**Clarifications to Bidders Questions - Interdisciplinary workshop facilitation**

**1. VAT** - in the RFQ it asks for prices to be inclusive of VAT but in the Template it asks for prices to be exclusive of VAT - please could you clarify whether the prices should be inclusive or exclusive of VAT. Prices submitted to us should be **inclusive** of VAT. This means that exclusive of VAT the maximum budget is £40,000 as per the template and that once VAT added, total maximum budget is £50,000

**2. Proposal length**- Could you clarify that the proposal should be 2 pages of A4 with Arial font 11 excluding CVs and the  information and costing table ?  Proposal length of 2 pages of A4 is for staff details and information (additional CV’s can be attached). In terms of your specific proposal, there is not a minimum or maximum length for submission as long as it addresses the key assessment criteria questions set in the specification (p.18). But as you can imagine succinctness is always appreciated

**3. Budget limit**- is there a total budget limit for this project ? Please could you advise ? As per question 1 Maximum total budget for the work is £40,000 (exclusive VAT) or £50,000 once VAT added.

**4.Participants at the workshop -** the RFQ talks about NE place based teams in the 3 locations attending the workshop - are you intending this to be just the NE place based teams or would you also be inviting key partners and stakeholders ? Would members of the central NE team be attending the workshops ? It will just be the NE place based teams and other NE colleagues from NE’s chief scientist directorate (we recognise that ideally vision creation would involve all relevant partners internal and external but for this project at this time logistics will not make this possible).

1. What is the current level of knowledge and competence around science-led decision-making within Natural England? Can you characterise this via different segments we are likely to encounter in the project- their size, status etc (e.g., - a small group who are experts with practical experience?) NE has a lot of knowledge and competence around science led decision making and this is dispersed throughout the different programmes, area and teams across NE. However, having said that the Chief Scientist Directorate has the largest concentration of specialist knowledge (science, evidence and evaluation led decision making) while area team staff in the different area teams (12 area teams covering the whole of England in total) within which the priority place projects are being delivered are often the staff that have to use science to inform their decision making. However, they may have less qualifications (academic) and have challenges of making decisions under time and resource constraints. One of the key challenges we want to address is whether by being able to work together collaboratively in a workshop (using methods to assist us) we can co create vision, plans etc for priority place projects that enable NE staff on these projects to make science led decisions. This will include consideration of what existing evidence we have that might help and how we make that evidence available to them in time and format that allows them to use it. It could also include how we might work together to create new evidence where gaps in our combined knowledge exists.
2. What are your current expectations around the amount of time to be dedicated to this project by:

a) the Natural England project owners / leaders;  I will be the project lead and will be able to put about half a day a week into supporting the project. We will also have a steering group who will meet monthly to help provide support.

b) others involved via workshops? This would be the one day workshop and max one additional day (follow up work)

1. Regarding the details of the Evidence Standard i.e., this document: <http://neintranet/aboutus/howwework/standards/Documents/evidence_ststnd-internal.pdf>  for which the link is broken.  Or is the sufficient insight based on the Natural Englands’ Science Evidence and Evaluation Strategy (2020-25) – p7 - also attached. We can provide NE’s evidence standard (although currently under review) but the science evidence and evaluation strategy provides the key insight as you note
2. The RFQ discusses 'priority places' as well as  'priority place-based working.' Could you clarify if 'priority place' refers to a specific geographic location (e.g. a town or a river), or more of an area of interest (e.g. How, where and why is the natural environment changing and what are the likely drivers of future change?). Priority place refers to a specific geographic location which can vary substantially in size and have many different issues of interest to NE within them

1. Could you also clarify approximately how many project staff will be part of each of the three priority place projects? I anticipate between 10-20 in each of the three workshops
2. In the IFQ, a priority place is described as 'prioritising efforts where we can achieve the most, including through others.' Has NE already defined 'the most' or is this something that will also need to be discovered through the workshops? This is one of the things that we hope the workshops might hep staff identify. E.g., the multiple benefits working in a place good have.
3. Do priority areas include areas with communities of people? If so, do you aniticipate ways in which NE builds trust and relationships with geographic communities of people or communities of interest/professional communities is part of this work? Yes some of them do include communities of people and while this relationship and trust building will be vital it is slightly beyond the scope of this project – almost the how it could do things. These workshops should help staff to identify what they could do.
4. The IFQ outlines workshops with three departmental groups as well as three area teams. How many people will this be? Will members of departmental teams attend workshops organised for area teams? At most, how many staff should we prepare to facilitate per session? Yes both area team staff and staff from within the chief scientist directorate will attend both. I anticipate that this may vary for each project but between 10-20 people.
5. Related, the IFQ states, 'Project staff will be able to identify and invite workshop participants from each of the three priority place projects (and wider specialisms)...' How many additional people might this add to the staff group to be facilitated? This is included in the 10-20 figure for the previous question

