**Clarifications for Bidders Questions:**

Arts as evidence

**Q: Will there be an application workshop for this tender?**

A: No, there will not be an application workshop for this tender.

**Q: If I have any questions are you the best person to direct them to?**

A: Yes, if you have any questions, please send them to me at

Alexia.Coke@naturalengland.org.uk. Please note that we will publish all clarifications and its responses provided to all suppliers via email on contracts finder unless deemed commercially sensitive. For more details on this please see p4 of the Request for Quotation.

**Q: Regarding point (a) on page 9 of the Request for Quotation document, is there a time-scale for how recent the case studies and their associated literature need to be? Would it be useful to have a span of historical depth, as well as a range of applicable arts methods and practices?**

A: Yes, we are keen to have case studies from a range of applicable methods and practices. However, our preference is for recent case studies, and none older than the year 2000, because of changes in the arts and environmental research and policy context and the need for the case studies to be understood as applicable to Natural England’s needs now. However, reference to the learning from older examples can be made within the case studies and report where significant.

**Q: For stage 1, what support can we expect from NE in terms of identifying published resources and/or possible interviewees to feed into the case studies?**

A: We will brief the successful contractor about the rationale behind this research, the structure of Chief Scientist directorate, and point them towards possible resources, etc. However, part of the purpose of this research is to identify relevant published resources and possible interviewees. Our ideal therefore is that the contractor brings some knowledge to the contract (perhaps through partnership with an appropriate organisation or individual) or, if not, provides an outline of how they will identify published resources or possible interviewees beyond any suggestions we make.

**Q: For stage 2, do you already have a list of arts-based approaches that require classification? If yes, could you provide this list or give an indication of its length?**

A: To clarify: the classification we are seeking though this research project is the identification of arts-based research and evidence, and related approaches, that might complement the research and evidence, and related approaches, that currently Natural England uses to inform what we do. We expect the research in Stage 1 to provide the information that you will then classify in this stage in a way that will be useful for our organisational evidence priorities.

**Q: For stage 3, are you happy for us to suggest other research methods e.g. depths rather than focus groups with CSD staff?**

A: We would like you to submit a quote for the methods we have proposed. However, we are open to suggestions for alternative research methods which could be done within the budget of the quote you supply. We will expect you to demonstrate why the methods you suggest would better suit the needs of the research. We will then discuss your proposals for alternative methods with you at the inception meeting, if you are successful, to decide whether they look likely to be a better way to achieve the good quality outputs expected. However, you will need to be prepared that we might decide that the approach we have outlined in the Request for Quotation is better suited to our needs.

(In terms of the specific example you give: you suggest depths instead of focus groups as a possibility. By ‘depths’, we assume you mean in-depth interviews? If so, we would need to understand why you think this would be a more appropriate method, given Natural England’s context, as well as how many interviews you would be proposing. As background, the reason we have suggested focus groups is that the Chief Scientist’s Directorate is large, and divided into three sub-directorates, with a range of teams doing a range of things. We would need to understand how any alternative method proposed for Stage 3 would take appropriate account of this context.)

**Q: Confirmation of the budget?**

A: As stated in the Request for Quotation, the maximum budget we have available for this contract is £40,833 without VAT, which translates to £49,000 with VAT. However, please be aware that 30% of the evaluation criteria is price: the quote you provide. We have provided a lower limit for the budget (£30,000 without VAT, so £36,000 with VAT) below which we think it would be difficult to deliver the expected outputs, but you can submit any price as long as it is no higher than the maximum budget available.

**Q: Can some of the case studies be international, or would Natural England prefer that they are all UK based, potentially with connecting international projects and literature referenced in the written presentations and webinar?**

Though we would favour more UK-based case studies where they are equivalently strong, we are open to the potential of including one of more international case studies where they provide learning that UK case studies cannot in terms of what arts research and practice can do to usefully expand the evidence base and related approach to meet Natural England goals. We do think including references to other relevant examples (international or not) in the case studies and report would be very helpful where they add further learning beyond the focus case studies.

