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Request for Quotation

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National Vegetation Classification Survey of 'North Thames Estuary & Marshes' Saltmarsh

You are invited, to submit a quotation for the requirement described in the specification below. Please confirm, by email, receipt of these documents and whether you intend to submit a quote. Your quotation should be returned to the following email address by: **Monday 17th April 2023 at 17:00.**

Email: Jonathan.Bustard@naturalengland.org.uk

Please also send to Mailbox: thamesestuary@naturalengland.org.uk

Ensure you state the reference title 'National Vegetation Classification Survey of North Thames Estuary & Marshes Final Submission' in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

Contact Details and Timeline

Jonathan Bustard will be your contact for any questions linked to the content of the quote pack or the process. Please submit any questions by email and note that, unless commercially sensitive, both the question and the response will be circulated to all tenderers.

Action	Date
Date of issue of RFQ	Monday 3 rd April 2023
Deadline for clarifications questions	Please submit any questions as soon as possible
Deadline for receipt of Quotation	Monday 17 th April 2023
Intended date of Contract Award	Friday 21 st April 2023
Intended Contract Start Date	Monday 24 th April 2023
Intended Delivery Date / Contract Duration	Friday 16 th June 2023

Glossary

Unless the context otherwise requires the following words and expressions used within this Request for Quotation shall have the following meanings (to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires):

"Authority"	Means the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs acting as part of Natural England
"RFQ"	Means this Request for Quotation and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to suppliers
"Contract"	Means the contract to be entered into by the Authority and the successful supplier.

Conditions applying to the RFQ

You should examine your response to the RFQ and related documents ensuring it is complete prior to submitting your completed quotation.

Your quotation must contain sufficient information to enable the Authority to evaluate it fairly and effectively. You should ensure that you have prepared your quotation fully and accurately and that prices quoted are arithmetically correct for the units stated.

The supplier by submitting a quotation is deemed to accept the terms and conditions in the RFQ. Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the RTQ may result in the supplier's exclusion from this procurement.

Acceptance of Quotations

By issuing this RFQ the Authority does not bind itself to accept any quotation and reserves the right not to award a contract to any supplier who submits a quotation.

Costs

The Authority will not reimburse you for any costs and expenses which you incur preparing and submitting your quotation, even if the Authority amends or terminates the procurement process.

Mandatory Requirements

The RFQ includes mandatory requirements and, if you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated. All mandatory requirements are set out in Bravo.

Clarifications

The Authority reserves the right to discuss, confidentially, any aspect of your quotation with you prior to any award of Contract to clarify matters.

Amendments

The Authority may amend the RFQ at any time prior to the deadline for receipt. If it amends the RFQ the Authority will notify you in writing and may extend the deadline for receipt in order to give you a reasonable time in which to take the amendment into account.

Conditions of Contract

The terms and conditions attached Condensed Terms and Conditions will be included in any contract awarded as a result of this RFQ process. The Authority will not accept any material changes to these terms and conditions proposed by a supplier.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/procurement>

Specification

The Authority is Natural England. The Authority's priorities are to secure a healthy natural environment; a sustainable, low-carbon economy; a thriving farming sector and a sustainable, healthy and secure food supply. Further information about the Authority can be found at: [Natural England](#).

Natural England

Natural England is the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide. The organisation is responsible for promoting nature conservation and protecting biodiversity within England.

Natural England is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

Background to Specification

Natural England is considering the enlargement of Mucking Flats & Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), to be known as North Thames Estuary & Marshes SSSI, in order to recognise the national importance of a series of habitats and the species which they support. The enlarged SSSI will be an important component of nature recovery in the Thames Estuary. The Tilbury – Mucking corridor on the Essex side of the River Thames is a key area for biodiversity. Efforts have been made over some years to influence land use change towards nature conservation after uses to further strengthen these qualities.

The wider area includes post-industrial habitats with restored landfill/quarry, flooded pits and historic grazing marsh, with some arable farmland. It has a riverside setting, which supports a range of transitional habitats from the inter-tidal zone to coastal grasslands, scrublands and pockets of woodland. Several water bodies are also present with fringing scrub. Some areas are within active nature conservation management, but many remain under private ownership.

Natural England requires an up-to-date saltmarsh survey to be undertaken of the vegetation communities and local variants present within the survey area (see Annex 1). This survey will add to the existing body of evidence to enable Natural England to determine whether the saltmarsh habitat present qualifies under the Guidelines for the Selection of Biological SSSIs, Part 2: Detailed Guidelines for Habitats and Species, Chapter 1a for coastlands (Rees and others 2019)¹.

