**Clarifications to Bidders Questions - Testing the validity of using eDNA for carbon origin analysis from sediment cores.**

Question:

The application requests the development of a “bespoke reference library” to be developed for UK terrestrial, costal, and marine species tailored to the Solway Firth.

We were wondering if we could get more information on exactly what is sought after. By this do you mean a reference database or a reference mock community library. Specifically, do you mean a database that contains representative amplicon sequences of the organism we find, matched with taxonomic information (which can be found using current existing databases, for example, NCBI, BOLD, SILVA etc) for others to search against to examine the Soloway firth in the future? Or do you mean a reference library in terms of a mock community (or set of mock communities) made up of UK reference species in known ratios for validating the accuracy of species/taxa detection?

Answer:

The project includes DNA metabarcoding of the already collected samples. In order to do this, the project includes the creation of a reference library (or reference database) for potential species in the area. This library is expected to be a database with amplicon sequences, matched with taxonomic information, of organisms which could be present within the collected samples. The reference library should be built prior to matching sequences, but it may be required to tweak the reference library in light of the sequencing results.

The reference library should be tailored towards the regional area (Solway Firth / Northwest) and should include marine, coastal and terrestrial species. This information may be collated from existing databases (such as NCBI, BOLD, SILVA etc.). However, Natural England are open to possible approaches for how to collate or build this reference library, or database, and will evaluate each proposal according to the criteria provided in the RFQ.

Question:

Please could you clarify the requirements for the tender. It says: Responses should not exceed four sides of A4, and use Arial font, size 11.

Does that mean that our response to all questions (Q1-Q4) should not exceed 4 pages? Or does it mean that our response to each question should be a maximum of 4 pages?

Answer: The page limit is 4 sides of A4 per question. However, shorter responses are acceptable, the four pages is the maximum.