**EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**

**PLEASE RESPOND BY 12PM ON 25TH JAN 2023 BY EMAILING PROCUREMENT@SOUTHKESTEVEN.GOV.UK**

**Background**

**The 2014 to 2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)** bring the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and part of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) together into a single European Union Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England supporting the key growth priorities of innovation, research and development, support for Small and Medium sized Enterprises, low carbon, skills, employment, and social inclusion.

**The European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme for England 2014 to 2020** sets out how the ERDF will focus on investment to support economic growth and job creation. Priority Axis 6 of the Operational Programme aims to preserve and protect the environment and promote resource efficiency, specifically following the investment priorities: 6d Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.

All applicants for funding were required to clearly demonstrate that the project would meet the requirement of, and make a meaningful contribution to, the delivery of the relevant Priority Axis of the European Regional Development Fund Operational Programme.

The Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Project is a £1.23m ERDF funded project. In October 2019, South Kesteven District Council (SKDC) received a grant of **£743,831** to deliver 14 projects focusing on Environment and Resource efficiently along the River Sea and River Witham Corridor. This is a unique opportunity for both SKDC and North Kesteven District Council (NKDC) to improve the natural environment infrastructure, regenerate urban conurbations and support the delivery of sustainable housing via partnership funding, resulting in attractive and environmentally rich river corridors beneficial for wildlife, residents, business, and visitors alike.

The wider project will include a range of physical improvements including footpath upgrades, repairs and installation, habitat creation in and along the river corridor, and river and floodplain restoration and regeneration.

Measurable outputs include the improvement of 7.05 hectares of blue / green corridor areas, conservation of 5 hectares of land. Wider outputs include supporting sustainable travel, visitor economy, physical and mental health well-being, and place-making for both District Councils.

To date 7 projects and 4.22 hectares of improved areas have been completed, with a further 7 projects with remaining hectarage outputs scheduled for completion before the financial and practical completion date of 31st June 2023.

**Objective**

As part of the contractual requirements of ERDF funding, South Kesteven District Council is required to procure a supplier to conduct an impact evaluation of the project, known as a “Summative Assessment”. The Managing Authority, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Level Government (MHCLG) is seeking to ensure that Summative Assessments are of a high quality and that they will help inform evaluations of the national programme.

With this in mind, the key objectives of this summative assessment will be to:

• Identify whether the programme was relevant for the local context.

• Identify whether expected outputs, outcomes and impact were achieved (including an assessment of equality and diversity).

• Demonstrate the economy, efficiency and effectiveness offered by the consortium in delivering the programme. This includes an assessment of the management capability of the management team and delivery partners.

• Combining the above, assess whether the project provided VFM.

• Identify lessons learned.

The key internal and external audiences for the summative assessment will be:

• External: Key stakeholders including (but not limited to) MHCLG, HMG and the EU. Their interest will be in demonstrating that the projects funded achieved the intended results and provided value for money as well as learning about the wider benefits of the programme.

• Internal: All the project partners who delivered The Witham/Slea Blue Green Corridor Project. Their interest will be in lessons learned for future projects, demonstrating value for money internally and externally, generating case studies and gaining useful economic insights for internal and external use. Suppliers are encouraged to be innovative in their proposals and design of the assessment to reflect the nature of the programme, suggesting any additional insights and added value they may be able to provide.

A full specification of the service required will be provided to bidders once an interest is expressed. Guidance for the summative Assessment - Evaluation of the European Regional Development Fund 2014 to 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

IF YOU CAN CONDUCT THIS ASSESSMENT PLEASE EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST BEFORE THE DEADLINE ABOVE.

IN YOUR EMAIL, PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR COMPANY LEGAL ENTITY NAME, ADDRESS, CONTACT PERSON AND CONTACT DETAILS.