Invitation to Tender

For

VisitAberdeenshire Website Development and Hosting

VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited

February 2025

1.   ABOUT VISITABERDEENSHIRE

VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited t/a VisitAberdeenshire (VA) is the recognised destination organisation and lead body for tourism serving Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. VisitAberdeenshire's core purpose is to drive demand to visit Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and support businesses to develop and to meet that demand, reflected in a remit that embraces both destination marketing and destination development. VisitAberdeenshire's vision is to be the leading destination organisation in Scotland, increasingly recognised for growing the visitor economy through bold, dynamic initiatives.

VisitAberdeenshire is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee; transparent, accountable to its stakeholders and reinvesting any trading surplus in the destination tourism offer. VisitAberdeenshire is open and inclusive in its approach, inviting all those with an interest in tourism to be part of their activities and communications network. It is engaged with all parts of the industry and across the region.

VisitAberdeenshire's activity is shaped around three core areas, all of which are informed by customer, market and industry insight. In support of these disciplines VisitAberdeenshire has established a flexible, knowledgeable and professional team.

- **Local business and destination focus** - to support tourism development through business engagement programmes that address business challenges, and support sector opportunities.
- **Short term market focus** - to drive demand to visit local tourism experiences through promotion to targeted consumer audiences in the UK
- **Mid to long term market focus** - to secure a pipeline of new business for future years from UK and inbound travel trade intermediaries and from business event organisers.

VisitAberdeenshire's vision and values:

Our **purpose** is to help drive demand to visit Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire, and to support businesses to develop and to meet that demand.

Our **vision** is to be the leading destination organisation in Scotland increasingly recognised for growing the visitor economy through bold and dynamic initiatives.

Values and Behaviours (CARE)

Collaborative - We work in partnership, internally and externally to work towards our company vision.

Responsible - We take an environmentally responsible and insights driven approach, operate inclusively and are respectful of others.

Ambitious - We are creative, forward-thinkers and passionate about what we do.

Empathetic - We listen and respond to the needs of others.

Tourism is one of the engine rooms of the Scottish economy and the North-east is where tourism has space to grow. At its heart, this is a sector that inspires people to enrich their lives by exploring a world beyond their own backyard, and importantly, it enriches the livelihoods of those who serve them across a diverse range of businesses. The stark impact of COVID-19 on the local visitor economy, and the current economic environment presents a significant challenge for businesses

across the sector. The launch of a refreshed tourism strategy in summer 2022; "[Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire, Framework for Growth 2022-2030](#)" provides basis to address these challenges, and to take advantage of market opportunities.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire offer fantastic tourism experiences to its visitors, including 263 castles forming part of the longest castle trail in Europe, some 50 golf courses, a host of museums, nine National Trust for Scotland properties, an emerging adventure tourism offer, many gardens and buildings of interest, unique preserved fishing villages, and world class adventure tourism experiences.

2.   PROJECT BACKGROUND

VisitAberdeenshire invites tender responses from suitably skilled suppliers with experience in website development for 'place' organisations (eg, destinations, business improvement districts, local authorities) for the provision of services for the design and ongoing maintenance of an engaging and inspirational, fully responsive website designed to be futureproofed and adaptable to the needs and requirements of the end user.

Visitabdn.com serves a range of audiences and purposes. These are specified within this brief.

Challenges faced by Destination Organisations when promoting their destinations and serving local business audiences:

1. **Competition:** The tourism industry is highly competitive, with numerous destinations vying for the attention of visitors.

2. **Changing consumer behaviour:** Visitors increasingly rely on online platforms for trip planning, seeking personalised experiences tailored to their interests.

3. **Information overload:** The abundance of information available online can overwhelm visitors, making it challenging to discover relevant and reliable content about destinations.

4. **Mobile accessibility:** With the proliferation of smartphones and tablets, visitors expect seamless access to information on-the-go, necessitating mobile-friendly solutions.

5. **User engagement:** Destination websites must go beyond providing static information and actively engage users, fostering a sense of trust, connection and exploration in a manner that is relevant to a range of demographics and accessibility needs among its audiences.

6. **For local stakeholders:** The challenge of easily finding relevant content, advice and resources

The Opportunity

VisitAberdeenshire's vision for the new site is for it to be a hub of inspiration and information for visitors, prospective visitors, local tourism businesses, local audiences and stakeholders, conference organisers and delegates, travel trade operators and potential future employees and volunteers.

Objectives of the new website: The proposed website should address these challenges and achieve the following objectives:

1. **Enhanced user experience:** Prioritise user-centric design principles to ensure an intuitive and seamless browsing experience for visitors of all demographics.

2. **Personalisation:** Implement features that allow visitors to customise their itineraries based on interests, preferences, and travel style.

3. **Interactive functionality:** Integrate innovative tools and content to enrich the user experience.

4. **Accessibility:** Ensure the website is accessible across various devices and platforms, with a particular focus on mobile responsiveness.

5. **Content curation:** Allow VA to curate high-quality, up-to-date content that highlights the diverse attractions, activities, and experiences available in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire (see section regarding migration strategy).

6. **Consumer marketing campaigns:** There is a requirement to be able to create campaign landing pages and gather leads and data via these landing pages.

7. **Revenue opportunities:** Offer enhanced business listings that increase visibility for local businesses and introducing advertising capabilities to help clients promote their services to their targeted audience.

8. **Efficient to maintain**: to allow client to manage most of maintenance requirements in-house, whilst maintaining all security and data compliance protocols.

