

Supporting local communities to take action for nature and climate.



Yn cefnogi cymunedau lleol i weithredu dros natur a hinsawdd

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Monitoring & Evaluation brief: Nature Neighbourhoods

Organisations	RSPB, National Trust, WWF-UK, Co-op, National Lottery Community Fund
Team	National Trust (Urban Green)
Brief description of supply	Evaluation service
Estimated value of tender	£50,000 inclusive of all expenses and VAT
Estimated duration	February 2024 – December 2025
Name of NT contact	Rory Crawford Project Manager – Nature Neighbourhoods rory.crawford@nationaltrust.org.uk

Overview

We are looking for a creative evaluator to analyse the impact of the Nature Neighbourhoods project.

[Nature Neighbourhoods](#) is a community-led project to tackle the nature and climate crises in 18 neighbourhoods around the UK. Each of these neighbourhoods will co-create plans for climate and nature action, bringing in local system actors (e.g. local authorities and businesses) and training at least 400 community members, to make it easier for communities to take action.

The two-year project will combine the local knowledge of 18 diverse community organisations with the expertise, support, influence and connections of three of the largest conservation groups in the UK – the National Trust, RSPB and WWF. It has been supported by a £750,000 grant from The National Lottery Community Fund and £300,000 from Co-op, who are also providing on-the-ground support through their store-based [Member Pioneers](#).

Background Context

People want urgent action to protect and restore nature. In March 2023, the world's first People's Plan for Nature was published <https://peoplesplanfornature.org/>. It is a plan created for the people, by the people of the UK – a vision for the future of nature, and the actions we must all take to protect and renew it. With input from thousands of people from across the UK, the People's Plan for Nature calls for urgent, immediate action – from governments, businesses, charities, organisations, farmers and communities – to protect and fundamentally

change how we value nature. The Nature Neighbourhoods project is a direct response to the People's Plan for Nature's calls for greater collaboration, investing in co-design of action to protect and renew nature at neighbourhood level.

The project is funded by National Lottery Community Fund and the Co-op and delivers against the [NLCF's Climate Action Fund](#) Round 3 which aims to help communities across the UK to address climate change. **NLCF are looking for projects that focus on the link between nature and climate.** They want projects to be creative, include everyone and try out new things. Projects also need to show how they can achieve longer-term, larger change that goes beyond the communities they're directly working with. They are interested in projects that can do at least one of the following:

- show how creating a deeper connection with nature will lead to changing people's behaviours and greater care for the environment
- show how by bringing nature back into the places we live and work, we can help communities to reduce or adapt to the impacts of climate change

Nature Neighbourhoods Project Outcomes, Objectives, Milestones and Indicative Timings

Main Project Outcomes	Objectives	Milestones	Timing
<i>1. Building community capacity: working with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, building the capacity of diverse communities.</i>	<p>1. Bring in new voices to the existing nature-positive movement amongst the UK public who have been traditionally excluded, by catalysing action in underrepresented communities across the UK.</p> <p>This will include providing development opportunities to 400 community leaders and convening a peer-to-peer support network.</p>	<p>Online Peer Network – Sharepoint or equivalent system (for cohorts)</p> <p>Bespoke training packages delivery commences</p> <p>400 community leaders engaged and trained (100 thanks to Co-op funding)</p>	<p>Oct 2023</p> <p>Collaboration kick off Oct 2023</p> <p>By Sept 2025</p>
<i>2. Neighbourhood action for nature: VCSE anchor organisations will support local communities to take more climate and nature positive actions.</i>	2. Establish, grow, and connect a diverse network of 16+ community groups who are taking nature-positive action at a local and regional scale.	16+ local VCSE organisations signed up to the project (4 thanks to Co-op funding)	By Jan 2024
<i>3. Successful communities: Training will be provided to local 'system actors' who sit within</i>	3. Internal and External Learning: Identify and support community champions, to recognise and platform the	'Internal' Peer Networking & Learning Opportunities	Sept 2025

