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Request for Quotation

Soil Sample Metabarcoding for Natural England's Long Term Monitoring Network 2025 - 2026

Request for Quotation

Soil Sample Metabarcoding for Natural England's Long Term Monitoring Network (LTMN) 2025 - 2026

You are invited to submit a quotation for the requirement described in the specification, Section 2.

Your response should be returned to the following email addresses:

Email: matthew.j.shepherd@naturalengland.org.uk; victoria.sloan@naturalengland.org.uk

Date: Monday 15th December 2025

Time: 5pm

Ensure you state the reference '**LTMN SOILS METABARCODING 25-26**' and '**Final Submission**' in the subject field to make it clear that it is your response.

Contact Details and Timeline

Matthew Shepherd and Victoria Sloan will be your contacts for any questions linked to the content of the quote pack or the process. Please submit any questions by email and note that, unless commercially sensitive, both the question and the response will be shared on the Contracts Finder website / circulated to all tenderers.

Action	Date
Date of issue of RFQ	01/12/2025
Deadline for clarifications questions	08/12/2025 at 17:00
Deadline for receipt of Quotation	15/12/2025 at 17:00
Intended date of Contract Award	19/12/2025
Intended Contract Start Date	05/01/2026
Intended Delivery Date / Contract Duration	25/03/2026

Glossary and Background to Natural England

Unless the context otherwise requires the following words and expressions used within this Request for Quotation shall have the following meanings (to be interpreted in the singular or plural as the context requires):

"Authority"	Means Natural England acting as part of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
"RFQ"	Means this Request for Quotation and all related documents published by the Authority and made available to suppliers
"Contract"	Means the contract to be entered into by the Authority and the successful supplier.

The Authority is Natural England. The Authority's priorities are to secure a healthy natural environment; a sustainable, low-carbon economy; a thriving farming sector and a sustainable, healthy and secure food supply. Further information about the Authority can be found at: [Defra – Natural England](#).

Conditions applying to the RFQ

You should examine your response to the RFQ and related documents ensuring it is complete and in accordance with the stated instructions prior to submission.

Your quotation must contain sufficient information to enable the Authority to evaluate it fairly and effectively. You should ensure that you have prepared your quotation fully and accurately and that prices quoted are arithmetically correct for the units stated.

The supplier by submitting a quotation is deemed to accept the terms and conditions in the RFQ Confirmation of this is required in Annex 2. Failure to comply with the instructions set out in the RTQ may result in the supplier's exclusion from this quotation process.

Acceptance of Quotations

By issuing this RFQ the Authority does not bind itself to accept any quotation and reserves the right not to award a contract to any supplier who submits a quotation.

Costs

The Authority will not reimburse you for any costs and expenses which you incur preparing and submitting your quotation, even if the Authority amends or terminates the procurement process.

Self-Declaration and Mandatory Requirements

The RFQ includes a self-declaration response (Annex 1) which covers basic information about the supplier, as well as any grounds for exclusion. If you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Any mandatory requirements will be set out in Section 2, Specification of Requirements and, if you do not comply with them, your quotation will not be evaluated.

Clarifications

Any request for clarification regarding the RFQ and supporting documentation must be submitted via email no later than the deadline for clarifications set out in the Timetable. The Authority shall be under no obligation to respond to queries raised after the clarification deadline. The Authority will respond to all reasonable clarifications as soon as possible but cannot guarantee a minimum response time. The Authority will publish all clarifications and its responses to all suppliers via email unless deemed commercially sensitive.

If a supplier believes that a request for clarification is commercially sensitive, it should clearly state this when submitting the clarification request. However, if the Authority considers either that:

- the clarification and response are not commercially sensitive; and
- all suppliers may benefit from its disclosure,

then the Authority will notify the supplier (via email), and the supplier will have an opportunity to withdraw the request for clarification by sending a further message requesting the withdrawal of the clarification request. If not withdrawn by the supplier within 2 working days of the Authority's notification, the Authority may publish the clarification request and its response and the Authority shall not be liable to the supplier for any consequences of such publication.

