

CONTRACT FOR

Testing eDNA metabarcoding as a technique for monitoring subtidal sediment condition – marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment Programme

REF: NEPW_010823_TDNAM

DATED: 19/09/2023

THIS CONTRACT is dated 19/09/2023

BETWEEN

- (1) **NATURAL ENGLAND** of 4th Floor, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX (the “**Authority**”); and
 - (2) **JMU Services Limited**, c/o Liverpool John Moores University, 2nd Floor, Exchange Station, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool, L2 2QP (the “**Supplier**”)
- (each a “**Party**” and together the “**Parties**”).

BACKGROUND

- a) The Authority requires the services set out in Schedule 1.
- b) The Authority has awarded this contract for the services to the Supplier and the Supplier agrees to provide the services in accordance with the terms of the contract.

AGREED TERMS

1 Definitions and Interpretation

- 1.1 In the Contract, unless the context requires otherwise, the following terms shall have the meanings given to them below:

March 2015

‘Approval’: the prior written consent of the Authority.

‘Authority Website’: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

‘Contract Term’: the period from the Commencement Date to the Expiry Date.

‘Contracting Authority’: an organisation defined as a contracting authority in Regulation 3 of the Public Contract Regulations 2006.

‘Default’: a breach by the Supplier or Staff of its obligations under the Contract or any other default, negligence or negligent statement in connection with the Contract.

‘Dispute Resolution Procedure’: the dispute resolution procedure set out in Clause 20.

‘Force Majeure’: any cause affecting the performance by a Party of its obligations under the Contract arising from acts, events, omissions or non-events beyond its reasonable control, including acts of God, riots, war, acts of terrorism, fire, flood, storm or earthquake and any disaster, but excluding any industrial dispute relating to the Supplier, its Staff or any other failure in the Supplier’s supply chain.

‘Fraud’: any offence under laws creating offences in respect of fraudulent acts or at common law in respect of fraudulent acts in relation to the Contract or defrauding or attempting to defraud or conspiring to defraud the Authority or any other Contracting Authority.

‘Good Industry Practice’: standards, practices, methods and procedures conforming to the law and the degree of skill and care, diligence, prudence and foresight which would reasonably and ordinarily be expected from a skilled and experienced person or body engaged in a similar type of undertaking under similar circumstances.

‘Goods’: all products, documents, and materials developed by the Supplier or its agents, Sub-contractors, consultants, suppliers and Staff in relation to the Services in any form, including computer programs, data, reports and specifications (including drafts).

‘Intellectual Property Rights’: any and all intellectual property rights of any nature anywhere in the world whether registered, registerable or otherwise, including patents, utility models, trademarks, registered designs and domain names, applications for any of the foregoing, trade or business names, goodwill, copyright and rights in the nature of copyright, design rights, rights in databases, moral rights, know-how and any other intellectual property rights which subsist in computer software, computer programs, websites, documents, information, techniques, business methods, drawings, logos, instruction manuals, lists and procedures and particulars of customers, marketing methods and procedures and advertising literature, including the “look and feel” of any websites.

‘IP Materials’: all Intellectual Property Rights which are:

(a) furnished to or made available to the Supplier by or on behalf of the Authority; or

- (b) created by the Supplier or Staff in the course of providing the Services or exclusively for the purpose of providing the Services.

'Price': the price for the Services set out in Schedule 2.

'Replacement Supplier': any third party supplier of services appointed by the Authority to replace the Supplier.

'Staff': all employees, staff, other workers, agents and consultants of the Supplier and of any Sub-contractors who are engaged in providing the Services from time to time.

'Sub-contract': any contract between the Supplier and a third party pursuant to which the Supplier agrees to source the provision of any of the Services from that third party.

'Sub-contractor': third parties which enter into a Sub-contract with the Supplier.

'Valid Invoice': an invoice containing the information set out in Clause 3.3.

'VAT': Value Added Tax.

'Working Day': Monday to Friday excluding any public holidays in England and Wales.

1.2 The interpretation and construction of the Contract is subject to the following provisions:

- (a) words importing the singular meaning include where the context so admits the plural meaning and vice versa;
- (b) words importing the masculine include the feminine and the neuter;
- (c) reference to any statutory provision, enactment, order, regulation or other similar instrument are construed as a reference to the statutory provision enactment, order regulation or instrument (including any instrument of the European Union) as amended, replaced, consolidated or re-enacted from time to time, and include any orders, regulations, codes of practice, instruments or other subordinate legislation made under it;
- (d) reference to any person includes natural persons and partnerships, firms and other incorporated bodies and all other legal persons of whatever kind and however constituted and their successors and permitted assigns or transferees;
- (e) the headings are inserted for ease of reference only and do not affect the interpretation or construction of the Contract;
- (f) references to the Services include references to the Goods;
- (g) references to Clauses and Schedules are to clauses and schedules of the Contract; and
- (h) the Schedules form part of the Contract and have affect as if set out in full in the body of the Contract and any reference to the Contract includes the Schedules.