<p><i>organisations such as local authorities, landowners, businesses, and funders.</i></p> <p><i>4.Organisational learning and generous leadership: Building the capability of project partners to support community action for climate and nature.</i></p>	<p>contribution of communities in creating a nature positive UK.</p>	<p>Curation of resources from x3 charities, Co-op and other expert partners – for use by VCSEs and stakeholders.</p>	<p>April 2024 – September 2025</p>
		<p>External facing learning platform set up with free to use new resources created during/by the project.</p>	<p>September 2025</p>
		<p>Training/resources for system actors, developed during the project, for deeper community collaboration.</p>	<p>June 2024 - June 2025</p>
		<p>A plan for and the delivery of case studies: people and systems actors.</p>	<p>April 2024 – June 2025</p>
		<p>National online conference event & Final report</p>	<p>September 2025</p>

Evaluation aim and questions

We are looking to appoint an independent evaluator/evaluation team that will help us evidence and understand the impact of the Nature Neighbourhoods Project and to suggest recommendations based on learnings in support of the People’s Plan for Nature Report recommendations.

Aims:

The aim of the evaluation is three-fold:

- a) draw together lessons learned, best practice and insights from each one of the four main project outcomes mentioned above.
- b) capture the successes and challenges of working with hyperlocal VCSE organisations, as well as the wider Nature Neighbourhoods partnership organisations including Co-op and National Lottery Community Fund. Provide recommended improvements for future ways of working.
- c) provide key lessons for places creating Nature Neighbourhood local plans and outline key insights to influence local policymakers and funders.

Questions:

We anticipate that the study will address the following themes/questions:

- a. *Objectives:* To what extent has the Nature Neighbourhoods Project delivered against:
 - i. its original project outcomes

- ii. People's Plan for Nature recommendations for communities and local government and NGOs
- iii. National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action framework (see appendix 1)
- iv. [Co-op sustainability and community goals](#)

What has been the journey/route-map and deviations/challenges/successes along the way? What is now happening that wouldn't otherwise have happened without it?

- b. *Partnership*: How has the grant/donation and project helped to develop and solidify the relationship between partners? What effect has the inclusion of a Corporate Partner had on this? Has the Project created new ways for the three core Partner organisations to achieve or extend their charitable purpose and build organisational knowledge and experience of supporting diverse communities? How has it helped to grow knowledge, skills and capacity amongst partners and places in relation to community mobilising and partnering? Which parts of the Project offer are most and least valuable for partners and why? What worked less well/could be improved?
- c. *Sustainability*: How has the project supported the longer-term sustainability of local VCSE organisations? How do VCSE organisations experience the transition at the end of their grant and how could this experience be improved? What will continue post grant funded period? Is there any change in direction anticipated or any discontinuation of work? Why?
- d. *Engagement & access*: What were the barriers and enablers to engagement? To what extent has the Project helped to address galvanise VCSE leadership to take action on access, connection to nature and issues related to nature and climate? What have the NGO partners learned about barriers to access, and is this likely to inform their future practice? To what extent does the wider cohort of places feel 'bought in' to the Nature Neighbourhoods Project and the National Lottery Community Climate Action Fund network? What would make them feel more engaged in the future?
- e. *Scale-up/roll-out*: To what extent has the Project design enabled the project to prepare for scaling up and what lessons should we learn for any future roll out of Nature Neighbourhoods or community mobilising? What would we do more or less of in future? How should we structure it? What type of places/projects should we support? What are the most significant lessons for wider policy and practice? What are the key practical sets of actions or solutions that could be adopted by any place wanting to establish a Nature Neighbourhood action plan? What can the local and country governments and other organisations learn about how to better support and enable Nature Neighbourhoods?
- f. *Additionality*: Have there been any unexpected outcomes - both positive and negative? Has it been successful in other ways than originally anticipated?

We would welcome feedback on the questions listed above and remain open to developing these further with the successful applicant.

