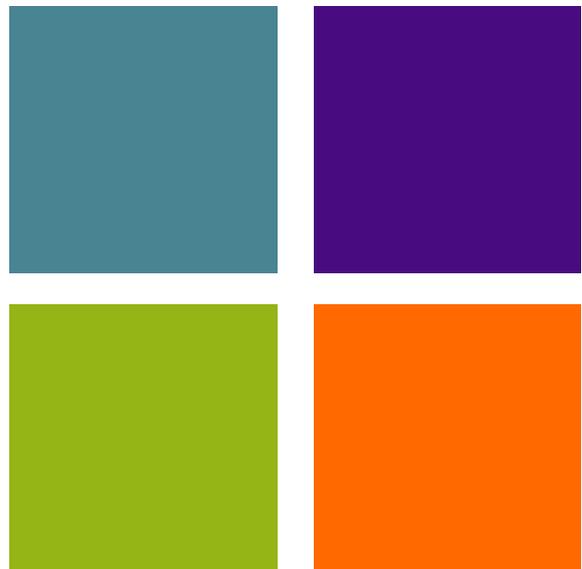


## Invitation to Tender

### Consultant Brief for a Specialist to Lead the Monitoring and Evaluation of the New Life on the Old West Project

Start Date: 07-04-2021

End Date: 30-09-2023



Procurement is being undertaken by Cambridgeshire ACRE

- Company limited by guarantee No. 3690881 • Registered charity No. 1074032
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ITT preparation date: 19-Feb-2021

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## INTRODUCTION

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Cambridgeshire ACRE is managing the delivery of the 'New Life on the Old West' project (NLOW), which is being funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund. This is a 3 year project that runs from October 2020 through to the latter months of 2023.

This project seeks to establish connectivity and ecological resilience in the Cambridgeshire Fens between core wetland nature reserves: National Trust's Wicken Fen and RSPB's Ouse Fen and Ouse Washes. It will do so by creating stepping-stones of new and enhanced small-scale habitats along a corridor centred on the Old West River, benefiting a range of habitats and species. Re-connecting dispersed species and restoring ecological processes will be achieved through habitat improvements on the network of fenland ditches and other waterbodies, farmland and community green spaces.

There will be new opportunities for local people to discover, experience, and appreciate their fenland natural heritage and green spaces. This should increase their sense of connection to fenland wildlife and to others within their community, engender a desire to become enthusiastic stewards of their local environment, and an inspiration to other communities within the Fens, and beyond.

Cambridgeshire ACRE are looking to appoint an experienced and competent consultant to lead on monitoring and evaluating the NLOW project throughout the 3 year delivery phase. The consultant will work with Cambridgeshire ACRE staff from the early stages of the project to:

### During Project Delivery-

1. Ensure the NLOW project meets its objectives in benefitting natural heritage, people and communities in the Old West River landscape.
2. Help improve the management and delivery of the project.

### At the End of Project Delivery-

1. Assess the impact of the project on our key target audiences.
2. Provide an independent evaluation of the successes, challenges and learning of the NLOW project.
3. Evaluate whether the NLOW project has successfully met its objectives for heritage, people and communities.
4. Assist in demonstrating overall achievements and identifying successful approaches / important learning arising from this landscape-scale approach to nature conservation in the Cambridgeshire Fens.
5. Allow the partnership and other organisations to replicate the NLOW project's landscape-scale approach to conservation in the fens and beyond.

The evaluation consultant will provide an independent assessment of the NLOW project in terms of both its heritage/wildlife and people/communities objectives. A comprehensive Biodiversity Monitoring Framework has already been developed by Wildlife Trust BCN to provide a strong framework against which the project's biodiversity monitoring, data collection and ecological analysis will take place. Some experience of monitoring and evaluating similar conservation projects would be advantageous. Additionally, the consultant will play an important role in critically assessing how the NLOW project has met its project-wide heritage objectives.

The successful consultant will commit to a longitudinal project evaluation study, covering the period from the launch of the project in October 2020 and concluding after September 2023. The exact end date will depend upon the length of an expected potential extension of the project delivery period. We want to gather data

over this period to track and clearly identify the impact of NLOW delivery in the Old West River landscape, including on our key target audiences, fenland wildlife, and project partners.

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## APPROACH

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Project evaluation will be an important and on-going formative process throughout the NLOW project's delivery phase, allowing us to assess how well the project is meeting its objectives, as well as how effective, efficient and sustainable the project has been. From the project's outset, we need to build a strong evaluation strategy that will help us show what NLOW has achieved, as well as to continually improve our project activities to ensure they meet our objectives for benefiting heritage, people and communities.

