Clarification questions received and answered

1. **Baseline Surveys:**
2. Where have surveys been carried out? May we see the results pre-submission to refine our tender accordingly? Surveys have been carried out at the following locations, and can be viewed upon request.

* Taunton Green
* Galmington Way
* Greenway
* Hamilton
* French Weir
* Comeytrowe
* Victoria
* Hawthorn

1. Where have surveys been commissioned but not yet carried out? Can we help? They are all currently complete at the following locations, awaiting 1 final report which should be with us promptly.
2. Do any sites not yet have surveys organised – can we help or is there an expectation to include this in the tender - if so for how many sites? There are remaining park locations, green spaces that we manage without surveys. Lyngford Park and Goodland Gardens are set to receive a survey next year as part of our new Green Flag application. Remaining locations without surveys are: Freize Hill Community Orchard, The Grove, Priorswood, Pennys Field and Staplegrove.  If you wish to undertake the wildflower creation at non surveyed sites this would need to be factored into the distribution of the funding for the tender. Please find our location here: [Taunton Town Council - Parks and Play Areas](https://www.taunton-tc.gov.uk/taunton-community/parks-open-spaces/)

**2. TT25 Flood Alleviation Scheme Area (French Weir)**

1. Re "How should Somerset Council leave the land"? We are happy to have a chat about this to give free advice on soil management for wildflowers - perhaps we may be in time to ask for subsoil to be put back on top in some areas following excavation? This could hugely help and speed up wildflower establishment if it's possible.  This is a wonderful offer. Please reach out to: [climate@taunton-tc.gov.uk](mailto:climate@taunton-tc.gov.uk) and we can organise a chat, we still have time to amend the current request.
2. Allotment scheme potential in this area – would it be wise, therefore, for us to focus on the perimeter borders for this particular project? Our approach is flexible and iterative so this can shift as the situation develops. We have changed our thinking that this location might better suit the planting of more fruit trees to make a community orchard, at this stage the ideas are flexible for this particular space. At the very least we would like to indeed focus on the borders and the secondary triangle area of land immediately next to this area show on the map. We appreciate the approach of flexible and iterative as we are looking for this in how we approach the design phase for the selection of sites.

**3. Open Spaces Team:**

1. Can we clarify the resource in this team please? How many people/ FTE, roles etc? Are their tractor drivers among them?  There are 12 in this team, a mixture of 1 lead, 2 supervisors, 2 apprentices and the remaining being assistants. We have an in house tractor and most of the staff are certified to use it. However it is currently in near constant use so we would need to coordinate with the Open Spaces Lead on the capacity for this to be used by the open spaces team to help in the delivery of this project. Initial meetings would have to be conducted to identify capacity from the team anyway for the implementation of the corridors.
2. The project brief doesn’t currently include mention of training sessions for staff teams? Would you like to  include this in our proposal? We have demonstrable experience of delivering high quality training to land management teams and this can support the ongoing success and legacy of the project. This sounds like a great opportunity to offer if you feel it would aid with the project legacy as we will definitely  be looking at this to ensure long term success. I believe there is reference to asking applicants to consider how they would help create management plans that can be delivered by TTC more long term to ensure this. A training opportunity seems a great way to address this element. It would be good to be mindful of turnover of staff to ensure a way for the information to be retained and redistributed for staff, as staff come and go over time.
3. Equipment and machinery to hire e.g. cut and collect  - can you say more on your hopes or expectations regarding machinery costs and hiring etc, staff training etc? Is this to be included in te budget of £25k? I can’t provide anymore currently on this unfortunately. We are a new council and have gone through a series of considerable expansions in the last year. I currently don’t have a forecast of future budgeting. We are hoping that as the external advisors, you would be aware of cost breakdowns that it would take to hire this equipment if and when necessary. Additionally, there is mention that we are interested in upskilling the community by offering scything (which would come from a separate budget) to help support capacity with the cut and collect. This is addressed in the request for: *Provide within the scope technical advice and an ongoing long term maintenance programme with minimal intervention after the project finishes that can be used by our open spaces team and any volunteering forces.* Provided in the scope.
4. You mention that you currently have a lack of storage and growing space, is there a desire to address this with say purchase of a polytunnel or creation of a dedicated growing/storage space? We currently don’t have capacity onsite for growing, nor a secure location that we could grow within our parks. There are potential talks between our ops and assets and somerset council about a nursery owned by SC on the outskirts of Taunton, but this is only a beginning discussion so there is no timeline or guarantee that will take place and be opportunity. It would be highly unlikely it would be an opportunity for the time this project is set to run therefore take the project as having to source seed and planting externally but in the most sustainable way possible. We welcome working with local providers.