2 Contract and Contract Term

- 2.1 The Supplier shall provide the Authority with the services set out in Schedule 1 (the “**Services**”) in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Contract.
- 2.2 The Contract is effective on 05/09/2023 (the “**Commencement Date**”) and ends on 31/03/2023 (the “**Expiry Date**”) unless terminated early or extended in accordance with the Contract.

3 Price and Payment

- 3.1 In consideration of the Supplier providing the Services in accordance with the Contract, the Authority shall pay the Price to the Supplier.
- 3.2 The Authority shall:
- (a) provide the Supplier with a purchase order number (“**PO Number**”); and
 - (b) pay all undisputed sums due to the Supplier within 30 days of receipt of a Valid Invoice.
- 3.3 A Valid Invoice shall:
- (a) contain the correct PO Number;
 - (b) express the sum invoiced in sterling; and
 - (c) include VAT at the prevailing rate as a separate sum or a statement that the Supplier is not registered for VAT.
- 3.4 The Supplier shall submit invoices according to the payment schedule as agreed in project start up meeting, to the Authority at the following addresses:
- (a) APinvoices-NEG-U@gov.sscl.com or
 - (b) SSCL Finance, Room 211, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX.
- 3.5 The Supplier acknowledges that:
- (a) if the Supplier does not include VAT on an invoice or does not include VAT at the correct rate, the Authority will not be liable to pay the Supplier any additional VAT;
 - (b) invoices which do not include the information set out in Clause 3.3 will be rejected.
- 3.6 Any late payment by the Authority of an undisputed Valid Invoice will be subject to interest at the rate of 3% above the base rate from time to time of Barclays Bank plc.

- 3.7 The Supplier shall not suspend provision of the Services if any payment is overdue.
- 3.8 The Supplier indemnifies the Authority on a continuing basis against any liability, including any interest, penalties or costs incurred, which is levied, demanded or assessed on the Authority at any time in respect of the Supplier's failure to account for or to pay any VAT relating to payments made to the Supplier under the Contract.

4 Extension of the Contract

- 4.1 The Authority may, by written notice to the Supplier, extend the Contract for a further period up to 1 year.

5 Warranties and Representations

- 5.1 The Supplier warrants and represents for the Contract Term that:
- (a) it has full capacity and authority and all necessary consents and regulatory approvals to enter into the Contract and to provide the Services;
 - (b) the Contract is executed by a duly authorised representative of the Supplier;
 - (c) in entering the Contract it has not committed any Fraud;
 - (d) as at the Commencement Date, all information contained in its tender or other offer made by the Supplier to the Authority remains true, accurate and not misleading, save as may have been specifically disclosed in writing to the Authority prior to execution of the Contract and that it will advise the Authority of any fact, matter or circumstance of which it may become aware which would render such information false or misleading;
 - (e) no claim is being asserted and no litigation, arbitration or administrative proceeding is presently in progress or, to the best of its knowledge and belief, pending or threatened against it or any of its assets which will or might have a material adverse effect on its ability to perform its obligations under the Contract;
 - (f) it is not subject to any contractual obligation, compliance with which is likely to have a material adverse effect on its ability to provide the Services;
 - (g) no proceedings or other steps have been taken and not discharged (or, to the best of its knowledge, are threatened) for the winding up of the Supplier or for its dissolution or for the appointment of a receiver, administrative receiver, liquidator, manager, administrator or similar in relation to any of the Supplier's assets or revenue;
 - (h) it owns, or has obtained or is able to obtain valid licences for, all Intellectual Property Rights that are necessary to provide the Services; and
 - (i) Staff shall be engaged on terms which do not entitle them to any Intellectual Property Right in any IP Materials;

- (j) it will comply with its obligations under the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006.

5.2 The Supplier warrants and represents that in the 3 years prior to the date of the Contract:

- (a) it has conducted all financial accounting and reporting activities in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles and has complied with relevant securities;
- (b) it has not done or omitted to do anything which could have a material adverse effect on its assets, financial condition or position as a going concern or its ability to provide the Services; and
- (c) it has complied with all relevant tax laws and regulations and no tax return submitted to a relevant tax authority has been found to be incorrect under any anti-abuse rules.

6 Service Standards

6.1 The Supplier shall provide the Services or procure that they are provided with reasonable skill and care, in accordance with Good Industry Practice prevailing from time to time and with Staff who are appropriately trained and qualified.

6.2 If the Services do not meet the Specification, the Supplier shall at its own expense reschedule and carry out the Services in accordance with the Specification within such reasonable time as may be specified by the Authority.

