Request for Quotation

Post-deployment monitoring of ‘Seahorse Hotels’ in Sussex as part of a Short-snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) Species Recovery Project.

07/03/2025

Request for Quotation

Post-deployment monitoring of ‘Seahorse Hotels’ in Sussex as part of a Short-snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) Species Recovery Project.

You are invited to submit a quotation for the requirement described in the specification, Section 2.

Please confirm by email, receipt of these documents and whether you intend to submit a quote or not.

Your response should be returned to the following email address by:

Email: Sian.Woollard@naturalengland.org.uk

Date: 07/03/2025

Time: 13:00

Ensure you include the name of the quotation and ‘Final Submission’ in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

Contact Details and Timetable

Sian Woollard will be your contact for any questions linked to the content of the quote or the process. Please submit any clarification questions via email and note that, unless commercially sensitive, both the question and the response will be circulated to all tenderers.

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| --- | --- |
| Action | Date |
| Date of issue of RFQ | 07/03/2025 |
| Deadline for clarifications questions | 07/04/2025 |
| Deadline for receipt of Quotation | **24/04/2025** |
| Intended date of Contract Award | 01/05/2025 |
| Intended Contract Start Date | 15/05/2025 |
| Intended Delivery Date / Contract Duration | 15/05/2025 - 30/11/2025 |

Section 1: General Information

Glossary

Unless the context otherwise requires, the following words and expressions used within this Request for Quotation shall have the following meanings (to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires):

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| --- | --- |
|  |  |
| “Authority” | Means Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs acting as part of Natural England who is the Contracting Authority. |
| “Contract” | means the contract to be entered into by the Authority and the successful supplier. |
| “Response” | means the information submitted by a supplier in response to the RFQ. |
| “RFQ” | means this Request for Quotation and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to suppliers. |

Conditions applying to the RFQ

You should examine your Response and related documents ensuring it is complete and in accordance with the stated instructions prior to submission.

Your Response must contain sufficient information to enable the Authority to evaluate it fairly and effectively. You should ensure that you have prepared your Response fully and accurately and that prices quoted are arithmetically correct for the units stated.

By submitting a Response, you, the supplier, are deemed to accept the terms and conditions provided in the RFQ. Confirmation of this is required in Annex 2.

Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the RFQ may result in the supplier’s exclusion from this quotation process.

Acceptance of Quotations

By issuing this RFQ the Authority does not bind itself to accept any quotation and reserves the right not to award a contract to any supplier who submits a quotation.

Costs

The Authority will not reimburse you for any costs and expenses which you incur preparing and submitting your quotation, even if the Authority amends or terminates the procurement process.

Self-Declaration and Mandatory Requirements

The RFQ includes a self-declaration response (Annex 1) which covers basic information about the supplier, as well as any grounds for exclusion. If you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Any mandatory requirements will be set out in Section 2, Specification of Requirements and, if you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Clarifications

Any request for clarification regarding the RFQ and supporting documentation must be submitted via email no later than the deadline for clarifications set out in the Timetable. The Authority shall be under no obligation to respond to queries raised after the clarification deadline.

The Authority will respond to all reasonable clarifications as soon as possible but cannot guarantee a minimum response time. The Authority will publish all clarifications and its responses to all suppliers via email unless deemed commercially sensitive.

If a supplier believes that a request for clarification is commercially sensitive, it should clearly state this when submitting the clarification request. However, if the Authority considers either that:

* the clarification and response are not commercially sensitive; and
* all suppliers may benefit from its disclosure,

then the Authority will notify the supplier (via email), and the supplier will have an opportunity to withdraw the request for clarification by sending a further message requesting the withdrawal of the clarification request. If not withdrawn by the supplier within 2 working days of the Authority’s notification, the Authority may publish the clarification request and its response to all suppliers and the Authority shall not be liable to the supplier for any consequences of such publication.

The Authority reserves the right to seek clarification of any aspect of a quotation and/or provide additional information during the evaluation phase to carry out a fair evaluation. Where the Authority seeks clarification on any aspect of the quotation, the supplier must respond within the timeframe requested by the Authority.

Amendments

The Authority may amend the RFQ at any time prior to the deadline for receipt. If it amends the RFQ the Authority will notify you via email.

Suppliers may modify their quotation prior to the deadline for Responses. No Responses may be modified after the deadline for Responses.

Suppliers may withdraw their quotations at any time by submitting a notice via the email to the named contact.

**Conditions of the Contract**

The Authority’s Standard Good and Services Terms & Conditions (used for purchases under £50k) can be located on the [Natural England Website](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/procurement) and will be applicable to any contract awarded as a result of this quotation process. The Authority will not accept any changes to these terms and conditions proposed by a supplier.

Suppliers should note that the quotation provided by the successful bidder will form part of the Contract.

