

The National Forest Company



**THE NATIONAL
FOREST**

Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Development - Consultancy Support Programme

June 2021

1. Summary

The National Forest Company (NFC) is looking to appoint a suitably qualified consultant(s) to provide advisory visits and follow up consultancy support to National Forest landowners and operators looking to develop new sustainable tourism accommodation.

The offer of consultancy support will primarily target new entrants to the market who are looking to develop new or retrofit sustainable tourism accommodation in accordance with the design principles outlined in a new National Forest Sustainable Tourism Design Guide, which will be launched later this year. This will include woodland owners and landowners in the National Forest, plus individuals looking to establish new serviced and non-serviced tourist accommodation including bed & breakfast and self-catering accommodation.

2. Context

The National Forest covers 200 square miles of the Midlands. Since 1995, 9 million trees have been planted across 100s of woodlands increasing Forest cover from c.6% to 21% of the area.

The creation of the National Forest is led by the NFC, a non-profit institution within the public sector sponsored by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The NFC is also a registered charity.

25-year Vision

The last 30 years has seen the NFC lead the transformation of the area through the creation of new woodlands as a catalyst for change. The NFC is currently working on a new vision for the next 25 years which will prioritise interventions that support:

Climate change adaptation and mitigation

The urgency of climate change and the need for a practical and positive response in terms of mitigation and adaptation. This is an opportunity for environmental leadership and ties into the Forest's brand value that trees transform things.

Placemaking

The need and ability to achieve real change in a real place for real people. This is an opportunity to demonstrate improved quality of life and ties into the Forest's brand value that forests are for everyone.

Sustainable living

The need to genuinely reflect the three pillars of sustainability in National Forest policies, economy and decision making, to model sustainable living. This is an opportunity to set an optimistic vision for the future and ties into the Forest's brand value that sustainability is achievable.

National Forest Tourism Growth Plan

In 2017, the NFC produced a Tourism Growth Plan to support its ambition to develop the National Forest as a sustainable tourism destination. This sets out a 10-year plan for how the NFC will realise the potential of the Forest as a visitor destination and move from an emerging destination to a recognised destination. Increasing bed space and the range of accommodation on offer was identified as a key priority.

In 2019, North West Leicestershire District Council commissioned an Accommodation Demand Study which also identified significant growth and development opportunities for visitor accommodation within the National Forest, particularly opportunities that relate closely to its brand values and the focus on woodland and outdoor activities or linked to existing attractions.

More recently, emerging master planning work within the Heart of the Forest has highlighted increased sustainable tourism accommodation as a priority to maximise the overall offer, increase visitor numbers and spend. Within the National Forest 9.1m people visited in 2019 (STEAM) with only 4% staying overnight, whereas within the Heart of the Forest an estimated 806,000 people visited with only 2% staying overnight.

In recent years, new forms of sustainable tourism accommodation e.g. glamping, tree houses and pods have grown in popularity and in the current climate there is a significantly increased demand for staycations. Through our wider woodland economy work, and engagement with landowners, we have identified there is good potential to bring forward new investment in sustainable tourism accommodation.

Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Design Guide

In 2020, the NFC with the support of several local authority partners including North West Leicestershire District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, started work on a new Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Design Guide.

The Design Guide will illustrate how new accommodation development in the Forest should not only reflect the brand of the Forest and meet the needs of our existing and future visitors, but also align with the Forest's new 25-year vision, which will prioritise actions that support a low carbon and sustainable economy, forming a resilient environment and the creation of a coherent National Forest sense of place.

The Design Guide has been produced to serve the interests of both smaller scale landowners e.g. existing National Forest woodland owners looking to diversify, who will have limited experience of both the tourism sector and planning policy, as well as existing accommodation providers keen to retrofit their accommodation to make it more 'on brand' with the Forest. Overtime, it is hoped that the development principles outlined in the Design Guide will be embedded as part of future planning policy. The NFC and its partners will also be able to use the Design Guide as an inward investment tool, to promote a vision for sustainable tourism accommodation that will help support the development of masterplans and to attract new investment from operators outside of the Forest e.g. larger scale forest lodge resorts and exemplar green hotels.

The Design Guide is due to be launched to landowners and other stakeholders in the National Forest later this summer.

3. Consultancy support aims & objectives

The overall aim of the consultancy support programme is to support innovative ideas and new ventures at an early stage to help facilitate a pipeline of new sustainable tourism accommodation development that demonstrate the Design Guide principles and supports delivery of the National Forest 25-year Vision and the National Forest brand. The objectives of the programme are:

- To broaden the offer and increase the supply of sustainable tourism accommodation within the National Forest which will meet demand identified through recent studies and unlock the potential supply identified through our engagement work.
- To support landowners to further develop their ideas and plans to develop new sustainable tourism accommodation, either through new construction, glamping, or renovation of redundant buildings.

