

Project specification

Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project Green Finance – Year Two

a) Background to Natural England

Natural England (NE) is the government's adviser for the natural environment. We provide practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. Our remit is to ensure sustainable stewardship of the land and sea so that people and nature can thrive. It is our responsibility to see that England's rich natural environment can adapt and survive intact for future generations to enjoy.

b) Background to the specific Natural England work area relevant to this purchase

The NE West Midlands Area Team's vision is big, green, connected areas with lots of wildlife, thriving habitats and people enjoying it forever. Midlands Heathland Heartland is one of the West Midlands Area Team's strategic projects, which centres on a biodiversity and culturally rich landscape between Cannock Chase AONB in Staffordshire and Sutton Park NNR in Birmingham. This area was a Biodiversity Enhancement Area in 2006, reflecting the long-standing ambition to deliver landscape scale conservation here. The area partially overlaps with the Black Country UNESCO Geopark which recognises the internationally important geological exposures created by the area's rich mining heritage.

Purple Horizons is one of five landscape-scale Nature Recovery Project's (NRP's) across the country (see map at Appendix 1) which sits within the wider Midlands Heathland Heartland, focusing on parts of Walsall and Lichfield Districts where a bottleneck to species flow across heathlands has recently been identified. It is a peri-urban landscape crossing from built up urban communities in Walsall with high levels of deprivation into more rural areas of Lichfield. Recreational pressure on SSSIs is high.

Stakeholder engagement in 2022 fed into the vision statement, summarised as:

"We want to create a thriving nature recovery network that is resilient to climate change. We want to see improved biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape value, enjoyed by people in a sustainable way. We will use a holistic, inclusive partnership approach to deliver change. We want to better manage, protect, expand and enhance lowland heathland and associated complementary habitats. We want to link and buffer these sites and also increase the value that people and businesses put on local biodiversity and the landscape. We want this area to be a collaborative exemplar, demonstrating how nature and people can live and work together in a balanced way."

The Walsall and Lichfield Green Belt Releases are bringing about a high demand for net gain projects on private land. Recent conversations with the Region's FTSE100 companies also indicate a growing demand from West Midlands businesses for carbon off-setting opportunities. We would like to explore the potential for peatland restoration within the headwaters of the River Tame to bring about greenhouse gas abatement and regenerative agriculture to sequester carbon. There are also SSSIs where poor water quality is resulting in unfavourable wetland habitat condition and the potential for nature-based solutions to address water and nutrient challenges needs further investigation.

This contract will build on Green Finance analysis undertaken in year one, working with the Purple Horizons partnership who will facilitate links to business and landowner communities.

The timetable for this work is to start as soon as possible and be completed by 31st March 2023.

c) Requirement

The output of this contract will be:

Building on year one Green Finance work for the Purple Horizons landscape through completion of elements 1-4 below. This work will feed into a wider Purple Horizons project, focusing on landowner engagement, development of a project pipeline and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivery. This project includes Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (lead), Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and Walsall Council.

Natural England will supply information about the natural capital of the Purple Horizons landscape and facilitate introductions with local partners, landowners and businesses, sharing data in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. However, further new contacts will need to be made with potential buyers.

A copy of 'Purple Horizons Green Finance Analysis Report' (3Keel LLP, 2022) is available on request. This will be for the purposes of submitting a tender and should not be shared any wider.

The contract will include the following elements:

1. Follow up strong buyer leads from year 1

- Build on work undertaken in year one to follow up opportunities with strong buyer leads to look at opportunities for investment in local projects to help their environmental aims.

2. Expand buyer research to engage new businesses

- Continue work begun in year 1 to undertake further exploratory meetings with potential buyers looking at businesses needs and dependencies.
- In this second-year target in particular buyer sectors not reached in year 1, (including identifying mismatches of demand and supply and focus on shortages), particularly local SMEs, tourism sector, developers needing to deliver BNG and use of Green Belt Enhancement Fund.

