

Guidance on selecting a contractor

Identify the work that needs to be done. This will help you decide the sort of contractor you need and the type of competence you will expect them to have. The Countryside Access team can offer advice about competent contractors for certain types of work currently employed by the County Council.

If you decide to use your own contractor please consider the following advice and use this to help you select a competent contractor:

Ask the following questions to help you decide if the contractor is competent to do the work you need them to do.

Their experience:

- What experience do they have in the type of work?
- Can they provide references? You may want to check these.

Their competence:

- Do their workers have any appropriate qualifications, training and experience? This is important if they are using work equipment or carrying out specialist tasks.
- Are they a member of a trade or professional body?
- Can they provide examples of safe methods of work, risk assessments or other relevant documentation to show they are familiar with the type of work and that they can work safely?

Their management arrangements:

- What are their procedures for managing health and safety?
- How do they supervise, monitor and manage their site work?
- How do they inspect and check their equipment (owned or hired)?
- Do they have the appropriate liability insurance?

Are they asking you for any information about your risks or needs?

The more complex and potentially dangerous the activities, the more likely it is that the answers and information will need to be recorded.

As the client, you will be responsible for checking that any contractor you appoint is competent to do the work safely.

Once you have selected a competent contractor, you will need to exchange information and agree the method of work. Both will need to be done before work starts. Pre-work meetings are a good way of ensuring that the work is properly planned and controlled. Finally, you will also need to monitor the work.

Exchanging information with your contractor

Make sure you talk to and co-operate with your contractor so that the following points are covered:

- Establish who the contacts are and their telephone numbers, so both sides know who to talk to during the job and any problems can be discussed and settled.

The contacts should be those people who were involved in agreeing the work, so they have a detailed understanding of it and the agreed precautions.

Discuss the following if they are relevant to the job:

- Specific site hazards that the contractor needs to be aware of e.g. proximity to highways, water hazards, public access, electrical lines, terrain, vehicle movements and livestock.

When you have selected a contractor

You will need to take the following steps:

- **before** work starts, check that the equipment they said they would use is there and that any agreed arrangements are in place.
- **during** the work, use the agreed method of work to monitor the work as it progresses, by carrying out regular checks. Are they using the work equipment and methods of work that they said they would? Are the trained people on site? If not, ask why and ensure corrective action is taken;
- **after** the work has finished, review their performance to see if everything went as planned, so you will have confidence if choosing them for future work.

If at any point you need advice please contact the Countryside Access team.