

**Invitation to Tender (ITT):** **Northeast Intertidal Rocky Shore Condition and Impacts Assessment volunteer surveys**

**SPECIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS**

This section sets out the project requirements.

**1. Introduction**

## This project will provide important data on intertidal reef community assemblages within the Berwick and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation (BNNC SAC). This project is a continuation of a condition monitoring project that was completed in 2021. It comprises of three different parts:

* Part 1 (survey A) is an expert detailed monitoring of the community composition, using transects and quadrats on rock platforms and under boulder communities with an assessment of this data against the condition monitoring baseline and production of a condition monitoring report to inform condition assessments.
* **Part 2 (survey B) is a targeted indicator species search, carried out by volunteer citizen scientists with varying knowledge of marine species, focusing on species that are subject to recreational and commercial harvesting (e.g. periwinkles and crabs) and indicators of condition (e.g. opportunistic macroalgae).**
* Part 3 is coordination of citizen scientists/volunteers to undertake the B surveys

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THIS IS AN INVITATION FOR TENDER FOR PART 2

## Natural England is seeking to procure a Contractor to deliver **part 2 of the project (survey B)** and will include:

## Further development of the targeted indicator species search methodology from the 2021 survey (available on request) for the B surveys, with the overall Natural England project manager and the contractor delivering part 1 (A surveys) of the project.

## Aim to ensure that the collation of data robustly informs the condition assessment(s) of the specific attributes along the coast.

## Produce volunteer methods and ID sheets for the volunteer surveys to provide to the contractor organising part 3.

## Carry out one training session with Natural England in-house staff, volunteers and contractor of part 3 of the project and explain how to carry out focused target indicator species searches (survey B), which will be led by part 3 contractor.

## one meeting with contractor from part 1 of the project, about the condition monitoring surveys in the Berwick and North Northumberland Coast SAC (survey A).

## Produce a report that illustrates how the survey A data, used in tandem with B survey data, can show a more robust insight into the condition of the reef attributes of the Berwick and North Northumberland Coast SAC.

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The contractor is not expected to recruit or manage any volunteers, this will be done by a separate contract (part 3 of the project).

## The Contractor is expected to begin work as soon as possible after the contract start date.

## Potential Contractors are requested to provide costings (including VAT) for:

## 1) Preplanning of the logistics of survey B in locations within the Berwick and North Northumberland Coast SAC

## 2) Designing and producing ID guid material for the B surveys

## 3) Attend at least one field surveys with volunteers as training

## 4) Attend at least one meeting with contractors from part 1 of the project

## 5) Using data from A surveys (collected from the part 1 contract) compare the condition monitoring data (A survey), with that of the targeted indicator species searches (B surveys) and produce a report on how these two different surveys can be used to inform each other.

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## The contractor will be expected to undertake quality assurance on work delivered and ensure it is compliant with the requirements of the Joint Code of Practice for Research

## (see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413154/pb13725-research-code-practice.pdf>)

**2. Background**

**2.1 Site details**

Table 1 outlines the feature or supporting habitat of the Berwick and North Northumberland Coast SAC that Natural England is interested in surveying. For additional context, we have outlined the attributes and targets of the features, supporting habitats and the conservation objectives of the site. For more information, we have included the link to the designated site system, which has more in-depth information about the chosen site.

Initially, data should be collected within the existing condition monitoring transects to enable a comparison between A and B survey data. Moving forward, B surveys can be carried out in other sites along the coast to gather information for commercially sensitive and condition indicating species, but this will be led by part 3 contractors.

Table 1. Berwick and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation reef attributes and targets

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Designated site** | **Feature, attributes and targets Natural England is interested in** |
| Berwick and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation | **Reefs**:   * **Distribution**: Maintain the presence and spatial distribution of reef communities. * **Extent and Distribution**: Maintain the total extent, spatial distribution and types of reef (and each of its sub-features) * **Structure and Function**: Maintain, Recover or Restore the abundance of listed species, to enable each of them to be a viable component of the habitat. * **Structure**: Restrict the introduction and spread of non-native species and pathogens, and their impacts. * **Structure**: Maintain the surface and structural complexity, and the stability of the reef structure. * **Structure**: Maintain the species composition of component communities. |

**2.2 The issue**

Periodic monitoring of protected sites is needed to understand their condition and for Natural England to be able to produce accurate and detailed conservation advice packages on these sites. Due to various constraints, regular monitoring is not always feasible and therefore this has left large data gaps for the area. The volunteer targeted indicator species search (survey B), used in combination with detailed condition monitoring assessments (survey A from project 1), will provide robust monitoring of areas and will produce valuable data that can be used in future management. This tandem method will make monitoring more manageable in the future and cover new locations.

The secondary issues is Natural England’s reach within local communities. An outcome of this project is to engage with local communities and partners through volunteer recruitment and training. We hope this engagement will broaden the understanding of the volunteers and highlight the importance of the Northumberland coast as well as forge important stakeholder relationships with community groups.

**3. Objectives**

**3.1 Project objectives**

The objectivesfor this contract are:

* Help train volunteers with varied marine surveying experience by leading at least one of the targeted indicator species searches (survey B) and producing species ID guides.
* The targeted indicator species search will be used to understand the numbers and distribution of commercially important species within the protected sites and see how this data can inform the condition monitoring assessment data.
* Produce a report, using data comparable with Natural England’s ways or working (see section 5.2), with illustrates how these two survey designs can complement each other.