A map of the 'area of interest' is provided. The major areas of saltmarsh can be found within the existing Mucking Flats & Marshes SSSI, but some areas are outside of that boundary. All areas marked in green on the maps should be surveyed. The NVC survey should use quadrat data to map the whole saltmarsh, therefore a map of the NVC communities across the whole site will be

¹ Rees, S., Angus, S., Creer, J., Lewis, H. & Mills, R., 2019. Guidelines for the selection of biological SSSIs. Part 2 Detailed guidelines for Habitats and Species. Chapter 1a Coastlands (coastal saltmarsh, sand dune, machair, shingle, and maritime cliff and slopes, habitats), JNCC, Peterborough.

<https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/36b59d93-8487-471d-9428-bc3d7dff0423>

Biological SSSI Guidelines. Chapter 1a: Coastlands (Annex 1: habitat selection units) <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/36b59d93-8487-471d-9428-bc3d7dff0423/ssi-guidelines-1a-coastlands-annex-1.xlsx>

required. No specific transect data is required. The successful contractor should check the Environment Agency Saltmarsh Extent and Zonation data in the field, found [online here](#).

Please note it is desirable for the surveyor(s) to be at FISC level 5 or above / or have very good ID skills² on saltmarsh habitat, due to the complexity of the site and minimal data available on the site. Surveyors should also have undergone water safety training.

Requirement: Saltmarsh Vegetation Survey

The aim is to establish whether the saltmarsh habitat within the survey area (~65 ha) meets the criteria for selection as a SSSI notified feature. To determine the status of the saltmarsh habitat we require evidence of the vegetation communities present in the survey area. The full extent of saltmarsh for survey can be found on the Gov.UK [website](#) here, within the 'area of interest' indicated on the maps below.

Field survey methodology

1. To undertake a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey to provide a record of the NVC communities (ideally, but not essentially) to sub-community level, following the methods set out in the NVC Users' Handbook (Rodwell 2006)³.
2. The NVC communities include saltmarsh SM4-SM28, and upper marsh communities on sea walls and transitions to other habitats for example MG11, MG12, MG13, S4, S19, S20, S21, M28. The relevant NVC volumes – British Plant Communities (Rodwell 1991, 1992, 1995, 2000)⁴ should be used where necessary.
3. Stands which do not conform to the standard NVC types (indicate any floristic deviations, non-NVC communities or local variants) should be identified by target notes and briefly described in terms of their dominant species and any unusual floristic combinations.
4. Mosaics should be identified by standard codes separated by a dash along with estimated cover to nearest 10% (e.g. SM13 40%-SM16 60%). Target notes should be used to identify any further variations in the vegetation.
5. Target notes should be used to record:
 - i. Stands of vegetation which due to their unusual floristics cannot be assigned to a given NVC type or its intermediates.
 - ii. Small stands which cannot easily be mapped.
 - iii. Locations for rare or local species, or species which are otherwise of importance.
 - iv. Other features of importance to site conservation such as geological exposures, landforms and evidence of management activities.
 - v. Location of photographs

² FISC level 5 "Very good ID skills – in one group or more – more-or-less totally reliable for a site survey for that group – would expect to identify any rare species or hybrids or take vouchers for ID. Would be expected to know about legislation and automatically have appropriate licence. Always uses scientific names". https://bsbi.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Botanical_Skills_Pyramid.pdf

³ NVC Users' Handbook. Rodwell, J.S. (2006) NVC Users' Handbook, JNCC, Peterborough, ISBN 978 1 86107 574 1. <https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/a407ebfc-2859-49cf-9710-1bde9c8e28c7>

⁴ National Vegetation Classification (NVC) <https://jncc.gov.uk/our-work/nvc/#:~:text=The%20NVC%20is%20a%20detailed,about%2035%2C000%20samples%20of%20vegetation.>