The Authority reserves the right to seek clarification of any aspect of a quotation and/or provide additional information during the evaluation phase to carry out a fair evaluation. Where the Authority seeks clarification on any aspect of the quotation, the supplier must respond within the timeframe requested by the Authority.

Amendments

The Authority may amend the RFQ at any time prior to the deadline for receipt. If it amends the RFQ the Authority will notify you via email, and may extend the deadline for receipt in order to give you a reasonable time in which to take the amendment into account.

Suppliers may modify their quotation prior to the deadline for Responses. No Responses may be modified after the deadline for Responses.

Suppliers may withdraw their quotations at any time by submitting a notice via the email to the named contact.

Conditions of Contract

The Authority's

- Standard Good and Services Terms & Conditions,

which can be located [here](#).

and will be applicable to any contract awarded as a result of this quotation process. The Authority will not accept any changes to these terms and conditions proposed by a supplier.

Suppliers should note that the quotation provided by the successful bidder will form part of the Contract.

Prices

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling, exclusive of VAT.

It is anticipated that this contract will be awarded to end no later than 25/03/2026. Prices will remain fixed for the duration of the contract award period. We may at our sole discretion extend

this contract to include related or further work. Any extension shall be agreed in advance of any work commencing and may be subject to further competition.

Disclosure

All Central Government Departments, their Executive Agencies and Non Departmental Public Bodies are subject to control and reporting within Government. In particular, they report to the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury for all expenditure. Further the Cabinet Office has a cross-Government role delivering overall Government policy on public procurement, including ensuring value for money and related aspects of good procurement practice. For these purposes, the Authority may disclose within Government any details contained in your quotation. The information will not be disclosed outside Government during the procurement.

In addition, the Authority is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, which provide a public right of access to information held by public bodies. In accordance with these two statutes, the Authority may be required to disclose information contained in your quotation to any person who submits a request for information pursuant to those statutes.

Further to the Government's transparency agenda, all UK Government organisations must advertise on Find a Tender Service (FTS) in accordance with the following publication thresholds:

- Central Contracting Authority's: £12,000
- Sub Central Contracting Authority's and NHS Trusts: £30,000

For the purpose of this RFQ the Authority is classified as a Central Contracting Authority with a publication threshold of £12,000 inclusive of VAT.

If this opportunity is advertised via FTS, we are obliged to publish details of the awarded contract.

A copy of the contract must also be published with confidential information redacted.

By submitting a Response, you consent to these terms as part of the procurement.

Disclaimers

Whilst the information in this RFQ and any supporting information referred to herein or provided to you by the Authority have been prepared in good faith the Authority does not warrant that this information is comprehensive or that it has been independently verified.

The Authority does not:

- make any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to the accuracy, reasonableness or completeness of the RFQ;
- accept any liability for the information contained in the RFQ or for the fairness, accuracy or completeness of that information; or

- accept any liability for any loss or damage (other than in respect of fraudulent misrepresentation or any other liability which cannot lawfully be excluded) arising as a result of reliance on such information or any subsequent communication.

Any supplier considering entering into contractual relationships with the Authority following receipt of the RFQ should make its own investigations and independent assessment of the Authority and its requirements for the goods and/or services and should seek its own professional financial and legal advice.

Information Security requirements

The Government Security Classification Policy (GSCP) sets out the administrative system used by HM Government (HMG) to protect information and data assets appropriately against prevalent threats through the use of 'classification tiers'. HMG uses three classification tiers; OFFICIAL, SECRET and TOP SECRET. Each tier provides a set of recommended baseline behaviours and a set of protective controls, which are proportionate to the threat profile for that tier AND the potential impact of a compromise, accidental loss or incorrect disclosure of information held within that tier.

Tenderers and suppliers must ensure that appropriate protective security controls are in place to comply with the GSCP and manage the information shared and received as part of this tender exercise.