9. **SEO**: Enhance the website's SEO performance to increase organic traffic, improve search visibility, and effectively target audiences with optimised, relevant content and a user-friendly structure.

Website requirements

Visitabdn.com requires a robust, fully flexible and customisable CMS with powerful features. The proposed CMS should be user intuitive, fully responsive and allow for flexibility in content modelling and customisation.

Visitabdn.com contains a main consumer site, with B2B subsites.

B2C site should contain:

- Advertising capabilities
- E-commerce capabilities
- Accessibility and sustainability tools
- Location categories
- Itinerary planner
- What to do
- Events calendar
- Blog section
- Interactive maps
- AI capabilities and functionality
- Social media feeds
- Customer reviews

B2B:

- Local business listing capability
- Conference venue search
- Content hub – downloadable content for businesses, media and other stakeholders
- Advertising capability
- About us
    - Jobs
    - Company info
    - Meet the team

- Meet the Board
- Volunteers
- Vacancies/Recruitment
- Contractors/Contracting

For full breakdown of subsites, see below.

Technical scope

- SEO set up
- 301/302 redirects
- SEO sanity check

Integrations

- Accessibility tool – eg Recite Me
- Events feed – Data Thistle
- GA4 integration

Reporting

- Insights/dashboard access
- GA4 reports

Ongoing site maintenance

The selected agency will:

- Monitor and maintain website security, ensuring the site is protected against vulnerabilities and threats.
- Perform regular software and plugin updates.
- Provide technical support to address issues or bugs promptly.
- Ensure website uptime and monitor performance to maintain fast loading times and reliability.
- Deliver periodic recommendations for optimisation, including UX, SEO, and performance improvements.
- Assist with implementing new features or updates as requested by VisitAberdeenshire.

Targeted audiences

VisitAberdeenshire's audiences are varied, with differing needs and requirements. These include:

- **Leisure consumer audiences primarily located in:**
  - The rest of Scotland
  - Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire when fulfilling local facing campaigns
  - Northern England
  - Those living in Southern England and the Midlands are targeted when partnering with a transport provider.
  - Disembarking cruise-ship passengers
- **Local businesses**
  - Local tourism businesses

- o VA's current and future stakeholders
- **Supply chain audiences**
  - o Travel trade buyers
  - o Conference organisers.

The website's target audience encompasses a wide range of users:

Leisure consumer audiences:

- Seeking unique cultural experiences, outdoor adventures, and scenic landscapes.

- Families in search of family-friendly activities, educational experiences, and accommodations catering to their needs.

- Adventure seekers interested in outdoor pursuits such as hiking, cycling, fishing and wildlife encounters.

- Food and drink enthusiasts eager to explore the region's culinary scene, including local produce, traditional cuisine, and fine dining establishments.

Conference organisers and delegates:

- To encourage users to consider Aberdeen for their next conference or event.
- To provide practical advice for delegates.
- To connect with local bid ambassadors.

Travel trade operators:

- Up-to-date product information to include within their itineraries for clients.

Local businesses

- Information on insights, events, webinars hosted by VA and to manage their own business listing.
- Audio and visual content from VA's Content Hub.

Local stakeholders

- Funders
- Potential sponsors
- Education partners
- Potential employees and volunteers.

3. PROCUREMENT SCOPE / SPECIFICATION

To ensure best value, VisitAberdeenshire is inviting quotes from suitably skilled and experienced companies to undertake the website redevelopment and ongoing monthly maintenance.

Innovative functionality

The proposed website should incorporate innovative functionality that empowers consumers in holiday planning. Examples **could** include the following however, VA expect suppliers to propose functionality, site structure and accompanying justification and insight to back up proposals.

A breakdown of costs should be provided for all proposed functionality over and above what would be standard on the pages, as listed in website requirements section. This should be presented as a menu of options for VA to consider. Some requirements could include:

1. **Commercial functionality:** VA has recently introduced advertising opportunities on the website. Tender responses **must** include approaches to ad implementation, performance tracking and other innovations.

2. **E-commerce capabilities:** The integration of robust e-commerce functionalities into the new website design. The e-commerce system should provide a seamless user experience, ensuring that customers can easily browse products, add them to their cart, and complete their purchases with minimal steps.

3. **Interactive maps:** Dynamic maps that allow users to explore attractions, accommodations, dining options, and points of interest with ease.

4. **Itinerary planner:** A customisable trip planner tool that enables users to create and save personalised itineraries, including activities, accommodation and dining options.

5. **Search functionality:** To give users the ability to search and filter all content across the website.

6. **Personalised recommendations:** Implement personalised recommendation features based on user preferences, past behaviour and demographics, offering tailored suggestions for activities, attractions and accommodation to enhance engagement and satisfaction.

7. **Feedback mechanisms:** Implement feedback mechanisms such as surveys, ratings, and reviews to gather insights from visitors, identify pain points and continuously improve the user experience based on user feedback and preferences.

8. **Blog section**: Blog section to inspire visitors. Needs to include categorisation, archiving features and allow users to search for blogs using keywords or category.

9. **SEO:** Site should be optimised for SEO purposes.

10. **Video hosting:** Site must have the ability to host video.

11. **Content management:** A robust CMS that allows VisitAberdeenshire employees to easily update, manage, and customise content, with user-friendly editing tools, workflow automation, and version control features.

12. **Business Directory:** Allow businesses to be grouped into categories, with the ability to create sub-categories. Additionally, ensure that listings within categories can be randomised or prioritised based on specific criteria, rather than defaulting to an A-Z order. This will provide equal visibility opportunities for all businesses and enhance user engagement.