Key Considerations

In developing the evaluation, it will be important to consider the wider intended outcomes of the National Lottery Community Fund's Climate Action Fund (see Appendix 1). We have also done some initial thinking around 'Desired impacts' and possible 'Hypotheses' for this project as part of our reporting to Co-op (see separate document) [Nature Neighbourhoods Metrics - Co-op - Final.xlsx \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

Audiences

The outcomes of the evaluation will need to be accessible, engaging and relevant for a variety of different audiences including:

1. *Local Government officers.* The evaluation should support the capacity building workstreams of the project and provide inspiration for Local Government officers. Within local government we aim to engage senior policy makers, managers and directors, and practitioners in and beyond the green space sector.
2. *Project partnership staff.* As mentioned above, the Nature Neighbourhoods is a partnership project between RSPB, National Trust and WWF-UK. The evaluation should support the burgeoning knowledge base within these organisations on work with local communities. We envisage sharing outputs both with operational practitioners and high-level decision makers.
3. *National Lottery Community Fund – Climate Action Fund (CAF).* The evaluation will be instrumental in reporting back to our funders. Investment managers and other staff to whom we are responsible for reporting the progress and impact of the project are a key audience.
4. *The wider CAF cohort of community organisations.* The evaluation will be a valuable resource for peer-to-peer learning with other organisations that have received funding, as the project will provide key lessons for cross-third sector working in nature and climate action.
5. *Co-op Group and Members.* For Co-op the evaluation will be a vital way to report on the outcomes and impacts of the project to key stakeholders, from Senior leadership to Co-op members, helping them to deliver on both their sustainability and community objectives.
6. *The VCSE Organisations.* The evaluation ought to help VCSE organisations reflect on the successes and challenges of the project writ large, and provide insight for future work.

All of these audiences should be kept in mind when considering the accessibility and application of evaluation outputs (see below).

Methodology & outputs

A methodology for the work is open for consultants to propose. However, we anticipate that the work will include the following strands:

1. **Baselining** – what is the current state of knowledge, perceptions, practice and agency in nature and climate positive actions. Baselining should assess this amongst project partners, VCSE leaders, relevant local authorities and other third sector actors. *Note that the National*

Lottery Community Fund has its own baseline survey for CAF – how and when this data will be collected is still TBC, but we expect participation in this survey.

2. Data collection: Conduct primary qualitative data collection and fieldwork such as in-depth interviews, web-based surveys and qualitative and quantitative secondary data review and analysis e.g. from projects documentation such as evaluation reports and surveys, project reports, local area statistics, photo/video content, 'before and after' surveys to assess changes in behaviours/attitudes to nature and climate action.
3. Review point to identify emerging findings and any possible improvements to the support provided through the Project, and the way the funding partners work together, to make appropriate recommendations to ensure it remains responsive to the needs of the partners.
4. Presentation of findings for the audiences mentioned above, ensuring final materials are engaging, digestible, applicable, and relevant. We would like to see a plan for presenting findings in the early stages of the evaluation process, so that data collection and research can be informed by the intended outputs.
5. We would like to reserve a number of days' time (5-10 days) to allow for the consideration of topics that might arise throughout the process of the evaluation and wider project.

Outputs:

1. Interim report – at a natural review point to cover findings on progress to date and possibilities for improvement (max 30 pages)
2. Draft report – to include community case studies.
3. Executive summary (<10 pages) and a presentation of findings to a combined meeting of the project steering group and board.
4. Final report (max 30 pages)
5. Presentation slide pack of findings for end of project online conference

We welcome creative ways of presenting the findings, including visual reports, data breakdown, video and others. We would welcome a collaborative approach to working with the partner organisations to find the most appropriate formats for sharing findings internally and externally.

Budget

The budget available for this work is £50,000 incl. VAT.

25% of the budget will be paid upfront, 25% on completion of the interim report and 50% on completion of the final evaluation report.

