



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Contract Award Report

## Bronze

**Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB designation**

Project C15776

May 2023

STATUS
DRAFT / FINAL / APPROVED

This document is classified as

**[OFFICIAL SENSITIVE]**

## Template Change History

Version	Date	Summary of Change	Author(s)
1.0	Jan 20	First Approved Template Version	SDP Team
1.1	April 20	Inclusion of Compliance Checklist	SDP Team
1.2	Sept 20	Table of contents format. New Governance	SDP Team
1.3	May 22	Addition of executive summary	COO Policy & Process team
1.4	Oct 22	Changes related to online capture of Risk Register when using Atamis. Additional IPR Note	COO Policy & Process team

# Executive Summary

The Natural England Board has approved a project to determine whether a new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB should be designated and if so in which specific areas. The Board has also approved an improved designation process. Collaboration underpins the improvements: including partners in project governance, facilitated engagement for stakeholders, clear messaging to communities to support greater understanding and transparency. This is all within the framework of the existing legislation.

This refined designation process has already been trailed and developed through Natural England's ongoing landscape designation cases in the Surrey Hills, the Yorkshire Wolds and the Chilterns. Important aspects of the Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB Designation Project will be to continue to test and refine the new process, including opportunities for further improvement.

It is our intention, through this contract, to employ a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to assist in:

- i. Undertaking the natural beauty and desirability assessments and boundary development for a potential new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB designation;
- ii. The development and delivery of a collaborative process with facilitated stakeholder engagement;
- iii. Identifying and utilising modern technologies and 'citizen science' approaches to support evidence gathering by local stakeholders; and
- iv. To the further technical requirements of this project as set out below.

A new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge Stakeholder Management Group has been established for this project comprising representatives of the local authorities involved in the project, trustees of the Sandstone Ridge Trust and Natural England. The Management Group will act as a Management Advisory Group (MAG) for the project, providing oversight of the project and involving key stakeholders. The MAG will also provide a range of technical expertise to enable to project development and may bring in representatives from partner and stakeholder organisations to assist with this, as needed. The Terms of Reference for the MAG are at Appendix D). The role of the MAG in relation to this contract are set out with regard to each task defined below.

The MAG will be convened to meet at the outset and periodically during the project to assist Natural England and the Consultant with the delivery of this specification. Meetings will mostly be held virtually although face to face meetings in Cheshire may be required. Appendix E outlines the key tasks of the project, identifying where there may be opportunities for engagement and input from stakeholders as well as the MAG.

Having worked collaboratively with Natural England and the MAG in the completion of the tasks set out below, all consequent final reports, maps and other outputs will be submitted by the Consultant to Natural England to determine the final outcome under the powers vested in it by the CRoW Act 2000.

Project C15776 - Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB designation	
Contracting Authority	Natural England



DgC Commercial Lead & Category Team	[REDACTED] – Corporate Services
Customer SRO and Budget Owner	[REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Business Area and Contract User(s)	Natural England - Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside & Lancashire Area Team
Estimated Total Contract Value and Term (inc. Possible Extensions)	[REDACTED]

### Outline of Procurement Strategy

The Natural England Board has approved a project to determine whether a new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB should be designated and if so in which specific areas. The Board has also approved an improved designation process. It is Natural England's intention, through this contract, to employ a suitably qualified and experienced consultant to assist in:

- i. Undertaking the natural beauty and desirability assessments and boundary development for a potential new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB designation;
- ii. The development and delivery of a collaborative process with facilitated stakeholder engagement;

Identifying and utilising modern technologies and 'citizen science' approaches to support evidence gathering by local stakeholders.

Nature of the procurement – Services

The Procurement Strategy was approved by [REDACTED]

*There have not been any significant changes to any details in the Procurement Strategy.*

### Outline of tender and evaluation process

Due to the budget value over PCR, the tender was published on FTS and Contracts Finder.

Clarification questions and responses:



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stions%20and%20re

#### Evaluation criteria:

1.1 and 1.2 Knowledge and experience in landscape assessment /evaluation 35%

2.1 Experience of working collaboratively with stakeholders 5%

3.1 and 3.2 Use of innovative technology in technical assessments and stakeholder engagement 20%

4. Social Value 10%

The project leads constructed the criteria and weightings in line with their expectations of delivery. As a result, the scoring was provided for an EU tender opportunity.

