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**Request for Quotation**

**Landscape Character Assessment guidance update Phase 2 - stakeholder engagement and material preparation**

**29th August 2023**

**Request for Quotation**

**Landscape Character Assessment guidance update Phase 2 - stakeholder engagement and material preparation**

You are invited to submit a quotation for the requirement described in the specification, Section 2.

Please confirm by email, receipt of these documents and whether you intend to submit a quote or not.

Your response should be returned to the following email address by:

Email:[Jacqui.jobbins@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Jacqui.jobbins@naturalengland.org.uk)

Date: **22/09/23**

Time: **12:00 noon**

Ensure you include the name of the quotation and ‘Final Submission’ in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

**Contact Details and Timetable**

**Jacqui Jobbins** will be your contact for any questions linked to the content of the quote or the process. Please submit any clarification questions via email and note that, unless commercially sensitive, both the question and the response will be circulated to all tenderers.

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| Action | Date |
| Date of issue of RFQ | 31st August 2023 |
| Deadline for clarifications questions | 12th September at 12 noon |
| Deadline for receipt of Quotation | 22st September 2023 at 12 noon |
| Intended date of Contract Award | 5th October 2023 |
| Intended Contract Start Date | 9th October 2023 |
| Intended Delivery Date / Contract Duration | 16th February 2024 |

**Section 1: General Information**

**Glossary**

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and expressions used within this Request for Quotation shall have the following meanings (to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires):

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| “Authority” | means **Natural England** who is the Contracting Authority. |
| “Contract” | means the contract to be entered into by the Authority and the successful supplier. |
| “Response” | means the information submitted by a supplier in response to the RFQ. |
| “RFQ” | means this Request for Quotation and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to suppliers. |

**Conditions applying to the RFQ**

You should examine your Response and related documents ensuring it is complete and in accordance with the stated instructions prior to submission.

Your Response must contain sufficient information to enable the Authority to evaluate it fairly and effectively. You should ensure that you have prepared your Response fully and accurately and that prices quoted are arithmetically correct for the units stated.

By submitting a Response, you, the supplier, are deemed to accept the terms and conditions accompanying the RFQ. Confirmation of this is required in Annex 2.

Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the RFQ may result in the supplier’s exclusion from this quotation process.

**Acceptance of Quotations**

By issuing this RFQ the Authority does not bind itself to accept any quotation and reserves the right not to award a contract to any supplier who submits a quotation.

**Costs**

The Authority will not reimburse you for any costs and expenses which you incur preparing and submitting your quotation, even if the Authority amends or terminates the procurement process.

**Self-Declaration and Mandatory Requirements**

The RFQ includes a self-declaration response (Annex 1) which covers basic information about the supplier, as well as any grounds for exclusion. If you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Any mandatory requirements will be set out in Section 2, Specification of Requirements and, if you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

**Clarifications**

Any request for clarification regarding the RFQ and supporting documentation must be submitted via email no later than the deadline for clarifications set out in the Timetable. The Authority shall be under no obligation to respond to queries raised after the clarification deadline.

The Authority will respond to all reasonable clarifications as soon as possible but cannot guarantee a minimum response time. The Authority will publish all clarifications and its responses to all suppliers via email unless deemed commercially sensitive.

If a supplier believes that a request for clarification is commercially sensitive, it should clearly state this when submitting the clarification request. However, if the Authority considers either that:

* the clarification and response are not commercially sensitive; and
* all suppliers may benefit from its disclosure,

then the Authority will notify the supplier (via email), and the supplier will have an opportunity to withdraw the request for clarification by sending a further message requesting the withdrawal of the clarification request. If not withdrawn by the supplier within 2 working days of the Authority’s notification, the Authority may publish the clarification request and its response to all suppliers and the Authority shall not be liable to the supplier for any consequences of such publication.

The Authority reserves the right to seek clarification of any aspect of a quotation and/or provide additional information during the evaluation phase to carry out a fair evaluation. Where the Authority seeks clarification on any aspect of the quotation, the supplier must respond within the timeframe requested by the Authority.

**Amendments**

The Authority may amend the RFQ at any time prior to the deadline for receipt. If it amends the RFQ the Authority will notify you via email.

Suppliers may modify their quotation prior to the deadline for Responses. No Responses may be modified after the deadline for Responses.

Suppliers may withdraw their quotations at any time by submitting a notice via the email to the named contact.

**Conditions of Contract**

The Authority’s **Standard Condensed Terms and Conditions** found at [Procurement at Natural England - Natural England - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/procurement) will be included in any contract awarded as a result of this quotation process. The Authority will not accept any changes to these terms and conditions proposed by a supplier.

