



PART 1 – INVITATION TO TENDER

Plan development and operational implementation for cliff and mountaineering areas for the eradication of ferrets and rats from Rathlin Island.

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PROJECT NAME

Rathlin Acting For Tomorrow: Removing invasive non-native ferrets and rats from the Rathlin Island SPA, Northern Ireland.

PROJECT LOGO



PROJECT ACRONYM

LIFE Raft

PROJECT PARTNERS AND FUNDERS



LIFE Raft is a partnership between RSPB NI; Rathlin Development and Community Association; Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council; National Parks and Wildlife Service; Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust; and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

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1. ABOUT THE RSPB

1.1 The RSPB's vision

"A world richer in nature"

Imagine that the world has worked together to save nature. Birds and other wildlife are flourishing. Our natural environment is enriching people's lives. There's clean air and water, a stable climate, a sustainable economy and abundant wildlife. This is the vision we're working towards. Everything we do is bringing us closer.

1.2 Our mission

Saving the home we share with nature is our driving force. We bring people together to understand the threats facing our natural world, find sustainable solutions, and act to save it. Together we:

- save threatened wild birds and other wildlife
- protect, restore and create wild places
- inspire people to take action for nature.

For over 100 years we've been rallying people together to save nature. While we've got birds in our title, and birds are our focus, we work to save all nature. Because all nature is connected. For birds to thrive, the whole ecosystem must thrive. Right now, nature faces its biggest ever challenge. Exploitation, pollution and destruction of our natural world is being intensified by a planet in climate crisis. It's affecting all life – wild birds, other wildlife and humans alike. Nature is in crisis, but together we can save it, while using our natural world to help fight climate change.

In Northern Ireland, the RSPB has been operating for 50 years; we have 12,500 members, around 60 employees and 300 volunteers. Our long-term successes are a result of the RSPB adapting to change and seizing new opportunities.

For details on the RSPB's challenges and achievements in the previous financial year please go to

<https://ww2.rspb.org.uk/about-the-rspb/about-us/how-we-are-run/annualreview/>

1.3 Overarching Objectives of LIFE Raft

Further information about the LIFE Raft project is provided in Appendix 1.

The main objective of this project is to protect the internationally important assemblage of breeding seabirds that is the primary reason for the existence of the Rathlin Island SPA, while also enabling wider species recovery, by eradicating invasive non-native rats and ferrets from the island. The project is expected to lead to reversal of the declines that many seabird species have suffered on Rathlin in recent years, recolonisation of the island by seabirds that have gone extinct there, safeguarding of corncrake nesting attempts, and recovery of many other avian and non-avian species. In addition, it will build the resilience of the seabird assemblage to the impacts of oceanographic change and increasing human activity at sea.

As well as this main 'Objective 1', the project has three supplementary aims – as follows.

Objective 2 is to contribute to the recovery of the Rathlin economy following the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the longer term to its maintenance and growth. This will be achieved partly through the employment of local people and the use of local services during the project period, and partly through the creation of wider economic opportunities – linked for example to increased eco-tourism due to the recovery of the island's protected species. The principles of the EU's Green Deal will be applied to Rathlin, and the survival of the human population there as Northern Ireland's last offshore island community will be assured.

Objective 3 is to enable the Rathlin community and visitors to learn about and take pride in the natural heritage of the island and play an active role in conserving it. We will focus especially on empowering community members to lead on the biosecurity measures that will be required to ensure the legacy of the project, and on ensuring that visitors comply with these measures. However, we will also seek to increase awareness, understanding and 'ownership' more generally.

Objective 4 will be to contribute to wider learning in island restoration by sharing the lessons learned during the project. We will liaise with relevant conservation leaders throughout Europe, creating a lasting dialogue among island restoration experts in Northern Ireland, other parts of the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the rest of the EU. In particular, we will seek to enhance understanding of best practice for predator eradication on inhabited islands – which is increasingly necessary – assessing what is desirable, legal and practical for island communities.

2. OVERVIEW OF ERADICATION PROJECTS AS RELATING TO ROPE ACCESS AND MOUNTAINEERING

Eradication of invasive non-native mammal species must be viewed as an intensive effort to ensure that every individual is put at risk from the methods. Eradication must not be viewed as “control” intensified i.e., a temporary reduction of the population. The planning and operational effort required to achieve success and manage the prevailing risks is significant.

For the LIFE Raft project, we are eradicating ferrets beginning autumn 2023 and we will then start to eradicate rats in autumn 2024. Monitoring of the methods used in both the ferret and rat eradication project will be essential to ensure the project achieves the intended results.

Both eradication projects require access to all home ranges for each species. Therefore, the entire island of Rathlin Island is the focus of this project. Ferrets and rats are expected to inhabit the cliff and coastal areas of Rathlin Island where they must be targeted to ensure overall success for the LIFE Raft programme.

The cliff and coastal areas will be particularly challenging during both eradication projects. We expect to successfully target both ferrets and rats in these areas and access will require a combination of hiking into accessible areas; scrambling to other areas supported by safety lines; and/or full rope access.

2.1 Overview of Rathlin Island

Rathlin Island is a 1,438 ha island that lies 10 km off the north coast of County Antrim, Northern Ireland and 25 km from Scotland’s Mull of Kintyre. The island is a very distinctive reverse L shape and is 6 km from east to west and 4 km from north to south. It is Northern Ireland’s only inhabited offshore island with a permanent community of around 160 people. The number of people on the island can rise considerably during the summer season.

Rathlin is by far the largest seabird colony in Northern Ireland and remains one of the most important seabird breeding sites in the UK and Ireland. Rathlin Island is home to approximately 200,000-250,000 breeding seabirds.

The island has a range of designations and protections that cover the whole island or certain areas to protect its special habitats, species and landscape which include Special Protected Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ), Areas of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI) and it is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2.2 Overview of the eradication projects

	Eradicate ferrets	Eradicate rats
Feasibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deemed feasible due to three previous independent assessments (Bell 2000, Bell 2011, and Bell 2017) and a PhD study examining ferrets on Rathlin Island (Bodey 2009). • Mustelid eradication methods have been demonstrated successfully in New Zealand with growing understanding of methods required in the UK. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deemed feasible by independent feasibility study (Bell 2011 and Bell 2017). Based on ground-based bait stations method and second-generation anticoagulant with first generation as reserve option. • Recommended methods based on track record of success in similar projects on both inhabited and uninhabited islands. • The largest ground-based rat eradication project was Langara Island in British Columbia at 3,100 ha. In the UK, the largest ground-based project was on the Isle of Canna at 1,300 ha (Bell et al. 2011). Rathlin, by comparison is 1,450 ha • Similar projects that have seen the successful removal of rats in the UK using these techniques on populated islands include: Lundy Island (Appleton et al. 2006, Lock 2006, Bell 2019); the Isle of Canna (Bell et al. 2011); and St Agnes and Gugh (Bell et al. 2019).
Description and method statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live trapping in a grid system with dispatch by either shooting or lethal injection (final method to be confirmed). • Snap trapping using DOC250 kill traps on challenging terrain near the cliffs and when targeting the last few remaining individuals. • Monitoring will be required throughout the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of anticoagulant rodenticide in bait stations spread in a 50 x 50 m or 90 m x 90 m grid across the island with special operational considerations for community areas and the coastal cliff area. • Monitoring will be required throughout the project.