- To promote the economic, social, and environmental benefits of the Design Guide to landowners, and support them to demonstrate the principles of the guide within their development plans.
- To work with landowners to strengthen their business plans and increase the viability of the development in preparation for submitting planning applications.

4. Programme outputs

Our aspiration is that the consultancy support programme will deliver the following:

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| • Businesses supported with an advisory visit and follow up report | 30 estimated |
| • Businesses supported with enhanced (up to 12 hrs) of advice & support | 20 estimated |
| • Businesses supported to successfully access feasibility grants | 10 estimated |

5. Programme delivery requirements

The successful provider will deliver the following support to eligible beneficiaries:

- 1-1 advisory visits for landowners and operators followed by a report summarising recommendations.
- Up to 12 hrs of additional consultancy support to eligible businesses shortlisted to move forward to stage two of the programme. Support could include providing help and guidance to beneficiaries who wish to submit a grant application to the NFC for funding towards a feasibility study.

The consultancy support programme will need to be tailored depending on individual business needs and we anticipate that some businesses will require different levels of support or may have different entry points to the overall programme.

Separate to this tender it is intended that suitably qualified providers will be appointed to deliver a further stage of the accelerator programme to undertake detailed feasibility studies of accommodation development projects. Prospective providers bidding to deliver the requirements set out in this brief are welcome to submit an expression of interest to undertake these feasibility studies when details of this stage are confirmed.

6. Programme management requirements

The successful provider will fulfil the following management requirements for the programme:

- Servicing and coordination of a project steering group to include representatives from NFC, local authorities, and the sector. It is expected that the steering group will meet four times throughout the duration of the contract.
- Preparing a programme overview document and / or other digital marketing materials to be used to promote the consultancy support programme to prospective beneficiaries.
- Developing and administering a beneficiary selection criterion and scoring process to maximise delivery against the programme aims and objectives – considering geographical spread, market potential and business viability. Working closely with the Tourism Development Manager and to be approved by the steering group.
- All liaison and communication with successful and unsuccessful beneficiaries through promotion, selection, and delivery of the programme.

- Developing suitable recording and monitoring processes for the programme and producing and presenting reports for the steering group.
- Preparing an evaluation report outlining key successes, lessons learnt and future recommendations at the end of the programme.

7. Governance and reporting

The project lead and Contract Manager is Richard Drakeley, Tourism Development Manager at the NFC.

The programme will be supported by a small panel made up of NFC representatives and other interested partners that may include local authority representatives and other professional experts.

The successful provider will be required to produce an Action Plan for the lifetime of the programme which will be signed-off by the NFC and Steering Group for this contract when awarded. As part of the Action Plan the provider will need to provide quarterly projections on when the outputs / results will be achieved.

The NFC's Contract Manager will be responsible for monitoring delivery against contract obligations and authorising payment once evidence is certified.

8. Monitoring

The NFC's Contract Manager will continually assess and review performance of the appointed consultant(s) to ascertain the ongoing quality of support provided to programme beneficiaries. The appointed consultant(s) will be expected to work with the NFC to devise a suitable beneficiary satisfaction questionnaire using a scale rating of excellent, good, average and poor. Should the results of the beneficiary satisfaction questionnaires consistently fall below a good rating, the NFC's Contract Manager will work with the provider to agree appropriate mitigation actions. If these are not met the contract will be terminated in line with the notice period as per the Terms and Conditions. Output evidence will be collated using the following method.

- Outputs / results:

All original signed documentation (i.e. programme enrolment forms and records of business assisted hours of support etc will need to either have wet or scanned signatures from the business.) Once collated these will be submitted to the Contract Manager at the NFC as part of the quarterly invoice process.

The NFC and/or its auditors reserve the right to inspect any documentation held by the successful consultant(s). Therefore, the successful provider will need to ensure access to documents is available as required.

9. Existing evidence

To help bidders prepare their tender response, please refer to the following background materials and previous studies relevant to the accelerator programme delivery including:

- Draft National Forest Sustainable Accommodation Development Design Guide. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zmfR_VfzwA4oDk7ARC1NIODTsHplySoQ/view?usp=sharing
- National Forest Tourism Growth Plan. <https://www.nationalforest.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/National-Forest-Tourism-Growth-Plan-Web-Document.pdf>

- Emerging documents relating to the NFC's new 25-year vision.
https://www.nationalforest.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/1693%20NFC%20Brand%20Vision%20Report%20AW_SCREEN%20%281%29.pdf

Upon appointment, the appointed consultant(s) will also be provided with the following:

- National Forest accommodation demand and supply research.
- Destination STEAM statistics.

