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Business and Finance Manager
foi@environmentalstandards.scot
0808 1964000

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16 May 2026

Dear 1

Response to information request – partial disclosure

ESS Reference: ESS.IR.036

I am writing in response to your email of 21 April 2026, requesting information under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA). The information you requested is as follows:

‘Please can you provide the successful pitch from Smarts for the procurement of reference number DEC467255 which commenced on 12.12.22 and for the procurement of reference number JAN522912 which commenced on 30.1.25. Please also provide the notification from yourselves to the successful bidder for these successful bids.’

Our response

Please find our response to your request below and in the accompanying pack. The accompanying pack contains the four requested documents. Some of the information you asked for cannot be provided because it is exempt from disclosure.

FOISA allows a Scottish public authority to withhold information in response to a request, where one or more exemptions apply. While our aim is to provide information whenever

Environmental Standards Scotland Enquiries

enquiries@environmentalstandards.scot

Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HD

0808 1964000

Redaction Key

1 - Section 38 (1) (b) - Personal data of a third party

possible, in this instance we are unable to provide some of the information you have requested because the exemption under section 33(1)(b) and section 38(1)(b) applies to that information.

Section 33(1)(b) exempts information from disclosure if the disclosure would, or would be likely to, prejudice substantially the commercial interests of any person. "Person" includes any public authority, company or partnership.

This exemption is subject to the public interest test. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing this information outweighs the public interest in applying the exemption. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exemption. We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosing information as part of open and transparent public sector, and to help account for the expenditure of public money. However, there is a greater public interest in protecting the commercial interests of ESS and Smarts.

Section 38(1)(b) exempts personal data from disclosure if disclosing the the data to a member of the public would contravene Article5(1) of the UK GDPR.

This exemption is not subject to the public interest test.

Right to seek a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your request under FOISA, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response by writing to:

Chief Executive Officer
Environmental Standards Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace Edinburgh
EH12 5HD
Email foi@environmentalstandards.scot

Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response and should be made within 40 working days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review and inform you of the result within 20 working days from the date when we receive your review request. If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then

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have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. More detailed information on your appeal rights is available on the Commissioner's website at:

<https://www.foi.scot/appeal>

Yours sincerely

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

Business and Finance Manager

Environmental Standards Scotland

Environmental Standards Scotland Enquiries

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TECHNICAL AWARD CRITERIA

SECTION 1: METHODOLOGY

Q1:	<p>The Framework supplier must clearly explain their proposed approach to delivering the services and outline the suitability and robustness of the proposed methods. The Framework supplier must also outline any limitations to the services they can provide and how they will manage communication with Environmental Standards Scotland.</p> <p>The Framework supplier shall also provide details of their procedures to ensure that any risks, for example, political, reputational, operational and financial can impact on the provision of the service and what action you would propose to mitigate these risks.</p>
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Understanding of the requirement

Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) has been established to ensure Scotland achieves the highest environmental standards and communities can enjoy the healthy environment that they deserve.

The body's creation comes at a crucial time – the governance gap created by the UK's exit from the European Union coupled with the threat and increasing risk of climate change means that effective scrutiny and compliance with environmental law is paramount.

With a broad remit, an ambitious vision to deliver improved standards for the benefit of nature, people, society and the economy, there will be no shortage of interest and news. We believe there is a need for a robust communications function to:

- increase awareness of the role and remit of Environmental Standards Scotland
- demonstrate the body's contribution in driving forward compliance and improving effectiveness of environmental law
- highlighting how collaboration with partners is delivering collective benefits for environmental protection and enhancement.

Our understanding is that Environmental Standards Scotland is looking for agency support to bolster its in house communications resource that will:

- work as an extension of its team
- be flexible in the service it delivers in line with client need and in house workloads
- provide senior counsel and tactical press office support as required
- develop and help seed creative content for social media and the website

This is a role we are well versed in, particularly for newly established public bodies. We have been working with ¹ [REDACTED] – a body independent from Government but accountable to the Scottish Parliament following its vesting in April 2022, supporting the in house team in developing a communications strategy, providing strategic counsel, supporting media relations, development of social media content and activation.

We have been involved nearly since the outset in the creation of the ¹ [REDACTED] ¹ [REDACTED] providing all communications support (there is no in house resource) including strategic communication counsel, media relations, social media and website content, directly posting all content across all channels.

Proposed approach

Collaboration is core to the Smarts way of working and is standard practice across all our clients. We like to work with our clients and partners in this way to maximise synergies, outputs and results.

The key to success across our work is our rigorous planning process to ensure the brief is understood, the correct strategic approach is adopted, the audience insights and channel selection is robust to meet agreed KPIs, the implementation is planned but flexible for the opportunities that are identified and grasped along the way and that the learnings are taken forward into future activity.



The ITT outlines the services which are likely to be required during the contract, including:

- press office advice or support, particularly with larger campaigns, or complicated cases
- advice and creative digital content for ESS' website and social media platforms
- additional website content support.

To effectively deliver these services, our proposed approach would involve getting under the skin of the brief to ensure objectives are understood, outputs are defined and expectations of ESS are met.

This immersion process would involve:

- **Understanding the landscape:** gaining a thorough understanding of the key environmental challenges being faced in Scotland, and globally, and the impact of environmental law on both the environment and the wellbeing of individuals is our starting point. This knowledge will allow us to develop materials that reinforces the role of ESS and why it matters.

We note from the strategic plan that there is a substantial amount of interest in the work of ESS and collaboration is a key theme in terms of the body carrying out its functions. The scope of public authorities you will interact with as the body develops is vast, spanning local authorities, health and transport authorities, the Scottish Government and its agencies, and UK counterparts. As such, we would look to fully understand the stakeholder and policy landscape, where ESS sits, work done to date in terms of engagement, and priority audiences for specific investigations as work gets underway.

We also note that the public believes ESS can play an important role in meeting the environmental challenges faced. Identifying target audiences, understanding how the public can interact with ESS and developing messaging that helps drive awareness will also be key to developing our response.

- **Developing positioning:** in line with your key values of being independent, transparent, trusted and effective, we would work with you to develop your positioning as you ramp up your communications.

Highlighting the expertise that exists within ESS is paramount to enhancing your reputation in the initial stages. Coupled with this, developing assets that provide a drumbeat of news, effectively tell your story in terms of milestones reached and demonstrate that the body is ready to act – and its impact will be key.

- **Adding value:** in line with the ESS guiding principles, we would also seek to clarify where our efforts and resources would add the most value, identifying priorities that require agency support as the communications strategy is developed.

This would include gaining a thorough understanding of the communications strategy, work completed to date and upcoming milestones that require agency support (e.g. live investigations, outcomes, published reports, relevant calendar hooks, key stakeholder campaigns). Once defined, we would then work to set objectives, identify audiences and channels and deliver media and social media outputs to support the activity.

We note from the strategic plan that marginalised and disadvantaged groups are a key focus for communications. This is an area where we have a wealth of experience having implemented numerous campaigns for [REDACTED] using a blend of stakeholder outreach, content creation and channel deployment to reach and influence these audiences.

- **Defining processes:** we would seek to understand how we can effectively support the in house function, defining processes for effective sharing of information, agency briefing, reporting against KPIs and milestones and applying learnings throughout the contract.

Our approach to implementation is detailed in question 4.

Managing communication

From the outset, reporting mechanisms and frequency of reporting are agreed with the client and communicated to the account team.

We welcome regular (virtual) face to face meetings with both internal and wider campaign teams and deem them essential to effective delivery, particularly when dealing with issues or crisis management.

Status and contact reports are also generated to the required frequency, next steps, with actions agreed and assigned, to ensure communication is constant throughout the contract.

At Smarts, we operate a system of transparent reporting, where content generated and delivery against objectives is recorded on **1** so clients can access real time information to assist with internal reporting and account management.

Where risk mitigation and emergency / out of hours cover is required, our standard process is to agree a structure whereby potential issues are identified and our approach – and means of response – is pre-agreed.

We also have a clear process for problem resolution in relation to service delivery.

Pre-requisites, risks and dependencies

There are a number of pre requisites, risks and dependencies in delivering this project:

- **Adhering to timetables** both the agency and the client – we will need a fluid but realistic plan for the delivery of work with timeframes built in for discussion and approvals.
- **Access to the relevant expertise** within Environmental Standards Scotland and stakeholders to inform the strategy and agree tactical plans.
- **Resources** – agency and the client – we will ensure we have the right mix of skills and capacity to deliver the project and have access to over 100+ PR practitioners so can quickly scale-up to meet both strategic and tactical needs.
- **Project reputation risks** – we outline how we would audit risk and our strategies for both mitigation and reporting / evaluation below that would be built into our comms approach.