	Eradicate ferrets	Eradicate rats
Time of year	<p>October 2023 – March 2024 with island preparation before this time.</p> <p>This ensures the operation ideally starts after ferret breeding season and lasting a minimum of six months.</p> <p>The project will then transition into the rat eradication project. We expect some monitoring for ferrets during this transition time.</p>	<p>October 2024 – March 2025 with island preparation before this time.</p>
Community context	<p>Most eradication projects to date have been undertaken on uninhabited islands, though increasingly inhabited islands are also now being restored (DIISE 2018). However, with a population of approximately 160, Rathlin will also be amongst the most populous islands where the population comprises private residents rather than institutional staff (e.g. defence forces owned land or conservation).</p>	

2.3 Island zoning

Please see [LIFE Raft Rope Access and Mountaineering Plan Version 1.0.docx](#) for further information. This document provides essential information relevant to this tender and our expected methods.

2.4 Our team

The key people that the successful tender will engage with are:

John Kelly, Programme Manager: A key role of the Programme Manager is to authorise progression between the requirements and therefore allocation of budget. The Programme Manager will also formally manage this contract on behalf of the RSPB and work closely with the LIFE Raft team and appointed contractor.

David Tosh, Eradication Delivery Manager: Our Eradication Delivery Manager on island will be a key link with the community, assisting in plan development and refinement and ensuring RSPB H&S policies are communicated to the appointed contract.

Elizabeth (Biz) Bell, Eradication Technical Advisor: Our Eradication Technical Advisor has substantial experience in delivering similar projects worldwide. The RSPB and the appointed contractor should rely on her expertise to ensure plans proposed and developed will achieve our goal of eradicating ferrets and rats.

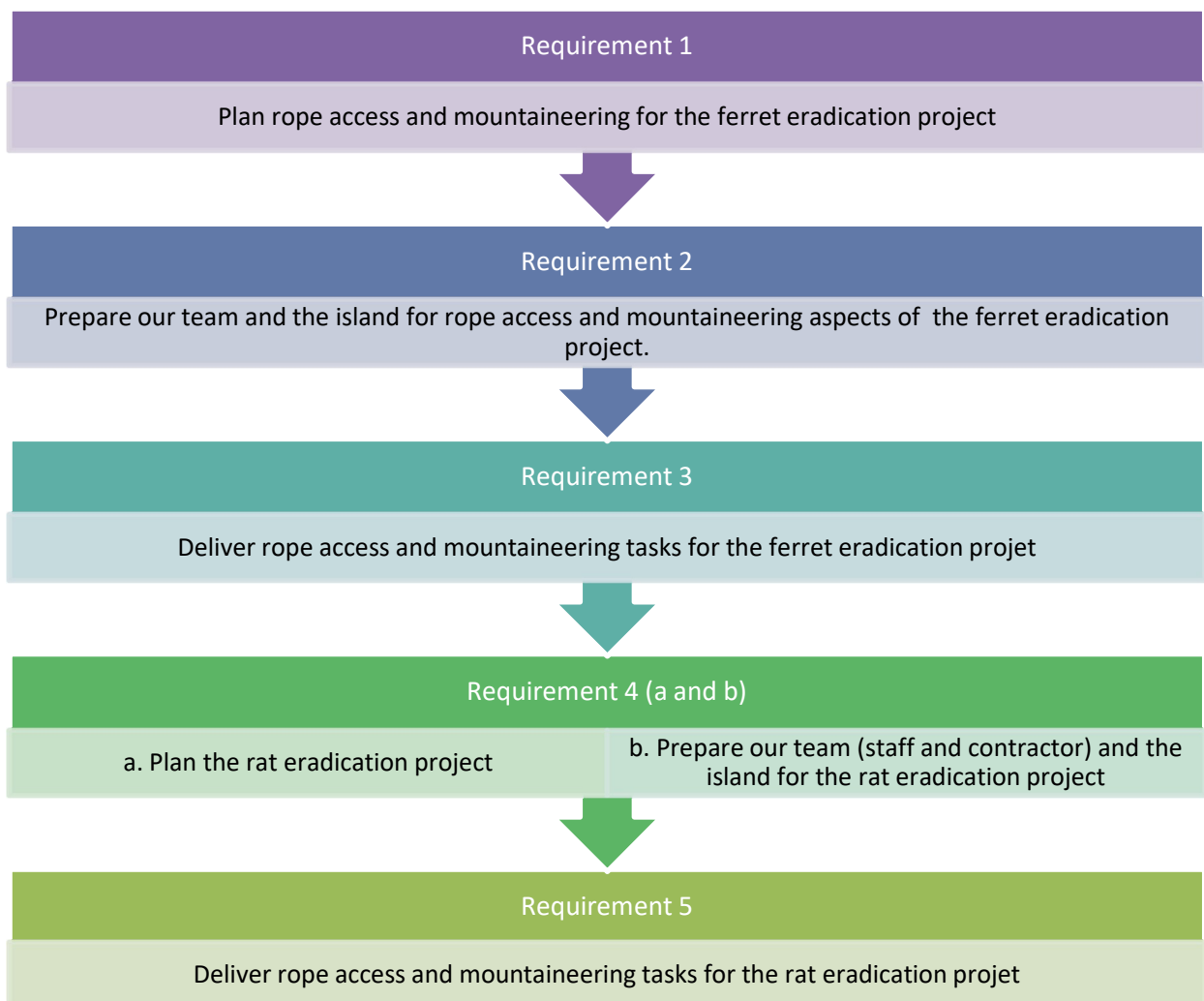
Collaborative working: Please note, we are aiming for a culture of collaboration and working on project documentation and delivery. We expect to work closely with the appointed contractor to

overcome project challenges we will encounter. Without collaborative working on tasks, our operational goals will be compromised.

3. STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENT

Fundamentally, we are aiming to target both ferrets and rats in their home ranges and in all suitable habitat for the respective species. We will also carry out monitoring throughout both projects. Due to the geography and terrain of Rathlin Island, rope access and mountaineering techniques will be required to achieve operational success. A single pregnant female, or a female/male pair of either species would lead to operational failure.

We have therefore designed our tender with requirements that follow on from each other. Learning should be expected throughout, and adaptation of plans is also expected. The requirements in this tender are intended to progress as follows:



3.1 Requirement 1: Develop rope access and mountaineering plan for ferret eradication project

Requirement 1: We will achieve a fully agreed plan for the rope access and mountaineering activities to ensure a successful ferret eradication project.

3.1.1 Timeline

From date of contract signing until end of May 2023.

3.1.2 Our identified tasks required to achieve Requirement 1

First and foremost, please consider the tasks you would take to plan for the rope and mountaineering aspects of the ferret eradication project. We want to know what you believe is needed to achieve success, who will be responsible for delivering these and by when.

We envisage the following tasks:

1. A project start-up meeting.
2. A formal review of the zones specified in **LIFE Raft Rope Access and Mountaineering Plan Version 1.0.docx** as identified by LIFE Raft staff as requiring: no rope access; limited rope access (fixed rope/hand rope/fall arrest system appropriate for the environment); or full rope access.
3. Your **ground-truthing of rope access and mountaineering** areas for the ferret (and rat eradication) projects.
4. A full **assessment of exact methods for rope access and mountaineering approaches** required on Rathlin to support the ferret (and rat eradication) element of the project.
5. Discussion with landowners regarding their specific requirements or permissions.
6. **Identification of rope access and mountaineering equipment** required to support the ferret eradication project.
7. **Review available assets on island and identification of additional requirements** for the safe storage and maintenance and use of rope access equipment.
8. **Develop recommendations on staffing strategy for rope access** and mountaineering to support the ferret eradication project. We have identified the following options:
 - a. Contractor supplies rope access and mountaineering staff under the terms of this ITT;
 - b. Contractor trains our team in both rope access and mountaineering but provides supervisory support; or
 - c. A hybrid of options a and b above.
9. Development of a Health and Safety plan to ensure staff safety and our compliance with legal duties for working at height.
10. A formal draft report that we can review and input to.
11. **Assist in the application of appropriate licenses** to undertake climbing or rope access work on Rathlin. This may require production of standard operating procedures or other relevant documents as requested by the regulators.
12. A formal meeting where all parties agree and sign off on the final version. This can be over

MS Teams to reduce T&S.

After the formal meeting, the Programme Manager will issue confirmation in writing (email or headed note paper) that the plan has been approved.

3.1.3 Specific guidance for tenders on setting your tasks

Please prepare your tender to include the above tasks.

If from your experience, you do not agree with a task we have identified, please provide a rationale for this or an alternate approach.

Please also ensure you develop and include tasks you believe are required from your expert knowledge.

3.1.4 Key performance indicators of Requirement 1

- i. A plan for all mountaineering and rope access requirements to achieve a successful ferret eradication project
- ii. If applicable, a training plan for members of our team to upskill them in rope access and/or mountaineering to ensure safe delivery by our team
- iii. A draft plan for consultation with our team
- iv. A final plan signed off and approved.
 - o This plan must ensure the RSPB and the contractor are compliant with the requirements of the Work at Height Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

3.2 Requirement 2: Prepare our teams and the island for ferret eradication

Requirement 2: Our team and the island will be fully prepared for rope access and mountaineering requirements of the ferret eradication project.

3.2.1 Timeline

We expect the timeline for this Requirement will overlap with some aspects of Requirement 1. We do not expect any overlap with Requirement 3.

Requirement 2 must be completed prior to initiating Requirement 3.

Therefore, planning for this Requirement will begin once the contract is signed with final work completed no later than 30th September 2023.

3.2.2 Tasks required to achieve Requirement 2

We expect the following tasks in any plan to **prepare the team**:

1. Participation in team meetings, from time to time.
2. Training of our team as per the agreed plan in Requirement 1.
 - a. There is an underpinning assumption that we can train members of our team to either an accredited standard or with a bespoke system in rope access and mountaineering. **Please address this assumption in your proposal**
3. We will have all equipment needed to safely carry out the agreed plan as per Requirement 1.
4. Your team will be trained in the safe use of ferret traps.
5. We will have an agreed audit system to ensure safety of ropes and other equipment.
6. We will have an agreed audit system to ensure effectiveness of traps laid by rope access and mountaineering specialists.
7. We will have fully agreed emergency response plans for the coastal and cliff areas by working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the Coastguard on Rathlin Island.
8. We will have an agreed "Toolbox" talk system with clear responsibilities understood and agreed.

We expect the following tasks to **prepare the island**:

9. Any regulatory requirements required by any relevant regulatory body e.g. HSENI or DAERA/NIEA.
10. Discussions with landowners and presentations to the community about the proposed work.
11. Establishing safety lines to assist mountaineering components.
12. Ensuring the storage shed and other island infrastructure will have all requirements in place to ensure the effective working on the rope access and mountaineering teams.
13. Placing all traps and monitoring equipment on site as per the agreed plan in advance of opening of traps to ensure trapping is ready to proceed effectively.

Please prepare your tender to include the above tasks.

Please also ensure you develop and include tasks you believe are required from your expert knowledge.

Please note, we are aiming for a culture of collaboration and working on project documentation together.

3.2.3 Key performance indicators of Requirement 2

- i. Full regulatory approval in place for project to proceed.
- ii. Agreed training of our team in rope access and/or mountaineering completed, if this approach is recommended and adopted.
- iii. Audit systems for proposed safety lines and equipment confirmed with clear responsibilities of who does what and when.
- iv. Emergency response plans agreed and confirmed with the RSPB and key stakeholders such as the Coastguard on Rathlin Island.
- v. All necessary equipment obtained and on island by the deadline.
- vi. Safety lines established as per the agreed plan.

3.3 Requirement 3: Deliver agreed rope access and mountaineering plan for ferret eradication

Requirement 3: We will have access to the rope access and mountaineering expertise required to deliver the agreed ferret eradication plans.

3.3.1 Timeline

The main activities for this Requirement are from October through to the end of March. At present, we are unable to estimate the team size required on island to carry out the rope access and mountaineering aspects of this contract. That information will be gathered in Requirements 1 and 2.

There may be *ad hoc* support required after this. We request tenders to consider this and provide costs for weekly work for rope access support.

3.3.2 Tasks required to achieve Requirement 3

This part of the contract will naturally follow on from Requirements 1 and 2 above.

As part of this tender, we are asking tenders to define Tasks needed to deliver rope access work. Tasks required should be based on your own expertise.