The consultant will lead the NLOW Delivery Team in building on the project's monitoring and evaluation strategy developed for the Stage 2 NLHF submission (this document is available to view on request, from the contacts listed on page 9) to further develop a detailed evaluation framework during the early stages of the delivery phase. The consultant will lead the on-going monitoring and evaluation of the NLOW project throughout the remaining delivery phase, up to the end of the project.

The evaluation needs to capture the impact of both individual events/activities, and of the project as a whole. The consultant will work with the NLOW Delivery Team and partner organisations to collect evidence. The requirement to engage with residents and organisations from across the Old West landscape is essential, in order to gain the best outcomes for this work. It is expected that the consultant will make use of video conferencing, and visit the area regularly, meet project participants and attend events. The consultant will also be required to give regular updates on progress and findings to the project's steering group via video conferencing, and some attendance at meetings when required. Therefore, please allow for ample time to be spent with relevant organisations, participants and community groups in your costings.

We are particularly keen for the consultant to track our NLOW Nature Volunteers' journeys (experiences, learning, development) across the project, giving a better understanding of the benefits, and the new skills they have gained from their involvement. This should include participants who 'drop out' of the volunteer programme to better understand their reasons and experiences.

The consultant should be familiar with the NLHF guidelines for project monitoring and evaluation, and the NLHF aims and objectives, against which the NLOW project's success will be measured:

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/evaluation-guidance>

The project's evaluation process will explore the extent to which (and how, why and when) the NLOW project's outcomes have been achieved. It will look at the quality of project delivery using outcome indicators (formulated during the development of the project's evaluation framework) to evaluate NLOW's value and significance to natural heritage, people and communities in the Old West River landscape. The evaluation will need to identify both planned and unanticipated outcomes of the project.

The monitoring and evaluation data analysis will be regularly discussed with focus groups and partners and will be used to improve service delivery and quality throughout the project. Qualitative feedback comments will also be invited, recorded and fed into the evaluation process.

It is essential that the monitoring and evaluation is carefully planned and implemented from the start of project delivery and is regularly reviewed. It is also critical that our NLOW partners and project volunteers are involved in the evaluation process throughout.

Consultants are invited to submit a proposal that covers their approach to the work which will fall into five stages:

1. Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework at the start of the project, building on the framework developed as part of the stage 2 lottery fund submission.
2. Develop an evaluation 'toolkit' for use by the NLOW delivery team, its partners and volunteers involved.
3. Support the NLOW Delivery Team in developing quarterly project progress reports every 3 months during delivery.
4. Develop a mid-point project evaluation report (Spring 2022).
5. Develop a final project evaluation report at the end of the project delivery phase (which will be post September 2023).

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## KEY TASKS TO BE COMPLETED

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### Part 1: Develop a detailed Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- Document produced which will set out how outputs and outcomes will be monitored.
- Procedures agreed for data collection and reporting.
- Indicators identified for different types of evidence.
- A reliable framework for measuring impact of the whole project and discreet sub-projects within the wider project.

During the early stages of the delivery phase the information contained in the '*NLOW Monitoring and Evaluation Plan*' (August 2019), the '*NLOW Activity Plan*' (August 2019), and the '*Biodiversity Monitoring Framework*' (January 2019) will be reviewed, and the consultant will develop a full project evaluation framework. The framework will finalise the methods by which NLOW's outputs and outcomes will be monitored, and will establish a system whereby those responsible for delivery of different elements of the project will collect appropriate data, reporting back to the NLOW Delivery Team and the NLOW Steering Group. The framework will also set out what information needs to be collected regarding project participants and volunteers including age, gender, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status etc, in keeping with and in a format that complies with NLHF guidance.

### Part 2: Develop an Evaluation Toolkit

- Set of documents and templates developed that the delivery team is able to use confidently to gather data from a range of activities.
- Should employ data collection methods that are simple and are not time-consuming during completion by activity participants, nor during data entry by the NLOW Delivery Team.
- Able to collate qualitative and quantitative data.
- Variety of data-gathering techniques that are suitable for the wide range of smaller projects and activities within the project work.

We anticipate that the consultant will create monitoring and evaluation material for the NLOW Delivery Team and partners to use for data collection when delivering community events and activities. Data entry and storage will be undertaken by the NLOW Team, and the data will be passed onto the consultant for analysis and reporting. A variety of methods should be employed to collect evaluation information, including the following:

- A focus group of volunteers, participants and target beneficiaries.
- Targeted questionnaires and surveys, including the use of video, paper, online and smartphone surveys methodologies.
- Simple feedback cards for event/activity participants.
- Meetings and ongoing liaison with participant groups and partners.
- Statistics on public interaction with digital resources.

The NLOW project would particularly welcome creative approaches to evaluation that make it easy for young people and people with different needs to contribute fully to the evaluation process. Such approaches may include the use of photography, art and other techniques.

