Case study exercise for recruitment purposes only

This case study is fictitious. It is not intended to represent any actual events, organisations or correspondence. It is indicative of a range of information or type of issues that you may deal with. It will be used only in the recruitment process.

RARE ANIMALS CARE ENGLAND (RACE)

Part 1: Instructions for candidates

IMPORTANT: READ ALL OF THE INSTRUCTIONS IN PART 1 BEFORE YOU BEGIN THE EXERCISE

The case study exercise:

A colleague has provided you with some background information on the performance of regional centres funded by the Ministry of Animal Welfare, along with information about their Super Centre project.

A local representative has raised concerns after hearing about issues highlighted by members of the public, journalists and on the "Politik" radio show about the treatment of rare animals in these centres. There has also been a recent announcement about problems with delivery of a £900m infrastructure project which aims to provide a new national Supercentre for Rare animals located in Central City to replace the two existing Regional Centres in Northborough and Spireville.

As a member of the NAO environment and rural issues team, you have been asked to review the background information provided and to prepare the following for senior managers:

a) **A written brief** (no more than 2 pages of A4) that identifies the key issues or questions that could be examined by the NAO; briefly explain how:

- they <u>are supported by the evidence, including any of your analysis</u> in point **b**) below;
- outline the <u>key research methods / analytical approaches and information</u> which might be used to further examine each of the issues you have identified; and
- highlight any <u>potential problems and risks</u> with your suggested methods / <u>analytical approaches.</u>

b) An **accompanying spreadsheet** prepared in MS Excel (or similar) which must contain analysis of the data provided (on cost, performance etc) to support your written brief.

In preparing your written brief and simple data analysis, you should assume that your audience are familiar with the background information. So, whilst you can refer to, or quote from, this information, there is no need to repeat it in your answers. We do not expect or require you to support your brief by researching additional information outside of this case study.

What we require you to return to us:

You should prepare a **short written brief** of no more than two pages of A4. You will be scored on the clarity of your writing, so your brief should not be in the form of jotted prompts or abbreviated points. Given the suggested time available, you should concentrate on the quality of the brief not the length, remembering that the aim of the written brief is to get across the key points in a sensible structure. Your **spreadsheet analysis** should also be sent at the same time.

Timing:

While we are not setting or monitoring a time limit for this work, we do not expect you to spend any more than around one-two hours on this. As a guide, you might allow about 20-30 minutes to read the background information and make notes, 20-30 minutes to complete your analysis, and 20-30 minutes to prepare your written brief.

YOU SHOULD NOTE THAT THERE IS NO MODEL ANSWER TO THIS EXERCISE

Part 2: Background information

The Agency

1. Rare Animal Care England (RACE) is an executive agency. RACE is responsible for providing services for the care and rehabilitation of rare animals in poor health. They operate two centres – in Northborough (located in the North) and in Spireville (located in the South). They provide services to zoos and animal reserves, and provide care and assistance to nurse back to full health the sick animals which have been transferred into their temporary care.

Funding

2. RACE falls under the remit of a Government Ministry – the Ministry of Animal Welfare (MAW). RACE is funded by a combination of grant from the MAW, revenues from the flat rate Animal Care Levy (ACL), and third-party revenues. The funding pays for the running costs of the facilities. There is intended to be a small annual surplus for investment in new equipment.

3. The Animal Care Levy is a flat rate levy on all rare animals under the care of registered zoos and animal reserves in England. Another source of funding is third party revenues from consultancy and advice services that RACE provides to international organisations. MAW has been encouraging the agency to grow third party revenues to reduce the burden on taxpayers and to provide new equipment.

