

NATIONAL TRAILS.UK

A multi-method approach to habitat baselining National Trail corridors

Tender

Request for proposals (RfP)

Date RfP issued: 22nd September 2025

Submission Deadline: Proposals to be emailed to
hannah@nationaltrails.uk by 9am Friday 24th October 2025

We are the Protected Landscapes Partnership



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Association



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1. About the project

[National Trails UK](#) (NTUK) is the only advocate for the 20 National Trails across the UK. Together, we are working to make sure National Trails are truly accessible to all, delivering for people and for nature. With funding from the [Protected Landscapes Partnership](#), we lead the UK's first coordinated programme to unlock National Trails' potential as corridors for nature as well as people, the National Trails Nature Recovery Programme.

But the opportunity for nature recovery along the National Trails is not clearly understood, in part because there is no standard methodology for identifying habitats along the trail and assessing their condition to inform effective management. The National Trails Nature Recovery Programme is seeking the first step towards addressing this problem. But a one size fits all solution, or single standardised methodology will not be fit for purpose for the National Trails that vary greatly in their length, width, the habitats they cross, their organisational set up and available funding.

We believe this is an exciting opportunity to apply methods that take advantage of the unique nature of National Trail corridors as narrower and more easily accessible linear infrastructure. Methods that may not be possible at a National Park or National Landscape scale, however, still provide data that is compatible and comparable across these wider contexts.

NTUK is therefore seeking an innovative ecology consultant to develop an 'a la carte' menu of surveying options that can be trialled across the National Trails. This menu will provide options that can be used at scale i.e. for the full length of a National Trail or large sections, and by different users e.g. the public to trained ecologists. For the purposes of this work, we see the 'trail corridor' as the verge habitat, which in some cases will extend to the nearest boundary feature e.g. a fence or hedge, which can create corridors in the 10s of metres in width.

We are not trying to reinvent the wheel but take advantage of existing methods and tools that can be applied to the National Trail context. NTUK can direct the consultant to some key contacts who may help inform the list of survey approaches. The consultant will also provide recommendations on how the methods could be used in combination, what baseline data will need to be collected as a standard across them and how this will be integrated into the National Trails Nature Recovery Hub (ArcGIS app, currently in development) and other relevant open-source databases.

National Trails UK will use this report to inform a series of survey pilots in the 2026 summer survey season. This will subsequently inform a guidance resource for National Trail Officers & partners. In the long term, this will help:

- Enable on the ground delivery for people and nature
- Highlight the opportunity and associated level of investment required to deliver effective habitat management along National Trail corridors

2. Project timings, management, budget and deliverables

Table 1 shows the high-level timelines for the project:

Table 1. Timeline

Request for Proposals (RfP) issued	22 September 2025
Deadline for receipt of submissions	9am Friday 24 October
Completion of application review by panel made up of National Trails UK & Protected Landscape Partnership staff	w/c 27 October
If required, interviews with tender applicants	Between 1-4pm Tuesday 4 November
Application outcome communicated	By Friday 7 November
Contract agreement, due diligence and information governance complete	w/c 10 November 2025
Kick off meeting	w/c 17 November 2025
Delivery of first draft	w/c 26 January 2026
Delivery of final outputs and handover to National Trails UK staff	w/c 2 March 2026

Management arrangements

- 2.1 The 'Multi-method approach to habitat baselining National Trail corridors' contract will be held between the successful applicant and National Trails UK.
- 2.2 National Trails UK will be responsible for reviewing the application and managing the relationship with the client.
- 2.3 The successful applicant will be expected to provide regular status updates to the National Trails Nature Recovery Programme Manager and attend project meetings as required.

Budget

- 2.4 We anticipate that this work will be in the region of **£25,000** (including VAT and expenses). As outlined in Section 3, cost will be factored into the scoring criteria of the applications.