Prices

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling, exclusive of VAT.

Disclosure

All Central Government Departments, their Executive Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement, including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice. For these purposes, the Authority may disclose within Government any details contained in your quotation. The information will not be disclosed outside Government during the procurement.

In addition, the Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, which provide a public right of access to information held by public bodies. In accordance with these two statutes, the Authority may be required to disclose information contained in your quotation to any person who submits a request for information pursuant to those statutes.

Further to the Government’s transparency agenda, all UK Government organisations must advertise on Contract Finder in accordance with the following publication thresholds:

* Central Contracting Authority’s: £12,000
* Sub Central Contracting Authority’s and NHS Trusts: £30,000

For the purpose of this RFQ the Authority is classified as a Central Contracting Authority with a publication threshold of £12,000 inclusive of VAT.

If this opportunity is advertised via Contracts Finder, we are obliged to publish details of the awarded contract including who has won the contract, the contract value, and indicate whether the winning supplier is a small and medium-sized enterprise (“SMEs”) or voluntary organisation or charity. A copy of the contract must also be published with confidential information redacted.

By submitting a Response, you consent to these terms as part of the procurement.

Disclaimers

Whilst the information in this RFQ and any supporting information referred to herein or provided to you by the Authority have been prepared in good faith the Authority does not warrant that this information is comprehensive or that it has been independently verified.

The Authority does not:

* make any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the RFQ;
* accept any liability for the information contained in the RFQ or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information; or
* accept any liability for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation or any other liability which cannot lawfully be excluded) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any supplier considering entering into contractual relationships with the Authority following receipt of the RFQ should make its own investigations and independent assessment of the Authority and its requirements for the goods and/or services and should seek its own professional financial and legal advice.

Information Security requirements

The Government Security Classification Policy (GSCP) sets out the administrative system used by HM Government (HMG) to protect information and data assets appropriately against prevalent threats through the use of ‘classification tiers’. HMG uses three classification tiers; OFFICIAL, SECRET and TOP SECRET. Each tier provides a set of recommended baseline behaviours and a set of protective controls, which are proportionate to the threat profile for that tier AND the potential impact of a compromise, accidental loss or incorrect disclosure of information held within that tier.

Tenderers and suppliers must ensure that appropriate protective security controls are in place to comply with the GSCP and manage the information shared and received as part of this tender exercise.

A full suite of guidance documents is available on GOV.UK, with specific guidance for tenderers and suppliers set out in [Guidance 1.6 - Contractors and Contracting Authorities.docx (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1166155/Guidance_1.6_-_Contractors_and_Contracting_Authorities.pdf).

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The Authority expects suppliers to declare where they have used AI software in the creation of Tender responses or intend to use AI software in the performance of the contract. How any AI software was, or will be, used should be to be declared within the technical submission part of the tender. We may require you to answer specific question/s on this topic, particularly where the Authority expects that usage is highly likely or clearly relates to the contract requirements.

Suppliers must follow any guidelines or regulations related to AI use and declarations as indicated in the [PPN 2/24 Improving Transparency of AI use in Procurement](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-0224-improving-transparency-of-ai-use-in-procurement/ppn-0224-improving-transparency-of-ai-use-in-procurement-html).

Any information, instructions, or data provided by the Authority to suppliers as part of this tender, the requirements, or contract should not be directly inserted into Generative AI software (such as Gemini, ChatGPT, or CoPilot) without prior permission, unless this information is clearly published in the public domain.

Use of any Authority confidential tender information for training AI software is prohibited. it is advised that Defra’s data or instructions, or anything marked as confidential should not be directly inserted into AIs. For example, putting Authority’s instruction email into Gemini, ChatGPT, or CoPilot is not recommended.

If you intend to use AI to provide goods or services to the Authority, then you are required to complete a declaration which is simply answering the question stated within the 'Information to be returned’. The answer to this question will not be used in scoring your quote.

Protection of Personal Data

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 the supplier must agree to the following:

You must only process any personal data in strict accordance with instructions from the Authority.

* You must ensure that all the personal data that we disclose to you or you collect on our behalf under this agreement are kept confidential.
* You must take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of employees who have access to personal data.
* Only employees who may be required to assist in meeting the obligations under this agreement may have access to the personal data.
* Any disclosure of personal data must be made in confidence and extend only so far as that which is specifically necessary for the purposes of this agreement.
* You must ensure that there are appropriate security measures in place to safeguard against any unauthorised access or unlawful processing or accidental loss, destruction or damage or disclosure of the personal data.
* On termination of this agreement, for whatever reason, the personal data must be returned to us promptly and safely, together with all copies in your possession or control.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

For the purposes of the Regulations the Authority is the data processor.