1. Is there a particular motivation for the timing of this piece of work, e.g. if it is part of a bigger package of case studies? No specific motivation. Priority place based working is a new initiative for NE that has started this year but is still at early stages. One of the key drivers of place based work is to maximise the impact we can have in places of importance (ecological, social, cultural, etc) by focusing resources (our own and through partnership work) to deliver beneficial outcomes. There is other work going on to evaluate priority place projects and approaches that this work can feed into but it is distinct from

2.  How do you determine which are your 'priority' places, and what does this term mean? Each of the 12 area teams was asked to identify priority places – these are geographic locations within their geographic area of responsibility where area teams believe that focused work and resources (beyond the work that we already do) could deliver important benefits (for species, ecosystems, landscapes etc). The priority places were identified using existing knowledge and evidence about the place to determine those that might benefit most from this approach.

3. Was there a particular rationale for choosing the three different area teams? We ask in case there are some key differences/similarities which may have a bearing on workshop design and delivery. The three area teams are in the South of England. There was not a specific rationale but rather they are area teams that had reached out to project team staff and expressed and interested in participating.

4. For the key personnel and expertise section there is a two A4 page limit. It is not mentioned whether there is a limit for the for the methodology/approach section. Is there a page limit? There is not a page limit. Obviously the more succinct the better. Basically, how you could bring together people with different knowledge (academic, scientific, place based etc) to try to develop a vision of what the priority place project could deliver and how, including what it might need for this (resources, evidence, knowledge, partnerships etc). Area teams are under a lot of pressure to deliver benefits in the short term but the area teams want to make sure that they haven’t missed opportunities to do more or do things differently because of this pressure.

5. In the ITT it says both that our answers to your questions should be sent as one document, and as separate documents. Can you advise as to whether we should send our quote as one document or several? Sorry about this. CV’s etc can be separate. Approach/methods etc in one and costs in another is ideal. But to be honest whatever works best for you in terms of overall clarity.

6. How many participants to the NE project team envisage attending the face-to-face workshops? We envisage between 10-20. This will be a mix of area team staff and staff from the chief scientists directorate (my directorate).

7. What is the response length for question one? Could you please confirm whether the page limit specified for question 2 (2 sides of an A4 page) applies for each question individually or for the bidder's full response? There is not an overall page limit (just the 2 pages max on staff with ability to then attach CV’s). Obviously the more succinct your responses to the relevant assessment criteria questions the better. But the key is to outline how your proposed approach could help us to achieve the project aim and deliver the project outcomes

8. Are bidders permitted to provide further appendices to any of the questions other than the C.Vs as specified in question 2 – key personnel (e.g. project plan, case studies of previous work) Yes if these are relevant and help clarify how the approach taken could deliver outcomes then this is ok. They could be added as attachments or given there isn’t the page limit (as noted in response to question one), you could build them into single document.

9. Could you specify what the difference is between 'National Priority Focus Areas' and 'Priority Places' as specified in the RfQ? National focus areas are areas of national significance that might cross over multiple area team boundaries whereas priority places are specific geographic locations within an area teams geographic area of responsibility where they believe that focused work and resources (beyond the work that we already do) could deliver important benefits (for species, ecosystems, landscapes etc)

* 1. Will there be several priority places per participating team in a workshop, or will there be one team for one single priority place? There will be between 1 or 2 priority place projects that each area team brings to the workshops for discussion. Each project will have its own area team leads and associated staff that will attend

10. Could you clarify the role and activities of the Natural Capital, Economics, and Social Science Teams? How do they interface with other teams in your organisation and what is their primary responsibility? The natural capital, social science and economic teams are part of (CSD) the chief scientists directorate ( I am part of the social science team). We provide specialists support (advice, guidance, evidence) to staff across NE working on a range of different projects as well as carry out research to address evidence needs within NE. We are usually commissioned through a mixture of yearly business planning and in year allocated time to respond to needs/request of others in the organisation. One of the key things that priority place working hopes to achieve is better or more integrated working between CSD and area teams to help deliver benefits. The workshops are a proof of concept approach to see if this kind of working helps achieve this. The three teams are just those from with CSD that have been working around developing this approach.