10. Tender response

Tender proposals are invited from consultants or a consortium of consultants with:

- An in depth understanding of the UK accommodation sector including glamping and alternative accommodation, as well as more traditional serviced and non-serviced accommodation e.g. bed and breakfast and self-catering accommodation.
- Extensive experience of working with sustainable building design standards and principles.
- A knowledge and understanding of rural development planning requirements.
- Experience of supporting / mentoring landowners / operators to develop business ideas and projects relevant to this tender to develop business ideas and projects relevant to this tender.

Proposals should include:

- Detailed methodology for undertaking the work to be completed and an outline of who will lead on specific deliverable as outlined in the brief.
- Confirmation of your team's capacity to meet the contract duration.
- Evidence of relevant experience of all members of the team.
- Evidence of recent similar work undertaken.
- Completion of the Excel spreadsheet 'Payment Schedule.'
- Contact details for two referees who can comment on your previous recent work.
- The tender submission should also detail steps the consultant(s) currently takes, and will undertake in delivering the accelerator programme, to reduce carbon emissions and address the impacts of climate change.

11. Fee proposal & payment terms

Payments will be made to the appointed consultant(s) in accordance with the following schedule:

- Flat rate payment per beneficiary supported with an advisory visit and follow up report – We anticipate around **30 beneficiaries will be supported at this stage of the programme.**
- Hourly rate payment for enhanced support (up to 12 hrs per business) providing additional advice & support - We anticipate around **20 beneficiaries will be supported at this stage of the programme.**
- Flat rate payment to cover programme management tasks as specified in the brief.

Payments for advisory visits and additional consultancy support (up to 12 hours per business) will be made to the appointed consultant(s) upon submission of an invoice and timesheets, which shall be submitted to the NFC at the end of each quarter that the work has been undertaken in. Payments to cover flat rate programme management tasks will be reimbursed by fixed quarterly payments. All costs should exclude VAT and include travel and other disbursements.

Bonus-based payments

To help incentivise the uptake of NFC feasibility grants, the NFC will award a bonus payment of £100 excluding VAT for each programme beneficiary that goes on to apply for and is awarded an NFC feasibility grant. Bonus payments will only be paid once a programme beneficiary's final grant claim has been settled and a copy of the feasibility has been submitted with the NFC. The NFC will confirm the bonus-based payments which become due to the appointed consultant(s) at the end of the contract term and the consultant(s).

12. Assessment criteria

Tenders will be scored against the following criteria:

• Experience of consultants	30%
• Methodology proposed	25%
• Value for money	20%
• Quality of comparable work	15%
• Ability to deliver to time	10%

13. Timeline and milestones

The contract will run from August 2021 until December 2022.

The high-level indicative timelines in which the overall accelerator programme will be delivered are illustrated in Annex 1.

Procurement timeline

Programme procurement, award and initiation will need to be progressed within an acute timeframe. To provide bidders with key milestones, the timeline below indicates the response time and proposed timescales for the tender award.

Milestone	Date
Invitation to tender issued	1 July 2021
Deadline to register interest and submit tender clarifications	Noon 15 July 2021
Deadline for receipt of tender responses	Noon 6 August 2021
Assessment date	11 August 2021
Inception meeting	18 August 2021

14. Proposal submission

Proposals providing the information and quotes requested as outlined above should be received at the NFC offices by **noon on 6 August 2021**. Please mark your email '**Tender in Confidence – Ref: Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Accelerator Programme.**' These should be marked for the attention of Angela Beech and emailed to abeech@nationalforest.org

Contracts will be awarded on the NFC's Standard Terms and Conditions (attached).

The ownership of all materials arising from this work lies with the NFC.

The NFC is not liable for any costs associated with preparing your tender proposal.

Please register your interest and make any requests for further information, or clarifications on this tender document, by email to Richard Drakeley (details below) by no later than noon on **Thursday 15 July**. This will enable us to respond to all interested parties.

Richard Drakeley

Email: rdrakeley@nationalforest.org

Annex 1: Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Development Consultancy Support Programme Timeline

Annex 2: Sustainable Tourism Accommodation Development Consultancy Support Programme
Pricing Schedule