Clarification Questions - Investigation into the delivery of biodiversity units in the west Surrey Hills AONB

**Q: Will Natural England have a role in collecting data from the relevant Local Planning Authorities on current and predicted development?**

A: 20% of evaluation criteria for quotations relates to the proposed methodology, which includes the suggested methodology for analysing current and predicted development for Output Two and associated data collation. The Natural England team may have capacity to help with data collation for this output. Please indicate what help you may require from Natural England staff in your quotation.

Methodologies may involve analysing both adopted local plans and evidence for emerging local plans (such as housing needs assessments). They could also involve assessing traffic modelling as this makes assumptions about location and amount of future development and takes into account local plans and population growth.

In terms of timing, please note that Output Three (identifying habitat enhancement and creation projects to deliver net gain) should be the core focus. Although we endeavour for Outputs One and Two to be as accurate as possible, we recognise they will be desk-based best guess estimates.

**Q: With regard to Output 2, please advise specific time frame for current and predicted developments to review and also the preferred method for undertaking this output.**

A: 20% of evaluation criteria for quotations relates to the proposed methodology, which includes the suggested methodology for predicting current and future development. Methodologies may involve analysing both adopted local plans and evidence for emerging local plans (such as housing needs assessments). Theoretically, development should always align with the local plan. Methodologies could also involve assessing traffic modelling as this makes assumptions about location and amount of future development and takes into account local plans and population growth. The Natural England team may have capacity to help with the information sourcing for this output, which can be discussed with the consultant at the first meeting. Please indicate what help you may require from Natural England staff in your quotation.

We would like consultants to set out a draft timetable for delivering the outputs in their quotation. In terms of timing, Output Three (identifying habitat enhancement and creation projects to deliver net gain) should be the core focus. Although we endeavour for Outputs One and Two to be as accurate as possible, we recognise they will be desk-based best guess estimates.

**Q: Please could you provide details, definitions and data on the project boundary including likely habitats.**

A: There is a zipfile in Appendix One of the Request for Quotation which has shapefiles of project boundaries. You’ll see the project boundary is broad and the intention is for this investigation to help us refine our search.

Heathland Connections sits within the Surrey Hills AONB, a landscape recognised as a national asset in which its natural and cultural resources are managed in an attractive landscape mosaic of farmland, woodland, heaths, downs and commons. It provides opportunities for business enterprise and for all to enjoy and appreciate its natural beauty for their health and well-being. The purposes of the AONB designation is to conserve the natural beauty of the landscape, which is achieved through specific policies within the Management Plan covering biodiversity, agriculture, woodland, cultural heritage, health and wellbeing among others.

The area is predominately in the Wealden Greensand NCA, with a large area of internationally important lowland heath concentrated in this area of England. This project seeks to address the following statements of environmental opportunity:

• SEO1 - Protect and manage the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, conserving and enhancing historic landscape character, tranquillity, sense of place, and the rich historical and geological heritage of the Wealden Greensand. Enhance access provision where appropriate, to maintain public benefit from and enjoyment of the area;

• SEO 2: protect, manage and significantly enhance the mosaic and connectivity of semi-natural habitats within the mixed farmed landscape – particularly the internationally important woodland and heathland habitats – for the benefit of biodiversity, pollination, soil and water regulation, landscape character and enhanced adaptation to climate change.

South of Witley and East of Haslemere is the Low Weald NCA. This project has the potential to contribute to this ‘Forest District’ by connecting existing wood pasture and woodlands.

The area has the following SSSIs: Moor Park, Puttenham & Crooksbury Commons, Charterhouse to Eashing, Wey Valley Meadows, Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons, Devil’s Punch Bowl, Gong Hill (part of RSPB Farnham Heath reserve), Hankley Farm, and Charleshill. The area also includes large areas of ancient woodland and several Local Wildlife Sites.

