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Tender

Technical Support to Regulatory Assessments of Solid Radioactive Waste Disposal Framework

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

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

Notice identifier: 2026/S 000-007413

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-061077

Published 28 January 2026, 9:59am

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Scope

Reference

C-32197

Description

The Environment Agency is the independent environmental regulator for the nuclear industry and for radioactive substances regulation in England. It regulates a range of activities, depending on the type of site, but in all cases it regulates the disposal of solid radioactive waste on or from the site, as well as discharges to air and water (which are also defined as disposal under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 (EPR2016)). Its remit covers England, but the Environment Agency works closely with the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) on matters of mutual interest, including those relating to the management and disposal of solid radioactive waste.

The Authority is seeking to establish an Open Framework, for up to an 8 (eight) year period, with multiple suppliers across 3 (three) technical Lots, that have the capability to provide technical support and scrutiny across several areas of solid radioactive waste disposal. Suppliers appointed to the Framework will support the Environment Agency in meeting its statutory obligations in the regulation of solid radioactive waste disposal.

Suppliers are required for the provision of expert advice and scrutiny on solid radioactive waste disposal including, but not limited to, support in the technical evaluation of near-surface Environmental Safety Cases (ESCs) from developers and operators of radioactive waste disposal facilities and Site-Wide Environmental Safety Case (SWESCs) from operators of nuclear licensed sites and expert advice and scrutiny on geological solid radioactive waste disposal. The scope of services will also encompass expert advice relating to the Environment Agency's remit in pre-disposal management and materials not yet formally declared as wastes, such as spent fuel and separated plutonium and other advice connected with solid radioactive waste disposal.

The Framework will also be available to other Defra group bodies which have regulatory roles in the nuclear industry should they require services related to solid radioactive waste disposal to fulfil their statutory obligations.

The full Framework Scope and Technical Specifications are provided in the Bidder Pack which also contains the full details of the opportunity, the tender process and how to submit a tender. The Bidder Pack is available via the Authority's eSourcing portal.

Note: there has been an amendment to the previously published UK03 Planned Procurement Notice (UK-0561). The lot structure has been amended - Lot 3 will now be divided into three (3) separate Sub-lots not a single Lot as previously advised.

To participate in the tendering procedure you must be registered on the Defra eSourcing Portal to access the opportunity and submit a Tender Response. Details of how to register your organisation can be found at <https://atamis-9529.my.site.com/s/Welcome>

Commercial tool

Establishes an open framework

A series of frameworks with substantially the same terms. Awarded suppliers are carried over and new suppliers can bid.

Total value (estimated)

- £9,750,000 excluding VAT
- £11,700,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Options

The right to additional purchases while the contract is valid.

The Framework may be re-opened in year three to establish a follow on Framework for up to a further 5 years.

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 71621000 - Technical analysis or consultancy services
- 90711000 - Environmental impact assessment other than for construction
- 98113100 - Nuclear safety services
- 90713000 - Environmental issues consultancy services
- 71313000 - Environmental engineering consultancy services
- 71351220 - Geological consultancy services

Contract locations

- UK - United Kingdom

Lot constraints

Maximum number of lots a supplier can bid for: 6

Maximum number of lots a supplier can be awarded: 6

Description of how multiple lots may be awarded:

The Framework will be structured in 3 technical Lots.

The Lots will be divided into 7 further sub-lots. The Sub-lots will be awarded as follows:

LOT 1 - Specialist Support to Solid Radioactive Waste Regulation:

Sub-lot 1.1 Technical Secretariat for Expert Advisory Panel will be awarded to a single (1) supplier that receives the highest total evaluation score, i.e. ranked 1st (first), for this sub-lot.

Sub-lot 1.2 Topical Review Services – the successful suppliers appointed to Sub-lots 2.1, 2.2 and all Lot 3 Sub-lots will automatically be offered a Framework Agreement to provide Services for Sub-lot 1.2.

LOT 2 - Specialist support to regulation of solid radioactive waste near-surface disposal:

Sub-lot 2.1 LLWR 2026 Environmental Safety Case will be awarded to a single (1) supplier that receives the highest total evaluation score, i.e. ranked 1st (first), for this sub-lot.

Sub-lot 2.1 Radioactive waste disposal at landfills, decommissioning sites and other facilities will be awarded to up to 5 suppliers which receive the 5 highest total evaluation scores, i.e. ranked 1st – 5th, for this sub-lot.