13. **Events:** Event listings / calendar can be linked to businesses, users can search by keyword or filter by category, interest, location and date.

14. **Competitions:** Allow for users to enter competitions directly on Visitabdn.com via forms.

15. **Experiences** can be categorised into types and budget ranges, linked to business profiles, potential to allow for booking widgets.

16. **Location categories:** Explore Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire sections dedicated to exploring different regions, including the city, towns and villages within Aberdeenshire, with detailed information and interactive maps.

17. **Things to do:** Curated lists of activities, attractions, tours and experiences categorised by interest, season and accessibility.

18. **What's On:** An interactive calendar displaying upcoming events, festivals, and cultural celebrations in the region (currently supplied as a feed by a third party). Allow users to search and filter for dates, location, or event type to improve usability.

Subsites

In the proposal, respondents should outline their approach to developing and managing specialised subsites for Tourism Development, Aberdeen Convention Bureau, Travel Trade and the Content Hub.

1. **User experience and content:** Design intuitive and user-friendly interfaces and content for each subsite, optimised for the specific needs and preferences of its target audience, with clear navigation, informative content and interactive features as appropriate.

2. **Content management:** Implement a robust content management system (CMS) that allows VisitAberdeenshire staff to easily update, manage, and customise content for each subsite, with user-friendly editing tools, workflow automation, and version control features.

VA's teams have identified subsite requirements as indicated below. These have been marked as **essentials (E)** and **desirables (D).** A costed breakdown of desirable items should be presented that VA can consider.

Aberdeen Convention Bureau

- Search function allowing users to search for hotels and venues in the region. They should be able to search/filter by capacity, number of rooms, meeting room capacity and set up, and hotel services. **(E)**
- Once the search has been conducted, users would be able to add up to five venues into their virtual basket and the system would then send an automatic email enquiry to all venues. This would remove the need for the Convention Bureau team to manually send this information. Emails would be VA branded. **(E)**

Travel Trade:

- Current Travel Trade Guide – requirement to filter businesses alphabetically **(E)**
- Add a search function – so buyers can search by business name / type **(E)**

- Add lead form to sit in front of Travel Trade Product Guide to allow for follow-up. **(E)**
- Add multiple images, with name and description, to the supplier listings on the Travel Trade Product Guide, which can be downloaded by buyers for use in their marketing materials. Include lead generation form. **(D)**

Tourism Development (industry site)

- Addition of a search function (particularly for finding pre-recorded webinars) **(E)**
- New section on training and support available. Training modules to be included in this section. (filter to help find most suitable training / resources etc.) **(E)**
- Ability for local tourism businesses to list their business on the VA site. An example of a business listing is here. Businesses tick the category in which their business falls, for example, accommodation, or restaurant. Their listing then appears on the corresponding page on the VA site. **(E)**

Insights and Evaluation (not a sub-site, sits within industry site)

- Search function to find specific reports **(D)**
- Ability to send auto triggers when content users may like is posted by VA **(D)**
- Industry facing interactive data dashboard – plug-in option, for example Microsoft Power BI **(D)**

Corporate (not a sub-site, sits within the footer across all sites)

- Separate corporate section of website that users can view to find out about the history of VA, meet the VA team, Board, volunteers, search vacancies and contractor opportunities. **(E)**
- Inclusion of corporate partnerships section that details funders and sponsors/partners. **(E)**
- Online recruitment process for vacancies to allow applications to be uploaded and submitted directly from the website for staff and volunteer vacancies. **(D)**
- Online contracting process for tender and quote opportunities that allows contractors to submit questions and upload application information directly on the website **(D)**

Content hub

VA currently has a Content Hub containing images and videos which are available for industry to request, VA approve requests, and industry can download and use in their promotions. As part of the web tender process, VA expects a proposed solution for moving the Content Hub across to the new web platform.

Technical requirements:

Supplier credentials:

Tenders should include evidence of the following credentials from the supplier:

1. System monitoring
2. Service provider used

3. Back up procedures
4. Security measures and monitoring
5. Data Protection Policy
6. Cyber security policy / Cyber Essentials registration.
7. Disaster recovery process
8. Domain registration and support policy
9. Complaint procedure

Content Management System (CMS)

Tenders should include proposals for a CMS that meets the following requirements.

1. **User-friendly interface:** The CMS should have an intuitive and user-friendly interface that allows staff members with varying technical skills to easily update and manage website content.

2. **Customisability:** The CMS should support customisation to meet VisitAberdeenshire's specific requirements and branding guidelines, including the ability to add new pages, sections, redirects and functionalities as needed.

3. **Accessibility:** Ensure that the CMS complies with accessibility standards (for example, WCAG) to facilitate content creation and management for users with disabilities.

4. **Multi-user support:** The CMS should allow multiple users with different roles and permissions (for example, administrators, editors, contributors) to collaborate on content creation and editing tasks.

5. **Version Control:** Implement version control features to track changes made to content, facilitate content review and approval workflows and revert to previous versions if necessary.

6. **Media management:** Provide robust media management capabilities, including support for uploading, organising and embedding various types of media (for example, images, videos, documents) into web pages.

7. **SEO-friendly:** Ensure that the CMS supports best practices for search engine optimisation (SEO), including customisable meta tags, URL structures and XML sitemap generation.

8. **Responsive design:** The CMS should facilitate the creation of responsive web pages that adapt seamlessly to different screen sizes and devices, ensuring optimal viewing experiences for visitors on desktops, tablets, and smartphones (smartphone first approach).

9. **Integration capabilities:** Enable seamless integration with third-party services and tools (for example, booking engines (not currently integrated but could be in the future), analytics platforms, email platforms, social media APIs to enhance website functionality and user experience.

