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Award

## Noise modelling system (NMS)

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

UK5: Transparency notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2026/S 000-012078

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## Scope

## Description

The provision of Defra's Noise Modelling System ("NMS") software and live service support including management, maintenance, hosting and development of the Noise Modelling Service in England, with optional use for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

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## Contract 1. Noise modelling system (NMS)

## Supplier

- Noise Consultants Limited (NCL)

## **Contract value**

- £12,000,000 excluding VAT
- £14,400,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

## **Earliest date the contract will be signed**

28 February 2026

## **Contract dates (estimated)**

- 1 March 2026 to 28 February 2029
- Possible extension to 28 February 2030
- 4 years

Description of possible extension:

The 1 year extension may be invoked in the event that Defra requires more time to migrate the existing NMS to their cloud tenancy.

## **Main procurement category**

Services

## **Options**

The right to additional purchases while the contract is valid.

The contract also includes the optional capability:

- (a) to introduce NMS enhancements;
- (b) to migrate the existing NMS into Defra's cloud hosting tenancy; and
- (c) for other public bodies to utilise the NMS.

## **CPV classifications**

- 90742400 - Noise pollution advisory services

## **Contract locations**

- UK - United Kingdom

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## **Participation**

### **Particular suitability**

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

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## **Other information**

### **Description of risks to contract performance**

Defra currently envisages that the following risks could jeopardise the satisfactory performance of the contract:

- a) Emerging cyber security threats and the impact this may have on Defra's need to make updates to software to address these threats;
- b) Changes in political direction and policy changes outside Defra's control that may drive diversified requirements for noise modelling services;
- c) Climate change in the UK and the longer-term impact this may have on the provision of the services; and
- d) Technology obsolescence and new technologies, and the impact these may have on the provision of the services.

## **Conflicts assessment prepared/revised**

Yes

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## **Procedure**

### **Procedure type**

Direct award

### **Direct award justification**

- Single supplier - technical reasons
- Additional or repeat goods, services or works - extension or partial replacement

The Noise Modelling System ('NMS') is a digital system and database and is the core noise mapping system used to meet Defra's statutory and policy requirements under the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended from time to time) and therefore is a critical service. The NMS is available for optional use by the devolved administrations. It is the only national source of evidence on environmental noise. The NMS combines noise data from multiple sources and holds details on traffic flow, the

location of infrastructure and buildings, local meteorological conditions and other relevant information which supports noise mapping. The NMS uses this information to determine noise emissions and calculate noise exposure across England and across the devolved administrations (where applicable). In addition, there are several systems that have a dependency on the NMS. For example, a number of UK public bodies (including but not limited to) the UK Health Security Agency, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and National Highways use derived products from the noise model.

The NMS contains sensitive information and needs to be supported and maintained to enable Defra to meet its legislative obligations and to inform government policy to protect and improve environmental and health impacts from noise.

The services to be provided by the supplier under the contract include live IT service hosting, management, support, maintenance and development of the NMS; licences for NMS software and datasets, noise modelling datasets and calculations; enhancement of, and capability to migrate, the NMS and enable more public bodies to use it. The supplier has designed, built and developed the NMS and has been providing and licensing the NMS system components since February 2021. The services are required on a 3+1-year basis from and including 1 March 2026.

The contracting authority (Defra) is relying on the single supplier and additional or repeat services direct award justifications in paragraphs 6 and 7 of schedule 5 of the Procurement Act 2023:

- paragraph 6 (a) due to an absence of competition for technical reasons, only a particular supplier can supply the goods, services or works required, and (b) there are no reasonable alternatives to those goods, services or works; and
- paragraph 7 for additional or repeat goods, services or works where (a) a change in supplier would result in the contracting authority receiving goods, services or works that are different from, or incompatible with, the existing goods, services or works, and (b) the difference or incompatibility would result in disproportionate technical difficulties in operation or maintenance.

The explanations for why the justifications apply are as follows.

Paragraph 6: the absence of competition for technical reasons.

This justification applies because only the supplier has the technical knowledge and expertise of the NMS components and processes which they have built into the NMS and its existing integrations, to be able to provide the services to Defra, the devolved administrations and the number of other public bodies who use and rely on the NMS. The supplier has spent several years designing, building, developing, testing and deploying the NMS to ensure Defra is able to complete the next cycle of noise mapping required by

the legislative deadline of 30 June 2027, followed by associated noise action planning activity over the subsequent 18 months.

