

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

Framework Agreement for the Provision of Specialist Technical Support Services for Quality Meat Scotland 2026-2028

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1. Background

Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) is the public body here for Scotland's £4.2bn Scottish red meat supply chain which supports around 40,000 jobs in some of our most rural areas. A Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) since 1 April 2008, QMS has a remit to shape a productive, sustainable and prospering Scottish red meat industry, backed by integrity.

QMS is currently around half-way through the delivery of its five-year Strategy to 2028, with a vision to make Scotland *the* choice for premium red meat. One of the key pillars within the Strategy is 'Planet & Place' which focusses on building the reputation of Scottish red meat from the sector's unique role in environmental protection as well as its importance across our communities from health to socio-economic benefits.

QMS's in-house Communications and External Affairs (C&EA) Team has a strategic objective to 'tell the positive red meat story' to target audiences including policy makers, influencers, educators and citizens. Central to this approach is having an evidence-informed, accessible red meat narrative and being proactive to ensure credibility and build advocacy.

The C&EA Team takes a proactive and reactive approach to protecting the reputation of Scottish red meat. As well as developing planned communications and campaigns around positive red meat evidence, we also respond to misleading research and misinformation from anti-red meat organisations as well as press enquiries.

Some response examples are:

- **Quality Meat Scotland responds to EAT-Lancet Commission healthy dietary target on red meat reduction - Quality Meat Scotland**
- **Quality Meat Scotland highlights health, environment, and social benefits of the Scottish red meat supply chain following Eat-Lancet Commission report - Quality Meat Scotland**
- **Quality Meat Scotland response to Food Standard Scotland and University of Edinburgh modelling research - Quality Meat Scotland**

In addition, within QMS's 'Productivity & Profitability' strategic pillar, is a Climate and Nature work package where a critical 5-year Environmental Baselining research project between QMS, AHDB and HCC is being carried out to provide a baseline for sustainable agriculture and net zero progress. Industry and wider communication and understanding of these results to support farming sustainability and showcase agriculture's significant environmental contributions is paramount to its success.

2. Service Requirements

QMS is seeking specialists to help support our proactive and reactive red meat reputational activity to protect the Scottish red meat supply chain as well as build advocacy amongst decision maker and citizen audiences.

The main requirements are for **any / all** of the following:

- **Environment consultancy** - Scientific and technical expertise on the environmental contributions of Scottish livestock and agriculture, including supporting the industry, decision-maker and wider communications of the Environmental Baselining Project. Support proactive and reactive communications such as corporate communication campaigns, media responses and statements.

- **Nutrition consultancy** - Scientific and technical expertise on the human health nutritional value of beef, pork and lamb, to support proactive and reactive communications such as corporate communications campaigns, media responses and statements.

Due to the required range of specialisms across different topics, QMS is looking to operate a Framework Agreement with a panel of contractors. Depending on ongoing and emerging reputational requirements, QMS will decide on the most appropriate contractor(s), according to their skills, relevant experience and overall value to provide expertise and support on the specific business need.

Environment consultancy

- Educating businesses, political decision makers and broader citizens on the environmental contributions of the red meat industry, such as sustainable land management, farmland carbon storage and biodiversity support, is a critical focus to make sure productive and profitable farming is recognised and supported. The expert requirement is to assess evidence and information, advise, and provide copywriting on the contributions to support red meat sustainability. In addition, there could be requirements to support direct industry engagement such as attending meetings and delivering presentations in relation to topics such as net zero and environmental baselining. An example of activity would be reviewing a new piece of environmental evidence, interpreting what it means for the red meat sector, advising and delivering on a suitable QMS response to relevant audiences. This could be a key piece of planned activity with opportunity for deeper review and consideration or an emerging request requiring quick reaction time e.g. responding to a press enquiry.

Nutrition consultancy

- Ensuring nutritious red meat protein continues to be part of recommendations for a healthy, balanced diet in Scotland is vital across public and private sector environments as well as in border citizen advice and information. In a media landscape where there is often confusing and mixed messaging in relation to red meat's role in our health, the requirement is for expert clear and confident communications response support on the health credentials of Scottish beef, pork and lamb. An example of activity would be reviewing a new piece of nutritional evidence, interpreting what it means for human health and advising on a suitable QMS response. This could be a key piece of planned activity with opportunity for deeper review and consideration or an emerging request requiring quick reaction time e.g. responding to a press enquiry.

3. Framework Operation

The framework will operate initially **from 18 December 2026 until 31 March 2028 (the end of the current 5-year QMS strategy)**. Framework Suppliers will be expected to maintain their submitted Daily Rates for that period.

The number of Suppliers on the framework will depend on the number and quality of tenders received.

Acceptance of a tender and inclusion on the framework does not guarantee the offer of any work.

Individual contracts (call-offs) offered under the framework are all expected to be under £27,000 per annum. Which suppliers are approached to quote for an individual contract will be determined by means of an assessment of framework supplier(s) with the most relevant and suitable skills and expertise to undertake the work.

4. Performance Monitoring

Performance will be assessed from feedback obtained by QMS working with individuals on specific activities. Dissatisfaction reported will be further investigated and may result in no further use of that Supplier under this Framework.

5. Quotation Submissions

The deadline for submitting **tenders is 17:00 on 7 December 2026**

QMS is not bound to accept the lowest-priced, or any, tender. Tenderers shall bear their own costs and expenses relating to this tender exercise.

Daily Rates submitted by tenderers must be exclusive of VAT.

