



Invitation to Tender

FOREST FARMING GROUP:
PA2 Feasibility Study
Consultancy
(NFNPA – 0052)

Date : Wednesday 16th August 2023

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1. SUMMARY

The New Forest National Park Authority (NFNPA or 'the Authority'), on behalf of the Forest Farming Group (FFG), is **seeking a consultant and/or individual** to work with the group members to prepare a PA2 Feasibility Study ("the Study") to aid a possible Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier application.

The purpose of the Study is to identify appropriate management principles for the Study Area in order to deliver the FFG's objectives and to explore how the management principles can be supported through DEFRA's Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS).

The **PA2 should be completed by 30th September 2024**, unless the FFG agrees to an extension. Regular updates including a written monthly progress report will be provided to the FFG throughout the study period.

The contract value is expected to be **in the range of £70-100,000**.

2. NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK OVERVIEW

The **New Forest National Park Authority** is the organisation responsible for promoting the two statutory purposes of the National Park as set out in the Environment Act 1995 which are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area
- To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park by the public.

The Authority also has a duty to seek to foster the economic and social well-being of the local communities within the National Park.

The **Forest Farming Group*** has its origins in the decision of the UK to leave the European Union and consequently the Common Agricultural Policy. The CAP has been the mechanism for providing financial support to New Forest farmers and land managers through the Single Payment Scheme, Basic Payment Scheme and environmental stewardship schemes; Countryside Stewardship and Higher Level Stewardship.

The primary focus of the group has been to work together to promote the need for a bespoke land management scheme for the New Forest which will continue to deliver and maintain vital environmental services for the benefit of the public. The FFG has identified a range of public goods provided by the New Forest including the grazing of legally depastured animals and published the report 'Understanding the New Forest's Natural Capital' in 2018 which gives an evidence base and proposes a structure to help create a replacement for the current system that will be specially suited to the New Forest area. A Vision document setting out the requirements of a future scheme was drawn up by the FFG in March 2022. This is attached as Appendix 1.

The FFG has made representations to government ministers and officials and responded to consultations on the future of farming and the Environmental Land Management (ELM) Policy Discussion Document.

** Representatives from: New Forest National Park Authority, Forestry England, New Forest Commoners Defence Association, National Farmers Union, National Trust and Natural England.*

The New Forest hosts an extraordinary diverse range of species that are rare, uncommon, and declining elsewhere in the UK and Western Europe. The Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan has identified 50 notable species meriting special regard, with 41 of these found in the New Forest. The area is well placed to sequester increased levels of carbon and it also boasts exceptional water quality, which requires protection.

The various public and non-public bodies that share the management of this unique landscape have a very good track record of collaborative working. This is illustrated by the Verderers' of the New Forest' Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) board, the New Forest National Park Partnership Plan, and the work of the Forest Farming Group to date.

3. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Any queries may be submitted through our [In-tend supplier portal](#) or via the contact details below:

For tender process / procurement queries:

Tom Knott, Finance & Sustainable Procurement Officer - 01590 646678
tender@newforestnpa.gov.uk

For technical queries:

Paul Walton, Head of Environment & Rural Economy - 01590 646631,
paul.walton@newforestnpa.gov.uk

4. TENDER SPECIFICATION

Overview of requirements (if applicable, supplementary documents are placed in the Appendices section)

We are looking for a supplier to manage the work necessary to be able to enter a New Forest Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship in place of the existing HLS. The work will deliver the following seven outputs:

1 Identify the Key Features of the Study Area

With reference to the citations of the New Forest's SSSI, SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations, identify all the Study Area's 'features', before working with the FFG's membership and other key stakeholders to establish what 'features' are best supported through ELMS (the "Key Features").

The Study shall consider what features are supported well through current (or recent) agri-environment schemes and where there is scope for further support under ELMS. The Feasibility

Study shall consider both the natural and historic environment and will have regard to the list of resources provided at the end of this document.

2 Identify the geographical area that is required to support the Key Features (see Appendix 1)

Whilst the Study Area has been defined as the perambulation, the feasibility study shall explore what area of land is required to support the Key Features. It may be that not all of the land within the Perambulation is required to support them. Conversely, land outside of the Study Area may be required to support and manage the Key Features. Where multiple options are identified, regard shall be had to the practicalities of managing the area under one or more management agreements.

The study shall seek to establish who are the landowners/managers of the lands located within the perambulation.

The Study will also establish whether the timber growing inclosures are required to support the Key Features, and if so, whether these areas can technically and practically be included within one of DEFRA's land management schemes.

3 What Management Principles should be adopted in order to support the Key Features

The study shall seek to identify a list of management principles and/or outcomes that support the Key Features of the Study Area ("the Management Principles"). The FFG membership and other key stakeholders will be appropriately consulted with the aim of producing a list of principles that can be adopted by the FFG and used to inform any future land management scheme for the Study Area.

