

**Title:** Photography Services Framework  
**Portfolio:** Operations  
**Responsible Director:** Alan Reiss, Director of Operations  
**Report Author:** Ben Cuthbertson, Senior Communications Officer

## **Purpose of the report**

This report seeks approval to award contracts under the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA) Photography Services Framework covering:

- Lot 1: Press and PR Photography
- Lot 2: Staff Portraits and Corporate Photography
- Lot 3: Regional Landscapes and Architectural Imagery

## **Recommendations**

The Head of Content is recommended to approve the award of contracts to the successful suppliers appointed to the Photography Services Framework, up to a maximum value of £99,000 excluding VAT across the full framework term, establishing the framework for an initial period of two years commencing August 2026, with options to extend for up to a further two years.

The suppliers recommended for approval, following scoring the highest within the framework per lot, are:

### **Lot 1: Press and PR Photography**

- The Bigger Picture Agency LTD
- The Social Co Academy
- Now North East Ltd.
- Gavin Forster Photography LTD

### **Lot 2: Staff Portraits and Corporate Photography**

- Now North East Ltd
- Creo Communications Ltd.
- The Bigger Picture Agency LTD
- The Social Co Academy

### **Lot 3: Regional Landscapes and Architectural Imagery**

- Graeme Peacock
- Creo Communications Ltd.
- The Bigger Picture Agency LTD
- The Social Co Academy

## **Executive Summary**

The North East Mayoral Strategic Authority requires access to professional photographic services to support its communications, marketing, engagement and promotional activities.

Photography plays a vital role in showcasing the Mayor's priorities, promoting investment opportunities, highlighting regional assets and infrastructure, supporting media activity, and providing high-quality visual content for residents, businesses and stakeholders.

An open competitive procurement exercise was undertaken to establish a framework of approved suppliers capable of providing photography services across three specialist lots. The framework will provide a compliant, efficient and flexible mechanism for commissioning photography services as required while ensuring value for money and maintaining high professional standards.

The total estimated value of the framework is £99,000 excluding VAT over its full duration. The framework supports delivery of the Authority's communications and promotional objectives and will help ensure the North East is represented through high-quality imagery across regional, national and international channels.

## **A. Context**

### **1. Background and Procurement Overview**

The North East MSA regularly commissions photography services to support communications campaigns, media activity, stakeholder engagement, marketing materials, publications, digital content and event delivery.

To ensure continued access to high-quality photographic services, an open procurement exercise was undertaken via the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO) Open Portal. A tender notice was published on the UK government's Find a Tender Service in June 2026. The procurement established a framework arrangement covering three service areas:

- **Lot 1: Press and PR Photography**  
Provision of responsive photography for announcements, launches, ministerial visits, events and media activity.
- **Lot 2: Staff Portraits and Corporate Photography**  
Provision of professional portraits and corporate imagery for internal and external communications purposes.
- **Lot 3: Regional Landscapes and Architectural Imagery**  
Provision of photography showcasing the region's landscapes, places, infrastructure, regeneration projects and investment opportunities.

The framework was advertised with an estimated maximum value of £99,000 excluding VAT over the full framework term and an initial duration of two years with options to extend for up to two further years.

Tenders were evaluated in accordance with the published procurement documentation using the specified quality and commercial criteria. Evaluation was undertaken by an appropriately constituted panel and moderated in line with the Authority's procurement procedures.

The highest scoring suppliers within each lot have been identified and are recommended for appointment to the framework.

The framework will operate on a call-off basis, enabling services to be commissioned quickly and efficiently when required whilst ensuring ongoing value for money.

Appointment to the framework does not guarantee any minimum level of spend.

### **2. Procurement Exercise**

- 2.1** A procurement exercise was undertaken in accordance with the North East MSA's Commissioning and Procurement Rules to appoint suitably qualified suppliers to the Photography Services Framework.

The Framework comprises 3 Lots:

- Lot 1 – Press and PR Photography
- Lot 2 – Staff Portraits and Corporate Photography
- Lot 3 – Regional Landscapes and Architectural Imagery

A maximum of four suppliers will be allocated to each Lot.

- 2.2** Bids were invited via the OPEN e-tendering service from suppliers with demonstrable experience in Photography Services, with submissions assessed against pre-published quality and price criteria.
- 2.3** A total of 34 compliant bids were received, details can be found at Appendix A (Confidential).