10. **Security:** Implement robust security measures to protect against unauthorised access, data breaches and malicious attacks, including user authentication, encryption, and regular security updates.

11. **Performance optimisation:** Optimise the CMS for performance to ensure fast page load times, efficient resource utilisation and scalability to accommodate growing website traffic and content volume.

12. **Support and training:** Provide comprehensive documentation, training resources, and technical support to assist VisitAberdeenshire staff in effectively using and maintaining the CMS.

Other technical requirements

1. **Hosting environment:** Propose a reliable hosting provider and infrastructure setup (for example, cloud-based hosting, dedicated servers) to ensure high availability, scalability, and performance for the website.

2. **Programming languages and frameworks:** Use modern programming languages and frameworks to build responsive and interactive web interfaces.

3. **Database management:** Employ efficient database management systems to store and retrieve website content, user data and other relevant information securely.

4. **Security measures:** Implement security best practices, such as SSL encryption, firewalls, intrusion detection/prevention systems and regular security audits to safeguard the website against cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

5. **Scalability and performance:** Design the website architecture for scalability and performance, utilising techniques like caching, content delivery networks (CDNs) and load balancing to handle increasing traffic and maintain fast response times.

6. **Search functionality:** Incorporate advanced search functionality (for example, faceted search, keyword highlighting, autosuggestions) to help users easily find relevant content and information on the website.

7. **Analytics and reporting:** Integrate web analytics tools (for example, GA4) to track website traffic, user engagement, and performance metrics, enabling data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement.

8. **Compliance:** Ensure compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements, such as data protection laws (e.g., GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)), privacy policies, and industry standards for web development and accessibility.

9. **Commercial**: A robust solution to support advertising and revenue generating opportunities across the main consumer website and subsites. The solution must prioritise user experience, be scalable, and include comprehensive tracking and reporting (CTR, clicks, impressions, conversions, etc).

10. **Dynamic content capabilities:** The proposed solution must support the implementation of dynamic content to enhance user engagement and deliver personalised experiences, functionality could include personalised recommendations, customisable user journeys, smart itinerary suggestions. Dynamic content should work seamlessly across the main consumer website and subsites (if applicable) to ensure consistency in user experience and allow for A/B testing functionality to evaluate performance of dynamic elements.

11. **Artificial Intelligence:** The solution should support the integration of AI-driven tools to enhance user experience and improve website functionality, whilst remaining sustainable. Functionality could include smart itineraries, accessibility enhancements, recommended content, ai-powered personalisation, chatbot assistance, etc. AI should be scalable, cost-effective and future proof to adapt to evolving technologies and user expectations.

12. **Implementation of accessibility add-on:** Include costs for the implementation of a tool like Recite Me, or alternatives.

By adhering to these technical requirements, VisitAberdeenshire can ensure the successful development, deployment, and maintenance of a modern, user-friendly website that effectively promotes the region as a premier destination while empowering employees to manage content with ease and efficiency.

Hosting. Expected Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

GA4 Behaviour Tracking

For information, VisitAberdeenshire uses GA4 and will continue to monitor the following:

1. **Website traffic and engagement:** Monitor the total number of sessions, users, and views to gauge site performance. Track additional metrics such as bounce rate, average session duration, pages per session, and new vs. returning users to understand user engagement. Analyse traffic sources (e.g., organic, referral, direct, paid) to identify key acquisition channels, and monitor geographic locations of visitors to assess audience reach. Utilise event tracking to measure specific user actions, such as clicks, downloads, or form submissions, and set up conversion goals to evaluate the effectiveness of call-to-action elements. Additionally, monitor page load times and other technical metrics to ensure a positive user experience.

2. **Conversion rate:** Measure the conversion rate for key events or goals, such as newsletter sign-ups, downloads, and event registrations, to evaluate the website's effectiveness in driving desired outcomes.

3. **Top pages and content:** Identify the most visited pages, popular content and referral sources to understand visitor interests, preferences and traffic sources.

4. **User demographics:** Analyse demographic data (for example, age, gender, location) to profile the website's audience and tailor content and marketing strategies accordingly.

5. **Mobile performance:** Assess the performance of the website on mobile devices, including mobile conversion rate and mobile responsiveness, to ensure optimal user experience across devices.

6. **Search engine visibility:** Monitor keyword rankings, organic search traffic, and click-through rates (CTRs) to assess the website's visibility and performance in search engine results pages (SERPs).

Security and technical uptime

VisitAberdeenshire requirements are as follows, it is expected that tenders and proposals should also address any other important factors not listed below.

1. **Uptime percentage:** Ensure a high level of website availability by monitoring uptime percentage and minimising downtime due to server issues, maintenance or security incidents. Uptime should be maintained at 99.9%.

2. **Response time:** Monitor server response time and page load speed to optimise website performance and ensure fast and responsive user experiences.

3. **Security audits:** Conduct regular security audits, vulnerability assessments and penetration testing to identify and mitigate potential security threats, vulnerabilities and weaknesses in the website's infrastructure and codebase.

4. **SSL certificate validity:** Ensure the validity and proper configuration of SSL/TLS certificates to encrypt data transmission and protect user privacy and security and ensure these do not expire.

5. **Backup and disaster recovery:** Implement automated backup procedures and disaster recovery plans to minimise data loss and ensure business continuity in the event of hardware failures, cyber-attacks or natural disasters.

6. **Security incident response:** Establish protocols and procedures for detecting, reporting and responding to security incidents, breaches, and unauthorised access attempts in a timely and effective manner.