Figure 1:

Funding Source	**£ million (2025-26)**
MAW Grant to RACE	500
Animal Care Levy	200
Third party revenues	50
Total	**750**

Super Centre

4. The Super Centre initiative was first announced in January 2019 by the MAW in a blaze of publicity. It was planned to open in December 2022. MAW promised "world-class" care and rehabilitation for rare animals, "fit for the 21st Century", by replacing the two existing centres, providing better facilities, improving efficiency and productivity. They said that RACE would be managing the tendering process for the construction of the new facility and managing all parts of the contract and transition of the treatment services.

5. In line with the deficit reduction strategy, the Super Centre aims to reduce the costs of caring for animals by bringing together specialists in one location and providing a better more integrated service to zoos. The government also expects that it will be able to increase third party revenues over time, by consolidating the staff responsible for consultancy services into the Super Centre.

Procurement process

6. The tender process was established in March 2019 for the design and build of the Super Centre design. RACE have provided this information about the process.

Figure 2:

Bidder	Bid	Status	Notes
BuilditEverywhere Ltd	£ 0.9bn (revised from £0.7bn)	Winning Bidder	Was awarded preferred bidder status in May 2019, and negotiations continued, during which the bid price was revised before being accepted in July 2019.
BetterBuildit Ltd	£ 1.2bn	Losing Bidder	Bid was higher than the winning bidder. Inexperienced and small company. Lack of track record in working with public sector.
DoEverythingBuild Ltd	£ 1.4bn	Non-Compliant	Was considered a non-compliant bid. DoEverythingBuild Ltd were seeking a contract for Design and build, plus the day-to-day Facilities Management of the Super Centre for an initial 5-year period.

7. The unsuccessful bidders for the contract DoEverythingBuild Ltd and BetterBuildit Ltd have complained about the contract tendering process and the subsequent revisions to the terms of the contract, and the payments that have been agreed with the winning bidder – BuilditEverywhere. They are threatening legal action and have already given statements to the press about alleged malpractice at RACE.

Construction of the Super Centre

8. Construction of the Super Centre was contracted out by RACE to BuilditEverywhere Ltd who then subcontracted parts of the construction to four other smaller companies who are specialists in ground preparation, construction of animal enclosures, specialist treatment facilities and electrical installations.

9. Opening of the Super Centre has been beset with delays. The planning application process started in February 2019. Construction eventually started in November 2022 (one year later than originally planned back in 2019), at which time a revised opening date was agreed for Summer 2025. This has subsequently slipped further, and in recent statements RACE has revised this over recent years to Autumn 2025, by "Summer 2026", and now an "absolutely final" opening date of 25 April 2027. This is an important date because it coincides with a week of celebrations for the 100 Year Anniversary of the opening of their first treatment centre for rare animals.

10. RACE has told NAO that the Project Leader at BuilditEverywhere Ltd has explained that they will have to abandon their contract to construct the Super Centre unless they receive further funding of £500m (in addition to £1,500m estimated by RACE). BuilditEverywhere Ltd say that the RACE did not provide all the information about the poor land quality and are alleging that the RACE has been obstructive and took longer to receive planning permission on their behalf which led to delays and rising costs. In return the RACE has responded that they will take

BuilditEverywhere Ltd to court for damages under the contract and will take over the completion of the centre.

11. A trade journal "Building Infrastructure Today" published an article about problems with the project.

Figure 3: "BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE TODAY" – Construction sabotaged by rogue workers (December 2025)

We can reveal that construction work at the Super Centre – already beset by costly delays – is being sabotaged. We have received information from an anonymous source:

> *"It's just a group of workers – no one knows who they are – who are aggrieved at promised bonuses not being paid. There are rumours that they are sabotaging their work at the site so that they get overtime payments for fixing the problems over the weekend. I suppose they are being put under pressure and stress by management at the subcontractor, the project manager on site, and from officials from the Ministry. But, it's not very professional and they give us all a bad name."*

A Press Officer at RACE gave us a statement:

> *"We are aware of these allegations. Ministers are clear that these allegations must be investigated, and they have urged BuildItEverywhere Ltd to push on with the project. These are contractual issues between BuildItEverywhere Ltd, their Subcontractors and their workers. We are confident that the new Super Centre will be open on 25 April 2027 in time for the 100th anniversary celebrations."*

The Chief Executive of *BuildItEverywhere* Ltd has categorically denied the allegations.

