Rijkswaterstaat
Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat

RWS INFORMATIE

Market Consultation Document for the Emergency Towing Vessel (ERTV) Service in the North Sea 2027–2035

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Rijkswaterstaat and the Dutch Government Shipping Agency (Rijksrederij) are preparing the future procurement of emergency towing services for the North Sea for the period 2027 to 2035.

Preparations for the procurement have indicated that the combination of the proposed requirements and assumptions (see Appendix A) may influence both the availability of suitable vessels and market interest.

This market consultation is therefore being undertaken to further evaluate the balance between operational needs and practical feasibility, with a view to optimising the future procurement.

Would you like to contribute your views on the future Emergency Towing Service for the North Sea for the period 2027–2035?

1.2 Project description

The Dutch North Sea is one of the busiest maritime areas in the world and plays a crucial role in international shipping, energy supply and economic activity. At the same time, spatial pressure on the North Sea continues to increase due to the development and expansion of offshore wind energy areas, reducing the available navigation space and increasing the risk of incidents. The Dutch Government Shipping Agency (Rijksrederij) supports the Dutch Coastguard in safeguarding safety in the North Sea by providing emergency towing capacity.

The intended service aims to ensure maritime safety in the North Sea through the provision of emergency towing capacity in accordance with the principles set out in the North Sea Emergency Assistance Policy 2026-2030[1] and the resulting proposed requirements and assumptions (Appendix A).

The primary area of operation is the Dutch Exclusive Economic Zone (NL-EEZ), with the possibility of aiding assistance in border areas upon request.

The service includes the provision of three Emergency Response Towing Vessels (ERTVs), including qualified crew, equipment, materials and supporting services. The primary tasks of these vessels are the provision of emergency towing assistance, support during maritime incidents (disaster and incident response), and assistance in Search and Rescue (SAR) operations. In addition, the vessels may be deployed for other supplementary Coastguard tasks, such as vessel traffic assistance, exercises, inspections, patrols, interventions and support for drone operations. Day-to-day operational control will be exercised by the Netherlands Coastguard.

[1] Nota Noodhulp op de Noordzee 2026 - 2030

For the future contract, a high level of vessel availability is envisaged. The proposed requirements and assumptions provide for three ERTVs, with at least two vessels permanently available at sea from a strategic position designated by the Coastguard. Various operational scenarios are being examined for the third vessel. In addition, the most suitable contract model, performance requirements and availability conditions are being explored to ensure alignment with both the operational needs of the Coastguard and the capabilities of the market.

Through this market consultation, Rijkswaterstaat seeks to gain insight into:
- the feasibility of the proposed requirements and assumptions (see Appendix A).

The information obtained will be used in the further development of the procurement strategy and the eventual contracting of emergency towing services for the period 2027-2035, including potential extension options up to 2040.

1.3 Market consultation purpose

The purpose of this market consultation is to gain insight into how market participants view the future provision of emergency towing services in the North Sea. By obtaining responses from market participants on a number of key issues, Rijkswaterstaat aims to develop a better understanding of the market, including the level of competition, feasibility, contractual conditions, best practices, trends and innovations. This will enable Rijkswaterstaat to structure any future procurement in such a way that the market is given sufficient opportunity to deliver added value.

More specifically, Rijkswaterstaat seeks to gain insight into:
- available and future market capacity;
- achievable performance requirements;
- appropriate contract and collaboration models;
- the willingness of market participants to invest;
- opportunities for sustainability and decarbonisation;
- opportunities and risks;
- factors that may encourage or hinder participation in a future procurement process.

1.4 Target group

This market consultation is aimed at organizations involved in, or able to contribute to, the provision of emergency towing services at sea, including:

- providers of emergency towing services;
- towing companies;
- maritime service providers (such as brokers).

Rijkswaterstaat explicitly invites market participants to take part in this market consultation from a variety of perspectives.

1.5 About Rijkswaterstaat / Dutch Government Shipping Agency

Rijkswaterstaat is the executive agency of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management. We manage and develop the national road network, waterways and waters, and contribute to a sustainable living environment.

The Dutch Government Shipping Agency (Rijksrederij) is the national service provider for civil nautical government tasks. Together with its clients, the Dutch Government Shipping Agency contributes to a safe, liveable and accessible Netherlands.

2 Procedure

Following the announcement of this market consultation and the answering of any questions relating to it, a period will be provided during which the written questionnaire may be completed and submitted.

Should there still be a need for further clarification of the responses after the questionnaire has been completed, participants will be given the opportunity to provide an individual explanation. These individual meetings may be scheduled in accordance with the timetable set out in Section 2.2.