A full suite of guidance documents is available on GOV.UK, with specific guidance for tenderers and suppliers set out in [Guidance 1.6 - Contractors and Contracting Authorities.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-1-6-contractors-and-contracting-authorities).

Use of Artificial Intelligence

The Authority expects suppliers to declare where they have used AI software in the creation of Tender responses or intend to use AI software in the performance of the contract. How any AI software was, or will be, used should be to be declared within the technical submission part of the tender. We may require you to answer specific question/s on this topic, particularly where the Authority expects that usage is highly likely or clearly relates to the contract requirements.

Suppliers must follow any guidelines or regulations related to AI use and declarations as indicated in the [PPN 2/24 Improving Transparency of AI use in Procurement](#).

Any information, instructions, or data provided by the Authority to suppliers as part of this tender, the requirements, or contract should not be directly inserted into Generative AI software (such as Gemini, ChatGPT, or CoPilot) without prior permission, unless this information is clearly published in the public domain.

Use of any Authority confidential tender information for training AI software is prohibited. it is advised that Defra's data or instructions, or anything marked as confidential should not be directly inserted into AIs. For example, putting Authority's instruction email into Gemini, ChatGPT, or CoPilot is not recommended.

If you intend to use AI to provide goods or services to the Authority, then you are required to complete a declaration which is simply answering the question stated within the 'Information to be returned'. The answer to this question will not be used in scoring your quote.

Protection of Personal Data

In order to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 the supplier must agree to the following:

You must only process any personal data in strict accordance with instructions from the Authority.

- You must ensure that all the personal data that we disclose to you or you collect on our behalf under this agreement are kept confidential.
- You must take reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of employees who have access to personal data.
- Only employees who may be required to assist in meeting the obligations under this agreement may have access to the personal data.
- Any disclosure of personal data must be made in confidence and extend only so far as that which is specifically necessary for the purposes of this agreement.
- You must ensure that there are appropriate security measures in place to safeguard against any unauthorised access or unlawful processing or accidental loss, destruction or damage or disclosure of the personal data.
- On termination of this agreement, for whatever reason, the personal data must be returned to us promptly and safely, together with all copies in your possession or control.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

For the purposes of the Regulations the Authority is the data processor.

The personal information that we have asked you provide on individuals (data subjects) that will be working for you on this contract will be used in compiling the tender list and in assessing your offer. If you are unsuccessful the information will be held and destroyed within two years of the award of contracts. If you are awarded a contract it will be retained for the duration of the contract and destroyed within seven years of the contract's expiry.

We may monitor the performance of the individuals during the execution of the contract, and the results of our monitoring, together with the information that you have provided, will be used in determining what work is allocated under the contract, and in any renewal of the contract or in the award of future contracts of a similar nature. The information will not be disclosed to anyone outside the Authority without the consent of the data subject, unless the Authority is required by law to make such disclosures.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

The Client is striving to create a diverse and inclusive working environment where every individual has equality of opportunity to progress and to apply their unique insights to making the UK a great place for living. The Service Provider is expected to respect this commitment in all dealings with Natural England staff and service users.

Suppliers are expected to;

- support Defra group to achieve its Public Sector Equality Duty as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and to support delivery of [Defra group's Equality & Diversity Strategy](#).
- meet the standards set out in the [Government's Supplier Code of Conduct](#)
- work with Defra group to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion impacts are addressed (positive and negative) in the goods, services and works we procure, barriers are removed and opportunities realised.

Sustainable Procurement

Addressing global sustainability impacts and realising additional community benefits within commercial activity is core to Defra group's approach, working with its supply chain is key to achieving sustainable outcomes. In addition to supporting Defra group to meet its outcomes we look to understand and reduce negative sustainability impacts associated with our commercial activity and realise benefits.

The Client encourages its suppliers to share these values, work to address negative impacts and realise opportunities, measure performance and success.

