



Evaluation Tender Brief:

Culture in Common is looking to commission an independent evaluator to lead on the evaluation of the New Forest's Creative People and Places (CPP) programme from September 2026 until April 2029. The budget available is £30,000 inclusive of travel and VAT.

We are looking for an experienced evaluator to revise and implement the evaluation framework for Culture in Common and support the delivery team in assessing and sharing the impact and learning from the programme. The evaluator will be positioned not only as someone who reports on impact, but as a learning partner supporting the ongoing development of Culture in Common. The successful candidate or organisation will interact with community champions/organisations of the New Forest, the delivery team and the consortium.

As an Arts Council England (ACE) funded CPP project, Culture in Common is committed to achieving the following outcomes:

- Engage more people from eligible places in a wide range of arts and cultural experiences as audiences and/or participants
- Empower communities to lead and shape local cultural provision
- To ensure excellence and relevance in both the engagement process and the creative and cultural experiences on offer
- To encourage partnerships between publicly funded, amateur, voluntary, community and commercial sectors, as well as collaboration across various cultural institutions
- To take an Action Research approach to community engagement in arts, creativity, and culture; learn what works best and share that learning

As an action-research programme CPP places as strong an emphasis on learning and therefore this should form a central strand of the evaluation. We want the evaluation to help us understand what is changing, why it is changing, and how we adapt our approach during the programme, rather than only assess successes and challenges.

About Culture in Common:

Culture in Common is a community-led CPP programme, funded by Arts Council England (ACE), which connects high-quality artistic work with communities in the New Forest, delivering a programme which remains both ambitious and rooted in local needs. We are committed to empowering communities to lead and shape a thriving cultural life across the New Forest into the future. We aim to strengthen the New Forest's shared cultural identity around the idea that it has 'culture in common'.

The programme launched in 2022 with £1.3 million investment from ACE for the first four years (April 2022 – March 2026) and with another £1 million secured, this plan covers three more years

(2026-29) of a 10-year vision, to spark widespread engagement in a sustainable, inclusive and locally inspired offer that makes culture as synonymous with the district as the iconic New Forest pony.

Culture in Common has consistently enabled more people in the New Forest to experience and be inspired by arts and culture for the first time, while deepening relationships with communities already engaged. We are exceeding our audience engagement targets every year and after 4 years have now reached more than 75,000 people.

The team is guided by our 'Community Anchors' and Consortium members: [Energise Me](#), [Creative Forest](#), [The Handy Trust](#), [NFDC](#) and [NFNPA](#). Our consortium blends arts, community engagement, heritage, physical activity and health expertise. We are all passionate about collaborating and building authentic relationships with New Forest communities.

The Culture in Common name is inspired by the ancient tradition of commoning which is still thriving in the New Forest and represents our ambition to unite people through a shared vision of arts and culture, which is driven by local people.

High-quality art together with the testing of community engagement models puts co-creation and the un-tapped potential of local communities at the heart of Culture in Common. This brief shows how our programming strategy works to reach unengaged local people in a variety of ways.

Our Values:

Our Community Panel explored the values for Culture in Common and expressed them as follows. When local people join one of our activities, we hope that they find it:

- **Accepting:** It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from or if you haven't taken part in creative activities before.
- **Accessible:** We want to make it easy for you to participate, by giving you the information you need and running events in accessible places that you can get to at convenient times.
- **Fun:** We aren't stuffy and boring - we want you to have a good time.
- **Inspiring:** We will support you to do things you haven't done before and meet people you wouldn't normally meet.
- **Of the New Forest:** The New Forest is a very special place. We want to connect activities to the landscape and heritage of the New Forest and share our collective stories.

Culture in Common's Programming Methodology & Framework:

Following extensive consultation our focus for the programme falls into six areas of work (with titles inspired by the New Forest commoners' calendar of activity):

FUZZING

Artworks and Projects that are in depth and time-limited with target groups. Mid-scale public commissions where artists co-create work with a local group (e.g. Gypsy Romany Travellers, Young Commoners, LGBTQIA+), which reflects the people, place, landscape or habitat. Final works might be presented as 'chance' discoveries ([Damerham Telephone Box](#)), events ([New Forest Pride](#)), exhibitions ([Growing Up Commoning](#)) or short films. Street art in schools or youth clubs, interventions at railway stations or shop windows - paths of discovery which will re-enchant a love of place and creativity in the varied landscape.

PANNAGE

Piggy-backing local popular outdoor events such as the Totton Lantern Parade, Port Maritime Regiment's Culture Day, Ringwood Carnival, Halloween Treat Trails, Pirate Day and more – making the local event organiser's dream come true by offering them a choice of high-quality walkabouts and outdoor performances, some using digital approaches, to enhance their event. Introducing new artforms to trusted local events, and developing the skills and networks of local potential creative producers.

