

Invitation to Tender for the Strategic Communications Plan and Execution for EARTH Hub; an online platform for environmental education and action in Northern Ireland

Section 1: Instructions & Content Information

This is an invitation to tender for the Strategic Communications Plan and Execution for EARTH Hub; a new dedicated online platform for environmental education and action in Northern Ireland.

Your submission should be written to address the key requirements detailed in Sections 3, 4 & 5 of this document and demonstrate how it meets the scoring criteria outlined under section 6. Any details not provided or not fully completed may constitute an admission of unsuitability/inability to fulfil requirements and may result in the tender being rejected at our absolute discretion.

All submissions must remain valid for a minimum period of 90 days following the deadline for receipt of submissions.

All proposals must be in English.

Prices contained within the proposal must be exclusive of VAT and be in Pounds sterling and must include ALL fees.

The work will have a provisional start date of September/ October 2024 and a provisional completion date of June 2025.

If you have any questions about this document, please email Rachael Thomas, rachael.thomas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org by **12 noon on Tuesday 6th August**. Questions received after this deadline will not be answered. Questions and responses will be circulated to all interested tenderers. If you do not have a question but wish to receive the responses, please indicate your interest via email to Rachael Thomas by 12 noon on Tuesday 6th August. It is the responsibility of the bidder to provide the correct email address for tender questions and responses and to check their emails regularly during this period.

Please submit your proposal via email, in PDF format, entitled '[YOUR COMPANY NAME] - Strategic Communications Plan and Execution for EARTH Hub' by **5 pm on Friday 16th August 2024** to rachael.thomas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful will acknowledge receipt of your tender submission via email. If email acknowledgement is not received, please contact rachael.thomas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Tender Timeline

| Task | Date |
|--|--|
| Tender opens | Thursday 25 th July 2024 |
| Deadline for questions | Tuesday 6 th August 2024, 12 noon |
| Questions and responses shared to bidders | Thursday 8 th August 2024, 5 pm |
| Tender closes | Friday 16 th August 2024, 5 pm |
| Shortlisting | w/c 19 th August 2024 |
| Interviews | w/c 26 th August 2024 |

Section 2: Background Information

EARTH Hub Partnership:

This initiative is part of a wider collaborative project between Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) and Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL), specifically the Education for Sustainable Development Forum, for which NIEL provides the secretariat function.

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is a charity working towards the vision of a world where people and nature thrive, by running environmental-education programmes and awareness-raising campaigns, increasing volunteering opportunities and reporting on local environmental quality. Programmes include: national civic-pride campaign, Live Here Love Here; Tackling Plastic NI; Tackling Textiles; Carbon Literacy training; environmental education programme, Eco-Schools NI; and local environmental quality programmes, such as Blue Flag Award, Seaside Award, Green Flag Award, Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Marine Litter surveys. For more information, visit www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) is the networking and forum body for organisations interested in the environment of Northern Ireland. NIEL helps members understand complex issues and presents a unified voice by bringing together a wide range of knowledge, experience and expertise which can be used to help develop policy, practice and implementation across a range of environmental fields. For further information on NIEL go to <https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/>

EARTH Hub (Environmental Action for Resilience, Transformation and Health) is a digital infrastructure transformation project for the environmental sector in NI. EARTH Hub will be a way to bring together all of the fantastic work that is going on within the environmental sector and make it more accessible for not just those already interested in taking action but more importantly, for a wide variety of new local audiences. Put simply, this is a digital transformation and enablement project that will enable the environment sector to fully embrace the opportunities and efficiencies of IT to positively address the climate crisis.

The first phase of the project (funded by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Challenge Fund), which ran from August 2022 until March 2023, was a consultation process to identify the key needs of the sector in relation to the functionality of the Hub, as well as beginning to build an identity for the project. The second phase of the project (funded by the National Lottery Dormant Accounts Fund NI) is the actual build and launch of the online platform. This phase of the project is currently underway with user testing and IT build of the Hub substantially progressed.

EARTH Hub:

EARTH Hub is intended to be an ambitious and interactive website. Primarily, we want to incentivise environmental action and empower individuals and organisations to measure their environmental impact. EARTH Hub will be a place where anyone can:

- **Access environmental information in one place:** Available across a range of topics including but not limited to, Biodiversity & Nature, Climate Change & Action, Energy, Global Citizenship, Health & Wellbeing, Waste & Pollution, Marine and Coast, Transport, Waste and Water Library of resources.