Lot 3 - Specialist support to regulation of geological disposal:

Each Sub-lot (3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) will be awarded to up to 3 suppliers per Sub-lot, which receive the 3 highest total evaluation scores for the relevant Sub-lot, i.e. ranked 1st – 3rd for each Sub-lot.

There is no restriction on the number of Lots or Sub-lots tenderers may bid for. Tenderers may be offered a framework agreement/contract for multiple or all Sub-lots if their tender for each Sub-lot is ranked as set out above.

Not the same for all lots

Contract dates are shown in Lot sections, because they are not the same for all lots.

Lot 1.1. Technical Secretariat Support for an Expert Panel

Description

The Authority will appoint a single supplier to provide technical secretariat support to establish and maintain an Expert Advisory Panel. The Environment Agency Expert Advisory Panel (EAEAP) will provide independent advice and expertise in the following areas relating to the regulation of solid radioactive waste disposal and pre-disposal management.

The full Specification is included in the Bidder Pack Annex C.

Lot value (estimated)

- £1,349,000 excluding VAT
- £1,618,800 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
- 4 years

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot 1.2. Topical Review Services

Description

The Authority will appoint the successful tenderers for sub-lots 2.1, 2.2 and all sub-lots under Lot 3 to establish access to expert Services under sub-lot 1.2 to support the continued development and enhancement of its internal processes and/or external regulatory guidance related to the disposal of solid radioactive waste. Over the lifetime of the Framework, there may also be a requirement for Environment Agency to develop new guidance in response to evolving government policy, operator proposals, international recommendations, or scientific developments.

Full details are available in the Bidder Pack Annex C.

Lot value (estimated)

- £356,000 excluding VAT
- £427,200 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
- 4 years

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot 2.1. 2026 Low Level Waste Repository Environmental Safety Case and other services

Description

The Authority will appoint a single Contractor, with the required skills and experience, to assist the Environment Agency in its detailed review of the 2026 Environmental Safety Case (ESC) for the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) facility in Cumbria, England. The Authority expects to benefit from the Contractor bringing to the review their experience from involvement in other near-surface radioactive waste disposal safety assessments. The Contractor should also bring specific capabilities in facility design and substantiation, materials performance, conceptual environmental model review, safety assessment calculation specification and undertaking of assessment modelling (e.g. using GoldSim and or other suitable software).

The exact nature, scope and specification of the Services required from the Contractor will be finalised following receipt of the 2026 ESC, expected in May 2026.

Lot number

For further details see Specification Annex D in the Bidder Pack

Lot value (estimated)

- £3,460,000 excluding VAT
- £4,152,000 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
- Possible extension to 31 August 2034
- 8 years

Description of possible extension:

The contract may be extended by up to 4 x 12 month extension periods at the discretion of the Authority.

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot 2.2. Radioactive Waste Disposal at landfills, decommissioning sites and other support

Description

The Environment Agency anticipates receiving applications from operators for either the disposal of LLW to existing landfills or for the construction of a new dedicated disposal facilities on nuclear sites which may require input from expert external consultants.

The Authority will appoint up to 5 (five) suppliers to provide technical support to assist in the review of ESCs submitted in support of permit applications for the disposal of solid LLW to landfill. Outputs would inform the Environment Agency's determination of the ESC review or permit variation. The number and timing of these reviews is not currently known.

See Specification Annex D in the Bidder Pack for further details

Lot value (estimated)

- £808,000 excluding VAT
- £969,000 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 October 2026 to 31 August 2030
- 3 years, 11 months

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot 3.1. Regulatory review of Site Descriptive Models

Description

Lot 3 will provide specialist expertise and advice to the Environment Agency related to the regulation of geological disposal. Framework Suppliers will provide technical support to supplement internal Environment Agency capability during both the pre-application stage and the review of the first permit application for intrusive site investigations.

This Sub-lot will provide expert support for the review of site descriptive models, including aspects relating to hydrogeology, geochemistry and structural geology. Up to three suppliers will be appointed.

The Annex E Specification in the Bidder Pack provides further information.

Lot value (estimated)

- £3,777,000 excluding VAT
- £4,532,000 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
- 4 years

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot 3.2. Site Characterisation Plans

Description

Lot 3 will provide specialist expertise and advice to the Environment Agency related to the regulation of geological disposal. Framework Suppliers will provide technical support to supplement internal Environment Agency capability during both the pre-application stage and the review of the first permit application for intrusive site investigations.

This Sub-lot will provide expert support for the review of site characterisation plans including for deep borehole drilling and investigations. Up to three suppliers will be appointed.

The Annex E Specification in the Bidder Pack provides further information.

