



## The Eco House



**Invitation to tender to create a Master Plan for the  
refurbishment and re-launch of The Eco House, Leicester,  
supported by a feasibility assessment**

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire (GWLL) manages the Eco House on behalf of Leicester City Council as an exemplar, low carbon show home, organic garden and community facility. Constructed in 1989, the Eco House is now 21 years old and requires considerable modernisation and remodelling to bring it back up to showcase standards as a visitor attraction for members of the public, as an educative and interpretative facility and as a viable community hub.
- 1.2 In partnership with Highcross Leicester, Groundwork Leicester & Leicestershire is seeking to engage a consultant that can work with us to deliver a consultancy project involving feasibility and Master Planning to achieve the following main aims:
- a) To provide best practice advice, and a plan to achieve, the total refurbishment of the Eco House, including retro-fitting and the installation of new technologies capable of enabling the EcoHouse to perform to at least the same levels as those set out in the Retrofit for the Future programme.
  - b) To devise an attractive and compelling methodology to demonstrate and interpret the technology behind energy efficiency and energy conservation in the Eco House in a way that will engage and inform people of all ages that visit the facility.
  - c) To assist the development of a strategy to establish the Eco House as a place for sustainable retail and as a more active community hub capable of engaging members of the public in organic gardening, energy conservation and other environmental projects.
- 1.3 Interested parties are being contacted by GWLL that may wish to be considered for this project. An initial expression of interest is required. Three companies will then be invited to submit a full tender to deliver this project.
- 1.4 GWLL expects that the consultant appointed to deliver this project will be an expert in the field of sustainable homes with a track record in delivering completed projects on time and within budget. S/he will be willing to add to the brief from the perspective of their detailed knowledge and understanding of this important subject area. The final Master Plan will be required to enable the company that is subsequently engaged to fulfill the brief to comply with RIBA contract standards.
- 1.5 The initial consultancy work involves elements of design and strategic marketing planning. GWLL anticipates that agencies might collaborate to deliver the outcomes required within this brief, therefore a joint tender for this work will be accepted.
- 1.6 The fee available for this work is £7,000.
- 1.7 Details of how to make an application to deliver this project are set out at section 4.

## **2. Background to the Eco House**

- 2.1 The Eco House was the country's first environmental show home when it opened in 1989 – its purpose being to demonstrate sustainable living in a domestic setting in both a home and garden setting. Since then it has attracted over 100,000 visitors. The Eco House is owned by Leicester City Council (LCC) and operated by GWLL on a long term lease for a pepper-corn rent (GWLL is presently discussing the terms of the lease with the City Council and is also investigating the possibility of asset transfer). It is located within Western Park, close to the city, with use of an adjacent



public car park. An extension was added to the house in 2000, with financial support from LCC and the National Lottery, and this was the last major piece of work undertaken at the facility.

- 2.2 The Eco House is open to the general public at limited times. It also provides pre-booked tours, mainly for school and community groups. The Eco House demonstrates renewable energy generation, home energy efficiency (heating and domestic appliances), recycling (home and garden), recycled fabric and materials and market-place home technology.
- 2.3 Subsidiary activities include hire of the training room (capacity 20), a coffee area and shop retailing “green” household products and “eco” gifts and souvenirs. Courses on organic food growing are delivered in the gardens. There were 3,850 visitors in 2009/10. Public entrance fees are £2.50; pre-booked tours are priced from £70 to £130 dependent on group size.
- 2.4 GWLL has identified a clear development need at the Eco House. The facility is currently operating below its physical capacity. Its technology is outdated and the house does not comply with current low carbon emission standards. Some visitors are complimentary about the experience but the general view is that it feels a little dated and “tired” – which may deter other visitors. It is also unlikely to attract repeat visits except as an educational facility. Its retail and café areas are under utilised, the former has minimal turnover.
- 2.5 In the past two years, GWLL has benefited from a relationship with the Highcross Partnership, based in Leicester. Highcross has sponsored the Eco House, as one of its preferred charity projects; part of the donation in 2009/10 was used to produce new plans for the Eco House gardens and to support a bid to the National Lottery. GWLL and Highcross have both agreed in principal to invest the remaining funds to initiate a project that will redevelop the Eco House over the next 3 years.
- 2.6 It has been timely to reconsider and restate the purpose of the Eco House before embarking on a significant redevelopment, given the house has been open for 20+ years and things have changed. The purpose should be consistent with GWLL’s mission and the terms of the lease. The GWLL management team has debated its future positioning and produced a Vision Statement (attached at Annex One) and this has now been agreed by the GWLL board.