6.3 The Authority may by written notice to the Supplier reject any of the Goods which fail to conform to the approved sample or fail to meet the Specification. Such notice shall be given within a reasonable time after delivery to the Authority of the Goods. If the Authority rejects any of the Goods it may (without prejudice to its other rights and remedies) either:

- (a) have the Goods promptly either repaired by the Supplier or replaced by the Supplier with Goods which conform in all respects with the approved sample or with the Specification and due delivery shall not be deemed to have taken place until the repair or replacement has occurred; or
- (b) treat the Contract as discharged by the Supplier's breach and obtain a refund (if the Goods have already been paid for) from the Supplier in respect of the Goods concerned together with payment of any additional expenditure reasonably incurred by the Authority in obtaining replacements.

6.4 The Authority will be deemed to have accepted the Goods if it expressly states the same in writing or fails to reject the Goods in accordance with Clause 6.3.

6.5 If the Authority issues a receipt note for delivery of the Goods it shall not constitute any acknowledgement of the condition, quantity or nature of those Goods or the Authority's acceptance of them.

6.6 The Supplier hereby guarantees the Goods against faulty materials or workmanship for such period as may be specified in the Specification or, if no

period is so specified, for 3 years from the date of acceptance. If the Authority shall within such guarantee period or within 30 Working Days thereafter give notice in writing to the Supplier of any defect in any of the Goods as may have arisen during such guarantee period under proper and normal use, the Supplier shall (without prejudice to any other rights and remedies which the Authority may have) promptly remedy such defects (whether by repair or replacement as the Authority shall choose) free of charge.

6.7 Any Goods rejected or returned by the Authority pursuant to this Clause 6 shall be returned to the Supplier at the Supplier's risk and expense.

7 Termination

7.1 The Authority may terminate the Contract at any time by giving 30 days written notice to the Supplier.

7.2 The Authority may terminate the Contract in whole or in part by notice to the Supplier with immediate effect and without compensation to the Supplier if:

- (a) being an individual, the Supplier is the subject of a bankruptcy order; has made a composition or arrangement with his creditors; dies or is adjudged incapable of managing his affairs within the meaning of Part VII of the Mental Health Act 1983;
- (b) being a company, the Supplier goes into compulsory winding up, or passes a resolution for voluntary winding up, or suffers an administrator, administrative receiver or receiver and manager to be appointed or to take possession over the whole or any part of its assets, is dissolved; or has entered into a voluntary arrangement with its creditors under the Insolvency Act 1986, or has proposed or entered into any scheme of arrangement or composition with its creditors under section 425 of the Companies Act 1985; or has been dissolved;
- (c) being a partnership, limited liability partnership or unregistered company, the Supplier or an individual member of it goes into compulsory winding up; is dissolved; suffers an administrator or receiver or manager to be appointed over the whole or any part of its assets; or has entered into a composition or voluntary arrangement with its creditors;
- (d) the Supplier is in any case affected by any similar occurrence to any of the above in any jurisdiction;
- (e) subject to Clause 7.3, the Supplier commits a Default;
- (f) there is a change of control of the Supplier; or
- (g) the Supplier or Staff commits Fraud in relation to the Contract or any other contract with the Crown (including the Authority).

7.3 If the Supplier commits a Default which is capable of being remedied, the Authority may terminate the Contract pursuant to Clause 7.2(e) only if the Supplier has failed to remedy the Default within 20 Working Days of being notified of the Default by the Authority.

8 Consequences of Expiry or Termination

8.1 If the Authority terminates the Contract under Clause 7.2:

- (a) and then makes other arrangements for the supply of the Services, the Authority may recover from the Supplier the cost reasonably incurred of making those other arrangements and any additional expenditure incurred by the Authority throughout the remainder of the Contract Term; and
- (b) no further payments shall be payable by the Authority to the Supplier (for the Services supplied by the Supplier prior to termination and in accordance with the Contract but where the payment has yet to be made by the Authority), until the Authority has established the final cost of making the other arrangements envisaged under Clause 8.1(a).

8.2 On expiry or termination of the Contract the Supplier shall:

- (a) co-operate fully with the Authority to ensure an orderly migration of the Services to the Authority or, at the Authority's request, a Replacement Supplier; and
- (b) procure that all data and other material belonging to the Authority (and all media of any nature containing information and data belonging to the Authority or relating to the Services) shall be delivered promptly to the Authority.

8.3 Save as otherwise expressly provided in the Contract:

- (a) termination or expiry of the Contract shall be without prejudice to any rights, remedies or obligations accrued under the Contract prior to termination or expiration and nothing in the Contract shall prejudice the right of either Party to recover any amount outstanding at such termination or expiry; and
- (b) termination of the Contract shall not affect the continuing rights, remedies or obligations of the Authority or the Supplier under Clauses 3, 8 to 13, 17, 26 and 28.

