**Request for Tender:**

**Designing an effective urban greening marketplace and demand side testing**

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| **Contract Title** | Designing an effective urban greening marketplace and demand side testing  |
| **Organisation** | National Trust |
| **Value** | Tenders up to £30,000 (inc VAT) |
| **Closing date** | 5pm, Friday 24th October |
| **Submissions or clarifications to** | anne.mackinnon@nationaltrust.org.uk |
| **Contract start date** | ASAP |

**Background**

Nature Towns and Cities is a coalition of organisations (National Trust, Natural England, and National Lottery Heritage Fund) working together to inspire, incentivise, and support UK towns and cities to take ambitious action for urban green space. Our aim is to help millions more people enjoy time in nature close to home, in greener, thriving towns and cities. We want more urban areas to use nature recovery and nature-based solutions to tackle health inequalities and climate change, and to put nature at the heart of communities to grow their prosperity, connection and resilience.

This work sits within the Nature Towns and Cities Nature Finance Workstream. Nature Towns and Cities is looking to support Local Authorities and their partners in accessing private funding. Specifically, through developing a marketplace of urban greening interventions in the form of tokens, underpinned by an urban greening code and registry.

**Scope of the work**

Development of an online marketplace will begin with street tree planting (urban intervention), able to be bundled and sold/funded as ‘tokens’. This research will aim to understand and develop demand side requirements for creating an effective token marketplace.

*Phase 1:*

It is unfeasible for Local Authorities for one token to represent one tree that must be planted should a token be funded. The first phase of this work will require engagement with Local Authorities and tree officers to map the process of pricing tokens, so that a reasonable estimate of tree token price and how many trees one token may realistically represent can be used during demand side testing. This will be supported by a spreadsheet Nature Towns and Cities holds with economic/financial modelling able to forecast the cost of planting, estimate cashflow/revenue and price tokens when multiple trees are bundled together. This should result in a recommendation on the supply side of the minimal number of trees trees one token should represent, to allow for planting of a number of trees seen as a single viable project by Local Authorities/tree officers, as well as a supply side framework for costing and listing tree tokens. Please note Nature Towns and Cities will support with identifying and contacting Local Authority stakeholders.

The supplier is expected to have a level of tree/environmental specific and/or local authority specific knowledge, as well as the capability for stakeholder engagement.

*Phase 2:*

The next phase of this work will include engaging potential buyers of tokenised urban greening interventions. This work is aiming to be supported by a prototype platform/mock-up of the token concept to support effective engagement and communication with potential buyers of urban greening tokens.

Where possible the Nature Towns and Cities partnership/partners will support introductions to potential funders.

We are flexible on methodology, however activities of this phase of work should include:

1. Stakeholder mapping of potential funders/buyers of tree tokens or urban greening interventions (to be included in final report)
2. Organising and deliver 1-1 interviews with potential funders to test:
	* The attractiveness of different scales of tokens (street, neighbourhood, national – and the concept of ‘benefit bundles’).
	* Preferences for other token typologies (e.g. pocket parks, SuDS, roadside verges) based on the intervention itself, and preferences for the benefits they bring
	* Preferences for how money is handled through a marketplace (i.e. directly through a Local Authority, an SPV, central funding mechanism)
	* Preferences for how tokens are displayed/prototype user-feedback
	* Level of rigor needed in validation and verification for tokens not used in offsetting
	* Testing token pricing, including levy areas for Environmental Justice/Tree equity
	* Tree token reporting requirements
	* Understanding funder preference for a token marketplace to be underpinned by a code and/or registry, and linked to NT&C Accreditation of towns and cities
	* Understanding what funders would want to know in terms of governance of a marketplace, code, tokens and registry
	* If a registry would be expected to be maintained over the life-time of funded trees – noting that currently tokens could not be used for offsetting.
	* How funders would want to see tokens/funds working for communities / community groups
3. Synthetising information from demand side testing to understand and produce recommendations/frameworks for:
	* A strawman tree-token reporting framework
	* Recommendation for minimum marketplace governance (marketplace participant assessment, code, registry, NT&C accreditation) and key elements to communicate to prospective funders
	* Recommendation on registry longevity
	* Recommended typologies to develop and quantify next tokens based on demand side interest
	* Recommended funding mechanism
	* Recommended platform functionality / user-flow
	* Recommended validation and verification methodology
	* Recommended maximum per-token price
	* Recommended framework for how tokens may work for communities/community groups