4 How does the current grazing system in the New Forest maintain the Key Features and how can the grazing system be supported to protect and enhance the Key Features?

The Study will consider the interaction between the grazing system and the identified Key Features. It will explore how the grazing system can be incentivised and supported to protect and enhance the Key Features. Commoners (being those that hold the rights to graze the Study Area) and the Verderers of the New Forest (who administer the grazing system) will need to be properly consulted as part of this exercise.

The study shall review how the Verderers' Grazing Scheme has supported the grazing system in the New Forest and consider what alternative options there are, if any. The levels of funding necessary to incentivise and support the grazing system shall be considered. The study shall consider what the key management principles should be for any new scheme in relation to the grazing system.

5 Which agri-environment scheme, or combination of schemes, would be most appropriate for delivering the Management Principles?

The Study shall explore all three components of DEFRA's Environmental Land Management Scheme:

Landscape Recovery; Countryside Stewardship (including Countryside Stewardship Plus), and Sustainable Farming Incentive.

It shall review the interaction between these schemes considering eligibility criteria and identifying how multiple agreements might work together on a landscape scale to deliver the agreed Management Principles.

6 What governance structure will best support the management of the Key Features?

The existing governance structure for the Verderers of the New Forest's Higher Level Stewardship Scheme shall be considered along with alternative structures to establish how one or more agri-environmental schemes can be best managed over the scheme area(s).

The study shall call upon the works carried out to date by the Foundation for Common Land's Test & Trial operating in the New Forest and build upon what has been learnt to date.

7 What further research or studies are required?

If it is found during this feasibility study that further studies or tasks need to be carried out before an informed Environmental Land Management scheme application can be made, then these should be identified as part of the feasibility study's conclusion.

The Contract

The contract is for a maximum 12-month period.

The Supplier

We are seeking a supplier with :

- an understanding of the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier scheme
- an understanding of emerging Agriculture policy, ELMs including Landscape Recovery
- an understanding of the New Forest National Park, roles and responsibilities of Forestry England, National Park Authority and Verderers of the New Forest
- an understanding of commoners of the New Forest and commoning systems
- an understanding of the key issues and challenges within in the New Forest
- the ability to identify risks and opportunities
- strong communication and engagement skills.

5. EVALUATION OF TENDERS

Suppliers must complete, in full, the Assessment Document which is attached below. This outlines the minimum information required from suppliers and will form the basis upon which your submission will be evaluated. It is envisaged that this scoring and evaluation exercise will take no longer than 7 working days after the ITT response deadline, which is noon 13th September 2023. It is envisaged that a decision will then be made on or around 22nd September 2023.

No information contained in this ITT, or in any communication made between the Authority and you in connection with this ITT shall be relied upon as constituting a contract, agreement or representation that any contract shall be offered in accordance with this ITT. The Authority reserves the right, subject to the appropriate procurement regulations, to change without notice the basis of, or the procedures for, the competitive tendering process or to terminate the process at any time. Under no circumstances shall the Authority incur any liability in respect of this ITT or any supporting documentation.

Please answer all questions as accurately and concisely as possible in the same order as the questions are presented. Where a question is not relevant to your organisation, this should be indicated, with an explanation.

Completeness and Further Information

The information supplied will be checked for completeness and compliance with the instructions before responses are evaluated.

Failure to provide the required information, make a satisfactory response to any question, or supply documentation referred to in responses, within the specified timescale, may mean that you are not invited to participate further. In the event that none of the responses are deemed satisfactory, the Authority reserves the right to terminate the procurement and where appropriate re-advertise the procurement.

You should be explicit and comprehensive in your responses to this ITT as this will be the single source of information on which responses will be scored and ranked. You are advised neither to make any assumptions about any past or current supplier relationships with the Authority nor to assume that such prior business relationships will be taken into account in the evaluation procedure.

The ITT is provided on the same basis to all tenderers. Please note that to ensure fair and open competition, the responses to any questions raised by interested contractors will be made available to all other contractors, where appropriate. Any such clarifications will be posted on our In-tend portal and you will receive email notification to make you aware of this. If you wish to be updated with any tender clarifications but do not wish to register on our In-tend portal, then you must formally request to receive such clarifications via email, to the contact listed in Section 3 of this ITT. The deadline for receipt of clarifications relating to the specification or any other part of this ITT is noon 6th September 2023.

Please note that the spaces provided in the Assessment Document should not be viewed as an indication of the length and depth of responses we require for a particular section. Suppliers are encouraged to generate as much space as required to answer each section in full, ensuring that any additional pages used are clearly cross-referenced to the relevant section being addressed, where applicable.

It should be noted that whilst some sections of the Assessment Document are not directly scored (e.g. financial information), the Authority reserves the right to take into account supplier responses to these elements when evaluating and awarding the contract.

