Clarifications to Bidder’s Questions:

Survey of Terrestrial Invertebrates Stensall Common SSSI

**Q1) Can you confirm that Natural England are expecting samples to be collected from a broader range of habitats than just wetlands? This would appear to be so reading beyond the initial narrative and would make ecological sense, but it is not clear.**

A1) Yes, this is an error in the specification for which apologies. The text in sampling methods should read:

**“Number of sampling locations**: The contractor should judge this, based on achieving representative samples from the range of terrestrial habitats available, e.g. dry and wet heath, acid and mesotrophic grassland, rush pasture etc, on each of the main sites (Strensall Common, World’s End Former Plantation, World’s End and Sandburn Wood).

The contractor should aim for a minimum of 3 locations per site (Strensall Common likely to need many more due to its area), to provide replication and capture spatial variation. At each location, sampling will likely range across a variety of habitats or mosaics. Sample locations should capture variation relevant to terrestrial assemblages, e.g., underlying substrate, vegetation community and structure, habitat transitions etc.”

It is anticipated that c. 8 locations would be visited for the existing Strensall Common SSSI.

I would also add a further clarification relating to “Timing and number of visits”, this section should read;

**“Timing and number of visits:** Make sufficient visits (daytime only), starting in April (or as soon as the contract is let whichever is the earlier) and finishing by the end of September, to capture complete seasonal turnover in terrestrial assemblages. This is assumed to mean roughly monthly visits, although sampling may be focussed on spring and the first half of summer (April – July) if these are the main active periods. The contractor should decide precise timings in relation to progress of the season and weekly variations in weather.”

**Q2) Can you provide the habitat maps to inform the quotation; and make the definition of ‘locations’ more precise in the context of SSSI versus ancillary sites?**

A2) NVC survey maps attached. No NVC available for Sandburn Wood but a baisic habitat map is attached.

As you will see from the attached NVC maps the existing SSSI is a complex mosaic of wet and dry heath, acid grassland scrub and other habitats. We would expect locations to encompass these different habitats and be spatially spread across the various sites. Depending on the size and configuration of habitat patches, it’s envisaged that a location could span an area of many tens of metres. Invertebrate samples would then be referrable to a particular location / SSSI unit / field parcel, rather than being aggregated for an entire site. Locations should attempt to include any micro-habitats features of particular importance to invertebrates present e.g. micro-cliffs used by nesting bees and wasps, glades, rich flower resources, bare ground.

**Q3) Is the above approach acceptable to Natural England, subject to refinement after scoping/ receipt of habitat maps?**

A3) See above comments for more advice on locations and sampling approach verbal advice may be sort from Natural England’s Invertebrate Specialist, Richard Smith richard.smith@naturalengland.org.uk

**Q4) Are pitfall traps forbidden within this area entirely or does their deployment require supervision by MOD personnel?**

A4) Unfortunately, I think they will be, however if specific locations are identified during the survey a further request can be made.

**Q5) Can pitfall traps be deployed out with the military training area without supervision?**

A5) See above.

**Q6) I am proposing to provide three quotes, combining Worlds End Former Plantation & Worlds End Grasslands as a single site *for the purposes of costing the site visits* but separating the data such that you would have bespoke results for each site. Is this approach acceptable to Natural England or is there a reasonable likely outcome that one would be commissioned and not the other? I understand your rationale for seeking separate quotes, but both Worlds End sites can be surveyed in a single visit, separating the survey data to ensure outputs relate to one or the other. To provide two separate quotes would, in broad terms, if all were eventually commissioned, double the cost of survey.**

A6) A combined quote for Worlds End Former Plantation & Worlds End Grasslands would be acceptable, however given uncertainties over funding availability and likely costs associated with the contract it would still be helpful to have separate quotes as well.

**Q7) Can small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) bid on this tender?**

A7) Yes, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are able to bid on this tender.

**Q8) As access is restricted to Strensall Common itself (as I understand it access is only possible on Fridays) is it possible to arrange any access days outwith the stated access days as some surveys may require 2 days within a single survey period?**

A8) Unfortunately, two consecutive days access cannot be guaranteed. However, please note, it is only the danger zone with the existing Strensall Common SSSI shown on map included within the specification where access is restricted. Access is available to the other areas to be surveyed at most times. Also note, live firing tends to finish by late afternoon and the danger area is also accessible some weekends.