> *"These allegations are groundless. They have been put about by an agency worker who was fired by one of our subcontractors. The problems are all due to the Ministry. We are in discussions with the Ministry to resolve satisfactorily the extra costs and delays we have faced in this project – which are no fault of our own. We remain committed to the project but we must be compensated for the problems we have faced on this project."*

None of the subcontractors were available for comment at the time of going to press.

The Outline Business Case

12. The agreed cost of the Super Centre was £900m (the winning bid from BuilditEverywhere Ltd). The estimated running costs of the Super Centre are £500m a year. RACE announced in March 2026 that the forecast outturn cost of the centre will be £1,500million, and has explained that the construction was more complicated but that they had negotiated some additional value from the supplier. The successful bidder (BuilditEverywhere Ltd) agreed to provide "limited facilities management services" and any additional works would be provided "according to an agreed set menu of costs and time scales".

Figure 4:

Outline Business case – July 2019	One off costs £m	Annual costs / revenues £m
Super Centre Construction costs	900	-
Closure of North and South centres	100	-
Annual running cost savings (£647m falling to £500m)	-	147
Additional third-party revenues £300 million – (minus) £50 million		250
Total	**1,000**	**397 (net savings)**

13. RACE say that operating two centres in two parts of the country is inefficient, and do not provide a sufficient level of care for animals which is fit for the 21st century. Treatment of animals was to be transferred to the new Super Centre by December 2025. This will now be delayed until the new Super Centre opens. Over the last 5 years, the total costs of running the two existing centres have ranged between £643m and £709m a year. These were planned for closure in January 2026. RACE estimates that the one-off costs of closing the existing two regional centres will be £100m, but that there will be £397m net revenues per annum.

Day to day running of the existing centres

14. There have been allegations of mistreatment of animals in the existing regional centres, with a number of workers allegedly found harming and neglecting animals. This has resulted in the private zoos in England, who are currently using the regional centres, threatening RACE with court action if action is not taken quickly to remedy the harm to their animals in the care of the regional centres.

15. The public have started a campaign to highlight the plight of the animals and worry about the impact on health of moving rare and vulnerable animals across the country to the new Super Centre. They have also been appalled by the mistreatment of animals in the care of the regional centres. In one case, a rare elephant was sent to the Southern regional centre in Spireville and was reported lost – and subsequently discovered in a park 10 miles away.

16. The morale of the workers is reported in local newspapers as being low – one of them spoke anonymously to the Northern Herald UK newspaper saying that there was a lack of resources, job insecurity and that the buildings were crumbling because they have not been maintained. This has led to good staff leaving and not being replaced – and recruitment problems as people aren't applying for jobs knowing that the jobs are being transferred to the new Super Centre in Central City.

17. MAW has a long-term concern about the rising costs of treating animals at the existing facilities – and believe that they will be able to reduce the cost, through staff reductions, more efficient management practices, and streamlining the process of moving animals across the country. They have been concerned about the delays and the subsequent backlog (and extra costs associated with the care of animals which are handled by the Southern centre).