The supplier may wish to bring in a market research agency/specialism to conduct or support demand side testing.

**Key Deliverables**

1. Supply side/marketplace development: token pricing and minimum viable planting number (Phase 1)
2. Demand side stakeholder mapping and testing (Phase 2)
3. Draft report: findings and recommendations/frameworks
4. Final report: findings and recommendations/frameworks

**Expertise of Contractor**

**Essential:** the contractor should have market testing/stakeholder engagement expertise, or propose a plan for collaboration with a market testing agency. The contractor should have Nature Market expertise. The contractor should have some knowledge/experience with the operations of Local Authorities and have existing contacts or networks allowing contact with potential funders.

**Preferred:** It is advantageous for the contractor to have environmental (ideally tree specific and/or urban-specific) expertise.

**Timeline**

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| --- | --- |
| Inception meeting  | W/C 10th November 2025 |
| Tokens priced and potential buyers identified by | ~12th January 2026 |
| Buyer testing to begin from  | ~12th January 2026 (if not sooner) |
| Draft report  | 20th February 2026 |
| Final Report  | No later than 18th March 2026 |

**Project and Contract Management**

To ensure the project runs smoothly, we would expect a contractor to nominate a Project Manager or lead contact for the commission. We would expect to be in regular contact with the project lead, joining regular progress meetings. We would also expect to give feedback and be consulted on the deliverables before final versions are accepted.

The contract will be managed by the National Trust on behalf of the Nature Towns and Cities partnership. The project will be appointed project lead within the Nature Towns and Cities partnership team to ensure direction and outputs are acceptable.

Should this be required, there will also be the opportunity to engage with a small steering group of stakeholders within the Nature Towns and Cities programme team for input and feedback.

**Evaluation Criteria**

Submissions will be scored according to the following criteria:

* Understanding of the brief – 15%
* Proposed methodology – 20%
* Experience and confidence in ability to deliver – 25%
* Resourcing and expected timeline to deliver – 20%
* Quotation price – 20%

**Information to be returned**

Submissions should include the following information:

* Outline of your proposed approach to the project, including details of methodology, proposed outputs, timeline, and high level risk log.
* Description of your relevant experience and abridged CVs of the proposed project team, including examples of at least two similar pieces of work you have carried out.
* Proposed budget breakdown.
* Details of any matters or concerns not covered by this brief.

Submissions should be no more than 8 pages in length. Abridged VCs can be included as appendices.

These should be returned to anne.mackinnon@nationaltrust.org.uk by the deadline of **5pm, Friday 24th October 2025.**

**Award**

Once evaluation of submissions is complete, all suppliers will be notified of the outcome by email.

**Payment**

The National Trust will raise purchase orders to cover the cost of the services and will issue to the awarded supplier following contract award.

All invoices should be sent electronically to the address provided on the Purchase Order, and quoting a valid Purchase Order number.

It is anticipated that this contract will end no later than 31st March 2026. Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period.

We may at our sole discretion extend this contract to include related or further work. Any extension shall be agreed in writing in advance of any work commencing and may be subject to further competition.

**Insurance**

Please note the National Trust requires contractors to hold a minimum of £2million in Public Liability insurance and £1million in Professional Indemnity insurance. The latter should be maintained in force for the period of the contract plus an additional five years. We will seek evidence of this at an inception meeting or upon signing contracts.