

Invitation to Tender for the Independent Evaluation of the EARTH Hub project; an online Hub for environmental education and action in Northern Ireland

Section 1: Instructions & Content Information

This is an invitation to tender for the Independent Evaluation of the EARTH Hub project; 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 January 2025 and a provisional completion date of November 2025.

If you have any questions about this document, please email rachael.thomas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org and claire.dundas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org by **9 am on Wednesday 27th November 2024**. 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 at any stage. 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] – Independent Evaluation of EARTH Hub' by **9 am on Monday 2nd December 2024** to rachael.thomas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org and claire.dundas@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 and claire.dundas@keepnorthernirelandbeautiful.org.

Tender Timeline

Task	Date
Tender opens	Wednesday 20 th November 2024
Deadline for questions	Tuesday 26 th November 2024, 9 am
Questions and responses shared to bidders	Wednesday 27 th November 2024
Tender closes	Monday 2 nd December 2024, 9 am
Shortlisting	w/c 2 nd December 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 function as an online platform 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 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 through Dormant Assets NI from the National Lottery Community Fund) is the actual build and public launch of the online platform. This phase of the project is currently underway with user testing and IT build of the Hub substantially progressed. Public launch of the Hub is expected in Spring 2025 and the Dormant Assets funded phase of the project will run until December 2025.

EARTH Hub:

EARTH Hub is intended to be an ambitious and interactive website. Primarily, it is 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: Specification of Requirements

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful wish to appoint a suitably qualified consultant/ agency to undertake an independent professional evaluation of the EARTH Hub project. The evaluation should be comprehensive, (retrospectively) considering all aspects of the programme from the start of the project in July 2023 to launch/ go live in Spring 2025 and until the end of the current funding stream in December 2025. Additionally, there is an array of documentation which reflects the work done on the project prior to the receipt of the Dormant Assets funding, which will be made available to the appointed evaluator.

The evaluation of the project will run in parallel with the next phase of project delivery, and will broadly consider:

- Contribution of the project to The Dormant Assets funding objectives;
- Impact and progress against project objectives, including but not limited to:
 - o Enhanced Collaboration & Connectedness in the eNGO sector;
 - o Streamlining of environmental education programme offering & promotion;
 - o Contribution to longer term sustainability of the eNGO sector;
 - o Platform to measure/report eNGO sectoral impact; and
 - o Means to attract new audiences to environmental action
- Effectiveness of the collaborative partnership between KNIB & NIEL
- Lessons learnt and reflections for future project development, including an assessment of programme of stakeholder engagement, pre-market engagement, sectoral resource development programme and communications campaign
- Assessment of all issues specifically relating to the software design and development, including the selection of and delivery from IT supplier, measured against the expectations from the Invitation to Tender
- Recommendations for EARTH Hub project beyond December 2025.

Evaluators will be expected to compile data (both qualitative and quantitative) throughout the evaluation corresponding to the above specification. This will be gathered utilising a variety of methods which will include at a minimum:

- Observation of Delivery Partner training and upskilling opportunities (January – June 2025)
- Feedback questionnaires and 1:1 interviews
- Observation of the EARTH Hub launch event

In undertaking this exercise, it is anticipated that the appointed evaluator would consult with the following stakeholders:

- KNIB Staff (EARTH Hub Project Manager and Content Coordinator, KNIB Head of Business Development and Head of Communications)
- NIEL Staff (Education for Sustainable Development Officer, Chief Executive)
- IT Partner, Data Intellect
- Communications Agency, Navigator Blue
- External Delivery Partners (various)
- Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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 fixed budget of £10,000, exclusive of VAT.

Please provide an estimated timeline for delivery within the timeframe of a provisional start date of January 2025 and a provisional completion date of November 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 £10,000, exclusive of VAT.

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

- Technical Capability/Evaluation Methodology

Please provide an overview of how you would undertake the independent evaluation of the EARTH Hub project on behalf of Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, including:

- Details of evaluation methodology
- Timeline for delivery

- 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.**

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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	30%
Track Record & Quality of Past Experience	30%
Technical Capability/Evaluation Methodology	30%
Environmental Policy & Credentials	10%
Total	100%