However, we expect the following tasks will be needed for a successful contract:

1. Establishing all lines as agreed and planned.
2. Maintaining trapping network in rope access areas as per the plan but with adaptive management required.
3. Carrying out rope access work as planned.
4. Maintaining any and all safety lines to legal requirements as per the agreed plan.
5. Maintaining all relevant equipment as per your legal requirements and as per the agreed plans.
6. Facilitating audits of trapping work by our team to ensure they are all set as per our operational requirements.
7. Carrying out monitoring during the main operation to ensure methods are effective (as per the plan that will be agreed).
8. Maintaining data inputting standards throughout.
9. Final reporting.
10. Provision of rope access and/or mountaineering support in an *ad hoc* manner until the start of the rat eradication project (please cost for a weekly basis that will be authorised by the Programme Manager).

3.3.3 Key performance indicators of Requirement 3

- i. All mountaineering lines established to the agreed plan.
- ii. All mountaineering lines maintained to ensure safety of our teams.
- iii. Rope access work proceeding along agreed lines and expectations.
- iv. Data and methods audited as agreed.
- v. Final report provided.

3.4 Requirement 4: Develop rope access and mountaineering plan for the rat eradication; and prepare our team and island

Requirement 4a: We will achieve a fully agreed plan for the rope access and mountaineering activities to ensure a successful rat eradication project

Requirement 4b: Our team and the island will be fully prepared for rope access and mountaineering requirements of the ferret eradication project.

This is a similar model as the ferret eradication project but with the expectation that project learning will be more advanced, allowing the combination into one Requirement.

3.4.1 Timeline

This part of the contract will naturally follow on from Requirements 1, 2 and 3 above. We are expecting a great deal of learning throughout those requirements which will be incorporated into planning and preparing the island and our team for the eradication of rats on island. Moreover, an effective contractor should actively consider the rat eradication project throughout the ferret eradication project. However, the most intensive activities for this Requirement are from April 2024 through to the end of March 2025. This covers the transition from the ferret eradication to the rat eradication project.

3.4.2 Tasks required to achieve Requirements 4a and 4b

Requirement 4a: Planning

1. A formal review of the most current version of the rope access plan and application of any lessons learnt during the ferret eradication project for the rat eradication project.
2. Any follow-up **ground-truthing of rope access and mountaineering** areas for the rat eradication project to plug any gaps in knowledge.
3. Discussion with landowners regarding their specific requirements or permissions.
4. Identification of staff requirements to achieve successful delivery of the plan.
5. **Identification of rope access and mountaineering equipment** will be required to support the rat eradication project
6. **Review available assets on island and identification of additional requirements** for the safe storage and maintenance and use of rope access equipment.
7. **Develop recommendations on staffing strategy for rope access** and mountaineering to support the rat eradication project. Similar to the ferret eradication project, we have identified the following options:
 - a. Contractor supplies rope access and mountaineering staff under the terms of this ITT;
 - b. Contractor trains our team in both rope access and mountaineering but provides supervisory support; or
 - c. A hybrid of options a and b above.
8. A formal draft plan that we can review and input to.
9. Development of a Health and Safety plan to ensure staff safety and our compliance with

legal duties for working at height.

10. **Assist in the application of appropriate licenses** to undertake climbing or rope access work on Rathlin. This may require production of standard operating procedures or other relevant documents as requested by the regulators.
11. A formal meeting where all parties agree and sign off on the final version. This can be over MS Teams to reduce T&S.

Requirement 4b: Preparation of our team and the island

At present, we are unable to estimate the team size required on island to carry out the rope access and mountaineering aspects of this contract. Understanding the team size will be a critical decision.

We expect the following tasks to prepare our team:

12. Participation in team meetings, from time to time.
13. Training of our team as per the agreed plan in Requirement 4a.
 - a. There is an underpinning assumption that we can train members of our team to either an accredited standard or with a bespoke system in rope access and mountaineering. Please address this assumption in your proposal
14. We will have all equipment needed to safely carry out the agreed plan as per Requirement 4a.
15. Your team will be trained in the safe use of rodenticide bait and bait stations.
16. We will have an agreed audit system to ensure safety of ropes and other equipment.
17. We will have an agreed audit system to ensure effectiveness of traps laid by rope access and mountaineering specialists.
18. We will have fully agreed emergency response plans for the coastal and cliff areas by working in partnership with the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service on Rathlin Island and the Coastguard on Rathlin Island.
19. We will have an agreed "Toolbox" talk system with clear responsibilities understood and agreed.

We expect the following task to prepare the island:

20. Discussions with landowners and presentations to the community about the proposed work.
21. Establishing safety lines to assist mountaineering components.
22. Our storage shed and other island infrastructure will have all requirements in place to ensure the effective working on the rope access and mountaineering teams.
23. Placing all bait station on site as per the agreed plan in advance of opening of traps to ensure trapping is ready to proceed effectively.

3.4.3 Key performance indicators of Requirement 4

- i. Effectively considering the rat eradication requirements throughout the ferret eradication project to ensure efficient transition between the two projects.
- ii. Attendance at a lessons learnt workshop following the ferret eradication project to ensure the effective identification or relevant lessons from the ferret eradication project leading to

- appropriate plan for the rat eradication project.
- iii. A formal review of the zones specified in **LIFE Raft Rope Access and Mountaineering Plan Version 1.1** as first identified by LIFE Raft staff Version 1.1 and updated by the contractor during their duties of delivering Requirements 1 - 3.
 - iv. A full **assessment of exact methods for rope access and mountaineering approaches** required on Rathlin to support the rat eradication project.
 - v. Identification of staff requirements to achieve successful delivery of the plan.
 - vi. **Identification of rope access and mountaineering equipment** will be required to support the rat eradication project
 - vii. **Review available assets on island and identification of additional requirements** for the safe storage and maintenance and use of rope access equipment.
 - viii. **Develop recommendations on staffing strategy for rope access** and mountaineering to support the rat eradication project.
 - ix. A formal draft plan that we can review and input to.
 - x. Development of a Health and Safety plan to ensure staff safety and our compliance with legal duties for working at height.

3.5 Requirement 5: Deliver agreed rope access and mountaineering plan for rat eradication project

Requirement 5: We will have access to the rope access and mountaineering expertise required to deliver the agreed rat eradication project.

3.5.1 Timeline

The main activities for this Requirement are from October through to the end of March (plus any close down activities).

There may be *ad hoc* support required after this. We request tenders to consider this and provide costs for daily or weekly work after end of March 2025.

3.5.2 Tasks required to achieve Requirement 5

This part of the contract will naturally follow on from Requirements 1 - 4 above.