The personal information that we have asked you provide on individuals (data subjects) that will be working for you on this contract will be used in compiling the tender list and in assessing your offer. If you are unsuccessful the information will be held and destroyed within two years of the award of contracts. If you are awarded a contract it will be retained for the duration of the contract and destroyed within seven years of the contract’s expiry.

We may monitor the performance of the individuals during the execution of the contract, and the results of our monitoring, together with the information that you have provided, will be used in determining what work is allocated under the contract, and in any renewal of the contract or in the award of future contracts of a similar nature. The information will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Authority without the consent of the data subject, unless the Authority is required by law to make such disclosures.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

The Client is striving to create a diverse and inclusive working environment where every individual has equality of opportunity to progress and to apply their unique insights to making the UK a great place for living. The Service Provider is expected to respect this commitment in all dealings with Natural England staff and service users.

Suppliers are expected to;

* Support Defra group to achieve its Public Sector Equality Duty as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and to support delivery of [Defra group’s Equality & Diversity Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defra-group-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2020-to-2024/defra-group-equality-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2020-to-2024).
* Meet the standards set out in the [Government’s Supplier Code of Conduct](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supplier-code-of-conduct)
* Work with Defra group to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion impacts are addressed (positive and negative) in the goods, services and works we procure, barriers are removed and opportunities realised.

Sustainable Procurement

Addressing global sustainability impacts and realising additional community benefits within commercial activity is core to Defra group’s approach, working with its supply chain is key to achieving sustainable outcomes. In addition to supporting Defra group to meet its outcomes we look to understand and reduce negative sustainability impacts associated with our commercial activity and realise benefits.

The Client encourages its suppliers to share these values, work to address negative impacts and realise opportunities, measure performance and success.

Suppliers are expected to have an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, the interconnections between them and the relevance to the Goods, Services and works procured on the Client’s behalf

Conflicts of Interest

The concept of a conflict of interest includes but is not limited to any situation where an Involved Person or Relevant Body has directly or indirectly, a financial, economic or other personal interest which might be perceived to compromise their impartiality and independence in the context of the procurement procedure and/or affect the integrity of the contract award.

We expect suppliers to mitigate appropriately against any real or perceived conflict of interest through their work with government. A supplier with a position of influence gained through a contract should not use that position to unfairly disadvantage any other supplier or reduce the potential for future competition

Where the supplier is aware of any circumstances giving rise to a conflict of interest or has any indication that a conflict of interest exists or may arise you should inform the Authority of this as soon as possible (whether before or after they have submitted a quotation). Tenderers should remain alert to the possibility of conflicts of interest arising at all stages of the procurement and should update the Authority if any new circumstances or information arises, or there are any changes to information already provided to the Authority. Failure to do so, and/or to properly manage any conflicts of interest may result in a quotation being rejected.

Provided that it has been carried out in an open, fair and transparent manner, routine pre-market engagement carried out by the Authority should not represent a conflict of interest for the supplier.

Section 2: The Invitation

Specification of Requirements

Background to Natural England

The Authority is Natural England. The Authority’s priorities are to secure a healthy natural environment; a sustainable, low-carbon economy; a thriving farming sector and a sustainable, healthy and secure food supply. Further information about the Authority can be found at: [Natural England](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england).

Short-snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) Species Recovery Project in Seaford to Eastbourne: Monitoring surveys of 'Seahorse Hotels'.

Background to the specific work area relevant to this purchase

Natural England is seeking to commission the Build and Deployment of artificial seahorse habitats (‘Seahorse Hotels’) at 5 sites along the Sussex coastline. This is part of a larger project, looking to test the effectiveness of artificial habitats for providing alternative refuge for short-snouted seahorses in areas with high potting intensity.

Requirement

1. Introduction

Short-snouted seahorses (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) are one of England’s native seahorse species and are listed as a species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006). Despite being a designated feature of two Marine Protected Areas within Sussex, Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Beachy Head East MCZ and Selsey Bill and the Hounds MCZ, little is known about the species’ presence within these sites.

This project aims to understand the species’ site-specific ecological interactions, creating artificial habitat known as ‘seahorse hotels’ to provide alternative refuge and reduce accidental bycatch, all with the overarching outcome to recover the species.

In Phase One of the project (now completed), Natural England commissioned a Feasibility Study; prototype development of 'seahorse hotels'; and the trial of ‘hotels’.

In Phase Two of the project (coming to completion in March 2025), Natural England prepared Marine Licences required for the deployment of hotels and commissioned a contractor to conduct SCUBA monitoring surveys at 5 locations pre-deployment of ‘seahorse hotels’ to investigate suitability of locations for the deployment of the hotels.

For Phase Three of the project, Natural England is seeking a contractor to conduct SCUBA monitoring surveys at five locations for post-deployment of the ‘seahorse hotels’. Please note, we also have a separate Request for Quotation for the build and deployment of the hotels.