### **3. Responding to the Tender Brief**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 The Vision Statement (attached at Appendix One) states our intended vision of what we intend the EcoHouse to be once it has been refurbished and refreshed. While we have a clear view of it, we do not wish to be prescriptive at this stage and envisage the appointed consultant/s will work with us to further develop our understanding of what the Eco House can be.
- 3.1.2 This section provides detailed information which the consultant will be expected to respond to in the delivery of some feasibility components and the subsequent creation of a Master Plan. It is divided into five sections:
  - 1) Development aims and research that has been undertaken by Groundwork Leicester & Leicestershire to date covering: a) other Eco Houses; b) the customer base for the Eco House; c) industry and how it



will benefit from the refurbishment of the Eco House; and d) how we will maintain the integrity of the refurbishment process.

- 2) Marketing proposition.
- 3) Financial brief.
- 4) Measuring impact.
- 5) Indicative timetable.

3.1.3 The first five sections need to work simultaneously, and in a coherent manner, and be in line with the indicative timetable if the aim of the Vision Statement for the EcoHouse is to be achieved.

3.1.4 We anticipate the feasibility studies, Master Planning process and final documentation will be crafted around these five main areas and help us to understand and make decisions about how we engage specialists to help us realise our ambitions for the Eco House.

## 3.2 Development aims

3.2.1 GWLL has identified the following general development aims to inform its proposed refurbishment of the Eco House. These are to:

- a) Develop a new contemporary look and visitor experience.
- b) Update to market-place technologies and showcase emerging and futuristic technologies and retro-fit with the aim of enabling the Eco House to perform to at least the same levels as those set out in the Retrofit for the Future programme.
- c) Improve public engagement and educational facilities (displays, interactions, etc).
- d) Improve income generation from visits, retail and associated services, see Section 3.4.
- e) Enable better marketing and promotion of the Eco House (see section 3.4).
- f) Extend the reach of the Eco House through the creation of a virtual experience.

3.2.2 Positioning the Eco House for the future is crucial if the aims of the Vision Statement are to be fulfilled and continue to be of relevance for visitors. However, remembering the lessons of the past and the good practice developed during the first twenty years of its existence are also important. It is anticipated that the general content of the Eco House will change slightly - the show home will include a kitchen, bathroom, living room and bedroom. Services will include catering, retail, conveniences and educational facilities (training room and resource centre). The environmental, financial and other benefits of sustainable living should be significant and highlighted through a more flexible and exciting public engagement, where possible in an interactive manner.

## 3.3 Market proposition

3.3.1 Key questions in determining how the EcoHouse could develop a marketing proposition include:

- a) Why will people visit the Eco House?
- b) What should be the main draw or distinctiveness of the Eco House?
- c) Who will visit the Eco House?
- d) Are there a range of offers that can be made to different visitor segments (see target audience list at 3.3.3 below)?



- e) How can the Eco House support the needs of students and professionals operating within the service areas of housing, energy efficiency and other low carbon technologies?
- f) How can the Eco House be positioned with respect to other facilities in the region and nationally?

3.3.2 Research into other Eco Houses in the UK is currently being undertaken by GWLL staff. This work will be available to support the appointed consultant in addressing the questions listed above.

3.3.3 GWLL envisages that the following key target audiences for the EcoHouse will include:

<b>Audience</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Location</b>
General public	Those already committed to “sustainable living” or interested in improving their environmental impact.	50 mile radius?
General public	Casual visitors – those with a passing interest who either live or are visiting locally.	10 mile radius
Schools & education organisations	Eco House is already used by the EMAS team and could form part of a more explicit offer to schools (e.g. as part of the government’s sustainable schools agenda).	Regional but predominantly within Leicestershire
Local business	Suppliers of “sustainable living” goods and services that wish to demonstrate their products and associate their branding to the Eco House	Regional and national
Housing providers	Those with interests in refurbishing existing housing stock to a high standard, fuel poverty issues and the performance of a high specification environmental home.	National
Business	Those wishing to incorporate environmental sustainable linked to a presence in the community as part of their CSR agenda.	Larger businesses that are either rooted in or have a significant local presence and CSR agenda.