Suppliers should note that the quotation provided by the successful bidder will form part of the Contract.

**Prices**

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling, **inclusive of VAT**.

**Disclosure**

All Central Government Departments, their Executive Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement, including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice. For these purposes, the Authority may disclose within Government any details contained in your quotation. The information will not be disclosed outside Government during the procurement.

In addition, the Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, which provide a public right of access to information held by public bodies. In accordance with these two statutes, the Authority may be required to disclose information contained in your quotation to any person who submits a request for information pursuant to those statutes.

Further to the Government’s transparency agenda, all UK Government organisations must advertise on Contract Finder in accordance with the following publication thresholds:

* Central Contracting Authority’s: £12,000
* Sub Central Contracting Authority’s and NHS Trusts: £30,000

For the purpose of this RFQ the Authority is classified as a Central Contracting Authority with a publication threshold of £12,000 inclusive of VAT.

If this opportunity is advertised via Contracts Finder, we are obliged to publish details of the awarded contract including who has won the contract, the contract value, and indicate whether the winning supplier is a small and medium-sized enterprise (“SMEs”) or voluntary organisation or charity. A copy of the contract must also be published with confidential information redacted.

By submitting a Response, you consent to these terms as part of the procurement.

**Disclaimers**

Whilst the information in this RFQ and any supporting information referred to herein or provided to you by the Authority have been prepared in good faith the Authority does not warrant that this information is comprehensive or that it has been independently verified.

The Authority does not:

* make any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the RFQ;
* accept any liability for the information contained in the RFQ or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information; or
* accept any liability for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation or any other liability which cannot lawfully be excluded) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any supplier considering entering into contractual relationships with the Authority following receipt of the RFQ should make its own investigations and independent assessment of the Authority and its requirements for the goods and/or services and should seek its own professional financial and legal advice.

**Protection of Personal Data**

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 the supplier must agree to the following:

* You must only process any personal data in strict accordance with instructions from the Authority.
* You must ensure that all the personal data that we disclose to you or you collect on our behalf under this agreement are kept confidential.
* You must take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of employees who have access to personal data.
* Only employees who may be required to assist in meeting the obligations under this agreement may have access to the personal data.
* Any disclosure of personal data must be made in confidence and extend only so far as that which is specifically necessary for the purposes of this agreement.
* You must ensure that there are appropriate security measures in place to safeguard against any unauthorised access or unlawful processing or accidental loss, destruction or damage or disclosure of the personal data.
* On termination of this agreement, for whatever reason, the personal data must be returned to us promptly and safely, together with all copies in your possession or control.

**General Data Protection Regulations 2018**

For the purposes of the Regulations the Authority is the data processor.

The personal information that we have asked you provide on individuals (data subjects) that will be working for you on this contract will be used in compiling the tender list and in assessing your offer. If you are unsuccessful the information will be held and destroyed within two years of the award of contracts. If you are awarded a contract, it will be retained for the duration of the contract and destroyed within seven years of the contract’s expiry.

We may monitor the performance of the individuals during the execution of the contract, and the results of our monitoring, together with the information that you have provided, will be used in determining what work is allocated under the contract, and in any renewal of the contract or in the award of future contracts of a similar nature. The information will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Authority without the consent of the data subject, unless the Authority is required by law to make such disclosures.

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)**

The Client is striving to create a diverse and inclusive working environment where every individual has equality of opportunity to progress and to apply their unique insights to making the UK a great place for living. The Service Provider is expected to respect this commitment in all dealings with Natural England staff and service users.

Suppliers are expected to:

* support Defra group to achieve its Public Sector Equality Duty as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and to support delivery of [Defra group’s Equality & Diversity Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-group-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2020-to-2024/defra-group-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2020-to-2024).
* meet the standards set out in the [Government’s Supplier Code of Conduct](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supplier-code-of-conduct)
* work with Defra group to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion impacts are addressed (positive and negative) in the goods, services and works we procure, barriers are removed and opportunities realised.

**Sustainable Procurement**

Addressing global sustainability impacts and realising additional community benefits within commercial activity is core to Defra group’s approach, working with its supply chain is key to achieving sustainable outcomes. In addition to supporting Defra group to meet its outcomes we look to understand and reduce negative sustainability impacts associated with our commercial activity and realise benefits.

The Client encourages its suppliers to share these values, work to address negative impacts and realise opportunities, measure performance and success.