Risk	Impact	Action	Measurement
Political / Financial			
Political change of emphasis which leads to funding cuts	Reputational damage	Reactive media lines to take in consultation with SG Key messages / proof points / FAQ around delivery to date and future plans Stakeholder engagement to inform and reassure Briefing of appropriate spokespersons	Tracking sentiment on and offline Charting feedback
FOI on delivery / funding	Review, campaign delivery disruption	Robust reporting, with appropriate project governance mechanisms in place	Framework for tracking progress (planning, defined KPIs outputs,

		<p>Ensuring PR works within set budget parameters with all spend tracked and sense-checked by team / client</p> <p>Reactive lines to take if picked up by media</p> <p>Business as usual with comms delivery</p>	<p>delivery against objectives / KPIs) with regular reporting</p>
Reputational			
<p>Negative commentary by stakeholders / other advice / advocacy services</p>	<p>Reputational damage</p>	<p>Development of key messages / proof points / FAQ demonstrating impact</p> <p>Supportive commentary from industry champions</p> <p>Face to face engagement inviting external commentary</p>	<p>Tracking sentiment on and offline</p> <p>Penetration of key messages to counter criticism</p> <p>Number of organisations engaging with feedback process</p>
Operational			
<p>Performance of Environmental Standards Scotland</p>	<p>Use of funding / support questioned</p>	<p>Media / social monitoring to flag any negative reports</p> <p>Potential company issues raised through status meetings</p> <p>Reactive media statements prepared</p>	<p>Tracking sentiment on and offline</p>
<p>Change of senior personnel</p>	<p>Reputational damage, impact on project delivery</p>	<p>Key messages and succession biogs prepared</p> <p>Media strategy and positioning determined based on circumstances</p> <p>Proactive / reactive statements</p>	<p>Strategy measurement metrics (i.e. tracking of sentiment on and offline)</p>

Redaction Key

1 - Section 33 (1) (b) - Substantial prejudice to commercial interests

2 - Section 38 (1) (b) - Personal data of a third party

SECTION 2: STAFFING AND CAPABILITY

<p>Q2:</p>	<p>The Framework supplier must provide details of all roles and responsibilities proposed for the delivery of the services and provide named individuals against these roles where relevant. This should include a CV detailing the experience, qualifications, competency and specialist skills these individuals possess to carry out the specified role.</p>
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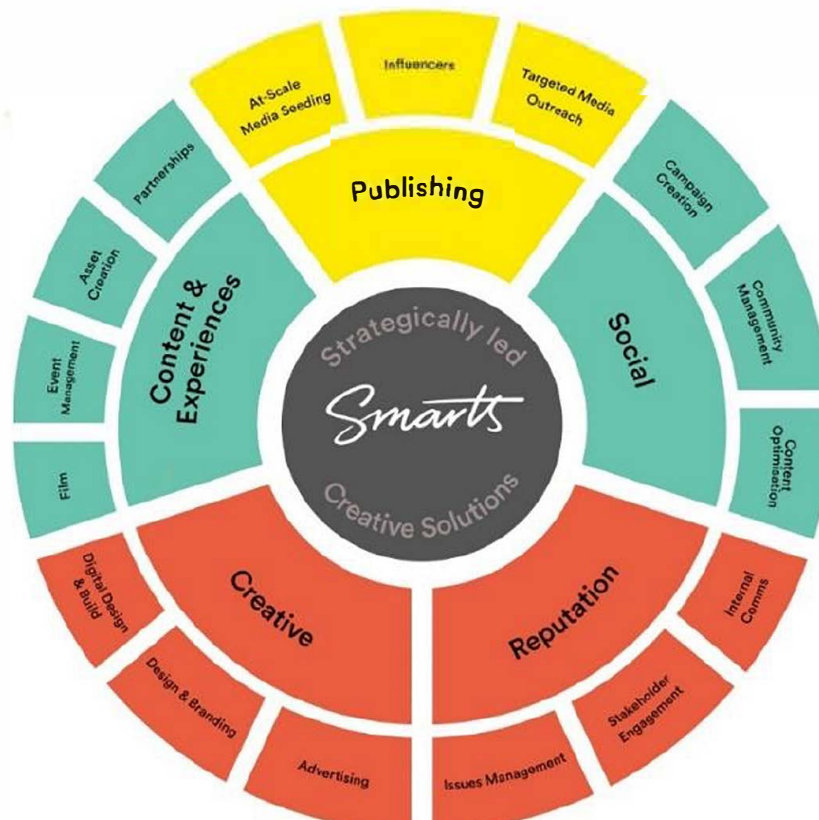
Our proprietary Smarts Delivery Wheel (below) is the model on which all of our communications activities are based.

Around this service offering we have built, and organise, our multi-disciplinary Account Management and support team.

It allows us to maximise campaign activity highly effectively incorporating, as it does, all aspects of strategic development, ideation (idea creation), film, design, media, social media, reputation management and outreach activities (partner and stakeholder engagement).

Our team has the strategic, creative, tactical, responsive and collaborative attributes you seek, backed by a sound understanding of the purpose and workings of Central and Local Government and a clear understanding of the agency’s role in adding value.

This is borne out of having worked on the [redacted] for 15 years; winning 23 PR Awards since 2018, delivering campaigns across a diverse range of audiences, including those that are harder to reach.



Redaction Key

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Proposed Account Team

The proposed team has been selected for the experience, expertise and enthusiasm they bring to this brief and the strategic and tactical skills required for the role.

The team members proposed also have extensive experience of working as an extension of an existing press office team – adding value to communications and providing a flexible and responsive proactive and reactive service.

With collective experience of delivering the service requirements, the account team is supported by a robust back office team covering IT, finance, reporting, risk and business continuity.

With over 100 experienced PR practitioners working across our Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast and London offices to call upon; we can upweight our team capacity at peak periods when required.

We structure our teams to ensure that a client team member, who is immersed in that client's business, is always available 24/7.

Here we detail their roles and experience in relation to the requirement:

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

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Redaction Key

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Redaction Key

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SECTION 2: STAFFING AND CAPABILITY

Q3: The Framework supplier must provide an example of any recent previous commission, with specific emphasis on Environmental issues to demonstrate your capability to deliver this requirement. Please indicate if these were led by proposed team members and highlight their relevance to the commission requirements.

We believe we have the demonstrable experience and capability to deliver this requirement from both a strategic and tactical perspective.

Environmental issues:

Smarts is adept at handling campaigns focused at tackling a range of environmental issues from [redacted] to creating a [redacted] to a campaign [redacted]

We have also delivered communications for a wind farm operator and for the [redacted] encouraging businesses to reduce their carbon emissions.

Establishing a communications approach:

As outlined in this response, we also have demonstrable experience of establishing communications for newly created public bodies and understand the nuances in terms of policy and political backdrops.

We understand the importance of demonstrating traction as organisations evolve, whilst managing expectation amongst key stakeholders – and ensuring key milestones are effectively communicated to bring audiences on the journey.

Case study:

However, we have chosen a more rounded recent commission which illustrates better the scope of work that we believe ESS is looking for, specifically:

- providing proactive and reactive press office advice and support
- effective delivery of complex messaging
- amplifying campaigns through content creation including video production, static and animated infographics and developing website content.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

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Redaction Key

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1 [Redacted]

Redaction Key

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SECTION 3: DELIVERY

Q4:	The Framework supplier will detail their operational proposals with particular emphasis on quality and performance measurements, and customer satisfaction to meet the ordered service. The Framework supplier must describe how they will deliver a flexible and responsive service. At times there will be a need for an urgent response and this will be an important part of delivery.
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Operational proposals

Below we detail our approach to supporting tactical activation and the quality and performance measurements we have in place to ensure effective delivery of the requirement.