**11.** Could you provide further details on the intended audience for the final report, and how this report is expected to be used in the future? The reports from the workshop will be for the priority place project leads and the CSD project leads (myself and other steering group members). We anticipate that it can be used by the area team project staff as a way to support their planning and decision making (what resources they might need and why, when they might need them, how they might access them etc). We envisage that it could also be something that area team project staff take out to use in discussions with external partners (not as a final vision but as something that could then be built upon further iteratively between them). For CSD staff it will help clarify resource demand and how we might be able to provide access to or support from CSD to the priority place project as it moves forward (short medium and long term)

12. How do you anticipate the "step-by-step guide" to be used? Could you clarify who the intended users will be? The audience is other area team staff who might be working on other priority place projects either within the same area teams as those that participated in the workshops or those that have not. The how to guide is to help those who haven’t been able to participate to learn about what was done and how so that they might carry out a similar visioning/planning exercise for their projects

13. On the 'priority places', will part of the workshops include defining these places or will places already have been identified before each session? The places will have already been identified, part of the session could be getting the area team staff to discuss and explain the projects, why the places were chosen, what they want to achieve etc. We then hope that using relevant methodological approaches they workshops can then help facilitate discussion between participants to think through and discuss the projects both in terms of what they want to achieve as well as anything else they might be able to deliver (wider or multiple benefits that might not as yet have been thought about).

14. Are there preferred tools/frameworks (foresight, visioning, systems mapping, scenario planning etc.) that the NE teams are familiar with and prefer using? No, while we have both a futures team and evaluation team in NE that use different visioning approaches we are not wedded to any specific approach. We are interested in creative approaches to facilitating and supporting integrated working and are open to contractors providing a rationale for what they think would work best.

15. What is meant by "skeleton" in relation to the project vision? Does this define a template any team at NE can use to set up multidisciplinary work on a priority place? The term skeleton has been used as we recognise that it will be very difficult to create a fully formed final vision for the project from a single workshop. We have used the term skeleton here to suggest an initial framework etc that the area teams can then use and develop further to put flesh onto the bones so to speak (e.g. through the iterative development of this initial skeleton project vision etc). The template you mention sounds like the guide of thing that the too guide might usefully provide so that as you say any NE team could use to set up multidisciplinary work on a priority place.

16. Does the NE team require support with selecting participants for each workshop session or have these already been identified? We will be able to do this but are happy to share this with you so that you can input if this is important to the process.

17.Please could you specify the estimated size of participant groups in each workshop? Between 10-20 max

18. Can you provide any further details on the roles played by workshop participants? Will any co-deliver elements of the workshops? We would want the area team staff to present some information about their priority place project(s). This helps give a focus to subsequent discussion. We could provide access to this information/staff in advance if it helps you to create a more effective workshop.

19. Could you specify the expected duration of the workshops? (e.g. half day, full day..) In terms of duration, it is whatever you feel is required to help deliver the relevant outcomes. Given possible travel etc I would suggest 10am to 4pm be max duration

20. Could you provide a more detailed view of the stakeholders who will be involved in the design and workshop preparation? What are their roles and level of seniority? The stakeholders will all be NE staff. They will be from a mixture of different roles and backgrounds. One of the key leads from the steering group for the project is a deputy director from CSD and from the area teams they may be area team manager(s) who are also of a similar seniority.

21. What kind of information, existing research, or data access will you provide while designing the workshops? We will endeavour to meet any requirements you have and I will work with you to provide access

22. How long do you anticipate each workshop to be?  Both the main workshop and the follow up workshop. In terms of duration it is whatever you feel is required to help deliver the relevant outcomes. Given possible travel etc I would suggest 10am to 4pm be max duration for the main workshops. Follow up would be short 1-2 hrs for any follow up Q&A, clarifications, sense checking etc.

23.What would be your estimate as to how many pages the summary report from each workshop should be? I would suggest 5-15 pages. Succinct and clear summary.

24. Do you have in house graphic design team to work with the facilitators so the step-by-step guide is Natural England branded or will we be responsible for the formatting? You will be responsible for formatting the step by step guide. We have formatting information/requirements that we will provide but do not have the resources to do it ourselves unfortunately.

25. Can you give us a rough estimate of how many participants you expect to be in each workshop? We estimate between 10-20 max

26. Do you expect the workshops to be held in different locations for the relevant teams, or for participants to travel to your main office? Should we budget to reimburse travel costs for participants? We expect workshops to be held in main offices in each area team. You only need to cover costs of your own travel. Given that workshops will only include NE staff they will be able to claim travel expenses directly from NE

27. Do you have a preference or expectation for what form the step-by-step tooklit should be developed in? E.g. Report, vs slide deck, vs flow-diagram? No preference or expectation but something that is user friendly, plain English and accessible to people who will not have any background knowledge of the methodology etc.