7. **Compliance with standards:** Ensure compliance with industry standards, best practices, and regulatory requirements (for example, GDPR) for data protection, privacy and information security.

By monitoring these KPIs, VisitAberdeenshire can measure the effectiveness of the new website in attracting, engaging, and converting visitors while maintaining robust security and technical performance standards to safeguard user data and ensure uninterrupted access to website resources.

Maintaining SEO authority and transitioning to the new website

By prioritising the preservation of SEO authority during the transition to the new website, VisitAberdeenshire can minimise disruptions to search engine rankings and organic traffic while capitalising on the established online presence and visibility to attract and engage visitors effectively.

Effective transition of SEO authority from the current website to the new one is crucial to preserve existing search engine rankings, organic traffic, and online visibility. Here's why it's essential and how it can be achieved, and proposals should include how the agency plan to manage the transition:

1. **Preserving rankings and traffic:** The current website has established SEO authority, including backlinks, domain authority and keyword rankings. Transitioning to a new website without preserving this authority can lead to a drop in search engine rankings and organic traffic, impacting the website's visibility and accessibility to potential visitors.

2. **User experience and relevance:** Search engines prioritise user experience and relevance when ranking websites. A seamless transition to a new website ensures continuity in user experience, content relevance and technical optimisation which will be key factors in maintaining SEO authority.

3. **301 redirects:** Implementing 301 redirects from old URLs to corresponding pages on the new website is essential to preserve SEO authority and ensure that visitors and search engines are directed to the correct pages. This helps retain existing backlinks and signals to search engines that the content has moved permanently.

4. **Content migration:** Careful migration of existing content, including meta tags, headings and structured data markup, helps maintain continuity in keyword relevance and semantic signals for search engines. Content should be migrated with minimal changes to preserve its SEO value and ensure consistency in messaging.

5. **XML Sitemap and Robots.txt:** Generate and submit XML sitemaps for the new website to inform search engines about the website's structure and content hierarchy. Update the robots.txt file to guide search engine crawlers and prevent indexing of duplicate or irrelevant content.

6. **Canonical tags:** Implement canonical tags on duplicate or similar content pages to indicate the preferred URL for indexing and prevent duplicate content penalties from search engines.

7. **Monitor and adjust:** Continuously monitor website performance, search engine rankings, and organic traffic post-launch to identify any issues or anomalies. Make necessary adjustments and optimisations to maintain and improve SEO authority over time.

8. **Engage with SEO professionals:** Utilise and/or consult with SEO experts or agencies to ensure a smooth transition and mitigate any potential risks or challenges associated with the migration process. Their expertise can help identify opportunities for optimisation and maximise the new website's SEO potential.

Importance of accessibility and adherence to WCAG guidelines:

Ensuring accessibility is paramount for the VisitAberdeenshire website to provide a positive, inclusive experience for all users, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

1. **Inclusivity and equal access:** Accessibility enables individuals with disabilities, including visual, auditory, motor and cognitive impairments, to navigate and interact with the website effectively. By prioritising accessibility, VisitAberdeenshire ensures that all users have access to information and services, fostering inclusivity and diversity.

2. **Legal and ethical obligations:** Compliance with accessibility standards, such as WCAG, is not only a legal requirement in many areas but also an ethical imperative. By adhering to WCAG guidelines, VisitAberdeenshire demonstrates its commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all users, in accordance with international standards and best practices.

3. **Expanded audience reach:** Accessibility enhancements not only benefit users with disabilities but also improve the overall user experience for everyone. Features such as clear navigation, descriptive alt text for images and keyboard-friendly interactions benefit users with diverse needs and preferences, leading to a broader audience reach and increased user engagement.

4. **SEO and search engine visibility:** Accessible websites tend to perform better in search engine rankings, as search engines prioritise user-friendly and well-structured content. By

implementing accessibility features recommended by WCAG, VisitAberdeenshire can improve the website's search engine visibility and discoverability, enhancing its online presence and reach.

5. **Positive brand image:** Prioritising accessibility reflects positively on VisitAberdeenshire's brand image and reputation, demonstrating its commitment to inclusivity, social responsibility, and customer satisfaction. Accessible websites are perceived as more user-friendly, trustworthy, and customer-centric, enhancing brand loyalty and advocacy among users.

6. **WCAG compliance guidelines:** Adherence to WCAG guidelines involves implementing specific technical and design standards to ensure accessibility across various aspects of the website, including:
   - Perceivable: Providing text alternatives for non-text content, ensuring content is distinguishable and easy to perceive.

   - Operable: Facilitating keyboard navigation, providing sufficient time for users to interact with content, and avoiding content that may cause seizures or physical reactions.

   - Understandable: Using clear and concise language, organising content in a logical manner, and providing input assistance for form fields.

   - Robust: Ensuring compatibility with assistive technologies and future-proofing the website against technological advancements.

Importance of consistent content standards and specialised subsites

Why consistency matters

1. **Brand cohesion:** Consistent content standards help reinforce VisitAberdeenshire's brand identity and messaging across all digital platforms.

2. **Audience targeting:** Specialised subsites cater to distinct audiences, such as tourism industry professionals, event planners, and travel trade partners, allowing VisitAberdeenshire to deliver tailored information, resources, and services that meet the unique needs and interests of each audience segment.

3. **Content relevance:** Subsites enable focused content curation and dissemination, ensuring that visitors can easily access relevant information and resources without being overwhelmed by irrelevant or extraneous content.