9 Liability, Indemnity and Insurance

9.1 Notwithstanding any other provision in the Contract, neither Party excludes or limits liability to the other Party for:

- (a) death or personal injury caused by its negligence;
- (b) Fraud or fraudulent misrepresentation; or
- (c) any breach of any obligations implied by section 12 of the Sale of Goods Act 1979 or Parts I and II of the Supply of Goods and Services Act 1982.

- 9.2 The Supplier shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Authority against all claims, proceedings, demands, actions, damages, costs, breach of statutory duty, expenses and any other liabilities which arise in tort (including negligence) default or breach of the Contract to the extent that any such loss or claim is due

to the breach of contract, negligence, wilful default or Fraud of itself or of Staff or Sub-contractors save to the extent that the same is directly caused by the negligence, breach of the Contract or applicable law by the Authority.

9.3 The Supplier shall not exclude liability for additional operational, administrative costs and/or expenses or wasted expenditure resulting from the direct Default of the Supplier.

9.4 Subject to Clause 9.1:

(a) neither Party is liable to the other for any:

(i) loss of profits, business, revenue or goodwill;

(ii) loss of savings (whether anticipated or otherwise); and/or

(iii) indirect or consequential loss or damage

(b) each Party's total aggregate liability in respect of all claims, losses damages, whether arising from tort (including negligence), breach of contract or otherwise under or in connection with the Contract, shall not exceed £1,000,000 (one million pounds) or 10x the value of the Contract whichever is the lower amount.

9.5 The Supplier shall, with effect from the Commencement Date and for such period as necessary to enable the Supplier to comply with its obligations under the Contract, take out and maintain with a reputable insurance company a policy or policies of insurance providing an adequate level of cover in respect of all risks which may be incurred by the Supplier, arising out of the Supplier's performance of its obligations under the Contract, including employer's liability, death or personal injury, loss of or damage to property or any other loss, including financial loss arising from any advice given or omitted to be given by the Supplier. Such insurance shall be maintained for the Contract Term and for a minimum of 6 years following the end of the Contract.

9.6 The Supplier shall give the Authority, on request, copies of all insurance policies referred to in this Clause or a broker's verification of insurance to demonstrate that the appropriate cover is in place, together with receipts or other evidence of payment of the latest premiums due under those policies.

9.7 If the Supplier fails to comply with Clauses 9.5 and 9.6 the Authority may make alternative arrangements to protect its interests and may recover the costs of such arrangements from the Supplier.

9.8 The provisions of any insurance or the amount of cover shall not relieve the Supplier of any liabilities under the Contract.

9.9 The Supplier shall not take any action or fail to take any reasonable action, or (to the extent that it is reasonably within its power) permit anything to occur in relation to the Supplier, which would entitle any insurer to refuse to pay any claim under any insurance policy in which the Supplier is an insured, a co-insured or additional insured person.

10 Confidentiality and Data Protection

10.1 Subject to Clause 10.2, unless agreed otherwise in writing, the Supplier shall, and shall procure that Staff shall, keep confidential all matters relating to the Contract.

10.2 Clause 10.1 shall not apply to any disclosure of information:

- (a) required by any applicable law;
- (b) that is reasonably required by persons engaged by the Supplier in performing the Supplier's obligations under the Contract;
- (c) where the Supplier can demonstrate that such information is already generally available and in the public domain other than as a result of a breach of Clause 10.1; or
- (d) which is already lawfully in the Supplier's possession prior to its disclosure by the Authority.

10.3 The Supplier shall, and shall procure that Staff shall, comply with any notification requirements under the Data Protection Act 1998 ("**DPA**") and shall observe its obligations under the DPA which arise in connection with the Contract.

10.4 Notwithstanding the general obligations in Clause 10.3, where the Supplier is processing Personal Data as a Data Processor (as those terms are defined in the DPA) for the Authority, the Supplier shall ensure that it has in place appropriate technical and contractual measures to ensure the security of the Personal Data (and to prevent unauthorised or unlawful processing of the Personal Data), as required under the Seventh Data Protection Principle in Schedule 1 of the DPA.

10.5 The Supplier shall:

- a) promptly notify the Authority of any breach of the security measures required to be put in place pursuant to Clause 10.4;
- b) not knowingly or negligently do or omit to do anything which places the Authority in breach of its obligations under the DPA; and
- c) provide the Authority with such information as it may reasonably require to satisfy itself that the Supplier is complying with its obligations under the DPA.

11 Freedom of Information

11.1 The Supplier acknowledges that the Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the "**Information Acts**") and may be required to disclose certain information to third parties including information relating to this Contract pursuant to the Information Acts.

- 11.2 If the Authority receives a request for information relating to the Contract pursuant to either of the Information Acts, the Authority may disclose such information as necessary in order to comply with its duties under the Information Acts.

