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Request for Quotation

**Audit of landscape evidence available to AONBs to support their land use planning advice**

##

## Request for Quotation

## Audit of Information available to AONBs to support their land use planning advice

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 **25th November 2022 at 12:00 noon**: rob.meetham@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**

Rob Meetham will be your contact for any questions linked to the content of the quote pack 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 | 2nd November 2022 |
| Deadline for clarifications questions | 18th November 2022 at 12 noon |
| Deadline for receipt of Quotation | 25th November 2022 at 12 noon |
| Intended date of Contract Award | 5th December 2022 |
| Intended Contract Start Date | 12th December 2022 |
| Intended Delivery Date / Contract Duration  | 3rd 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 RTQ 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. All mandatory requirements are set out in Bravo.

#### 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)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/procurement) 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](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/).

A. Background

This specification covers the first of two separate contracts to deliver two distinct but interrelated pieces of work. The first contract, subject to this procurement, will provide helpful stand alone information to inform policy and other decision makers, and will also provide information that will inform more detailed analyses through a subsequent second contract.

**Please note that the detailed requirements of the second contract will be developed to reflect the findings of this first contract and potential changes to the national policy context. The second contract will provide a more detailed analysis of the geographical gaps in the information and evidence available to AONBs; and identify and trial the scope for improved material to support the effective application of Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA), Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and Design Guidance/Codes for decision-making.**

B. Contract requirements

**B1. Aims**

**This contract is to provide Natural England with up-to-date information on where and how various forms of landscape information and evidence pertaining to England’s Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) have been produced and are being applied in land use planning decisions.**

Specifically, we need to know about:

* Landscape Sensitivity Assessments (LSA)
* Landscape Character Assessments (LCA)
* Design guides / codes

Details of what these are and the information we are seeking in relation to each is explained in **‘B2. Tasks’** below.

The information gathered will be used to support Natural England, as the government’s statutory landscape adviser, in providing policy advice; and to begin identifying where both Natural England and central government can target resources most effectively. This element will be developed in much more detail by the second contract.

This first contract is therefore principally an information gathering and auditing exercise. This information should then be presented spatially (in accessible maps) and in a well-structured excel spreadsheet. We also need some good practice case studies to be identified, documented and presented.

We require information on:

**Landscape Sensitivity Assessments (LSA), which may also have been produced and badged as Landscape Sensitivity and/or Capacity Assessments**

A LSA may assess the sensitivity of an area to a single type of development, typically housing or renewables, or more than one form of development. There is also a growing interest in LSA in relation to renewable energy schemes (onshore wind, offshore connections and solar farms) to help AONBs respond positively to addressing a climate emergency without compromising their landscape character and affecting the delivery of their statutory purpose to conserve and enhance the area’s natural beauty.

We understand that LSAs relating to AONBs have been produced to support:

- Strategic planning processes, typically commissioned by a Local Planning Authority (LPA) to inform land allocations for housing and/or industry for a draft Local Plan. These may cover the whole of an AONB but are more likely to cover just part of a designated landscape which falls within the LPA’s patch. Therefore AONBs may be covered by more than one LSA – where it falls within more than one LPA area.

- Individual allocation and development sites, although this may be more of a capacity assessment of the site’s ability to accommodate a type and level of development.

There may be fewer incidences of LSAs being commissioned by or for individual AONBs in their own right.

**Landscape Character Assessments (LCA)**

All 37 of the English AONBs are likely to be covered by a LCA – either for the AONB itself or as part of a LPA-wide assessment(s). These present the landscape character of an area in sufficient detail to be directly useful to both strategic land use planning processes and to individual development management decisions. In particular they provide a baseline for assessment processes such as Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, as considered above.

**Design guides / codes**

These are guides produced to support the design of new development that respects landscape character by reflecting the local architectural vernacular of the area and settlement morphology; and to help the local planning authority to determine development proposals. We are aware that many AONBs have produced this sort of material over the years. Proposed changes to the land use planning system in the current Levelling Up Bill will give an important role to design codes.

**B2. Tasks**

**Anticipated approach to the work**

This contract will be delivered through a desk-based process of internet searches, liaison with individual AONBs for the case studies (primarily their planning officer where they have one, or the AONB Officer who heads the local team), and if necessary, with the planning teams in relevant LPAs.

Online sources to consult will include:

* The current statutory AONB management plan and the land use planning sections of each AONB’s web site.
* LCAs, which should be straightforward to find online – either hosted by the AONBs themselves or relevant LPAs.
* The current and/or the latest draft revision, of Local Plans.

The contractor may wish to design a questionnaire to be sent to AONBs and/or to guide discussions with officers.

**Contract outputs**

The output from this contract will be:

* A well-structured database (likely Excel spreadsheet) and simple mapping or spatial Interactive GIS mapping (which can be interrogated by NE) with the associated datasets as defined below. The specifics of the approach can be agreed with NE at the project inception meeting.
* A short summary report which (a) summarises and captures all the information gathered and (b) presents the case studies. This should provide text and images (where appropriate) which Natural England can use without infringing copyright.