*The technical evaluators were:*



Procurement Procedure or Existing Route to Market selected	Over PCR Threshold tender opportunity published on Contract Finder and FTS sites
Risk management approach	<p>As an extension of time for suppliers to submit their bids was required, this has pushed the timetable back.</p> <p>As a result, project leads have made allowances but have actually increased their evaluation time, as they see it ensuring a positive outcome.</p>

Procurement / Contract Milestone Dates	
Invitation to Tender (ITT) Publication Date:	17/02/23
Publish Contract Award Notice:	17/05/23
Contract Start Date:	29/05/23
Works Start/Service Commencement/Goods Delivered Date:	29/05/23

Contracting Strategy	
Contract Type and Outline Structure	FTS Open procedure (standard terms and conditions)
Due Diligence Undertaken	Dun and Bradstreet Reports have been pulled out on financial stability check.
Benefits Realisation including Sustainability/Social Value	<p>The suppliers were required to be able to provide a copy of their environmental policy and any environmental accreditation schemes such as ISO 14001 or EMAS which they have been awarded or are working towards.</p> <p>In addition there has been an emphasis on Biosecurity and adequate biosecurity precautions to ensure that the risk of spreading disease, pests and invasive non-native species (INNS) is minimised.</p>
Contract Management Strategy Summary	<div style="background-color: black; width: 100px; height: 1.2em; display: inline-block;"></div> will be the project lead for Natural England managing the contract once awarded.

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# Contract Award Report

## Compliance Checklist

Ref.	Question	Answer (Y / N)
1	Have all mandatory documents been completed and saved (or completed) in the correct folder on the eSourcing system being used? i. Updated Risk Issues Register – relevant folder for Bravo, or confirmation completed on Atamis e-sourcing system ii. Updated Contract Management Plan – relevant folder	i. Y ii. Y
2	Has the customer approved the Contract Award Report?	Y
3	Was the opportunity published on Contracts Finder if over the threshold for the Customer organisation (£10k Defra/RPA/APHA/MMO and £25k EA and NE)?	Y
4	Have all evaluators completed COI Declarations and have they been saved in folder 2.2.1a Conflict of Interest Form and / or COI declarations have been completed in the Atamis e-sourcing system?	Y
5	Has all evaluation evidence been saved in relevant folder Evaluation Evidence?	Y
6	Has any due diligence been completed on the preferred supplier?	Y
7	Have checks of the financial standing/stability of the preferred supplier been made and are any identified risks acceptable and manageable?	Y
8	Has provision been made to publish a Contract Award Notice and a redacted contract within 30 days?	Y
9	Have all data fields on the eSourcing system project record been completed and all workflow Tasks are up to date?	Y



## Introduction / Background

This contract award report presents the recommendation to award a contract for Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB designation.

The Contract Award Report should be read in conjunction with the Procurement Strategy which sets out the basis for the procurement and the objectives that a successful delivery will be measured by. This was approved on 2/2/23.

The recommendations within this document confirms that the procurement activity has been undertaken in compliance with appropriate legislation, Government policy and Defra group Commercial guidance.

## Governance & Stakeholder Engagement

The key stakeholders detailed in the Procurement Strategy have remained constant throughout this procurement exercise and have fulfilled the roles and responsibilities agreed as part of this procurement activity.

Stakeholder Name	Role in Procurement Activity	Organisation
	Customer SRO	NE
	Contract Manager	NE
	Commercial Lead	DgC
	Commercial Manager	DgC
	Sustainability Specialist	
	Legal	

## Value and Contract Period of the Proposed Contract Award

Key value and contractual period details are provided below:

Total Contract Value (inc. Possible Extensions)	
Contractual Term (Original)	2+1 years
Contractual Start Date of Original Term	29/05/2023
Contractual End Date of Original Term	10/4/25
Contractual Term (inc. Possible Extensions)	2 years
Extension Criteria	1 year will most likely be required for a public enquiry
Milestone Dates	A milestones table has been produced to factor in tasks throughout the contract and noted in the CMP

## Tender Evaluation Process

The tender was evaluated against technical and commercial criteria to achieve an overall score, which was outlined in the ITT document, in order to determine the most economically

advantageous tender. The Price/Quality split is 70% technical / 30% price. The approach to commercial evaluation was to compare whole life cost quotes, also identifying staff grade pricing from the pricing schedule.

