Clarifications to Bidder’s Questions:

Survey of Aquatic Invertebrates Stensall Common SSSI

**Q1) There’s a report mentioned in the bid document ‘Hammond, M (1998). Water beetles at World’s End pSSSI. Unpublished report to English Nature, 2pp.’ I’m just having trouble tracking it down and was wondering if we could possibly obtain a copy or if a copy would be provided to the successful applicant? I’ve tracked down the Hammond, 2016 report.**

A1) A copy can be made available to the successful contractor.

**Q2) 2. Could we please clarify the requirement for NVC surveys? Under the field methods section it states Vegetation: Contractor should aim to identify the NVC (JNCC, 2020 here) type for each sample location, by reference to existing survey data and on ground observations, (note full survey NVC re-survey and species list not required). Reference to broad habitat types e.g. wet heath will suffice where NVC data is not available. So can I just clarify what it is you would like reported for vegetation, is it more so for example, if a pond was surveyed, you would just want NVC terminology for the vegetation type at that specific location?**

A2) Yes, that is correct, reference to existing surveys and on the ground observations should be made to habitats present at survey points. New NVC survey and vegetation quadrats are not required.

**Q3) I have a query about the terms and conditions. Would it be an option to be contracted under an existing agreement, for example the EcoSF3 framework or Defra R&D framework? These are existing agreements under which we can contract to Natural England, and would be easier that having to take the provided T&Cs through our legal review process, as I don’t believe we have worked under them previously.**

A3) Advice received confirms that as this an open tender competition through contracts finder we have to use the T&Cs as stated in the opportunity notice. This is to maintain fair and transparent competition for all potential providers.

**Q4) I propose to make a bid to conduct an eDNA survey covering all water bodies (up to 100 ponds/streams/ditches) in the area with an eDNA survey. The cost will be £2.5k including travel and accommodation. As I will not be drawing any salary (I am a volunteer) this would be more like a small grant than a contract. The survey will be repeatable and I can work with 2 local volunteers to teach them how eDNA is done so that they can coordinate/conduct long term eDNA monitoring by themselves.**

**I am aware that eDNA will not fully suffice for your needs at Strensall Common. Therefore my bid can be stand alone (i.e. if nobody else submits a bid but you think eDNA might still be interesting) but I would also be very happy to work alongside another bidder (i.e. to combine our services) if that is best for Natural England.**

**The RFQ form is quite short./simple and I can complete it this week but I wanted to first check if such a proposal would at least be considered.**

**If not suitable for the Strensall Common work perhaps there are other SSSI sites closer to where I live that would benefit from eDNA baseline monitoring ? And of course with Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) soon taking off (?) perhaps there are other opportunities for community scientists with an interest in DNA monitoring methods to help add to the UK's BNG baselining and monitoring capacity.**

A4) Advice received from Invertebrate specialist colleague Richard Smith, “a purely environmental DNA survey is unlikely to be suitable for Strensall, but the field is developing rapidly and shows promise.”