Suppliers are expected to have an understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals, the interconnections between them and the relevance to the Goods, Services and works procured on the Client's behalf.

Conflicts of Interest

The concept of a conflict of interest includes but is not limited to any situation where an Involved Person or Relevant Body has directly or indirectly, a financial, economic or other personal interest which might be perceived to compromise their impartiality and independence in the context of the procurement procedure and/or affect the integrity of the contract award.

We expect suppliers to mitigate appropriately against any real or perceived conflict of interest through their work with government. A supplier with a position of influence gained through a contract should not use that position to unfairly disadvantage any other supplier or reduce the potential for future competition

Where the supplier is aware of any circumstances giving rise to a conflict of interest or has any indication that a conflict of interest exists or may arise you should inform the Authority of this as soon as possible (whether before or after they have submitted a quotation). Tenderers should remain alert to the possibility of conflicts of interest arising at all stages of the procurement and should update the Authority if any new circumstances or information arises, or there are any changes to information already provided to the Authority. Failure to do so, and/or to properly manage any conflicts of interest may result in a quotation being rejected.

Provided that it has been carried out in an open, fair and transparent manner, routine pre-market engagement carried out by the Authority should not represent a conflict of interest for the supplier.

Section 2: Specification of requirements

Long Term Monitoring Network – Soil Sample Metabarcoding

Background to the specific work area relevant to this contract

Natural England maintain a Long-term Monitoring Network (LTMN) comprising 37 sites, mainly National Nature Reserves (NNRs) in England where a wide range of environmental parameters are being monitored with the aim of detecting long-term changes in biodiversity and ecosystem function associated with climate change, pollution and land management. A suite of soil parameters is included in this monitoring to assess long-term changes in soil characteristics, functions and biodiversity. The LTMN network sites cover multiple habitat types, soil types and environmental conditions, and more information about the project can be found [here](#). The sites are visited for soil sampling on a rolling programme, at approximately 8 year intervals.

At each site the same five sampling plots are surveyed in each round of sampling, and in each plot samples are collected from 0-15 cm soil depth, bulked from 12 locations across 4 subplots, to be evaluated for soil microbial community characteristics. Since the start of the sampling in 2011, these samples have been analysed in the year of collection using terminal restriction fragment length polymorphism (tRFLP), acting on genetic material used to indicate bacteria (16SrRNA), fungi (ITS) and a specific archaeal genetic barcode. Since 2013, samples of the soil collected in the field have been frozen to allow for future analyses. Between 2022 and 2024, a comparison study of tRFLP and metabarcoding methods was undertaken, during which 90 of the frozen samples were analysed using metabarcoding.

This project is to undertake metabarcoding analysis (targeting bacteria and fungi) of remaining soil samples held by the Long Term Monitoring Network.

Requirements

LTMN soil samples – numbers and locations

Currently 235 further frozen samples are held at the University of Sheffield (S10 2TN) and 45 at the James Hutton Institute (Aberdeen, AB15 8HQ). Each sample comprises a minimum of one 5ml Eppendorf tube approximately half filled with frozen soil, originating from one bulked and mixed sample per plot (as above), with the fresh soil having been passed through a 2mm sieve prior to freezing.

Under this contract, arrangements will need to be made to collect and transport the frozen samples in suitable frozen condition to the contractors laboratory for analysis. Quotations should therefore include costs for transport and consider time requirements for this in the project programme.

Given the uncertainty of exact costs associated with the sample analyses, suppliers are invited to submit a quotation based on the number of samples that it would be feasible to analyse (within the total number of samples remaining), under the maximum project budget, and taking account of requirements for replication and contingency (see below). Please note that the maximum budget will be published both inclusive and exclusive of VAT; contractors should ensure that quotations are consistent with the appropriate category of budget.