We would welcome contractors developing their own methodology to meet the above aims and outputs through a series of costed tasks. These will include the following key stages:

**Stage 1: Audit**

**Stage 1.1 Landscape Sensitivity Assessments**

We are seeking information on, per AONB in England:

* If the AONB is covered by an LSA (or more than one)
* Coverage of the assessment(s) within each AONB i.e. covering the whole or part of the AONB.
* The spatial classification used for the assessment – whether units defined specifically for the study’s purposes or if LCA units are used (Landscape Character Areas and/or Landscape Character Types)
* The type(s) of development/s assessed, including scales/sizes.
* Whether the LSA is adopted as Local Plan evidence or a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
* Whether an LSA is used to support strategic land use planning and/or the determination of individual development proposals.
* The LSA’s ongoing use and status or whether it was commissioned for a single and time limited purpose such as supporting a draft Local Plan through its public examination and adoption.

**Stage 1.2 Landscape Character Assessments**

We need to know, for each English AONB:

* Its current LCA coverage – does it have its own assessment or is it considered as part of a wider assessment(s) (e.g. at local authority level)?
* The age of the assessment – i.e. has it been reviewed / updated since Natural England’s [approach document](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/landscape-and-seascape-character-assessments) was published (2014)?
* Whether the LCA(s) include information on the special qualities of the AONB?
* Whether the LCA(s) has been adopted by the LPA(s) as supplementary planning guidance or if it is specifically referred to as evidence in the relevant Local Plan.

**Stage 1.3 Design guides / codes**

These are guides produced to support the design of new development that respects landscape character by reflecting the local architectural vernacular of the area and settlement morphology; and to help local planning authorities to determine development proposals. We are aware that many AONBs have produced this sort of material over the years. Proposed changes to the land use planning system in the current Levelling Up Bill will give an important role to design codes. We need information on:

* Which AONBs have a design guide or code and the document’s scope (detailed or high-level design principles).
* Whether these are standalone documents or feature within (or as a supplementary document or annex to) the area’s statutory management plan.
* Whether the guide or code has been formally adopted by the AONB’s LPA(s) as supplementary planning guidance or local plan evidence.

**Stage 2: Case studies**

**Four case studies are required in total, two for LSA and two for Design Codes/guides.**

**Stage 2.1 Case studies for Landscape Sensitivity Assessment**

We are seeking two case studies which present how LSAs have been successfully applied to AONB landscapes, in line with national guidance / best practice in the approach, with:

* one case study addressing housing or featuring housing as a primary element; and
* one case study dealing with the landscape’s sensitivity to renewable energy schemes.

Ideally the case studies should also represent different AONB contexts particularly in terms of their size, landscape character and the number of constituent LPAs.

**Stage 2.2 Case studies for Design guides / codes**

We are looking for two case studies presenting design guides or codes which:

* Provide guidance for the whole of the AONB
* Offer guidance on design which is detailed enough to reflect and support local distinctiveness within the AONB, rather than just broad design principles giving high level guidance covering all landscape character types and areas.
* Have been included within the statutory AONB Management Plan and ideally, formally adopted by the relevant LPA(s) as supplementary planning guidance or evidence linked to their Local Plan and its landscape policies.
* Has been successfully used to inform strategic and/or individual development management decisions – ideally illustrated by example.

The case studies must document how the documents were produced, have been applied to land use planning decisions and how useful and effective they are considered to have been by the AONB Partnership / Conservation Board and LPA.

This information will be drawn primarily from discussions with the relevant AONB officer/s. Important information will include the status of the case studies in relation to the AONB Management Plan and the LPA’s Local Plan.

The case studies selected will be agreed with NE based on options identified by the contractor and should include examples of mapped and illustrative outputs. We are particularly interested in highlighting examples which include specific reference to the special qualities underpinning AONB designation.

**Stage 3: Interactive GIS mapping, associated datasets and report**

The outcomes of Stages 1 and 2 should be presented to the NE to provide an opportunity to discuss the findings and provide feedback.

The outcomes of the Stage 1 (audit) should be presented as a well-structured excel database supported by simple mapping or spatial Interactive GIS mapping (which can be interrogated by NE) with the associated datasets.

The outcomes of Stages 1 and 2 should be presented in a short report which (a) summarises and captures all the information gathered and (b) presents the case studies. This should provide text and images which Natural England can use without infringing copyright.

The report should meet Natural England’s Commissioned Report Writing Guidance (which will be provided on appointment).

**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 meet the project requirements. This meeting will also discuss ideas for database / spatial data presentation methods.
* A virtual meeting with Natural England at the end of Stage 1.
* A virtual meeting with Natural England at the end of Stage 2.
* A final virtual meeting with Natural England 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.
* Knowledge of protected landscapes, including AONB management plans and their planning / policy context.
* Knowledge of landscape sensitivity assessment, landscape character assessment and design guidance/ codes.
* Good knowledge of the range of data and information relevant to AONBs to support their land use planning advice.
* 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 December 2022, with work starting as soon as practical after that. The contract is expected to run until early March 2023. Any extension shall be agreed in advance of any work starting and may be subject to further competition.

E. Prices

The contract will be let on a firm price basis. Consultancies should indicate their VAT status i.e will VAT be charged in addition? 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/related 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. As a rough indication, we think this is likely to be a max. of 20-30 days of staff time. 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. Please indicate your company VAT status.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Output** | **Staff grade** | **Daily rate** | **Input (days)** | **Total (excl. VAT)** |
| Stage 1: Audit |  |  |  |  |
| Stage 2: Case Studies |  |  |  |  |
| Stage 3: Database, presentation of spatial data and short report |  |  |  |  |
| **Total** |  |  |  |  |
| Company VAT status |  |

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 | 15% |
| Proposals for determining case study examples | 10% |
| 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 Rob Meetham, rob.meetham@naturalengland.org.uk, 07799177915.

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:

1. 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.