**Expression of Interest for Nature and Biodiversity Footprint Assessment**

**1. Introduction**

The Environment Agency was established in 1996 to protect and improve the environment. We have more than 10,600 employees with offices located across England.

Within England, we are responsible for:

- Regulating major industry and waste

- Treatment of contaminated land

- Water quality and resources

- Fisheries

- Inland river, estuary, and harbour navigations

- Conservation and ecology

- Managing the risk of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries, and the sea.

For further information please visit [Environment Agency - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency)

The Environment Agency (EA) intends to undertake a comprehensive assessment of its nature and biodiversity footprint. This project aims to identify and quantify the impacts of the EA's operations and supply chain on nature and biodiversity, forming the foundation for targeted, science-based management and disclosure reporting. The assessment will support the EA's commitment to sustainability and compliance with emerging international frameworks such as the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD).

**2. Background**

**2.1 Purpose and Importance**

Sustainability and evidence-based decision-making are central to the EA's operations. Following the successful quantification of carbon and resource footprints, the next step is to assess the EA's nature and biodiversity footprint. We are defining ‘nature’ for the purposes of this exercise as the abundance, diversity, integrity and resilience of species, ecosystems and natural processes. This will enable the EA to manage biodiversity impacts with the same rigour as its climate impacts, aligning with science-based targets, TNFD recommendations and the Global Biodiversity Framework.

**The aim of this expression of interest is to allow the EA:**

1. **to develop a more refined tender scope that will be available to competitive tender in the near future, and**
2. **to identify suppliers capable of developing a detailed scope and delivering a comprehensive assessment of the EA's nature and biodiversity footprint.**

**As such, practical project management information regarding timescales, costs and quality considerations should be included in your response.**

**2.2 Previous Footprinting Projects**

The EA has completed two footprinting exercises: a carbon footprint by Trucost and a resource consumption footprint (RCF) by Accenture. Both cover direct operations and our supply chain. The biodiversity footprint project will build on these foundations, integrating existing data to provide new insights into the EA's nature and biodiversity impacts. The successful supplier will have access to these existing footprints and datasets.

**2.3 Project Relevance**

‘eMission2030’ is the Environment Agency’s sustainability strategy. This project supports the EA's eMission2030 commitment and prepares the organisation for mandatory nature reporting requirements. The nature and biodiversity footprint will inform risk management, science-based target setting, decision-making and disclosure reporting, ensuring the EA can demonstrate transparency and rigour in sustainable business practices.

As a non-departmental public body our activities differ from private sector corporates, in that our outcomes and activities are not driven by purely economic factors, rather by legislation, value for public money and policy objectives. Proposed approaches should be cognisant of this and suggest relevant adaptations of standard biodiversity footprint methodologies developed with commercial businesses in mind.

In terms of policy objectives and targets on the Environment, the EA’s work is driven by existing legislation, the Environmental Improvement Plan [Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan) and Greening Government Commitments [Greening government commitments 2021 to 2025 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greening-government-commitments-2021-to-2025/greening-government-commitments-2021-to-2025). Both are under review by the new Government. Similarly the EA’s current business plan [Environment Agency: EA2025 creating a better place - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-ea2025-creating-a-better-place) is coming to an end. There is a one year business plan in place for 2024/25 [Environment Agency business plan 2024 to 2025 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-business-plans/environment-agency-business-plan-2024-to-2025), after which a new longer term business plan will be published.

For further information on EA’s Net Zero commitments please visit: [Environment Agency: reaching net zero - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-reaching-net-zero)

**2.4 Existing Resources**

The EA maintains a conservation project database and numerous key performance indicators (KPIs) demonstrating the downstream impacts of its operations. These include activities such as hectares of habitat created or restored, actual area of saltmarsh, mudflat, sea grass meadows and biogenic reef restored, number of trees planted or funded by the Environment Agency, fisheries activities, protected species activities, reduction of carbon emissions, as well as metrics on regulation of and improving waste, environmental incidents, water resources, water quality, and invasive non-native species management. A full list can be provided, and an overview of metrics and performance can be found in our Annual Report and Accounts [Environment Agency annual reports and accounts - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/environment-agency-annual-reports-and-accounts).