Suppliers are expected to have an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, the interconnections between them and the relevance to the Goods, Services and works procured on the Client’s behalf.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The concept of a conflict of interest includes but is not limited to any situation where an Involved Person or Relevant Body has directly or indirectly, a financial, economic or other personal interest which might be perceived to compromise their impartiality and independence in the context of the procurement procedure and/or affect the integrity of the contract award.

We expect suppliers to mitigate appropriately against any real or perceived conflict of interest through their work with government. A supplier with a position of influence gained through a contract should not use that position to unfairly disadvantage any other supplier or reduce the potential for future competition.

Where the supplier is aware of any circumstances giving rise to a conflict of interest or has any indication that a conflict of interest exists or may arise you should inform the Authority of this as soon as possible (whether before or after they have submitted a quotation). Tenderers should remain alert to the possibility of conflicts of interest arising at all stages of the procurement and should update the Authority if any new circumstances or information arises, or there are any changes to information already provided to the Authority. Failure to do so, and/or to properly manage any conflicts of interest may result in a quotation being rejected.

Provided that it has been carried out in an open, fair and transparent manner, routine pre-market engagement carried out by the Authority should not represent a conflict of interest for the supplier.

**Section 2: The Invitation**

**Specification of Requirements**

1. **Background to Natural England**
   1. Natural England is the government’s advisor on the natural environment. We provide practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England’s natural wealth for the benefit of everyone.
   2. Our remit is to ensure sustainable stewardship of the land and sea so that people and nature can thrive. It is our responsibility to see that England’s rich natural environment can adapt and survive intact for future generations to enjoy. We work with farmers and land managers; business and industry; planners and developers; national and local government; interest groups and local communities to help them improve their local environment. Further information can be found at [Natural England](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/).
2. **Context to the specific Natural England work area relevant to this request for tender**

* 1. Natural England’s chair, Tony Juniper highlighted the importance of landscape in Natural England’s remit in January 2022 by stating that our landscapes are:

‘… *the foundation of the natural systems on which everything depends … [they] can help provide answers to the dual challenges we face on climate change and biodiversity loss and improve people’s health and wellbeing in the wake of the Covid-19 Pandemic. [Landscape] brings together our ambitions to restore nature and to ensure that people from all walks of life can enjoy and benefit from the natural world*.’[[1]](#footnote-2)

* 1. The foundational nature of landscape and our need for it to provide multifunctional benefits to society and the natural world in the face of climate change and the biodiversity crisis, mean that we need a more detailed and intimate understanding of our diverse and distinctive landscapes than ever before. We also need to promote this evidence to a wider audience, so that more people can enjoy and benefit from the natural world, while ensuring our stewardship of it. Natural England has an opportunity to play a pivotal leadership role in achieving these aims.
  2. As the government’s statutory adviser on landscape, we develop and publish the guidance for Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (currently entitled ‘approach’ documents). These are used to inform a wide range of initiatives that influence landscape planning, design, management and evaluation. They also provide key evidence tools for enabling positive landscape change and supporting the detailed understanding of our landscapes needed by a range of practitioners and audiences to tackle the significant challenges we face, including climate change, biodiversity loss and people’s wellbeing.

Background information and current guidance/approach documents:

* 1. ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’[[2]](#footnote-3), which is aimed at guiding the production and publication of LCAs at county, district or specific area scale was published in 2014, while ‘An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment’[[3]](#footnote-4) is older, having been published in 2012. To ensure the guidance is fit to inform the management of our changing landscapes and respond to the challenges we face, both guidance documents need to be updated, and alongside this, a package of new supplementary information needs to be developed.

Phase 1 project:

* 1. Natural England started initial work towards the update of the Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (LCA/SCA) guidance documents by letting a Phase 1 contract earlier in 2023. The output of this first phase and further internal work on the project has informed this request for tender (Phase 2).
  2. The Phase 1 project was entitled ‘Scoping a brief for a review of Landscape Character Assessments to inform the update of the ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ document’. Phase 1 commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to work with Natural England to test and develop the initial brief. The work included research, two structured workshops with LCA practitioners at Natural England and LUC, and the development of a limited number of case studies to test the brief and identify lessons learnt. A number of recommendations were made, based on the key findings of the project[[4]](#footnote-5). The key findings were as follows:
     + The core LCA guidance is generally fit for purpose; some minor adjustments have been identified and need to be verified by a wider stakeholder group.
     + New guidance on evaluation and application of LCA will be a key element to be added to the guidance to broaden and promote its application, and to influence decision-making and achieve integrated environmental outcomes.
     + To support the two points above, a concise review of LCAs is required to gather examples of good practice, including examples that demonstrate the core methods and use of LCA in evaluation and application such as informing design, development management, land management and EIA. Importantly, the review should also explore examples of ‘cutting edge’ applications to wider landscape issues and contexts.
     + Timely tools for early engagement will be needed to initiate discussion and stimulate wider interest in the use of LCA as a tool for managing positive change; to address this, the review and updating (if required) of recent studies commissioned for Natural England relating to such topics as nature recovery and forestry was recommended.
     + The perception (in some instances) of LCA being solely about ‘preservation’ of landscapes and a ‘barrier to change’ needs to be addressed so that LCA is presented as a means of enabling and guiding positive change. This is an important part of this commission.
     + The need for targeted stakeholder engagement which reaches as wide an audience as possible and works specifically on changing perceptions and introducing the use of LCA.
     + Clear information on the future demands on, and the wider context around, projected land use change is required to provide the evidence for stakeholder engagement and for showcasing the use of LCA in land use change management.

Phase 2 (this commission) and its relationship to Phase 3 and Seascape Character Assessment (SCA) guidance:

* 1. The subject of this request for tender (Phase 2) relates exclusively to LCA. The output of Phase 2 will be used to inform Phase 3 (currently planned for the 2024/25 financial year) which will update the LCA guidance and develop supplementary tools and materials prior to publication.
  2. Please note that the update of the SCA guidance will be undertaken as a separate project, drawing on the lessons learnt from this work and adapting it to SCA guidance.
  3. A volunteer group of Landscape Institute members has recently completed a ‘LCA database’ which contains links to all the known LCAs in the UK (in a spreadsheet format), at all scales and includes other related documents, such as Capacity and Sensitivity Assessments and Seascape Character Assessments. This catalogue is a useful resource which enables quicker access to LCAs, and an understanding of the current availability and breadth of LCAs across England. The digitisation of this catalogue is the longer term aim of the volunteers and Natural England, and forms part of the context for the update of the LCA guidance.

1. **Overall aims of the LCA update Phase 2 (this commission) and Phase 3** 
   1. The overall aim of the LCA guidance update is to offer a means of guiding positive landscape change for a wide range of applications and audiences, and to address the perception of LCA being a means of preventing or constraining change.
   2. To meet this aim and enable Natural England to provide strong landscape leadership, the updated LCA guidance produced in Phase 3 (supported by supplementary tools/materials) will:
      * continue to act as core evidence in landscape planning and management, while responding flexibly and creatively to a changing policy context;
      * be expanded to promote and illustrate its use as an evaluation tool and its application in processes and outcomes which respond to the challenges our landscape is facing and will face in the future;
      * be applicable to landscape professionals, but the guidance will be widened to encompass a range of land use change and land management applications, and thus be aimed at and promoted to planners, land managers, ecologists, foresters and others engaged in land use change or management as a tool they can use in their work;
      * be supported by a strong communications strategy aimed at altering perceptions and presenting LCA as a valuable tool in enabling positive landscape change;
      * be used as a platform from which to develop a longer term ‘landscape change network’ (working title) for continued stakeholder engagement, training, knowledge exchange and promotion to a wide audience of the use of LCA and landscape as context to land use change.
2. **Aim of LCA Phase 2 (this commission)**
   1. The overall **aim** of this commission/request for tender is to build upon the work undertaken in Phase 1 to prepare for the update of the LCA guidance document. To achieve this aim, Phase 2 will comprise two parts:
3. Undertake stakeholder engagement to:
   * + gather views on the additions and changes needed for the LCA guidance update; and
     + understand how to promote and demonstrate the use and benefits of LCA as a means of managing positive landscape change in different contexts.
4. Identify and prepare the ideas and draft content required to update the LCA guidance (e.g. narrative and illustrative content) informed by the material and evidence gathered from the stakeholder engagement.
5. **Detailed requirements for the LCA Phase 2 (subject of this commission/request for tender)**

