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Planning

Provision of Helicopter Services to Deliver Aerial Survey Work

NETWORK RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED

UK2: Preliminary market engagement notice - Procurement Act 2023 - [view information about notice types](#)

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-025031

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-051cf1

Published 22 May 2025, 2:48pm

Changes to notice

This notice has been edited. The [previous version](#) is still available.

Scope

Reference

37888

Description

NOTE: This market consultation exercise is a repeat of that undertaken under the UCR regulations with slight modifications to the market consultation questionnaire. We would advise that all interested parties attend this event.

Objective of the Procurement

Network Rail is seeking to put in place a contract for the provision of helicopter services to deliver aerial survey work across its national infrastructure and estate.

The contract will provide Network Rail with access to helicopter-based survey capability nationally, across its Regions, with service availability 365 days per year including an element of night flying.

Background

Network Rail has used helicopters to survey its assets and create aerial pictorial maps of the railway infrastructure since 2004.

Currently, this capability is delivered by two helicopters, one covering Scotland and one covering England and Wales, with an estimated 1000 flight hours per year.

Network Rail provides the Aerial Survey Specialists (referred to as 'observers' from this point forward) that accompany each flight to capture and process data specified by the Regions.

Description of services requirements

Aircraft Requirements and Availability

Essential:

- Helicopters must be available during the hours of 0700 to 1900 each day, 7 days per week.

Each aircraft must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Twin engine helicopter
- Fully equipped for VFR and night capable flights
- Fitted with a CAA approved mount capable of carrying the required camera/survey systems as specified in this notice, plus 1 x Network Rail observer and two other

passengers (such as Network Rail engineers)

- Flight following capability (Spidertrax or equivalent) to be made available to Network Rail
- Able to fly a mission for a duration of three hours without needing to refuel
- Able to mount screens and other equipment in the cabin - both fore and after

The availability of aircraft must be achieved through:

- The provision of a backup aircraft in the event of mechanical fault or scheduled maintenance
- Access to additional aircraft may be required if the need arises (subcontracting shall be permitted)

Desirable:

- IFR capable platform

Pilot Availability and Competence Profile

Essential:

- A minimum of two dedicated pilots shall be assigned to each aircraft
- Pilots shall be trained to Commercial Air Transport (C.A.T) Standard, night rated and with a minimum of 2500 hours rotary wing flight time
- Pilots shall be trained and familiar in flying infrastructure survey missions
- Pilot competence shall be maintained by limiting rotation between Network Rail and other customers
- Tasking schedules shall be set by Network Rail's observers and the supplier will be required to allocate a pilot for a daily mission that in general shall not exceed standard flight duty hours

Desirable:

- IFR rated pilot

Sensors, Camera Equipment and Systems

The supplier shall provide and maintain the following equipment:

Essential:

- System 1 - Thermal Multi Sensor System to include: HD Thermal Imaging sensors with Zoom capability, HD Visual Colour Cameras with Zoom capability, Laser Range Finder with Geo-lock capability, 6-axis or greater stabilisation, Augmentation with mapping.
- System 2 - Gimbalised Stills camera system to include: HD Stills Camera System (min 50mp) with Zoom capability, 6-axis, or greater stabilisation.

Desirable:

- System 3 - Corona Discharge Multi Sensor System to include: HD UV Imaging sensors with Zoom capability, HD Thermal Imaging sensors with Zoom capability, HD Visual Colour Cameras with Zoom capability, HD Stills Camera System with Zoom capability, Laser Range Finder with Geo-lock capability, 4-axis or greater stabilisation, Augmentation with mapping.

In addition to the above, the helicopter must also be able to accommodate Network Rail's own bespoke MACs camera system. This is mounted on a standard meeker boom or equivalent.

Training and Access to a Broadcast quality camera

Training on a broadcast quality camera system for occasional use by the team for media filming of special events, major incidents, and major engineering work.

Additional Requirements

Personal Protective Equipment

The supplier shall provide Network Rail's observers with:

- Fire retardant flight suits (a minimum of 2 suits per observer per annum)
- Personal noise cancelling headsets with Bluetooth capability
- Any additional PPE requested, for example 'flying boots'

Information Technology

The supplier shall provide Network Rail's observers with:

- Access to high-speed broadband connectivity (minimum 1Gbps to reach 5Gbps or better)
- 1 x high spec laptop suitable for post processing of images (1 per aircraft)
- 2 x high-speed memory storage devices for all systems (minimum of two per person, per system)

Flight Bases and Facilities

The supplier shall provide as a minimum but not limited to:

- A base in Scotland to serve the Scotland Region and at least one base in England or Wales to serve the remaining Network Rail Regions
- Dedicated and secure office accommodation at each aircraft's home base to be furnished with a minimum of two desks and chairs
- Access to rest rooms
- A dedicated landline
- Free on-site parking

Commercial tool

Establishes a framework

Total value (estimated)

- £3,000,000 excluding VAT
- £36,000,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 April 2027 to 31 March 2032
- Possible extension to 31 March 2035
- 8 years

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 60440000 - Aerial and related services
- 34000000 - Transport equipment and auxiliary products to transportation

Contract locations

- UK - United Kingdom

Engagement

Engagement deadline

6 June 2025

Engagement process description

Supplier Event

Network Rail will be hosting a market engagement event for Aerial (Helicopter) Survey Services on Friday 6th June 2025.

The event will be hosted on TEAMS and shall commence at 11.00am. The objective of this event is for Network Rail to provide information to potential suppliers on manned helicopter aerial services; how the services currently works and developments of the service during CP7.

If you would like to express an interest in attending market engagement event for Aerial (Helicopter) Survey Services for Network Rail please email annmarie.rochford2@networkrail.co.uk In the subject line of your email please state, 'Market Engagement Event - Network Rail Manned Helicopter Aerial Services.'

In return you will receive a confirmation email of your booking as well as a series of market consultation questions which will where upon your responses will assist Network Rail in developing the strategy for the servicing of its aerial services requirement.

Participation

Particular suitability

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

Submission

Publication date of tender notice (estimated)

14 July 2025

Procedure

Special regime

Utilities

Contracting authority

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Organisation type: Public authority - central government