Metabarcoding analysis – method

Comparisons with existing data

The samples described above originate from a larger group of samples for which some metabarcoding analyses have already been undertaken. Contractors should therefore select methods which maximise comparability of data across the whole group of samples. To aid this, outline details of the previous analyses are included below (*italic text*). Quotations should include a full description of the intended analysis methods (including primers, PCR cycle conditions, reagents and number of replicates proposed), and for any differences in approach to previous analyses, an assessment of the impact of this on comparisons with existing data. As some details will require finalising through discussion with Natural England at the start of the contract, contractors should also include costs for an initial meeting in early January 2026.

Sample contamination

Details of measures to avoid sample contamination in the laboratory should be included throughout.

DNA extraction

DNA should be extracted using a reliable extraction kit for genetic material. *DNA extraction was previously done using Macherey-Nagel NucleoSpin Soil Kits, following manufacturers instructions, with Buffer 1 and no enhancement solution.*

Contractors should also provide details of how they intend to test for DNA degradation.

PCR and primers

The genetic material should be primed and amplified using primers typically in use for soil microbial taxa. The final selection of primers and PCR programmes to be used will to be discussed and agreed with Natural England at the commencement of the contract (details from previous analyses below). Positive and negative controls should be included.

Following first PCR, an agarose gel should be run, and samples bead cleaned (cleaning details to be discussed and agreed with Natural England at the commencement of the contract), then unique identifiers added. TapeStation and fluorometer checks should be undertaken on samples, and bead purification performed. Serial dilution of libraries and quantification using qPCR should be undertaken. Quotations should include information on how any inhibition in the samples will be identified and managed.

The primer pair previously used for bacterial and archea – 16S, ~280bp is shown below (Kindworth et al. 2013); the primer pair previously used for fungi was developed by the University of Sheffield and is not yet published.

Forward Seq (5'-3', Adapter in grey)	Reverse Seq (5'-3', Adapter in grey)
GTGACTGGAGTTCAGACGTGTGCTCTTC CGATCTCAGCMGCCGCGGTAA	ACACTCTTTCCCTACACGACGCTCTTCCG ATCTNNNNNTACNVGGGTATCTAATCC

¹ Klindworth, A. et al. (2013) 'Evaluation of general 16S ribosomal RNA gene PCR primers for classical and next-generation sequencing-based diversity studies', Nucleic Acids Research, 41(1), p.e1.doi:10.1093/nar/gks808.

Previous first PCR program

*1 cycle of 95°C for 15 minutes
then 25-35 cycles of
94°C – 30 sec
Tm°C 1 min – 1 min 30 sec
72°C – 1 min to 2 min
72°C – 10 min*

Previous second PCR program

*95 °C for 15 mins

Then 8-12 cycles of
98°C for 10 sec
65°C for 30 sec
72°C for 30 sec
then 72°C for 5 min*

Sequencing, data analysis and reference libraries

Amplicon sets should be sequenced using an appropriate platform (*previous sequencing was using an Illumina MiSeq*).

Sequencing results should be processed through a DADA2 pipeline (full details to be agreed with Natural England at the start of the project), and taxonomy assigned using the Silva database for bacteria and archaea (<https://zenodo.org/record/4587955#.ZCRQs-zML0o>) and the Unite database for fungi (<https://unite.ut.ee/repository.php>).

Sample use storage

Where possible, small quantities of frozen soil should be used for extraction, and the remainder retained.

All remaining unused soil and extracted DNA should be stored at -80°C. Quotations should initially include sample storage throughout this project, with further discussions to be held with Natural England.

Technical replicates and contingency

Contractors should suggest an appropriate number of samples (based on total samples analysed) to act as full replicates for the analytical process (i.e. to undergo DNA extraction through to sequencing). In addition, the DNA extracted from at least 5 samples should be amplified and sequenced 3 times. This will help inform understanding of the variation resulting from different stages of the process and whether it might affect further analysis of the results. Natural England will select the samples for replicated analysis, ensuring a spread across sites and habitats.

Contractors should also indicate if it would be feasible to re-run any samples that fail during initial analysis, and included costs as appropriate.