Supplier responses in the Assessment Document shall form part of the contract, where appropriate, thus the supplier will be legally obliged to comply with the responses provided therein. Should your company be successful and be awarded the contract, any variations to the proposals in the Assessment Document must receive prior written approval from the Authority.

The Authority expressly reserves the right to request you to provide additional information supplementing or clarifying any of the information provided in response to the requests set out in this ITT. The Authority may seek independent financial and market advice to validate information declared, or to assist in the evaluation.

Disqualification and selection

The Authority may disqualify you if you fail to:

1. Provide a satisfactory response to any questions in the ITT or inadequately or incorrectly complete any question or have not provided the required information; and/or
2. Submit the completed ITT before the stated deadline.

The potential providers who are not disqualified in accordance with the above grounds shall be evaluated on the qualification criteria which take into account the economic and financial standing and the technical or professional ability of each.

The Assessment Document is attached here:



Assessment Document

The Contract will be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender to Authority, based on the evaluation criteria of 30% price and 70% quality. Tenders will be evaluated and assessed using the scoring matrix below, by at least three Authority staff / FFG members.

Criteria	Weighting
Price	30%
Quality	70%

Sub-weightings for the Quality Criteria are provided below :

Section	Quality Heading	Sub-Weighting
A	Company Information	0%
B	Your Approach	40%
C	Scope of Services	30%
D	Your Experience / References	30%

The following scoring mechanism will be used to allocate points available.

Scoring	Points
Response meets the required standard in all material respects and adds value in some or all of the major requirements	9 – 10
Response meets the required standard in all material respects	7 – 8
Response meets the required standard in most material respects, but is lacking or inconsistent in others	5 – 6
Proposal falls short of achieving expected standard in a number of identifiable respects	3 - 4
Response significantly fails to meet the required standard, contains significant shortcomings or is inconsistent with other responses	1 - 2
Completely fails to meet required standard or does not provide a response	0

Price – with regards to the price evaluation, the lowest accepted (i.e. reasonable) submitted price will be awarded the maximum price score of **30%**. Thereafter, each tender will be ranked and scored in accordance with how much more expensive their respective price is compared to the lowest price (e.g. – if it is 50% more expensive than the lowest price, it will be awarded 50% less price points in comparison to the lowest price tender).

Quality - weighted scores will be calculated by multiplying the score for each quality criteria by its weighting. The weighted scores will be totalled for each tender. The totals will be normalised so that the normalised highest total will attract the highest Quality score of **70%**.

There is an overall quality threshold of **6 points**. If the summation of the weighted scores under each quality heading is below this figure, then the tender will no longer be considered, regardless of price.

The Authority reserves the right to withdraw this contract opportunity at any point, without notice, and will not be liable for any costs incurred by suppliers during any stage of the process. Suppliers should also note that, in the event a tender is considered to be fundamentally unacceptable on a key issue, regardless of its other merits, that tender may be rejected.

6. INSTRUCTIONS TO TENDERERS

The proposed Tender timescales are as follows, however these are subject to change. In such an event, all Tenderers will be informed immediately via our In-tend supplier portal:

Tender Process	Deadline
Invitation to Tender (ITT) sent out	Wednesday 16 th August 2023
Deadline for ITT clarifications / questions	Noon, 6 th September 2023
ITT response deadline	Noon, 13 th September 2023
Evaluation of ITT submissions	13 th Sept – 22 nd Sept
Contract Award	22 nd September 2023
Standstill period (10 days)	23 rd Sept – 2 nd Oct
Contract Commencement date	3 rd October 2023

Tenders submitted after the stipulated time and date advised will be rejected, unless exceptional circumstances are proven, such as clear evidence of postal guarantee or record of successful submission through In-tend.

Tenderers must ensure that their completed Assessment Document has been returned, by noon 13th September 2023 in order for their bids to be evaluated:

- a. If your submission is via our [In-tend supplier portal](#), then it must be completed by noon 13th September 2023 Please note that you will have to register on this portal before you can view the Invitation to Tender document and submit a tender
- b. If your submission is via email, please return it to: tender@newforestnpa.gov.uk - to arrive no later than noon 13th September 2023
- c. If you wish to post a hard copy reply, it must be marked for the attention of Tom Knott, to arrive no later than noon 13th September 2023 and sent to:

FAO: Tom Knott, Finance and Sustainable Procurement Officer – [NFNPA 0100]
New Forest National Park Authority
Lymington Town Hall
Avenue Road
Lymington
Hampshire
SO41 9ZG.

Please note that you must ensure that the envelope used must bear **no mark to identify the sender**. Failure to comply with this may result in your tender being excluded from the evaluation process.