- vi. Geographical locations should be recorded using GPS grid reference to 8-10 figures.
6. Quadrat data is to provide clear illustrative evidence of the more precise floristic composition the NVC types found on the site. Usually they should be taken from several stands (if multiple stands of a given type exist).
- i. The minimum standard should be to have five quadrat for the main stand types – more data may be recorded if deemed necessary.
 - ii. How to record spatially restricted stands should be the subject of discussion between the field worker and project officer. In general it is recommended that strands of rare NVC types or which are important as habitat for rare plants or animals should be the subject of some quadrat recording.
 - iii. Quadrat sizes should be 4m² following the published guidance in British Plant Communities.
 - iv. All plant species recorded should be given a cover score using the Domin scale, and the percentage cover of bare ground and macroalgae in each quadrat.
 - v. Record vegetation structure: average of 3 x sward heights, and proportion of macroalgae and bare ground within each quadrat⁵.
 - vi. The quadrat data should include a GPS grid reference to 8-10 figures.
 - vii. All plants should be recorded with a scientific binomial name (nomenclature to follow Stace, C.A. (2019). New Flora of the British Isles. 4th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
 - viii. Data should be entered onto an Excel spreadsheet as individual quadrat samples and their map location indicated by a target note.
7. Photographs should be taken of key aspects of the site and particularly of quadrats at the time of recording. Photograph locations should be recorded using GPS grid reference to 8-10 figures.

Timing

Survey to be undertaken in late April - early May 2023.

Deliverables

An electronic copy of the draft report in Microsoft Word 2010 format with Excel spreadsheet ArcGIS data and field maps should be submitted to Natural England for consideration and comments by 26th May 2023, with a final report incorporating feedback from Natural England, including Excel spreadsheets, and field maps to be submitted by 16th June 2023.

Report to include:

- i. An analysis of the survey results identifying the vegetation communities and local variants present in the survey area.
- ii. Map of the location of NVC community types coded using standard codes, non-NVC stands and local variants.
- iii. Excel spreadsheet of quadrat data.
- iv. List of plant species recorded.
- v. ArcGIS data layer of the location of quadrats and target notes cross referenced to the survey data.

⁵ Common Standards Monitoring Guidance of Saltmarsh Habitat (JNCC 2004) <https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/7607ac0b-f3d9-4660-9dda-0e538334ed86/CSM-SaltmarshHabitats-2004.pdf>

- vi. GPS locations of photographs.

A report template will be provided to meet Natural England publishing and presentational requirements. We may use any photographs they supply for our own reports and comms including social media. We may make any data and shape files they provide available to third parties.

Health & Safety

Not all survey areas have been visited by Natural England staff and some adjacent areas are industrial in character. Appropriate risk assessments should be carried out in discussion with site staff if necessary. Some sites are near residential areas, and horses or other stock may be encountered. Health and safety regarding work in or near to water should also be considered, together with lone working procedures if lone working is undertaken. Appropriate safeguards in working around deep water and on friable and possibly slippery slopes, steep banks, coastal mud, tidal zones, and any other hazards noted during prior or dynamic risk assessment are expected of the contractor and any surveyors working for them. It should be noted that Natural England's survey programme has received challenge from some landowners, who may reluctantly accept contractors on their land. We are making efforts to ensure that all landowners and their agents are fully sighted on our plans, and that we are adhering to any specific procedures and inductions requested. In some instances it may be necessary to deploy Natural England's legal powers of entry, however this is regarded as a last resort.

What Natural England will supply and undertake to do

Natural England will supply base maps required by the surveyors e.g. 1:5,000 and 1:10,000 as well as an accurate landowner map and contact details (including telephone numbers).

Prior to the survey commencing Natural England will contact all landowners to inform them of the survey and seek their permission to carry out the survey on their land, including establishing the contact requirements of each landowner, i.e. whether they wish to be contacted by the surveyors before each survey visit.

Prices

It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded for a period of 3 months to end no later than 16th June 2023. Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period. We may at our sole discretion extend this contract to include related or further work. Any extension shall be agreed in advance of any work commencing and may be subject to further competition.

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling inclusive of VAT (if applicable). Please confirm that your prices will remain fixed and firm for the duration of the contract.

Quotation Submission

We will award this contract in line with the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) as set out in the following award criteria:

Price – 40%

Quality – 60%

The following quality criteria are weighted in accordance with the importance and relevance attached to each one.

Criteria	Weighting	To include assessment of:
Staff	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pen portraits/thumbnails of field staff to demonstrate experience and competency. FISC level 5 (or above) is required, owing to the anticipated complex habitats on site requiring decision making on site at a sub-optimal time of year & survey to NVC sub-community level.
Methodology	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Outline method of how you propose to deliver the project including: draft survey route maps; how the survey will be organized in terms of personnel; approximate dates, duration and timescales
Information about costs	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Breakdown of quote for survey of each of the areas, and for the Report, including all costs and travel expenses
Health & Safety	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Detail how you will manage any H&S risks including a sample risk assessment for a similar piece of work, and your Public Liability Insurance certificate

Quality Score	Justification
For a score of hundred (100):	Excellent - Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full.
For a score of seventy (70):	Good - Response is relevant and good. The response demonstrates a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled.
For a score of fifty (50):	Acceptable - Response is relevant and acceptable. The response provides sufficient evidence to fulfil basic requirements.
For a score of twenty (20):	Poor - Response is partially relevant and/or poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirements but contains insufficient / limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled.
For a score of zero (0):	Unacceptable - Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.

