

Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons

Enabling a
shared future
for all

Executive Summary

Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons is a landmark project that will conserve, enhance and broaden understanding of the cultural and natural heritage of commons and commoning in upland England, working in the Lake District, Dartmoor, the Yorkshire Dales and Shropshire Hills.

This project comes at a critical time when common land faces the biggest change in agricultural policy support for three generations, and when there is an urgent need to rectify past ecological damage and create resilience in the face of climate change. Commons are too small in number and in economic impact to register within national policy and planning, yet the landscapes and cultural heritage commoners manage are of disproportionately high value for biodiversity, water supply, carbon storage, historic environment, natural beauty and public access.

A system of commoning for the 21st century must be co-created to secure the authenticity of pastoral grazing systems alongside being responsive to current ecological and climate crises. This is what Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons seeks to do; build a nature rich and culture rich future for common land, commoning and communities

Working on the ground across 12 commons, we will ‘demonstrate by doing’ and so change attitudes and behaviours, build collaboration and bring people together. The projects we deliver at a local scale will demonstrate and influence how we can deliver positive change regionally and nationally. Sharing our learning amongst our partners and stakeholders within, between and beyond our four local areas will be a key outcome of this project.

Our Partnership Vision, developed as a result of our Commons Charter and individual Commons Visioning, is for **Vibrant, Thriving and Healthy Commons fit for the 21st Century**. Principally, our Partnership recognises that upland commons are important and valuable places for nature and for people, and for the public goods which they provide. If we are going to achieve the best outcomes for our commons, especially in a period of uncertainty, we need to understand different perspectives and passions, we need effective collaboration and we need trusted facilitation to promote fruitful discussion and build consensus.

The project has four central aims reflected in four thematic strands of activity:

- 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.

Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons will deliver 14 sub-projects across the thematic strands of **Collaboration, Resilience, Commons for All and Commons for**

Tomorrow. The strands have been designed to deliver the overall aims of the project and each sub-project will deliver a range of outcomes for heritage, people and communities. Our project proposals have been refined and developed during Stage 2 as a result of engagement, consultation and research, and to reflect the significance and special qualities of commons as well as the threats and opportunities we have identified.

Theme A: Collaboration

There is only one thing which makes upland commons different from any other piece of upland farmland and that is the collaboration intrinsic in the ancient tradition and practice of commoning. Securing and supporting this collaborative management is vital to the sympathetic management of commons and preservation of the heritage they hold. When collaborative management breaks down, land and communities suffer.

Collaboration includes three sub-projects:

- A1. Stronger Together - collaborative projects
- A2. Shared Spaces - commons infrastructure
- A3. Sharing the benefit - widening the Visions

Theme B: Resilience

If Common Land is to thrive, and a way of life is to continue, Commoners must have the skills and support they need, and policy must recognise how the grazing of Common Land works. The activities in this strand tackle these challenges.

Resilience includes three sub-projects:

- B1. Hill Livestock Health
- B2. Schemes & Skills
- B3. Commons Resilience Fund

Theme C: Commons for All

Most people have little knowledge of Commoning, or Common Land, including the millions who enjoy visiting our Protected Landscapes. The 'visiting public' miss the history and meaning of landscapes they explore. If more, and a wider range of people, engaged with Common Land and what it has to offer the public, the public could play a greater role in understanding, supporting and benefitting from Common Land.

Commons for All includes three sub-projects:

- C1. Enjoy - Interpretation programme
- C2. Learn - Learning resources and activities
- C3. Do - Activities and events programme

Theme D: Commons for Tomorrow

Multiple public benefits are provided by sympathetically managed Commons: rare habitats and species, ancient monuments, and conservation of soil and water. Yet where Commoning has declined, or common land not been adequately managed, these benefits are not realised.

Commons for Tomorrow include five sub-projects:

- D1. Carbon
- D2. Historic Environment
- D3. Habitats
- D4. Water
- D5. Biodiversity

Within the Commons for All strand there is a strengthened emphasis on outreach, both into urban areas surrounding our commons and in order to engage with new audiences for commons and commoning. This is as a direct result of our audience development work into missing audiences and some strong current policy drivers such as the Glover Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs.

A further significant development between Stage 1 and Stage 2 proposals is the desired extension of the Project timeframe to three and a half years (42 months) with an anticipated start in May 2020, and completion October 2023.

Our Common Cause: Our Upland Commons is a national partnership project. The broad-ranging and inclusive Partnership is convened by the Foundation for Common Land as the Lead Body, with the National Trust as the Accountable Body. The national Partnership represents a broad range of statutory, charitable and special interest organisations at a national and regional level with a stake and interest in commons and commoning. The multiple uses of common land are reflected in the Partnership,

The Project budget has grown at Stage 2 to £3,068,866. We have raised over £690,000 cash funding from our project partners, national and local Charitable Trusts and Foundations. This increased funding allows the project to do so much more to achieve our aims and objectives in supporting upland commons and commoning. We are extremely appreciative and immensely proud of the breadth of partnership support for the project which this funding demonstrates.

The project will be delivered by a core team of six people comprising:

- National project manager (0.8FTE)
- 4 x Area Project Officers (0.8FTE)
- Admin & Finance Officer (0.6FTE)

The team will be supported by a national Communication support contract worth £56,950 +VAT.

The Project team will be managed by the Foundation for Common Land Executive Director and will be hosted in partner offices. The Project Manager and Admin & Finance Officer will be employed by the National Trust with the Project Officers either employed by National Trust or one of the area protected bodies (as appropriate).

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FOUNDATION FOR
COMMON LAND

A gathering of those with a stake in pastoral commons and their future