

Somerset Wildlife Trust

Honeygar Expression of Interest Brief

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Introduction to Honeygar

Somerset Wildlife Trust purchased Honeygar Farm, a former dairy farm, in 2021 to preserve and enhance the peatland that makes up the majority of the 81ha of land. This habitat is critical in the biodiversity and climate crises, and the Avalon Marshes is one of the few places in the UK where lowland peat is still held.

Interest in the project, and the opportunities to study lowland peat, has been considerable and the Trust wants to harness this interest to deliver a National Centre for Lowland Peat Research.

The Trust's vision is for Honeygar to become an internationally recognised hub for research, innovation, and collaboration in lowland peatland restoration. We will drive scientific understanding of the management of lowland peatlands on a local, national and international scale.

The emerging masterplan for Honeygar, underpinned by the business plan, will meet the needs of professionals, academics and students to increase our collective knowledge, skills and experience. It will meet a need in Somerset, and the wider UK, for in situ scientific study, allowing groups to learn and influence change in the management and restoration of lowland peatland landscapes. The Honeygar buildings will showcase best practice in green infrastructure; informing the approach for homes, learning and workspaces, for wildlife and for the creation of more flood resilient communities.

We envisage research & monitoring studies of the fauna and flora of this unique habitat. Innovative technology will help us to understand the importance and interrelated connections of lowland peat, greenhouse gas emissions, water level management and water quality. We will work closely with landowners, sharing this knowledge to aid them in managing land to benefit nature while generating income from it. Visitors to Somerset and local communities will be able to stay at Honeygar and participate in VIP behind the-scenes tours, providing immersive experiences with nature, that showcase the importance of the landscape and enable meaningful connections with nature.

The Trust is looking for an Architect or Architects to design the buildings at Honeygar, using the existing buildings and materials wherever possible to deliver a sustainable, resilient and delightful place for students and academics to carry out their studies.

The opportunity

The Trust is seeking an Architect or Architects to design the buildings at Honeygar. The successful practice(s) will be part of a team comprising;

- Structural / Civil Engineer
- Cost Consultant
- M&E Engineer / Energy Consultant
- Landscape Architect
- Principal Designer
- Planning Consultant

The client will be Somerset Wildlife Trust, which has employed a full-time, dedicated project manager to lead the team.

The appointment will initially be up to submission of a planning application, with the Architect(s) also asked to design key details for each building. The contract type for delivery of the buildings is not yet known, so it is not possible to foresee whether the appointment might continue post-contract. Once the appointment has been made, the Architect(s) will be paid their agreed fee in the following stage payments:

- Completion of Stage 1 10%
- Completion of Stage 2 30%
- Completion of Stage 3 40%
- Completion of agreed details 10%
- Planning decision 10%



Stage 3 will be considered complete when the Planning Consultant confirms that all drawings required for the Planning Application have been provided. The Planning decision will be achieved when a Decision Notice (approval or refusal) has been issued by the Local Planning Authority.

As discussed in the following 'General Design Principles' section, it is expected that all buildings capable of repair and conversion will be retained. Where buildings are demolished, all salvageable materials will remain on site and be re-used.

It is envisaged that the Landscape Architect, working with the Civil Engineer, will design all external spaces and set ground levels. As such, the Architect(s) role will be to design buildings that sit within this landscape.

The buildings have been split into five lots of varying size and use types. Practices can express an interest in any or all the lots. Expressing an interest in a lot will not prejudice a practice's likelihood of success in another lot. If a practice would only wish to be involved as the sole architect, this can be stated in the expression of interest.



Who can express an interest?

The opportunity is open to ARB registered individuals and RIBA chartered practices.

Interest is also welcomed from groups of Part 2 students, where supported by their School of Architecture, and Part 3 final year candidates, where supported by their employer.

In all cases, the party that the Trust contracts with must have an appropriate level of Professional Indemnity Insurance and sufficient competency to act as a Designer under the CDM Regulations. Honeygar is located in the Somerset Levels, midway between Bristol and Taunton.

The Architect(s) will be expected to visit the site at least monthly and should consider this when deciding whether to express an interest.

How to express an interest

To formally express an interest and be considered for an invitation to tender, please email adam.preece@somersetwildlife.org by 5pm on 10 October 2024 with:

A covering email stating which lots you are interested in:

- Lot 1 Education: Labs, Lecture Theatre and Canteen
- Lot 2 Offices
- Lot 3 Student Accommodation
- Lot 4 Workshop
- Lot 5 Caretaker's House
- Any Lot

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- Only all Lots.
- 2 A statement not exceeding 500 words explaining why you are interested in this opportunity.
- A brochure or portfolio of your work which demonstrates your experience relevant to the lot(s) that you are interested in. Please keep file size below 10mb. Your submission will be read on screen and not printed, so very high resolution images are not necessary.

This approach is designed to be simple and to minimise the cost and time commitment required to express an interest. It is not necessary to submit any site analysis or design proposals at this stage

What happens next?

