

# **North East Rural Affairs Forum**

## **INVITATION TO TENDER**

**For the provision of secretariat service to the  
Forum**

**June 2010**

## **Background to the North East Rural Affairs Forum**

### Aim of the forum

The North East Rural Affairs Forum aims to speak up for rural communities and influence the delivery and development of rural policy in the North East. It is a small, independent force listening to what is happening at the grassroots. At the same time it is a 'critical friend' to public agencies – pressing, with increasing urgency, for more responsive and effective measures to support rural areas. The Forum is a sounding board and champion for the concerns and issues affecting people, communities and businesses in the region's countryside. Its views and ideas reach a wide, influential audience. It provides essential feedback and opinions to public agencies and the Government. The aim is to sharpen policy making and the delivery of initiatives designed to improve the quality of life and nurture enterprise in rural areas.

The Rural Strategy 2004 announced that end customers should have a clear voice in strategic decision-making, and that this could be achieved through a strengthening of the regional rural affairs forums. In response to this, in 2005, the North East Rural Affairs Forum restructured itself to address changing needs and to become an independent forum championing the interests of rural communities in the North East.

Members of the Forum emphasise that they are an independent voice across a broad range of rural interests. Members will challenge the status quo – the actions and perceptions of public bodies – wherever they feel this is necessary. They want to see things done in more meaningful ways and communicated in simple, easy-to-understand language. Above all, they want the Government and public sector to be more sensitive and responsive to those changing needs and realities of rural life. The impact of their work is being felt in a better understanding of rural issues and needs among policy makers. This, in turn, will promote much greater effectiveness in the range and delivery of programmes designed to revitalize country areas.

### Objectives of the forum

*To have a positive impact on rural delivery by contributing to the rural proofing and influencing the development of, regional and national policies by the forum:*

- acting as a sounding board for Government Office and its key delivery partners, ensuring an appropriate consideration of rural needs and interests is taken into account at the design stage of policies and strategies
- contributing to the development and monitoring of regional and local rural delivery, assessing its effectiveness and scrutinising selected activities and organisations

- drawing on its assessment of delivery and opinions gathered from local communities, feedback customers views on government partners' rural delivery activities and speak out for rural communities
- knowing or identifying the particular characteristics and needs of north east rural communities by initiating research and influencing the research programmes of government and its partners
- contributing to the development of an evidence-based understanding of the key issues facing the rural areas of the north east and rural England more widely, by contributing to studies (for example Commission for Rural Communities) and where appropriate, responding to local and national consultations.

*To be the recognised rural voice of the region by the forum:*

- regularly bringing together a group of individuals selected because of their experiences of and links with a variety of rural interests, issues and service delivery
- developing a productive dialogue between forum members and drawing on their delivery contacts within wider rural social and business communities
- representing the region's rural interests to the principal policy and delivery agencies affecting rural life.

#### **Invitation to tender – core activities**

NERAF seeks to appoint a secretariat for the Forum to offer a pro-active support and briefing service. The core tasks include:

- Arrange, attend, minute, report NERAF meetings (currently 4 per Annum, 3 dates scheduled for the period to 31 March 2011)
- Arrange, attend, minute, report standing conferences (currently 2 per annum).
- Arrange, attend, minute, report sub-group meetings (expected maximum of 4 per annum)
- Design and coordinate induction programme for new members where required in liaison with NERAF members
- Maintain database of NERAF members and stakeholder organisations
- Maintain currency of key documents on NERAF website and NING online forum and change/add new material at request of members.
- Maintain links with GONE Rural, Environment, Climate Change and Energy (RECCE) Team
- Regularly identify and collate NERAF members' current issues
- Provide information, briefings, contacts to help progress actions and keep members up to date with developments
- Liaise with Secretariats support service for North West and Yorkshire and

Humber RAFs and their Chairs to improve communications and joining up of activities.

- Promotion of NERAF issues via existing services such as Rural Voices, NRN, etc
- Admin support for chair & vice chair,
- Admin support and expense claim processing for NERAF members
- Budget monitoring & submission of invoices
- Regular (frequency tba) reporting to appointed NERAF /Government Office for the North East representatives of activities and budget spend
- Manage internal process for selection/extension of Chair, vice-Chair positions and arrangements for extension of individual members' appointments.
- Devise and conduct an exercise for recruitment of new members as and when advised to do so by (and with the support) of Chair/Vice-Chair. Next exercise likely to be Autumn 2010
- You should be aware that the list of duties could change, so it is very important that the successful contractor has flexibility in how it works.

#### **Arrangements and timescales**

This will be a formal arrangement between the successful bidder and Government Office for the North East (GONE) on behalf of NERAF and Defra. Reimbursement of costs will be via invoices submitted to Government Office for the North East, Environment, Climate Change and Energy Team.

The arrangements will commence in July 2010, but will be subject to review in the light of future government funding decisions and review of Government Office Network. The contract duration will be until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 at which point in time a full review will be undertaken. In view of the mid-year starting point, tender bids should set out the basis (timeframe) on which costs have been calculated.

Performance criteria for all core tasks will be agreed before the new arrangements come into force. These will be based on discussions between GONE, NERAF Chair/Vice Chair and the successful bidder. Criteria for termination of the arrangement by either side will also be agreed.

A selection panel including at least two representative from NERAF and one from GONE will consider the bids. All applicants will be notified of the panel's decision.

In reaching its decision the panel will be looking for evidence of the following qualities and experience:

- Knowledge of rural policy context
- Strong communications, with track record in dealing with a wide range of stakeholders from public, private and community sectors and individual citizens.
- Conference and event management

- Skills in tailored support to Chair and Vice Chair
- Experience of maintaining and moderating website
- Skills in summarising policies and providing briefings
- Supporting and inducting individuals
- Good networking skills
- Delivering outputs: reports, financial updates, e-newsletters and PR

Bidding documents should set out:

- Description of how the requirements of the role would be delivered.
- CV's of key personnel including whoever would be carrying out the work - their skills and experience. Bidders must be able to satisfy the Forum that there is an opportunity to develop a strong working relationship. For this reason the performance criteria referred to above are likely to include reasonable expectations around continuity of personnel and support.
- Timeline for getting arrangements underway and any time factors needing be considered.
- Total budget showing breakdown of costs (see point above re duration of arrangement). Please state whether or not VAT has been included

Bids should be sent by email to [Yvonne.GREENLAY@gone.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Yvonne.GREENLAY@gone.gsi.gov.uk) or by post to Government Office for the North East, Rural, Environment, Climate Change, and Energy Team, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4WH. Bids must be received by 5pm on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010. Bidders will be notified by the 13<sup>th</sup> July 2010 and the successful applicant should expect to attend a full briefing session on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2010 at GONE.

If you require further information please contact either:

Yvonne Greenlay – GONE – [Yvonne.Greenlay@gone.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Yvonne.Greenlay@gone.gsi.gov.uk) 0191 202 3512. or

David Stewart – NERAF Chair - [david@davidstewart30.orangehome.co.uk](mailto:david@davidstewart30.orangehome.co.uk)

**GONE**  
**Rural, Environment, Climate Change, and Energy Team**  
**June 2010**