The ‘Seahorse Hotels’ have been developed to provide refuge for seahorses, and to help to reduce accidental bycatch. A prototype has been created out of galvanised mesh with a natural concrete block (to weigh down the structure). Outcomes of the trials suggested that the weight (initially 18kg) may need to be adjusted to 40kg to ensure there is no movement whilst on the seabed. A design spec will be provided during the initial start-up meeting. Please see below for an image of the ‘Seahorse Hotel’ prototype:

A metal cage with a piece of wood and a piece of foam

Description automatically generated  
*Figure 1. Prototype of ‘Seahorse Hotel’*.

* 1. Site information and survey area

During Phase 1, seven sites were proposed for the deployment of ‘Seahorse Hotels’ based on habitat suitability, substrate type, the presence of anthropogenic structures and bathymetry. Within Phase 2, this was reduced to 5 locations. 1 proposed site is within Beachy Head West MCZ, 3 are within Beachy Head East MCZ, and one is just outside of Beachy Head East MCZ. The sites are currently provisional and will be clarified during the start-up meeting, as confirmation will occur following the pre-deployment surveys to ensure the locations are suitable.

Short-snouted seahorses are features of conservation interest for both Beachy Head West MCZ and Beachy Head East MCZ. Further information on Beachy Head West MCZ and Beachy Head East MCZ is provided below:

Beachy Head West MCZ was designated as a Marine Conservation Zone in 2013; Beachy Head East MCZ was designated as a Marine Conservation Zone in 2019. These sites compliment the UK's suite of Natura 2000 and SSSI sites and overall MPA network.

Coordinates for Beachy Head East MCZ can be found here: [Beachy Head East Marine Conservation Zone boundary map (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914349/beachy-head-east-mcz-boundary.pdf).

Coordinates for Beachy Head West MCZ can be found here: [Beachy Head West Marine Conservation Zone map (publishing.service.gov.uk)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c6e2f40f0b626628ac015/mcz-map-beachy-head-west-boundary.pdf)

Full details are available on the NE designated sites webpage. For more information, please see [Beachy Head East MCZ (naturalengland.org.uk)](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UKMCZ0053&SiteName=beachy%20Head%20East%20MCZ&SiteNameDisplay=Beachy%20Head%20East%20MCZ&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=&HasCA=1) and [Beachy Head West MCZ (naturalengland.org.uk)](https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UKMCZ0002&SiteName=beachy%20head&SiteNameDisplay=Beachy%20Head%20West%20MCZ&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=&HasCA=1).

* 1. Previous surveys

Baseline data on short-snouted seahorses is limited within both Beachy Head East MCZ and Beachy Head West MCZ, with only one data point recorded on the NE Marine Evidence Base. Anecdotal evidence provided by the local fishing community to Sussex IFCA and sightings submitted to the Seahorse Trust demonstrate species presence within both sites.

To begin to gather evidence on the species, a survey was delivered in the summer of 2023, recruiting the NE Dive Unit and a Seahorse Trust contracted diver. This provided two separate short-snouted seahorse sightings outside the sites.

A seahorse on the sand

Description automatically generated  
Figure 2. Short-snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) from survey in August 2023. Photo by Ken Obbard.

2 Aims & Objectives

2.1 Aims

Natural England intends to commission ecological dive survey work in the period May 2025 – August 2025 to collect data from the sites of ‘seahorse hotels’. The key aim of this project is:

* Post-deployment survey of the ‘seahorse hotels’ to gather data on seahorse abundance, recording possible presence of seahorses and, if present, recording number, sex, and size, to assess effectiveness of the habitat structures.

Natural England is seeking potential contractors to:

1. Provide a team of HSE scientific divers to undertake post-deployment monitoring surveys. Under this project, the winning supplier will act as a ‘Dive Contractor’ and Natural England will act as the ‘Client’ in line with Diving at Work Regulations 1997.
2. Provide field reports and data obtained from dive surveys.

2.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this contract are:

* To develop a suitable methodology using SCUBA divers to collect monitoring data at ‘seahorse hotel’ locations post-deployment. ‘Seahorse Hotels’ are expected to be deployed by the middle of May 2025. There are expected to be 3 ‘Hotels’ in 5 different locations, requiring 5 post-deployment survey dives each month for three months (between May – August), totalling to 15 dives. The survey design must be practical, realistic, generate sufficiently robust data, and guide the collection of compatible data in the future. Videography and imagery should also be collected as part of the dive survey.
* To gather data through SCUBA surveys on seahorses (if Wildlife Licence is granted) and other marine fauna and flora, within and around 'seahorse hotels', using a team of suitably qualified, experienced and fully HSE compliant scientific divers. Dive surveys must be in accordance with the Approved Code of Practice for Scientific and Archaeological Diving and complying with the Diving at Work Regulations (1997)
* Produce field reports for each survey at each site, which:
  + Review data (and associated metadata) collected from the dive survey and provide species list.
  + Provide brief field report after each survey and a detailed report at the end of the monitoring period, with a comprehensive discussion / conclusion of findings, including appropriate GIS outputs, Marine Recorder files, MEDIN compliant metadata, and standard survey imagery.