All submissions will be reviewed by a panel comprising the below Trust staff or their nominees. Trustees may also participate in the process. All submissions will be reviewed by a consistent panel:

- The CEO
- The Director of Nature Recovery
- The Director Action for Nature
- The Director of Business Planning and Development
- The Head of Innovation and Evidence
- The Honeygar Project Manager

A minimum of three practices will be invited to tender for individual or combined lots. Practices not invited to tender will be informed of the decision at the same time, but detailed feedback will not be provided unless specifically requested following the decision. The panel's decision will be final and not open to appeal. The tender process is anticipated to begin in October 2024.

Planning

The site does not have any relevant planning history and has been a farm for several hundred years.

Pre-application discussions with Planning Officers are underway and have been positive to date.

The planning strategy for the site is yet to be determined and is dependent on detailed feedback from Officers and whether a single architect or multiple architects are appointed.



The site

The site is owned freehold by Somerset Wildlife Trust. It sits approximately 500m west of the village of Westhay, which is itself equidistant between Highbridge and Glastonbury, right at the heart of the Somerset Levels.

On the following site plan, the whole of Honeygar Farm, approximately 81ha, is shown outlined in blue whilst the farmyard and access from the south via Burtle Road are outlined in red. All buildings will be inside the red line boundary.

As would be expected, the broader site is very level and sits at about 2m AOD. The farmyard sits at around 4m-5m AOD on a raised sand 'island'. Trial pits have established that strip foundations will be suitable across the farmyard for the proposed 1-3 storey buildings. An initial drainage strategy has been completed, and both foul and surface water drainage can be delivered via a gravity system to the west of the buildings.



The existing buildings

There are 13 existing buildings on site. Each has been reviewed briefly by a structural engineer and materials tested for asbestos. Small trial pits have been dug adjacent to each building's foundations to establish depth and type.

A very brief summary of the buildings follows. This is provided to aid understanding of what is on site; it is not necessary at this stage for potential bidders to identify which building would accommodate each use. Buildings N and O on the key plan below have been demolished and removed. The area labelled H is an open manure store currently used for site accommodation. It occupies an area of around 220m2.

A topographical survey of the entire site, including all buildings has been completed and will be made available at tender stage.



Building A



A three storey farmhouse of approximately 500m2 in total (including the usable roof space). The house has solid stone walls with sand and cement render. The ground floor is primarily stone flags laid on earth. The roof is a timber structure with clay pan tiles.

The house contains a number of attractive original details with an equal number of ill-considered modern interventions. The eastern gable has been rebuilt in concrete block and the western gable is cracking and beginning to collapse. Foundations are very shallow.

It is unlikely that this building can be refurbished as is, primarily because the ground floor will not meet modern standards of insulation and the foundations are too shallow to excavate beneath the floor to improve it. Having been abandoned for over six years, the house has fallen into disrepair and is suffering from water damage to the internal timber structures. It is a known bat roost and contains several birds' nests.

Building B



A single storey garage of approximately 110m2. The walls are single-skin blockwork and the roof is timber trusses with asbestos cement sheet covering. Windows are single glazed steel framed, and there is a powered roller shutter to the northern gable. The floor is concrete.

This building has several settlement cracks and is beginning to crack over the roller shutter. The floor slab has a large fracture running its length.

It is expected that Building B will be demolished and the concrete crushed for use elsewhere on site. However, it may be possible to repair it.

Building C



A concrete framed barn in good structural condition. The roof covering is asbestos cement and floor is concrete. The existing building is around 170m2 and is considered capable of conversion. Existing eaves height is around 4.7m above ground level and ridge height around 6m above ground level.

Building D



A single storey steel-framed shelter of around 175m2. The building has a concrete floor and is clad in corrugated metal.

This building is considered capable of conversion but will require repairs to its steel structure.

The building has a monopitch roof around 3.5m above ground level at the lower eaves and 4m above ground level at the upper eaves.

Building E



A single storey hybrid concrete and timber barn. The floor is earth and roof covering is non-asbestos cement sheet. The footprint is around 200m2.

The building is in good structural condition. Eaves height is around 3.5m above ground level and ridge height around 4.5m above ground level.

Building F



A single storey timber structure, partially clad in corrugated metal. The floor is made up of several uneven concrete slabs.

This building is not capable of reuse and will be demolished. It occupies a footprint of around 100m2 and enjoys long views to the south and east.

Building G



A single storey cattle shed with a steel frame and concrete block infill panels. The roof is asbestos cement and the floor is a concrete slab with several level changes.

The building is in sound condition and will require some repairs to the steel frame. It occupies a footprint of around 100m2 and has an eaves height around 3m above ground level. The roof is pitched, with a ridge height around 4.5m above ground level.

Building I



A single storey cattle shed of around 130m2. The building is steel framed. Two sides infilled with concrete block and the other two are solid stone. The floor is part concrete, part earth. The roof is asbestos cement.

Eaves height is around 3.2m above ground level and ridge height around 4.6m above ground level.

The building adjoins Building J and an existing doorway links the two.

