**Clarifications for Bidders Questions:**

Testing eDNA metabarcoding as a technique for monitoring subtidal sediment condition

**Q: Please could you clarify the requirements of the tender? In the wording ‘As such we are particularly interested in bacterial and meiofaunal diversity as well as wider community diversity (fish, invertebrates etc),’ is the request for metabarcoding of bacteria and meiofauna only, or for metabarcoding of bacteria, meiofauna, fish and invertebrates?**

A: Yes we would like metabarcoding of bacteria, meiofauna, fish and invertebrates in order to examine community-wide changes. We would like suppliers to suggest (open access) primers that would be most suitable for this analysis. Preferably costs would be broken down per primer so that we are able to maximise the analysis we can do within our available budget.

**Q: The end of the first paragraph on page 10 is incomplete.**

A: That should read ‘A detailed summary of the sampling methods will be provided to the successful contractor’.

**Q: Page 5 of the RFQ states all prices must include VAT and table 1 of the “Commercial Response” for pricing states all prices should exclude VAT. Could you clarify please whether our prices should include or exclude VAT?**

A: Please provide prices exclusive of VAT but please state whether VAT is applicable to your costs and if so what rate.

**Q: Can you tell me about the nature of the impact gradient as per the call documentation as different impact causes may benefit from different approaches.**

A: The pressure gradient likely to be investigated is eutrophication/organic pollution. Please note however the exact sampling locations are still being agreed with the Environment Agency, therefore locations and specific impacts could be subject to change. This is continually developing (hence why we did not specify in the RFQ) and we will share the sampling plan and further detail on the pressure gradient with the successful supplier as soon as possible.

**Q: I just wanted to ask about the evaluation criteria noted in the Benthic eDNA analysis RFQ document. From page 15, its details the criteria for evaluation - See below. in the right column, it states that the combined responses for Q1 should not exceed four pages. However, after that all the information refer to Q2, so in Methdology Q3, Key Personnel Q2, Quality assurance measures Q3, all the information refer to Q2 not exceeding 2 pages. Could you clarify these limits for the proposal?**

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| **Q1.1 Please submit an outline methodology for DNA extraction, PCR amplification, and sequencing**    **Q1.2 Outline methodology for bioinformatic processing**    **Q1.3 Proposed results, data comparisons and discussion sections.** | **Provide details of the methodology and approaches proposed to deliver each element.**    **Your response should:**  **1) Demonstrate a clear understanding of the nature of the requirements.**  **2) Be a clear, practical, achievable, and cost-effective methodology to deliver these requirements.**  **3) Have information in sufficient detail to allow a full appraisal of the suitability of the approach to deliver for the project.**    **Combined responses for Q1 should not exceed four sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11.** |
| **Q2 Please include details of previous work that involved reviewing protocols and/or field methods using DNA** | **Provide details of previous work that has involved reviewing DNA sampling and/or analysis protocols, that indicates relevant experience.**    **Responses for Q2 should not exceed two sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11.** |
| **Q3 Please explain the QA checks that will be undertaken on the results** | **Provide details of quality assurance checks and how these will ensure confidence in data outputs and subsequent discussions/recommendations.**    **Responses for Q2 should not exceed two sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11.** |

| **Key personnel** | **Detailed Evaluation Criteria** |
| --- | --- |
| **Q2 Please include details of previous work that involved reviewing protocols and/or field methods using DNA** | **Provide details of previous work that has involved reviewing DNA sampling and/or analysis protocols, that indicates relevant experience.**    **Responses for Q2 should not exceed two sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11.** |

| **Quality assurance measures** | **Detailed Evaluation Criteria** |
| --- | --- |
| **Q3 Please explain the QA checks that will be undertaken on the results** | **Provide details of quality assurance checks and how these will ensure confidence in data outputs and subsequent discussions/recommendations.**    **Responses for Q2 should not exceed two sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11.** |

A: Qs 2 and 3 under the methodology table are duplications of the ‘key personnel’ and ‘quality assurance measures’ questions. Please disregard these two rows under the methodology table. To clarify there should therefore be three sets of answers to the technical criteria: Q1 (including 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) – max 4 pages, Q2 – max 2 pages, and Q3 – max 2 pages.

**Q: In the Prices section of the RFQ it states Prices must be inclusive of VAT. The Commercial Schedule we need to submit states Prices should exclude VAT. Can you confirm that the Commercial schedule should exclude VAT?**

A: Please provide prices exclusive of VAT but please state whether VAT is applicable to your costs and if so what rate.