As part of this tender, we are asking tenders to define Tasks needed to deliver rope access and mountaineering work. Tasks required should be based on your own expertise.

However, we expect the following tasks will be needed for a successful contract:

1. Establishing all lines as agreed and planned.
2. Maintaining baiting network in rope access areas as per the plan but with adaptive management required.
3. Carrying out rope access work as planned.
4. Maintaining any and all safety lines to legal requirements as per the agreed plan.
5. Maintaining all relevant equipment as per your legal requirements and as per the agreed plans.
6. Facilitating audits of trapping work by our team to ensure they are all set as per our operational requirements.
7. Maintaining data inputting standards throughout.
8. Carrying out monitoring during the main operation to ensure methods are effective (as per the plan that will be agreed).
9. Final reporting.

3.5.3 Key performance indicators of Requirement 5

- i. All mountaineering lines established to the agreed plan.
- ii. All mountaineering lines maintained to ensure safety of our teams.
- iii. Rope access work proceeding along agreed lines and expectations.
- iv. Data and methods audited as agreed.
- v. Final report provided.

4. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4.1 Project planning collateral

Photographs have been taken of the coastline of Rathlin Island. Two assets are available.

1. Full access to the sea level images taken by the LIFE Raft team using iPhone 13 Pro Max
2. Aerial images taken by DAERA using a high-resolution camera.

Due to the file size, these cannot be attached to this tender. Please email John Kelly John.Kelly@rspb.org.uk to request a download link to these images.

These images are provided for the sole purpose of providing supplementary information for tenders during their tender preparations. These are not authorised for any other use whatsoever.

4.2 Some notable points

- i. A start-up meeting should be planned for.
- ii. Field work and community or landowner engagement activities carried out under this contract must be with the agreement of the Eradication Delivery Manager (David Tosh). This is to manage community land access permissions and associated risks to the entire project.
- iii. There is a planned visit by our Eradication Technical Advisor Contractor 09th March – 22nd March 2023. This is expected to be a key opportunity to discuss and refine plans with the team.

4.2.1 Avian influenza

Avian influenza (AI) is an emerging risk. While AI is not believed to pose a high risk of transmission to humans, the risk is not zero. Furthermore, there is a risk that carcasses of birds that succumbed to AI are now present on the cliffs and coastal areas of Rathlin Island. This may impact on the SOP for the cliff and coastal area plan. This should be a specific topic of discussion between the LIFE Raft team and the appointed contractor. RSPB and our contractors must maintain a watching brief on this topic.

4.3 The role of the Programme Manager authorising progression between Project Parts or Requirements

Subject to:

- i. The satisfactory completion of the Requirements;
- ii. The RSPB securing all necessary funding and permissions for the project to proceed; and
- iii. Barring any external factors that are beyond reasonable ability to foresee or predict,

The Programme Manager, or his duly authorised delegate, will authorise progression between the project Requirements. Authorisation can only be considered valid if given in writing (email or formal letter on RSPB headed paper).

Without specific authorisation (as outlined in Table 1) to proceed provided by the programme manager, or his delegate, the project will pause until the relevant issue or issues are resolved. If the specific issue cannot be resolved, the Programme Manager retains the right to terminate the contract without incurring costs associated with the project part that has not started or any work that has not been carried out.

Table 1: Authorisations required to proceed with specific requirements

Requirement	Authorisation required	Authoriser
Requirement 1 and 2	Signing of contract will authorise starting of these requirements.	Authorised officers with contractor and the RSPB
Requirement 3	Written authorisation required to start.	Programme Manager
Requirement 4a and 4b	Written authorisation required to start.	Programme Manager
Requirement 5	Written authorisation required to start.	Programme Manager

4.4 Your nominated team

We expect tenderers to nominate a single lead and experienced point of contact. This person will be our primary liaison.

The team members should be named with CV provided.

For the successful contractor, any changes to the proposed team must be done so with the prior agreement of the Programme Manager. A general principle is that the RSPB will seek similar experience for any changes in team members. You may not substitute persons with lower experience in place of someone with a greater level of experience that was central to awarding the contract.

4.5 Budget

Costing sheets have been provided in the Tender Response Form. Tenderers should provide costs on the basis requested.

Costs should also consider the following:

1. Costs for delivery of each requirement detailing your plan to achieve each requirement.
2. Commitment that all incurred expenses (e.g., travel and subsistence) will only be invoiced as per the costs incurred at standard travel class only and will require proof via receipts.

and, in case of additional or unforeseen requirements:

3. Time base rates for each of your nominated team members for the following:
 - a. Hourly rate;
 - b. Daily rate;
 - c. Weekly rate; and/or
 - d. Monthly rate.

4.5.1 Managing inflation risks

Barring any unexpected risks or issues, this contract will run until the end of the rat eradication project in March 2025 (plus any close down requirements). At the time of tendering, we recognise that inflation risks are a prevalent risk for Northern Ireland and UK economies. We are therefore looking for a reasonable approach to managing inflation risks.

Furthermore, we expect inflation to return to more normal levels during the life of this contract.

When preparing your costs, we request tenders identify where costs are likely to be subject to inflationary pressures and how these can be managed effectively. We cannot accept a flat inflationary cost based on today's rate applied across a proposed budget. We have therefore proposed a strategy to fairly and reasonably manage inflationary risks for both parties. Please consider where your inflationary pressures are most prevalent and propose costings accordingly.

Tenders can propose a cost review as part of their proposal, but this would increase budget risks for us and maybe weighted against you.

4.6 Our approach to partnerships

Partnerships established to meet the requirements must appoint a Lead Contractor.

Sub-contractors must have an equal level of insurances as the Lead Contractor. It is the responsibility of the lead contractor to check the insurances of the sub-contractor.

4.7 Format of outputs

Where appropriate, outputs such as plan and reports should be submitted in Word and PDF format. The general principle is that outputs should be delivered to allow continued use by the RSPB as the project develops further.

4.8 Acknowledgements and branding of outputs

The funders of this work must be clearly acknowledged in all outputs.

It is also key that the public facing outputs and reports that arise from this project should include the project partners logos.

4.9 Ownership of data collected

All data collected during this project will ordinarily be owned by the RSPB unless otherwise agreed.

All data and reports must be provided to the RSPB in editable format. It is expected that this will require reports in Word format and data held in Excel databases.

Future agreement for the contractor to use data can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. The RSPB will not ordinarily charge for subsequent use of data where it contributes to the RSPB's

mission. However, future commercial use of data may incur a reasonable fee to be determined based on the purpose of the usage.