12 Intellectual Property Rights

- 12.1 The IP Materials shall vest in the Authority and the Supplier shall not, and shall procure that Staff shall not, use or disclose any IP Materials without Approval save to the extent necessary for the Supplier to provide the Services.
- 12.2 The Supplier shall indemnify and keep indemnified the Authority and the Crown against all actions, claims, demands, losses, damages, costs and expenses and other liabilities which the Authority or the Crown may suffer or incur arising from any infringement or alleged infringement of any Intellectual Property Rights by the availability of the Services except to the extent that they have been caused by or contributed to by the Authority's acts or omissions.

13 Prevention of Corruption and Fraud

- 13.1 The Supplier shall act within the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 13.2 The Supplier shall take all reasonable steps, in accordance with Good Industry Practice, to prevent Fraud by Staff and the Supplier (including its shareholders, members and directors) in connection with the receipt of money from the Authority.
- 13.3 The Supplier shall notify the Authority immediately if it has reason to suspect that Fraud has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.

14 Discrimination

- 14.1 The Supplier shall not unlawfully discriminate within the meaning and scope of any law, enactment, order or regulation relating to discrimination in employment.
- 14.2 The Supplier shall notify the Authority immediately in writing as soon as it becomes aware of any legal proceedings threatened or issued against it by Staff on the grounds of discrimination arising in connection with the Services.

15 Environmental and Ethical Policies

- 15.1 The Supplier shall provide the Services in accordance with the Authority's policies on the environment, sustainable and ethical procurement and timber and wood derived products, details of which are available on the Authority Website.

16 Health and Safety

- 16.1 Each Party will promptly notify the other Party of any health and safety hazards which may arise in connection with the Services.
- 16.2 While on the Authority's premises, the Supplier shall comply with the Authority's health and safety policies.

16.3 The Supplier shall notify the Authority immediately if any incident occurs in providing the Services on the Authority's premises which causes or may cause personal injury.

16.4 The Supplier shall comply with the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1976, and with any other acts, orders, regulations and codes of practice relating to health and safety, which may apply to Staff and other persons working on the Authority's premises when providing the Services.

16.5 The Supplier's health and safety policy statement (as required by the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974) shall be made available to the Authority on request.

17 Monitoring and Audit

17.1 The Authority may monitor the provision of the Services and the Supplier shall cooperate, and shall procure that Staff and any Sub-contractors co-operate, with the Authority in carrying out the monitoring at no additional charge to the Authority.

17.2 The Supplier shall keep and maintain until 6 years after the end of the Contract Term full and accurate records of the Contract including the Services supplied under it and all payments made by the Authority. The Supplier shall allow the Authority, the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General reasonable access to those records and on such terms as they may request.

17.3 The Supplier agrees to provide, free of charge, whenever requested, copies of audit reports obtained by the Supplier in relation to the Services.

18 Transfer and Sub-Contracting

18.1 The Supplier shall not transfer, charge, assign, sub-contract or in any other way dispose of the Contract or any part of it without Approval.

18.2 If the Supplier enters into any Sub-contract in connection with the Contract it shall:

- (a) remain responsible to the Authority for the performance of its obligations under the Contract;
- (b) be responsible for the acts and/or omissions of its Sub-contractors as though they are its own;
- (c) impose obligations on its Sub-contractors in the same terms as those imposed on it pursuant to the Contract and shall procure that the Sub-Supplier complies with such terms;
- (d) pay its Sub-contractors' undisputed invoices within 30 days of receipt.

18.3 The Authority may assign, novate or otherwise dispose of its rights and obligations under the Contract or any part thereof to:

- (a) any Contracting Authority or any other body established by the Crown or under statute in order substantially to perform any of the functions that had previously been performed by the Authority; or

- (b) any private sector body which performs substantially any of the functions of the Authority.

18.4 Any change in the legal status of the Authority such that it ceases to be a Contracting Authority shall not affect the validity of the Contract. In such circumstances the Contract shall bind and inure to the benefit of any successor body to the Authority.

19 Variation

19.1 Subject to the provisions of this Clause 19, the Authority may change the Specification provided that such change is not a material change to the Specification (a "**Variation**").

19.2 The Authority may request a Variation by notifying the Supplier with sufficient information to assess the extent of the Variation and consider whether any change to the Price is required in order to implement it. Variations agreed by the Parties shall be made in writing.

19.3 If the Supplier is unable to accept the Variation or where the Parties are unable to agree a change to the Price, the Authority may:

- (a) allow the Supplier to fulfil its obligations under the Contract without the Variation; or
- (b) refer the request to be dealt with under the Dispute Resolution Procedure.