The consultant will deliver a training session for the NLOW Delivery Team, partners and selected volunteers so that we are all clear about the adoption and delivery of the evaluation framework. This will include a briefing summarising the purpose of the evaluation and how to collect meaningful feedback. It is anticipated that data and child protection guidelines and requirements will also be covered in relation to the collection, storage, use and dissemination of monitoring and evaluation material collected. The consultant is expected to provide telephone and email support to the NLOW Delivery Team, partners and volunteers should questions arise while implementing the evaluation framework.

### **Part 3: Assist in Quarterly Project Evaluation Reporting**

- A short, 'light' review of progress on project impact produced every 3 months.
- Ensuring that monitoring tools are fit for purpose and are in use by project team.
- Confirm what has been achieved to date.
- Will be shared with the public and partners, and used to promote the successes and outcomes of the NLOW project, promoting engagement and volunteer recruitment.

Every three months during project delivery the NLOW Delivery Team will complete a quarterly project evaluation report. The primary purpose of these reports will be to summarise the achievements to date within short and engaging reports, which will be used to promote the project within local communities to encourage future public engagement in project activities, and to assist in volunteer recruitment. The reports will also be used as an opportunity to encourage and thank existing volunteers and participants.

The consultant will advise the NLOW Delivery Team in how to gather the necessary community engagement data and statistics to develop these reports. The required data will mostly be captured by the NLOW Delivery Team at community events, surveys, and through the NLOW website, but the consultant will assist NLOW staff to ensure the necessary evaluation data is being collected correctly.

Specifically, regarding the project's ecological impacts, the ability to interpret and analyse data, upon the impact of habitat improvements delivered by the project on farmland and community green spaces, will be an advantage. NLOW Delivery Team will work with partners and other consultants to collect the required ecological data for the quarterly evaluation reports.

### **Part 4: Develop Mid-point Project Evaluation Report (Spring 2022)**

- A detailed review of progress on project impact.
- Ensuring that monitoring tools are fit for purpose and are in use by the project team.

- Consider how project legacy is developing at project wide and local levels.
- Review efficiency and effectiveness of the project team and wider project partnership.
- Ensure delivery plans and evaluation plans for the remaining delivery period remain fit for purpose, including recommendations for any changes needed.
- Will be shared with the public and partners and used to promote the successes and outcomes of the NLOW project, promoting engagement and volunteer recruitment.

The report will assess whether NLOW's wider project outcomes are being achieved in addition to that of the individual sub-projects. The report will identify what has been achieved to date, difficulties and challenges, and the extent to which NLHF and NLOW outcomes / objectives are being met. It will also assess whether NLOW is meeting the aspirations of partners and project beneficiaries, and will look at how effectively the partnership is working. The report will make recommendations for changes and delivery improvements for the remainder of the NLOW project.

The mid-point evaluation report will draw on:

- Output data which the project team and partners will need to compile to meet NLHF's reporting requirements.
- Project documentation – in particular relating to delivery targets.
- Interviews with a number of key individuals, including funders, partners and volunteers.
- Select visits to project delivery sites.

While the majority of data collection will be the responsibility of the NLOW Delivery Team, we would expect the consultant to attend events alongside NLOW staff to trial data collection methodologies, and to conduct interviews and focus group consultations with key audiences and stakeholders. The consultant will also arrange additional interviews and consultations outside of event delivery. Regarding the ecological impact of the project, the NLOW Delivery Team will be responsible for data collection. The consultant will then use this data and information to produce the mid-point evaluation report.

As part of the mid-point review, the consultant will also work with the NLOW Partnership to develop a legacy strategy. The consultant will be required to present their mid-point review and the draft legacy plan to the partnership board for review and discussion.

#### **Part 5: Develop Final Project Evaluation Report**

- Overview of what has been achieved.
- Assess to what extent the project has achieved its aims and objectives – where targets have been met, exceeded, or where they have not been realised.
- Present an assessment of project legacy – the longer-term impacts beyond the life of the project delivery and plans to ensure legacy is sustained.
- Review project delivery – how effective has project delivery been?
- What has been learnt – could things have been done in a different way?
- How can we share this learning?

During the last four months of the project, the consultant will lead the development of a final project-wide evaluation report (following NLHF suggested formats) which will be shared with NLHF and all participant groups, partners, and stakeholders. This report will tell NLOW's story, examine the extent to which outputs and outcomes were met, identify weaknesses and shortcomings, and review how effectively the NLOW project

was governed and managed. It will also make an assessment of NLOW's longer term impacts and how the Partnership's legacy strategy will be implemented. The final evaluation report will also inform a review of the legacy strategy drawn up at the mid-point review stage (Spring 2022). The legacy strategy will be amended and/or updated in response to final evaluation and will set out the long-term vision for sustaining NLOW's achievements.