During SCUBA surveys, the following data should be collected on seahorses:

* Number of individuals
* Sex
* Size
* Pregnant or not
* Photographs of facial pattern for identification
* Whole body photographs
* Behaviour should be noted but not studied for a prolonged period of time.

Seahorses must not be handled.

Other data recorded during SCUBA surveys should include:

* Fauna and flora surrounding seahorse hotel deployment locations.
* Turbidity - estimated diver visibility.

**3** **Methods**

**3.1** **Pre-survey Deskwork**

Before monitoring surveys are carried out, the contractor will discuss any pre-survey work with the Project Officer. This should include checking site information, identifying sources of relevant information, and finalising diving methods.

To ensure the successful contractor complies with the Diving at Work Regulations and appropriate Health and Safety Executive Approved Code of Practice; is competent for the work and aware of hazards associated with the project; and are maintaining full records of all such projects, a Diving Project Plan and risk assessment must be submitted by the contractor to the Natural England Diving Officer for approval. Copies of qualifications, medical certificates and first aid certificates should be provided to the Natural England Diving Officer by the Contractor.

3.2 Site Access

Natural England will obtain permission from seabed owners, Port Authorities, or leaseholders for survey work as necessary.

Each member of the survey team must carry a letter from Natural England to confirm that they are doing this work on the behalf of Natural England. Survey work will not be able to begin until access permissions have been obtained by Natural England.

3.3 Protected Species & Licensing

The winning contractor is expected to obtain their own licence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to disturb short-snouted seahorse (*Hippocampus hippocampus*) and spiny seahorse (*Hippocampus guttulatus*) for the purpose of scientific research. Natural England holds their own licence, but it cannot be used by the contractor as the licence holder, or a named agent must be present on the survey; Natural England is unable to provide divers for this survey.

Natural England will ensure that any other relevant marine and protected species licences and legal requirements (such as a Habitats Regulations Assessment) for the survey have been attained and are valid before the survey commences.

3.4 Diving Operations

The contractor will undertake the work using a team of fully equipped HSE divers. Expected locations of ‘Seahorse Hotels’ can be seen here:

A map of a land with red dots

AI-generated content may be incorrect.It is expected that one diver pair would survey the 'hotel' and surrounding biotope. The contractor is expected to provide a suitable vessel (e.g. hard boat and Category 2 MCA registered vessel or RIB). Please note, the chosen contractor must provide a contingency plan on weather dependency.

**3.5 Weather Downtime and Contingency**

Weather downtime is defined as those periods during diving operations where the influence of weather conditions results in a halt to any monitoring due to the impact on data quality and/or operational safety. Survey windows should be allocated in accordance with the best tides available. To ensure the safety of the Contractor and integrity of the project, good, clear, documented communications with the project officer (Sian Woollard) is essential. Contractors will be expected to check weather regularly (daily) prior to agreed survey windows. If contractors have 48 hours' notice of impending poor weather, then they will be expected to make alternative arrangements for the duration of the poor weather and reschedule survey work to be completed at a later date. Any permission to accrue weather downtime costs given must be in writing or by email from Sian Woollard to the Contractor. Any charges for weather downtime where no evidence of prior approval exists will not be approved and will not be reimbursed. Approved weather downtime maybe charged to Natural England at an Operational Weather Downtime Rate (Table 1).

If contractors have not yet mobilised, then Natural England does not expect to be charged for any weather downtime.

Table 1 Downtimes and Rates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Situation | Rate |
| Not immobilised | No costs |
| Other | Maximum 2 days by prior agreement with Sian Woollard |

3.6 Invasive Non-Native Species

Invasive non-native species (INNS) are considered to be one of the top five pressures directly driving biodiversity loss globally. Prevention is the key focus, particularly in marine environments.

The contractor must collect georeferenced photographs of INNS observed on site, record these on Marine Recorder, report to the Natural England Project Officer, and include within the survey report. Any species currently listed as ‘alert’ species should be flagged immediately to the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat and with the Natural England Project Officer. More information and guidance including ID guides can be found at [NNSS (nonnativespecies.org)](https://nonnativespecies.org/).

**4 Outputs – Products and Timescales**

This contract shall be managed on behalf of the Authority by Sian Woollard.