* If successful, the project will help modify Natural England’s current in-house condition monitoring methodology for intertidal rocky reefs by identifying how less detailed surveys could, in tandem with more intensive work in a smaller number of areas, significantly increase survey coverage.

**4. Methods**

**4.1 Survey methodology**

A pilot for this project was carried out in 2021, and methods from last year’s B surveys can be used as a guideline to help inform this year’s methodology for the targeted indicator search.

Please see Annex 1 for more information on the previous surveys and survey from 2021 is available on request.

The targeted indicator search will be completed by volunteer citizen scientists with varying levels of intertidal survey experience, so methods need to be inclusive for different skill sets.

**4.2 Survey Area**

To start with, the B surveys will be carried out on multiple sites within the Berwick and North Northumberland Coast SAC and will initially focus around the established condition monitoring transect. Natural England welcomes suggestions from the potential contractors on different survey areas/stations/transects (historical and new).

As the project continues, we would like the volunteer citizen scientists to have the freedom to choose different locations along the coast and complete B surveys to provide data on location inside and outside of protected sites. However, this will be coordinated by the contractor for part 3 of the project.

Due to the presences of Avian Flu on our coast, there is some restricted access to different sites. Natural England and other bodies are monitoring the risks and status of the virus, however, currently the situation is variable and as such, some survey locations cannot be confirmed yet.

# **5. Requirements and Timescales.**

**5.1 COVID related information.**

This work is ideally scheduled to begin as soon as possible, whilst the following guidance may change, it is still pertinent and was needed at the time of drafting the invitation to tender.

Assurance that contractors will work within government guidance on working outdoors will be required: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work>

Coronavirus specific risk assessments, in addition to other H&S risk assessments, will be required and submitted by the contractor.

It will be necessary that landowners/occupiers of sites concerned are made aware of the survey and agree to surveyors being on each site involved – surveys will not proceed without landowner/occupier agreement.

**5.2 Products and deliverables**

To enable successful delivery, ideally the Contractor is expected to:

* Plan logistics and methods for the B surveys
* Produce ID guides for volunteers
* Have at least one meeting with part 3 contractor and Natural England staff to talk through the B survey methods.
* Undertake at least one training session for B surveys with citizen science volunteers, with the support of Natural England staff and contractor for part 3 of the project
* Have one meeting with Part 1 contractors about the condition monitoring data
* Using the survey data from the A surveys and the B surveys, produce a report on how standardise condition monitoring data can be used in tandem with citizen science targeted species to offer a more robust and holistic view of the protected sites.

Timelines for delivery of draft final and revised final reports, and associated products, are detailed in section 5.3.

All data should be supplied to MEDIN standard (see guidance at [www.oceannet.org](http://www.oceannet.org)). Any GIS datasets need to be provided in ESRI ArcGIS format compatible with ArcGIS 9.3.1, have attached metadata and be clean of any topology errors. If relevant, any point and polygon data should be supplied to us with the final analysis.

**5.3 Timeline for project delivery:**

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| **Timeline** | **Date** |
| Project inception meeting between contractor and Natural England staff via video conferencing | asap |
| Help produce training material and training strategy for volunteers to be agreed with Natural England | asap |
| Field work to collect the data sets | Mid October 2022 |
| Telecall to discuss the report and collect A survey data from art 1 contractors | End of November |
| Draft final report to be provided by the contractor to Natural England | Beginning February 2023 |
| Comments on draft final report to be provided to contractor by Natural England. | March 2023 |
| Final report and associated products to be delivered by contractor to Natural England incorporating additions/ amendments in light of comments received from Natural England. | April 2023 |

Any delays to this timetable should be immediately discussed with NE project lead.

**Annex 1.**

Previous surveys include, but are not limited to:

**BNNC SAC**

Brazier, D.P., Davies, J., Holt, R.H.F., Murray, E., 1996. Marine nature conservation review sector 5. South-east Scotland and north-east England: Biotope classification. Peterborough.

Foster-Smith, R.L., 1998. Broadscale mapping of the reefs of the Berwickshire and Northumberland. University of Newcastle.

Foster-Smith, J.L., Foster-Smith, R.L., Hills, J.M., 2010. Condition Monitoring of the Intertidal Reefs Feature: Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area for Conservation (European Marine Site). Envison.

Foster-Smith, R.L., Sotheran, I., Foster-Smith, J.L., Bunker, F., 1996. Mapping survey of the sublittoral and littoral biotopes of the Berwickshire coast: Appendix. BioMar Programme.

Moore, J., 2003. Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast cSAC, Rocky shore monitoring sites Coastal Assessment , Liaison & Monitoring

Mieszkowska, N., Sugden, H. (2014) . Berwickshire Intertidal Rocky Reefs. Report to Natural England.

**Coquet to St. Mary’s MCZ**

Sugden, H., Mieszkowska, N. (2014) Coquet to St. Mary’s NG13) Littoral Rock and Sediment Verification Survey (NECSMCZ0114). Report to Natural England.

Barne, J.H., Robson, C.F., Kaznowska, S.S., Doody, J.P., & Davidson, N.C., *eds*, 1995. Coasts and seas

of the United Kingdom. Region 5 North-east England: Berwick upon Tweed to Filey Bay.

Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Wyn, G., Brazier, P., Birch, K., Bunker, A., Cooke, A., Jones, M., Lough, N., McMath, A. & Roberts, S.,

2006. Marine Intertidal Phase 1 Biotope Mapping Survey pp122. Countryside Council for

Wales.