We keep a Natural Capital Account for the Environment Agency estate land holdings, comprising of 17,240 hectares of coastal plains, river corridors, farmland, woodlands and wetlands as derived from CORINE land cover data.

The Resource Consumption Footprint Project includes impact assessment for the goods that we purchase, including emissions, energy, water, ecotoxicity, land use, land use change & material scarcity. This information was collated from a blend of life cycle assessments (EcoInvent LCI database) and statistical data sources (ND-Gain, ONS, ILOSTAT) to assess impacts across 18 indicators. Impacts are calculated as a function of resource inflows (i.e. constituent materials), consumption volumes and the geographic locations of suppliers/manufacturers. Where available, Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) are used to provide further detailed environmental impact information. Within the nature and biodiversity footprint assessment the EA would like to improve the geospatial data to understand where the impact is occurring, with reference to protected areas and threatened ecosystems.

These resources will be available to inform and support the nature and biodiversity footprint assessment.

**3. Scope of Work**

**3.1 Assessment Scope**

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1. **to develop a more refined tender scope that will be available to competitive tender in the near future, and**
2. **to identify suppliers capable of developing a detailed scope and delivering a comprehensive assessment of the EA's nature and biodiversity footprint.**

**As such, practical project management information regarding timescales, costs and quality considerations should be included in your response.**

The nature and biodiversity footprint project itself will be to:

1. Fully scope and then conduct a comprehensive nature and biodiversity footprint assessment covering the EA's value chain, including a materiality assessment, and quantification of impacts of activities within direct operations, supply chain, and, where material, downstream impacts through partnership working and regulatory activities.
2. Evaluate both positive and negative impacts of the EA’s activities on nature and biodiversity, including knock-on effects such as greenhouse gas emissions from land use change, invasive non-native species (INNS) risk, and social value derived from natural assets.
3. Provide a transparent tool and repeatable methodology to the EA.
4. Produce technical and summary reports, attend regular project meetings, and engage with stakeholders at all stages of the process.

**3.2 Baseline Year**

The baseline year for the biodiversity footprint is the 2019-2020 fiscal year. All data collection, analysis, and reporting should reference this baseline to ensure consistency and comparability.

**3.3 Methodology**

1. Develop and agree with the EA a detailed scope for the project, including possible phasing options as constrained by materiality and/or data availability.
2. Develop and apply a robust bespoke methodology to quantify the EA's nature and biodiversity footprint, building on existing carbon and resource footprint data. NB: We are keen to explore options for using a natural capital framework for the footprint methodology, alongside established metrics such as Mean Species Abundance.
3. Utilise best practices and align with TNFD recommendations, the Global Biodiversity Framework, and SBTN’s Science Based Targets for Nature.
4. Leverage the EA's existing data sources given in 2.4 above
5. Incorporate stakeholder engagement and collaboration with academic partners where appropriate. EA will assist with internal EA stakeholder engagement.

**3.4 Data Collection and Automation**

1. Collect and analyse data from the EA's operations, supply chain, and downstream activities.
2. Ensure data accuracy, reliability, and comprehensiveness.
3. Identify data gaps and propose strategies to address them.
4. Develop, or suggest options for developing, automated data collection systems to streamline the data gathering process, reduce manual effort and enhance data accuracy and timeliness.

