

Market Sounding Questionnaire – Conservation Management Plans in N. Ireland

Comments by
Northern Ireland Environment Link

5th May 2017

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the networking and forum body for non-statutory organisations concerned with the environment of Northern Ireland. Its 70+ Full Members represent over 90,000 individuals, 262 subsidiary groups, have an annual turnover of £70 million and manage over 314,000 acres of land. Members are involved in environmental issues of all types and at all levels from the local community to the global environment. NIEL brings together a wide range of knowledge, experience and expertise which can be used to help develop policy, practice and implementation across a wide range of environmental fields.

These comments are made on behalf of Members, but some members may be providing independent comments as well. If you would like to discuss these comments further we would be delighted to do so.

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1. Is there capacity in the environmental management sector to deliver on this contract?

We believe the environment sector has the capability to deliver on the contract however additional staffing would probably be required to ensure that they have the current capacity to do so given that a number of key eNGOs with necessary knowledge, skills & technical expertise in writing and delivering management plans are already committed to working on similar plans with the current Interreg VA programme. Should commercial organisations be selected to complete the contract they will also need to rely upon the local help and expertise of eNGOs already working on the ground in each location to design and implement the plans.

2. What might the risks be in taking this contract forward?

We foresee a number of risks including:

- The timeframe puts the project at risk given the level of sectoral commitment already invested in existing Interreg VA projects as outlined above as well as the fact that certain work that can only be undertaken at specific times of the year;
- Level of stakeholder engagement and the risk that Management Plan actions are not bought into by the local community;
- Insufficient funding to enable appropriate consultation and design of the Management Plans;
- Insufficient funding to see the full implementation of the Management Plans;
- The awarding of the contract to multiple individual partners may lead to the design of disjointed Management Plans and thus a further deterioration of on-the-ground conditions;
- Those awarded the contract have insufficient, capacity, credibility (especially within the farming community) and expertise to successfully complete the project.

3. What might the issues be in taking this contract forward?

Please see above.

4. Should the tender be issued as a single contract, or would delivery be best served through the tender of smaller contracts based on habitat type / geographic location e.g. Upper Lough Erne, River sites, Peatlands sites, Other terrestrial sites [grassland, woodland fen & coastal]?

We support the option for interested parties to deliver all or part of the contract. It is likely however that a consortium would be required to deliver the contract as it is very unlikely that any eNGO or smaller commercial organisation would have the individual capacity to fulfil the contract.