

Agenda Item 15
Report PR24/25-37

Report to **Policy & Resources Committee**
Date **26 June 2025**
By **Procurement Manager**
Title of Report **Recruitment Advertising Framework Contract 2025**
Decision

Recommendation: Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Approve the commencement of a procurement process leading to the conclusion of a framework agreement to provide recruitment advertising services to 7 National Parks in the UK for a period of up to 4 years.**
 - 2. Approve delegation of authority to the Chief Executive to award contracts for the above, following a competitive process carried out under the terms of the Procurement Act 2023.**
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2019 the “Working Together” programme identified areas in which National Parks could share resources and best practice. One of the areas that had been identified was in recruitment advertising
- 1.2 A framework was tendered for and ran for six years (four plus a two-year permitted extension). The framework has now expired, and a new one needs to be procured.
- 1.3 Whilst all the National Parks were involved in the original process, 7 including SDNPA would like to continue with a joint framework.
- 1.4 Advertising agencies, because of the volume of business they handle, are able to negotiate substantial discounts with publications and on-line sites. A joint framework will help us secure larger discounts through economies of scale.
- 1.5 Due to the new Procurement Act 2023 that went live in February the maximum term of the framework, including all extensions, cannot exceed four years.
- 1.6 Based on the previous year’s spend from the seven National Parks that wish to be named on the framework, we estimate the overall value will be in the region of £400,000 (£480,000 including VAT).
- 1.7 Whilst SDNPA spend is in the region of £21,650 per year, the value of this Framework must include spend for all of the participating National Parks and therefore the overall value of the Framework means that we must bring this paper to Committee for approval.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1 There is no financial commitment for SDNPA in concluding a framework agreement. A contract is formed within the agreement each time a client organisation ‘calls off’ a service from within a framework. Where it is appropriate links to supporting information can be included.

2.2 There is however an administrative burden in managing the framework agreement and this is likely to fall to SDNPA as soon as the Framework is live. The administration of a single supplier framework is not onerous, but SDNPA would need to manage the contractors' performance and monitor the value of work being placed through the framework.

2.3 This procurement will be the first over GPA threshold that SDNPA has run under the Procurement Act 2023 which went live in February 2025, for which we are prepared.

3. Options & cost implications

3.1 Pre-market engagement to inform the specification and determine the most appropriate route to market is currently being conducted. This is being done in the form of a questionnaire (Appendix I).

3.2 At this point, I propose a two-stage process which will work as an open selection stage, where between five to eight bidders will then be selected to go forward to the tender stage.

3.3 Should the pre-market engagement indicate limited interest in bidding for this framework we would revert to a fully open one stage process.

4. Next steps

4.1 With committee approval, the next steps will be to examine the pre-market engagement questionnaire results and finalise the tender pack that will be published.

4.2 A draft timetable for the procurement is attached. A panel made up of a representative from SDNPA and two of the other participating National Parks will evaluate the bids when received.

5. Other implications

Implication	Yes*/No
Will further decisions be required by another committee/full authority?	No
Does the proposal raise any Resource implications?	SDNPA has sufficient resources in place, both in terms of staff qualified to undertake the procurement exercise and revenue budget to meet the costs of the on-going contract. Collaboration with other National Parks will help when conducting the process.
How does the proposal represent Value for Money?	The competitive tender process is aimed at delivering value for money.
Which PMP Outcomes/ Corporate plan objectives does this deliver against	As a corporate function of the Authority, recruitment supports all of the objectives.
Links to other projects or partner organisations	This will be commissioned in collaboration with six other National Parks: Lake District, North York Moors, the Broads Authority, Dartmoor, Exmoor and the New Forest.
How does this decision contribute to the Authority's climate change objectives	We will ensure carbon emissions are minimised in the delivery of this framework, and have asked this in the pre-market engagement questionnaire (appendix I)
Are there any Social Value implications arising from the proposal?	Social value may improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. The new contract will be above the relevant GPA Threshold and the Procurement Act

Implication	Yes*/No
	2023 will apply. Evaluation of Social Value will therefore be included at a 10% weighting, using criteria designed to ensure that proposed outcomes are achievable and proportionate to the contract. KPIs will be set with the successful bidder to ensure the social value outcomes are delivered during the contract.
Have you taken regard of the South Downs National Park Authority's equality duty as contained within the Equality Act 2010?	Yes. The procurement exercise and the terms of the subsequent Framework will meet the terms of the Equality Act. Having a diverse and inclusive workforce is a very important consideration for all National Parks and we will seek clarity from the market in how we can continue to improve on EDI through our recruitment process and specify this requirement in the tender. Please see pre-market engagement questionnaire (Appendix I).
Are there any Human Rights implications arising from the proposal?	No.
Are there any Crime & Disorder implications arising from the proposal?	No, All Due diligence will take place during evaluation.
Are there any Health & Safety implications arising from the proposal?	No, All Due diligence will take place during evaluation.
Are there any Data Protection implications?	No, All Due diligence will take place during evaluation.