Metadata, data and reporting

The following outputs should be provided:

- A completed version of the “Metabarcoding metadata template” available [here](#). Information relating to sample collection details and locations would be completed by Natural England; the contractor would need to complete all other relevant fields.
- Spreadsheets listing the species identified, including the reference library and sequence ID used. If a species is not assigned, the sequence should be identified to the lowest possible taxonomic level (e.g. genus or family).
- Raw sequencing data in FASTQ format, and should be transferred to Natural England using an appropriate platform. Two FASTQ files with the extensions R1.fastq and R2.fastq should be provided (i.e. demultiplexed data).
- Brief report, including any details of the methodology not already captured in meta-data, and notes/discussion highlighting any problems and their resolution, quality of sequencing reads and any issues with reference databases or barcodes. The methods should allow the reader to understand confidence in the sequences obtained. The report should also specify any recommendations for any further work required to rectify any issues or improve or enhance data gathered from these samples.

Suggested report contents (where data not already provided): methods

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 primers, PCR cycle conditions, reagents, volumes, and number of replicates per sample used. Contractors may only reference another publication without providing these details if the protocol is followed as written, including the same primers, PCR cycle conditions, reagents, volumes, and number of replicates per sample. Describe the indexing process. Describe the positive and negative controls used, and whether these behaved as expected. State whether samples were tested for degradation and / or inhibition, and if so, how many samples were affected and measures taken to promote amplification.

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 platform, reagent kit, percentage of PhiX control (if applicable), and loading concentration used.

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, 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 and any manual manipulation of the bioinformatics output.

Suggested report contents: results

Reported results should include:

- The efficiency of DNA extraction.
- Correct amplification of expected PCR products at each stage.
- Correct amplification of positive and negative controls.
- Number of sequencing reads generated, quality of sequencing reads (which should be assessed using FastQC or similar software e.g. MultiQC), proportion of reads discarded and proportion which were assigned to species

Contractors should be aware that all data (and associate meta-data) produced will be made available by Natural England under the Open Government Licence.

Sustainability

Natural England protects and improves the environment and is committed to reducing the sustainability impacts of its activities directly and through its supply chains. We expect the Contractor to share this commitment and adopt a sound, proactive sustainable approach in keeping with the 25 yr environmental plan/our commitments compliant with all applicable legislation. This includes understanding and reducing direct and indirect sustainability impacts and realising opportunities, including but not restricted to; resilience to climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use and quality, biosecurity, resource efficiency and waste, reducing the risk of pollution, biodiversity, modern slavery and equality, diversity & inclusion, negative community impacts.

As a delivery partner, the successful contractor is expected to pursue sustainability in their operations, thereby ensuring the Contracting Authority is not contracting with a supplier whose operational outputs run contrary to the Contracting Authority's objectives. The successful contractor will need to approach the project with a focus on the entire life cycle of the project

Prices

Prices must be submitted in £ sterling, exclusive of VAT. It should be indicated whether VAT is applicable.

Quotation Submission and Evaluation

We will award this contract in line with the most advantageous tender (MAT) as set out in the following award criteria:

- Commercial – 50%
- Technical – 50%

Assessment against the technical criterion will be based on scores for tenders received, weighted in accordance to the importance of the following criteria, as indicated in the table below:

Criteria - Technical	Weighting	To include:
1. Proposed delivery methods	45 (% of technical score available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear explanation of lab protocol and plans for processing samples, including extraction, amplification, sequencing and bioinformatics, storage, and appropriate quality assurance steps applied at each stage, including rationale for proposed approaches. • Clear indication of any impacts of proposed protocol on comparability of data with previous metabarcoding analyses.
2. Delivery Capability	25 (% of technical score available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of the project's management, showing who will have responsibility for different elements of the project. • A project timetable. • A project risk assessment identifying potential threats to the delivery of the project, (such as problems with equipment, staffing, access to facilities) and mitigation strategies to overcome these. • Details of any subcontractors that may be involved in delivery of analyses or other services. • A description of how you will manage any risks to health and safety during laboratory analyses.
3. Expertise	20 (% of technical score available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of how the training, qualifications and experience of key staff members will enable them to deliver the project. • C.V.s or pen portraits of all key staff members.
4. Sustainability	10 (% of technical score available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of how environmental impacts relating to the project will be minimized including reference to protocols for safe disposal of