20 Dispute Resolution

20.1 The Parties shall attempt in good faith to resolve any dispute between them arising out of the Contract within 10 Working Days of either Party notifying the other of the dispute and such efforts shall include the escalation of the dispute to the Supplier's representative and the Authority's commercial director or equivalent.

20.2 Nothing in this dispute resolution procedure shall prevent the Parties from seeking from any court of competent jurisdiction an interim order restraining the other Party from doing any act or compelling the other Party to do any act.

20.3 If the dispute cannot be resolved by the Parties pursuant to Clause 20.1 the Parties shall refer it to mediation pursuant to the procedure set out in Clauses 20.5 to 20.10.

20.4 The obligations of the Parties under the Contract shall not cease, or be suspended or delayed by the reference of a dispute to mediation and the Supplier and Staff shall comply fully with the requirements of the Contract at all times.

20.5 A neutral adviser or mediator (the "**Mediator**") shall be chosen by agreement between the Parties or, if they are unable to agree a Mediator within 10 Working Days after a request by one Party or if the chosen Mediator is unable to act, either Party shall within 10 Working Days from the date of the proposal to appoint a Mediator or within 10 Working Days of notice to either Party that he is unable or unwilling to act, apply to the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution to appoint a Mediator.

20.6 The Parties shall, within 10 Working Days of the appointment of the Mediator, meet the Mediator to agree a programme for the disclosure of information and the structure to

be adopted for negotiations. The Parties may at any stage seek assistance from the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution to provide guidance on a suitable procedure.

20.7 Unless otherwise agreed, all negotiations connected with the dispute and any settlement agreement relating to it shall be conducted in confidence and without prejudice to the rights of the Parties in any future proceedings.

20.8 If the Parties reach agreement on the resolution of the dispute, the agreement shall be recorded in writing and shall be binding on the Parties once it is signed by their duly authorised representatives.

20.9 Failing agreement, either of the Parties may invite the Mediator to provide a nonbinding but informative written opinion. Such opinion shall be provided on a without prejudice basis and shall not be used in evidence in any proceedings relating to the Contract without the prior written consent of both Parties.

20.10 If the Parties fail to reach agreement within 60 Working Days of the Mediator being appointed, or such longer period as may be agreed by the Parties, then the dispute may be referred to the Courts.

20.11 Subject to Clause 20.2, the Parties shall not institute court proceedings until the procedures set out in Clauses 20.1 and 20.5 to 20.10 have been completed.

21 Supplier's Status

21.1 Nothing in the Contract shall be construed as constituting a partnership between the Parties or as constituting either Party as the agent for the other for any purposes except as specified by the terms of the Contract.

21.2 The Supplier shall not (and shall ensure that Staff shall not) say or do anything that might lead any person to believe that the Supplier is acting as the agent, partner or employee of the Authority.

22 Notices

22.1 Notices shall be in writing and in English and shall be deemed given if signed by or on behalf of a duly authorised officer of the Party giving the notice and if left at, or sent by first class mail to the address of the receiving Party as specified in the Contract (or as amended from time to time by notice in writing to the other Party).

23 Entire Agreement

23.1 The Contract constitutes the entire agreement between the Parties relating to the subject matter of the Contract. The Contract supersedes all prior negotiations, representations, arrangements and undertakings.

24 Third Party Rights

24.1 No term of the Contract is intended to confer a benefit on, or be enforceable by, any person who is not a Party other than the Crown.

25 Waiver

25.1 The failure of either Party to insist upon strict performance of any provision of the Contract, or the failure of either Party to exercise, or any delay in exercising, any right or remedy shall not constitute a waiver of that right or remedy and shall not cause a diminution of the obligations established by the Contract.

25.2 No waiver shall be effective unless it is expressly stated to be a waiver and communicated to the other Party in writing.

25.3 A waiver of any right or remedy arising from a breach of the Contract shall not constitute a waiver of any right or remedy arising from any other or subsequent breach of the Contract.

26 Publicity

26.1 The Supplier shall not without Approval:

- (a) make any press announcements or publicise the Contract or its contents in any way; or
- (b) use the Authority's name or logo in any promotion or marketing or announcement.

26.2 The Authority may publish the Contract on the Authority Website or another website at its discretion.

27 Force Majeure

27.1 Except to the extent that the Supplier has not complied with any business continuity plan agreed with the Authority, neither Party shall be liable for any failure to perform its obligations under the Contract if, and to the extent, that the failure is caused by act of God, war, riots, acts of terrorism, fire, flood, storm or earthquake and any disaster but excluding any industrial dispute relating to the Supplier, Staff or Sub-contractors.

27.2 If there is an event of Force Majeure, the affected Party shall use all reasonable endeavours to mitigate the effect of the event of Force Majeure on the performance of its obligations.

28 Governing Law and Jurisdiction

28.1 The Contract shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with English law and shall be subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts of England and Wales.