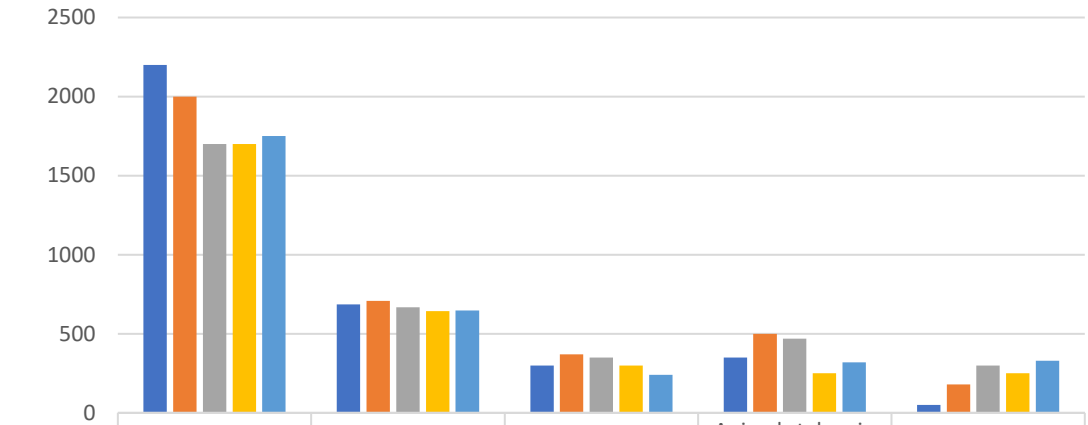
18. RACE has provided the following information – summarised in the figures over page (and provided in the accompanying Excel file) – covering the performance of the existing centres. They state that their performance ratings are holding up through difficult times, and say that in the last five years they have achieved or surpassed the 70% UserRating target set by the Ministry of Animal Welfare. Each time a rare animal is treated and transported back to the zoo, the liaison is emailed a questionnaire about the service that they received; they email their response back to the animal carer at the centre.

19. Here is an extract of the questionnaire: *"Rare Animal Care England aims to provide a service that surpasses expectations. We do this in a variety of ways, through caring for vulnerable animals. How do you rate the service that you received from Rare Animal Care England in the last year? Please select from the following choices "Don't Know, Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, or Outstanding), (please reply to RACE@MAW.org.uk)"*

Accompanying charts and data tables overleaf

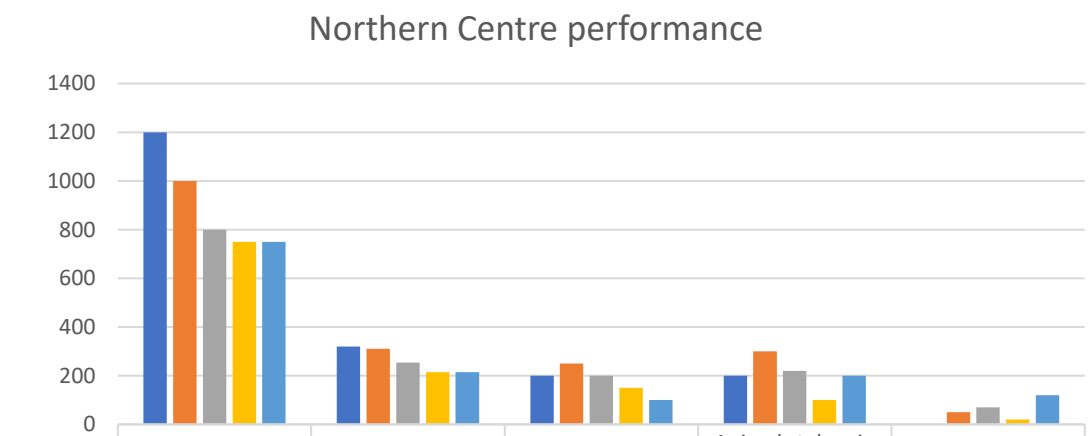
NOTE: The data for these charts are provided in the Excel data file.