The final decision on a tender being declared void or non-compliant shall rest with QMS.

6. Procurement Timetable

The intended timetable for this procurement process is detailed below. Every effort will be made to inform those invited to tender of any substantial delays to any part of these timescales.

Activity	Date
Invite quotes for Framework Agreement	6 November 2026
Deadline for receipt of tenders (17:00 hours)	7 December 2026
Evaluation of tenders complete	15 December 2026
Notify all tenderers of decision	16 December 2026
Framework commences	18 December 2026

7. Terms and conditions

The tender must include CV's of key staff to be involved, skills and experience to meet and or all of the service requirements, and contact details for a reference who can substantiate the bidder's ability to deliver the contracted services.

QMS will treat all tenders received as "Commercial - In Confidence". In turn bidders are required to keep all communications and documentation between themselves and QMS confidential both during and after the tendering process.

Bidders should advise QMS as soon as practicable if any conflict of interest arises in respect of the tender. In such circumstances, QMS may reserve the right to disqualify the bidder from the tender process.

In selecting the successful tender QMS will consider best value for money and may, therefore, not automatically accept the lowest bid.

QMS cannot guarantee a set amount of work for contractors and reserves the right to allocate work to competing contractors if this is in the best interest of the programme.

Each tender submission is subject to QMS terms and conditions of services QMS | Terms & Conditions

8. Evaluation criteria

QMS evaluate tenders against qualitative as well as quantitative criteria. The successful bid is therefore the one that is deemed "the most economically advantageous tender" and this may not necessarily be the lowest-priced bid but overall best value. The successful bid will be the one which scores highest overall against both Price and Quality, as detailed below.

Criterion	Weighting
Price **Hourly and Daily Rate excluding VAT (include all relevant personnel)**	**35%**

Quality **Experience of Proposed Personnel –** Please submit full details of your relevant knowledge, skills and experience, detailing how these will be applied to successfully deliver advice and services under the contract (2. Service Requirements) Ensure your submission clearly identify which areas from the above specification you are including in your tender and what are not (this should be clear by using the linked form). <u>Essential</u> • Strong technical knowledge and practical experience of topic(s) for tender • Relevant skills and practical experience carrying out research and / or communications copywriting • Relevant experience of providing advice and information on the topic(s) of tender • A good understanding of and passion for Scottish beef, pork and lamb and / or the Scottish red meat supply chain • Excellent verbal and written communication skills • Adaptability in communicating technical information to non-technical audiences	**65%**
TOTAL	**100%**

Tenders may be disqualified if they:

- are considered 'abnormally low';
- fail to provide information requested;

Scores awarded against the above weighted criteria will be on the following basis:

Evaluation	**Description**	**Scoring**
Unacceptable	Nil or inadequate response. It fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.	0
Poor	Response is partially relevant but poor. It addresses some elements of the requirement but contains insufficient and/or limited explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled.	1
Acceptable	Response is relevant and acceptable. It addresses a broad understanding of the requirement but may lack details in how the requirement will be fulfilled.	2
Good	Response is relevant and good. It is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a good understanding and provides details on how the requirement will be fulfilled.	3
Outstanding	Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. It is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides robust detail and innovation.	4

9. Data Protection requirements

Everyone has rights regarding how their personal information is handled. While fulfilling the terms for which you have been contracted, you may collect, store and process personal information, and we need to be satisfied that you will recognise the need to treat such information in an appropriate and lawful manner.

The information, which may be held on paper, on a computer or other media, is subject to certain legal safeguards specified within the Data Protection Act 2018 (the Act), UK GDPR and other regulations. The Act imposes restrictions on how you may use that information.

To meet QMS requirements, we need to be satisfied that prospective suppliers are competent to undertake the work described and have sufficient data protection policies and procedures in place.

To this end, we require you to submit the following information:

i) A copy of your Data Protection Policy Statement setting out your rules on data protection and indicating your knowledge of the legal conditions that must be satisfied in relation to the obtaining, handling, processing, storage, transportation and destruction of personal information.
ii) A statement of your current procedures for storing, processing and maintaining security in respect of personal information.

If contractors fail to provide suitable information, they may be regarded as ‘non-compliant’.

10. Insurance and Health & Safety

As part of any client/contractor relationship, both parties have duties under Health & Safety legislation. Similarly, if a contractor employs sub-contractors to carry out some or all of the work contained within the specification given for the contract, all parties have health and safety responsibilities. The extent of the responsibilities of each party will depend on the individual circumstances of the project.

In order to meet QMS requirements, we need to be satisfied that prospective contractors are competent to undertake the work described and have health & safety policies and procedures in place.

To this end, we require you to submit the following information: -

- A copy of your Health and Safety Policy Statement
- A statement showing your ‘Safe Method of Operation’ and any generic Risk Assessments for the type of work you intend carrying out (if applicable).
- A copy of both your Professional Liability Insurance certificate, Public Liability Insurance certificate and, where appropriate, Employer’s Liability Insurance certificates, or other evidence of insurance cover (e.g. a broker’s letter).

If contractors fail to provide suitable information, in particular a Health & Safety Policy and evidence of insurance (as requested above), their tender will be regarded as ‘non-compliant’.

11. Tender Submission and Checklist

- Tenders can be submitted on word documents to lbain@qmscotland.co.uk

- Supporting evidence should include:
    i. Details of all personnel proposed, which service requirement(s) you are applying to support, including full details of relevant skills, knowledge and experience
    ii. Copies of relevant Insurance certificates
    iii. Copy of Health and Safety policy