**Tasks:**

* 1. The supplier will be required to undertake the following tasks.
     + **Task 1** – produce a **project management plan** for Phase 2 informed by the work undertaken in Phase 1, with an appropriate timeline setting out how the project will be implemented including the stakeholder engagement phase in the time allowed. Stakeholder representation will need to include a range of users of LCA such as public bodies and decision makers (local authorities, Government Agencies, NGOs), private practitioners and academics.
     + **Task 2** – produce a written **communications strategy** to meet the ambitions of the project as a whole, with a detailed strategy developed for Phase 2, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are included, but stratified according to a stakeholder hierarchy (see Task 5) based on the reasons for engagement and the content sought.
     + **Task 2 (a)** – as part of the communications strategy, a **stakeholder engagement plan** will need to be developed to support Natural England’s ambition of engaging a diverse range of stakeholders from across different sectors involved in land use change and land management. In addition to providing the firm foundations for engagement in Phases 2 and 3, the strategy will need be consistent with the aim of establishing a longer term ‘landscape change network’. An appropriate approach to data protection will need to be ensured as part of the stakeholder engagement plan.
     + **Task 3** – set up a **digital platform** to manage the stakeholder engagement with sufficient functionality and longevity for it to support the engagement needed for Phases 2 and 3 but be capable of being developed into a hub for the ‘landscape change network’ after the publication of the guidance document. In Phase 2, the platform would be the core resource for digitally setting out the background to the consultation, sharing materials which support it, gathering ideas and feedback and any other engagement needed.
     + **Task 4** – in collaboration with Natural England, **develop material to stimulate interest** and debate during stakeholder engagement, this is envisaged as a short scene-setting document, and should include:
     + Predicted future landscape change (looking approximately 20 years hence) precipitated by the need for climate change mitigation and nature recovery strategies.
     + A short policy review section, which considers the focus on environmental outcomes in landscape assessment.
     + The repurposing (as necessary) of recently commissioned internal Natural England training/evidence material to showcase LCA use in land change management to a broad audience.
     + **Task 5** – determine the **requirements needed for the updated LCA guidance** and any supplementary documentation/tools to meet the overall aims of the project and building upon the findings of Phase 1. This should be done in collaboration with an identified diverse range of stakeholders (divided into a hierarchy for effective communication[[5]](#footnote-6)), and include, but not limited to:
     + Identifying updates needed to the core guidance by building upon and verifying the information gathered during the Phase 1 work.
     + Exploring with stakeholders the ways in which the LCA guidance and supplementary material/tools could be developed to encourage and embed LCA use more widely, to alter perceptions and enable positive landscape change. Use of questionnaires, online workshops and other means of engagement should be considered.
     + Identifying best practice LCAs and examples of its innovative use in a range of applications, processes and outcomes to showcase its wider use to feed into the guidance document and supplementary material/tools (either as case studies or ‘topic papers’ depending on subject matter) and building on the initial work done in Phase 1.
     + **Task 6** – collate the **feedback from the stakeholder engagement stage**, identifying, in collaboration with Natural England, the key information to be included in specific identified parts of the LCA guidance document or its supplementary material/tools; and using this content to draft the outline structure and themes for inclusion in the update in Phase 3. Topics for further research should also be identified as part of this task.
     + **Task 7** – **remodeling the material** developed as part of the engagement stage of the project into specific draft paragraphs/parts of chapters/appendices of the LCA guidance, identifying the specific locations for this new material and/or the changes needed within the document to incorporate it. It is important to note that the final text to be incorporated will be agreed in Phase 3.
     + **Task 8** – A **written document** which pulls together the outline structure, themes for inclusion and remodeled material for the LCA update and its supplementary material/tools.

**Outputs to be delivered:**

* 1. The supplier will be required to produce the following **outputs** based on tasks one to eight as set out in paragraph 5.1. While the overall outputs are defined and required, the supplier is encouraged to suggest appropriate alternative approaches to the outputs as part of the bid if they deem this useful.
  2. Expected **outputs** are as follows:
     + A project management plan.
     + The **outputs** to meet the aims of the **stakeholder engagement** part of this project are expected to be:
     + A written communications strategy, identifying a hierarchy of stakeholder engagement groups for specific input and the method of working with specific stakeholders, including those nominated individuals/ consultancies as set out in paragraph 6.3 below. A second part of the strategy should set out the methods Natural England could employ to continue to engage with and encourage the use of LCA by the wide group of stakeholders identified, beyond the publication of the LCA guidance update.
     + A digital platform for stakeholder engagement, with sufficient / flexible functionality to allow for migration to Natural England systems after the publication of the LCA guidance to support a ‘landscape change network’ for continued stakeholder engagement, training, knowledge exchange and promotion to a wide audience of the use of LCA and landscape as context to land use change.
     + Material for use in the Phase 2 stakeholder engagement part of the project, including drawing together scene setting material, in collaboration with Natural England, to demonstrate the changes that the landscape is likely to undergo over the next 20 years; and use and repurposing (if necessary) of existing recently commissioned Natural England training materials/evidence to demonstrate the expanded application of LCA.
     + The **outputs** feeding into the **LCA guidance update** are expected to be:
     + A written document containing the following:
     + Material obtained from and used to stimulate interest and debate in the stakeholder engagement stage developed into drafts of specific paragraphs/chapters/appendices for inclusion in the LCA update. The format of this material should enable its efficient incorporation into the Phase 3 update of the guidance.
     + Identification of the specific locations for the new material to be inserted into the LCA guidance and its supplementary material/tools, and recommendations of where sections should be expanded, altered and added.