- **Access Education for Sustainability (EFS) resources:** Providing learning and teaching resources, toolkits, videos and links on topics sorted/filtered by age, theme, ability, user type (eg teacher, community leader etc.).
- **Access support available across NI:** EARTH Hub will enable other EFS and environmental organisations to promote their 'wares', display their own details, share their programmes, educational & support resources and signpost to relevant help, providing opportunities for teachers, groups and individuals to take part in their trainings/workshops, challenges, events and programmes.
- **Take action:** EARTH Hub users will be supported to get involved! Individuals/Groups will be supported to access actions cards to inform/guide their environmental activities across a range of themes and over time. Actions will be measured and collated so they can demonstrate the positive impact being made and by themselves/their group and by all EARTH Hub to see cumulative impact of environmental action across Northern Ireland.
- **Monitor impact:** Each eNGO sector organisation active on EARTH Hub will have access to impact data, which will track distance travelled across a number of impact metrics e.g. no. of volunteers engaged, reduction in CO2 emissions, no. of bags of litter collected, no. of trees planted, area of habitat surveyed etc. This information can be used to inform sound decision making for the sector in terms of future programme development and resourcing, attracting funding/sponsorship and enhancing collaboration between groups – all contributing to developing the resilience of sector.
- **Keep up to date:** It is hoped that in time, EARTH Hub will be able to signpost users to a range of useful resources in NI that will assist them on their sustainability journey. For example, refill stores, public water tap locations, electric car-charging points, terracycling facilities, repair/borrow libraries and, Deposit Return points.
- **Identify case studies and best practice:** Live repository of best practice/ case study examples of environmental education, sustainability and action as a source of inspiration for array of users of the Hub.

Section 3: The Brief/ Specification of Requirements

Key Audiences:

One of the key objectives of the EARTH Hub project is to make it as simple as possible for as many people as possible to engage with environmental education and action. EARTH Hub will be a way to bring together all of the fantastic work that is going on within the environment sector and make it more accessible for not just those already interested in taking action but more importantly, for a wide variety of new cross-sectoral audiences.

The key audiences we are seeking external support for are listed and prioritised below:

- **General Public** (i.e. Children & Young People, as well as Individuals & Families – perhaps initially via volunteer pools with intentions to extend more widely)
- **Private Sector** (i.e. Businesses & Corporates, both as users of the Hub, e.g. to find CSR opportunities/ staff volunteering days, but also as potential sponsors for environmental programmes profiled on the Hub)
- **Groups** (i.e. Community & Youth Groups and Sports Clubs)
- **Delivery Partners** (i.e. the environmental NGOs, charities, organisations and businesses who will be providing and creating the resources, programmes, opportunities etc. that will be displayed on the Hub, as well as the public sector, i.e. government departments, local councils and non-environmental community and voluntary sector organisations)
- **The Media** (with a particular focus on engaging the media to raise awareness of EARTH Hub and its profile)

Key Objectives:

The successful tenderer will develop and deliver a communications campaign for the newly developed EARTH Hub, as the key voice/platform in environmental education sector. We want to develop an engaged and loyal audience for the platform and brand, to ultimately drive traffic to Earth Hub website and drive engagement with the programmes, activities, resources and opportunities showcased on the Hub.

Tenderers should determine the most appropriate channels to disseminate this information in order to have the biggest impact and with measurable levels of engagement and thus should consider a combination of communication and media channels when developing the campaign.

The tenderer should:

- Include specific proposals for the use of social media to reach defined target audiences, capitalising on current trends and memes
- Appoint, be responsible for and be the liaison contact for all third-party sub-contractors, media owners and printers to ensure production and placement of the advertisements for use in the campaign
- Liaise with appropriate suppliers as required and adhere to agreed procurement guidelines
- Maximise existing Delivery Partner relationships to ensure EARTH Hub communications can utilise the sectoral wide range to maximise audience reach
- Book all media channels required to successfully deliver the plan in the agreed timeframe, taking advantage of any available discounting and reflecting this in costings

- Meet KNIB, when necessary, throughout the contract period gaining appropriate approvals for work
- Provide comprehensive reports after campaign activity including full review and evaluation
- Provide originals of all third-party invoices and all company invoices should be itemised
- All copy and external communications must be approved by KNIB Communications Manager

Key Messages:

We want to make it quick, easy and simple for everyone to get involved with EARTH Hub. We want everyone to feel that they have a part to play, that they can make a difference and that it's not going to be too time intensive or burdensome to do so.

Some examples of messaging for the key audiences are outlined below but please note, this is not an exhaustive list, and we are open to other ideas and suggestions by interested tenderers.