- **Immersion:** we would work with the in house team to gain a thorough understanding of the landscape and policy content within which ESS operates, the roles and responsibilities of key personnel, key audiences, communications positioning and outputs to date (key messages, media releases and statements (proactive & reactive), Q&As, thought leadership) and the key future programme milestones that require support (i.e. live investigations, outcomes, published reports, relevant calendar hooks, key stakeholder campaigns).
- **Audience and stakeholder identification:** this would involve identifying key audiences, ranking them, if appropriate, in terms of importance to ensure plans are aligned and effective delivery and measurement. We would then develop a channel matrix based on audiences' media consumption and social media profiling, to develop messages that will inform and resonate, whether public, partner or stakeholder.
- **Objectives / measurement:** we would set SMART objectives against agreed activity – example KPIs would include metrics around awareness, key message penetration, increased digital engagement, frequency of stakeholder communication and press office outputs.
- **Messaging:** using insight gleaned, we'd work with the in house team to develop a core script detailing messaging and proof points. This would be used to brief key personnel, with media training arranged if required.
- **Implementation:** once plans agreed, we would ensure roles and responsibilities are defined and a process put in place for delivery, with timetables and reporting structures as per the key requirements:

Media relations: processes for overarching press office support would be outlined, including contact mechanisms, responsibilities of key account personnel and detailed processes for the management of media enquires and responses (with timeframes).

This would involve identifying milestones, announcements and news hitchhiking opportunities, drafting proactive releases, quotes and lines to take for reactive enquiries and placing op-eds.

We would apply our considerable understanding of Scotland's media landscape, editorial style of media outlets and journalists and understanding the political and policy

context. Having worked on the Framework for 11 years, we have built a diverse range of media contacts across broadcast print and online that we would harness proactively in engaging and delivering media outputs.

Content creation for social & website: content management guidelines and social planners would be supplied to support communications planning and maintain a flow of news, with creative ideas for content creation activated within agreed timescales.

We're extremely well versed in developing timely, impactful content to amplify communications, as an agency that handles content creation (infographics, statics, videos) and community management for [REDACTED]

We are adept at distilling complex messaging to ensure content is tailored for the audience and their needs to ensure maximum engagement, particularly in relation to public sector issues and legislation.

- **Outputs & Measurement:** we would seek to gain an understanding what success looks like putting in place key metrics to deliver against comms objectives.

We track and evaluate throughout the year, building measurement into our reporting structures so strategy can be adapted and resource reallocated if required.

We seek to measure against outputs (e.g. volume of releases, statements, graphics, posts) as well as outcomes (e.g. increase in audience awareness, increase in social media engagement and followers, engagement with content and website visits).

Where possible, we'd seek to build communications performance metrics into wider organisations quantitative and qualitative research.

Quality and Performance Measurements

Our approach to quality and performance involves:

- Putting the right team with the right mix of skills in place at the outset – both senior counsel and tactical implementation to make best use of time and budget resources. We have daily team meetings to identify workloads, priorities and any sticky points that need addressed.
- Ensuring accuracy is built in at the outset through our robust planning process to ensure every brief is understood following rigorous research and scrutiny and that both the client and agency are aligned on the objectives, the work that is required and the responsibilities of who is delivering what and when.
- As part of our strategic planning process, we ensure every project includes SMART objectives to ensure activity is both measurable and effective. These are communicated and agreed before the implementation phase.
- We adhere to the [REDACTED] policies and standards, and continually seek appropriate metrics to evidence the added value of PR spend, particularly important given scrutiny on the public purse.

- A robust monitoring and evaluation process is put in place to monitor each project stage to ensure delivery is on plan both in its content and its timeframe, adapting our approach if necessary.
- KPIs are tracked throughout the project with review dates in place, so delivery against objectives can be monitored regularly, and our approach can be tailored or adapted if required.
- Regular status update calls and meetings (weekly if time sensitive), backed up with a google doc so there is real-time visibility on progress against the agreed plan to assist with internal reporting and account management. This is particularly important when dealing with sensitive issues.
- Real time information on content generation and delivery against objectives.
- It is highly unlikely issues would arise but we have a clear approach and timetable for problem resolution and addressing non adherence/failure to deliver service, as follows:
 - Problem reported to account lead, solution presented and timescales agreed
 - If not deemed acceptable problem escalated to contract lead
 - Contract lead confirms investigation into cause with actions documented and circulated to client and agency team
 - Cause identified with solution agreed and applied which becomes a regular agenda item and monitored until the client agrees the issue has been fully resolved.

Customer Satisfaction

We encourage regular dialogue and open and honest feedback between clients and our colleagues. Customer satisfaction approaches are client tailored, typically recommending quarterly reviews and campaign wash-ups which provides useful learnings to take into future work, alongside regular client 'check ins' as work progresses. This will be particularly important between phase 1 and 2.

The [REDACTED] carries out six monthly independent client assessment 'emotional checks' for us which benchmarks:

- agency scores overall
- by client
- by industry norm

While we consistently score above [REDACTED] [REDACTED] there is always scope for improvement which we action within the client team.

Urgent Requirement

Given the immediacy of the media and social media world we operate in; working quickly, efficiently and effectively, often on unforeseen issues and out of hours, is something we are well

versed in. This has been particularly true during the pandemic where our work across the [REDACTED] has required an expedited approach to respond to ever evolving situations within and outside of working hours, turning around campaigns in hours or days rather than weeks.

Our standard process is to agree, at the outset of working with clients, a structured process for risk mitigation and emergency/ out of hours cover, so that potential issues are identified and our approach, and means of response, is pre agreed.

Generally, we share the names and contact details of the emergency response team (client and agency, including holidays/sickness cover) and escalation process details across client and agency teams.

To cope with a sudden increase in requirements, our [REDACTED] scheduling software identifies internal capacity that enables the immediate freeing up of team members by reallocating work so the team can fully dedicate itself to that matter.

Either our [REDACTED] takes the lead in these situations, with the other deputising on the others' workload. Depending on the situation, our response team would include a mix of 'thinkers' and 'do ers' to cover planning, account management, digital strategy, social media and media relations engagement, tracking and monitoring.

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Head of Corporate Services &
Communications
Environmental Standards Scotland
Ìrean Àrainneachdail na h-Alba

ENVIRONMENTAL
Standards Scotland
Ìrean Àrainneachdail na h-Alba

1 [@environmentalstandards.scot](mailto:1@environmentalstandards.scot)

T: 1

07 December 2022

Stein IAS Holdings Limited t/a Smarts Scotland
FAO: 1, CEO Scotland
By email to: 1 [@smarts.sgency](mailto:1@smarts.sgency)

Our ref: ESS/2022/06

INVITATION TO TENDER – PROVISION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & PRESS OFFICE SUPPORT

Dear 1,

I refer to your tender submission dated 28 November 2022 in respect of the above Invitation to Tender. We have now completed our evaluation of all tenders received in accordance with the previously published evaluation criteria, and I am pleased to inform you that your tender has been successful.

This letter is an acceptance of your tender.

The documents listed below shall be deemed to form part of the contract:

- This Contract Award Letter
- Framework Agreement – Schedule 5 – Call Off Document attached at Annex A
- Your Tender response dated 28 November 2022, attached at Annex B
- Framework Terms and Conditions

The contract shall commence on 12 December 2022 and shall expire on 11 December 2024, unless the contract is terminated in accordance with the Terms and Conditions. The prices within the pricing schedule at Annex B shall apply. The maximum contract value is £60,000.00 exclusive of VAT. Invoices shall be submitted monthly and payment shall be made within 30 days of a valid invoice being received.

Environmental Standards Scotland Enquiries

enquiries@environmentalstandards.scot

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Please acknowledge receipt of this contract award by signing and returning a copy of this letter.

Please note that the Contract Manager for this contract is 1 [redacted] who can be contacted by email at 1 [redacted] [@environmentalstandards.scot](mailto:1[redacted]@environmentalstandards.scot)

Yours sincerely

1 [redacted]

1 [redacted]
Head of Corporate Services & Communications
Environmental Standards Scotland

PROVISION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS & PRESS OFFICE SUPPORT

I/We acknowledge receipt of this contract award letter for the above-mentioned contract on behalf of Stein IAS Holdings Limited t/a Smarts Scotland and agree to provide the services in accordance with all of the provisions therein.