Please note, a draft of the written document should be produced for Natural England’s comment, prior to the final document being completed.

**Meetings and project communication:**

* 1. Meetings and key contact points should be built into the tender response, and should include:
     + An initial inception meeting with Natural England’s Steering Group to confirm the scope of the work and the steps the contractor intends to take to meet the project requirements.
     + Fortnightly updates with the Project Manager via MS Teams calls, emails and/or telephone calls.
     + Virtual meetings with the project manager and other Natural England staff at key points in the process (please cost for 5 meetings beyond the inception meeting; and provide provisional costs for additional meetings).
     + Allowance for two meetings of the Project Advisory Group (see footnote 5 above) at the start and end of Phase 2.
     + Allowance of one in person meeting as part of a potential smaller stakeholder group (as an option).
     + A final virtual meeting with the internal Steering Group to present the draft report.

1. **Supplier skill requirements**
   1. Please provide evidence to support your skills and experience as set out below.
   2. To deliver the project as specified and to acknowledge the wide-ranging views and stakeholders we need to consult on this work, we are looking for a professional contractor with **multi-disciplinary skills and experience** to manage the project and fulfil the specification. **We would particularly encourage tenders from consortiums**.
   3. In addition to the project team, a **key requirement of this project is the inclusion of paid input from at least two key individuals or consultancies** who have contributed to the field of landscape character assessment. They could either support and feed into the project consortium or be engaged for specific tasks. They would be nominated by Natural England and chosen once the contractor/contractor consortium has won the contract to ensure the update incorporates as wide a range of industry expertise as possible.
   4. Stakeholder engagement skills – working closely with the Project Manager it will be expected that consultants develop a stakeholder engagement hierarchy to capture specific input from particular identified stakeholders. Stakeholders will include internal (Natural England staff), external partners and stakeholders from a wide range of land use and land management professions. The engagement will take the form of publicity, presentation, and feedback and ideas from, and discussion with stakeholders.
   5. Specific LCA knowledge is essential including:
      * Experience of the production of LCAs and sound knowledge of the guidance which underpins it.
      * Strong knowledge of landscape planning and the role that LCAs play as baseline evidence in the production of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments and other planning evidence (e.g. Landscape Sensitivity studies and Green Infrastructure strategies), and within the planning system more widely.
      * Strong knowledge of the range of pressures which are currently, or likely to, affect landscape change and knowledge of land management / planning responses to change.
      * Good knowledge of the techniques used to undertake and present LCAs, including desk and field work, mapping, analysis, and presentation formats, including Word/PDF documents to interactive web-based platforms.
   6. The following generic skills will also be required for all elements of the work:
      * excellent research, analytical and written skills;
      * excellent inter-personal and presentational skills,
      * the ability to meet tight deadlines whilst maintaining high quality outputs;
      * identifying risks to project delivery and appropriate mitigation measures;
      * a flexible approach to meet a varied and fluctuating workload;
      * an awareness of the nature of Natural England’s and partners/stakeholders work;
      * the ability to establish good working relationships with Natural England staff and partners/stakeholders;
      * experience of working with public sector bodies, other stakeholders and the general public.
2. **Payment**
   1. The Authority will raise purchase orders to cover the cost of the services and will issue to the awarded supplier following contract award.
   2. The Authority’s preference is for all invoices to be sent electronically, quoting a valid Purchase Order number. Two invoicing points are proposed. The first invoice should be submitted after the completion of the project management plan, stakeholder engagement plan, the preparation of materials needed for the engagement and the set up of the digital platform. Invoice two would be paid after the completion of the remaining outputs. In each case, the invoice would be paid once the project manager has reviewed the output and deemed it to be satisfactory.
   3. As stated on p.4, prices must be submitted in £ sterling, **inclusive of VAT**.

* 1. It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded in early October 2023, with work starting as soon as practical after that. The contract is expected to run until the middle of February 2024.
  2. Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period. We may, at our sole discretion, extend this contract to include related or further work. Any extension shall be agreed in writing in advance of any work commencing and may be subject to further competition.