The area is within the River Wey catchment. Protected species include otters that are slowly returning to the Wey catchment, while numbers of water voles are decreasing, mainly because of mink in the area. It is suspected that the last stronghold for water voles and white claw crayfish are on the streams which feed Frensham Great Pond and Frensham Little Pond.

Heathland Connections is in the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: WG01, 02, 03 and 04. It also links into B-lines, most notably the south westernmost arm of the Surrey B-Line, providing complementary aims and benefits for pollinator habitat connectivity.

**Q: Are there any other documents for reference/guidance for this tender apart from the one attached?**

A: No.

**Q: Where are other applicant’s questions published?**

A: They’re published as a word document on the project page on Contracts Finder. All questions are anonymous.

**Q: In terms of landowner engagement sessions, what level of detail would you like us to provide?**

A: This can be discussed together as to what would be best. We’re conscious of short timeframes so what you can provide is dependent on what time you have. It may be that we target a number of specific landowners based on the outcome of Output Three, in which case user friendly maps of individual landholdings would be brilliant for kickstarting engagement. We welcome your suggestions.

**Q: Is the bidding procedure just to send bids directly to you by the deadline? (I.e. there’s no procurement portal to use?)**

A: Yes, please email me your response to this email address by midday on Monday 21st November 2022. Ensure you state the reference number and ‘Final Submission’ in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

**Q: Would we send any questions direct to you too?**

A: Yes. FYI I send any questions I receive plus the answers I give to an internal team who upload the question and answers as an attachment on the Contracts Finder page for anyone to open.

**Q: Is there any particular format or form required for responses, or is any format acceptable that contains the required information?**

A: Any format is acceptable.

**Q: Is there any word or page limit for responses?**

A: No word limit.

**Q: The decision is to be made the day after the bidding deadline, so can we expect that there will not be an interview stage?**

A: There will be no interview stage.

**Q: How will the price score determined? E.g. will a formula be used?**

A: We will award this contract in line with the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) and on quality criteria.

Price – 50%

Quality-50%

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Quality Criteria | Weighting (%) | To include: |
| 1. Method What is your proposed methodology to deliver the outlined tasks?  Understanding of the key aims and requirements of the project, tasks and intended outputs | 20 | An initial outline of what material/expertise is to be used and how evidence will be collected, and findings presented  Identification of key tasks, with a proposed timeline and milestones.  Clear stakeholder engagement plan |
| 2.Staff and skills.  Evidence of previous research skills, knowledge, and experience  Key Personnel, their roles, and contributions to the project | 25 | CVs and a minimum of two relevant examples of work including names and contact details for these clients/referees  The team structure and projected time allocations for all individuals in days, set against your identified main tasks.  Link to pricing schedule. |
| 3. Understanding of Risk/Constraints | 5 | Identify risks and how they will be mitigated |

**Q: What formula or approach will be used to determine the price element of the score? E.g. will an arithmetic formula be used to determine a price score between 0% and 50%?**

A: Where we have more than one non price criteria, we have a standard spreadsheet that we use across the Defra family to evaluate. I’m afraid we can’t provide further detail on the exact formula or approach we use to determine the price element of the score, other than what is already set out in the Request for Quotation.

**Q: We wanted to check if there is any likelihood of an extension to the tender submission date which is currently 12 noon on Monday 21st November?**

A: If we gave an extension it would be to all potential applicants. If another applicant gets in touch regarding an extension I will consider it, otherwise I’m afraid we’re keen to get going with this project as soon as possible so an extension is unlikely.

**Q: Please could you confirm whether the upper price limit for this contract (£24,999) is including or excluding VAT?**

A: The value of the contract includes VAT

**Q: Please can you confirm if the project is to include all 11 LPAs within Surrey when considering future developments or is to be more focused, e.g. analysing Guildford, Waverley, Mole Valley and Epsom and Ewell which cover three NCAs?**

A: Due to time constraints, this project will only focus on a number of LPAs as you say, to be confirmed with consultants at start of project. The steering board is in process of being confirmed but we hope it will include Waverley and Guildford Borough Councils.