4.10 Alternative proposal to achieve our Requirements

We recognise that specialist contractors may wish to present alternative or novel ways to achieve the Requirements we envisage. We will consider these as part of your tender submission but please detail how your approach will aid the further development of this project as opposed to our outlined Requirement (i.e., the benefits and risks of your proposed approach versus our outlined approach).

5. ADDITIONAL TENDER REQUIREMENTS

Only tenders submitted in accordance with the [RSPB's Terms and Conditions](#) will be considered.

6. OUR RESERVED RIGHTS

You are invited to submit your best offer for the work as detailed above. The RSPB reserves the right to undertake post-tender negotiations.

The RSPB does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any Tender, and reserves the right to accept only part of a Tender.

RSPB reserves the right to procure individual elements of the required solution from one or more supplier as appropriate.

Whilst the RSPB aims to provide feedback on failed submissions this may not always be possible, and the RSPB is under no obligation to do so.

Any tenders that are incomplete, or received after the time indicated may be disregarded.

7. TIMETABLE

Table 2: Invitation to Tender and Project Timeline

Tender process	Deadline	Time (GMT)
Invitation to Tender document sent out	Wednesday 11 th January 2023	
Optional registering interest in this ITT Registering your interest is not obligatory but we aim to share the most relevant updates or answers to questions with any contractor that does.	Friday 20 th January 2023	17.00
Submission of any queries including requests for briefings from RSPB to possible contractors on a one-to-one basis over MS Teams Urgent queries can still be submitted after this date but we cannot commit to a date of answering them.	Friday 20 th January 2023	17.00

Tender process	Deadline	Time (GMT)
Responses to queries released	Friday 27 th January 2023	17.00
Tender documents to be returned	Friday 3 rd February 2023	17.00
Presentations by shortlisted suppliers	TBC	Appointment only
Follow up references for shortlisted suppliers	TBC	<i>Ad hoc</i>
Award of contract	TBC	TBC
Commencement of services	On date of contract signing	TBC

8. TENDER QUERIES

Any queries should be submitted via email to John Kelly, Project Manager john.kelly@rspb.org.uk and must be completed by as per Section 7 Timetable.

- Please use the Subject Line: ***Tender queries: LIFE Raft rope access and mountaineering***

Tenders can request a one-to-one briefing over MS Teams should they seek any clarification or wish to learn more about the project.

9. TENDER SUBMISSIONS

All submissions must be in PDF format via email to John Kelly, Project Manager, john.kelly@rspb.org.uk

- Please use the Subject Line: ***Tender submission: LIFE Raft rope access and mountaineering***

10. TENDER EVALUATION PROCESS

Tenders will be evaluated on the weightings as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Our criteria for evaluating tenders received.

Criteria	Commentary	Weighting
Previous experience	Evidence of skills/ experience including brief portfolio of <u>relevant</u> work is required; information/CV on who will be delivering the project.	30%
Company profile	Net zero commitment or other relevant environmental policy that reduces impact on the climate or natural environment.	10%
Understanding and methodology	Tenderers must describe the methodology they will use to carry out the project with specific reference to the Requirement of this tender (1 – 5).	40%

Criteria	Commentary	Weighting
Value for Money	Your submission should include a detailed breakdown of costs; this must include the proposed number of days work, and the daily fee rates. Costs should be related to our intended Requirements. We welcome consideration of rates appropriate to our charitable status; and specific meaningful consideration of how you propose applying your Corporate Social Responsibility policy to our work.	20%
Completion of Tender Response Form	This format will allow us to fairly compare all proposals we receive. This form also contains essential information we need as part of our Due Diligence.	Pass/negotiate We retain the right to negotiate with any strong proposal that submits in their own format and provides the essential information requested about your approach and company information.
Timeframe	Ability to complete work within the agreed timeframe.	Pass/Fail
Professional Indemnity Insurance	A minimum value of £5,000,000.	Pass/Fail/ but potential to negotiate if specifically raised in ITT
Public Liability Insurance	A minimum value of £3,000,000.	Pass/Fail/but potential to negotiate if specifically raised in ITT
Lead contractor	One lead contractor nominated with named and suitably qualified Project Manager	Pass/Fail

The RSPB may require supplementary information or clarification, or further evidence of the information given.

The RSPB may wish to contact references given as evidence of relevant experience.

10.1 Pre-tender supplier event

This tender was supported by a pre-tender supplier event held on Rathlin during 21st and 22nd June 2022. The advertisement process for both the pre-tender supplier event and the current opportunity are the same. Attendance (or not) at the supplier event will not be taken into account during any scoring of the tender process.

11. CONTRACTING

It should be noted that in any formal contract that is subsequently entered into, reference will be made to the detailed information provided in the formal response to this tender document provided by the successful organisation. Thus, answers and information given in your reply will become a binding part of the contractual relationship between yourselves and the RSPB.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE RAFT PROJECT

Impact of invasive non-native rats and ferrets

Invasive non-native brown rats (*Rattus norvegicus*) and ferrets (*Mustela furo*) are not part of the natural ecosystem of Rathlin. Both predate wildlife, impacting seabirds, ground-nesting birds and the overall biodiversity on Rathlin Island. Rats are believed to have been introduced to the island in the mid 1800's. Ferrets were released in the mid 1980's.

In two separate prioritisation exercises, Rathlin Island was identified as the top priority island in Northern Ireland for eradication of invasive non-native predatory species (Kelly 2008; Stanbury 2017). For the island of Ireland context, Kelly (2008) identified Rathlin Island as joint priority along with Lambay Island in the Republic of Ireland. For the UK as a whole, Stanbury (2017) identified Rathlin Island as the 4th highest priority island for this type of conservation intervention. This was out of 955 UK islands known to have invasive mammals and threatened species.

Threatened and Red-listed bird species are expected to benefit from successful eradication of rats and ferrets from Rathlin Island (Appendix 1). Many of Rathlin's breeding seabirds have seen significant declines. This includes Red List endangered species:

- In 1985, there were 2,400 Atlantic Puffin on Rathlin. This declined by 71% by 2011. The decline is most likely a mix of complicated issues, but predation pressure of the nesting site is judged as highly probable as a significant contributing factor of this decline.
- The European Herring Gull experienced an almost complete collapse from 4,047 nests in 1985, to only 19 in 1999.
- The Manx Shearwater also bred on Rathlin up until the 1980's, potentially into their thousands but have been extirpated due to predation by rats and ferrets.

The harm that one invasive ferret can cause was illustrated in April 2017 (Figure 1). A single ferret accessed the main puffin breeding colony, killing at least 15 puffins within two days.