		reagents, sustainable reuse or disposal of waste materials, and any other actions you will take to minimize environmental impact of the project.
Criteria - commercial	100 (% commercial score)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of samples that can be analysed within the budget, or if all available samples, then overall cost.

The scoring of submissions will be follow the rationale outlined in the table below:

Score	Justification
For a score of hundred (100):	Excellent - Response is completely relevant and excellent overall. The response is comprehensive, unambiguous and demonstrates a thorough understanding of the requirement and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full.
For a score of seventy (70):	Good - Response is relevant and good. The response demonstrates a good understanding and provides details on how the requirements will be fulfilled.
For a score of fifty (50):	Acceptable - Response is relevant and acceptable. The response provides sufficient evidence to fulfil basic requirements.
For a score of twenty (20):	Poor - Response is partially relevant and/or poor. The response addresses some elements of the requirements but contains insufficient / limited detail or explanation to demonstrate how the requirement will be fulfilled.
For a score of zero (0):	Unacceptable - Nil or inadequate response. Fails to demonstrate an ability to meet the requirement.

Separate submissions for each technical question should be provided and will be evaluated in isolation. Tenderers should provide answers that meet the criteria of each technical question.

Information to be returned

Please note, the following information requested must be provided. Incomplete tender submissions may be discounted.

Please complete and return the following information:

- completed Commercial Response template
- separate response submission for each technical element (in accordance with the response instructions)
- complete AI question "Do you use Artificial Intelligence (AI) or machine learning tools, including large language models within your quote submission or service delivery processes?" - response which will not be scored, is to be returned within technical response
- completed Mandatory Requirements (Annex 1)
- completed Acceptance of Terms and Conditions (Annex 2)

Award

Once the evaluation of the Response(s) is complete suppliers will be notified of the outcome via email.

Outputs and Contract Management

This contract shall be managed on behalf of the Authority by Matthew Shepherd and Victoria Sloan.

It is expected that the contractor or contractors will liaise with Natural England by e-mail, and in telephone/webinar meetings to:

- Agree and finalise the project timetable, and analysis details as required.
- Coordinate the transport and delivery of samples
- Provide updates on the progress of sample analysis and further discuss sample storage.
- Share experiences on the processing and analysis of the samples and provide any recommendations to improve it.

All progress meetings required will be held during the course of the contract by teleconference/webinar/videoconference.

The **Nominated Officers** for this project are:

Dr Matthew J Shepherd
Senior Environmental Specialist – Soil Biodiversity
Natural England, Met Office, Fitzroy Road, Exeter EX1 3PB
Tel: 07866 680786
E-mail matthew.j.shepherd@naturalengland.org.uk

Dr Victoria Sloan
Higher Officer, Evidence – Long Term Monitoring Network
Natural England, Horizon House, Deanery Road, Bristol BS1 5AH
Tel: 07385 968538
E-mail: victoria.sloan@naturalengland.org.uk

This contract is to run until 25th March 2026.

The Authority will raise purchase orders to cover the cost of the services and will issue to the awarded supplier following contract award.

The Authority's preference is for all invoices to be sent electronically, quoting a valid Purchase Order number.

Annex 1 Mandatory Requirements

Part 1 Potential Supplier Information

Please answer the following self-declaration questions in full and include this Annex in your quotation response.