Name	_____	Signature	_____
	(Block Capitals)		
Designation	_____	Date	_____

Annex A – Framework Agreement – Schedule 5 – Call Off Document

Annex B – Stein IAS Holdings Limited t/a Smarts Scotland Tender Response



Smarts -
Environmental Stand:

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enquiries@environmentalstandards.scot
Thistle House, 91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HD
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Smarts

Environmental Standards Scotland

Public Relations & Press Office
Support
December 2024

Section 1: Mandatory Questions

Relating to Criminal Convictions

Question		Answer
1	Has the bidder itself or any person who is a member of its administrative, management or supervisory body or has powers of representation, decision or control therein been the subject of a conviction by final judgment within the last five years for one of the reasons (1-8) listed above?	No
2	If the answer is yes to any, please provide details including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of conviction • Which of the points 1-8 it relates to and the reason • Name of the person convicted • A description of any measures taken by the bidder to demonstrate its reliability despite the existence of this relevant ground for exclusion 	N/A

Relating to the Levels of Insurance Cover

Question	Answer
<p>1 The Bidder confirms they already have or can commit to obtain, prior to the commencement of the contract, the levels of insurance cover indicated (as a minimum):</p> <p>1 ██████████ public liability insurance</p> <p>1 ██████████ professional liability insurance</p> <p>Minimum levels of Employers Liability insurance as set out in legislation as applicable to the organisation at any time (currently 1 ██████████ for most organisations)</p>	<p>Yes, I already have this</p>
<p>2 Provide details of the coverage you refer to in Q1 (above) here:</p>	<p>Public liability - 1 ██████████</p> <p>Professional indemnity - 1 ██████████</p> <p>Employers liability - 1 ██████████</p>

Section 2: Award Criteria

Table 2: Technical Award Criteria

Technical Questions		Question Weighting
Q1	<p>Methodology The tenderer must clearly explain their proposed approach to delivering the services and outline the suitability, robustness and performance measures of the proposed methods. The tenderer must also outline any limitations to the services they can provide.</p>	25%

Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) was established to ensure Scotland achieves the highest environmental standards and communities can enjoy the healthy environment that they deserve.

The body's creation came at a crucial time - the governance gap created by the UK's exit from the European Union coupled with the threat and increasing risk of climate change means that effective scrutiny around environmental law is paramount. This involves assessing the effectiveness of environmental law in Scotland, and ensuring public bodies are compliant.

In October 2024, ESS published the second annual overview of its work, demonstrating the breadth of its activity and reinforcing its role as a cornerstone of environmental governance in Scotland.

Building on these strong foundations, now is the time for ESS to expand and enhance its communications function to reflect its broad remit and ambitious vision to deliver improved standards for the benefit of nature, people, society, and the economy. There is no shortage of interest and news, and we believe a robust communications strategy is essential to:

- increase ongoing awareness of the role and remit of ESS
- further demonstrate the body's contribution and impact in driving forward compliance and improving effectiveness of environmental law
- continue to highlight how collaboration with partners is delivering collective benefits for environmental protection and enhancement.

Our understanding is that ESS is looking for agency support to bolster its in-house communications resource that will:

- work as an extension of its team
- be flexible in the service it delivers in line with client need and in-house workloads
- provide senior counsel and tactical press office support as required
- identify and effectively engage with stakeholders, ensuring key messages are communicated clearly and strategically
- develop and help seed creative content for social media and the website

Having fulfilled the role for ESS for two years, working as an extension of the in-house team and delivering against the core requirements of this brief, we are well placed to continue this work and build on the successes achieved so far.

In doing so we can draw on not just our experience of working with ESS, but with other newly established and evolving public bodies such as **1** - a body independent from Government but accountable to the **1** - which following its vesting in April 2022, we supported the in-house team in developing a communications strategy, providing strategic counsel, supporting media relations, development of social media content and activation.

We have been involved - nearly since the outset - in the creation of the **1**, providing all communications support (there is no in-house resource) including strategic communication counsel, media relations, social media and website content, directly posting all content across all channels.

Overarching approach

Collaboration is core to the Smarts way of working and is standard practice across all our clients. We like to work with our clients and partners in this way to maximise synergies, outputs and results.

The key to success across our work is our rigorous planning process to ensure the brief is understood, the correct strategic approach is adopted, the audience insights and channel selection is robust to meet agreed KPIs, the implementation is planned but flexible for the opportunities that are identified and grasped along the way and that the learnings are taken forward into future activity.



Redaction Key

1 - Section 33(1) (b) - Substantial prejudice to commercial interests

2 - Section 38 (1) (b) - Personal data of a third party

The ITT outlines the services which are likely to be required during the contract. At the core of our delivery will be establishing where we can add most value - from a sounding board on some issues, to full strategic and tactical delivery on others, depending on the workload of the in-house team.

We have a sound knowledge of the organisation, its function, stakeholders, people and working processes, therefore the immersion process that we would undertake with new clients is unnecessary, however it would be worth taking a step back with the Senior Communications Officer and the wider team to carry out the following exercises:

- **Reappraising the landscape:** How the environmental and political landscape for ESS is evolving two years in (as outlined in Q2) and therefore how our communications need to adapt. In doing so we would look at the stakeholder and policy landscape, where ESS sits, work done to date in terms of engagement, and priority audiences for specific investigations as work gets underway in this next contract phase. This will be important in feeding into the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

With community engagement work now underway, we will work with ESS to identify target audiences and develop suitable messaging and outreach strategies to further drive interaction between ESS and the public.

- **Refining the positioning:** we would examine ESS's current positioning and how it is fulfilling the key values of being independent, transparent, trusted and effective.

Highlighting the expertise that exists within ESS is paramount to enhancing its reputation and building trust, while developing assets that create a steady flow of news, effectively highlight milestones achieved and demonstrate the organisation's actions and impact will be crucial in showcasing effectiveness.

- **Interrogating our audiences:** This involves identifying key audiences (such as the public, partners, or stakeholders) and, if needed, ranking them based on their importance to ensure our plans are aligned and effective. Their role in the activity - whether as informed, engaged, or amplifying outputs - will influence how we tailor our approach. The significance of each audience may vary depending on the specific activity, and our strategy will be adapted accordingly.
- **Continually focusing on adding value:** in line with the ESS guiding principles, we would also seek to ensure our efforts and resources are adding the most value, identifying priorities that require agency support as the communications and engagement strategy is developed and the work plan rolled out.

This would include gaining a thorough understanding of the communications strategy, work completed to date and upcoming milestones that require agency support (e.g. live investigations, outcomes, published reports, relevant calendar hooks, key stakeholder campaigns). Once defined, we would then work to set objectives, identify audiences and channels and deliver media and social media outputs to support the activity.

- **Refining processes:** we would seek to explore our effectiveness in supporting the in-house function; ensuring processes for the sharing of information, agency briefing, reporting against KPIs and milestones are effective and applying learnings throughout the contract.

- **Understanding what success looks like:** we would seek to gain an understanding of what success looks like, putting in place key metrics to deliver against overall comms objectives and tweak our outputs accordingly.

Where possible, we'd seek to build communications performance metrics into the wider organisation's quantitative and qualitative research.

Operational approach

To ensure a successful and appropriate response is given overall and to each project/task, we would adopt the following working methods:

- **Identifying the right approach:** to ensure efficiency and maximise results, a key priority will be adopting a measured strategy for communications. This will involve carefully assessing the significance and impact of each piece of activity to determine the most suitable approach.

This will be achieved by working with the [REDACTED] to determine the desired exposure and most appropriate tactics. This may range from outreach to national broadcast, online and print media to securing coverage with sector-specific outlets or targeted journalists; or from creating engaging online content to opting for a focused website and social media push.

The prominence given will depend on a range of considerations such as recent and upcoming activity; ESS and governmental priority areas; the wider news agenda; and how the activity might be received by stakeholders and what measures need to be in place to address this.

- **Setting objectives/ measurement:** we would set SMART objectives against agreed activity - example KPIs would include metrics around awareness, key message penetration, in outputs accordingly.
- **Developing messaging:** using insight gleaned, we'd work with the in-house team to develop a core script detailing messaging and proof points for wider and individual pieces of activity. This would be used to brief key personnel, with media training arranged if required.
- **Implementation:** once plans are agreed, we would ensure roles and responsibilities are defined and a process put in place for delivery, with timetables and reporting structures as per the key requirements:

Media relations: processes for overarching press office support would be outlined, including contact mechanisms, responsibilities of key account personnel and detailed processes for the management of media enquiries and responses (with timeframes).

This would involve identifying milestones, announcements and news hitchhiking opportunities, drafting proactive releases, quotes and lines to take for reactive enquiries and placing op-eds.

We would apply our considerable understanding of Scotland's media landscape, editorial style of media outlets and journalists and understanding of the political and policy context. Having worked on the Framework for 17 years, we have built a diverse range of media contacts across broadcast print and online that we would harness proactively in engaging and delivering media outputs.

We also understand the importance of timing when it comes to engaging media - for example building in enough time for interested journalists to digest the contents and finding of reports and set up interviews, balanced with the need to maintain control of information and ensure embargoes are respected.