THE DRIFT

Establishing and sustaining new festivals and programmes which take place or tour to the furthest reaches of the District, providing interesting and varied programmes bringing together all age groups and cultures. The 'Acting Up' rural touring programme, the Play on Words festival for new writers, potentially New Forest Pride, Comedy, Music or Storytelling festivals managed by local committees - all providing opportunities to see and experience high quality diverse performances, take part in workshops and competitions, talks and discussions in familiar and unusual spaces where they live, drawn by a passion for their favourite genres.

BURNING

Dramatic performance commissions – Motionhouse Dance's WILD at New Forest Show, Witchy White's Scare Maze in Hythe, installations or promenade performances through a woodland. Telling stories of historic characters or happenings, witches, myths and legends, national or international outdoor arts companies partnering with local amateur drama, dance and singing groups to re-create moments in history encapsulating a message for the future. All activities encourage co-design with local communities, whilst reaching as many people as possible across the New Forest.

HAYMAKING

Creative clubs - opportunities to participate, try something new with a professional facilitator and improve health and wellbeing with a creative group meeting regularly over a long period. With artforms requested by local residents, these small-scale creative clubs connect artists to communities in a friendly space, developing welcoming entry points for engagement and connecting people to participatory activity, whether they are young, old, active or with a life-limiting challenge.

ABOVE THE BROWSE LINE:

Training Programme for potential producers of the future. Nurturing new local event organisers, providing a user-friendly 'How to Guide to putting on Events' in addition to inspirational workshops from national leaders in the field of Creative Health programmes and more. Working with Secondary Schools and youth clubs across the District to facilitate the delivery of a Youth Arts Festival, Street Art and other projects designed and led by young people. We aim for the legacy of this programme to be year-round long-term development opportunities that empower people to shape cultural provision in the New Forest.

All activities encourage co-design with local communities, whilst reaching as many people as possible across the New Forest. We will champion democratic platforms and invite local people into meaningful two-way conversations, centring community voice in our processes.

About the Programme Evaluation:

The evaluation is guided by the three core research questions that ACE asks all CPP programmes to track their impact against:

- Are more people from places of least engagement regularly experiencing and inspired by arts and culture?
- To what extent is the aspiration for excellence of art and culture and excellence of the process of engaging communities achieved?
- What approaches are successful and what are we learning?

Culture in Common has an **Evaluation Framework** based on the CPP key questions as a baseline, but we also want to understand the wider impact of Culture in Common on people, communities, organisations and the cultural ecosystem of the New Forest.

In addition to the framework, we have a **Theory of Change** model for the programme, which was co-created in 2022 with a range of different stakeholders and went through minor revisions with the consortium in 2025. The ongoing task of the evaluation will be to monitor how well we are delivering to our anticipated outputs, outcomes and impacts.

The outcomes we are looking for from the programme are as follows:

- Local people are more engaged in local events and activities
- Local people have improved pride and a change in perception of the creativity and culture of the New Forest
- Local people have increased access to events
- Local people of different generations start to experience some 'culture in common'
- Local people who take part regularly have increased wellbeing/happiness
- Local people feel empowered to take the lead in organising arts & cultural activity and create experiences that inspire them to regularly engage as audiences and participants
- Arts & community organisations have a greater understanding of what matters to people in the New Forest, have increased community engagement skills and practice more co-creation
- Local partnerships are strengthened

The role of the evaluator in testing and refining the Theory of Change is vital. The evaluator should be able to challenge assumptions and identify where the programme is creating unexpected outcomes or where approaches may need to change.

Our consortium would like the evaluation of the impact of our work examined in three ways:

- Impact on individuals (confidence, wellbeing, participation, relationship with culture)
- Impact on communities (agency, voice, connection and ability to shape cultural activity)
- Impact on organisations/ ecosystem (capacity, partnerships, sustainability and legacy)

Having **community voice** present throughout, in transparent and well-supported ways, sits at the heart of the programme. As part of that, we're very interested in exploring how we can empower

local people to get involved in and take a lead on aspects of the insight gathering and evaluation for Culture in Common. The ambition is not only for communities to provide feedback, but potentially to help shape what success looks like, gather insight and interpret learning.

Our Programme Manager is leading a development programme for our panel of '**Community Anchors**', and we aim to bring the Evaluator in to work with them on some aspects of the programme evaluation. We are interested to explore how well Community Anchors are networked in their community, who is influencing cultural decisions, whether community leadership is increasing, and whether new voices are shaping provision.