Figure 5:



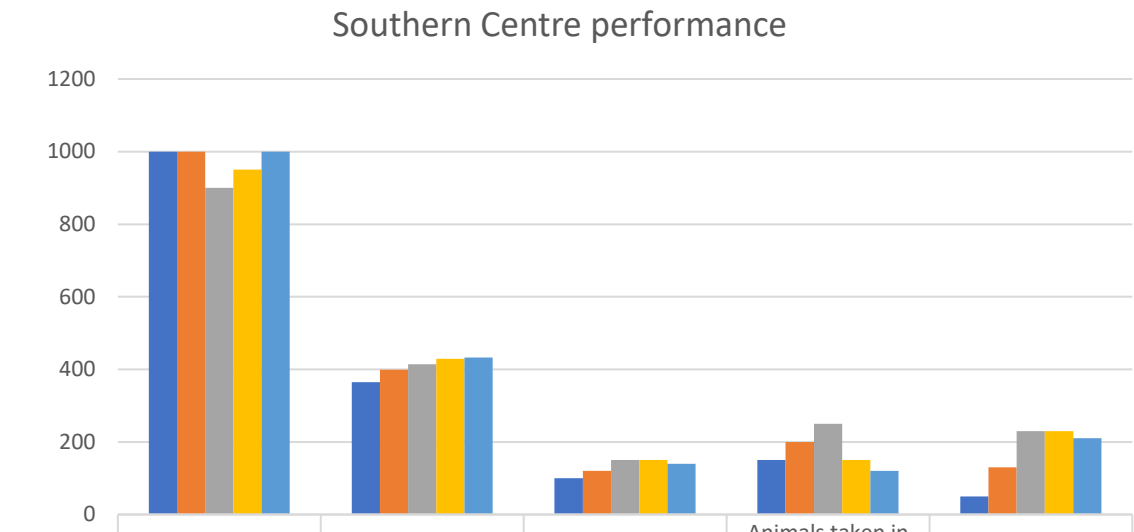
	Staff Employed	Running costs	Animals Treated	Animals taken in for treatment	Backlog
2021-22	2200	685	300	350	50
2022-23	2000	709	370	500	180
2023-24	1700	668	350	470	300
2024-25	1700	643	300	250	250
2025-26	1750	647	240	320	330

Figure 6:



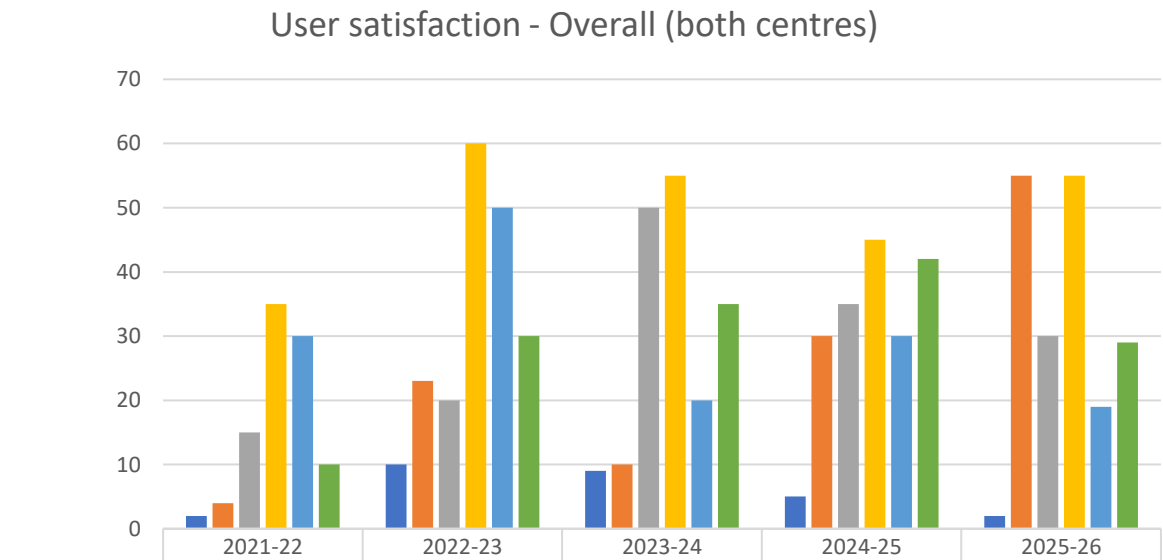
	Staff Employed	Running costs	Animals Treated	Animals taken in for treatment	Backlog
2021-22	1200	320	200	200	0
2022-23	1000	310	250	300	50
2023-24	800	254	200	220	70
2024-25	750	214	150	100	20
2025-26	750	214	100	200	120