**4. Native wildflower planting in urban planters**

1. May we ask if you wish to focus solely on growing native species in urban planters and hanging baskets or might there be some flexibility on this?  In semi-natural spaces, parks, green spaces, native wildflower meadow restoration should, of course,  be the absolute priority and in keeping with the strategy and with seeds/plants of known provenance. However in core urban areas, managing fixed planters cost-effectively could involve woody and/ or perennial species that have long leaf and flower seasons, giving longer seasons of interest, absorb pollutants and provide pollen and nectar. These will usually be more cost-effective to manage than seasonal native wildflower shows, and whilst they are more typically municipal, they will last. We can of course endeavour to include an agreed proportion of native and near-native species in these planting schemes alongside horticultural varieties to create the most suitable, beneficial and attractive displays that we can with you. We are open to incorporating non-native species beneficial to pollinators and that are adapted to urban environments and predicted climate change challenges. We would like to prioritise native in the first instant but are definitely open to creating a mix, at the advice of the expertise from the chosen provider.

**5. Funding/Project Budget**

1. Are materials costs, equipment costs (e.g. purchase of scythes, tools for friends of groups) and purchase of plants, seeds, shrub/tree whips, plugs and bulbs etc all to be included within the current £25K budget? Is there an existing budget for any of these items available that will be utilised? There is potential for the purchase of plants to come from the 26/27 climate budget, however POs would not be able to be raised until March. Additionally, any requests for additional funding would have to go through the Community and Place Committee to be agreed by councillors. There is no guarantee they would agree to more expenditure when a significant portion of money has already been allocated from the previous years budget. Scything and tools can be put through the climate budget for friends of groups/volunteers because this is deemed a business as usual to support our volunteers to carry out their tasks. For the restoration of the wildflowers specifically, I think the purchase of seed etc would have to come from the allocated £25k or up to £40k. Aim to work within this and we can discuss the potential for additional funding into the new financial year if we identify an opportunity that the Community and Place Committee might be the benefit of investing more into this project for.
2. RE: Additional funding We suggest that our initial tender focuses on the £25,000 currently available for the work. This will provide clarity. We would love to enter further discussions should your application to the NLHF be successful. We will certainly include an expression of interest in partaking in any future tender process should the funding be extended and we can make some initial suggestions for expansion of scope as part of our bid. Unfortunately I have ran this question past higher leadership and we require an estimated costed breakdown of how each scope of funding would be tackled, so that we are able to apply for the additional funding in the initial instance. Currently we are awaiting costed breakdowns from applicants, so that we can put this within our nature bid submission which require a costed breakdown of where the funding will be used. Therefore, by submitting the requested scopes for both potentials you are making it more likely that we will be successful receiving the additional funding which will only benefit both the successful applicant and pollinators by being able to proceed with the larger project.

**6. Subcontractors**

Is it essential that we select any potential subcontractor/s prior to submitting our bid? No, you can make reference where you would need additional sub contractors and your approach to engaging sub-contractors.

1. In the Project Brief, under Project Deliverables, it states that the awarded bidder is to *“deliver successful pollinator corridors of native wildflowers across the proposed sites specified.”* For the avoidance of doubt, does the scope therefore include the physical implementation of the wildflower corridors?

The scope does include the physical implementation of the wildflower corridors

1. If the scope does include the physical implementation of wildflower corridors, what guarantees or warranties are required, and over what periods?

We wish to work with the successful applicant to identify KPIs that will help us measure the success of the project. These KPIs would be specific to each stage of the project. For example, for community engagement, you might suggest KPIS based on results pulled from a community feedback form, after an engagement event has taken place. For wildflower creation, we can see that from the research success is usually measured by achieving a **50–80%** range for sown wildflower (forb) cover by year 2–3 (Carvell et al. 2022). We would therefore request **70% forb cover by year 2**. If by year 2 this is not achieved, we would expect the contractor to return in year 3 to address any planting needs to bring the success rate up to the requested 70%.  We will provide a Service Level Agreement at the start of our agreed working partnership that will stipulate these outlines. We would also like to see an explanation of what you as a contractor would deem a success measure and how these success measure would be calculated, i.e. will you have an officer come out and record the forb cover to gain estimates, during what times and frequencies, or , will you instead spend a few hours to train some of our open spaces team in how to collect the data, so they can gather the information themselves for measuring and monitoring. In your tender, please therefore provide projections of how your success measures might look and how you would go about measuring these. Once the successful applicant is chosen, we can then work with the candidate to collectively agree the additional success measures, based on the varying factors, which may be site specific.

1. When will soil sampling be undertaken at the 3 sites to inform this work?

* It is expected that the successful organisation will undertake this and thus costing of soil sampling should be included in your proposal.

1. At the French Weir Site a requirement/opportunity for tree planting has been identified, is a tree survey available/been instructed so RPA’s can inform this work?

* There are no surveys available.

1. If soil analysis shows that any of the 1-3 identified sites as unsuitable for Taunton Wildflower Recovery objectives, entering discussions to identify alternative sites may require a repeat of the testing require ecology surveys and impact the programme. Will a revised programme be used in this instance?