Deliverables

- 2.5 A clear & concise report (PDF) that provides:
- A list of recommended habitat surveying methodologies that are applicable to the long, narrow nature of National Trails. This could include (but not limited to) the use of desktop assessments, Phase 1, UKHAB, Rapid Habitat Assessments, citizen science apps, technology e.g. drones/360 cameras with machine learning.
Each method will include a:
 - Summary of the method
 - Skillset required to carry out method e.g. skilled ecologist, ranger, skilled volunteer, unskilled visitor
 - Month/season to carryout method & recommended re-survey frequency
 - Scale/length of trail the method can be applied to
 - Recommendations when to (and not to) use the method
 - Estimated cost
 - Recommendations on how, where and when the above methods could be applied in combination
 - A schema of baseline data that can be collected across these methods that integrates with the National Trails Nature Recovery Hub (ArcGIS app) & other relevant open-source databases
 - Recommended next steps for the 2026 pilots
 - Deliverables must be designed in alignment with emerging national principles for biodiversity monitoring^{1,2}, including those being developed through the 'Building a UK common evidence base for nature's recovery' Accord, to support consistency and interoperability across protected landscapes.

Required/Desirable Skills

- 2.6 Applicants must have a working knowledge of:
- Ecological principles
 - Environmental monitoring/surveying methodologies
 - GIS
 - Data standardisation and integration
- 2.7 It would be desirable for applicants to have knowledge of:
- National Trails and protected landscapes

¹ UKEOF (2024). Unifying principles for environmental monitoring. UK Environmental Observation Framework, Lancaster, UK. DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.14054886](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14054886)

² [“Byte-ing Back Better” – Introducing a Q-FAIR approach to Geospatial Data Improvement – Geospatial Insights](#) (accessed 19/08/25)

3 Your Proposal

Proposal Requirements

We are undertaking an open tender process by inviting suppliers to submit a **'Multi-method approach to habitat baselining National Trail Corridors'** proposal. Potential suppliers are required to submit a written proposal, providing the following information:

- 3.1 A brief overview of your organisation and team, including any information about track records of work in similar areas and any relevant qualifications (max 500 words).
- 3.2 Your proposed approach to this project, including a detailed statement of work (max 2,500 words).
- 3.3 Outline of proposed project management and risk management approach (max 500 words).
- 3.4 Your proposed timeline and key milestones for the project, including an indication of the days allocated to the assignment for both management and staff members. Setup time and any ethical approval/governance processes should be factored in.
- 3.5 Proposed budget, including VAT and travel expenses (if required).
- 3.6 A proposed payment schedule based on deliverables.
- 3.7 With your submission, please include (where possible) a link to your organisation or institution's latest Data Protection Policy.

Proposal assessment

- 3.8 Submissions will be reviewed by a panel of National Trails UK and Protected Landscapes Partnership representatives and will be judged against the criteria outlined in Table 2.
- 3.9 We have scheduled potential interviews with tender suppliers for the afternoon of **Tuesday 4 November**, if required. However, depending on the level of applications and suitability for the task, the review team might determine to appoint based on application (without interview). In this instance, we may reach out for further clarifying questions to aid in our decision making. This will be undertaken within the timeframe identified in Table 2.

- 3.10 Please note that assessment of proposals to this tender will be on perceived quality of service and demonstrable ability to meet the brief, but value for money is a selection criterion.

Table 2. Scoring Criteria

Proposal Criteria	Weighting
Details of the relevant experience of yourself or organisation in relation to the project	15%
Your proposed approach and methodology to undertake the project	50%
Your proposed timeline and key milestones for the project, including an indication of the days allocated to the project for both management and staff members (if applicable)	10%
Cost	25%

