Background to Natural England

Natural England is the government’s adviser for the natural environment in England. Its purpose is to help conserve, enhance and manage the natural environment for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Project Title: Agri-Environment Nightingale GPS tracking for the Upper Beult and Marden Farm Clusters

Background to the specific work area relevant to this purchase

This contract will provide the GPS tags to be owned by Natural England and to be subsequently loaned out to a third party to study nightingales in the 2025/26 breeding season.

Defra’s Agri-environment schemes include both the existing [Environmental Stewardship](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/environmental-stewardship-guidance-and-forms-for-existing-agreement-holders), [Countryside Stewardship,](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/countryside-stewardship-get-funding-to-protect-and-improve-the-land-you-manage) and the newer [Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI)](https://farming.campaign.gov.uk/) and [Landscape Recovery.](https://defrafarming.blog.gov.uk/2024/02/12/landscape-recovery-building-long-term-agreements/) Natural England's Agri-environment team is working closely with farmers and landowners to use the schemes offered by DEFRA to deliver nature recovery at a landscape-scale. Understanding how species respond to Agri-environment actions is crucial to target investment properly.

Nightingale is a red-listed species of conservation concern in the UK. Kent holds a significant proportion of the UK's Nightingale population, more than other individual counties. This project aims to investigate Nightingale use of agri-environment schemes in the Low Weald area, including hedgerow and scrub creation, field margins and ponds. It will focus on the breeding and post-breeding aspects of the Nightingale breeding cycle. The work will be undertaken by Adonis Blue Environmental (Kent Wildlife Trust Group) in collaboration with Natural England. It aligns with a comparable study of Turtle Doves.

Using archival GPS tags, we will investigate patterns of habitat use, specifically in a mixed woodland and farmland landscape with strong occupancy by Nightingales. We will look to study birds breeding in woodland and adjacent scrub habitats. This research will use a platform of existing Nightingale studies in the Upper Beult farmer cluster and adjacent low Weald. Nightingale is used by the Upper Beult farmer cluster as a flagship species and indicator of habitat quality. The Upper Beult farmer cluster is coordinated by Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT).

Tags will be deployed in late April/May when Nightingales have settled into their territories and can be readily caught (under appropriate licences). Breeding / post-breeding season data collection will continue through to August when birds start to leave on their winter migration.

Requirement

The project requires nine (9) nightingale GPS tags that match all aspects of the specification to be delivered by the time frame set out below.

SPECIFICATION:

Specification of GPS tags for deployment on Nightingales:

~ Small, waterproof, archival GPS tags for use on Nightingale

~ Tags to weigh less than 0.8 g

~ Suitable for harness attachment

~ Accelerometer

~ Battery only capacity

TIME FRAME and OBJECTIVES:

Tags will be deployed on Nightingale at breeding sites in UK in April/May 2025, to address the following objectives:

~~ Generate frequent GPS data points during the breeding / post-breeding season (June to August 2025). This will address priorities of NE agri-environment monitoring and UK Woodland Bird Group (NE/RSPB led). Based on presumed battery life, assumption of ~2 fixes each day during this period.

~~ Devices at some sites may be retrieved in late spring 2025, but majority of tags will be retrieved in spring 2026 meaning that a further objective will be to collect less frequent GPS data during ~September 2025 to April 2026. This will inform migration and wintering ranges of the tagged Nightingales. Based on presumed battery life, assumption of ~1 fix every 5 days during this period.

Sustainability

Natural England protects and improves the environment and is committed to reducing the sustainability impacts of its activities directly and through its supply chains. We expect the Contractor to share this commitment and adopt a sound, proactive sustainable approach in keeping with the 25-yr environmental plan/our commitments compliant with all applicable legislation. This includes understanding and reducing direct and indirect sustainability impacts and realising opportunities, including but not restricted to; resilience to climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use and quality, biosecurity, resource efficiency and waste, reducing the risk of pollution, biodiversity, modern slavery and equality, diversity & inclusion, negative community impacts.

As a delivery partner, the successful contractor is expected to pursue sustainability in their operations, thereby ensuring the Contracting Authority is not contracting with a supplier whose operational outputs run contrary to the Contracting Authority’s objectives. The successful contractor will need to approach the project with a focus on the entire life cycle of the project

Outputs and Contract Management

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Reference | Deliverable | Responsible Party | Date of completion |
| Outcome 1 | Schedule of works consultation and invoices received | KWT and Contractor | 28th February 2025 |
| Outcome 2 | Delivery of 9 GPS Nightingale tags. | Contractor | April 10 2025 |

- W/C 13th February 2025. Online consultation with Awarded Contactor and KWTG to arrange schedule.

- W/C 18th February 2025. Awarded Contactor to send a Proforma Invoice

- W/C 25th February 2025 Project Officer approves Proforma Invoice, raises a PO and sends to awarded contactor and awarded contactor returns a Sales Order Acknowledgement,

- W/C 10th April 2025 Product (9 NIGHTINGALE TAGS) to be delivered. Delivery date is scheduled to be as near to tag deployment date as possible to maximise battery life. Product should be Delivered to:

Elyse Ward

Natural England  
9th Floor  
International House  
Dover Place  
Ashford  
Kent, TN23 1HU