Clarifications to Bidder’s Questions:

North Thames Estuary & Marshes Breeding Bird Survey 2024

**Q1: Could the number of survey visits be reduced to four from the requested six? The required data could be collected in optimal weather conditions over four visits, and later visits would be redundant for surveying breeding birds in the south.**

**A1:** Natural England has referenced standard recommended methodology as per [Survey methodology | Bird Survey Guidelines](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbirdsurveyguidelines.org%2Fmethods%2Fsurvey-method%2F&data=05%7C02%7CJonathan.Bustard%40naturalengland.org.uk%7Ca772cc1407444c37e29508dc182e7c77%7C770a245002274c6290c74e38537f1102%7C0%7C0%7C638411835127499638%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=JKRdDPOuDqpHDGBxnhFhragFsVKJhGlQpUsgO6QxlnQ%3D&reserved=0). There is a need to ensure the method is precautionary enough to adequately cover all species across all habitats. For many, if not most species, four visits may be adequate, however for other species that may be encountered at the site, more visits may be necessary, particularly if we want the best chance to establish probable or confirmed breeding. See answers below regarding the seasonality point.

**Q2: The method states starting half an hour before sunrise but the dawn chorus of territorial birds starts an hour before. Species such as Song Thrush finish singing within half an hour of sunrise and therefore many pairs would be missed if you are not present near that pair within that time frame. Can the surveys start earlier? This also enables you to collect some nocturnal species at a site too.**

**A2:** The size of the site means that at least some of the area will not be able to be covered under optimised timings during every visit, however the altering of visit routes (in terms of start and finish locations) should address this concern to some extent. The survey timings can be looked at once reconnaissance visits have been undertaken, and may be tailored to suit particular locations / logistical constraints.

**Q3: Continuing to survey in July is a pointless exercise as most birds are just finishing breeding and you will be only be recording the odd confirmed pairs. I would not recommend surveying beyond early June as this is when the territorial behaviour slows down. Please confirm the survey can finish earlier?**

**A3:** If the requisite number of surveys have been completed by (and including up to) the end of June that is fine. We want to ensure the survey gives the best possibility to record ‘probable’ and ‘confirmed’ breeding for as many target species as possible, across the greatest area of the site as possible. It is important that the spread of visits covers both the resident breeders which may start earlier and migrants which may start later*.*

**Q4: The method for long-eared owl is actually a similar method that should applied to the breeding bird survey except at dawn rather than dusk. Please note that searching for young will confirm successful pair and doesn’t mean they haven’t bred just they have not been able to produce young. This method of surveying distorts the data if you look at breeding confirmation. Without being able to give every site a limitless number of visits recording to safely locate nest then recording via territorial is the best method. I would want to be given permission to present breeding totals in such a fashion and only record the data in such a way.**

**A4:** Whilst confirmation of breeding is ideal, the survey requires either ‘probable’ or ‘confirmed’ behaviours to be recorded for each visit. A male calling from the same location across several visits indicates a territory is occupied and therefore represents ‘probable’ breeding.  Later visit/s where young are heard calling can confirm breeding in the same location or confirm breeding in a location where perhaps calling males weren’t originally recorded. It is not critical that the total number of territories is confirmed, but we are looking to have a better idea of the likely number and distribution of breeding long-eared owl at the site using the BTO ‘probable’ or ‘confirmed’ definitions.

**Q5: Data recording - the details to record confirmed or probable breeding favours the more confident species, so, for example, it would be possible to confirm Coots are breeding because their nests are in the open, however Moorhen are secretive and therefore a breeding pair would be a bird in suitable habitat rather than finding a nest so different criteria would need to be used for some if not all species otherwise there would be bias towards easier to locate species.**

**A5:** It is unavoidable that a generic survey design will mean that some species are recorded more than others, however the method described is deemed precautionary enough to ensure the best chance of recording the majority of species breeding at the site. Whilst it is true that the detectability of species varies according to their behaviour, this is where the later visits can be helpful where the young of more secretive species may be evident and could provide confirmation of breeding. All records should be noted by the survey – records categorised as BTO ‘possible’ are also helpful. The survey can also be iterative, tailoring methods to some extent to target areas where greater effort may be desirable.

**Q6: I would not use BTO breeding codes as they are difficult to translate for non BTO individuals I would use codes such as ‘sgg’ for singing this means a map showing M. sgg shows a Mistle Thrush singing. Will this be acceptable?**

**A6:** We expect standard BTO codes to be used for data presentation. If an alternative coding is used for data collection in the field, these would need to be converted to BTO codings for reporting purposes. This enables the standardisation of data between sources for consistency.

**Q7: For the technical abilities of the surveyors I would not be able to confirm in addition to me who will be undertaking this work as it will all depend on who is available to cover any dates I cannot make as it will depend on their availability. Until the job is confirmed my subcontractors are free to take on other work.**

**A7:** It is recognised that the personnel involved may not be able to be confirmed until nearer the time of the survey. It would be acceptable for the details of a range of sub-contractors to be provided, i.e. a pool of resource from which the final personnel would be selected.

**Q8: For clarification as I have been asked to provide details of my technical abilities before do you want this within the main body of the quote?**

**A8:** So long as it is clear where we can locate your technical abilities, this could be in the main body of the quote, or in a separate CV.

**Q9: In terms of company structure it is just me so this section may look odd, is this ok or do you require me to demonstrate some sort of back up?**

**A9:** It is acceptable for you to explain your own individual set up, however you should set out how you would cover work where you may be unavailable (for example due to illness), or where more than one surveyor may be required. It is helpful to understand what resilience/contingency is available.