Field reports should be provided in electronic MS Office Word \*.DOCX format for comment. A template and guidance document exists for writing Natural England commissioned reports and will be sent to the contractor upon award of the tender. All reports should retain a clear suggested citation stating that it is a ‘Report to Natural England’.

Contractors should pay particular consideration to the data and GIS required formats for information compatibility including MEDIN metadata standards and Marine Recorder provision.

All interpreted products following data analysis should accompany the draft report; these will include:

* All GIS datasets need to be provided in ESRI ArcGIS format compatible with ArcGIS version 10.2 and have attached metadata.
* As specified in the [MESH DEF](http://www.emodnet-seabedhabitats.eu/default.aspx?page=2067), data files must be provided as ESRI Shapefiles using geographic coordinates (lat/long) and the WGS84 datum. If the datasets supplied are in other projections, transformation using the appropriate petroleum (EPSG) transformation should be carried out as part of the data formatting procedure.
* If not included in the GIS data layers listed above all sampling locations and links to data obtained should also be included as a single GI layer.

Natural England endorses the MEDIN initiative. Any data gathered/derived as part of this project must be submitted to Natural England in a way which expedites the MEDIN data archiving process through Data Archive Centres (DACs) with metadata meeting the MEDIN metadata discovery standard ([MEDIN discovery metadata standard](https://medin.org.uk/data-standards/medin-discovery-metadata-standard)).A MEDIN compliant metadata XML file must be provided for each survey. Natural England will supply the ‘MEDIN guidance for contractors’ document to successful contractors at the mini-tender stage.

All sample data must be entered into [Marine Recorder Online](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjfoorX9e6FAxUjQUEAHXk9AjQQFnoECBkQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.marine-recorder.org.uk%2F&usg=AOvVaw3p3XluRyhPsg1AERMIbFmh&opi=89978449). The Natural England Project Officer will create the survey in MRO and grant access to the contractor to input survey data. Natural England will supply a ‘Marine Recorder guidance for contractors’ document to successful contractors. Contractors should inform the Project Officer when the dataset has been entered, who will QA the survey before signing off.

Copies of the original data spreadsheets or databases are to be provided in the appropriate Microsoft Office format. However please be aware that using MEDIN marine biodiversity data guideline spreadsheets (available online under the marine biodiversity tab at [MEDIN guidelines](https://medin.org.uk/data-standards/medin-data-guidelines)) will ensure that biological taxon data is prepared correctly for entry into Marine Recorder and will facilitate the efficient entry of data into this system and the data archiving process in general. Natural England welcomes and supports the provision of raw data spreadsheets in the MEDIN format and expects that all raw datasheets will contain the mandatory fields in the MEDIN guidelines, regardless of their format.

Standard survey imagery (stills & video) is to be provided in their raw format electronically or on USB compliant external hard drives (to be provided by the contractor).

High quality imagery which has been selected to form part of the image reference collection for the survey need to be labelled appropriately, including the habitat/species which is represented. These should be provided as a separate folder on the storage device to the standard survey imagery.

All data products and electronic files must be appropriately named so they sufficiently describe the contents and are not purely a numerical value. All products should be named appropriately so that they can be clearly linked to the report/project.

Any species lists submitted will be compliant with current taxonomic names and synonyms (e.g. [Marine Species of the British Isles and Adjacent Seas (MSBIAS)](https://www.marinespecies.org/msbias/), [World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS)](https://www.marinespecies.org/)).

Video and still camera filenames must include the recording start date and time. Position data must be included within the overlay information.

**4.1 Timeline for Project Delivery**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Event | Date |
| Start-up meeting | W/C 15th May |
| Collection of dive survey data by contractor, with initial field report and data provided to Natural England within one month from the data of each survey | May 2025 – August 2025 |
| Check-in meetings to discuss progress | To occur monthly between May 2025 to August 2025 |
| Wash-up meeting | Between 1st October – 31st October 2025 |
| Final field report and outputs to be delivered | By 30th November 2025 |

**5 Other**

In support of this contract NE will provide the winning supplier with:

* Project support from dedicated Project Officer
* Opportunity to feedback and discuss progress and the project
* Supporting GIS datasets (if required) under licence for use in this contract:

Please see the following site for information on how to obtain access to the GI datasets listed above: <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-access-natural-englands-maps-and-data>

The intellectual property rights and copyright for all products (including photographs) will lie with Natural England. All data will be made available by Natural England under the Open Government Licence at the end of the project via data.gov.uk and the MEDIN Data Archiving Centres.

