 2) The AS must present a low risk and complexity solution to achieving a UK Ship Air Release (SA-R) clearance to the required ships.
- 3) The AS must be a modern commercial aircraft (i.e. not a legacy aircraft), commonly and freely available in the market, to give confidence that the service can be sustained for up to ten years. A legacy aircraft that would require a Duty Holder to accept the risk of significant shortfalls against modern safety and crashworthiness requirements will not be acceptable.

The Authority has conducted a Request for Information which closed in June 2022. Analysis of the responses (and all other AS that hold, or have previously held, military registration) showed only the AW139:

- a. Meets all threshold and objective requirements, and;
- b. Is a modern AS likely to be supportable and meet crashworthiness requirements, and;
- c. has an available Ship Air Integration (SAI) data set that will support generation of the necessary UK SA-R clearances.

The Authority has an SAI Strategy based on utilising the available AW139 SAI dataset to minimise the risk and complexity of achieving the SA-R clearances required to meet the In Service Date (ISD). The SAI Strategy exploits existing AW139, Merlin and Wildcat SAI data, on the same class of ship, to minimise the cost of SAI and the operational burden of First of Type Flight Trials (FoTFT) to Navy Command and will enable ISD to be achieved prior to FoTFT.

The Authority may consider an alternative AS if it meets the user requirements, the priority considerations detailed above and is able to satisfy the intent of the Authority's SAI Strategy. Any bidder offering an AS other than an AW139 must be able to demonstrate that there is existing SAI data available and that the MOD would be able to secure access to this data set.

If you are considering bidding an equivalent AS to the AW139 please detail this AS and the supporting SAI evidence separately but alongside your DPQQ response for consideration by the Authority.

Please note that the Authority does not require that a prospective bidder currently has an AW139 capability (or equivalent) but will need to demonstrate a credible plan through the ITN to deliver a comprehensive capability by the In Service Date (ISD) (assumed to be 1 April 2026).

Contract Duration:

The contract has an anticipated duration of five (5) years from ISD (assumed to be 1 April 2026) with an additional 5 x 1-year options. The final confirmed duration including any Contractual Option (s), and/or break points will be confirmed in the ITN documentation.

Process:

Interested companies are required to complete a DPQQ to provide the Authority with information to evaluate the company's capacities and capabilities against the selection criteria.

The Authority will use the DPQQ response to create a shortlist of tenderers who:

- a) are eligible to participate.
- b) fulfil any minimum economic, financial, professional, and technical standards; and,
- c) best meet in terms of capacity and capability the selection criteria set out below.

The Pre-Qualification Questionnaire Selection Criteria can be found in the attached supporting documents.

The closing date for submission of responses is 17:00 on 19/1/2024. Normally 30 days would be provided, however an additional two weeks is added to allow for the Christmas period. Responses received after this closure date/time will be discounted.

Potential tenderers will be scored in accordance with the criteria listed. A maximum of the six (6) highest scoring potential providers shall be taken through to the ITN stage. A minimum score of 30 (ADEQUATE) shall be required for all scored and weighted questions to allow the Potential Provider to progress to the ITN stage for this requirement. All remaining questions will be PASS/FAIL. An evaluation of a FAIL shall result in an unsuccessful result and the Authority reserves the right to exclude that potential tenderer.

The Authority reserves the right to exclude a potential tenderer if the economic and financial standing qualification standards are not met by that potential tenderer.

Information and formalities necessary for evaluating if the requirements are met as per: "Annex A – DPQQ Guidance and Evaluation Plan" and "Annex B-DPQQ Part 1 Form D Economic and Financial Standing Evaluation Criteria".

Minimum level(s) of standards-required: "Annex A – DPQQ Guidance and Evaluation Plan" and "Annex B-DPQQ Part 1 Form D Economic and Financial Standing Evaluation Criteria".

Intended Tendering Process

The Authority intends to conduct any following tender exercise as an Invitation to Negotiate (ITN) under the Competitive Negotiated Procedure of the Defence and Security Public Contracts Regulations (DSPCR). Therefore, any tendering process for the requirement will have an initial tender submission and assessment phase, which will be followed by a negotiation phase (one or more rounds of negotiation) and be completed by best and final offers.