Figure 7:



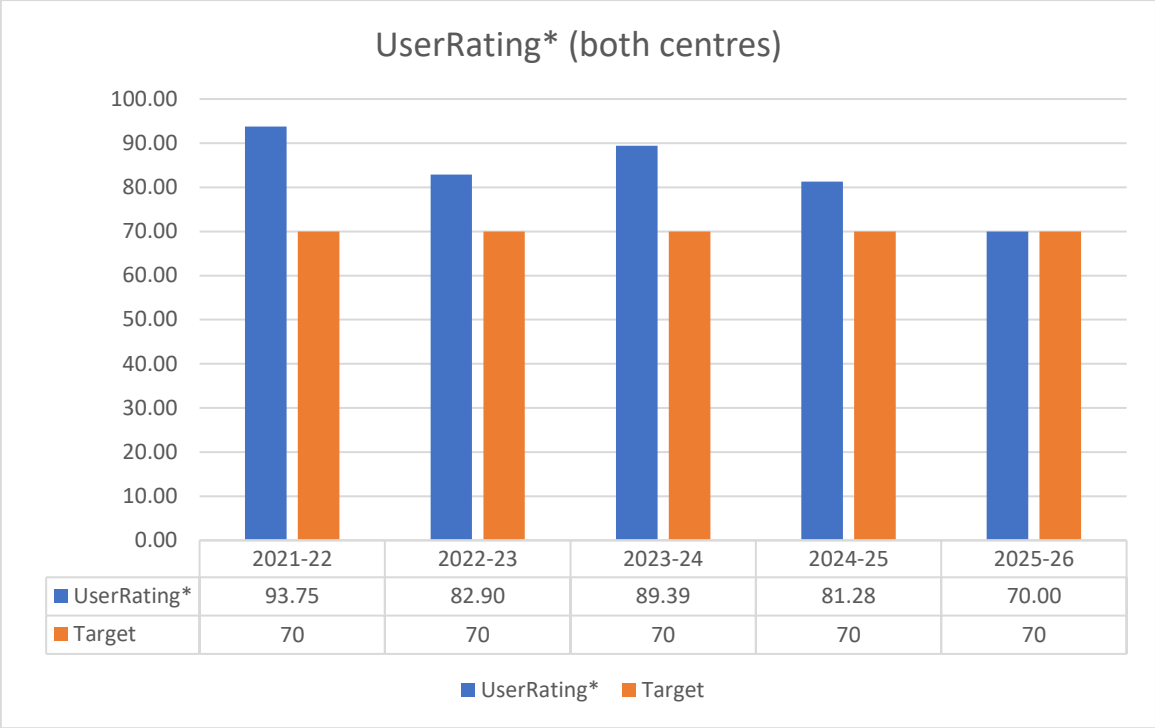
	Staff Employed	Running costs	Animals Treated	Animals taken in for treatment	Backlog
2021-22	1000	365	100	150	50
2022-23	1000	399	120	200	130
2023-24	900	414	150	250	230
2024-25	950	429	150	150	230
2025-26	1000	433	140	120	210

Figure 8:



	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Don’t know	2	10	9	5	2
Poor	4	23	10	30	55
Average	15	20	50	35	30
Good	35	60	55	45	55
Excellent	30	50	20	30	19
Outstanding	10	30	35	42	29

Figure 9:



	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
UserRating*	93.75	82.90	89.39	81.28	70.00
Target	70	70	70	70	70

*(*UserRating measure is number of treatments rated average, good, excellent or outstanding divided by number of responses received in each year)*

END OF NOTES FOR CANDIDATES