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## Request for Quotation

**Scoping a brief for a review of Landscape Character Assessments to inform the update of the 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' document**

# Request for Quotation

## Scoping a brief for a review of Landscape Character Assessments to inform the update of the 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment' document

You are invited to submit a quotation for the requirement described in the specification below.

Please confirm, by email, receipt of these documents and whether you intend to submit a quote.

Your response should be returned to the following email address by **24<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 12:00 noon**: [Jacqui.jobbins@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Jacqui.jobbins@naturalengland.org.uk).

Ensure you state the reference number and 'Final Submission' in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

## Contact details and timeline

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

| Action                                     | Date                                      |
|--|---|
| Date of issue of RFQ                       | 10 <sup>th</sup> February 2023            |
| Deadline for clarifications/questions      | 17 <sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 12 noon |
| Deadline for receipt of Quotation          | 24 <sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 12 noon |
| Intended date of Contract Award            | 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2023                |
| Intended Contract Start Date               | 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2023                |
| Intended Delivery Date / Contract Duration | 30 <sup>th</sup> March 2023               |

## 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):

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| "Authority" | Means the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs acting as part of Natural England                        |
| "RFQ"       | Means this Request for Quotation and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to suppliers |
| "Contract"  | Means the contract to be entered into by the Authority and the successful supplier.                                   |

## **Conditions applying to the RFQ**

You should examine your response to the RFQ and related documents ensuring it is complete prior to submitting your completed quotation.

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

By submitting a quotation, the supplier is deemed to accept the terms and conditions in the RFQ. Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the RFQ may result in the supplier's exclusion from this procurement.

## **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.

## **Mandatory requirements**

The RFQ includes mandatory requirements and, if you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

## **Clarifications**

The Authority reserves the right to discuss, confidentially, any aspect of your quotation with you prior to any award of Contract to clarify matters.

## **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 in writing and may extend the deadline for receipt in order to give you a reasonable time in which to take the amendment into account.

## **Conditions of contract**

Natural England's Standard Condensed Terms and Conditions found at [Procurement at Natural England - Natural England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) will be included in any contract awarded as a result of this RFQ process. The Authority will not accept any material changes to these terms and conditions proposed by a supplier.

# Specification

The Authority is Natural England. The Authority's priorities are to secure a healthy natural environment; a sustainable, low-carbon economy; a thriving farming sector and a sustainable, healthy and secure food supply. Further information about the Authority can be found at [Natural England](#).

## A. Background

As the government adviser on landscape, Natural England has developed and publishes methodologies for Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (LCA/SCA). 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'<sup>1</sup>, which is aimed at guiding the development and publication of landscape character evidence at county, district or specific area scale (such as parish-scale for Neighbourhood Plans) was published in 2014 and is now 9 years old, while 'An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment'<sup>2</sup> is older, having been published in 2012. Natural England considers LCA/SCA to be key evidence tools to support a range of interventions and decision making that can influence positive landscape change, and we are keen to ensure that the guidance we provide is fit for the current and future pressures on the landscape.

Natural England is planning to update the LCA and SCA 'Approach' documents through a set of three phased and interlinked work packages, as follows:

- Phase 1: A small project (which is the subject of this request for tender) to scope and test a brief for the phase 2 project, concentrating exclusively on LCAs.
- Phase 2: A comprehensive review of the current approaches to published LCAs, and their uses and effectiveness. This second phase will also undertake a similar review of SCAs, using and adapting the brief from phase 1 to address the particular issues relating to SCA. The findings of each review will inform the update of the 'Approach' documents.
- Phase 3: Update of the LCA and SCA 'Approach' documents. In phase 3, the 'Approach' document for each topic will be updated simultaneously to encourage full complementarity between the two documents.

Full and separate specifications will be produced and tendered for each of the phase 2 and phase 3 projects.

As this request for tender will concentrate on developing the brief for the LCA review, for ease of reading the SCA 'Approach' document will not be mentioned further.