General Public (i.e. Children & Young People, as well as Individuals & Families)

- A quick and easy way to find activities for individuals and families to do in their local area which will have a positive impact on their local environment and communities

Private Sector (i.e. Businesses & Corporates)

- A quick and easy way to source environmental programmes from across the eNGO sector in Northern Ireland in one place that could align with ESG/ CSR ambitions of businesses across NI
- Additionally, once operational EARTH Hub Content pages could be sponsored by businesses helping to resource the maintenance of the Hub in the future. We want to advertise this as an opportunity for businesses to financially support a long-term project that is championing the sustainability and resilience of the environment sector and the local communities and environments across Northern Ireland

Groups (i.e. Community & Youth Groups & Sports Clubs)

- A quick and easy way to identify organisations they could partner with in their local area to e.g. carrying out a beach clean/ litter pick/ tree planting activity

Delivery Partners

- As outlined above, Delivery Partners encompass environmental NGOs, charities, organisations and occasionally businesses who will be providing or supporting the creation of resources, programmes, opportunities etc. that will be displayed on the Hub. Whilst there has been extensive consultation and engagement with Delivery Partners this is a new, first of its kind, digital transformation project for the environment sector in NI, and thus there is still a need to raise the profile of the Hub with this audience. We want every eNGO to get on board and utilise EARTH Hub to drive traffic to and increase engagement with their programmes

The Media

- A particular focus on engaging the media to raise awareness of EARTH Hub as the key voice/platform for the environmental education sector across society in Northern Ireland



NB: We are open to ‘alternative messaging’ - we recognise that not everyone will be motivated by the concept of “making environmentally conscious choices,” so we would be keen to consider other messages to get audiences involved. For example, rather than trying to appeal to parents from an environment/ sustainability angle, we could encourage them to think of the platform as a free and easily accessible resource for ideas for events and activities that they can use to entertain their children on a Saturday afternoon.

Key Outputs:

The project partnership recognises that employing traditional PR methods alone, to successfully profile and promote EARTH Hub will not be sufficient. We recognise that there is an ever-increasing appetite for digital content, increased emphasis on storytelling and less of a reliance on traditional media tools. In securing funding to develop EARTH Hub, an outline Communications Plan was developed to accompany the funding bid. This is indicative and provided as background information only for interested tenderers. As part of your tender response, please put forward your expert recommendation on the optimal communications methods within the available budget envelope. An extract from the Communications Plan developed, which includes possible outputs is shown below:

| Sector | Audience | Tactics | Message/Campaign Examples (indicative only) |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|
| General public / Groups | Individuals, families and young people who are curious about sustainability and environmental issues but lack the resources to take action Sports Clubs Community Groups Youth Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media to include influencer campaigns - PR Campaign to include broadcast, print and digital mediums (with potential to explore outdoor advertising) - Earth Hub Launch at Live Here Love Here Community Awards | Social media, in particular the powerful impact and reach of personalities with 'influencer status' or 'key opinion leader' (KOL) status will be relied on heavily for this target audience. Some indicative campaign themes are also outlined to give a flavour of the opportunities Engaging with KOL and Influencers as EARTH Hub Ambassadors Example Campaign Messages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 easy ways to be more sustainable, with the help of EARTH Hub - EARTH Day – Get involved on EARTH Hub! - #goplasticfree - What's your carbon footprint? Work it out on EARTH Hub! |

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| Private Sector | Private businesses Business Associations Business Support Networks & Umbrella Organisations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Charity Business Partnerships - EARTH Hub Sponsorship Opportunities - E-Marketing (focusing on platforms that target a business audience e.g Chamber of Commerce Ambition Magazine/Tatler) - Content Marketing via Targeted Social Media Campaigns | Improve your environmental performance as a business – Check out EARTH Hub! Tips & tools to help with your Business ESG Strategy Find employee supported volunteer opportunities with a local environmental charity on EARTH Hub Find your environmental charity of the year on EARTH Hub! |
| Delivery Partners – NGO sector | Northern Ireland Environment link members. Education for Sustainable Development Forum Members Eco-School Delivery Partners (via Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member email and updates - Social media - Online and in person events - Website (NIEL & KNIB) - Ebulletins (NIEL & KNIB) – [Social media content which is transferable to newsletters and websites such as Canva templates in organisation/theme colourways and easily shared among networks and members. This could include but not limited to social and website banners, posters, reels or animated gifs.] | |
| Delivery Partners – Public sector | Government Departments Local Authorities NGOs outside of the environmental sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dedicated KNIB/ESDF Officer engagement with relevant Departmental and Council contacts across NI (eg with officers/teams responsible for biodiversity; environmental education; community relations; community planning and sustainable development); | Department for Communities Example: Check out EARTH Hub as an inclusive platform to empower communities across Northern Ireland |

| | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-person & online awareness building, information and on –boarding events tied in with existing Council and Departmental events - Email marketing (tailored to Councillor & MLA stakeholders and separately for staff officers and DEA Coordinators) - Content Marketing via Target Social Media Campaigns | <p>Local Council Example –Accelerate the transition to net zero with tools and resources on EARTH Hub!</p> <p>Environmental Charities across NI Example – Sign up to our fun family events in your area on EARTH Hub!</p> <p>Health Charity Example – Spend time in the great outdoors to improve your wellbeing – check out EARTH Hub for events and activities near you!</p> |
| The media | Journalists from business, environmental and lifestyle sectors from broadcast, print and online platforms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Features - Opinion articles - Platform pieces - People profiles - Spokesperson interviews (internally and externally) - Podcast interviews - Cross pollinating lifestyle campaigns showcasing human interest stories from EARTH Hub. KNIB officers to dedicate time to finding EARTH hub stories that will cut through the noise, and appeal to mainstream media | <p>Example Broadcast – Promotion of EARTH Hub on BBC NI Your Place & Mine</p> <p>Example Online – EARTH Hub promotion on Belfast Live</p> |

As this project will be delivered through grant funding, we have a budget of £15,000 - £19,000. **Please provide a range of pricing options based on different levels of resource and deliverables within this budget envelope.**

Other Support Available:

- We will have a variety of staff available to support with the execution of these plans, including:
 - **At KNIB:** Communications Manager, Communications Coordinator, Environmental Education Communications Officer (part-time), EARTH Hub Project Manager, EARTH Hub Content Coordinator
 - **At NIEL:** Education for Sustainable Development Forum Officer
- In March 2024, we engaged a digital marketing agency to develop a logo, colour scheme, fonts and brand guidelines for EARTH Hub. The brand guidelines documentation will be shared with the successful tenderer.
- The Management Organisations of the EARTH Hub project (Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and the Northern Ireland Environment Link, through the Education for Sustainable Development Forum) already have a considerable following and we would be keen to leverage these platforms for initial EARTH Hub communications
- **KNIB:**
 - Website: <https://www.keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org/>
 - Instagram: @keepnorthernirelandbeautiful
 - X (twitter): @KeepNIBeautiful
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/KeepNorthernIrelandBeautiful/>
 - LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/keepnorthernirelandbeautiful/>
- **NIEL:**
 - Website: <https://www.nienvironmentlink.org/>
 - X (twitter): @EnvironmentNI
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentNI/>
 - LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/northern-ireland-environment-link/>
- **Education for Sustainable Development Forum:**
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/educationforsustainabledevelopmentforum>
 - Website: www.esdforum.org.uk

Section 4: Budget & Timeframe

We would invite you to provide your recommendation of what you would deliver within budget and timeframe. As this project will be delivered through grant funding, we have a budget of £15,000 - £19,000. Please provide a range of pricing options based on different levels of resource and deliverables produced.

Please provide an estimated timeline for delivery within the timeframe of a provisional start date of September/ October 2024 and a provisional completion date of June 2025.

This must include all Agency fees and be exclusive of VAT.

Section 5: Submitting a Tender

Tenderers must not make assumptions that Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful has experience of their organisation or their service provision even if on a current or previous contract. Assessments will solely be based on the tender submissions received.

Submissions may be rejected if the complete information requested is not provided.

Submissions must include the following information:

- Value for Money

Please provide a full itemised breakdown of costs (exclusive of VAT), including a detailed work plan on how you will deliver the work on time, within budget and to the required standards. As noted above, we have a budget of £15,000 - £19,000 – please provide a range of pricing options based on different levels of resource and deliverables produced.

Expenses should be identified separately and must be included as part of the total cost of the work. If appropriate, please also indicate an invoicing schedule for the purposes of this project.

- Track Record & Quality of Past Experience

Please provide an overview of your organisation, details of relevant experience to include information on the following;

- Structure, size, capacity and expertise to undertake the work specified
- Staff details, including details of relevant skills, experience and qualifications
- Portfolio of relevant work showing the ability to deliver a quality programme/experience

- Environmental Policy & Credentials

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful is committed to sustainable procurement and would wish to see tenderers adopt a positive environmental approach.

Please detail any practices or initiatives your organisation has in place to reduce your environmental impact. This could include plans for reaching net zero, environmental considerations in procurement and offsetting necessary carbon emissions. **An environmental policy or statement (if available) should therefore be included with your tender submission.**

Please submit your proposal via email, in PDF format, entitled '[YOUR COMPANY NAME] - Strategic Communications Plan and Execution for' EARTH Hub **by 5pm on Friday 16th August 2024** to rachael.thomas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered. Recipients of tender submissions will acknowledge receipt. If you do not receive acknowledgement, please follow up to ensure it has been received.

Section 6: Scoring Criteria

Tenderers will be scored according to the criteria outlined below:

| Item | Weighting |
|--|-------------|
| Value for Money (including a detailed work plan on how you will deliver the work on time, within budget and to the required standards) | 60% |
| Track Record & Quality of Past Experience | 30% |
| Environmental Policy & Credentials | 10% |
| Total | 100% |