**3.5 Reporting and Deliverables**

1. Develop a detailed technical project scope.
2. Develop and agree with the EA a detailed scope for the project, with accompanying project delivery plan, including possible phasing options as constrained by materiality assessment and/or data availability.
3. Provide a detailed footprint dataset, with replicable methodology.
4. Produce reports including:
	1. A non-technical summary
	2. A full technical report featuring:
		1. The nature and biodiversity footprint assessment findings, including quantitative metrics and qualitative insights.
		2. Provide actionable recommendations on how the EA can take cost-effective steps to improve its nature and biodiversity footprint, identifying key areas for intervention.
		3. Suggested science-based targets for biodiversity based on the assessment results and aligned with Science Based Targets for Nature (SBTN).
		4. Provide guidance to assist with using the nature and biodiversity footprint in TNFD and TCFD reporting.
5. Present findings and recommendations to the EA's management team and relevant stakeholders.

**4. Project Management**

**4.1 Timeline**

The Tender exercise will begin following receipt of responses to this expression of interest and production of a refined tender scope. We intend this to be in November 2024.

The project is expected to commence upon contract award, in March 2025, and be completed March 2026.

Key milestones and deliverables will be outlined in the tender documentation and will be informed by market engagement responses.

**4.2 Budget**

The EA has not secured full funding for this project and requires reliable costing to progress.

Contractors are encouraged to propose cost-effective solutions and explore co-funding opportunities, including potential collaboration with academic institutions.

**5. Conclusion**

This nature and biodiversity footprint assessment is a critical step in the EA's sustainability journey. We are issuing this expression of interest to finalise the scope of the project and understand the cost and time required to measure the EA’s impact on nature. This will allow the EA to secure full project funding and resource, and result in a higher quality specification for the future invitation to tender for the project.

The footprint will have applied use in focussing the EA’s nature recovery efforts on material impacts on nature, thus improving public value for money. It will be used to drive measurable change towards the EA’s goal of becoming a nature positive organisation. The EA would also like to learn from organisations with experience conducting similar studies and are perhaps further ahead on their journey to assess, report and act on their nature-related dependencies, impacts, risks and opportunities.

 By participating in this tender, contractors will contribute to pioneering efforts in nature and biodiversity management, helping the EA lead by example in creating a sustainable future.

**Market Engagement Questions**

Questionnaire responses will be used to inform our assessment of carrying out this requirement and how it might potentially be delivered, including the route to market. Responses will not, under any circumstances, be used as an evaluation tool.

Please indicate your expression of interest and any feedback by **16th October 2024** by emailing jemma.godleman@defra.gov.uk who can also direct any questions prior to this date to the appropriate EA colleagues.

All responses and details of respondents will be held in the strictest commercial confidence and will not be shared wider.

Please provide examples in your responses of relevant projects, programmes of work and international standards where necessary.

**Questions**

1. Contractor Name
2. What is the nature of your business?
3. Briefly, what experience and expertise does your organisation have in:
	1. applied environmental footprinting in general, and nature and biodiversity footprinting specifically,
	2. working with public sector clients on sustainability issues,
	3. applied natural capital and ecosystem services assessments,
	4. helping organisations implement science-based targets for nature,
	5. helping organisations implement TNFD recommendations,
	6. data analysis, including GIS and spatial data analysis?
4. Are there any factors that may prevent you from submitting a bid for this project, such as capacity?
5. Can you meet the proposed timeframe in section 4.1 to produce a tender bid for the scope and delivery?
6. Can you provide a cost estimate (to the nearest £10k) for the scoping and delivery of the project, to assist us with securing adequate funding?
7. What further information does DEFRA need to provide in the Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents to ensure that you can prepare a quality bid and price the work accurately?
8. Given your understanding of the scope, are you able to provide the outputs for all of the requirements detailed in section 3. If no, please provide a brief explanation as to why.
9. Please set out what you foresee as key risks or challenges associated with delivery of the outlined services (including mitigations where relevant).
10. Do you wish to express an interest in this project? If your reply is No, please provide a brief reason why you have opted out for monitoring purposes.
11. Any other comments or feedback on this expression of interest?

**These questions are for information purposes only and are not being evaluated.**