Timescales

1. Tender: by mid Jan 2024
2. Tender submission deadline: 12:00 noon on 19th Jan 2024
3. Interviews held: week commencing 29th Jan 2024
4. Evaluation consultant selected: early Feb 2024

5. Evaluation framework design: Feb/Mar 2024
6. Baseline survey work commences: Mar 2024
7. Evaluation period begins, with interim feedback points: Mar 2024 – Sept 2025
8. Interim report delivered: January 2024 (max 15 pages)
9. Draft Evaluation report: June 2025
10. Final Evaluation Report delivered: August 2025 (max 30 pages)
11. Online conference: September 2025

Submission process

The tender response should include details of the following:

- Outline of your proposed approach to the monitoring and evaluation including details of methodology and proposed outputs – including how you will manage this as a UK-wide, geographically dispersed project.
- Description of your relevant experience and CV, including examples of at least two pieces of similar work you have carried out.
- Proposed budget breakdown
- Details of any matters or concerns not covered by this brief.

Proposals should not exceed 10 pages in length. Submitting a proposal more than 10 pages will automatically result in the rejection of the proposal.

We recognise one individual or organisation may not feel able to deliver all strands of this evaluation and are therefore happy to accept applications from a group of individuals or partner organisations. We will want one of these individuals or organisations to be identified as the lead contact.

Please submit proposals by email before the deadline of 12:00 noon on 19th Jan 2024 to the following contact:

Rory Crawford, Nature Neighbourhoods Manager: rory.crawford@nationaltrust.org.uk 07977 746 119

Appendix 1 – National Lottery Community Fund – Climate Action Fund (taken from CAF grantholder survey pdf guidance)

CAF Outcomes

For baseline survey, projects are asked to pick the top three CAF outcomes that align most closely to their own projects aims. These are:

- ☐ More people in communities are engaged in climate action¹
- ☐ More local organisations are engaged in climate action¹
- ☐ More local initiatives are engaged in climate action¹
- ☐ More businesses are engaged in climate action¹

¹ Engaged in climate action' may include (but is not limited to) seeking changes in people's awareness, understanding, feeling hopeful that change is possible, new skills, or climate-positive behaviour change, decisions, or social norms.

- ☐ Individual community-led climate action initiatives are connected, grow and develop
- ☐ Carbon emissions are reduced
- ☐ Carbon emissions are sequestered²
- ☐ There are social and economic benefits for people's quality of life and for their communities
- ☐ Climate action is fairer, more equitable, and responds to intersectional issues
- ☐ Local communities are more resilient to immediate climate impacts
- ☐ Something else? Please specify

Other elements being looked for by NLCF:

- 1) Case studies of projects that have focused on longer-term, wider change that goes beyond the project's direct work with your local community. We sometimes refer to this as 'system change'. Has this been a focus of your project this year?
- 2) We are looking for case studies of projects that have focused on longer-term, wider change that goes beyond the project's direct work with your local community. We sometimes refer to this as 'system change'. Has this been a focus of your project this year?
- 3) We are looking for case studies of projects that have focused on longer-term, wider change that goes beyond the project's direct work with your local community. We sometimes refer to this as 'system change'. Has this been a focus of your project this year?
- 4) Climate Action Focus: which policy areas did project activities focus on? Eg Transport; Energy; Food; Repair and reuse; Natural Environment; adaptation and resilience
- 5) Diversity of communities: They are interested in measuring the different characteristics of people that took part in the project activities. Ethnicity; Faith; disability; Other eg gender, socio economic, age, education, asylum and refugees etc
- 6) Measuring number of people 'new to climate change' and number of people (individuals/households) engaged in activities.
- 7) Delivery – long list of things that could be measured, we probably need to check list and decide what we want to measure. See 13.1/2 – includes spatial info eg m2 of areas
- 8) Carbon estimates

² Carbon sequestration refers to the capture and long-term storage of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere e.g. through tree planting. Carbon reduction, on the other hand, involves reducing the emission of new CO₂ into the atmosphere by decreasing the use of fossil fuels and implementing sustainable practices (e.g. recycling)