4. **Promotional efficiency:** Targeted subsites facilitate more effective promotional strategies by allowing VisitAberdeenshire to tailor messaging, imagery and calls to action to specific audience segments, driving engagement and conversions.

Adopting consistent content standards

1. **Branding guidelines:** Use VisitAberdeenshire's branding guidelines, including visual identity, tone of voice, messaging and content style to maintain consistency and coherence across all VisitAberdeenshire subsites.

2. **Content strategy:** Develop a comprehensive content strategy for each subsite, aligned with VisitAberdeenshire's overarching goals and objectives, to guide content creation, distribution, and ensure consistency in messaging, themes and topics.

1. **Integration and cross-promotion:** Facilitate seamless integration and cross-promotion between the main VisitAberdeenshire website and its subsites, leveraging shared content, functionality, and branding elements to enhance visibility, traffic and user engagement across all digital channels.

Objectives for an improved user experience.

VisitAberdeenshire's redeveloped website should include the following:

1. **Enhanced navigation:** Simplify website navigation by organising content logically and intuitively, with clear menu structures, breadcrumb trails, and search functionality, allowing visitors to find relevant information quickly and easily.

2. **Intuitive interface:** Design an intuitive user interface with consistent layout, visual hierarchy, and interactive elements, ensuring a seamless browsing experience across devices and screen sizes.

3. **Accessible design:** Ensure accessibility and inclusivity by adhering to WCAG guidelines, implementing features such as alt text for images, keyboard navigation and text resizing options, to accommodate users with disabilities and diverse needs.

4. **Responsive design:** Optimise the website for responsiveness and performance across devices and screen resolutions, ensuring consistent functionality, layout, and performance on desktops, tablets, and smartphones (smartphone first approach).

Audience testing:

VisitAberdeenshire expects the appointed agency to conduct comprehensive audience testing at key stages of the project:

1. **Initial research:** Conduct user research and testing at the outset of the project to understand the needs, preferences and expectations of target audiences when planning a trip to Aberdeenshire. Gather insights into content priorities, functionality requirements, and usability preferences to inform the website development process.

2. **Design iterations:** Incorporate user feedback and insights gathered from audience testing into the design and development process, iterating on prototypes and wireframes to address usability issues, improve navigation and enhance overall user experience.

3. **Usability testing:** Conduct usability testing sessions with representative users to evaluate the effectiveness of the website design, functionality, and navigation, identifying areas for improvement and validation before finalising the website launch.

Consideration of environmental impact

VisitAberdeenshire recognises the importance of environmental sustainability and responsibility in all aspects of its operations, including the development and maintenance of its digital platforms. As such, the environmental impact should be carefully considered throughout the process of building and maintaining the new website. Here's how:

1. **Green hosting options:** Where possible, prioritise the selection of environmentally friendly hosting providers and infrastructure solutions that utilise renewable energy sources, energy-efficient hardware, and sustainable data centre practices to minimise carbon emissions and environmental footprint.

2. **Optimised code and performance:** Develop and optimise website code and performance to reduce energy consumption, bandwidth usage and server resources, improving loading times and minimising environmental impact.

3. **Efficient content delivery:** Implement content delivery networks (CDNs) and caching mechanisms to optimise content delivery and reduce server load, bandwidth usage, and energy consumption, particularly during periods of high traffic or peak demand.

4. **Minimalist design approach:** Adopt a minimalist design approach focused on simplicity, efficiency, and functionality to reduce unnecessary elements, code bloat, and resource-intensive features that contribute to environmental waste and energy consumption.

5. **Lean and sustainable technologies:** Leverage lean and sustainable technologies, frameworks, and development practices that prioritise resource efficiency, scalability, and performance optimisation, reducing environmental impact without compromising functionality or user experience.

6. **Lifecycle considerations:** Consider the environmental impact of hardware and software lifecycle management, including procurement, deployment, maintenance, and disposal, and prioritise eco-friendly options, recycling programs, and sustainable practices wherever possible.

7. **Continuous improvement:** Implement processes for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of environmental performance and sustainability practices related to website development and maintenance, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility and accountability within the organisation.

Web hosting requirements and ongoing hosting/maintenance needs

VisitAberdeenshire recognises the critical role that web hosting plays in the performance, security, and reliability of its online presence. VA has outlined specific web hosting requirements and expectations for ongoing hosting and maintenance as part of the contract with the appointed agency.

Web hosting requirements:

1. **Reliability and uptime:** The web hosting service must provide reliable and stable uptime, with minimal downtime and disruptions to ensure continuous accessibility and availability of VisitAberdeenshire's website and digital assets.

2. **Scalability and performance:** The hosting infrastructure should be scalable and capable of handling fluctuations in website traffic, visitor engagement, and resource demands, ensuring optimal performance, speed and responsiveness always.

3. **Security and compliance:** The hosting provider must prioritise security and compliance with industry standards and best practices, including data encryption, firewall protection, malware scanning and regular security updates to safeguard VisitAberdeenshire's website and user data from cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

4. **Data backup and recovery:** Implement automated backup procedures and disaster recovery plans to ensure data integrity, resilience, and business continuity in the event of hardware failures, data loss, or security breaches, with regular backups stored securely offsite.

5. **Technical support and assistance:** Provide responsive and reliable technical support and assistance to address any hosting-related issues, inquiries, or concerns promptly, with knowledgeable staff available to assist VisitAberdeenshire's team as needed.

Ongoing hosting and maintenance:

1. **Routine maintenance tasks:** Perform routine maintenance tasks, updates and optimisations to ensure the ongoing performance, stability, and security of VisitAberdeenshire's website and hosting infrastructure, including software updates, security patches and performance tuning.