Content creation for social & website: content management guidelines and social planners would be supplied to support communications planning and maintain a flow of news, with creative ideas for content creation activated within agreed timescales.

We're extremely well versed in developing timely, impactful content to amplify communications, as an agency that handles content creation (infographics, statics, videos) and community management for ¹ [REDACTED] channel and bodies like the ¹ [REDACTED].

We are adept at distilling complex messaging to ensure content is tailored for the audience and their needs to ensure maximum engagement, particularly in relation to public sector issues and legislation.

Quality and Performance Measurements

Our approach to quality and performance involves:

- Putting the right team with the right mix of skills in place at the outset - both senior counsel and tactical implementation to make best use of time and budget resources. We have weekly team meetings to identify workloads, priorities and any sticky points that need addressed.
- Ensuring accuracy is built in at the outset through our robust planning process to ensure every brief is understood following rigorous research and scrutiny and that both the client and agency are aligned on the objectives, the work that is required and the responsibilities of who is delivering what and when.
- As part of our strategic planning process, we ensure every project includes SMART objectives to ensure activity is both measurable and effective. These are communicated and agreed before the implementation phase.
- We adhere to the ¹ [REDACTED] policies and standards and continually seek appropriate metrics to evidence the added value of PR spend, particularly important given scrutiny on the public purse.
- A robust monitoring and evaluation process is put in place to monitor each project stage to ensure delivery is on plan both in its content and its timeframe, adapting our approach if necessary.

- KPIs are tracked throughout the project with review dates in place, so delivery against objectives can be monitored regularly, and our approach can be tailored or adapted if required.
- Regular status update calls and meetings (weekly if time sensitive), backed up with a live status doc so there is real-time visibility on progress against the agreed plan to assist with internal reporting and account management. This is particularly important when dealing with sensitive issues.
- Real-time information on content generation and delivery against objectives.
- It is highly unlikely issues would arise but we have a clear approach and timetable for problem resolution and addressing non-adherence/failure to deliver service, as follows:
 - Problem reported to account lead, solution presented and timescales agreed
 - If not deemed acceptable problem escalated to contract lead
 - Contract lead confirms investigation into cause with actions documented and circulated to client and agency team
 - Cause identified with solution agreed and applied which becomes a regular agenda item and monitored until the client agrees the issue has been fully resolved.

Requirement from brief	Approach	Performance Measurements
<p>Press office advice, and/or support, with media approaches and responses, including: direct statements; interviews; and/or releases etc. This would generally be where support is required on larger campaigns, or complicated cases, rather than the more general day-to-day communication requirements;</p>	<p>Depending on the nature of the requirement, we will play a lead or supporting role ensuring seamless liaison with the in-house team to deliver communications planning, including KPIs, 'lines to take', news releases, media approach (e.g. exclusive or broader distribution), media sell-ins, stakeholder and social amplification.</p>	<p>Delivery against set KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coverage cut-through - Key message penetration - Sentiment <p>Feedback from the in-house team on outputs and outcomes and learnings taken forward into the next piece of work.</p>
<p>Support with engagement activities with other external stakeholders (e.g. MSPs, senior staff in other organisations, etc);</p>	<p>Approach could include identification of stakeholders, key messaging, channel identification, lines to take,</p>	<p>Depth and breadth of stakeholder engagement against the actions sought.</p> <p>Stakeholder sentiment.</p>

	creation of communication materials.	Content shared on their channels.
Advice and creative digital content for ESS' website and social media platforms, to increase awareness of the organisation, its role and remit. This would include the production of video and graphics;	Auditing, advising and creating opportunities for digital that are in-line with the audience and the narrative we wish to project.	Followers, views, click-throughs, web site visits, engagement.
Leading with unprompted, proactive communications advice on creative content for social media and press engagement;	Horizon scanning for opportunities and pitching these to the in-house team for consideration.	Volume of proactive opportunities identified and those that were actioned as a result.
Assistance with the writing and development of the new ESS Communications and Engagement Strategy due to be published in late 2025;	Depending on the Senior Communications Officer preferences, potential to hold a workshop together to look at the opportunities, divide up responsibilities and create a timetabled plan of what needs to be fulfilled by who and when. Helping edit and revise the Plan once all elements are in the initial draft.	Acceptance of the Communications and Engagement Strategy from ESS approvers with minimum adjustments. Efficacy of the roll-out of the Strategy.
Assistance with delivery of the published Action Plan as appropriate;	As well as feeding into the development of the Communications and Engagement Strategy, we will work closely with the Senior Communications Officer to support delivery of actions and outcomes from the resulting Action Plan.	Regular review of status of key actions and outcomes.
Additional website content support as needed;	In line with the requirements, we can audit website content, draft copy,	Website visits, views, dwell times.

	produce static assets or video content.	
Monitoring and support for communications with ESS during public holidays or during ESS staff team leave or absences;	<p>Full understanding of the role and the requirements so that the agency can step in.</p> <p>Seamless transition to Smarts team for in-house and external stakeholders.</p>	Feedback from in-house stakeholders on the effectiveness of the cover and any improvements that could be made so that these can be taken forward into continuous learning.
Crisis and issue communications management if required.	<p>Clear issues management protocols and escalation procedures in place.</p> <p>24/7 contact for the crisis team.</p> <p>Proactive development of lines to take on the occurrence of a range of different scenarios.</p> <p>Potential media training with those who will front up an issue with the media and with stakeholders to test a number of scenarios.</p>	<p>Containment or mitigation of issue, robustness of responses, key message cut-through, sentiment.</p> <p>Feedback on the efficacy of the plan amongst those on the front line dealing with it.</p>

Technical Questions		Question Weighting
Q2	<p>Understanding</p> <p>The tenderer must demonstrate their understanding of the political and environmental sector stakeholders that ESS works with.</p>	25%

Understanding

Effectiveness, value for money, transparency and accountability are at the heart of any public sector body and as ESS raises its profile, produces more reports and carries out more investigations, the focus on what it delivers and the value it adds in protecting environmental compliance in Scotland comes increasingly under the microscope.

It has been three years since ESS launched and since then it has established itself as a powerful force in Scotland and further afield, scrutinising if Scottish public bodies are complying with environmental law, assessing how effective environmental law in Scotland is, informing policy-making, and working with stakeholders and other bodies to raise awareness of the key issues which threaten our nation's future.

Recent hard-hitting reports on air quality, the effectiveness of the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan, storm overflows and soil preservation have captured the headlines, positioning ESS as a key voice in the debate on how best to protect Scotland's environment and preserve it for future generations.

Key to ESS's success has been the strength of relationships it has forged with a wide range of stakeholders in Scotland and across the UK. Among the most significant of these are the [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED], both of which ESS works with to ensure that environmental policies and regulations are effectively implemented and monitored.

ESS has responded to Scottish Government consultations around proposed environmental legislation and strategic frameworks. Reviewing, and where necessary challenging, policy comprises a significant element of its remit to assess the effectiveness of environmental law.

Accountable to the [REDACTED], ESS regularly updates the [REDACTED] on its work, flagging significant developments that could impact Scotland's path towards climate change targets and supporting the committee in its role to scrutinise environmental policies and governance in Scotland.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. For ESS, these developments can create additional challenges such as maintaining stakeholder confidence, aligning its advocacy and recommendations against shifting priorities and conveying accurate and timely information to stakeholders in the face of delays,

which can lead to confusion and frustration. A communication strategy taking these challenges into consideration will be key to helping ESS overcome them.

Other key stakeholders in Scotland include local authorities and regulatory agencies like the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], while outside of Scotland ESS works with the UK Government and associated bodies such as the [REDACTED]

ESS co-operates with the UK-wide [REDACTED] to address matters of mutual concern regarding environmental governance, especially where jurisdictions overlap. A recent example was its collaboration to assess if enough is being done to protect the habitats of rare, threatened and vulnerable birds.

Other regular collaborators are environmental NGOS and advocacy groups like [REDACTED], along with academic and research institutions. It also works with private sector and industry groups, especially those representing sectors where priorities such as profitability and productivity can compete with environmental protection measures, such as the [REDACTED]. Relationships with these organisations involve ensuring compliance with regulations and maintaining environmental standards, balanced with acknowledgement of their members' interests and the operational and economic challenges they face.

Most recently, ESS signed a memorandum to work together with the [REDACTED], the UK's independent advisor on tackling climate change, to maximise both groups' contributions to address the challenges facing our planet.