**6 Suitability**

Defra group protects and improves the environment and is committed to reducing the sustainability impacts of its activities directly and through its supply chains.  We expect the Contractor to share this commitment and adopt a sound, proactive sustainable approach in keeping with the 25-year environmental plan/our commitments compliant with all applicable legislation. This includes understanding and reducing direct and indirect sustainability impacts and realising opportunities, including but not restricted to; resilience to climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use and quality, biosecurity, resource efficiency and waste, reducing the risk of pollution, biodiversity, modern slavery and equality, diversity & inclusion, negative community impacts.

As a delivery partner, the successful contractor is expected to pursue sustainability in their operations, thereby ensuring the Contracting Authority is not contracting with a supplier whose operational outputs run contrary to the Contracting Authority’s objectives. The successful contractor will need to approach the project with a focus on the entire life cycle of the project.

Payment

The Authority will raise purchase orders to cover the cost of the services and will issue to the awarded supplier following contract award.

The Authority’s preference is for all invoices to be sent electronically, quoting a valid Purchase Order number. The work should be invoiced when Post-deployment monitoring Build the Seahorse Hotels has been completed, unless otherwise agreed.

It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded for a period of 7 months to end no later than 30/11/2025. Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period. We may at our sole discretion extend this contract to include related or further work. Any extension shall be agreed in writing in advance of any work commencing and may be subject to further competition.

Evaluation Methodology

We will award this contract in line with the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) as set out in the following award criteria:

Technical – 60%

Commercial –40%

**Evaluation criteria**

Evaluation weightings are 60% technical and 40% commercial, the winning tenderer will be the highest scoring combined score.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Award Criteria** | **Weighting (%)** | **Evaluation Topic & Weighting** | **Sub-Criteria** | **Weighted Question** |
| Technical | 60% | Service / Product Proposal | Availability / capacity | 1 Question  Q1 (pass/fail) |
| Relevant Licencing | 1 Question  Q1 (pass/fail) |
| Methodology | 1 Question  Q2 (40% of technical score available) |
| Key personnel | 1 Question  Q3 (40% of technical score available) |
| Report proposal | 1 Question  Q4 (20% of technical score available) |
| Commercial | 40% | Whole life cost of the proposed Contract | Commercial Model | 100% of commercial score available |

Technical (60%)

Technical evaluations will be based on responses to specific questions covering key criteria which are outlined below. Scores for questions will be based on the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | Score | Definition |
| Very good | 100 | Addresses all the Authority’s requirements with all the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. There are no weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority complete confidence that all the requirements will be met to a high standard. |
| Good | 70 | Addresses all the Authority’s requirements with all the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. The response contains minor weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority confidence that all the requirements will be met to a good standard. |
| Moderate | 50 | Addresses most of the requirements with most of the relevant supporting information set out in the RFQ. The response contains moderate weaknesses and therefore the tender response gives the Authority confidence that most of the requirements will be met to a suitable standard. |
| Weak | 20 | Substantially addresses the requirements but not all and provides supporting information that is of limited or no relevance or a methodology containing significant weaknesses and therefore raises concerns for the Authority that the requirements may not all be met. |
| Unacceptable | 0 | No response or provides a response that gives the Authority no confidence that the requirement will be met. |

Technical evaluation is assessed using the evaluation topics and sub-criteria stated in the Evaluation Criteria section above.

Separate submissions for each technical question should be provided and will be evaluated in isolation. Tenderers should provide answers that meet the criteria of each technical question.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Availability / capacity / Satisfaction** | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q1 Please supply a proposed schedule of work, stating the timescale you will be able to execute and deliver the products specified above (pass/fail) | The timescale provided should be in line with the timescale outlined in the section 2 |
| Q2. Please supply wildlife licence (pass/fail) |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Methodology** | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q2 Provide an initial proposal of your survey design methodology (750 words maximum) (40% of technical specification) | Your response should:  1) Demonstrate a clear understanding of the nature of the requirements.  2) Be a clear, practical, achievable, and cost-effective methodology to deliver these requirements.  3) Have information in sufficient detail to allow a full appraisal of the suitability of the approach to deliver for the project. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key personnel** | Detailed Evaluation Criteria |
| Q3 Provide CVs for the survey team (40% of technical specification) | Diver CVs should demonstrate appropriate skills and capabilities conducting marine wildlife surveys, and ideally with surveying seahorses |
| Report proposal | **Detailed Evaluation Criteria** |
| Q4 Provide a proposal for a field report including species lists as described in section 2.2 (20% of technical specification) |  |

**Commercial (**40**%)**

The Contract is to be awarded as a fixed price which will be paid according to the completion of the deliverables stated in the Specification of Requirements.

Suppliers are required to submit a total cost to provide the deliverables stated in the Specification of Requirements. In addition to this the Commercial Response template must be completed to provide a breakdown of the whole life costs against objective used in the delivery of this requirement.

