

Project Evaluation: INVITATION TO TENDER

From Foundation for Common Land (on behalf of the National Trust)

For End of Project Evaluation

Contact : Sam Caraway Project Manager Foundation for Common Land: Sam@foundationforcommonland.org.uk Tel: 07484922995

Tender Submissions due by: Wednesday the 20th of September

Introduction And Overview:

Commons are contested spaces, where divergent interests, overlapping legal rights and passionately held views can collide. However, the plurality of interests that makes commons complex spaces in which to work, has also made them exceptionally rich and varied places. Accounting for only 3% of England’s land mass, they account for 20% of its SSSIs, 40% of its open access land and 11% of its SAMs. Commoning is a living link to a land management system dating back to before the Norman conquest.

Now is a particularly difficult time for England’s uplands, and upland commons in particular: lockdowns have increased visitor numbers and changed visiting patterns on already pressured sites. The loss of Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) subsidies poses a significant threat to already marginal farm businesses, and ongoing uncertainty has undermined faith in the ability of successor schemes to support upland farming systems or to address biodiversity and climate crisis. While increasing polarisation between conservation and farming voices, is leading to a discourse of supposedly binary choices: production or rewilding, cultural heritage or natural heritage, farming, or nature.

In this challenging space the Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons project, a three and a half year, National Lottery Heritage Fund funded project, (lead delivery body: the Foundation for Common Land, accountable body National Trust) brings together 25 organisations in partnership to seek to secure collaborative, sustainable management of upland commons. The project has four aims:

* Secure and support collaborative management of Common Land
* Ensure that the health of commons is secured by supporting resilient commoning in a fast-changing world
* Reconnect the public with the natural and cultural heritage of Common Land
* Enhance the environmental and ecological benefits offered by Common Land

The project focuses on 12 commons, located in Dartmoor, the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, and Shropshire Hills, but the project also aspires to influence management of common land beyond these both regionally and nationally, sharing our learning across commons and organisations, and embedding collaborative working practices in partner organisations.

We are seeking a consultancy or contractor, who will understand this context, to carry out a project evaluation, which will help us understand the impacts of the project, capture lessons learnt to structure future projects, and support the projects wider influence on those involved in managing commons by sharing ways of working.

Mid Term Review

A mid-term review has already been carried out for this project. At our request this included a health check on existing evaluation and recommendations for evaluating the remainder of the project which can be found below and should be used to inform this tender application:



It should be noted that project timescales have changed since this document was completed with the end of practical delivery being extended to December 2024 and the deadline for final submission extended to June 2025.

Specification

**Evaluating impact**

This is the core evaluation task. The production of an impact focused evaluation report for NLHF, other project partners and funders.

We want a thorough project evaluation, with a primary focus on the long term impacts the project is seeking to achieve; that focuses on assessing the extent to which the project has met its overarching aims and objectives rather than counting the volume of specific outputs.

The evaluation will need to be alive to the context in which the project operates. Commons have a thousand-year history of contested space, exacerbated by the threats and tensions demonstrated by this particular moment of agricultural transition. We are not excepting a three-and-a-half-year project to have solved these problems.

However, within this context we want to understand, how the presence of the project and its manner of operating has impacted on the commons we are focusing on and beyond, to identify key lessons learnt and areas of particular success on which to build. While the exact questions to focus on will need to be determined by the evaluator and the project team with reference to the original application but areas of interest are likely to include:

**Project Specific Aims:**

**Collaboration:**

* Has the project increased collaboration on its focus commons or between them and other commons and if so, what is the impact of this on the way the commons are managed?
* Has the project changed its partners’ and collaborators’ (commoners and partner organisations) attitudes and practices towards commoning? If so, how?
* Are participants more open towards the wider benefits common land can bring, beyond their own particular interest?

**Resilience**

* Has the project increased the resilience of commoning systems on the sites it has worked on?
* Has the project helped commoners secure agri-environment funding, or otherwise supported their farm business?

**Environmental/Public Benefits**

* Has the project’s collaborative and participative approach to delivering public benefits projects increased the likelihood of those projects securing stakeholder support -or delivering successful results?
* Has this or other project activity increased the likelihood of future delivery of public benefits on the commons it has worked with?
* Has the project increased commoners’ understanding of the public benefits their commons deliver and how they can contribute to and benefit from these?

**Public Awareness and Understanding**

* Has the project increased the public’s awareness of the heritage of commons and commoning?
* (In so far as is possible to ascertain given lack of baseline data), has it changed their attitudes towards it and if so, how?

Note: although these questions are broadly focused on categories of project delivery, we are not suggesting that the questions are targeted by delivery strand – only asking collaboration questions about project’s badged as collaboration projects etc.

**NHLF aims:**

To what extent has the project met the aims NLHF has for all projects:

**Outcomes for heritage**

* Heritage will be better managed
* Heritage will be in better condition
* Heritage will be better interpreted and explained
* Heritage will be identified and recorded

**Outcomes for people**

* People will have developed skills
* People will have learned about heritage
* People will have changed their attitudes / behaviour
* People will have had an enjoyable experience
* People will have volunteered their time

**Outcome for Communities:**

* Negative environmental impacts will be reduced
* More people/wider range of people will have engaged
* The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit
* The local economy will be boosted
* The organisation will be more resilient

**Methods:**

The exact methodologies will need to be determined by the consultant in collaboration with the project team building on the recommendations made In the mid-term review. However, given the scale, scope, and geography of the project, coupled with the desire to answer some quite in-depth questions it is anticipated that there will need to be a dual approach. It may also be necessary to delegate some evaluation tasks to the project team.