Chough and Corncrake both have Northern Ireland Species Action Plans. Chough are currently breeding in very low numbers. A small but significant number of corncrake (in the context of Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland) have been observed calling on Rathlin. Although breeding has not been confirmed, probable breeding is suspected. In 2019 two calling males were recorded on the island, the first time this has been observed since the 1980's. This progress is due to the significant habitat restoration efforts led by farmers and RSPB staff and volunteers. However, Chough and Corncrake are highly likely to benefit from the removal of ferrets, and perhaps rats, contributing to securing the range of these species for the island of Ireland and UK.

Wider biodiversity interests are also believed to be impacted by both rats and ferrets. This includes Birds of Conservation Concern in both the UK and Ireland and other bird species; small mammals such as the pygmy shrew and wood mouse (both non-native); plants including native or threatened plant species; and invertebrates such as the Northern Ireland priority species the ash-black slug, knot grass moth, and ground beetle *Carabus clatratius*.

Impact on Rathlin Island community

Rats and ferrets affect the livelihood, health, enjoyment and lifestyle of the local community in the following ways;

Rats and Ferrets:

- Carry and transmit diseases. Although there have been no reports of *leptospirosis* on Rathlin, both rats and ferrets carry *leptospirosis* and other diseases (*toxoplasmosis*, *salmonella* and *cryptosporidium*); generally, most people catch these from handling wet vegetation or soil (that had the bacteria present after being spread in rat or ferret urine) and then transmitted via the hands to the mouth.
- Both species have been known to bite people on Rathlin when they feel threatened.

Rats:

- Damage people's homes and possessions, crops and animal feed through gnawing, urinating and defecating.
- Limit the opportunity for growing a wider range of crops due to eating the crops or due to the concern they present around disease transmission in the soil.
- Create general sense of fear due to their unwanted impacts and their presence.

Ferrets:

- Kill chickens, only one household on Rathlin currently keep chickens due to the cost, time and effort of ferret-proofing pens. Ferrets therefore limit the community's ability to keep chickens and wider fowl.
- Ferrets are also a known vector for Bovine TB, therefore this is of concern for the farming community.

The presence of rats and ferrets also limits eco-tourism opportunities as the narrative around Rathlin's current wildlife conservation is weakened. The signs of ferrets and rats (whether signs of predated seabirds, droppings, gnawing damage) all threaten the visitor experience, especially when a 2019 visitor survey found that 70% of respondents cited birds and wildlife as their main interest in visiting Rathlin (Fallows, 2019).

The community will support a well-planned eradication project for both species. However, there are issues with trust with all external organisations that could be an obstacle for implementation of the project. This is analogous to the situation on St Agnes and Gugh prior to the implementation of that project. It is for this reason that the project is working with Jaclyn Pearson, who was Project Manager, to transfer knowledge between the two projects.



Figure 1: Images of the 2017 response to the ferret incursion onto the puffin stack on Rathlin Island near RSPB's West Island Seabird Centre. **Fig A – C:** Deployment of the traps. **Fig D:** Trap in place with ferret in burrow. **Fig E:** Image of the dead puffins killed by the one ferret.

A major component of this project will be community engagement. Community engagement is essential for the success of the project and securing the lasting and effective biosecurity for Rathlin Island. The project will build on the approach adopted for community engagement by the St Agnes and Gugh Rat Eradication Project. However, the methods will be localised and expanded to ensure maximum socioeconomic benefit for the community.

The project itself is expected to bring direct economic benefit to Rathlin Island through provision of employment opportunities and taking up accommodation in the quiet winter seasons. The project will likely increase tourism on island through creating an awareness of the island and potential ecotourism opportunities.

Additional essential activities are proposed for baseline and Requirement monitoring, landowner advice, communications and project management.

Is success possible?

Yes, this project has been considered feasible through three independent feasibility studies (2000, 2011 and 2017) developed by Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL). The RSPB is currently updating the feasibility study with work carried out while developing the funding bids, our engagement with the community and key learnings from similar projects since 2017.

Why now?

This project has been in development since the first feasibility study in 2000 investigating the eradication of ferrets from Rathlin Island. The next major milestone in the development was the initiation of a PhD studentship investigating the impact of ferrets on Rathlin Island in 2005. This PhD studentship was undertaken by Queen's University Belfast and funded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Following this, RSPB commissioned WMIL to develop a feasibility study and draft operational plan for this project in 2011. Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust updated this again in 2017.

The project has been deemed feasible. If well planned and executed in partnership with the community, the project also has a high probability of success. A key component in the rationale for taking this project forward now is our ability to apply lessons from two similar completed rodent eradication projects (St Agnes and Gugh, Scilly Isles; Lord Howe, Australia) on inhabited islands and one ongoing similar stoat eradication project (Orkney, Scotland).

This proposal is also timely now because of the UK's departure from the EU, impacting on our access to LIFE + funding, which has the prospect of covering 60% of the funding required.

An additional consideration on why this project is required now is the designation of Puffin as Vulnerable to extinction by the IUCN. One of the main drivers for population decline is the impact of invasive non-native species. Rathlin Island is a vital nesting site for this species for the islands of Britain and Ireland.

What are the island community views on this proposal?

During project establishment phase 2019 – 2021

Funded by a combination of the RSPB and DAERA, the RSPB recruited a specialist in both community engagement and eradication planning and delivery, Jaclyn Pearson, Island Officer. This role engaged with the community on the specific technical actions that will be required during the development phase and into the delivery phase.

Applying lessons from St Agnes and Gugh and Lord Howe, we view buy-in as a process where we must work and consider community views throughout the project. Although face-to-face meetings would be preferred, due to Covid, all work with the community has been achieved through online and telephone conversations. Jaclyn has been able to engage with the majority of the island and the priority landowners that will have the most complex operational concerns. Managing expectations around funding and project timelines has been essential throughout this work. These efforts have resulted in an increased confidence that this project will bring benefits to both the community and environment and improved understanding of the methods, as well as buy-in.

As an additional benefit of the working during this phase, the RSPB has observed that our strategy has already improved our relationship with islanders. This extends to the partnership of DAERA, CCGHT and RDCA.

During 2011 and 2017 feasibility studies

To date, two surveys of the island community about the proposed project have been carried out. One in 2011 (55 individuals) and again in 2017 (33 individuals). All those interviewed in 2017 supported the eradication of ferrets from Rathlin. Many felt that they would not be able to assist with the project itself, but would support the work being done. Of those interviewed in 2017, 55% would like to be involved in the project either directly as part of the team completing the eradication, providing accommodation, transport or equipment storage, providing information on historical sites and other features, educating guests and visitors to Rathlin, or in support roles such as education, advocacy and writing letters of support.