Part 1.1 Potential Supplier Information:

1.1(a)	Full name of the potential supplier submitting the information	
1.1(b)	Registered office address (if applicable)	
1.1(c)	Company registration number (if applicable)	
1.1(d)	Charity registration number (if applicable)	
1.1(e)	Head office DUNS number (if applicable)	
1.1(f)	Registered VAT number	
1.1(g)	Are you a Small, Medium or Micro Enterprise (SME)?	(Yes / No)

Note: See EU definition of SME https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en

Part 1.2 Contact details and declaration

By submitting a quotation to this RFQ I declare that to the best of my knowledge the answers submitted and information contained in this document are correct and accurate.

I declare that, upon request and without delay you will provide the certificates or documentary evidence referred to in this document.

I understand that the information will be used in the selection process to assess my organisation's suitability to be invited to participate further in this procurement.

I understand that the authority may reject this submission in its entirety if there is a failure to answer all the relevant questions fully, or if false/misleading information or content is provided in any section.

I am aware of the consequences of serious misrepresentation.

1.2(a)	Contact name	
1.2(b)	Name of organisation	
1.2(c)	Role in organisation	
1.2(d)	Phone number	
1.2(e)	E-mail address	
1.2(f)	Postal address	
1.2(g)	Signature (electronic is acceptable)	
1.2(h)	Date	

Part 2 Exclusion Grounds

Part 2.1 Grounds for mandatory exclusion, including being on the Government Debarment List.

2.1(a)	Please indicate if, within the past five years you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation been convicted anywhere in the world of any of the offences within the summary below.	
	Participation in a criminal organisation.	(Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b)
	Corruption.	((Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b)
	Fraud.	(Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b)

	Terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities	(Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b)
	Money laundering or terrorist financing	(Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b)
	Child labour and other forms of trafficking in human beings	(Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.1 (b)
2.1(b)	<p>If you have answered yes to question 2.1(a), please provide further details.</p> <p>Date of conviction, specify which of the grounds listed the conviction was for, and the reasons for conviction.</p> <p>Identity of who has been convicted</p> <p>If the relevant documentation is available electronically please provide the web address, issuing authority, precise reference of the documents.</p>	
2.1 (c)	If you have answered Yes to any of the points above have measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (i.e. Self-Cleaning)	(Yes / No)
2.1(d)	Has it been established, for your organisation by a judicial or administrative decision having final and binding effect in accordance	(Yes / No)

	with the legal provisions of any part of the United Kingdom or the legal provisions of the country in which the organisation is established (if outside the UK), that the organisation is in breach of obligations related to the payment of tax or social security contributions?	
2.1(e)	If you have answered yes to question 2.3(a), please provide further details. Please also confirm you have paid or have entered into a binding arrangement with a view to paying, the outstanding sum including where applicable any accrued interest and/or fines.	

Part 2.2 Grounds for discretionary exclusion

2.2(a)	<p>The detailed grounds for discretionary exclusion of an organisation are set out on this webpage, which should be referred to before completing these questions.</p> <p>Please indicate if, within the past three years, anywhere in the world any of the following situations have applied to you, your organisation or any other person who has powers of representation, decision or control in the organisation</p>	
2.2(b)	Breach of environmental obligations?	<p>(Yes / No)</p> <p>If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f)</p>
2.2(c)	Breach of social obligations?	<p>(Yes / No)</p> <p>If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f)</p>
2.2(d)	Breach of labour law obligations?	(Yes / No)

		If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f)
2.2(e)	Shown significant or persistent deficiencies in the performance of a substantive requirement under a prior public contract, a prior contract with a contracting entity, or a prior concession contract, which led to early termination of that prior contract, damages or other comparable sanctions?	(Yes / No) If yes please provide details at 2.2 (f)
2.2 (f)	If you have answered Yes to any of the above, explain what measures been taken to demonstrate the reliability of the organisation despite the existence of a relevant ground for exclusion? (Self Cleaning)	

Annex 2 Acceptance of Terms and Conditions

I/We accept in full the terms and conditions appended to this Request for Quote document.

Company _____

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Position _____

Date _____