Clarifications to Bidder’s Questions:

Review and evaluation of the Coastbusters project: Synthesis report

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| 1 | I am writing to inquire about the deadline for the completion of the Coastbusters project review and synthesis report, which is currently set for March 2025.  Given the importance of aligning with the availability of interviewees and ensuring a thorough evaluation, I wanted to ask if there is any flexibility to complete the project earlier, should circumstances allow. | I can confirm there is flexibility to complete the project before March 2025, should circumstances allow. |
| 2 | Is VAT included or excluded from the 14 - 20K budget? | The 14-20k budget is exclusive of VAT. |
| 3 | ‘Has the project achieved its aims in terms of benefits to the Thanet Coast SAC features?’ – should this be focused solely on SAC features (chalk reef) or wider to NEKMPA features such as Blue mussel bed MCZ? | An additional focus on wider NEKMPA features would be of benefit to the Coastbusters review and evaluation project. |
| 4 | Could you share any further information on the existing quantitative data? We have looked at the data in the ITT references, but hoped you could shed light on whether there are any data on native species surveys (beyond quality scoring of sites) and the characteristics of volunteer data? | There is data available from blue mussel surveys that have been undertaken at the same locations within the NEKMPA where the pacific oyster is present and where control work occurs. Volunteer data consisting of postcode and age may be available. |
| 5 | In the pilot study report, we see tables of volunteer and coordinator equipment costs, we wondered if any other economic data is available? | Additional costs include volunteer travel expenses, First Aid Training and Natural England staff time - this economic data can be made available for the review. |
| 6 | What is the number of stakeholders and volunteers willing to be interviewed? Could you provide any more detail on who the stakeholders are? This will improve our ability to plan reasonable project management timescales. | There are 24 project volunteers who could be invited to be interviewed. Approximately 7 stakeholders could be invited in be interviewed, these include the local Marine Officer, District Council, Wildlife Trust, Port Authority, IFCA, EA and a university. |
| 7 | Please could you clarify the available budget for this project (exclusive of VAT)? We were unable to see this in the ITT. | The available budget can be found on the main contract finder page (£14,000 to £20,000): Review and evaluation of the Coastbusters project: Synthesis report - Contracts Finder This is exclusive of VAT. |
| 8 | We understand that the Synthesis report needs to be co-authored with the project officer, Willie McKnight. This being the case it would be good to know more about Willie's background and skills, is he a marine ecologist for example? This information would enable us to put forward a team with a complimentary skill set. | Willie McKnight was contracted to undertake the Pacific Oyster survey of the North East Kent European marine sites in 2007 (published 2009). He then worked with Natural England to establish best practice for pacific oyster control work and development and training of the ‘Coastbusters’ team - which launched in 2012. Willie has stayed involved in the project to the present day, as a Natural England volunteer co-ordinator - leading and attending control tasks, developing/updating training resources, collating field data, and providing the annual Current Account report to Natural England and the North East Kent Scientific Coastal Advisory Group (NEKSCAG). Willie’s project work has been communicated via published papers, Natural England reports, featured by the BBC and by support given to other agencies and individuals. In addition to his work on non-native species in the North East Kent Marine Protected Area (NEKMPA) Willie’s background includes engineering and leading conservation projects for the National Trust for Scotland. |