Please note that you may use either [In-tend](#) or post in submitting your responses, or both should you wish. Posted entries are sent at the risk of the supplier and confirmation of receipt will not be provided by the Authority, unless specifically requested by the supplier; the Authority will not be liable in any way for entries not received or delayed in the post. Furthermore the Authority is unable to return any documentation provided, whether the supplier is successful or not.

The Authority shall keep all tenders received unopened until after the ITT submission deadline of noon 13th September 2023. Any tenders received after this time shall not be considered for evaluation and shall be returned promptly to the tenderer.

7. CONDITIONS OF TENDER

The Terms and Conditions of Contract will be based on the Authority's General Standard Conditions of Contract, a copy of which can be found below:



NFNPA Standard
Terms Contract Aug:

The Authority reserves the right to withdraw this contract opportunity without notice and will not be liable for any costs incurred by suppliers during any stage of the process. Suppliers should also note that, in the event a tender is considered to be fundamentally unacceptable on a key issue, regardless of its other merits, that tender may be rejected.

Representations

A supplier may contact the Authority to obtain any further information about the requirements of the contract or the tendering procedures if these are not evident or clear from the documents supplied to suppliers.

No questions will be answered that provide a competitive advantage to any party interested in tendering.

Should questions arise during the tendering period, which in our judgment are of material significance, we will inform all suppliers to explain the nature of the question, and our formal reply. All suppliers should then take that reply into consideration when preparing their own bids and we will evaluate bids on the assumption that they have done so.

Specification

For the avoidance of doubt, the contract specification shall include all requirements explicit or implied within this Invitation to Tender.

The Authority reserves the right to withdraw this tender document and all funding contained within it without notice.

Conflicts of Interest

Tenderers must disclose in their Tender any circumstances, including personal, financial and business activities that will, or might, give rise to a conflict of interest by taking part in this competition, or if awarded any contract as a result of this opportunity. This also applies to any sub-contractors that the Tenderer wishes to employ as part of any contract.

Where Tenderers identify such potential conflicts, they should immediately state these to the Authority and confirm how they intend to avoid such conflicts. The Authority reserves the right to

reject any Tender which, in the opinion of the Authority gives rise, or could potentially give rise to, any conflict of interest.

Tenders Excluded

No tender will be considered for acceptance if the supplier has indulged or attempted to indulge in any corrupt practice or canvassed the tender with an employee of the Authority. If a supplier has indulged or attempted to indulge in such practices and the tender is accepted, then grounds shall exist for the termination of the contract and the claiming of damages from the successful suppliers.

It is unlikely that any tender will be accepted which (a) is incomplete or inaccurately or inadequately completed or which purports to impose conditions other than those provided in the contract documents and (b) is delivered out of time or in a manner other than specified in the specification.

Collusive Tendering

In submitting a tender against this contract, the supplier confirms that they have not fixed or adjusted the amount of the tender by or under or in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other person.

The supplier also certifies that at no time, before or following the submission of the tender, has the Supplier carried out any of the following acts:

- i) communicating to a person other than the person calling for the tenders the amount or approximate amount of the proposed tender, except where such disclosure is required for the purpose of obtaining insurance
- ii) entering into any agreement or arrangement with any person that he shall refrain from tendering or as to the amount of any tender to be submitted
- iii) offering or paying or giving or agreeing to give any sum of money or valuable consideration directly or indirectly to any person for doing or having done or causing or having caused to be done in relation to any other tender or proposed tender for the said work any act or thing of the sort described above. In the context of this clause the word 'person' includes any persons and any body or association, corporate or unincorporated; and 'any agreement or arrangement' includes any such transaction, formal or informal, and whether legally binding or not.

Freedom of Information

The National Park Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and therefore information in relation to this tender may be requested by third parties. Requests for information will be considered on a case by case basis and consideration will be given as to whether or not the information is exempt from disclosure under the legislation.

Suppliers should identify if any of the information supplied by them is confidential or commercially sensitive and provide details of why they feel release of the information would prejudice their interests. This will not guarantee that the information will not be disclosed but your views will be taken into account when considering a request.

It is important to note that information may be commercially sensitive for a time (e.g. during a tender process) but afterwards it may not be. The timing of any request for information will be taken into account when determining whether or not the information is exempt, however suppliers should note that no information is likely to be regarded as exempt forever.

Confidentiality

The Tenderer (whether this Tender is accepted or not) and all other recipients of the Specification and documents (whether they submit a tender or not) shall treat the details of the Specification and the documents attached hereto as private and confidential and shall not disclose the details to any party.

APPENDIX 1: Forest Farming Group Vision for a New Forest Environmental Land Management Scheme



FFG ELMS VISION
(10.03.22) .pdf

APPENDIX 2: Study Area Boundary

The map below shows the boundaries of the study area referred to in Section 2 above. The Study area is defined as the land within the perambulation boundary. The National Park boundary is shown for reference