28.2 The submission to such jurisdiction shall not limit the right of the Authority to take proceedings against the Supplier in any other court of competent jurisdiction and the taking of proceedings in any other court of competent jurisdiction shall not preclude the taking of proceedings in any other jurisdiction whether concurrently or not.

SCHEDULE 1

SPECIFICATION OF SERVICES

Specification of requirements

Project background

This project is part of the Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (mNCEA) Programme which is a three-year Defra-funded programme that looks to support the drive for new approaches to decision making based on the Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment (NCEA) approach. The overarching aim is to deliver evidence, tools and guidance on the extent and condition of marine natural capital assets, the ecosystem services they provide and the trade-offs that are necessary in realising the natural capital benefits of most importance to society. In the long term this will revolutionise how we understand and make decisions about our marine environment and ultimately enable us to reach our sustainable blue growth potential.

This particular project is testing DNA metabarcoding as a technique for tracking sedimentary ecosystem asset condition. DNA metabarcoding will be used alongside traditional morphological infauna ID to understand how eDNA of benthic fauna responds to anthropogenic pressure (such as pollution, contaminants, disturbance, etc.). The outputs will be used to assess if these metabarcoding techniques can be used in future monitoring scenarios that will enable more effective and efficient monitoring of impacts on the seabed at greater spatial scales, and with greater ease, than is currently possible.

Natural England is collecting traditional benthic infauna grab samples and eDNA sediment samples along pressure gradients in up to two sites, including the Solent Maritime Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Solent and Dorset Coast Special Protection Area (SPA), and the Thames Estuary. The surveys will be conducted in September-October 2023. Further details of precise sample stations will be confirmed with the successful contractor.

Sampling will be conducted along known pressure gradients at each site including a control site which is unimpacted. Samples will be collected at five stations at each site (including control station). At each station, triplicate grab samples will be collected using a 0.1m² Day grab. Subsamples of at least 30g of sediment will be collected from the top of the grab sample using a mini-corer (in accordance with the JNCC and NE DNA based benthic monitoring protocols (NatureMetrics, 2022)). Samples will be frozen in sealed and labelled zip-lock bags ready for transport to the lab. On arrival to the lab samples should be frozen at -80°C. A detailed summary of the sampling methods

Infauna analysis of grab samples will be undertaken by a separate contractor; output datasets will be available on 31st December 2023, and will be shared in Excel format with the successful contractor for analysis and discussion in the report.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this contract is to produce DNA metabarcoding data for benthic eDNA sediment samples, and examine this data in the context of pressure gradients and associated infauna data. Metabarcoding and traditional taxonomic output will be evaluated for their respective potential to be used as a method for determining the condition of marine sediments and therefore as a driver of their ecosystem service delivery potential.

The primary interest is to see if there is a change in community composition in response to known pressure gradients. As such we are particularly interested in bacterial and meiofaunal diversity as well as wider community diversity (fish, invertebrates etc). Contractors are invited to suggest costed options for barcode regions/open access primers that could provide a meaningful picture of diversity from the DNA datasets. Natural England will provide the successful contractor with data on pressures such as water quality and/or contaminants for interpretation.

The specific objectives are to:

- Undertake DNA extraction of 30 sediment samples (2 x 15 samples per site).
- Undertake eDNA analysis using Metabarcoding
- Produce report summarising interpretation of results in the form of graphical output and spatial representation across sites in relation to pressure gradient, including diversity and abundance data from both infauna and DNA datasets
- Provide a discussion of the results considering the success of bioinformatic processing and the applicability of DNA-based indicators for monitoring ecosystem asset (marine sediment) condition

Please provide a cost breakdown for sample analysis per site. In the case that a survey of two sites is not possible, one site will be selected for sample collection.

Outputs

The results should be provided in a full report written in accordance to the [Natural England report writing guidance](#).

The methods section should include detailed methodology including:

- Sample collection method, including how samples have been stored both before they got to the lab and at the lab. A summary of the sampling methodology and survey area will be provided by Natural England.
- DNA extraction methods - state any kits used. State how the DNA was quantified and discuss the quality of DNA extracted. Explain how sample contamination was controlled for and avoided
- PCR amplification - Specify the open access primers, PCR cycle conditions and reagents used. Describe the indexing process.
- Sequencing - State how the DNA products were prepared for sequencing including reagents, primers and conditions. State how the DNA was quantified, and the model of the sequencing machine used. The methods should allow the reader to understand confidence in the sequences obtained.