The evaluation panel was comprised of the following, all of whom completed Conflict of Interest Declaration. Where conflicts of interest have been identified they will be managed with the following actions:

Evaluators Name	Role	Conflict of Interest?	Risk Mitigation Undertaken
[REDACTED]	Technical Evaluator	Yes – partner employed by one of the suppliers	Justification provided on why this conflict is not a risk
[REDACTED]	Technical Evaluator	Yes – previously employed by one of the suppliers	Justification provided on why this conflict is not a risk
[REDACTED]	Technical Evaluator	No	
[REDACTED]	Technical Evaluator	No	

After undertaking an assessment of the technical and commercial elements of the responses, an overall score was finalised:

Supplier	Technical (70%)	Commercial (30%)	Price	Ranking
[REDACTED]	70	29	£294,106	1
	65	29	£299,985	2
	52	30	£288,075	3

## Risk Management

The key identified risks are detailed below:

Risk Detail	Date Identified	Owner	Remedial Action	Resolution Date
Time extension of tendering process could have an effect on time for the work to be carried out.	28/03/23	[REDACTED]	A realistic milestones task list has been produced. Suppliers will be aware of deadlines and consequences of not reaching those.	April 2023 onwards
Supplier's requests for inflationary price increases	28/03/23	[REDACTED]	Suppliers aware that expectation is they will provide consistent pricing for the duration of the contract. Refer	April 2023 onwards



			to t&c's regarding push back	

## Sustainability, Social Value and Government Initiatives

Consideration has been given in the construct of this award to the following Sustainability, including Social Value and Government Initiatives.

Initiative	Brief of Discussions	Included (Y/N)
Sustainability	Refer to the relevant organisations Sustainability Policy.	tbc
SMEs	Government Aim is 33% by 2020. Little opportunity for direct SME involvement, but sub-contracting opportunities are available.	Yes – Inclusion of a need for the successful bidder to report on their SME Policy and numbers used annual in the delivery of this contract
Social Value	10% of the evaluation will comprise social value, in line with PPN 06/20	Yes – Tendering process
Modern Slavery	Included in qualification envelope questions	Yes
Prompt Payment	E.g. In order to ensure cash flow to SME's down the supply chain a project bank account is being used.	Yes, payment within 30 days

## Due Diligence

Prior to the award of contract further due diligence will be required in the following areas:

- GDPR – noted within Bidder pack and t&c's
- Insurance Certification - confirmation that they can produce relevant documentation requested within the Qualification envelope
- Health & Safety Policy- self certification requested within the Qualification envelope
- Modern Slavery Statement – detail requested within the Qualification envelope. Additional Social Value information requested within the technical envelope with 10% of the score.

## Financial Stability

Reports have been pulled for the suppliers as below:-

presents in high risk with the failure score 13 out of 100.

presents in low risk with the failure score 75 out of 100.

presents in low risk with the failure score 93 out of 100.



## Conditions of Contract

New version standard services terms and conditions will be adhered to for the life of the contract.

## Benefits Realisation

Benefit	Opportunity	Value	Measurement
Savings	Budget [REDACTED]	Award = [REDACTED]	[REDACTED] saving

## Contract Management

The finalised Bronze Contract Management Plan is attached, see Supporting Documents.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that [REDACTED] are awarded the contract for the sum of [REDACTED] for the provision of Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB designation project. The financial risk and value of the contract is agreed between client and commercial to be low risk.

The Evaluation score matrix is attached, see Supporting Documents.

## Approvals

Agreements and signatures:





Project Executive..... Date .....

Project Manager..... [REDACTED] ..... Date.....

Commercial Lead..... [REDACTED] ..... Date.....



## Supporting Documents

Title	Document
Contract Management Plan – Bronze	 Contract%20Management%20Plan.docx
Risk & Issue Register (required)	 Risk%20and%20Issues%20Register%20,
RASCI (Recommended)	 RASCI.xlsx
Evaluation Scores	 Evaluation%20matrix%20v1.xlsx