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Planning

P-37549 - EAN - OJUE – Ouse Washes Habitat Creation Project (OWHCP)

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

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

Notice identifier: 2025/S 000-065029

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocds-h6vhtk-051b18

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Scope

Description

The Sutton scheme needs to create wet grassland from arable fields to benefit both wintering and breeding birds, the target species for the OWHCP being breeding ruff, black-tailed godwit, snipe, and wintering widgeon.

Total value (estimated)

- £4,940,000 excluding VAT
- £5,928,000 including VAT

Above the relevant threshold

Contract dates (estimated)

- 26 January 2026 to 25 January 2027
- Possible extension to 24 January 2028
- 1 year, 11 months, 30 days

Main procurement category

Works

CPV classifications

- 45247270 - Reservoir construction works
- 71322000 - Engineering design services for the construction of civil engineering works
- 90710000 - Environmental management
- 77310000 - Planting and maintenance services of green areas

Contract locations

- UKH12 - Cambridgeshire CC

Engagement

Engagement deadline

24 October 2025

Engagement process description

Defra Group Commercial on behalf of Environment Agency (EA) intends to publish a tender opportunity for the provision of Ouse Washes Habitat Creation Project (OWHCP), tentatively scheduled early 2026.

Purpose of Engagement:

Market engagement is being undertaken because our requirements have two unusual features. First, we are looking for a single supplier to undertake all aspects of habitat design, undertake works on the ground, and subsequently manage the site and habitat. We are doing so because in practice for habitat creation schemes there are not clear boundaries between these stages and is an iterative process. Second, we require the contractual arrangements to be in place for 25 years. This is because habitat establishment is a gradual process over a number of years and involves suppliers developing an understanding over time as to how the site functions under different circumstances. A shorter duration would lose the efficiency of having built such experience and knowledge.

From market engagement we hope to understand the size and maturity of the pool of potential suppliers, their technical capabilities and experience, and gauge their appetite for entering into such long-term arrangements.

Scope of Engagement:

The client has the intention of creating approximately 200ha of new wet grassland habitat suitable to accommodate breeding snipe, black-tailed godwit, and ruff, and also for wintering wigeon. The site is located at Sutton within the Cambridgeshire Fens, adjacent to the Ouse Washes. The landholding is being assembled and so the final site boundary is still to be set. The land is largely peat-based currently in cultivation. The supplier is required to produce the scheme design together with materials needed to secure consents, undertake the habitat creation works, and then manage the site and habitat for 25 years. The design and construction work will be administered through an NEC Engineering and Construction Contract, and the site management will be subject to a bespoke management agreement.

The supplier will design the scheme from scratch taking account the nature of the site and constraints. A specification for the habitat has been produced, but it is accepted that given the site and constraints the specification may not be met at all times across the whole site. The main design constraint is that in order to manage cost no large-scale water storage such as a raised reservoir or excavated lake will be included. In addition, to manage the risk to archaeology, as far as possible excavation must be confined to the top 0.5m of the ground. A range of possible water sources have been identified but it would be for the supplier to secure sources and design how water is stored and managed across the site.

There is ground information available, largely from hand auger survey, to inform the design.

Dependent on the design it is anticipated the following consents will be required: planning permission (for some elements), abstraction licence, IDB bylaw consent, Flood Risk Activity Permit, and Scheduled Monument consent. The supplier will provide the studies and reports needed to support consent applications by the client, such as environmental impact assessment, flood risk assessment, Habitats Regulations assessment, biodiversity net gain assessment. A range of ecological and archaeological studies and surveys have been completed and may need to be updated in order to inform the design, consents, construction, and possible protected species licence application.

Following acceptance of the design by the client and the granting of consents the supplier will undertake the habitat creation works. It is appreciated that habitat creation especially for wetland sites can be an iterative and possibly extended process. While land acquisition is still in progress, in order to make a start on the ground the scheme delivery may be divided into two or more phases that are progressed once all the land within a phase has been secured. Each phase would need to be ecologically appropriate and hydrologically self-contained in order that water levels can be raised. It would be for the supplier to propose the phases as part of the overall integrated scheme design. The timing of phases will depend on the land acquisition process and could potentially be years apart. The contractual arrangements will be designed to accommodate a phased approach.

When habitat creation works are completed for the whole site, or the first phase, the 25-year habitat management stage will commence. The supplier will be wholly responsible for and address all aspects of site management. The first step will be the production of the site management plan for acceptance by the client. Thereafter the client and supplier will meet and review progress with respect the target species and an overview of management activity on an annual basis. The management agreement will include provisions for its breaking should the habitat creation be no longer required, become unfeasible, or if there are issues of poor supplier performance.

Engagement Method:

Written submissions are required via email to Mohammed.Ali1@defra.gov.uk expressing interest in the outline above and some demonstration of your technical competence and robustness as a business.

We would appreciate receiving all expressions of interest by 12pm on 28th October 2025

Outcome Use:

Feedback from engagement will either confirm our intended procurement approach or

may cause us to reconsider aspects of it. This could include, for example, the reliance on a single supplier or the duration of the management agreement.

We will consider holding a virtual supplier engagement event. This session would provide an overview of our requirements and invite supplier feedback. A Q&A session would follow, giving participants the opportunity to raise questions which will be addressed by our team, please state in your response if this would be something you would be interested in.

Transparency Statement:

To confirm, the undertaking of this engagement is not part of a call for competition. Participation or absence from it will not influence future tendering outcomes.

Participation

Particular suitability

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

Contracting authority

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PNWW-1475-NYLN

Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street

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United Kingdom

Email: peter.doktor@environment-agency.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 OF ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Summary of their role in this procurement: Conducting the procurement exercise on behalf of Environment Agency

- Public Procurement Organisation Number: PNBD-3289-CDGX

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Region: UKI32 - Westminster

Contact organisation

Contact ENVIRONMENT AGENCY for any enquiries.