2.1 Rules Governing Questions, Responses and Meetings

- The responses to our questions and the discussions held are confidential, and any information provided will be treated confidentially by Rijkswaterstaat, meaning it will be used for internal purposes only. Other contracting authorities will receive only the general, anonymized report that will be made publicly available.
- We will not discuss other parties or their responses to the questionnaires.
- This is not a procurement procedure. However, the information obtained may be used in future procurement procedures, although there is no obligation to do so. Neither party incurs any commitments or obligations as a result of participating in this market consultation.
- Responses will be used anonymously and summarized in a general report.
- An individual meeting report will also be prepared following each individual meeting and submitted to you for review. We kindly request your feedback within five working days. If no response is received within this period, we will assume that the report accurately reflects the points you intended to convey. If feedback is provided, it will be incorporated within five working days and you will receive the final version of the report. Should this not occur, your feedback will prevail, as our objective is to ensure an accurate understanding of your message.

2.2 Planning

The table below provides an overview of the schedule for this market consultation:

Activity	Date
Publication market consultation document on TenderNed	Wednesday November 11th, 2026
Deadline for registration and submitting questions regarding the market consultation via the TenderNed messaging module.	Friday November 27th, 2026
Publication of questions and answers document concerning the market consultation document	Wednesday December 2nd, 2026
Start of the written market consultation	Monday November 30st, 2026
End of the written market consultation	Friday December 11th, 2026
Start of the individual consultation meetings	Monday January 4th, 2027
End of the individual consultation meetings	Friday January 15th, 2027
Publication report on TenderNed	Friday January 29th, 2027

2.3 Questions about the market consultation

If you have any questions regarding this market consultation, you may submit them via the TenderNed Messaging Module up to and including the deadline specified in Section 2.2. Rijkswaterstaat will generally respond within a few working day through the Questions and Answers module and, ultimately, through a consolidated Questions and Answers document published on TenderNed in accordance with the schedule set out in Section 2.2.

2.4 TenderNed

Communication relating to this market consultation will take place through TenderNed, where all relevant information can be found. The use of TenderNed ensures that all interested market participants are informed of relevant information simultaneously.

2.5 Registration

If you wish to participate in the market consultation, you may register via the TenderNed Messaging Module. Registration is possible until the deadline specified in Section 2.2.
When registering, please provide the name, organisation and position of the participant(s).
No later than when submitting your responses to the questionnaire, you are also requested to indicate whether you would like to make use of the opportunity to participate in an individual consultation meeting.

2.6 Completion of the Market Consultation Questionnaire

Chapter 3 of this market consultation document contains a questionnaire. This questionnaire is also available as a separate Word document in TenderNed. Responses may be completed in the black-bordered text fields provided in that Word document.
Section 2.2 specifies the deadline by which responses to the questionnaire must be submitted. Completed questionnaires may be submitted via the TenderNed Messaging Module.

2.7 Report of the market consultation

Publication of the market consultation report on TenderNed marks the conclusion of the market consultation.

The report will be prepared by Rijkswaterstaat and will present the key findings and principal conclusions. Publishing the report ensures a level playing field and enables all interested market participants to access the same information.

The findings contained in the report will be anonymised, and commercially confidential information will not be included. In addition, a list of participating market parties will be published on TenderNed. This list will contain the names of participating organisations only; the names and contact details of individual employees will not be included.

2.8 Conditions Governing the Market Consultation

This market consultation is conducted subject to the following conditions:

- Given the non-binding nature of this market consultation, no rights may be derived from any information provided in connection with this market consultation.
- Participation is entirely voluntary and non-binding.
- Rijkswaterstaat will not reimburse any costs incurred, or to be incurred, in connection with participation in this market consultation.
- The report of this market consultation may be included in a future procurement procedure. Participation in the consultation will have no consequences for any future procurement procedure. Participation in the consultation will neither create any preferential position nor constitute grounds for exclusion.
- Upon commencement of any future procurement procedure, Rijkswaterstaat will make the market consultation report available to all interested parties in order to ensure that the procurement process is conducted in an objective, transparent and non-discriminatory manner and to prevent any restriction of competition.
- Information provided during this market consultation may differ from information that may subsequently be provided in connection with any proposed procurement procedure.
- This market consultation does not constitute an invitation to tender or submit a bid in any future procurement procedure.
- Rijkswaterstaat reserves the right to amend the schedule outlined in this document at its sole discretion and/or to terminate the market consultation process in whole or in part.
- Information provided to Rijkswaterstaat through this market consultation will be treated confidentially and will not be used for any purpose other than gaining market knowledge and insights in order to develop higher-quality procurement documentation.
- By participating in this market consultation, the interested market participant confirms acceptance of all conditions set out above.

3 Questionnaire

3.1 Explanatory Notes

Through the questionnaire below, Rijkswaterstaat seeks to gain a better understanding of how the market views the future provision of emergency towing services in the North Sea.