Lot value (estimated)

- £3,777,000 excluding VAT
- £4,532,000 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
- 4 years

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Lot 3.3. Environmental Safety Case (ESC) and safety assessment development

Description

Lot 3 will provide specialist expertise and advice to the Environment Agency related to the regulation of geological disposal. Framework Suppliers will provide technical support to supplement internal Environment Agency capability during both the pre-application stage and the review of the first permit application for intrusive site investigations.

This Sub-lot will provide expert support for the review of ESC and environmental safety assessment development. Up to three suppliers will be appointed.

The Annex E Specification in the Bidder Pack provides further information.

Lot value (estimated)

- £3,777,000 excluding VAT
- £4,532,000 including VAT

Framework lot values may be shared with other lots

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 September 2026 to 31 August 2030
- 4 years

Same for all lots

CPV classifications, contract locations and options are shown in the Scope section, because they are the same for all lots.

Framework

Open framework scheme end date (estimated)

31 August 2034

Maximum number of suppliers

16

Maximum percentage fee charged to suppliers

0%

Further information about fees

No fees applicable

Framework operation description

The Authority anticipates the framework will operate for 8 (eight) years in total commencing 1st September 2026 until 31 August 2034. The initial Framework Period will be for a period of 4 (four) years to 31 August 2030. The Authority anticipates the framework will be re-opened in its third year (2029) with a further tender process undertaken to establish a follow-on framework for up to a further 5 (five) years to 2034 at the discretion of the Authority and subject to a continued business need. Sub-lot 2.1 will not be included in the re-opening process.

At the re-opening point incumbent framework suppliers will have the opportunity to revise their tender response, leave their offer as per their last framework tender submission or voluntarily exit the framework. Tenderers should be aware that at the re-opening point new suppliers will have the opportunity to tender to be included on the framework. All tender responses from incumbent and new suppliers will undergo an evaluation process to select the successful suppliers for the follow-on framework. Incumbent suppliers may be replaced by other suppliers with higher scoring tenders.

Award method when using the framework

Either with or without competition

Contracting authorities that may use the framework

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Defra group bodies (including but not limited to Core Defra, Natural England and Marine Maritime Organisation).

Participation

Legal and financial capacity conditions of participation

Lot 1.1. Technical Secretariat Support for an Expert Panel

Lot 1.2. Topical Review Services

Lot 2.1. 2026 Low Level Waste Repository Environmental Safety Case and other services

Lot 2.2. Radioactive Waste Disposal at landfills, decommissioning sites and other support

Lot 3.1. Regulatory review of Site Descriptive Models

Lot 3.2. Site Characterisation Plans

Lot 3.3. Environmental Safety Case (ESC) and safety assessment development

The conditions and information to be provided is set out in the Bidder Pack Part Two-Procurement Specific Requirements.

Technical ability conditions of participation

Lot 1.1. Technical Secretariat Support for an Expert Panel

Lot 1.2. Topical Review Services

Lot 2.1. 2026 Low Level Waste Repository Environmental Safety Case and other services

Lot 2.2. Radioactive Waste Disposal at landfills, decommissioning sites and other support

Lot 3.1. Regulatory review of Site Descriptive Models

Lot 3.2. Site Characterisation Plans

Lot 3.3. Environmental Safety Case (ESC) and safety assessment development

N/A

Particular suitability

Lot 1.1. Technical Secretariat Support for an Expert Panel

Lot 1.2. Topical Review Services

Lot 2.1. 2026 Low Level Waste Repository Environmental Safety Case and other services

Lot 2.2. Radioactive Waste Disposal at landfills, decommissioning sites and other support

Lot 3.1. Regulatory review of Site Descriptive Models

Lot 3.2. Site Characterisation Plans

Lot 3.3. Environmental Safety Case (ESC) and safety assessment development

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME)

Submission

Enquiry deadline

13 March 2026, 4:00pm

Submission type

Tenders

Tender submission deadline

20 March 2026, 3:00pm

Submission address and any special instructions

Details of the information required for Tenders and submission instructions are set out in the Bidder Pack which can be accessed through the Defra eSourcing portal. All submissions must be made using the eSourcing Portal.

Details of how to register your organisation on the portal can be found at <https://atamis-9529.my.site.com/s/Welcome>.