Building J



Single storey milking stalls building of around 130m2 with a further open area of stalls of roughly equal size adjoining.

The building and adjoining area have solid stone wall along the south and west boundaries. The building is a timber structure of considerable age with a roof covering predominantly of corrugated metal with occasional clay ridge tiles.

Several of the original timber stanchions have rotted away causing the roof to slump and the entire structure is distorted.

Eaves levels vary from around 2.2m to little more than 1.5m above ground level.

This building will require extensive repair, but the timber frame is considered worthy of retention.

Building K



An open-sided steel-framed barn of around 85m2. The roof is asbestos cement and floor is earth. Three sides are infilled with concrete block.

The structural steel stanchions are heavily rotted at the bottom but the building is otherwise sound. The eaves are around 3.2m above ground level and the ridge around 4.2m.

Building L



Concrete-framed cattle shed of around 175m2. The barn has half-height concrete walls with corrugated metal cladding above. The roof is asbestos cement and the floor is concrete with various level changes.

The building is in good structural condition. Eaves height is around 3.1m above ground level and ridge height around 3.5m.

Building M



A single storey hybrid concrete and timber barn. The floor is earth and roof covering is non-asbestos cement sheet. The footprint is around 150m2.

The building is in good structural condition. Eaves height is around 3.5m above ground level and ridge height around 4.5m above ground level.

Building P



A single storey building comprising, in the northern section, a stone and brick building of some age and, in the southern section, a 20th century concrete blockwork extension.

The roof covering is corrugated metal and the floor is concrete. The older part of the building is in need of significant repair and has isolated areas of partial collapse.

General design principles

The Trust has established several principles that it wishes to see reflected in every building at Honeygar:

• Buildings must respect the nature and history of the Somerset Levels. The scale should remain rural and the impact on the landscape carefully considered and minimised.

• It is expected that the only materials leaving site will be asbestos and contaminated soil. Where buildings are capable of repair and reuse, that will be the preference, even though it may be cheaper to demolish and replace them. Where they are not capable of reuse, it is expected that buildings will be dismantled and their materials reused on site.

• Sustainable construction methods and materials to be used throughout. PIR insulation and uPVC windows are not to be used.

• Energy efficient through use of passive measures and renewable energy. Zero carbon emissions in use targeted.

• Water efficient, with rainwater harvested for re-use on site.

• All buildings to incorporate nature and enhance biodiversity. Nesting space and shelters for wildlife to be incorporated into the buildings from the outset instead of relying on bolt-on solutions. Green and brown roofs likely to be the norm.

• Climate resilience: The buildings should be able to withstand flooding and increasing summer temperatures.

• Energy resilience: The buildings should aim to be operational off-grid.

Lot-specific requirements

The use and spatial requirements for each lot are described briefly below. These descriptions are not prescriptive and, at this stage, are intended only to allow practices to consider their interest in each lot and their ability to meet the brief.

Lot 1 - Education: Labs, Lecture Theatre and Canteen

Wet Lab

The wet lab will be used for a variety of experiments, particularly around soil and water quality. It is envisaged to require around 100m2of space in total, with around 60% of this for the laboratory itself and the balance of 40% for cleaning, sterilisation and chemical storage.

Dry Labs

Four dry laboratories are required; three of these should be of around 60m2 each and capable of being combined into a single space. A further laboratory of around 35m2 should be provided and will be permanently separated from the others.

Lecture Theatre

A small lecture theatre / resource room of around 125m2 including two toilets (one accessible) is required.

Canteen

The canteen will be a multipurpose building of around 140m2. Its primary purpose will be as a dining space for students and academics, with space for 40-50 covers in refectory-style seating.

The canteen will also serve as an events, exhibition and community space. The building will need to incorporate a commercial kitchen, kitchen storage and two toilets (one accessible).

Lot 2 - Offices

Approximately 500m2 of office space is required. This should be completely selfcontained, including toilets, showers, meeting rooms, kitchen, storage and space for around twenty desks.

Lot 3 – Student Accommodation

Sleeping accommodation for visiting students and academics is required, comprising twin / double rooms, all en-suite, with 5% to be wheelchair accessible.

Approximately 60 bedspaces should be provided in total.

A common room, including lounge area, accessible toilet and kitchen should also be provided.

Lot 4 - Workshop

The workshop building will serve primarily as an area for Trust staff to construct, maintain and repair equipment. Additional, separate, spaces should be provided for a community potting shed and garden store.

It is envisaged that the building will be around 100m2, with around 60% used for the workshop and the balance split between the potting shed and garden store.

Lot 5 - Caretaker's House

A two-bedroomed house is required for a caretaker / site manager's residence. The house will be required to meet Nationally Described Space Standards and all aspects of Part M4(2).

Other Uses

Various ancillary spaces, such as plant rooms, storage and public toilets will be required. These will be assigned to lots as the layout and other proposals emerge.

Queries

Any queries on this document or the expression of interest process can be directed to **Adam Preece** via **adam.preece@somersetwildlife.org** and will receive a response within two working days.