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Tender

CEFAS26-10 Offshore and Onshore Observer Programme

CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SCIENCE

UK4: Tender notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2026/S 000-006572

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-060e51

Published 26 January 2026, 11:48am

Scope

Reference

C32696

Description

The Offshore Observer Programme is a cornerstone of the UK's approach to sustainable fisheries management. It provides independent, high-quality data that underpins stock assessments, advice, and compliance with national and international obligations, including the Fisheries Act 2020. By placing trained observers on commercial fishing vessels, the programme ensures accurate information on catch composition, discards, and biological characteristics is collected during normal fishing operations.

To meet the requirements of the Fisheries Act 2020, Cefas contributes to the data collection and collation requirements laid out in the UK Data Collection Framework (DCF). The UK DCF ensures consistent and continuous fisheries data collection across each UK administration, enabling them to establish multiannual programmes for the collection and management of these data.

In England, Cefas is responsible, for the most part, for the collection of fisheries-

dependent data, which includes deploying Offshore Observers on commercial fishing vessels to sample catches of shellfish, demersal and pelagic fish stocks, and associated bycatch. Access to vessels is negotiated on a voluntary basis, as there is no mandatory requirement for vessels to carry observers. Maintaining strong industry relationships and professional conduct is therefore essential to secure ongoing cooperation.

Each year, Cefas determines the number of sampling trips required to meet DCF obligations and allocates resources accordingly. These targets are achieved through a combination of Cefas-employed observers and external observers supplied under this Contract. Observers are responsible for arranging sea trips on commercial fishing vessels, collecting trip-level information, catch composition, and biological data (including size, otoliths/scales, sex, and maturity). Upon return, all data must be entered into the Cefas Observer Database. All in accordance with established protocols and timelines.

The aim of the Cefas Observer Programme is to:

- 3.1. Accurately characterise the catches and fishing activities of the English fleet by collecting detailed data on species composition, quantity and biological parameters (size, sex, maturity and otoliths/scales) from catch and bycatch in a fishery (primarily demersal).
- 3.2. Routinely provide validated datasets that are integral to international stock assessments and national/international fisheries and marine management advice.
- 3.3. Provide the opportunity to collaborate and co-develop the programme and adopt new technologies that demonstrably improves efficiency and data quality without compromising safety or neutrality.

Observers must always maintain professional behaviour. This protects Cefas' reputation and ensures continued access to vessels for sampling. The Supplier must provide observers who are self-motivated, capable of working independently, and highly disciplined, with a proven track record of collecting scientific data aboard commercial fishing vessels.

See APPENDIX 4 of the Bidder Pack for full specification of requirements.

Prior Market Engagement was not conducted as the market is well known to Cefas through previous Contracts of this nature.

Total value (estimated)

- £750,000 excluding VAT

- £900,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 20 April 2026 to 19 April 2029
- Possible extension to 19 April 2031
- 5 years

Description of possible extension:

2 x 12 months

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 76520000 - Offshore services

Contract locations

- UK - United Kingdom

Participation

Legal and financial capacity conditions of participation

As per Bidder Pack

Technical ability conditions of participation

As per Bidder Pack

Particular suitability

- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)
- Voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE)

Submission

Enquiry deadline

18 February 2026, 10:00am

Tender submission deadline

27 February 2026, 10:00am

Submission address and any special instructions

<https://atamis-9529.my.site.com/s>Welcome>

All bids to be submitted via the above eProcurement system.

Tenders may be submitted electronically

Yes

Languages that may be used for submission

English

Award decision date (estimated)

23 March 2026

Recurring procurement

Publication date of next tender notice (estimated): 1 January 2031

Award criteria

Name	Type	Weighting
Technical	Quality	60.00%
Price	Price	30.00%
Social Value	Quality	10.00%

Other information

Payment terms

As per Bidder Pack

Description of risks to contract performance

Prolonged Adverse Weather

Due to the requirement being carried out at sea onboard vessels, there is a risk of prolonged adverse weather which could impact the vessels ability to go to sea to fish.

This could result in additional costs due to the Supplier needing to stand down and remain available to go out when the weather improves.

Unable to address the risk upfront as weather is beyond control of Buyer or Supplier.

Risk assigned to both parties.

Change in requirements related to the Fisheries Act 2020 and UKDCF and/or other policy and legislation

Due to changes in relevant policy, legislation, and other government requirements, Cefas may be required to amend the programme to meet these needs.

This could result in amendment to the scope of works, timelines and costs.

Unable to address the risk upfront as neither Buyer or Supplier has control over these elements.

Risk assigned to Buyer.

Applicable trade agreements

- Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Open procedure

Contracting authority

CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE SCIENCE

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PPGW-5299-JGTN

Pakefield Road

Lowestoft

NR33 0HT

United Kingdom

Email: procure@cefas.gov.uk

Website: <https://defra-family.force.com/s/Welcome>

Region: UKH14 - Suffolk

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government