It is important for Rijkswaterstaat to obtain a clear understanding of where market participants perceive opportunities and, conversely, risks. Rijkswaterstaat requests that market participants provide responses that are as clear and comprehensive as possible, enabling Rijkswaterstaat to take into account a broad range of market perspectives when making decisions regarding this project.

Where possible, market participants are encouraged to support their responses with examples, practical experience and/or substantiation.

3.2 Questions

The questions will be published on TenderNed at the start of the written market consultation, in accordance with Section 2.1.

When providing responses, market participants are requested, wherever possible, to substantiate their answers with:

- practical experience;
- reference contracts;
- fleet data;
- maintenance records and data;
- investment cases;
- other verifiable sources.

Interest, Role and Delivery Concept

Question 1

Is your organization interested in participating in a future procurement procedure for the ERTV services for the period 2027-2035?
If yes, please indicate:

a) whether as a prime contractor, consortium member, or subcontractor;
b) under which conditions;
c) which factors are decisive for your participation;
d) what your intended delivery concept is with regard to vessels, maintenance, and replacement.

Question 2

How many vessels does your organization and/or intended consortium own, or can demonstrably make available, that:

a) can directly comply with the requirements;
b) can comply with the requirements after modification;
c) can be deployed as temporary or permanent replacement vessels?

For each sub-question, please provide the key:

- Technical characteristics;
- Availability period;
- Required modifications;
- Lead time and dependencies.

Feasibility of the critical requirements in combination

Question 3

Which requirements and conditions set out in Appendix A are, individually and in combination, critical to the feasibility of the service? Please describe:

a) Which requirement(s) present the greatest risk to your participation in the procurement process, including:
   - ranked according to their impact;
   - which mitigation measures could help reduce these risks;
   - which requirements in Appendix A, in your view, pose the greatest risk to your organization or could potentially limit the number of bidders (including their operational, financial and market-access impact);

b) Which requirement(s) constitute the most significant cost driver(s);

c) The impact on fleet availability, operational feasibility, your level of interest in participating, and pricing;

d) Which modifications, in your opinion, would be possible without compromising the requirements set out in Annex A?

Please substantiate your response as far as possible with objectively verifiable data.

Operational performance and limitations

Question 4

Based on your experience with comparable contracts, what operational performance levels and deployment limits do you consider realistic and achievable for the provision of ERTV services?
Please describe:

- the availability percentages and response times that you currently achieve, including actual performance figures where available.

Please substantiate your response as far as possible with achieved performance results, operational data and other objectively verifiable information.

Maintenance, downtime and replacement

Question 5

How do you ensure the continuity of ERTV services during scheduled maintenance, damage repairs and unplanned vessel downtime?
Please describe:

- what reserve capacity is currently available for deployment as a replacement ERTV, including the number of vessels, relevant technical characteristics, area of availability and mobilization time.

What opportunities do you see for providing functionally equivalent replacement capacity, including the deployment of multiple vessels, and under what conditions?

What are the implications of the different replacement options for availability, mobilization time and costs?

Please substantiate your response as far as possible with actual performance data, fleet information and other objectively verifiable information.

Mobilisation, transition and commencement date

Question 6

What preparation period does your organisation require to make ERTV capacity operationally available, and which factors determine the feasibility of the intended commencement date?

Please describe:

- the preparation period required for existing vessels, vessels requiring modifications or newly acquired vessels;
- the main dependencies and risks affecting timely availability;
- the possibilities for a phased commencement of the services.

Please substantiate your response as far as possible with practical experience, completed mobilisation projects and fleet data.

Renumeration and indexation

Question 7

What remuneration and price indexation mechanism do you consider appropriate for a long-term ERTV contract, taking into account the required availability and operational readiness of the vessels?

Please describe:

- an appropriate balance between fixed availability payments and variable operational payments;
- the main cost drivers and financial risks;
- an appropriate price indexation mechanism and how exceptional cost developments could be addressed.

Please substantiate your response as far as possible with practical experience and reference contracts.

Sustainability and innovation

Question 8

a) Is the use of HVO100 as a transitional fuel for the proposed vessels feasible?
b) Do you identify any other opportunities to improve the sustainability performance of the proposed vessels, and if so, which option would be your preferred solution?

Please substantiate your response as far as possible with objectively verifiable data, practical experience and demonstrated results.

Priorities and Topics for Further Exploration

Question 9

What does your organization consider to be the three most important conditions for delivering successful, feasible, and future-proof ERTV services during the period 2027-2035?

Please rank these conditions in order of priority (1 to 3) and explain the rationale for your ranking.