In addition, a key priority moving forward will be to put more of our Community Engagement Strategy and training into practice by focusing on **more hyperlocal work in some of the lowest engaged areas**.

Creative Health is also important, and we would like to study arts for wellbeing in more depth, gathering baseline data at the start of our Creative Clubs to enable us to compare this with responses to the same questions at the end of a season's activity.

Case Studies development work is also key, creating a template for project strands, mainly for 'Fuzzing' time-limited projects or our Creative Health clubs. These will be shared publicly and also with Arts Council England.

Evaluation approach:

The purpose of the evaluation work is to provide reports based on evidence which allows the staff team and consortium to reflect on the effectiveness of CiC strategies and make informed decisions and changes as we progress on our journey.

We expect that our evaluation partner will apply varied research and evaluation methods which will be agreed by the Director and Chair of the Culture in Common Consortium. The evaluation must align with ACE frameworks for national evaluation of all CPP programmes.

We have a dedicated Programme Officer who manages the data and feedback forms collected from our events, projects and clubs, uploading feedback onto the ACE Illuminate platform and recording postcodes of our audiences/participants to deliver to Audience Agency at the end of the year.

The Culture in Common evaluator will be expected to submit annual reports to Arts Council England and also two of the four required short 'Quality' Impact and Insight Toolkit evaluations – [Please note the new guidance](#) which has different mandatory dimensions. Two of these can draw from the case studies required as part of this brief.

The evaluator will be required to:

- Review and refine our Evaluation Framework and Theory of Change Model in consultation with the Culture in Common Consortium & Team, ensuring that they align with objectives outlined in our 2026-29 bid and Business Plan and the ACE national framework for CPP programmes.
- Attend Team Meetings monthly to keep up to date with programming decisions and delivery.
- Attend occasional Culture in Common events, projects or clubs where possible to tie in with other commitments
- Work with the Team to revise or develop a suite of resources that are accessible, user-friendly and enable a consistent approach to gathering feedback and evaluation.
- Study the upcoming programme of activities and alert/prepare the programme team as to the nature of the feedback that needs to be gathered on each occasion.
- Hold training/focus group sessions once per year with our Community Anchors to inform and support them to collect feedback from our audiences and participants and share your analysis/learnings with them afterwards.
- Produce an interim report each year (April 2027 & April 2028) and a final 3-year evaluation report in April 2029 for Arts Council England and Culture in Common, including a conclusion and recommendations.
- Write up two projects per year as Case Studies (examples can be found in the Resources section of [Log in | Arts and Culture Peer Learning Programme](#)).
- Complete two 'Quality Evaluations' on the Impact & Insight Toolkit platform.
- Attend Culture in Common Consortium meetings twice a year, to provide regular reflection points, short insight updates or learning conversations intended to enable delivery to be dynamic and for changes and improvements to be introduced as the programme evolves.

What we are looking for:

- We expect that the evaluator will analyse data in a robust and rigorous manner to provide informative and high-quality reports and case studies.
- Work in a place-based way as much as possible, working with local knowledge and partners.
- Triangulate data from different sources (Illuminate, Audience Agency Reports, Census and Local Authority data etc.) to provide insights into the learning about the programme.
- Be formative in nature and reflect the action learning ethos of CPP, actively engaging with the CiC consortium and CiC team at regular intervals so that we continue to be responsive in our approach.

Submission Requirements:

Please provide a proposal outlining:

- Your approach to this brief - how you would plan to address the requirements outlined for the evaluation of this phase with an outline of your proposed workplan.
- A short statement outlining your experience, how it equips you to fulfil the brief and why you're interested in working with Culture in Common.
- A budget breakdown linked to this, including the proposed number of days.
- An outline of what support you might need from Culture in Common to ensure the successful delivery of this evaluation contract.
- Examples of previous relevant evaluation reports for similar projects.
- Two references

Please submit your proposal to Cicely Oreffo, Programme Officer cicely.oreffo@energiseme.org by the deadline date listed below.

For an informal discussion, please contact Jacqui Ibbotson, Programme Director, Jacqui.ibbotson@energiseme.org

Timescale

- Evaluation brief issued Monday 13th July 2026
- Deadline for applications, 12noon on Thursday 13th August 2026
- Interview date, Thursday 27th August 2026
- Awarding of contract, September 2026.
- Completion of Contract, April 2029.

Helpful links:

- [Creative People and Places | Arts Council England](#)
- [Our strategy | Arts Council England](#)
- [Home | Culture In Common](#)
- Culture in Common [Impact Report 2025-26 | PDF to Flipbook](#)
- [Illuminate](#)
- [Home - Impact & Insight Toolkit](#)