As part of meeting elements 1 and 2 carry out 6-10 structured interviews with potential buyers to understand:

- a) what they seek to achieve by investing in the natural environment
- b) what they need demonstrating to persuade them to invest
- c) whether they are looking for credits validated by codes or a sponsorship role
- d) the quantities and types of off-site BNG habitats required in the next 5-10 years

e) any other constraints.

Understand the willingness to invest in natural capital within this landscape as opposed to other places, in order to meet their needs. Write up one case study per sector.

Potential natural capital needs and buyers may include:

- **Carbon and biodiversity offsetting:** Opportunities to restore priority habitats including heathland, acid grassland, lowland meadow, wood pasture, ancient woodland and wetlands and the potential to conserve peaty soils (FTSE 100 companies, transport infrastructure companies, developers).
- **Health, wellbeing and employability:** Opportunities for green exercise, tranquillity, green group activities to gain skills and wellbeing benefits (health sector, local authority, local residents, local employers).
- **Placemaking and green infrastructure:** Attractive places to live and work (developers, local residents, local employers).
- **Clean air and water:** Opportunities to reduce water treatment costs and ensure plentiful supply (water companies) or improve air quality (local authority, health sector).

3. Feed into a menu of options and pipeline of shovel ready projects to present to potential buyers which is part of a wider landowner engagement, project pipeline and BNG delivery project (including Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency and Walsall Council).

- Contribute towards the development of a “menu” of options and a pipeline of “shovel ready” projects that are attractive to potential buyers, with all outcomes clearly explained, tailored to business needs and categorised by buyer analysis (core business, impact stories and/or nature recovery). Development work could include delivery of workshop with buyers to encourage buyer co-creation, exploring what makes a good project for buyers, and feeding into a longer-term project pipeline, that may include longer term acquisition ambitions.

4. Project coordination and partnership working

Attend 1:1 meetings with Natural England as required and provide updates to Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust to enable them to report on wider project to Natural England.

Connect with the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP will provide additional learning resources and share knowledge gained through the delivery of the first-round of NEIRF projects as well as information regarding appropriate second-round NEIRF projects.

d) Timescales

- Quotations should be received by 7th October 2022 so that the contract period for preparation of the project can commence as soon as possible thereafter.
- During October 2022 – Inception meeting between project officer and supplier via online video conferencing.
- Detailed delivery updates to project officer monthly thereafter.
- Summary updates and contribution to discussions at monthly Purple Horizons steering group meetings thereafter.
- W/C 27th February 2023 – feed in results/case studies to both project officer and wider landowner engagement, project pipeline and BNG delivery project in digital format via e-mail.
- During February or March 2023, contribute to a presentation to the wider Purple Horizons/Midlands Heathland Heartland partnership upon completion.
- W/C 13th March 2023 - wash up meeting with project officer online.
- Contract completion by 31st March 2023.

e) Standards of work

Consultants should note that unsatisfactory work which does not follow the brief (or any variation agreed with the client or Natural England) or which is not submitted according to the above timetable and/or output requirement may compromise the client's eligibility for grant aid.

The client is responsible for monitoring the work of the consultant, in terms of time spent and cost incurred, to ensure that the plan is delivered on schedule and within budget.

Natural England must be alerted as soon as unforeseen cost or delays are predicted.

f) Tender documents

To enable a full appraisal of the tenders, the following information is required from the consultant(s):

- Range of professional skills offered;
- Evidence of successful completion of similar projects demonstrating the qualities listed above;
- Names and CVs of individuals who will carry out the work;
- Details of any sub-contractors;
- Total cost + VAT which should be broken down to show:
 - Day rates for each member of the consultant's team;
 - Travel and related expenses;
 - A separate rate for additional meetings beyond those identified in the brief;
 - Other expenses;
 - (Please note that day rates and expenses should be included in the total overall cost as there will be no allowance for adding in these costs later).

Where relevant, information should also be included on health and safety policy, risk assessments, professional indemnity insurance, public liability insurance and employer's liability insurance.

g) Key Contacts

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Appendix 1 - Purple Horizons Nature Recovery Project and wider Midlands Heathland Heartland boundaries