Although we consider the core LCA methodology to be sound, small changes may be identified through the process which could improve it during the phased projects. The main focuses of the update to the LCA 'Approach' document will therefore be:

- Ensuring that the guidance continues to support those who produce landscape evidence to inform a range of decisions and applications, including for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) baselines.

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<sup>1</sup> Tudor, Christine (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Published by Natural England, October 2014. [landscape-character-assessment.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> Tudor, Christine (2012) An Approach to Seascape Character Assessment. Published by Natural England, October 2012. [seascape-character-assessment.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

- Reflecting the policy drivers that have emerged since the publication of the 'Approach' document, including the drive for nature recovery and climate change adaptation / mitigation.

As part of the update (phase 3), we consider that the guidance also needs to include a range of best practice examples and be made more relevant by including the latest technological advances available for data collection and LCA presentation. There is also work to be done on ensuring the guidance complies with accessibility standards. A further aim is to engage with and raise awareness of the process of LCA and the guidance used for it with a wider user group (e.g. planners, land managers and others dealing with land use change).

There is also a need to ensure the guidance is robust in its ability to respond to the strengthened use of Design Guides/Codes in development planning and to reflect the forthcoming changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, which places stronger emphasis on 'beautiful' places.

A separate Natural England project to audit the evidence available to Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty to support their land use planning advice is currently being undertaken. While the scope of the audit is significantly narrower than that envisaged for phase 2, i.e. a full review of LCAs and SCAs, the findings of the audit may be of use during phase 2.

A volunteer group of the Landscape Institute membership has recently completed the compilation of a 'LCA catalogue' which contains links to all the known LCAs in the UK, at all scales (and includes other related documents, such as Capacity and Sensitivity Assessments and Seascape Character Assessments). This catalogue provides a useful starting point for understanding the current availability of LCAs across England.

## **B. Contract requirements**

### **Aims**

The overall aim of this phase 1 project is to develop the brief for the phase 2 project. In phase 2, a comprehensive review of the current approaches to, and uses and effectiveness of, LCAs will be undertaken, together with recommendations made for the update of the LCA 'Approach' document. In phase 3, the LCA 'Approach' document will be updated. Specifically, this phase 1 project aims to:

- a. Develop a brief to the review of the current approaches to, and uses and effectiveness of LCAs (Stage 1 overpage).
- b. Test the brief using a limited number of LCAs covering different types of landscape, ideally at different scales, with LCAs chosen which reflect landscapes subject to differing pressures (for example housing/other development, woodland creation, flooding as appropriate). The lessons learnt from the testing stage, as well as any other findings gathered in the course of the project, should inform the development of the brief (Stage 2 overpage).

### **Tasks**

We ask contractors to develop their own approach to meet the above aims through a series of costed tasks. These will include the following key stages:

## Stage 1: Scope a brief for the LCA review

Develop a brief for the LCA review project (phase 2). The brief developed in this stage (Stage 1) will be tested in Stage 2, as set out overleaf. The brief should ensure that the phase 2 LCA review project is set up to undertake a comprehensive review of a representative sample of LCAs. The sample LCAs should cover a range of scales, geographical locations and landscape types, landscapes subject to different pressures, as well as including LCAs with different aims and content and different presentation methods. The brief needs to be wide enough in scope to ensure that best practice and poor practice examples can be identified to ensure the fullest understanding of published LCAs.

It is envisaged that the brief (phase1) will consider, but not be limited to, the following areas as appropriate:

- i. Purposes of the LCAs, especially if wider than land use planning.
- ii. How effective the LCAs have been in shaping the decisions of the commissioning body (considering both plan-making and decision-taking), with examples to show their use and effectiveness/lack of effectiveness. The brief should include recommendations for obtaining this information (and any other as appropriate) using a selection of techniques, including (but not limited to) interviews, surveys and workshops. In the brief, the recommended techniques should be accompanied by a short explanation of their application and relevance to the particular topic area. Some details showing how they will inform the LCA review project (phase 2), along with details as to how they would be applied, should also be provided.
- iii. Any recently emerged landscape pressures or trends relevant to the LCA study area and how/whether they have been addressed by the LCA, with details as to how this would be judged; consider whether the relevant NCA Landscape change evidence has been addressed in the pressures and trends identified in the LCA or whether there is the opportunity to do so; consider whether the LCA 'Approach' document had any role in this work; and whether any specific gaps can be identified in the LCA 'Approach' document.
- iv. The level of consistency between LCAs in different areas in tackling similar landscape pressures.
- v. The level of consistency between LCAs when tackling different and/or competing landscape pressures.
- vi. How well do LCAs work across different scales (county, district, parish), and are there any lessons for the updated 'Approach' document in relation to different scales?
- vii. To what extent, and with what efficacy, are the topics below considered in greater detail within LCAs or through tailored guidance/links to sensitivity assessment:
  1. Woodland creation/large scale tree planting;
  2. Urban fringe pressures;
  3. Pressures on coastal landscapes;
  4. Needs/inclusion of nature recovery;
  5. Any others not identified above.
- viii. Identify LCA exemplars which provide best practice or innovative approaches to general or specific issues or the approach to landscape assessment. This should include, but is not limited to:
  1. LCAs which cover any of the topics identified in point vii above;
  2. Monitoring of landscape change at different scales, including at a local scale (i.e. parish or areas within a district);
  3. Any innovative ways used in field data collection or analysis;

4. Presentation of publication, including the way(s) in which the LCA is made available, and the graphics, use of photographs and style of document.
- ix. Explore the spatial/boundary/scale relationships between a range of specific LCAs and the rest of the suite of landscape /seascape evidence produced by the commissioning bodies to understand their interrelationships and establish any lessons learnt from these to inform the LCA guidance update.

## **Stage 2: Test brief using a sample of LCAs**

Test the brief and the topic areas identified within it using at least three different LCAs. While for brevity and concision we are advising the use of a limited number of LCAs to test the brief, the chosen LCAs should apply to landscapes which are geographically distinct, subject to different landscape pressures, and ideally at different scales. Please note that this task should also capture any other considerations which arise as part of the testing, but that have not been specifically identified in Stage 1. The purpose of Stage 2 is to test the brief, show that it can be scaled up for the comprehensive LCA review in phase 2 and set out recommendations for the phase 2 LCA review project. Any information which is gathered and applies to the LCA 'Approach' document update in phase 3 should also be captured.

## **Stage 3: Report and recommendations**

The outcomes of Stages 1 and 2 should be presented to Natural England to provide an opportunity to discuss the findings and provide feedback, before producing a short project report. The report should meet Natural England's Commissioned Report Writing Guidance (provided on appointment). The report content should include:

- A brief which responds to and expands upon the tasks set out in Stage 1.
- The results of the testing of the brief (Stage 2).
- Recommendations for the LCA review project, including any key issues or lessons learnt from the proposal testing (and where appropriate, the LCA 'Approach' document update).

## **Summary of required outputs**

This contract will require the following outputs:

- A draft brief for the LCA review project produced at the end of Stage 1. This draft should be produced in Word format and presented to the project manager (and other invited Natural England staff) at a virtual meeting for discussion. The contractor should take account of any feedback and amend the proposal before completing testing, if required.
- Results of the tested brief undertaken under Stage 2, set out in a short summary of the findings and presented to the project manager (and any other relevant Natural England staff) at a virtual meeting.
- A draft of the short final report (Stage 3) encompassing the above outputs and setting out recommendations and key issues/limitations. The draft should be circulated electronically for comments to the group included in the virtual meetings.
- Final report that takes account of the comments received in the meetings and any other format, produced in both PDF and Word format.

## **Meetings**

Meetings and key contact points should be built into the tender response, including:

- An initial inception meeting with Natural England to confirm the scope of the work and the steps the contractor intends to take to meet the project requirements.
- A virtual meeting with the project manager and other Natural England staff at the end of Stage 1.
- A virtual meeting with the project manager and other Natural England staff at the end of Stage 2.
- A final virtual meeting with the Steering Group to present the draft report.