* The proposed sites are only proposals, as they are involved in our Green Flag applications and are amongst some of our busiest and most used parks. As we currently do not have soil surveys, contractors would need to factor this into the proposal for site identification. We do have ecology surveys available for 9 of our parks, of which some might demonstrate the suitability of potential wildflower creation as we requested the surveyor to identify if there was potential identified from the field survey visits. We do understand these are still limited without soil surveys however. We are happy to share these ecology surveys upon request.  If the proposed sites are deemed unsuitable, the contractor would need to identify and test some optional sites. If this was also unsuitable then the programme could be revisited. If new sites are proposed however, we would also need to look at ASB factors as some parks are more at risk than others.

1. The importance of the contractor liaising on site with community groups is understood, but may be difficult to arrange, delays relating to group availability may affect the programme.

* We would like to see contractors ensuring they are flexible to community availability, such as offering alternative approaches if the group are unable to meet in person.

1. Training and utilising community groups to undertake scything as an ongoing management strategy may be challenging to square with the Health and Safety requirements.

* Scything will be something we are looking to pursue separately. We have an in house Health and Safety Lead. It is simply something to be considered as part of a suggested ongoing maintenance programme by the bidders.

1. When in 2026 will the Grassland management Strategy be available?

* It is already available on our site: [Tree Maintenance Policy](https://www.taunton-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2023/11/Tree-Maintenance-Policy.pdf) . You will find the grassland management strategy as a section within this document. We are in the process of separating them out into two separate policies though the contents of the grassland management strategy will remain the same.

1. Do you have the locations of all TCC’s existing planters shown on a map/plan/GIS file?

* No not currently which is why we have requested mapping to be created.

1. Are the Comeytrowe ecology surveys completed and available?

* Yes. Please find attached. 

1. Liaison with Taunton Town Councils Communications team- RE: signage could become protracted and assumptions will need to be made to limit the number of meetings and input required.

* We are asking for estimates and we would ensure we are working to a focused and strict timeline once agreed so all parties are aware of the requirements.

1. Design work to commence winter 2025- to be implemented in planting season 2026 [Stantec to outline planting seasons for different landscape typologies and flag any issues]

* The bidders can create their own timeline of when locations are to be suitable planted however the project is to be finished by 2027.

1. Technical advice and an ongoing, long term maintenance programme-is this required for 30 years?

* Projected timeline is at the bidders discretion in terms of what is deemed suitable. If a wildflower corridor is resilient after 10 years, demonstrated by successful year on year reflowering, then we will accept a 10 year maintenance programme etc. Our priority is long term resilience and we will work with the expertise offered by the successful bidder.

1. Long term monitoring and evaluation Framework- [simplified HMMP template?- Ecology support]

* At the bidders discretion. We will welcome and review all applicants and approaches.

1. Can you define the frequency or set project stages at which regular liaison and updates to the Climate Officer & Open Spaces Team/Lead are required? (i.e., monthly, or specify at which project stages)

* At the bidders discretion. A monthly update at the minimum would be required however we predict there may be need for more contact time at specific points within the project.

1. When will the Final Report be required? (i.e., 1 year after completion or 1 year after establishment- successful establishment of wildflower grassland can typically take 3 years to achieve)

* We would like to see an evaluation once the project has been delivered, but a revisit of the sites to identify establishment success. . For wildflower creation, we can see that from the research success is usually measured by achieving a **50–80%** range for sown wildflower (forb) cover by year 2–3 (Carvell et al. 2022). We would therefore request **70% forb cover by year 2**. If by year 2 this is not achieved, we would expect the contractor to return in year 3 to address any planting needs to bring the success rate up to the requested 70%.  We will provide a Service Level Agreement at the start of our agreed working partnership that will stipulate these outlines. The final report should be produced either after the success of year 2, or if unsuccessful, after the revisit in year 3. As requested, we would like regular general updates however as to how the delivery is progressing.

1. Can you further define what information the informative planting map should contain?  i.e, planting plan format with plant labels/quantities-, or a site wide (3 identified sites)  planting map to identify locations of landscape planting typologies?

* At the bidders discretion based on what they feel is best practice. However, we would like the opportunity to be flexible so that when we sit down with the Open Spaces Lead, we can request if there are any specific details the team might find useful as they understand how the project will be delivered more clearly.

1. Does the town council already have access to their own ArcGIS Online licenses?

* No.

1. We note that the successful bidder will work with the Taunton Town Council's Communications Team. Can we assume that third party costs for the purposes of community engagement (for example in-person event hire, in-person event refreshments and travel, engagement materials) will be covered by the Council.

* No. The successful bidder can use sub-contractors to deliver community engagement if required, but this should be factored into the expenditure of the project in the proposal.

1. Is there a page limit for the evaluation questions?

* No.

1. Due to the current Ecological survey window, we have a limited pressure on the number of ecologist available for inputting into the tender.  Is it possible to have an extension to the tender submission date?
2. – Applications have been extended to November 3rd.