6. Risks Associated with the Proposed Decision

6.1 Describe any risks associated with the recommendation including possible risks to delivery, budgets in the table below.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Commercial Risk: The price objectives are not achieved up front or costs arise during the term of the awarded framework	2	4	Pre-market engagement will help us develop an outcome based specification for service providers to develop their costed proposals against.
Technical Risk: Inability to specify the desired outcomes or suppliers in the market being unable to deliver to the specification.	1	4	A pre-market engagement questionnaire went out to the market, this will inform the specification.
Performance Risk: The supplier fails to deliver the required outcomes over the course of the	2	4	Regular framework monitoring will be used to monitor performance over the term of the framework.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
framework.			
Contractual Risk: Unable to remedy the shortcomings in the contractors' performance without severely damaging the framework and unable to avoid relying on the contracted supplier as the framework develops.	2	4	Proactive framework management inclusion regular meetings with the other named National Parks should minimise performance issues, with the support of SDNPA's Legal Team who can assist with contractual issues if they arise.
Legal Risk: In public procurement there is a legal risk where a procurement is found unsound in law.	2	3	This Procurement is over the GPA threshold and therefore subject to legal challenge. Trained procurement staff and our legal team will ensure compliance.

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Appendices:

1. Pre-Market Engagement Questionnaire
2. Draft Timetable for Procurement

SDNPA Consultees: Chief Executive; Director of Countryside Policy and Management; Director of Planning; Chief Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer; Legal Services, Head of Finance and Corporate Strategy

External Consultees: None

Preliminary market engagement questionnaire

Please provide your answers in the table below, limiting your answer to 500 words per question.

The recruitment advertising market		
	Since we last went out to tender in 2019, what kind of changes have there been in the recruitment advertising market.	
	Have you successfully provided fully outsourced recruitment advertising services to clients of a similar size and profile to UK National Parks? If so, can you provide details of any issues or challenges encountered and considerations that we should be aware of?	
	What do you consider to be unique, different, or challenging about National Park requirements compared to other businesses or contracts you have previously managed? Please briefly explain why these aspects are significant and provide some headline suggestions on how you would address them.	
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)		
	National Parks are committed to ensuring EDI is at the centre of all our work. How does your organisation consider EDI when running recruitment advertising campaigns?	
Specification & pricing		
	Typically, what information would you require from SDNPA to enable your organisation to produce a robust commercial submission at tender stage?	
3	Can you please provide an overview of your typical pricing model for similar services, including how this is broken down by service line or campaign.	
	How would you suggest we structure a pricing proposal document for bidders to complete at tender stage? Please provide this as a separate document.	
4	In what ways could carbon emissions be minimised in the delivery of this contract?	

Information about your typical solution		
	Onboarding - how long does a typical onboarding process take, bearing in mind 7 National Parks would be calling off using the Framework?	
	What typical lead in times do you work to for campaigns?	
	What media titles/types do you use?	
	Do you, or any of your sub-processors store or process data outside of the UK? If so, is this inside or outside the area covered by GDPR (The EU)?	
	What support do you normally provide to clients?	
Additional questions		
	How can SDNPA reduce or remove barriers for SMEs in procuring this contract?	
	Would you be interested in bidding for this work?	

Recruitment Advertising Framework

Draft timetable

Timetable and Administration Arrangements

The envisaged key milestones for the tender are shown in the table below.

No	Event	Date
1	Issue Pre-market engagement	Wed 4 June 2025
2	Deadline for questions Pre-market engagement	Monday 16 June 2025
3	Response to questions – Pre-market engagement	Wednesday 18 June 2025
4	Deadline for Pre-market engagement submissions	Wednesday 25 June 2025
5	Issue of Invitation To Tender	Thursday 10 July 2025
6	Final date for receipt of any tenderer's questions	Friday 25 July 2025
7	Responses to questions circulated	Friday 1 August 2025
8	Deadline for return of tenders	Friday 29 August 2025
9	Desktop evaluation of tenders	Monday 1 September – Friday 12 September 2025
10	Meeting to discuss combined scores	Monday 15 September 2025
11	Clarification meetings/demonstrations (if required)	Monday 22 September 2025
12	Award notice issued	Wednesday 24 September 2025
13	Standstill period ends	Monday 6 October 2025
14	Commencement of contract	Tuesday 7 October 2025