### **3. Outcome of the Procurement Exercise**

- 3.1** Following evaluation, 6 suppliers across all 3 Lots achieved the highest overall score and identified as providing the most advantageous tender, demonstrating strong technical capability, relevant experience, and value for money, and are therefore appointed to the Photography Services Framework.
- 3.2** Suppliers appointed to the Photography Services Framework and the evaluation criteria can be found at confidential Appendix A.
- 3.3** Call off contracts will be awarded by either Direct Award and/or Mini Competition as defined below.

#### **Direct Award:**

Call off contracts up to and including the value of £10,000 excl. VAT will be awarded as Direct Awards according to the ranking and availability of suppliers on the framework: i.e. the top-ranked supplier will be invited to work with us first. If they have no availability, we will invite the second-ranked supplier and if they are unavailable, we will invite the third ranked supplier.

The Authority will:

- award directly without further competition; and
- issue a Call Off Contract based on the Framework's pre disclosed terms and pricing structure.

#### **Mini Competition:**

The invitation will refine the requirement within the framework scope and apply the Lot's published evaluation methodology.

The contract will be awarded to the supplier offering the most advantageous tender in accordance with the published evaluation method.

Call off contracts awarded under the Framework will remain within the defined scope and value limits set out for the Framework and for each Lot. Call off contracts may be awarded for a period that is appropriate and proportionate to the services being procured. Call off contracts may continue beyond the end date of the Framework, provided they are awarded before the Framework expires and remain consistent with its scope and terms.

## **B. Impact on North East Mayoral Strategic Authority Objectives**

The Photography Services Framework supports the North East MSA's Corporate Plan and the Mayor's priorities by enabling the Authority to communicate effectively with residents, businesses, stakeholders and partners.

The framework will support:

- Promotion of the Mayor's priorities and investment programmes.
- Increased visibility of regional projects, funding programmes and public services.
- Stronger place promotion and investment marketing activity.
- Consistent, professional visual communications across Authority channels.
- Showcasing the North East nationally and internationally through high-quality imagery.

The framework will also support delivery of campaigns across transport, housing, skills, culture, business growth, child poverty reduction and other strategic programmes.

## **C. Key risks**

### **Quality of commissioned outputs**

The framework mitigates this risk through a competitive procurement process which assessed suppliers' experience, portfolio quality and ability to meet requirements.

### **Capacity and responsiveness**

Appointing multiple suppliers across each lot provides resilience and flexibility, ensuring photography services can be commissioned at short notice when required.

### **Value for money**

The framework establishes pre-approved suppliers and agreed rate structures, enabling the Authority to secure services efficiently whilst maintaining competitive pricing.

### **Reputational risk**

High-quality imagery is essential to professional communications and place promotion activity. The framework ensures access to suitably qualified suppliers capable of delivering work to the required standard.

## **D. Corporate Implications**

### **D1. Financial and other resources implications**

The framework has an estimated maximum value of £99,000 excluding VAT across its full duration. Expenditure will be funded through existing approved communications and operational budgets as services are commissioned. Appointment to the framework does not create a commitment to spend the full value of the framework. No additional staffing resources are required.

### **D2. Legal implications**

The procurement exercise was conducted in accordance with Section 4.1 of the Authority's Constitution and the Procurement Act 2023.

The comments of a representative of the Monitoring Officer have been incorporated in the report.

### **D3. Equalities implications**

The North East MSA has had due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

The establishment of the framework does not give rise to any adverse equality impacts. The framework will support the production of inclusive communications and promotional materials representing the diverse communities of the North East.

### **D4. Consultation and engagement**

The procurement exercise was developed in collaboration with: Communications and Engagement Team, Procurement Team, Legal Services, Finance colleagues. Relevant portfolio and senior officers have been kept informed throughout the procurement process.

**E. Appendices**

Appendix A - Photography Services Framework Bids & Scores (Confidential)

**F. Background papers**

[Photography Services Framework Tender Notice](#)

**G. Contact officers**

Name: Ben Cuthbertson

Title: Senior Communications Officer

Email address: [Ben.Cuthbertson@northeast-ca.gov.uk](mailto:Ben.Cuthbertson@northeast-ca.gov.uk)

**H. Glossary**

None.