E-mail or phone liaison with the Project Manager will take place on an ad hoc basis as the work progresses.

## **C. Skills requirements**

To cover the work required, we are looking for a professional contractor/consultant with the following skills and experience. Please provide evidence to support this:

- Research and analytical skills.
- Experience of the production of landscape character assessments and sound knowledge of the guidance which underpins it.
- Strong knowledge of landscape planning and the role that LCAs play as baseline documents in the production of LVIA's, and within the planning system more widely.
- Strong knowledge of other pressures which are currently affecting landscape management, and knowledge of likely future pressures.
- Good knowledge of the techniques used to undertake and present LCAs, including desk and field work, mapping and analysis.
- Ability to write clear reports in relation to the environment and landscape.
- Good project management skills and a track record of delivering contracts on time.
- An awareness of the nature of Natural England's and partners' work.

## **D. Timescale**

The contract is anticipated to be awarded in early March 2023, with work starting as soon as practical after that. The contract is expected to run until end of March 2023, with flexibility for report finalisation beyond this date.

## **E. Prices**



The contract will be let on a firm price basis (excluding VAT). Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period.

## F. Quotation submission

Contractors should include details of:

- The personnel who will be directly involved with this contract, including brief CVs.
- Proposed methodology.
- Timetable.
- Past experience of carrying out similar work.
- Risk assessment and contingencies for ensuring successful completion of the contract.
- Quality assurance measures.

Bids must show a fixed price based on daily rates for project team members. They should follow the below format in providing a breakdown of the overall fixed price against the outputs required.

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling, exclusive of VAT.

| Output                                | Staff grade | Daily rate | Input (days) | Total (excl VAT) |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| Stage 1: Scope a brief for LCA review |             |            |              |                  |
| Stage 2: Test brief                   |             |            |              |                  |
| Stage 3: Report and recommendations   |             |            |              |                  |
| <b>Total</b>                          |             |            |              |                  |

## G. Evaluation of bids

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

Price – 40%

Quality – 60%

The following quality criteria (overpage) are weighted in accordance with the importance and relevance attached to each one.

| Criteria   | Weighting |
|--|-----------|
| Understanding of the key aims of the study, tasks and intended outputs | 10%       |
| Proposals for apportioning targets and testing the approach(es)        | 15%       |
| Evidence of previous research skills, knowledge and experience         | 15%       |
| Key personnel, the roles and contributions to the project              | 15%       |
| Understanding of risks/constraints                                     | 5%        |

The quality criteria will be scored as follows:

| Score                         | Justification   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| For a score of hundred (100): | Excellent - Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full. |
| For a score of seventy (70):  | Good - Response is relevant and good. The response demonstrates a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled.  |
| For a score of fifty (50):    | Acceptable - Response is relevant and acceptable. The response provides sufficient evidence to fulfil basic requirements.   |
| For a score of twenty (20):   | Poor - Response is partially relevant and/or poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirements but contains insufficient / limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled.                 |
| For a score of zero (0):      | Unacceptable - Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.   |

## H. Contract management and payments

This contract shall be managed on behalf of the Authority by Jacqui Jobbins, [Jacqui.jobbins@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:Jacqui.jobbins@naturalengland.org.uk), 07551 278031

The contractor will nominate a project leader who will manage and deliver the project, and liaise with Natural England's project manager.

We will raise a purchase order to cover the cost of the services and will issue it to the awarded supplier following the contract award. The contractor should invoice Natural England once the project manager has reviewed the final output and deemed it to be satisfactory.

## I. 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.

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

## **J. Intellectual Property Rights and data**

Any intellectual property arising from the contract will belong to Natural England. All data resulting from this project, project documents and other materials will be the property of Natural England.

## **K. 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.

## **L. Protection of Personal Data**

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 the contractor 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.

## **M. 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.