Please note: It is not a requirement of the bid to identify potential case studies. However, if you do -- and particularly if you provide a well thought through justification for your suggestions -- this will help provide evidence for the evaluation criteria in terms of your understanding of what is required and the relevance of the expertise and knowledge that you will be bringing as a contractor to this project. The final decision on which case studies to focus on will be made by Natural England in discussion with the winning contractor.

**Q: If we had access to networks of stakeholders that could form the basis of these case studies would you like us to describe and outline these at this stage?**

A: This is not a requirement but would help provide evidence for the evaluation criteria in terms of the relevance of the expertise and knowledge you bring.

**Q: When we submit the application is there the usual requirement of no more than 10 pages? Also, would you require the CVs of the academics leading the project – again, full documents or links to their CVs/experience/publications?**

A: There are page limits for each section (plus font size requirements) for each of the evaluation criteria sections (see first column of each section on pages 16-17). Together, they do total a maximum of 10 pages. We also ask there in the section on staff experience and knowledge, ‘In addition, please include CVs,’ so yes, please do include full CVs.

**Q: In the Stage One description, there is a reference to ‘creatives’ which differs slightly from the arts-specific language throughout. Would Natural England be interested in considering wider creative disciplines, such as design/illustration/animation as commercial creative practices and/or professional crafts such as pottery/weaving/green woodwork? Or is the interest specifically aligned to ‘the arts’ as defined by the UK’s Arts ALBs (i.e. Arts Council England)?**

A: We are looking for a supplier to develop informative case studies that would demonstrate how arts-based research and practice have been supported and used so far to shape the research process and/or evidence generated, particularly in the field of conservation and science. Therefore, the defining element for selection of case studies will be the approach to arts as research and practice that demonstrate processes for generating knowledge and evidence. Within these parameters, a breadth of examples will be welcomed, and we will discuss with those who win the tender any parameters on this breadth.

**Q: Is there interest/appetite to engage with creative academics who use practice-based, practice-led or practice-as research within the case studies? Or is Natural England more interested to scope case studies with professional artists/creatives outside the academy or academia**

A: We do not have a preference and are open to both (we have referenced research that has involved artists from both inside and outside academia within the specification of the call). As mentioned, the main criteria is that we are interested in how artistic and creative practices can offer methods and outputs that generate valid evidence to complement and broaden scientific and environmental evidence and understandings.

**Q: In the introduction, the RFQ states: “There is less appreciation of the significant contribution arts-based approaches can bring to broadening ways of understanding ecological and human-nature relationships and it has been largely absent from NE’s evidence base.” Is Natural England specifically interested in arts used for data collection/knowledge generation or wider interfaces for creative engagement in/with nature that enhances scientific, cross-sectoral and/or wider population understanding of ‘ecological and human-nature relationships’?**

A: The purpose of this research project is to explore the potential of arts-based research as evidence for broadening knowledge and understanding of human-nature relationships. We are therefore seeking examples of where creative engagement and processes have been used as a systematic activity and means of investigation undertaken in order to generate new evidence and insights in ways that can be effectively shared. In other words, for this project, the focus is on ‘**arts used for data collection/knowledge generation’** and not wider interfaces of creative engagement.

Please note:

* This call is now open to VCSE organisations (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise).
* There is a mistake in the table outlining the weighting for different elements of submitted bids that is given on pages 14-15 of the Request for Quotation. Here it says that 50% of the weighting will be for the technical element (proposal) and 50% for the commercial element (cost). This is incorrect. In line with the rest of the proposal, 70% of the weighting will be for the technical element and 30% for the commercial.

**Q: Is a collaboration with a partner at an academic research organisation permissible?**

A: Yes, a partnership with an academic research organisation would certainly be permissible.

**Q: I wondered whether you’d be able to share the three reference documents highlighted in the Request for Quotation?**

A: I am sorry you are not able to access two of these references (one can be downloaded through the link provided in the RFQ). We are not able to share those publications with you as we would need to share them with all potential applicants and would need have to have an agreement with the respective publishers to do so. However, you may be able to access them through Google Scholar which sometimes provides links to other versions or from the authors’ institution (the Stockholm Institute in the case of the ‘Raising the Temperature’ article).

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**Please note that the deadline for clarifications is now passed.**