The ESS team has this year extended its activities on a more local level with its community engagement programme, visiting groups of stakeholders and environmentalists across Scotland like the [REDACTED]. It encourages public engagement and welcomes complaints or reports about environmental issues from community groups, individuals, or local societies.

[REDACTED]

Meeting the expectations and balancing the interests of all stakeholders is unrealistic. For some, measures will not go far enough, for others they may go too far. It's a delicate tightrope that ESS navigates as it provides a balanced and fair voice. The agency and in-house team can provide the strategic counsel required to help spot, prepare for and mitigate the potential pitfalls by providing an insightful voice internally as to how ESS outcomes may 'land'. They can monitor media and social media for emerging issues, allowing 'lines to take' to be prepared and agreed upon in advance. These can then be adapted as situations develop and tailored for use beyond media and social media, such as prepping for stakeholder discussions or with MSPs.

In some instances, criticism can come from a lack of understanding of ESS's remit and obligations. With informal resolutions in particular, communications could play a role in educating both stakeholders and the media as to why this is a cost-effective and time-efficient route which can often expedite resolving issues, rather than the 'cop out' which some may perceive.

There is also an opportunity for broad stakeholder and distinct community engagement work to help provide advocacy for ESS, helping amplify and support its work on their communications channels and through their forums. The communications team can further enhance this by leveraging media and stakeholder channels to boost engagement and event attendance, while demonstrating publicly that ESS is committed to hearing voices and views from individuals and organisations at all levels across Scotland.

To be effective, ESS has to be able to challenge the status quo and drive forward real and tangible change; the role of the communications team in helping fulfil that is crucial.

Technical Questions		Question Weighting
Q3	<p>Timescales and Communications</p> <p>The tenderer must clearly explain how they will engage with ESS and deliver a flexible and responsive service to ensure ESS timescales are met. For example, at times there will be a need for an urgent response and this will be an important part of delivery.</p>	15%

Timescales and Communications

We pride ourselves on being a highly responsive and flexible team and have proven this through the last two years in our work with ESS. From the outset, reporting mechanisms and frequency of reporting are agreed with the client and communicated to the account team.

We welcome regular (virtual) face-to-face meetings with both internal and wider campaign teams and deem them essential to effective delivery, particularly when dealing with issues or crisis management. Although the requirement mentions monthly meetings, we recommend weekly meetings with the Contract Manager, Account Manager and team to ensure we are fully up-to-speed and therefore able to add value and to step in seamlessly when needed.

Status and contact reports are also generated to the required frequency, next steps, with actions agreed and assigned, to ensure communication is constant throughout the contract.

At Smarts, we operate a system of transparent reporting, where content generated and delivery against objectives is recorded on a shared documents so clients can access real time information to assist with internal reporting and account management.

Where risk-mitigation and emergency/ out-of-hours cover is required, our standard process is to agree a structure whereby potential issues are identified and our approach - and means of response - is pre-agreed.

Service level agreements are in place with clients such as:

- Smarts will endeavour to attend any meeting requested by the client with reasonable prior notice and will confirm within 24 hours if this request cannot be met.
- All client communications will be responded to or acknowledged within 24 hours
- Updated project plans and or project status reports to be circulated to (client) at least weekly or as agreed under this service level agreement
- Contact reports will be supplied within two days of any major meetings or conference calls
- All invoicing will provide optimum transparency for the work carried out, detailing the services delivered and the time or materials involved in securing that delivery.

We also have a clear process for problem resolution in relation to service delivery as outlined in Q1.

Ignition Meeting

Within the first week of the Contract, both the Contract Lead and Account Manager from Smarts will attend the Initial Ignition meeting to discuss and agree working practices. The Account Manager, supported by the wider Smarts team, will be abreast of all activity happening within ESS and the Contract Lead will step in where any additional strategic counsel, advice or additional resource is required.

At this meeting we will discuss and agree any evolution of ways of working, reviewing existing working practices and their efficacy against the role and backdrop that ESS is operating in - as outlined in Q1.

Urgent Requirement

Given the immediacy of the media and social media world we operate in; working quickly, efficiently and effectively, often on unforeseen issues and out-of-hours, is something we are well versed in. This was particularly true during the pandemic where our work across [REDACTED] required an expedited approach to respond to ever-evolving situations within and outside of working hours.

Our standard process is to agree, at the outset of working with clients, a structured process for risk-mitigation and emergency/ out-of-hours cover, so that potential issues are identified and our approach, and means of response, is pre-agreed.

Generally, we share the names and contact details of the emergency response team (client and agency, including holidays/sickness cover) and escalation-process details across client and agency teams.

We use [REDACTED] to manage our time and team capacity and allocate time accordingly, ensuring all colleagues have a sufficient capacity to deal with the unexpected. Inevitably there are many times when things can't be foreseen that need addressed. We use our daily agency meetings to manage this, identify any team members who are stretched and reallocate workload to other agency members as required so that the core client team is focused on the most pressing matters. This approach was effective during the pandemic when unexpected work arose daily around [REDACTED] campaigns on compliance with [REDACTED]. Should greater resources be required, we can call upon our wider team in Scotland or our 150-strong practitioners operating within Smarts' offices across different time-zones.

To cope with a sudden increase in requirements, our [REDACTED] scheduling software identifies internal capacity that enables the immediate freeing-up of team members by reallocating work so the team can fully dedicate itself to that matter.

Either our Head of Corporate & Public Sector or Account Director takes the lead in these situations, with the other deputising on the others' workload. Depending on the situation, our response team would include a mix of 'thinkers' and 'do-ers' to cover planning, account management, digital strategy, social media and media relations engagement, tracking and monitoring.

Customer Satisfaction

We encourage regular dialogue and open and honest feedback between clients and our colleagues. Customer satisfaction approaches are client tailored, typically recommending quarterly reviews and campaign wash-ups which provides useful learnings to take into future work, alongside regular client 'check-ins' as work progresses.

The [REDACTED] carries out six-monthly independent client assessment 'emotional checks' for us which benchmarks:

- agency scores overall
- by client
- by industry norm

While we consistently score above the UK PR industry recommendation-norm of 8.87/10, most recently scoring 9.3, there is always scope for improvement which we action within the client team.

Technical Questions		Question Weighting
Q4	<p>Risk Management and Business Continuity</p> <p>The tenderer shall also provide details of their procedures to ensure that any risks, for example, political, reputational, communication, operational and financial can impact on the provision of the service and what action you would propose to mitigate these risks and ensure business continuity.</p>	15%

Risk Management and Business Continuity

There are a number of pre-requisites, risks and dependencies in delivering this project:

- **Adhering to timetables** - both the agency and the client - we will need a fluid but realistic plan for the delivery of work with timeframes built in for discussion and approvals.
- **Access to the relevant expertise** - within ESS and stakeholders to inform the strategy and agree tactical plans.
- **Resources** - agency and the client - we will ensure we have the right mix of skills and capacity to deliver the project and have access to over 150+ PR practitioners so can quickly scale-up to meet both strategic and tactical needs.
- **Project reputation risks** - we outline how we would audit risk and our strategies for both mitigation and reporting/ evaluation below that would be built into our comms approach.

[Redacted]			
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]

Beyond identifying risks and business continuity distinct to clients, within Smarts we have robust systems in place for Business Continuity Planning and Recovery, tested annually, that encompasses health, fire protection, environmental control, security, training, public affairs, communications, quality control, maintenance, and operations.

This Plan details how we would respond to, prepare for, mitigate, and recover from a range of potential emergency or disaster situations. It designates responsibility and notification procedures for these. Given the depth of detail on our operations, the role and responsibilities of individuals and contact details, this full document is for internal consumption only.

Should an incident occur, the on-site Disaster Recovery team would invoke the business continuity plan in part, or in full, dependent upon the seriousness of the incident, led by our CEO. The emphasis is on providing a roadmap for quick recovery.