- Bioinformatic processing - State in detail how the bioinformatic processing was completed, by specifying the steps taken. State any programs and models that were used and any thresholds set. Where sequences are being used for taxonomic assignment, please explain the methods used to assign a species and why any reads may have been discarded. State all cut-off thresholds and state whether OTUs or ASVs are used.
- Reference libraries - Name all reference libraries used (open access preferred), and any rules used. State all cut-off thresholds, such as for % identity for taxonomic assignment.
- QA - Explain the QA checks that have been undertaken on the results, including

thresholds that may have been set

The contractor should provide a detailed results section, explaining the results generated, which should include:

- The efficiency of DNA extraction and correct amplification of expected PCR products at each stage
- Number of sequencing reads generated, quality of sequencing reads, proportion of reads discarded and proportion which were assigned to species
- Visualisations of community and species detections by site and further analysis of diversity and abundance data from both infauna and DNA datasets, in relation to pressure gradient.

A detailed discussion should be included explaining the results and confidence levels in the bioinformatic processing. Discussion should include:

- A discussion of any problems and how they were resolved, such as issues with PCR leading to a change of reagents or amplification conditions.
- Quality of the sequencing reads obtained.
- Discussion of the pros and cons of the primers and barcode(s) used. Has the expected species diversity been detected? Have non-target taxa been detected? Is species bias expected? Can the assay distinguish between closely related species?
- Discussion of any unexpected species detections. If any non-native or unexpected species have been detected, the confidence in this result.
- Discussion of any reference database or barcode issues which may have led to sequences being wrongly assigned or not assigned to species level.
- Discussion of whether the data can give information on species abundance or not.
- Consideration of the applicability and/or development of DNA-based indicators for monitoring benthic sediment condition
- Recommendations for future work based on the results of the current study.

Data

Two sets of data are required:

- A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet listing the species identified, the sample location if applicable and the reference library and sequence ID used to identify the species. If a species was not assigned, the sequence should be identified to the highest possible level, e.g. family.
- Raw sequence reads, in FASTQ format.

Data ownership

The intellectual property rights and copyright for all products will lie with Natural England. The data and any report produced will be made available by Natural England under [Open Government Licence](#) at the end of the project.

Other

In support of this contract NE will provide the winning supplier with:

- Project support from dedicated project lead
- Opportunity to feedback and discuss progress and the project
- Supporting GIS datasets (if required) under licence for use in this contract:
- Base map data from Ordnance Survey
- Raster charts from Oceanwise (Not to be used for Navigation)

Please see the following site for information on how to acquire GI information <https://www.gov.uk/how-to-access-natural-englands-maps-and-data>

Timelines

Milestone	Target date
Successful contractor awarded	08/09/2023
Samples provided to successful contractor	18/10/2023*
DNA metabarcoding and bioinformatics analysis complete	31/12/2023
nfauna data provided to contractor	31/12/2023
Draft report due to project officer in digital via email	02/02/2024
Natural England to provide comments on draft report	09/02/2024
Final report	01/03/2024
Contract completion	31/03/2024

*This is the latest possible date by which samples will be collected. Precise sampling dates will be confirmed with successful contractor but may be subject to change for example due to weather downtime. Natural England will communicate this with the successful supplier. Natural England would expect to discuss and review timelines with the successful contractor in the start-up meeting and throughout the duration of the contract. Any delays to this timetable should be discussed with the Natural England Project Officer and delays not outside the control of the contractor will be penalised.

Use of Confidential Information by the Authority

The Authority may disclose the Confidential Information of the Supplier:

- (a) on a confidential basis to any central Government body for any proper purpose of the Authority or of the relevant central Government body;
- (b) to Parliament and Parliamentary Committees or if required by any Parliamentary reporting requirement;
- (c) to the extent that the Authority (acting reasonably) deems disclosure necessary or appropriate in the course of carrying out its public functions;
- (d) on a confidential basis to a professional adviser, consultant, supplier or other person engaged by the Authority for any purpose relating to or connected with this Agreement;
- (e) on a confidential basis for the purpose of the exercise of its rights under this Agreement; or
- (f) on a confidential basis to a proposed successor body in connection with any assignment, novation or disposal of any of its rights, obligations or liabilities under this Agreement

SCHEDULE 2

PRICES

Table 1: Commercial Response for 2 sites (2x15 samples)

Descriptions of Tasks and / or Products	Cost per Day (i.e. rate)	No of Days	Total Cost per Task
REDACTED Under FOIA Section: 43, Commercial Information			
<div style="background-color: black; height: 300px; width: 100%;"></div>			
Total Overall Cost			£19,456.76

The Total Overall Cost of £19,456.76 excludes VAT. VAT will be applied at 20%, the Total Overall Cost including VAT is £23,348.11.

- (a) The Contract has been entered into on the date stated at the beginning of it.

SIGNED for and on behalf of the
AUTHORITY

SIGNED for and on behalf of the
SUPPLIER

SIGNATURE:

SIGNATURE

NAME:

NAME.....

March 2015

Position: REDACTED Under FOIA Section: 40, Personal Information

Position.

March 2015