Most felt that the rat population on Rathlin was too high and was causing issues for farmers and homeowners. Two-thirds of those interviewed felt it was important for tourism and the economy of the island that the rats and ferrets were removed, particularly as increased bird numbers would likely enhance the tourism experience. Nearly 40% felt the eradication of rats and ferrets would improve the health and well-being of residents and guests to the island. Over 90% felt it would improve the biodiversity of Rathlin if rats and ferrets were eradicated.

The Steering Group

A Steering Group has been formed to support the development of this project. If funding is successful, the steering group will subsequently support delivery and risk management. This Steering Group is of fundamental importance to the success of the project. Our approach to the project is that the RSPB is acting on behalf of the Steering Group for the benefit of the environment and

community of Rathlin Island. A true partnership working towards the expected environmental and community benefits. The group will however be chaired by the RSPB.

The group consists of RSPB; RDCA; DAERA; and CCGHT.

For the avoidance of any doubt and notwithstanding the commitment to the project made by the partners in the Steering Group, nothing in this tender documentation or subsequent contracting creates a legal agreement between the appointed contractor and the individual members of the group. The contractual agreement will be solely between the RSPB and the appointed lead contractor.

Summary of expected benefits of this intervention

Summary environmental benefits

There are significant expected benefits from removing rats and ferrets from Rathlin Island. At present rats and ferrets are affecting Manx Shearwater, Atlantic Puffin and other seabird populations, contributing to ground-nesting bird species declines, reducing invertebrate numbers is likely, preventing the recovery of some plant species and causing problems for crops, stock, poultry and homes. Further detail on potential benefits of the eradication is listed below.

1. With an island free from invasive non-native mammalian predators, it is hoped that we can return the island ecosystems into an ecological balance, and the species that have evolved to live on islands free from terrestrial predators can once again return and/or thrive.
2. We expect to halt the decline of many seabirds and ground-nesting birds and see a gradual increase
3. We also expect seabird species to recolonise areas that had been abandoned due to the accessibility of predators e.g., Puffin returning to old colonies.
4. We will secure the future of the Puffin colony close to the Seabird Centre which had an incursion by a ferret in 2017 (see Figure 1 for images of the impact and response mounted).
5. The islands Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) population have currently occupied all available safe ledges away from mammalian predators and we expect them to colonize further ledges and the population to expand after the successful eradication.
6. We hope that the prospecting Manx Shearwater sighted during the summer will be able to once again breed on Rathlin and form what once would have been a significant population.
7. The European Storm Petrel (*Hydrobates pelagicus*), which no longer breeds in Northern Ireland, may have bred on Rathlin in the past. The European Storm Petrel are highly sensitive to rat predation. They may return to breed on Rathlin with the removal of rats, as they have in other eradication project sites across the UK.
8. We expect ground-nesting bird populations, such as Lapwing, to increase. Rathlin formerly held a population of up to 50 pairs of Lapwing but in 2016 they failed to breed for the first time.
9. A number of scarce plants might benefit in the absence of rats eating their seeds/fruits. For example, NI Priority species Oysterplant, Scot's Lovage and Juniper, populations of which amount to only a few plants of each on Rathlin.
10. Whilst data is lacking on the status of invertebrates on Rathlin, there are certainly species of conservation significance present that might benefit from an absence of rats. These include

ash-black slug, knot grass (moth) and the ground beetle *Carabus clatratus*, all of which are NI Priority species. There are a number of other species recorded on our reserve that are considered (by experts) as deserving of Irish red-listed status such as *Meioneta mossica* (a spider), *Liogluta alpestris* and *Quedius invreae* (both rove beetles) and *Cymindis vaporariorum* (a ground beetle).

Please see Appendix 1 for a table showing the expected benefits for seabirds and landbirds arising from a successful eradication project. Note, this Appendix is still in development as part of the Business Case drafting for this project.

Overview of socioeconomic benefits to Rathlin Island

The investment that this project will bring to Rathlin Island will leave a lasting legacy for both the environment and the people. We expect that both the environment and economy of Rathlin Island will improve over the lifespan of the project and well into the legacy phase. Similar island restoration projects have resulted in economic benefits for the community at the heart of the project. Specific and planned for benefits have included direct employment opportunities, project use of local facilities, increased tourism through successful communications and the expected benefit of removing the target invasive non-native species.

However, to our knowledge, “knock-on” community economic benefits arising from the eradication projects have never been specifically planned for in any similar project. For example, during the project LIFE11 NAT/UK/000387 (Scilly Isles), 17% of the community developed new products from the catalyst that the project created. This included a gin distillery, seabird guided tours and artisanal art creation based on the project’s theme. These were added value from the project arising from the engagement efforts of the team and the wider communications of the project.

Our proposal aims to ensure the economic benefits from this project are built in from the outset to ensure maximum value for money and better environmental Requirements. Our approach will be based on an understanding that the community aspirations and desires for their island, while effectively ensuring that long-term environmental wildlife risks are mitigated.

The lessons learnt from previous projects on inhabited islands include:

- Firstly, that the community needs to feel empowerment of the project by codesigning elements of the project, particularly elements relating to their socioeconomic prospects. This produces buy-in for the technical and sometimes intrusive requirements of the eradication projects. For example, access to all property and removal of harbourage to facilitate the baiting grid. This was experienced on Scilly Isles (LIFE11 NAT/UK/000387) but the positive socioeconomic components were not fully planned for during the project. The strategy allowed for a more organic added value achieved through the efforts of the project manager and the commitment of the partnership. However, this strategy did not allow full realisation of the potential benefits from the investment.
- Secondly, that if the community engagement fails to build trust, the project will become derailed. This is a significant risk for every eradication project on inhabited islands. This was

experienced on Lord Howe, where the project became stuck in the development phase for 18 years.

The case for including socioeconomic activities in our project is clear. In addition to removing two invasive non-native species that directly impact on the economy of the island, this project will help the Rathlin Island community recover from the Covid 19 pandemic. The economic impact of COVID-19 is already affecting the entire country, and while forecasts vary as to the length and breadth of its impact, the effects on local economies depend on local circumstances. On Rathlin, the majority of the local economy has been put into hibernation. An added complication for Northern Ireland is the compounding impact of the UK's departure from the EU. Rathlin's economic resilience is strained. As recovery takes hold, we believe we need locally tailored approaches to economic recovery. For Rathlin, this project is the best opportunity to tailor these approaches on environment and socioeconomic development.

The project will create an Economy and Environment Officer post in the Rathlin Development and Community Association for five years. By working with the Programme Manager, Eradication and Community Engagement Manager, the RDCA and the Steering Group, this role will lead on a number of specific actions that will benefit the community and the environment.