No reasonable alternatives.

In the absence of an off the shelf NMS solution which provides equivalent end-to-end NMS functionality within the marketplace, the only reasonable alternative would be for another supplier to develop a replacement NMS solution to Defra's requirements, whether building an NMS from scratch or configuring the supplier's NMS solution. They would need time for testing and mobilisation of that solution. The existing NMS took 24 months to build, several years to develop and further time to deploy and integrate into IT systems. There is not sufficient time for an alternative supplier to design, build, test and deploy an alternate solution by the date the services are required or at any point prior to 30 June 2027 and in time for the next cycle of noise mapping. This is evidenced by the number of years it has taken the supplier to design, build, test, deploy, develop and integrate the existing NMS.

It is not reasonable to procure and fully implement an alternative NMS by the date the services are required because it would not be feasible to do so for practical and financial reasons. It would take a significant amount of time for Defra to secure the necessary approvals and governance and then procure an alternative NMS and for the new supplier to roll it out fully which would include integrating it into the IT systems of devolved government administrations and public bodies to ensure compatibility and continued access. Defra would need to run two concurrent NMS systems during service transition – the supplier's NMS in parallel with the alternative supplier's interim NMS. This would create duplication of work and increased costs and therefore an alternative NMS is not reasonable.

Transitioning to an alternative NMS is not reasonable because it would involve having to re-train internal staff and external users on the alternative NMS. Management of business change activities and training on an alternative NMS would be essential because if staff did not know how to operate it correctly, this could compromise Defra's ability to meet its statutory (Environmental Noise) obligations (as well as those of the devolved administrations) and to properly inform policy. A business change programme of this size would not be feasible, reasonable or affordable by the date the services are required.

Defra has also considered whether it would be reasonable for Defra's IT department ('DDTS') to develop an alternative NMS solution. However, DDTS do not have the capability to build and develop a NMS in-house and do not have the necessary acoustic modelling domain expertise.

Therefore, there are no reasonable alternatives.

Paragraph 7: additional or repeat goods, services or works.

This justification applies because:

A change of supplier would result in the contracting authority receiving services that are different from or incompatible with the existing service. An alternative supplier would not be able to walk in and take over the services on the date from which they are required due to the supplier's service being distinct in so far as the supplier has developed a prototype NMS system over a two-year period using COTS products and supplier-bespoke code which has been built, tested and deployed into the supplier's IT hosting environments and integrated into other user IT systems. There is no off the shelf end-to-end NMS commercial solution available on the marketplace. An alternative supplier would need to build their NMS or rely on the supplier's transfer of knowledge and technical expertise to develop a NMS solution but either option would mean providing a different NMS service from the one currently supplied. An alternative supplier would be required to host the NMS in their IT environment which would be different from the supplier's IT environment. An alternative supplier's untested IT environment may be incompatible with the IT systems of Defra, the devolved administrations and the number of other public bodies who rely on and use the supplier's NMS IT environment.

The difference or incompatibility would result in disproportionate technical difficulties in operation or maintenance as Defra would need to operate and maintain two NMS systems concurrently during service transition which is disproportionate to Defra being able to operate and maintain the existing service. It would also take time to migrate the supplier's technical knowledge and expertise, to integrate an alternate NMS into the IT systems of Defra, the devolved administrations and the number of other public bodies who access and use the NMS and to re-train staff. As stated in the justification under paragraph 6 above, this is not possible to do by the time the services are required.

No reasonable alternatives:

The same justifications, stated above, for why there are no reasonable alternatives for paragraph 6 single supplier - technical reasons, apply to the justification for paragraph 7. Therefore, there are no reasonable alternatives.

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## **Supplier**

**Noise Consultants Limited (NCL)**

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Email: [contact@noiseconsultants.co.uk](mailto:contact@noiseconsultants.co.uk)

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Region: UKK11 - Bristol, City of

Small or medium-sized enterprise (SME): Yes

Voluntary, community or social enterprise (VCSE): No

Contract 1. Noise modelling system (NMS)

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## Contracting authority

### DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PNBD-3289-CDGX

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Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Organisation type: Public authority - central government