Firstly, less in-depth methods aimed at providing a broader but necessarily more superficial general overview of the project as a whole. This might include desk reviews of end of project reports project media, results of participant surveys, etc

Second a deeper dive into the impact of some specific projects, workstreams or sites. Working with the project team to identify suitable foci for answering some of the more detailed questions using methods such as participant interviews. It is likely that this will need to include an element of visits to the locations where the project is being delivered.

Third: Supporting the project team to capture the data and information the evaluators require. This will be by clearly briefing the team as to what is needed, producing materials to support this being done in as effectively and easily as possible, and upskilling the team in their use.

**Output:**

A Project Evaluation Report to be shared with project partners, NHLF and other funders. This report should include data about project activity, descriptions of outcomes related to project aims, evaluation of impact and legacy, evaluation of project methods, a brief account of evaluation methodologies. It should aim to represent the ‘feel’ of the project. It is anticipated that this will be an electronic rather than a printed document, the evaluator should consider how to make the document as rich and engaging as possible e.g., through the use of pull quotes, photographs, case studies and links to embedded video or audio. We will be able to provide photography and video captured during the project, but the evaluator may also wish to record participant interviews.

Sharing Impact and Maximizing Legacy

A key aspiration of the project is through our delivery to influence those involved in managing commons beyond the project, by demonstrating and sharing our ways of working with partner organisations and others. In particular as part of its legacy the project seeks to:

* increase sector capacity by creating Bridges of Learning between project partners and areas
* to produce sharable outputs that enable others to take on the ideas developed by the project and actionable insights that give stakeholders the knowledge they need to act more suitably
* to embed project ways of working in partner organisations and others involved in commons management
* to build FCL’s own capacity to lead, convene and deliver on commons nationally, including to secure future funding for this work
* to sustain the projects Common’s Convener model, through both future funded projects and its adoption by other partners

(The projects current legacy plan is available on request). The project’s evaluation has important role in supporting these legacy aspirations, by providing an evidence base, insight into methodologies and materials to support broader dissemination and adoption of the project’s ways of working.

**Method/Outputs:**

This will be determined by the evaluator in collaboration with the project manager, but the intention is to produce a series of outward facing outputs to support the projects legacy aspirations. These could include:

* A slide deck for use by funders.
* Video or audio footage.
* Material to support ‘pitch presentations or end of project press releases.
* bespoke web content.
* case studies and how to guides (building on existing work by the team in this area).
* ‘socialising’ the evaluations findings with key sector partners and influencers external to the project, through hosting a session at the end of project symposium.

Timescales

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| **Activity**  | **Time period**  |
| Tender Submission by  |  Midnight on Wednesday the 20th of September 2023 |
| Start of contract  | 20th of October 2023 |
| Methods agreed, team briefed and supported to carry out their roles. | December 2023 |
| Production of outward facing outputs  | From early 2024 onwards |
| End of project symposium (key findings need to have been identified by this stage, and some outward facing outputs produced)  | October to November 2024 TBC  |
| End of Project delivery phase | November 2024 |
| Completion of final evaluation report and any remaining outputs  | January 2025 |
| Final Grant Submission Date  | June 2025  |

Contract Management

This contract will be managed by the Our Common Cause Project Manager, Sam Caraway, who is employed by the National Trust and seconded to the Foundation for Common Land. The contract will be with the National Trust, as the project’s accountable body, and will need to comply with the Trust’s General Terms & Conditions (available on request)

Selection Criteria

There are several areas that will specifically be considered in the selection process. These include but are not limited to:

* **Response to the tender:** the consultants understanding of the brief and their proposed approach to meeting the needs of the project and the requirements of the tender set out above.
* **Value for money:** Day rate, other costs and proposed time spent on the project.
* **Suitability for the Work**: Experience of evaluating similar projects skills and qualifications of team, sector knowledge including ideally an understanding of upland /commons context. We may invite suitable applicants to present their proposals to interview via zoom date TBC, if feel this would be helpful in determining the outcome of the tender process.

Health & Safety and Insurance

The contractor will be responsible for the health and safety of its employees

Before appointment, the contractor will need to demonstrate evidence of the following insurance policies:

* Employers’ liability £5 million (if the consultant employs staff)
* Public Liability £5 million
* Professional Indemnity Insurance £1 million

Tender Submission

Tender submission of no more than 14 sides of A4 should include: proposed approach to delivering the project evaluation; break-down of cost including any costs set aside for production of outward facing outputs and time allocation; experience of similar projects; and a brief CV of staff allocated to this project.

Tenders should be submitted to Sam@foundationforcommonland.org.uk by no later than midnight on Wednesday the 20th of September 2023

Award of contract

We will aim to award the contract by 20th of October 2023