3.3.4 Signage at the Eco House is presently low-key and indistinctive. GWLL is currently in the process of utilising an interim measure for on-street signage but this will need to be reviewed in conjunction with the whole of the refurbishment of the Eco House. GWLL anticipates that a clear and high profile signage strategy can be developed and agreed with the local authority, possibly similar to that of the National Space Centre, in order to attract visitors to, and within, Leicester.

3.3.5 GWLL anticipates that the refurbishment and redevelopment of the Eco House will generate considerable interest and offer an opportunity to “future market” the facility. How we can capitalise on this potential interest should be considered as part of this submission. For example, how might GWLL develop a relationship with, for example, Green Building Magazine, or the Leicester Mercury in order to have the refurbishment work profiled throughout its duration?



- 3.3.6 The marketing brief also needs to assess how GWLL can develop interest amongst local communities interested in drawing up a Master Plan for the refurbishment process. This might involve using local PR, articles on the GWLL website or consultation events. We are also required to engage our corporate sponsors, Highcross Ltd, in this process.

### 3.4 Financial Brief

- 3.4.1 GWLL anticipates that as part of the Master Planning process, the appointed consultant/s will arrive at an accurate figure for the cost of refurbishment and upgrading to the Eco House. This financial modelling will be developed collaboratively with GWLL staff based partly on their assessments of what might be required to create and utilise distinctive and innovative technologies and user engagement tools.
- 3.4.2 Currently, the Eco House is part subsidised by GWLL's Service Level Agreement with Leicester City Council and it is also self-income generating. Currently, the Eco House has a shop and a café, charges for admission, tours for groups and room hire for the small conference room/education room. This year the Eco House has £34,000 of funding from an SLA through LCC, £14,776 through GW PDF and £13,876 from sales, room bookings This means that we would need to quadruple our sales through the shop and café to make the Eco House financially sustainable.
- 3.4.3 Ideally, GWLL would like the Eco House to be a stand alone, self financing component of its wider service delivery structure. Once refurbished, in order to achieve this, existing income streams will need to be strengthened and new ones identified. A more commercial outlook is a necessity if this aim is to be realised.
- 3.4.4 The design brief for the Eco House should therefore include strategies and provision to address GWLL's financial aims, this will include a sustainable/fair trade retail plan, acquisition of fee paying users (in whatever category) and other possible income generating activities Key questions that will need to be addressed include:
- a) The realism of our aims for income generation.
  - b) What is the best income generating model for the Eco House? E.g. Shop + café + organic plant nursery? Shop or café or organic plant nursery? Something entirely different?
  - c) How much profit can be expected from the business situated where it is? Are there other models locally in a similar position?
  - d) We will be seeking funding for the refurbishment, would it be wise to include provision for taking the pressure off developing a profitable business by including staff time in the funding bid? We can then develop the business side slowly.

### 3.5 Maintaining the integrity of the refurbishment

- 3.5.1 In order to demonstrate the Eco House complies with Retrofit for the Future programme standards, and where various components of the house score measure against this standard, GWLL would like to introduce a scoring system for all materials used on the refurbishment. This will have the effect of ensuring that GWLL can demonstrate compliance with the standard and that visitors are able to scrutinize all materials, services, and products being used with a view to using this information for their own purposes. This scoring



system will take into account embodied energy, recycled materials used, the ability to recycle, payback periods, distance travelled, fair-trade, the ability to replace (when new technologies arrive) and cost, where appropriate.

### 3.6 Measuring impact / what does success look like?

3.6.1 Once refurbishment is completed, GWLL envisages that the success and impact of the EcoHouse will be measured using the following indicators:

- a) Visitor numbers (these will increase significantly).
- b) People changing their behaviour as a result of visiting.
- c) The Eco House is used by housing/regeneration professionals as an exemplar of Eco-renovation.
- d) The Eco House is Zero Carbon to run.
- e) The Eco House performs better financially (and ultimately is viable as a stand alone unit). See the Financial Brief.
- f) The Eco House is cost effective and its technology is accessible and viable for all.
- g) Visitors enjoy the experience and see it as exciting, inspirational, educational and fun.