Appendix A – Proposed requirements and assumptions

Proposed requirements and assumptions	
Vessel Draught	Maximum draught of 7 metres (when fully loaded with bunkers and stores for a minimum of 28 days at sea).
Bollard Pull	The ERTV shall have a Steady Bollard Pull (SBP) of at least 150 tonnes. The Contractor shall demonstrate, through calculations and/or simulations, that the vessel is capable of safely performing the design towing and positioning scenarios described in this appendix. The SBP shall be measured as an average over a period of at least five minutes, with the power applied not exceeding 100% of the Maximum Continuous Rating (MCR), or an equivalent standard.
Deployment and Availability	A minimum annual availability of 98% per vessel, with the vessel continuously available in the North Sea from a strategic (dynamic) offshore position to be determined. A vessel is considered available when it is ready to perform its assigned duties. Within the 98% availability requirement, time is allowed for routine crew changes, minor maintenance and repairs, and bunkering (up to a maximum of 24 hours per month), subject to coordination with the Coastguard. In the event of planned unavailability, a replacement vessel shall be provided to restore service availability. In the event of unplanned unavailability (e.g. a breakdown), availability should preferably be restored within four hours. If the unplanned unavailability is expected to exceed 24 hours, a replacement vessel shall be mobilised. The replacement vessel shall be called out no later than 24 hours after the start of the unplanned unavailability and shall arrive in the Coastguard operational area no later than 48 hours after the start of the unplanned unavailability.
Classification	The vessel shall be registered under the Dutch flag and shall comply with all applicable international classification

	society rules and requirements, including SOLAS, MARPOL, Load Line (LL), Tonnage, MLC 2006, COLREG, ISPS, FiFi 2 and DP2.
Dynamic Positioning	DP2 including certified crew
Towline connection	The vessel shall be capable of establishing a towing connection in weather conditions of up to Beaufort Force 9.
Sustainability	The Contractor shall minimize emissions of CO_2, NO_x and particulate matter. At a minimum, HVO100 or a demonstrably equivalent sustainable fuel shall be used. Deviation from this requirement is permitted where it can be demonstrated that an alternative fuel or technology achieves an equivalent or superior environmental performance.
Autonomy	The ERTV shall be capable of and equipped for remaining at sea independently and continuously for a period of 28 days under all weather conditions.
Maximum speed	The vessel shall be capable of achieving a maximum speed of 15 knots at the specified operational condition and draught (in accordance with the applicable conditions), with a maximum trim of 0.5% of the length between perpendiculars, using no more than 90% MCR or equivalent engine power, in 20-knot wind conditions and the corresponding sea state, at a water temperature of 15°C, and in the vessel's actual operating condition, including all onboard systems.
Firefighting system	The vessel shall be FiFi 2 certified and equipped with two firefighting monitors.
Number of Cabins (Single/Double Occupancy)	The vessel shall provide four single-occupancy cabins for embarked personnel, each equipped with a private shower, toilet, desk, chair and Wi-Fi access.
Deployment for Private-Sector Activities	The vessel shall not be deployed for private-sector or commercial activities,

	except in the event of an unforeseen and exceptional circumstance that could not reasonably have been anticipated.
Vessel Age	The vessels proposed for deployment should preferably be no more than 17 years old at the commencement of the contract. A deviation from this preference may be accepted where the Contractor can demonstrate that the vessel is at least equivalent to a newer vessel in terms of technical condition, safety, emissions, availability and performance, and is capable of operating on HVO100. Compliance will be assessed on the basis of inspections, maintenance records and performance data.

dditonal Client Systems	
RHIB tasks	• Search and Rescue (SAR) operations and assistance to small craft • Patrol, enforcement and service support operations • Boarding operations under various conditions, including during hours of darkness
RHIB Type	The vessel shall be equipped with an integrated launch and recovery system for the safe deployment and recovery of a RHIB and its personnel.
RHIB Number	1
RHIB Length min/max	8.5 m / 10 m
RHIB beam) min/max	2,8 m / 3,6 m
RHIB Top speed	The vessel shall be capable of achieving a minimum speed of 35 knots with fuel tanks at 100% capacity and with a full crew complement on board.
RHIB Range and Endurance	Range: 20 nautical miles. Fuel capacity sufficient for 4 hours of operation at maximum speed, with the vessel fully loaded.
RHIB launching and recovery system	The RHIB shall be operationally deployable in weather conditions up to and including at least Sea State 4. Performance shall be demonstrated through sea trials, supporting documentation and operational logs, including the safe launch and recovery of the RHIB at representative mothership speeds (> 3 knots).
Deck Crane (SWL)	The crane shall have a safe lifting capacity of 6 tons at a radius of 6 meters over the vessel's side under harbour conditions, with a minimum outreach of 6 meters.