4 Proposal Submission Conditions

- 4.1 Your response to this RfP is provided on the basis that you consent to:
 - 4.1.1 National Trails UK carrying out all necessary actions to verify the information that you have provided; and
 - 4.1.2 National Trails UK requesting further information from you as part of this verification process or to clarify any element of your response that is not clear.
- 4.2 The information contained in this RfP and in any related written or oral communication is believed to be correct at the time of issue, but National Trails UK will not accept any liability for its accuracy, adequacy or completeness and no warranty is given as such. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by or on behalf of National Trails UK.
- 4.3 By issuing this RfP, National Trails UK is not bound in any way to enter into any contractual or other arrangement with you or any other party. You will not be entitled to claim from National Trails UK any cost or expenses that you may incur in preparing your response.
- 4.4 National Trails UK reserves the right to issue the response to any query raised by you to all tendering agencies unless you expressly require it to be kept confidential at the time the query is raised. If National Trails UK considers the contents of the query not to be confidential, it will inform you and you will have the opportunity to withdraw the query.
- 4.5 By receiving this RfP, you agree to keep confidential information obtained in it or sent with it or made available in connection with any further enquiries about its subject matter confidential. The RfP is being made available on the condition that the information contained within it is used solely in connection with the process to procure and establish a contract for the **'Multi-method approach to habitat baselining National Trail Corridors'** tender.

5 About National Trails UK and the Protected Landscapes Partnership

National Trails

National Trails are long-distance, multi-use routes of access through some of the UK's finest landscapes. Born alongside National Parks and National Landscapes from the post-war 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act and the 1967 Countryside Act (Scotland), they were founded on the understanding that connection with nature is essential to the health of people, society and the planet. As such, National Trails have set the gold standard for walking, cycling, and riding routes in the UK for over 75 years.

There are currently [20 National Trails](#) weaving through the UK's breathtaking landscapes, connecting city streets to countryside and rugged coastlines to historic landmarks. The latest addition of the King Charles III England Coast Path - the world's longest managed coastal trail - will expand the network to 5,500 miles.

National Trails are designated and administered by Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and NatureScot. Their designation means that they adhere to quality standards that set them apart from other public access routes. These standards cover a range of parameters including the condition of the path and route furniture; the quality and diversity of experiences offered by the Trail; availability of information about the Trail, including how to access and navigate it; enhancement of the surrounding landscape, nature and historic features; and its social and economic benefits.

In England and Wales, each National Trail is managed by a National Trail Partnership. The Partnership includes but it is not limited to the National Parks, National Landscapes, landowners and local authorities that the Trail passes through. Each National Trail Partnership employs National Trail Officer(s) responsible for the maintenance, enhancement, promotion and funding of the National Trail. In Scotland, management is divided between councils, National Park Authorities, and Rangers.

National Trails UK

National Trails UK is the membership organisation for the National Trails. We are the only dedicated advocate for the National Trails in England, Scotland and Wales, working with and supporting the National Trails. Together, we are working to make sure National Trails are truly accessible to all, delivering for people and for nature.

We work tirelessly to advocate for the preservation and promotion of National Trails. Our goal is to ensure that these trails are protected and accessible, so that everyone can experience the beauty and benefits National Trails offer.

We are committed to ensuring the long-term sustainability of National Trails. Through our initiatives, we strive to secure funding for ongoing trail maintenance

and improvement, protecting and restoring the natural environment while also removing barriers to access.

Enabled by funding via the Protected Landscapes Partnership, the National Trails UK Nature Recovery Programme seeks to support and advocate for National Trails as corridors for people and nature. In its first year (2024-25) the programme set out an approach for how National Trails can deliver for people and nature through the [National Trails Nature Recovery Toolkit VI](#) and the film series 'The Path to Nature Recovery', featuring projects along the [Pennine Way](#) and [King Charles III England Coast Path in Durham](#).

Website: <https://www.nationaltrails.uk/>

The Protected Landscapes Partnership (PLP)

The Protected Landscapes Partnership is a partnership between the National Landscapes Association, National Parks England, National Trails UK and Natural England. The Partnership aims to strengthen the capacity of protected landscapes to meet environmental and social goals in an era of rapid change and uncertainty through an Innovation and Evidence Hub. The additional capacity provided by the PLP allows Partners to maximise opportunities for innovation, technology and creativity and evidence-led progress towards common goals around nature recovery, climate leadership and connection and access to nature.

Website: <https://www.protectedlandscapespartnership.org.uk/>