2. **Content Management System (CMS) updates:** Keep the CMS and associated plugins, themes, and extensions up to date with the latest versions to address security vulnerabilities, compatibility issues, and performance enhancements minimising the risk of exploitation and downtime.

3. **Security monitoring and threat detection:** Implement proactive security monitoring and threat detection measures to identify and mitigate potential security threats, breaches and vulnerabilities in real-time, ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of VisitAberdeenshire's website and user data.

4. **Performance optimisation:** Continuously optimise website performance, speed, and responsiveness through caching, content delivery networks (CDNs) and other performance-enhancing techniques to deliver a seamless and engaging user experience for visitors across all devices and platforms.

5. **Regular reporting and communication:** Provide regular reporting and communication updates to VisitAberdeenshire's team on hosting and maintenance activities, performance metrics, security incidents and any other relevant information to ensure transparency and accountability.

Content migration strategy:

VisitAberdeenshire expects respondents to propose a comprehensive content migration strategy and outline how they would manage the process effectively.

Futureproofing and longevity considerations

Futureproofing the new website for VisitAberdeenshire is essential to ensure its relevance, effectiveness and longevity in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. The website should be built with scalability, flexibility and adaptability in mind to accommodate emerging technologies, changing user expectations, and evolving business needs over time.

1. **Scalable architecture:** Design the website architecture with scalability in mind, allowing for easy expansion, customisation and integration of new features, functionalities and content modules as VisitAberdeenshire's needs evolve and grow.

2. **Flexible framework:** Build the website on a flexible framework or content management system (CMS) that supports modular development, customisation, and upgrades enabling seamless updates and enhancements without major disruptions or redesigns.

3. **Responsive design:** Implement responsive design principles to ensure the website is optimised for all devices and screen sizes, including desktops, laptops, smartphones, and tablets, providing a consistent and user-friendly experience across platforms.

4. **Future technologies:** Incorporate support for emerging technologies and standards, such as artificial intelligence (AI), voice search, augmented reality (AR), and progressive web apps (PWAs), to futureproof the website and stay ahead of industry trends and innovations. Consider chat bot functionality and how this could enhance user experience.

5. **Continuous improvement:** Establish processes for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of the website's performance, usability, and relevance, incorporating user feedback, analytics insights, and industry best practices to drive continuous optimisation and innovation.

6. **Security and compliance:** Implement robust security measures and compliance protocols to protect the website against cyber threats, data breaches and regulatory risks, ensuring the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of VisitAberdeenshire's digital assets and user data.

7. **Backup and Recovery:** Implement automated backup and disaster recovery procedures to safeguard against data loss, corruption, or hardware failures, ensuring business continuity and data integrity in the event of unforeseen disruptions or emergencies.

Project management plan and timelines:

VisitAberdeenshire expects respondents to propose a comprehensive project management plan outlining their approach, methodologies, timelines and key deliverables for the successful execution of the website development project. The project management plan should include the following components:

1. **Project scope and objectives:** Clearly define the scope, objectives and deliverables of the website development project, including specific goals, target audiences and success metrics to be achieved.

2. **Methodologies and approaches:** Describe the methodologies, frameworks and approaches that will be used to manage and execute the project and explain how they align with VisitAberdeenshire's requirements and preferences.

3. **Project team and roles:** Identify the project team members, their roles, responsibilities and areas of expertise, including project manager, developers, designers, QA testers and other stakeholders involved in the project.

4. **Timeline and milestones:** Develop a detailed project timeline with key milestones, deliverables, and dependencies outlining the sequence of activities, tasks, and deadlines required to complete the project within the specified period. Include checkpoints for review, feedback and approval at various stages of the project and clearly articulate any requirements on VisitAberdeenshire's time/resource.

5. **Resource allocation and budget:** Allocate resources, budget, and timelines effectively to support project activities, including staffing, technology infrastructure, software licenses, and third-party services, ensuring optimal utilisation and cost-effectiveness throughout the project lifecycle.

6. **Risk management:** Identify potential risks, challenges, and constraints that may impact project delivery, such as technical issues, resource constraints, scope changes, or external dependencies, and develop risk mitigation strategies to address them proactively.

7. **Communication plan:** Establish a communication plan to facilitate regular communication, collaboration, and reporting between the project team, VisitAberdeenshire's stakeholders, and any third-party vendors or partners involved in the project. Define communication channels, frequency, and protocols for updates, status reports, and issue resolution.

8. **Quality assurance and testing:** Define quality assurance standards, testing protocols, and acceptance criteria for the website development project, including functional testing, usability testing, accessibility testing, and performance testing to ensure the delivery of a high-quality, error-free product.

9. **Change management:** Outline procedures and protocols for managing change requests throughout the project lifecycle.

10. **Documentation and reporting:** Provide regular progress reports, status updates, and performance metrics to VisitAberdeenshire to track project progress and ensure alignment with project objectives and expectations.

Ongoing monthly maintenance and SEO optimisation:

Following the successful launch of the new website, VisitAberdeenshire recognises the importance of ongoing maintenance and optimisation to ensure its continued performance, security, and effectiveness in meeting the needs of visitors and stakeholders.

VisitAberdeenshire expects the appointed agency to provide dedicated monthly maintenance services, including SEO optimisations.

1. **Technical maintenance and support:**

   - Provide ongoing technical support and troubleshooting services to address any issues, bugs, or technical challenges that may arise with the website post-launch.

   - Monitor website performance, uptime, and security, proactively identifying and resolving any issues to minimise disruptions and ensure optimal functionality.