### 3.7 Indicative Time Table

3.7.1 GWLL envisages that the timetable for the implementation of the feasibility study elements, the creation of a Master Plan and subsequent acquisition of funding to redevelop the house and to carry out refurbishment will be roughly time-tabled as follows:

<b>Indicative Timetable (2010)</b>	
<b>2010</b>	
31 <sup>st</sup> March	Meeting with High Cross Team (completed)
15 <sup>th</sup> April	Internal discussion paper on future positioning (completed)
26 <sup>th</sup> April	GWLL Board Discussion (completed).
May	Refine vision and mission (completed).
2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Progress meeting with High Cross Team (completed).
28 <sup>th</sup> June	GWLL Board approval of new vision and mission (completed).
July	Further discussion with LCC (pending).
July-August	Market research and business planning
September / October	Prepare consultant's brief and appoint consultant.
October / December	Consultancy period: preparation of Master Plan.
<b>2011</b>	



January/February	Review design proposals
February onwards	Fund raising and engaging partners.
September	Build starts
<b>2012</b>	
July 2012	Build part of project complete

#### **4. Our requirements of the appointed Consultant**

##### Stage One

4.1 Submit a two A4 page "Expression of Interest" detailing:

- a) Your interest in undertaking the project.
- b) Your intended approach.
- c) Whether you will be working a partner or collaborative agency.
- d) A brief synopsis of similar or related work that you have delivered previously.

Please submit the EOI by 4pm on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to:

Chris Shaw, Assistant Director, Groundwork Leicester and Leicestershire, Parkfield, Leicester, LE3 6HX,

##### Assessment

4.2 Resulting from this process, we shall choose three companies to invite to tender in full as follows at Stage Two.

##### Stage Two

4.3 You will be invited to submit a detailed brief incorporating the following key issues:

- a) A written statement detailing how you will address the key issues described in section three above. You will be asked to ensure that you make reference to how the EcoHouse can be enabled to perform to at least the same levels as those set out in the Retrofit for the Future programme; how an effective marketing strategy could be introduced and how new income streams might be developed.
- b) A description of how you propose to work collaboratively with GWLL staff and local communities in the design and development of the Master Plan.
- c) A timetable with dates for this piece of work.
- d) A breakdown of your proposed budget including day rates.
- e) Examples of similar projects that you have undertaken, your approach to the project (i.e. community engagement, consultation etc) and the results (enclose a case study if you have one). Please also demonstrate how you have complied with contract timetables. Because of the nature of the Eco House, you should also highlight any commercial design work you have carried out with a view to





bringing together and balancing the two sides of our project, the integration of a show home and the shop/café.

- f) How you will comply with environmental best practice within your consultancy approach.
  - g) Your ability to market and showcase this project as it progresses with the aim of creating an exemplar programme capable of generating significant interest and funding.
  - h) Two references.
- 4.4 Full details of how to submit this tender will be sent to the three companies chosen to proceed. .
- [chris.shaw@groundwork.org.uk](mailto:chris.shaw@groundwork.org.uk)
- 4.5 The closing date for the submission of tenders shall be Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010 (12 noon).

#### Further Information

- 4.6 If you require further information about this information to tender please contact Chris Shaw or Gavin Fletcher on 0116 2220222.



**GROUNDWORK**  
LEICESTER & LEICESTERSHIRE

## **Annex One – Eco House Vision Statement 2010**

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The Eco House is Britain's original environmental show-home where visitors experience and learn about sustainable living in a realistic setting.

The Eco House inspires people to improve their quality of life and environmental impact through a wide range of practical, affordable and behavioural decisions particularly in the areas of energy efficiency, the use of renewable technologies and own food production.

The fully refurbished Eco House is –

**A lifetime home.** It adapts to people's changing needs and enables a lower impact lifestyle making it easier to work from home, easier to grow food at home, tackles fuel poverty and uses hi-tech and low-tech solutions to be cheaper to run and more comfortable to live in.

**A future home.** The Eco House contains leading edge technologies and is future proofed for the next half century to take advantage of new and emerging technologies quickly, cheaply and effectively.

**An example home.** It demonstrates how one of the biggest issues facing the UK, that of reducing CO2 emissions in our existing housing stock, can be tackled. It provides an exemplar for the refurbishment of existing housing in a modern, effective, realistic, thoughtful and creative way. It is a 'Zero Carbon' house.

The Eco House is the leading educational resource for schools and other interested groups in Leicester and Leicestershire, runs high quality events and provides the most up-to-date information to encourage, educate and inspire visitors of all ages. Whilst it is a localised resource, the messages and examples are national, the Eco House responds to this through imaginative marketing and on-line presence.

In order to support the visitor and educational experience, the Eco House is financially sustainable and draws upon a strong and wide ranging partnership of the business, public and charitable sectors.