Contract Management

This contract shall be managed on behalf of the Authority by:

Jonathan.Bustard@naturalengland.org.uk

Contact number 07721 783366

Outputs and Contract Management (subject to change)

- W/C 24th April 2023 (or shortly after) - Inception meeting (telecall/ video call) between Natural England and supplier.
- Anticipated 1 telecall thereafter.
- Draft report due (in digital format via e-mail) 26th May 2023.
- Final report due (in digital format via e-mail) 16th June 2023.

We will raise purchase orders to cover the cost of the services and will issue to the awarded supplier following contract award.

An invoice should be raised at the following the submission of the final report (this can will be confirmed at the start of the contract with the successful tenderer).

Disclosure

All Central Government Departments, their Executive Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement, including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice.

For these purposes, the Authority may disclose within Government any details contained in your quotation. The information will not be disclosed outside Government during the procurement.

In addition, the Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, which provide a public right of access to information held by public bodies. In accordance with these two statutes, the Authority may be required to disclose information contained in your quotation to any person who submits a request for information pursuant to those statutes.

By submitting a quotation you consent to these terms as part of the procurement.

Disclaimers

Whilst the information in this RFQ and any supporting information referred to herein or provided to you by the Authority have been prepared in good faith the Authority does not warrant that this information is comprehensive or that it has been independently verified.

The Authority does not:

- make any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the RFQ;

- accept any liability for the information contained in the RFQ or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information; or
- accept any liability for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation or any other liability which cannot lawfully be excluded) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any supplier considering entering into contractual relationships with the Authority following receipt of the RFQ should make its own investigations and independent assessment of the Authority and its requirements for the goods and/or services and should seek its own professional financial and legal advice.

Protection of Personal Data

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 the contractor must agree to the following:

- You must only process any personal data in strict accordance with instructions from the Authority
- You must ensure that all the personal data that we disclose to you or you collect on our behalf under this agreement are kept confidential.
- You must take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of employees who have access to personal data.
- Only employees who may be required to assist in meeting the obligations under this agreement may have access to the personal data.
- Any disclosure of personal data must be made in confidence and extend only so far as that which is specifically necessary for the purposes of this agreement.
- You must ensure that there are appropriate security measures in place to safeguard against any unauthorised access or unlawful processing or accidental loss, destruction or damage or disclosure of the personal data.
- On termination of this agreement, for whatever reason, the personal data must be returned to us promptly and safely, together with all copies in your possession or control.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

For the purposes of the Regulations the Authority is the data processor.

The personal information that we have asked you provide on individuals (data subjects) that will be working for you on this contract will be used in compiling the tender list and in assessing your offer. If you are unsuccessful the information will be **held and destroyed within two years** of the award of contracts. If you are awarded a contract it will be retained for the duration of the contract and destroyed within **seven years** of the contract's expiry.