   - Perform regular software updates, security patches, and system upgrades to maintain the website's stability, security, and compatibility with evolving technologies and standards.

2. **SEO optimisation and reporting:**

   - Allocate dedicated time each month for ongoing SEO optimisations, including keyword optimisation, meta tag optimisation, internal linking, and content enhancements, to improve organic search rankings and drive targeted traffic to the website.

   - Conduct regular SEO audits and performance assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of optimisation efforts, track key performance indicators (KPIs), and identify opportunities for further improvement.

   - Provide actionable recommendations for ongoing optimisation and improvement.

3. **Backup and disaster recovery:**

   - Maintain regular backups of the website's data and files, stored securely offsite, to ensure data integrity and facilitate quick recovery in the event of data loss, corruption, or hardware failures.

   - Develop and maintain a comprehensive disaster recovery plan and protocol to guide response and recovery efforts in the event of unforeseen emergencies or disruptions.

4. **Communication and collaboration:**

   - Maintain open and transparent communication with VisitAberdeenshire's team, providing regular updates, progress reports, and performance insights on ongoing maintenance activities, SEO optimisations, and website improvements.

   - Collaborate closely with VisitAberdeenshire's team to understand their evolving needs, priorities, and objectives, and tailor maintenance and optimisation efforts accordingly to achieve mutual goals and objectives.

Budget

Budget to be broken down into the following areas:

- Website redevelopment and launch clearly showing a breakdown of essential items, desirable items and other considerations. Proposals costed between £60,000 - £70,000 will be considered for essential aspects. A further costed breakdown of desirable items should also be presented that VA can consider.
- Ongoing monthly maintenance and hosting for remainder of contract (Options between £1200 and £2000 pcm will be considered)

4. PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE & DELIVERY REQUIREMENTS

VisitAberdeenshire are issuing an invitation to quote based on the following timeline:

The ITT will be issued by	12 February 2025
Note of Interest to be with VA by	19 February 2025
Last date for questions will be	25 February 2025
Tenders should be submitted by	5 March 2025
Interviews with shortlisted supplier	W/C 17 March 2025
Company/Consultant will be appointed by	4 April 2025
Initial project meeting between VA and the successful Company/Consultant	W/C 7 April 2025
Work Period (start to end date)	W/C 7 April - 31 October 2025
Project concluded by	31 October 2025
Close out meeting on	W/C 3 November 2025

To respond to this request, please send a written tender proposal by 5pm on Wednesday 5 March 2025 with your electronic submission to include:

- description of how you propose to deliver the project (the earlier Project Scope section should inform this narrative);
- an outline of the team who will be responsible for the project, including details of any third-party sub-contractors;
- a summary of previous similar work;
- contact details of at least two relevant referees where similar work has been undertaken; and
- detailed costs as per the framework provided.

Tender proposals should be submitted electronically to Ashleigh Pirie **website@visitabdn.com**. All tender proposals submitted will be assessed, in conjunction with all other proposals submitted, against the evaluation criteria detailed below.

Any questions relating to the ITT should be submitted in writing to Ashleigh Pirie Marketing Manager, **website@visitabdn.com** The last date for questions is by 5pm on Tuesday 25, February 2025.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following evaluation criteria will be applied to all proposals received:

All submissions will be scored on both price and quality. The contract will be awarded to the supplier who receives the highest total score. The overall Price: Quality split for this project will be 40%:60% respectively.

Any mandatory requirements or thresholds identified in the brief must be met before the submission will be evaluated further. You must address each of the evaluation criteria in your submission in order to receive a score.

Price Criteria	Weighting %
Overall Price reflecting value for money	40%
Total	40%

Quality Criteria	Weighting %
User-centric approach	20%
Accessibility	10%
Project management, technical approach and experience	30%
Total	**60%**

Each of the criteria will be scored using the scale below:

0 – Unacceptable – Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet requirement;

1 – Poor – Partially relevant but generally poor response. Demonstrates some understanding of the requirement but contains insufficient/limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be met;

2 – Acceptable – Relevant and acceptable response. Demonstrates a broad understanding of the requirement but lacks detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be met in certain areas;

3 – Good – Relevant and good response. Sufficiently detailed to demonstrate a good understanding of the requirement and provides an explanation of how the requirement will be met;

4 – Excellent – Completely relevant and excellent overall response. Comprehensive and clear and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides a concise and persuasive explanation of how the requirement will be met in full.

6. LEGAL & CONTRACTUAL

Any contract to follow from this procurement process will be between VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited (T/A VisitAberdeenshire) and the successful tenderer. This procurement and the legal form of any contract to follow therefrom will be in accordance with this Invitation to Quote, and shall be governed by the Law of Scotland, and VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited (T/A VisitAberdeenshire) standard terms and conditions of business, (which will be supplied).

Tenderers must ensure that they are fully aware of all relevant statutory, regulatory and other requirements and should seek necessary advice before submitting a response.

The contract to follow from this procurement process shall continue for the period identified in the tender, however VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited reserves the right to terminate the contract prior to the expiry of the Term in certain situations in accordance with this Invitation to Quote. In particular, VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited shall be entitled to terminate the contract prior to the expiry of the Term if, in its sole discretion, it considers that the selected tenderer is not performing the contract in a satisfactory manner (including without limitation poor performance and progress on the part of the selected tenderer). For the avoidance of doubt, the continuation of the contract for the full Term shall be dependent on the satisfactory performance of the contract by the selected tenderer, which shall be determined at VisitAberdeenshire Trading Limited sole discretion.