Clarifications to Bidder’s Questions:  
Riparian Buffer Strip Tool and Methodology for project assessments

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| 1 | Is there are scope for extending the delivery date please? | The deadline stated in the project specification can be extended and a timeline that is reasonable for you which allows sufficient time for you to review the existing literature will not be viewed or scored negatively, however, Natural England does have a cut-off point of 29th September 2025. |
| 2 | In terms of a tool are you specifically looking for an excel based tool that would calculate the nutrient load reduction achieved based on the NN catchment/SAC, riparian buffer strip area and area influenced? (similar to the Nutrient Budget Calculators we produced) | NE is interested to see what opportunity there is in terms of tool design so the contactor will have flexibility to propose its preferred design and function for the tool. For example, if a GIS based tool would be best to quantify the nutrient reductions from a RBS in an NN catchment to account for the various environmental factors then NE would be open to this. NE would also consider an Excel based tool appropriate as these have been effective in the past to quantify nutrient inputs. |
| 3 | Would you require accessibility formatting? | The tool would need to be suitably accessible as per NE’s publication standards on accessibility. So we’d encourage accessibility formatting as part of the contract but if for some reason accessibility formatting is not possible then we may be able to not meet some of the accessibility criteria by providing alternative options. |
| 4 | Would the tool be used in house by NE only? | No, the tool would need to be published externally for mitigation scheme providers to use but NE needs to have access and control of the tool following the end of the contract. |
| 5 | For the GIS element, are you looking for a shapefile to help identify the area influenced by a riparian buffer strip? We could include functionality where you can add a line for the buffer strip and the pore points are automatically calculated which would show the area of run off that is influenced by the buffer strip. You would then input this area into the excel tool. | Yes, ideally there will be some GI function to the tool to inform the calculation and ensure the environmental factors that influence nutrient treatment rates within a RBS are accounted for. As mentioned in my answer to the first question, the contractor will have scope to propose a design and functionality for the tool that they think will deliver the most accurate nutrient reduction calculations whilst also ensuring the tool is user-friendly. |
| 6 | Is there a word or page limit for any response? | There is no word or page limit for any response within this tender and the length of each response will not be considered either negatively or positively during the moderation scoring. |
| 7 | Can we use our own branded template for our tender response? | Yes, you are welcome to use your own branded template for your tender response. |
| 8 | The method section mentioned that the method needs to take into account point source pollution that would not be interpreted by the RBS – can this be elaborated on? For example, can this be a value that is entered into the tool by the user? | The watershed may contain diffuse and point source pollution driving nutrient losses to the river. The nutrient runoff from within the watershed that is intercepted by the riparian buffer strip (RBS) will need to be quantified to calculate the net nutrient reductions achieved by installing RBS. So, the RfQ requests the tool that accounts for point source nutrient pollution (as well as diffuse pollution) as these point sources may also be intercepted by the RBS to generate nutrient reductions. There are existing methods that have been developed for calculating the nutrient loads from some types of point source pollution (e.g., farmyard runoff, private or municipal wastewater treatment system, or industrial point sources) and where these methods have been approved, it would be acceptable for the tool’s users to follow these methodologies and enter the nutrient losses directly into the tool to account for the point source pollution. Any tool that requires nutrient loads from point source pollution to be entered would need to specify in the methodology the recommended method for quantifying the nutrient losses from point source pollution and NE will be able to advise on a few options available. Any point source pollution that is outside the watershed of the RBS would not need to be accounted for by the tool, only the point source pollution within the watershed and then the proportion of the source’s nutrient losses intercepted by the RBS. |
| 9 | Methodology mentioned “Nutrient reductions achieved through cessation of agriculture within the RBS, ideally this element of the methodology would be a separate output within the tool (see below)” Is it possible to have a more detailed explanation of this? Is this a separate tool to be created within the main tool to calculate change in land management practices or could it rely on Farmscoper outputs? | If the RBS is designed on an area of land currently used for agricultural then there will be a reduction in nutrient losses to the river resulting from the change in land management practices from agriculture to semi-natural habitats, in addition to the reductions in nutrient losses the RBS delivers through intercepting nutrient losses. This first type of nutrient reduction achieved by the RBS does not result from RBS intercepting nutrient runoff but from the change in land management practices that avoids the initial nutrient inputs, so the RfQ suggests that the calculation for nutrient reductions from land use change should be a separate stage within the tool. This would allow the two different components of the RBS’s nutrient reductions to be calculated individually at different stages of the tool before being combined to provide the net nutrient reductions achieved by the RBS.  As part of the wider project, NE is creating new nutrient export rates (in kg TN or TP/ha) for different livestock and crop types. More details on the nutrient export rates (in kg TN or TP/ha) for different livestock and crop types will be provided once the contract has been awarded but these nutrient export rates will be generated from Farmscoper outputs. Therefore, the calculation for the nutrient reductions resulting from changing land management practices should be straight forward using the average annual rainfall, soil drainage type, area, and nutrient export rates to calculate difference in nutrient losses from an area of agricultural land compared to semi-natural habitat. |
| 10 | Is the use of 3rd parties to assist with certain elements of the delivery permitted? | Yes, this is permitted, however these 3rd parties would need to be identified to the best of your ability within your tender response. |