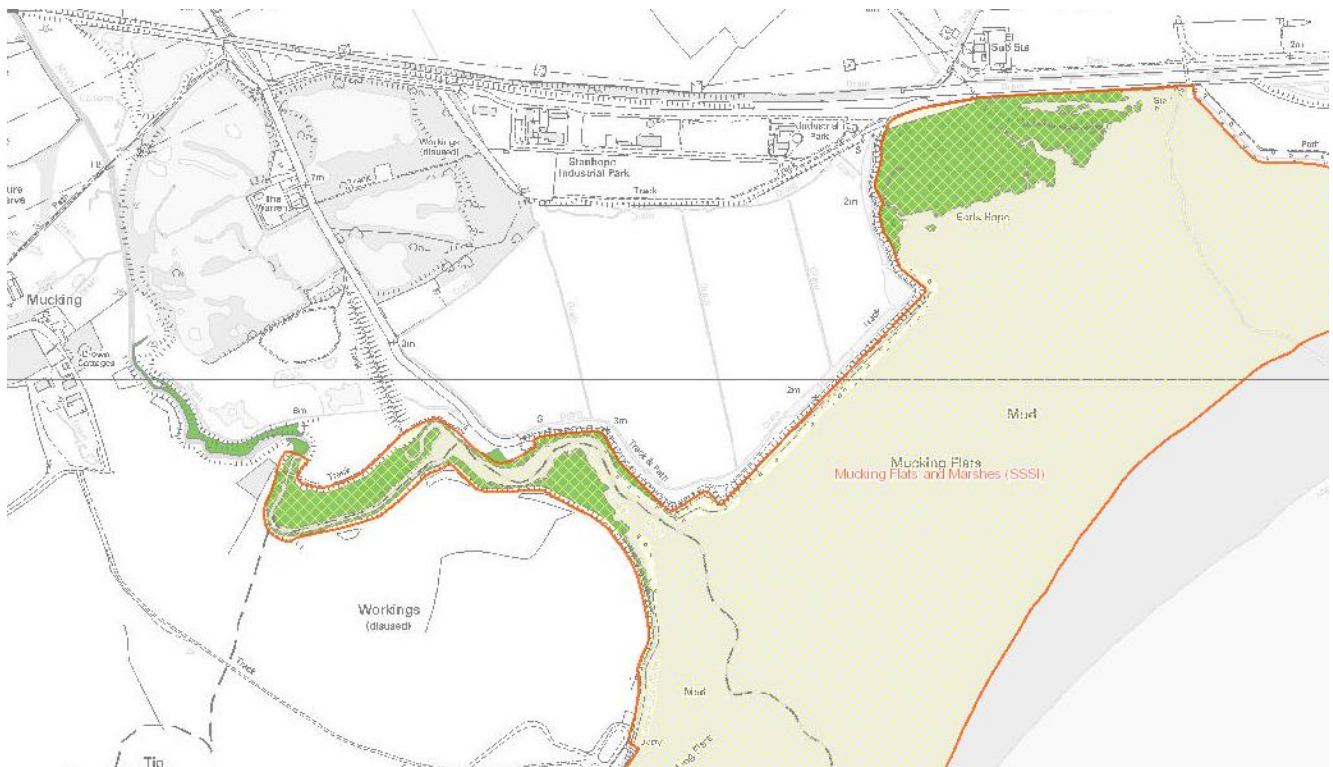
We may monitor the performance of the individuals during the execution of the contract, and the results of our monitoring, together with the information that you have provided, will be used in determining what work is allocated under the contract, and in any renewal of the contract or in the award of future contracts of a similar nature. The information will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Authority without the consent of the data subject, unless the Authority is required by law to make such disclosures.

Annex 1: Survey Locations

All areas marked in green should be surveyed. Not all areas shaded green have been ground-truthed as saltmarsh habitat, but they should still be visited to confirm the habitat type and, if saltmarsh is present, the NVC community type.

Compartment A: Mucking Wetlands

This area comprises three areas: the block of saltmarsh to the east of Stanhope industrial park, and to the west of the London Gateway port. It also include saltmarsh along the length of Mucking Creek. Additional saltmarsh (not marked on this map) has more recently accreted and is found within the western end of the managed realignment site, and approx. grid ref **TQ6948681008**, which should also be surveyed.



Compartment C: East of Enover landfill

This area is delineated by the gantry cranes as a northern reference point, and follows the foreshore south as far as the former sewage treatment works (although there may be no break in the habitat on the ground) at approx. grid reference TQ6950579006.



Compartment D: East and South of Walsh (East Tilbury) Quarry



This compartment (forming SSSI unit 2) stretches from the former sewage works as a northern reference point, south past the restored quarry, south past the former silt lagoon comprising SSSI unit 1, and south wrapping around Coalhouse Fort.

An area of saltmarsh is mapped within SSSI unit 1, but confirmation is requested that the habitats now present do not include saltmarsh habitat.

The green mapped area extends beyond Coalhouse Point, and the full extent of the saltmarsh here should be surveyed. Additionally, the ditch forming the field boundary running north-south is also mapped as saltmarsh but is not expected to confirm to this habitat type. Confirmation is requested.

Compartment F: Inter-tidal between Coalhouse Point and Tilbury Cruise Terminal

West of Coalhouse Point, the next mapped area of saltmarsh can be found in front of the Ashfields (an area of former power station waste), running westwards towards Tilbury Fort.

A final area of saltmarsh can be found west of Tilbury Fort and east of the Tilbury Cruise Terminal.

It is possible that additional small area of saltmarsh habitat are present between Compartment D and Compartment F, and if located, these should also be noted and surveyed if possible.