Tenderers must also be registered on the Central Digital Platform (CDF). Details of how to register can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-act-2023-short-guides/suppliers-how-to-register-your-organisation-and-first-administrator-on-find-a-tender-in-three-easy-steps-html>

Tenders may be submitted electronically

Yes

Languages that may be used for submission

English

Award decision date (estimated)

26 May 2026

Recurring procurement

Publication date of next tender notice (estimated): 31 August 2029

Award criteria

Name	Type	Weighting
Technical	Quality	60.00%

Name	Type	Weighting
Commercial	Price	30.00%
Social Value	Quality	10.00%

Other information

Payment terms

Within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice. The Authority's preference is for invoices to be submitted electronically. Further information on the submission of invoices will be contained in the Framework Agreement and / or Call-off Contracts

Description of risks to contract performance

Risk 1 – Potential for Call-off Contract Values to Exceed Framework Upper Limit:

There is uncertainty regarding the future pipeline of work. As a result, the cumulative value of call-off contracts may exceed the current upper value limit of £9.75m during the Framework Period. This risk cannot be fully addressed within the contract terms because the volume of work required is dependent on the number and type of applications received from industry operators and the level of external resource the Authority will require to support applications, which cannot be reliably forecast at this stage.

Risk 2 – Impact of Government Regulatory Changes and Nuclear Policy Developments:

Current and future Government regulatory reviews, together with the potential implications of the recent Atlantic Partnership for Nuclear Energy announcement, may affect the volume, value, or scope of services required under the Framework. These impacts cannot currently be quantified and therefore cannot be fully reflected in the contract specification or pricing model at the point of award.

Applicable trade agreements

- Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

Conflicts assessment prepared/revised

Yes

Procedure

Procedure type

Competitive flexible procedure

Competitive flexible procedure description

This procurement is being conducted as a Competitive Flexible Procedure in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023. Completion and submission of all documents will be conducted via the Authority's eSourcing system. There will be three stages as follows:

Stage One – Conditions of Participation

At this stage of the procurement Tenderers will be asked to submit their Procurement Specific Questionnaire and the response to the Conditions of Participation.

1.1 Conditions of Participation and Procurement Specific Questionnaire

Tenderers must complete a series of questions to allow the Authority to confirm their eligibility to participate in the competition, together with core supplier information, additional exclusions and debarment information.

Tenderers will not progress to the Technical Response stage if they do not pass this stage.

Stage Two – Tender Stage

1.2 Technical Response

Tenderers must respond to a series of technical questions as outlined on the Authority's

eSourcing system. Responses will be evaluated as described in this document and the Authority's eSourcing system. If Tenderers fail to meet any minimum Technical Threshold set for a Response, they will be eliminated from the competition and not progress to having their Commercial Response assessed. Suppliers must upload their Form of Tender otherwise their submission will not be considered.

1.3 Commercial Response

Tenderers must complete the Pricing Schedule in the Bidder Pack and upload it as the Response to the commercial question as detailed on the Authority's eSourcing system. Responses will be evaluated as described in the Bidder Pack Part Two document.

Scores from the technical and commercial sections will be added together to arrive at a total weighted score.

Stage Three (optional) – Negotiation Stage

As set out in the Bidder Pack Part Two document, following the initial evaluation of bidders' commercial offer, the Authority may request bidders review their Price Schedule to provide a Best and Final Offer. A further evaluation to confirm the most advantageous tenders for each Sub-lot will be undertaken.

Once evaluations have been completed, the most advantageous tenders for each Sub-lot will be the Tenderers with the highest final score(s). Tenderers will be notified about whether they have been successful in securing a place on the Framework. The number of Tenderers to be offered a contract for each Sub-lot is set out in the Bidder Pack Part Two document.

Please note that this tender will be tendered, evaluated and awarded on a sub-lot basis.

Justification for not publishing a preliminary market engagement notice

UK3 Notice published 28/11/2025 (UK-0561) but amendment to Lot 3 to structure into sub-lots occurred post publication. Change to Lot structure cannot be made in UK4 notice if notices are linked.

Documents

Documents to be provided after the tender notice

Updated Draft Framework Agreement will be uploaded to the Bidder Pack in the Authority's eSourcing portal

Contracting authority

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PNWW-1475-NYLN

Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

United Kingdom

Contact name: Carol Caddick

Email: carol.caddick@defra.gov.uk

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

Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government

Other organisation

These organisations are carrying out the procurement, or part of it, on behalf of the contracting authorities.

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Summary of their role in this procurement: Defra group Commercial will manage this procurement on behalf of the Contracting Authority.

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PNBD-3289-CDGX

Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

United Kingdom

Contact name: Carol Caddick

Email: carol.caddick@defra.gov.uk

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

Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Contact organisation

Contact DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS for any enquiries.