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Planning

Appointment of an operator to run the historic Carrickfergus & The Gobbins City Deal Tourism Projects in MEA

Mid and east Antrim Borough Council

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

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-032176

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-054841

Published 13 June 2025, 10:41am

Scope

Reference

T700

Description

PRELIMINARY MARKET ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council has secured Belfast Region City Deal funding approval for the Historic Carrickfergus and The Gobbins Projects, which are two inter-related visitor attraction projects in Mid and East Antrim Borough, Northern Ireland.

The Council is interested in exploring the opportunity to appoint a suitably experienced operator to manage and operate its two interrelated heritage visitor attraction Projects as one operator contract.

Prior to commencing a procurement of an operator for the two inter-related visitor attraction projects, the Council wishes to discuss with experienced operators the Council's thinking in relation to its approach to the operator procurement, including scope of operator services, risk allocation, commercial terms and procurement process.

By undertaking this initial PME, the Council is seeking to attract strong market interest in any subsequent procurement, resulting in the appointment of an operator with the experience and capability to successfully deliver the Council's aim and ambitions for the two inter-related visitor attraction projects.

Contract dates (estimated)

- 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2026
- Possible extension to 31 December 2028
- 3 years

Main procurement category

Services

CPV classifications

- 55000000 - Hotel, restaurant and retail trade services
- 63514000 - Tourist guide services
- 70000000 - Real estate services
- 79000000 - Business services: law, marketing, consulting, recruitment, printing and security
- 92000000 - Recreational, cultural and sporting services
- 98000000 - Other community, social and personal services

Contract locations

- UKN - Northern Ireland
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Engagement

Engagement deadline

9 July 2025

Engagement process description

Preliminary Market Engagement Exercise

This is a Preliminary Market Engagement (PME) Exercise that the Council is undertaking to inform a future procurement that the Council is considering undertaking (in accordance with the Procurement Regulations 2024) to appoint an operator to manage and operate the Historic Carrickfergus and The Gobbins Projects in Mid and East Antrim Borough, Northern Ireland as one multi-site, visitor attraction project.

The purpose of this PME exercise is to provide the opportunity for suitably experienced operators to inform the Council's thinking in relation to its approach to the procurement of a suitable operator, including the scope of operator services, risk allocation, commercial terms and procurement process.

The supporting PME document sets out the process for the PME and presents further information relating to the Historic Carrickfergus and The Gobbins Projects and the Council's requirements and proposals. The PME document can be obtained by registering your interest in this PME Notice on eSourcingNI portal <https://e-sourcingni.bravosolution.co.uk>.

The Council recognises that suitably experienced operators may not wish to discuss some of these matters in an open forum with market competitors, and accordingly to secure the market insights the Council requires, the Council is proposing to hold informal online one-to-one PME meetings with suitably experienced operators week commencing Monday 30th June 2025. These one-to-one PME meetings will help inform the Council's thinking in relation to its approach to the procurement of a suitable operator.

Should you wish to participate in a one-to-one meeting please email procurement@midandeantrim.gov.uk titling your email "Appointment of an Operator for the Historic Carrickfergus and The Gobbins Projects" in the subject line by 5pm on Friday 27th June 2025, and please provide the following details:

- Name of company.
- Experience of the company in managing and operating visitor attractions, and any specific experience operating attractions in the heritage sector or across multi-sites, which would be relevant to the operator contract (maximum 400 words).
- Names of individuals to participate in an on-line meeting with the Council (maximum of three individuals).
- Email addresses for individuals participating in the on-line meeting.
- Times available for a meeting week commencing Monday 30th June 2025.

Alternatively, you can register your interest and provide the above information requirements via the secure messaging function on the eSourcingNI portal (<https://e-sourcingni.bravosolution.co.uk>). If you are having any problems registering on the portal, please contact the BravoSolution dedicated supplier helpdesk by telephoning 0800 368 4850 or emailing help@bravosolution.co.uk.

If for any reason you are unable to participate in a one-to-one meeting with the Council, the Council would be happy to receive written views on the opportunity. Such views should be submitted to the Council by 5pm on Friday 4th July 2025 by emailing the Council at procurement@midandeantrim.gov.uk or by registering and messaging the Council via eSourcingNI (see weblink above).

It is important to note that: (a) this notice and the market testing exercise do/will not constitute a call for competition, a pre-qualification questionnaire, part of any pre-qualification/selection process or a current tender opportunity. All interested suppliers will need to express a formal interest in any future tender opportunity in due course once a tender notice (as appropriate) is published; and (b) the Council cannot guarantee it will incorporate all or any feedback received into any subsequent procurement.

The Council will not disclose any confidential information supplied by an interested supplier in response to this notice or during the market testing, other than: (a) to its advisors, members, servants and agents (under similar obligations of confidentiality) for the purposes of this market testing exercise and any subsequent procurement process; or (b) as required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 or to satisfy any other legislative obligation.

Participation

Particular suitability

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

Submission

Publication date of tender notice (estimated)

31 October 2025

Contracting authority

Mid and east Antrim Borough Council

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PMVX-1316-MMYP

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Region: UKN0F - Mid and East Antrim

Organisation type: Public authority - sub-central government

Devolved regulations that apply: Northern Ireland