Threat	H/M/L Risk	H/M/L Impact	Mitigation Actions including timescales	Responsible Owner
Supply Chain	L	L	While there is a risk that some suppliers, e.g. photographers or videographers may go under due to a lack of business, we have a wide enough network of suppliers to call upon immediately.	Day-to-day client leads
Resources (Staff)	M	M	There is the risk of staff sickness or departures which could impact delivery. We would harness our project management tool 1 to identify capacity within our broader team, fully brief and integrate them into the wider team. We also have a list of freelancers that we have worked with before that we can call upon at short notice. Solution would be in place within a maximum of 24 hours.	Contract Manager
Deliveries	L	L	While we are hybrid working, all deliveries are taken in by reception in our serviced offices and the team notified of these. If we are expecting an urgent delivery and home working we give out home addresses for delivery.	Contract Manager
Use of IT	L	L	All staff have laptops, mobile phones, access to files through SharePoint and to remote working tools such as Teams and Zoom. We are Cyber Essentials Plus accredited.	2
IT Failure	L	L	We have upgraded our facilities to a cloud-based system and invested in our IT - Microsoft Office 365	2
Back-up	L	L	We use Microsoft Office 365 backup and retention and have a non-Microsoft backup and archive solution to further supplement this to avoid any 'downtime'.	2

Redaction Key

1 - Section 33(1) (b) - Substantial prejudice to commercial interests

2 - Section 38 (1) (b) - Personal data of a third party

Technical Questions		Question Weighting
QS	<p>Capability</p> <p>The tenderer should provide information on how they will ensure the project team have the skills, knowledge, and resources to fulfil the requirement. Your answer should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expertise and skill of the team who will be delivering the services as a whole • Name any Key Contractor Personnel (e.g. the account manager) explaining their role and responsibilities • The tenderer should also outline any mitigations for risks relating to staff capabilities, (i.e. absences, staff turnover, etc.) <p>Note: Please do not provide CVs for any staff, and only Key Contractor Personnel should be named</p>	15%

Capability

Our proprietary Smarts Delivery Wheel (below) is the model on which all of our communications activities are based.

Around this service offering we have built, and organise, our multi-disciplinary Account Management and support team.

It allows us to maximise campaign activity highly effectively incorporating, as it does, all aspects of strategic development, ideation (idea creation), film, design, media, social media, reputation management and outreach activities (partner and stakeholder engagement).

Our team has the strategic, creative, tactical, responsive and collaborative attributes you seek, backed by a sound understanding of the purpose and workings of Central and Local Government and a clear understanding of the agency's role in adding value and brings:

- Significant experience of delivering the requirements of this brief for two years providing both strategic counsel and tactical support working as an extension of the in-house team across a number of topics areas such as marine litter, protection of Scotland's soils, sewage monitoring, safeguarding the habitats of rare birds, air pollution limits and the designation of bathing waters, providing holiday cover and horizon scanning the environmental landscape to inform the ESS and agency teams.
- A broader understanding having worked on the [REDACTED] for 17 years, winning 23 PR Awards since 2018, delivering campaigns across a diverse range of audiences, Including those that are harder-to-reach.
- A sound knowledge and understanding of the Scottish, UK and international environmental sector landscape (stakeholders and equivalent organisations to Environment Standards Scotland in England and Wales as well as Scotland) and the media working in it through the delivery of our work with Environmental Standards Scotland and through handling campaigns focused at tackling a range of environmental issues from encouraging people [REDACTED]

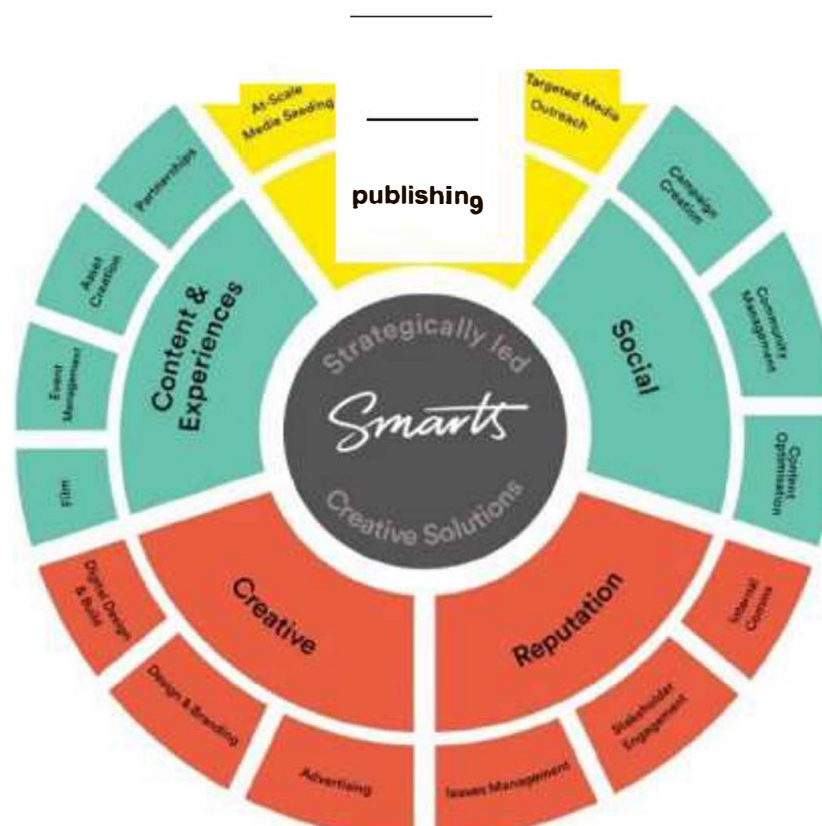
Redaction Key

1 - Section 33(1) (b) - Substantial prejudice to commercial interests

2 - Section 38 (1) (b) - Personal data of a third party

1, and a campaign focused on making climate change relevant to footie fans. We have also delivered communications for a wind farm operator and for the 1 encouraging businesses to reduce their carbon emissions.

- Demonstrable experience 1 of establishing communications for newly created public bodies and the importance of demonstrating traction as organisations evolve. In doing so, we understand the nuances in terms of policy and political backdrops, managing expectation amongst key stakeholders and ensuring key milestones are effectively communicated to bring audiences on the journey.
- An inquisitive approach and an innate understanding of how something will 'land' with media which is particularly important in establishing how ESS's outputs resonate in the wider landscape
- A collaborative approach to working as 'one team' with our clients broadly and specifically those working within the communications function.



Proposed Account Team

The proposed team has been selected for the experience, expertise and enthusiasm they bring to this brief and the strategic and tactical skills required for the role.

The team members proposed also have extensive experience of working as an extension of an existing press office team - adding value to communications and providing a flexible and responsive proactive and reactive service.

With collective experience of delivering the service requirements, the account team is supported by a robust back-office team covering IT, finance, reporting, risk and business continuity.

With over 190 experienced PR practitioners working across our Glasgow, Belfast, London, New York and Amsterdam offices to call upon; we can upweight our team capacity at peak periods when required.

We structure our teams to ensure that a client team member, who is immersed in that client's business, is always available **24/7**.

Here we detail their roles and experience in relation to the requirement:

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

1 [Redacted]

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Mitigation for risks

Our people are our business and we pride ourselves on supporting and developing our team and, as a result, our retention levels are high, illustrated by the average tenure of the account team which spans over 15 years, delivering continuity of expertise and knowledge for our clients.

Undoubtedly staff absences will occur. On the rare occasion due to staff departures, through sickness or annual leave. We avoid having conflicts of staff working on the same client being off at the same time by harnessing our holiday system 1 which shows at a glance who is off and when. We use our project management system 1 which identifies staff capacities amongst our 150+-strong team, alongside our skills database - across a range of skill sets such as earned media, social, studio and content creators and sector knowledge- to identify team members who have the right capacity and the right skills should we need to bolster our team due to increased client workloads, to manage staff absences or to transition staff to a new team member if a team member leaves. Where required, we recruit in the case of staff departures if capacity and the skill set required does not align within our existing resources.

Any team changes or absences are communicated to the team in a timely manner with solutions identified and with any new team member getting up to speed on client work at our own expense.

Technical Questions		Question Weighting
Q6	<p>Environment</p> <p>The Tenderer must explain what strategies and policies they have in place to reduce their impact on the environment including, if applicable, efforts to reduce carbon impact and scope 3 emissions. If the tenderer has an environmental policy/statement of intent or system in place, such as an ISO 14001 accreditation, please provide a copy.</p>	5%

We wholly support Scottish Ministers in their aim to reduce Scotland's emissions of all greenhouse gases to net-zero by 2045 at the latest, with interim targets for reductions of at least 56% by 2020, 75% by 2030, 90% by 2040.

Sustainability is of huge importance to our business, is led and reported on by our Head of Sustainability at a Group level with a cross-agency working group and our own [REDACTED] workstream empowering employees with a keen interest in sustainability to drive change and make a difference across our offices.