**Evaluation Methodology**

We will award this contract in line with the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) as set out in the following award criteria:

Technical (quality) – 60%

Commercial (price) – 40%

**Evaluation criteria**

The evaluation weightings are 60% technical and 40% commercial. The winning tenderer will be the highest scoring combined score.

**PLEASE NOTE – CORRECTION:** An error in the weighting of the questions in relation to the technical criteria has been discovered in the RFQ. These have been updated in the RFQ (25.09.23).

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| **Award Criteria** | **Weighting (%)** | **Evaluation Topic & Weighting** | **Sub-Criteria** | **Weighted Question** |
| Technical | 60% | Service Proposal | Methodology | Question 1  20% of technical score available |
| Outputs (see para. 5.3) | Question 2  30% of technical score available |
| Knowledge and experience | Question 3  20% of technical score available |
| Key personnel | Question 4  20% of technical score available |
| Risks & Constraints | Question 5  10% of technical score available |
| Commercial | 40% | Whole cost of the proposed contract | Commercial Model | Question 1  100% of commercial score available |

**Technical (60%)**

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| Criteria | **Detailed Evaluation Criteria** |
| Question 1 Please provide details of your understanding of the key aims of the work package, tasks and intended outputs. |  |
| Question 2 Please provide details of your proposals for completing outputs as set out in paragraph 5.3. |  |
| Question 3 Please provide evidence of previous research skills, knowledge and experience. | To include detail of two similar projects in scope and complexity, completed in the last five years. |
| Question 4 Please provide details of your key personnel, the roles and contributions to the project. | To include CVs for key staff. |
| Q5 Please provide details of your understanding of the risks/constraints of this project. | To include risk assessment and contingencies for ensuring successful completion of the contract. |

Technical evaluations will be based on responses to specific questions covering key criteria which are outlined below. Scores for questions will be based on the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Score** | **Definition** |
| Very good | 100 | Addresses all the Authority’s requirements with all the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. There are no weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority complete confidence that all the requirements will be met to a high standard. |
| Good | 70 | Addresses all the Authority’s requirements with all the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. The response contains minor weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority confidence that all the requirements will be met to a good standard. |
| Moderate | 50 | Addresses most of the requirements with most of the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. The response contains moderate weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority confidence that most of the requirements will be met to a suitable standard. |
| Weak | 20 | Substantially addresses the requirements but not all and provides supporting information that is of limited or no relevance or a methodology containing significant weaknesses and therefore raises concerns for the Authority that the requirements may not all be met. |
| Unacceptable | 0 | No response or provides a response that gives the Authority no confidence that the requirement will be met. |

The technical evaluation is assessed using the evaluation topics and sub-criteria stated in the Evaluation Criteria section above.

Separate submissions for each technical question should be provided and will be evaluated in isolation. Tenderers should provide answers that meet the criteria of each technical question.

**Commercial (40%)**

The Contract is to be awarded as a **fixed price** which will be paid according to the completion of the outputs to be delivered as stated in the Specification of Requirements.

Suppliers are required to submit a total cost to provide the outputs stated in the Specification of Requirements. In addition to this, the Commercial Response basic template must be completed to provide a breakdown of the costs against each output used in the delivery of this requirement.

Calculation Method

The method for calculating the weighted scores is as follows:

Technical:

Score = (Bidder’s Total Technical Score / Highest Technical Score) x 60%(Maximum available marks)

Commercial:

Score = (Lowest Quotation Price / Supplier’s Quotation Price) x 40%(Maximum available marks)

The total score (weighted) (TWS) is then calculated by adding the total weighted commercial score (WC) to the total weighted technical score (WT): WC + WT = TWS.

**Information to be returned**

Please note, the following information requested must be provided. Incomplete tender submissions may be discounted.

Please complete and return the following information:

* completed Commercial Response basic template;
* a separate response to each technical question within the submission (in accordance with the response instructions);
* Proposed timetable;
* Quality assurance measures;
* completed Mandatory Requirements (Annex 1);
* completed Acceptance of Terms and Conditions (Annex 2).

**Award**

Once the evaluation of the Response(s) is complete all suppliers will be notified of the outcome via email.

'The successful supplier will be issued the contract, incorporating their Response, for signature. The Authority will then counter sign'.

**Annex 1 Mandatory Requirements**

**Part 1 Potential Supplier Information**

Please answer the following self-declaration questions in full and include this Annex in your quotation response.