The evaluation report needs to provide an honest assessment of NLOW, being open both to successes and failures. A collaborative approach with the NLOW Delivery Team and both the Steering Group and Biodiversity Technical Group will be needed in preparing the report. The final evaluation should draw on:

- The mid-point evaluation report.
- A wide range of written materials including the original bid document to NLHF, and supporting documents.
- Monitoring data collected throughout the project delivery.
- Additional information and insights gathered by the consultant during the end stage of the evaluation period. This might include additional stakeholder surveys, focus groups and key interviews (with delivery partners, project beneficiaries and other stakeholders, the NLHF monitor / case officer etc).
- Visits to events, project sites, community and volunteering activities.

The final evaluation report provides an opportunity to celebrate the Partnership's achievements and should be written in a style to convey this. We require a report of no more than 100 pages, illustrated with appropriate photographs / diagrams. The report needs to incorporate a standalone executive summary (6 pages or fewer). The consultant will also be required to present their findings to both the Steering Group and Biodiversity Technical Group and/or to a wider group called together to celebrate the end of the scheme. A Word document and a hard copy of the report must be provided.

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## **TIMETABLE**

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All work and any final outputs must be completed and handed over to Cambridgeshire ACRE before the end of the project delivery period in the latter part of 2023.

Please provide a summary of key milestones and completion dates covering the duration of the work.

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## **CONTRACT MANAGEMENT**

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The contract for this work will be managed by Howard Jones, New Life on the Old West Project Manager at Cambridgeshire ACRE.

The consultant will be expected to work closely with Cambridgeshire ACRE staff, key partners, and other consultants, providing quarterly update reports and attending meetings to provide an overview of the work as it progresses.

An inception meeting will be held at the start of the project to discuss the work and provide for the development of an agreed workplan to guide the work, timing and expectations. Please allow time for this meeting and development of a workplan in your costings.

At the start of the delivery phase, we will re-convene a Biodiversity Technical Group – with biodiversity specialists from all relevant conservation and land and water management organisations involved. The Project Steering Group will, in addition, provide governance and oversight to the project’s delivery. The consultant will be expected to work closely with all relevant partners, providing regular updates and attending meetings to provide an overview of the work as it progresses.

Cambridgeshire ACRE is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Our Data Protection Policy (copy provided) sets out the measures with which all parties working on its behalf should comply. Any personal data shared by Cambridgeshire ACRE with the successful consultant must be handled in accordance with these measures.

The GDPR states that we should only contract with a processor who can provide sufficient guarantees that the requirements of the GDPR will be met and the rights of data subjects protected. The successful consultant will therefore be asked to complete Cambridgeshire ACRE’s ‘Data Protection Third Party Processor Checklist’ as a way of providing the necessary assurances.

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## **BUDGET**

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The maximum value of this contract is £25,000 which must include all VAT and expenses you incur. Cambridgeshire ACRE cannot exceed this amount.

Please provide information on your daily rate, VAT and the number of days of time allocated to each of the specified tasks to be undertaken as part of the work.

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## **PREPARATION OF TENDERS**

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Tenders are expected to cover the following:

- Relevant experience and competency possessed to complete the work.
- Biographies of any staff that will complete the work.
- Examples of similar work completed successfully elsewhere.
- The methods to be used for the development of each of the key tasks and how each of these will feed into the reports produced.
- Proposals for approaches to working with all relevant partners involved.
- A simple risk analysis of any issues or barriers foreseen in undertaking the work successfully.
- Full costs and expenses including information on daily rates, VAT and the amount of days of time allocated to each of the key specific tasks to be undertaken as part of the work.
- A breakdown of key milestones and their expected completion dates.

- Contact details of two people who are willing to provide references regarding similar work undertaken over the last 3 years.

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## **SELECTION OF TENDERS**

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Cambridgeshire ACRE has a formal 'Policy on Choosing Consultants, Contractors and Suppliers' a copy of which is provided alongside this Invitation to Tender.

Cambridgeshire ACRE will set a scoring system to allow it to determine and select the best value for money tender, with a panel of both staff and trustees involved in this process, and staff from selected partners where relevant or needed. Shortlisted consultants will be invited to an interview where a short presentation will be required detailing how the work will be undertaken.

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## **SUBMISSION OF TENDERS**

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If you wish to discuss the requirements of the tender further, then please contact Howard Jones via tel: 01353 865020 or email at [howard.jones@camsacre.org.uk](mailto:howard.jones@camsacre.org.uk)

Please submit your tender (in MS Word or PDF format) by email to Alison Brown, Head of Business Services at Cambridgeshire ACRE, by 12 noon on 19 March 2021 via [alison.brown@camsacre.org.uk](mailto:alison.brown@camsacre.org.uk). Late submissions will not be accepted.