Recognising the changing nature of the pandemic on our footprint, we accurately measure our carbon emissions across four areas:

- Commuting emissions
- In-work (business travel) emissions
- Working from home emissions
- Office consumption

We:

- Have committed via the Science Based Targets Initiative, to reduce absolute scopes 1 and 2 GHG emissions 100% by 2026 as well as scope 3 GHG emissions by 70% per full-time employee from a 2019 base year. In order to continue our progress to achieving Net Zero by 2040, we have pledged the following Net Zero carbon reduction target in accordance with SBTi guidelines; We are committed to reduce absolute scopes 1, 2 and 3 GHG emissions by 90% by 2040 from a 2019 base year.
- Are a Carbon Negative company and offset more than our emissions through our tree planting partnership with [REDACTED] and have a scheme in place for our team to contribute directly to this by benchmarking and offsetting their own personal emissions. If our team does this, Smarts increases their offsetting by a further 35%.
- Have both a Cycle to Work scheme in place and an EV scheme where staff can salary sacrifice against the cost of an electric vehicle.
- Are B Corp certified, scoring highly for our extensive staff initiatives and our impactful work with purpose driven companies in our community.

- Report on our sustainability measures and performance annually: www.sustainability.msgpartners.com
- Adopt a robust approach to reducing, reusing and recycling when it comes to waste/water and energy:
 - Reducing - e.g. the use of water, energy, paper, printing and car travel. Promoting cycling to work with office bike racks and showers, public transport and an Electric Vehicle Scheme.
 - Reusing - materials wherever possible e.g. glass milk bottle deliveries, repurposing props, sending obsolete technology to the Edinburgh Remakery for repurposing.
 - Recycling - e.g. with a commitment to send nothing to landfill we have no office bins beyond recycling ones.

In doing so, we adopt the following practices:

- Team - encourage and educate our team on best environmental practice.
- Suppliers - use contractors and suppliers whose environmental policies reflect our own.
- Purchasing - where practical, investigate environmentally acceptable alternatives and purchase products and services that have a minimal impact on the environment.

We will embed our sustainability principles into the delivery of this contract. To minimise vehicle led emissions, all our team are actively encouraged to take public transport and we monitor and report on our travel as a matter of course. On the rare occasion that a private vehicle is required for client travel, we would use an electric vehicle. If for any reason this was not possible (e.g. a taxi) we would offset the emissions through our [REDACTED] partnership.

We would of course minimise travel requirements by harnessing meetings on Microsoft Teams but with the caveat that face-to-face interaction is important.

Organisation
Registration Number

NI024211

Address

6.02 Onyx Studios
215 Bothwell Street
GLASGOW G2 7EZ

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

2 [Redacted]

No

2 [Redacted]

INCLUDE AREA CODE

Date

December 20, 2024

1
Smarts (NI) Ltd
6.02 Onyx Studios
215 Bothwell Street
Glasgow
G2 7EZ

Our reference: ESS/2024/06

29 January 2025

Dear 1

Invitation to Tender – Public Relations and Press Office Support

I refer to your tender submission dated 20 December 2024 in respect of the above Invitation to Tender. On behalf of Environmental Standards Scotland we have now completed our evaluation of all tenders received in accordance with the previously published evaluation criteria, and I am pleased to inform you that your tender has been found to offer the best price quality ratio.

The table below shows the individual scores given against the published evaluation criteria in respect of your submission:

Table 1 – Price/Quality Ratio Score

Award Criteria	Weighting	Your Score
Quality	70%	58.33%
Price	30%	30%
Total	100%	88.33%

Some further feedback is provided in Appendix A.

This letter is an acceptance of your tender. The Contract (Entire Agreement document) is attached for your signature and I would be grateful if you could sign and return a copy of the Contract as soon as possible to 1 [@gov.scot](mailto:1@gov.scot)

Please note that the Contract Manager for this Contract is Rebecca Peppiette who can be contacted by email at **1** [@environmentalstandards.scot](mailto:1@environmentalstandards.scot)

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. A yellow number '1' is visible on the left side of the box, indicating the redaction key.

Head of Corporate Services and Communications

Appendix A: Feedback on your bid

Question	Smarts Full Feedback	Moderated Average Score	Questions Weighted Scores
<p>Methodology (25%) The tenderer must clearly explain their proposed approach to delivering the services and outline the suitability, robustness and performance measures of the proposed methods. The tenderer must also outline any limitations to the services they can provide.</p>	<p>The response demonstrates a strong understanding of ESS' remit and current strengths that is used as a base for building communication approach. The methodology set out is clear and provides good connection of Key Performance Indicators with communication services, linking objectives, audience, strategy, implementation and evaluation. Good references throughout to working as an 'extension of ESS' team' as opposed to doing things independently on our behalf - sense that they want to assist ESS to be better, as opposed to implement top-down approach, whilst understanding the limited resources ESS can provide. However, the response lacks where improvements and changes to communications approach can be made in the future, providing clear examples and techniques, to increase ESS' awareness and effective communications.</p>	<p>3.33</p>	<p>20.83%</p>

Question	Smarts Full Feedback	Moderated Average Score	Questions Weighted Scores
<p>Understanding (25%) The tenderer must demonstrate their understanding of the political and environmental sector stakeholders that ESS works with.</p>	<p>An excellent response which clearly demonstrates an understanding of ESS' key stakeholder relationships with a strong emphasis on the importance of ESS' relationship with the SG and Parliament, including NZET Committee. The response also acknowledges wider relevant public bodies (e.g. NatureScot and SEPA), and NGOs (ERCS) and importantly, links relationships with them to the issues ESS has worked on. Reference to and understanding of ESS community engagement programme. The response doesn't just list key stakeholders, it ties them to policy issues and political dynamics that can pose challenges to these relationships and sets out how they will assist ESS in managing them which gives confidence that they would be able to support ESS with refreshing the stakeholder engagement strategy in 2025 - a key piece of work.</p>	4.00	25.00%
<p>Timescales and Communications (15%) The tenderer must clearly explain how they will engage with ESS and deliver a flexible and responsive service to ensure ESS timescales are met. For example, at times there will be a need for an urgent response and this will be an important part of delivery</p>	<p>A good response which sufficiently demonstrates their ability to provide a responsive service to ESS including KPIs and is supported by software. It is explained how this will support out-of-hours services. More detail and a more personalised approach to working with a very small scale organisation would have raised the score.</p>	3.33	12.50%

Question	Smarts Full Feedback	Moderated Average Score	Questions Weighted Scores
<p>Risk Management and Business Continuity (15%) The tenderer shall also provide details of their procedures to ensure that any risks, for example, political, reputational, communication, operational and financial can impact on the provision of the service and what action you would propose to mitigate these risks and ensure business continuity</p>	<p>Good response which provided separate assessment of risks on ESS' day to day work and wider operational/business plan recovery risks. Clear understanding of political and reputational risks to ESS (FOIs, fundings cuts), and includes measurements to assess whether the mitigation actions have been effective. Response would be stronger if it has gone into more detail about ESS specific risks beyond stating general risks posed to all public bodies in Scotland especially due to the position of ESS as a regulator and as a very small organisation.</p>	3.00	11.25%
<p>Capability (15%) The tenderer should provide information on how they will ensure the project team have the skills, knowledge, and resources to fulfil the requirement. Your answer should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The expertise and skill of the team who will be delivering the services as a whole • Name any Key Contractor Personnel (e.g. the account manager) explaining their role and responsibilities • The tenderer should also outline any mitigations for risks relating to staff capabilities, (i.e. absences, staff turnover, etc.) 	<p>A good response overall which provided information on contacts and their role descriptions including mitigating actions for covering leave and/or sudden changes. Good information on capability including media relations, though there is a gap in digital marketing expertise proposed.</p>	3.00	11.25%
<p>Environment (5%) The Tenderer must explain what strategies and policies they have in place to reduce their impact on the environment including, if applicable, efforts to reduce carbon impact and scope 3 emissions. If the tenderer has an environmental policy/statement of intent or system in place, such as an ISO 14001 accreditation, please provide a copy.</p>	<p>The response demonstrated a good understanding of the context of net zero. Goals have been set to reduce their carbon footprint, however they are not SMART objectives and it is unclear how progress towards the goals can or will be measured or if a detailed plan how they intend to achieve them has been developed. No sustainability plan was provided, but they have provided information on historical reporting and are B. Corp certified.</p>	2.00	2.50%
Total			83%
Overall Quality Score			58%