**Part 1.1 Potential Supplier Information:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 1.1(a) | Full name of the potential supplier submitting the information |  |
| 1.1(b) | Registered office address (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(c) | Company registration number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(d) | Charity registration number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(e) | Head office DUNS number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(f) | Registered VAT number |  |
| 1.1(g) | Are you a Small, Medium or Micro Enterprise (SME)? | (Yes / No) |

Note: See EU definition of SME <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en>

**Part 1.2 Contact details and declaration**

By submitting a quotation to this RFQ I declare that to the best of my knowledge the answers submitted and information contained in this document are correct and accurate.

I declare that, upon request and without delay you will provide the certificates or documentary evidence referred to in this document.

I understand that the information will be used in the selection process to assess my organisation’s suitability to be invited to participate further in this procurement.

I understand that the authority may reject this submission in its entirety if there is a failure to answer all the relevant questions fully, or if false/misleading information or content is provided in any section.

I am aware of the consequences of serious misrepresentation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 1.2(a) | Contact name |  |
| 1.2(b) | Name of organisation |  |
| 1.2(c) | Role in organisation |  |
| 1.2(d) | Phone number |  |
| 1.2(e) | E-mail address |  |
| 1.2(f) | Postal address |  |
| 1.2(g) | Signature (electronic is acceptable) |  |
| 1.2(h) | Date |  |

**Part 2 Exclusion Grounds**

**Part 2.1 Grounds for mandatory exclusion**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 2.1(a) | Please indicate if, within the past five years you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation been convicted anywhere in the world of any of the offences within the summary below. | |
|  | Participation in a criminal organisation. | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Corruption. | ((Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Fraud. | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Money laundering or terrorist financing | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
| 2.1(b) | If you have answered yes to question 2.1(a), please provide further details.  Date of conviction, specify which of the grounds listed the conviction was for, and the reasons for conviction.  Identity of who has been convicted  If the relevant documentation is available electronically please provide the web address, issuing authority, precise reference of the documents. |  |
| 2.1 (c) | If you have answered Yes to any of the points above have measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (i.e. Self-Cleaning) | (Yes / No) |
| 2.1(d) | Has it been established, for your organisation by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance with the legal provisions of any part of the United Kingdom or the legal provisions of the country in which the organisation is established (if outside the UK), that the organisation is in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions? | (Yes / No) |
| 2.1(e) | If you have answered yes to question 2.3(a), please provide further details. Please also confirm you have paid or have entered into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the outstanding sum including where applicable any accrued interest and/or fines. |  |

**Part 2.2 Grounds for discretionary exclusion**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 2.2(a) | The detailed grounds for discretionary exclusion of an organisation are set out on this [webpage](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551130/List_of_Mandatory_and_Discretionary_Exclusions.pdf), which should be referred to before completing these questions.  Please indicate if, within the past three years, anywhere in the world any of the following situations have applied to you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation | |
| 2.2(b) | Breach of environmental obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(c) | Breach of social obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(d) | Breach of labour law obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(e) | Shown significant or persistent deficiencies in the performance of a substantive requirement under a prior public contract, a prior contract with a contracting entity, or a prior concession contract, which led to early termination of that prior contract, damages or other comparable sanctions? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2 (f) | If you have answered Yes to any of the above, explain what measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (Self Cleaning) |  |

**Annex 2 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions**

I/We accept in full the terms and conditions appended to this Request for Quote document.

**Note** that completion of the terms and conditions themselves are not necessary at this stage. A copy is included with this RFQ for reference only.

Company \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. [An important step for England’s landscapes: welcoming the new Natural England Landscape Advisory Panel - Natural England (blog.gov.uk)](https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2022/01/27/an-important-step-for-englands-landscapes-welcoming-the-new-natural-england-landscape-advisory-panel/) [accessed 26.07.23] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Tudor, Christine (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Published by Natural England, October 2014. [landscape-character-assessment.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Tudor, Christine (2012) An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment. Published by Natural England, October 2012. [seascape-character-assessment.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396177/seascape-character-assessment.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. A copy of the full report will be made available to the successful tenderer upon appointment. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. We welcome recommendations from tenderers, but we would envisage a three tier approach to the stakeholder hierarchy comprising a Project Advisory Group; current users, commissioners and authors of LCAs (mainly landscape professionals); and then a wider group including public bodies and decision makers (Government Agencies, NGOs) and private practitioners, academics in a range of disciplines engaged in a wide range of land use change or management sectors. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)