**Clarifications for Bidders Questions: Long Term Monitoring Network - vegetation survey - Lullington Heath NNR - 2023**

**Q:** Why were so many plots not recorded in 2018

**A: Last time, in 2018, the survey was done in-house by Natural England surveyors – I was the one running this, early in the job, and didn’t find enough people to complete all the plots with the survey week, which is why only 36 were completed. Some of the plots are species-rich and time-consuming but not all of them, so please look at the plant species lists against the plot numbers to take account of this, for deciding the number of days needed.**

**There was trouble finding the feno markers and we had to install a lot of new ones, as you can see on the data sheet. The original feno markers were installed for the first survey in 2011, then the contractor who did the survey in 2014 was not able to find 18 markers and placed his quadrat at the gps co-ordinates using a Garmin gps and without installing new markers. Then, in 2018 we used a high-accuracy gps to ‘stake out’ accurately to the original co-ordinates and install a new feno marker, which is why for many of the plots there are no new readings but the co-ordinates should be accurate to 1m square, compared to what happened earlier. At the 2018 survey, we found 11 of the original feno markers and installed 33 new feno markers. Whenever a plot moves slightly e.g. a marker is lost and reinstalled, the plot number changes from e.g. 2 to 2a. Some of the plots had been obscured by bracken and scrub, and were recorded as such without finding the feno marker; two plots were discarded as being on a footpath and in dense bramble. We have a full history that will be provided in a ‘site plot tracker’.**

**The trouble finding the feno markers was due to low bramble and gorse preventing the metal detector operating close enough to the ground, as well as the previously used inaccurate gps readings. The site is under long-term restoration and there are large areas of grassland with incipient gorse that are mown each year, as well as patches of taller scrub and areas of more normal chalk grassland and chalk heath. Also, the time of year will obviously affect grass and other vegetation growth, so it would be beneficial to visit early in the season to find the feno markers.**

**This site has presented some challenges but I hope that using the high-accuracy gps last time will mean the markers are easier to find this time, meaning the plot replication is stabilised. I will be speaking with the site manager after he is back from leave on 7th March and will let you know if there is any further guidance.**

**Q:** The Eastings and Northings in the 2018 spreadsheet do not have figures after the decimal points. However, they are said to have been HA GPS recorded at this time. Will the full HA GPS data be made available to the successful contractor?

**A: As explained above. Yes, will provide a site plot tracker with full history.**

Q: Plots 1, 8, 14, 16, 36 and 46 were surveyed in 2011 and 2014 but not 2018. All plots, other than 1 and 36, are suffixed with an "a" in the 2018 spreadsheet, suggesting they were replaced in 2018 but then not surveyed (is that right?).

A: **Yes, that is correct – if ‘a’ that means feno markers were installed even if not surveyed.**

**Q:** Why though are Plots 1 and 36 now Plots 1a and 36a on the map sent with the RFQ? Has fieldwork been undertaken since 2018?

**A: Plots 1 and 36 should both have ‘a’s as the feno was re-installed, although they weren’t actually surveyed in 2018 – typo in 2018 spreadsheet on ‘whole plot data’ tab for plot 1 but ‘36a’ is correct. No fieldwork since 2018.**

**Q:** Unless I'm missing them: I can't see Plots 9a, 18 or 49 on the RFQ map. 9a was surveyed in 2018, the other two weren't. Is there a reason why they're not on the map? [they all have Eastings/Northings/GR locations in the 2018 spreadsheet].

**A: A decision was made to abandon plots 18 and 49 at the 2018 survey because they were on a footpath and dense inaccessible bramble. Plot 9a – I’ve checked my csv file used for creating the map and the co-ordinates are for the north edge of the site but for some reason that point didn’t map – the site plot tracker will provide the co-ordinates for producing a GIS map.**

**Q:** Have trees in woodland plots been tree tagged?

**A: I’m afraid I’m not sure – I have looked through the information we hold and cannot find a record of whether or not the ten sample trees for each of the three woodland plots were tagged, so we’ll work on the assumption that I need to provide tree tags.**

**Q;** The specification says the LTMN survey collation and QA guidance were updated in Jan 2023. Can you send this please, or put on LTMN web page (I can only see the 2020 version there).

**A: The guidance has only had a tiny edits to help our placement student, and won’t make any difference to a contractor’s usage. We are also currently working on improving the accessibility of our spreadsheets and word documents, and will re-publish after that. But, I can send you the updated version.**