



Northumberland
Wildlife Trust

Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN)

Evaluation Consultant
Contract Brief



Introduction

Northumberland Wildlife Trust (www.nwt.org.uk/), the largest voluntary organisation dedicated to saving wildlife and wild places across Northumberland, Newcastle Upon Tyne and North Tyneside, wishes to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced contractor to deliver evaluation services for the Red Squirrel Recovery Network (RSRN) project.

Red Squirrel Recovery Network Project

The Red Squirrel Recovery Network project is an ambitious 5-year initiative funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), which aims to safeguard the long-term future for red squirrels in northern England and southern Scotland.

Led by Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT), in partnership with Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT), the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and Merseyside (LWT), Knowsley Safari and delivery partners in southern Scotland, the project will work at a landscape scale to bring about lasting change for red squirrels that would be lost in a decade without continuous and extensive conservation effort.

The project builds on decades of work by partners and volunteers to manage grey squirrels and monitor red squirrel populations and is part of a wider vision for a Wilder Britain and an ecologically resilient landscape.

Funding from NLHF will enable the Partnership to:

- Implement field trials for grey squirrel fertility control.
- Explore the potential impact of pine martens as a natural grey squirrel predator.
- Establish new activities to engage wider audiences within the region.

The total project budget for RSRN is around £6 million over 5 years (2025-2030).

This contract is for a specialist **Evaluation Consultant** to support the RSRN partnership to evaluate the impact achieved by the project.

Contract specification

A 'Theory of Change' has been established; this outlines the need for the project and sets out activities which will meet these needs and achieve change across the red squirrel range.

Within this, we have also identified new outcomes and success measures which we will monitor throughout the project to ensure we are working towards the intended change/outcomes/impact across a significant area.

These are:

1. More people will be aware and engaged

- Increase Friends of Red Squirrel membership
- Increase public support (evidenced through surveys in Y1 and Y5)
- More people reporting red squirrel sightings
- More people engaged in local groups

- More people saying they would like to visit sites where they can see red squirrels
- 2. More people have developed skills and are using them to take action**
 - Increase people taking part in skills training
 - Increase volunteers active within groups
 - Fewer groups reporting skills gaps
 - More people participating in spring survey
 - More people reporting red squirrel sightings
 - More early career roles supported and more people moving into careers in sector
 - 3. New audiences have benefited from connecting to nature and nature experiences**
 - More young people aged 13-21, refugees and asylum seekers, older people/carers, and people living in areas of disadvantage participate in nature connection activities
 - Across all target audiences, more people demonstrate increased connection to nature
 - 4. Red squirrels are increasing in number and distribution**
 - Reduce grey squirrels in some areas
 - Increase total area where grey squirrels are managed
 - Red squirrels recorded in some new areas
 - Red squirrel numbers increase in areas where they are currently present
 - 5. Red squirrel conservation is sustainable beyond the funded period**
 - Progress towards establishing fertility control as a viable option for grey squirrel control
 - Likely impact of pine martens better understood and can be predicted for next 5-10 years
 - Increase funding available for grey squirrel control
 - Legacy plan agreed by partnership
 - New ecological monitoring adopted and informing strategies for managing grey squirrels
 - Volunteer groups more diverse and more resilient

The Evaluation Consultant will support the partnership to review the Theory of Change, collate baseline data, agree methodologies to evidence success measures/change, and produce interim and final evaluation reports.

The Evaluation Consultant will support this by providing evaluation tools and resources, facilitating partnership discussions and helping to plan activities. However, it is recognised that the contract value will not extend to delivering evaluation activities.

It is also recognised that the evaluation will not capture the detail of all RSRN activities – what is needed is a strategic review of whether the agreed outcomes have been achieved, supported by evidence provided by the project.

The Consultant will deliver the following evaluation outputs:

Evaluation output	Timing	Budget
Review 'Theory of Change' with partnership	Within 3 months	£1,500
Collate baseline data (to be provided by project team)	Year 1: Within 3 months	
Provide tools/resources/support to project team to collect evidence of the RSRN project impact and outcomes	Ongoing: at least one meeting/workshop per year with project partnership team)	£2,500 per year (£12,500 total)
Act as a critical friend and support the RSRN partnership to learn from ongoing evaluation	Ongoing	
Provide interim presentations to project partnership, collating evidence collected so far and highlighting any recommendations for project legacy	Year 3: 2027-28	£2,500
Produce a final report which celebrates RSRN achievements, presents evidence of change and highlights learning for the future	Year 5: By March 2030	£7,500
Contribute to final celebration or dissemination events to share learning from the evaluation	Year 5: By March 2030	
Work closely with the RSRN Programme Manager and project partnership to ensure learning from the evaluation informs RSRN legacy planning	Years 4-5: 2028-30	
TOTAL		£24,000

The evaluation contract will include a break clause which will allow either party to terminate the contract after the interim presentation. It also allows for a review of the evaluation approach if needed.

Timescale & budget

The evaluation activity is expected to take place from early October 2025 to late February 2030, with the final evaluation report produced by the **31 March 2030**.

The total contract value is **£24,000 inclusive of all travel and other expenses**. VAT may be added.

The schedule for payment will be agreed after appointment.

Contractor selection

Qualified contractors are asked to provide the following as part of their tender submission:

- Tender proposal – to include outline of approach to delivering evaluation
- Number of days estimated to be needed for this project, cost per day and availability
- Proposed payment terms
- Contact details of two clients willing to provide references regarding the provision of similar services. References will only be taken up for shortlisted bidders
- Normal working location(s)

The Northumberland Wildlife Trust working in partnership with RSRN partners will select a contractor based on:

- Relevant experience
- Proposed approach to the work
- Value for money

The Northumberland Wildlife Trust may wish to interview shortlisted contractors during the week commencing 22 September 2025. Unsuccessful tenders will be notified by Friday 19 September 2025.

The National Lottery's Heritage Fund's document Evaluation Good Practice Guidance is available at [Evaluation good practice guidance | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#).

For more information, please contact Mike Denbury, RSRN Programme Manager at rsrn@northwt.org.uk or visit [Red Squirrel Recovery Network \(RSRN\) | Northumberland Wildlife Trust](#)

The following documents will be provided on request:

- RSRN Application Form
- RSRN Engagement Plan
- RSRN Conservation Plan
- RSRN Theory of Change
- RSRN Legacy Plan

Tender deadline

Tenders should be submitted in pdf or MS Word compatible format to rsrn@northwt.org.uk with the subject heading TENDER: RSRN Evaluation by 09:00am on **Monday 15 September 2025**.