The method for calculating the weighted scores is as follows:

* Commercial

Score = (Lowest Quotation Price / Supplier’s Quotation Price ) x **[40%]** (Maximum available marks)

* Technical

Score = (Bidder’s Total Technical Score / Highest Technical Score) x **[60%]** (Maximum available marks)

The total score (weighted) (TWS) is then calculated by adding the total weighted commercial score (WC) to the total weighted technical score (WT): WC + WT = TWS.

Information to be returned

Please note, the following information requested must be provided. Incomplete tender submissions may be discounted.

Please complete and return the following information:

* completed Commercial Response template
* separate response submission for each technical question (in accordance with the response instructions)
* complete AI question [ ''Do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI) or machine learning tools, including large language models within your quote submission or service delivery processes.?''] response which will not be scored, is to be returned within technical response
* completed Mandatory Requirements (Annex 1)
* completed Acceptance of Terms and Conditions (Annex 2)

Award

Once the evaluation of the Response(s) is complete all suppliers will be notified of the outcome via email.

The successful supplier will be issued the contract, incorporating their Response, for signature. The authority will then counter sign. On receipt of the signed contract, the Authority will issue a purchase order.

Annex 1 Mandatory Requirements

Part 1 Potential Supplier Information

Please answer the following self-declaration questions in full and include this Annex in your quotation response.

Part 1.1 Potential Supplier Information:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 1.1(a) | Full name of the potential supplier submitting the information |  |
| 1.1(b) | Registered office address (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(c) | Company registration number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(d) | Charity registration number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(e) | Head office DUNS number (if applicable) |  |
| 1.1(f) | Registered VAT number |  |
| 1.1(g) | Are you a Small, Medium or Micro Enterprise (SME)? | (Yes / No) |

Note: See EU definition of SME <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en>

Part 1.2 Contact details and declaration

By submitting a quotation to this RFQ I declare that to the best of my knowledge the answers submitted and information contained in this document are correct and accurate.

I declare that, upon request and without delay you will provide the certificates or documentary evidence referred to in this document.

I understand that the information will be used in the selection process to assess my organisation’s suitability to be invited to participate further in this procurement.

I understand that the authority may reject this submission in its entirety if there is a failure to answer all the relevant questions fully, or if false/misleading information or content is provided in any section.

I am aware of the consequences of serious misrepresentation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 1.2(a) | Contact name |  |
| 1.2(b) | Name of organisation |  |
| 1.2(c) | Role in organisation |  |
| 1.2(d) | Phone number |  |
| 1.2(e) | E-mail address |  |
| 1.2(f) | Postal address |  |
| 1.2(g) | Signature (electronic is acceptable) |  |
| 1.2(h) | Date |  |

Part 2 Exclusion Grounds

Part 2.1 Grounds for mandatory exclusion

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 2.1(a) | Please indicate if, within the past five years you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation been convicted anywhere in the world of any of the offences within the summary below. | |
|  | Participation in a criminal organisation. | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Corruption. | ((Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Fraud. | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Money laundering or terrorist financing | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
|  | Child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b) |
| 2.1(b) | If you have answered yes to question 2.1(a), please provide further details.  Date of conviction, specify which of the grounds listed the conviction was for, and the reasons for conviction.  Identity of who has been convicted  If the relevant documentation is available electronically please provide the web address, issuing authority, precise reference of the documents. |  |
| 2.1 (c) | If you have answered Yes to any of the points above have measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (i.e. Self-Cleaning) | (Yes / No) |
| 2.1(d) | Has it been established, for your organisation by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance with the legal provisions of any part of the United Kingdom or the legal provisions of the country in which the organisation is established (if outside the UK), that the organisation is in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions? | (Yes / No) |
| 2.1(e) | If you have answered yes to question 2.3(a), please provide further details. Please also confirm you have paid or have entered into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the outstanding sum including where applicable any accrued interest and/or fines. |  |

Part 2.2 Grounds for discretionary exclusion

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Question no. | Question | Response |
| 2.2(a) | The detailed grounds for discretionary exclusion of an organisation are set out on this [webpage](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/551130/List_of_Mandatory_and_Discretionary_Exclusions.pdf), which should be referred to before completing these questions.  Please indicate if, within the past three years, anywhere in the world any of the following situations have applied to you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation | |
| 2.2(b) | Breach of environmental obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(c) | Breach of social obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(d) | Breach of labour law obligations? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2(e) | Shown significant or persistent deficiencies in the performance of a substantive requirement under a prior public contract, a prior contract with a contracting entity, or a prior concession contract, which led to early termination of that prior contract, damages or other comparable sanctions? | (Yes / No)  If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f) |
| 2.2 (f) | If you have answered Yes to any of the above, explain what measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (Self Cleaning) |  |

Annex 2 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

I/We accept in full the terms and conditions appended to this Request for Quote document.

Company \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Position \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_