



## Request for Proposal: Research & Innovation Consultant

The UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) is inviting proposals from consultants with expertise in research and coordinating cross-disciplinary groups to a) convene, manage and focus the activities of our Research & Innovation Group; b) develop and deliver a research study that contextualises the learning, approaches, and emerging practice of the DCMS-UKNC led Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage project and complementary initiatives; and c) formulate a suggested research agenda that will help to underpin future research activities.

The overall work will support a broader understanding of the growing role and positioning of UNESCO sites as pioneers for localising and testing innovative, participatory approaches for addressing global sustainable development challenges, both in the UK and internationally.

We welcome submissions for this opportunity from a range of profiles such as independent researchers or partnerships, practitioners, academics etc.

The anticipated budget ceiling for delivering this work is **£30,000** (including expenses and VAT).

We strongly encourage interested applicants to review the supplementary information at **Annex A** before submitting a proposal.

**Date:** 20th September 2024

### 1. About the UK National Commission for UNESCO

The **United Kingdom National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC)** is the focal point for all UNESCO-related matters in the UK and manages programmes in the UK that cover UNESCO's core themes of education, science (natural and human), culture, and communication & information. It also oversees and supports the network of UNESCO-designated UK sites, including Biosphere Reserves, Creative Cities, Global Geoparks and World Heritage Sites.

The UKNC has three Core Functions:

1. Support the UK government in achieving its objectives through UNESCO
2. Support UK society and communities to maximise the benefits of UNESCO's mission and programmes

3. Support UNESCO to be a competent and relevant UN agency able to deliver its mission and fulfil its objectives

While the UKNC is a constitutional part of the UK's membership of UNESCO, the UKNC is an independent organisation from UNESCO. For more information, please see [www.unesco.org.uk](http://www.unesco.org.uk).

## **2. About the Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage Project and the Research & Innovation Group**

Funded by HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund, [Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage](#) (CCUH) is a pilot project being delivered in partnership between the UKNC and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Taking a cross-sectoral and community-led approach, the pilot is working with government partners and stakeholders at three UNESCO sites to co-design, develop and test models of improved joint-working, alongside the production of new tools and templates that will help organisations to analyse and share climate-related data more effectively, and interpret its impact on natural and cultural heritage. The pilot builds on [research](#) by the UK and Canadian National Commissions for UNESCO (2022), which demonstrated that UNESCO sites are not only ideal test beds for developing participatory approaches for addressing the threats posed by climate change, but are also well-placed to support genuine, on-the-ground collaborative action with communities and partners that will help to realise sustainable development outcomes aligned with the [UN 2030 Agenda](#). Whilst the pilot will test approaches tailored to specific sites in the UK, it is envisioned that project results will be relevant, adaptable, and useful to places more widely both in the UK and internationally.

To support, contextualise and substantiate the learning from the pilot within UNESCO and beyond, the UKNC is establishing a Research & Innovation Group in 2024-25, which will comprise a broad range of expertise and cross-disciplinary specialisms. The Research & Innovation Group will include representatives from various academic institutions, researchers, funders and agencies, and will collectively explore how UNESCO sites can localise, identify, test and progress multiple innovative approaches to addressing 21st-century challenges.

The ambition is that this collaborative approach will also help to ground UK and international UNESCO sites within the broader move to nexus/place-based approaches to sustainable development, and will help to set a future-oriented and sector-wide research agenda for the next 5-10 years.

A more detailed background note and suggested further reading is available at **Annex A**.

## **3. Consultant Responsibilities**

The UKNC would like to commission a consultant to convene, manage and bring focus to the activities of the Research & Innovation Group, centering its work around the development and delivery of a research study and strategic agenda.

These research outputs will help to consolidate and contextualise emergent learning from CCUH and the UKNC's wider programme of related work, and will help to direct its future work exploring how UNESCO sites can advance solutions to sustainable development challenges.

The research outputs should be supported and informed by the knowledge and expert advice drawn from the Research & Innovation Group as well as broader cross-sector knowledge and literature, should build on the work of CCUH, and draw on the adjacent UKNC project, [Local to Global](#) (L2G, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund).

The work will need to be structured around an appropriate research design and methodology developed and documented by the consultant, which could include a qualitative, rapid literature review and thematic analysis; primary research with pilot projects and members of the Research and Innovation Group; and structured interviews/workshops with the network of UK UNESCO sites scheduled to participate in CCUH delivery in Spring 2025.

### **Key responsibilities of the consultant include:**

#### **3.1. Management of the Research & Innovation Group:**

**3.1.1.** Lead on the convening and coordination of a multidisciplinary Research & Innovation Group on behalf of the UKNC in close consultation with the Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage project team. We envisage this being achieved through the following activities, but flexibility will be expected in response to any emergent learning:

- Finalise and agree on a Terms of Reference and short-term work plan for the Research & Innovation Group. This should adopt a Task and Finish style approach to Group activity, aligned with and focused on delivering the research study and agenda (**see 3.2**), as well as identifying any complementary outputs or opportunities.
- Facilitate the development of strong and productive working relationships between the group's contributing members to maximise buy-in and potential opportunities for collaboration.
- Provide professional secretariat functions to the R&I group (virtual and in person as appropriate), including planning meetings and facilitation of regular group meetings. Meeting frequency is to be discussed and determined, but is expected to be as frequent as monthly.
- Provide regular written reports to the project team on the progress, risks, issues and opportunities emerging from group activities.

- Establish an appropriate monitoring and evaluation approach to support effective and timely knowledge sharing, ensuring that arrangements are consistent with, and contribute to, the Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage project's overarching evaluation framework.

**The anticipated budget ceiling for this element of the brief is £5,000 (including VAT and consultant expenses, but excluding R&I group member expenses).**

### **3.2. Conducting the research study and formulating a complementary agenda:**

- 3.2.1.** Undertake an updated analysis of available research and evidence, including the policy and practice landscape regarding the role of UNESCO sites in contributing to the fulfilment of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda; analyses should also be used to review and update the findings and recommendations from the UKNC's Sites for Sustainable Development Report (2022) and UNESCO policy literature/practice. This activity should also draw upon wider place-based approaches/nexus and participatory approaches to addressing sustainable development both in the UK and internationally (where appropriate), drawing on expertise and knowledge found within the Research and Innovation Group and further afield.
- 3.2.2.** Review current evidence and progress on the role of UNESCO sites from a selection of existing UKNC programmes and projects, including the ongoing Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage Project and Local to Global Project. This will include analysing practice from project pilot sites, research undertaken by project consultants, and data from visioning workshops held with the 58 physical UNESCO sites across the UK in Spring 2024.
- 3.2.3.** Work with and consult Research & Innovation Group members on analysing and reviewing learning from six proposed workshops with UK UNESCO sites in Spring 2025 (to be worked up by the Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage project team).
- 3.2.4.** Through this review, explore the strengths, weaknesses and best practice potential of UNESCO sites as contributors to sustainable development, the strength of the emerging evidence base (and where this could helpfully be enhanced), and potential future funding opportunities. This could also thematically analyse UNESCO sites' potential to provide the basis of a future research agenda, with the potential to expand on these thematic areas at possible conferences or events in 2025 (tbc).
- 3.2.5.** Propose and document practical ways forward for how the UKNC can progress the tools and resources it is developing across its projects for UNESCO and

non-UNESCO sites both in the UK and internationally.

- 3.2.6.** Propose and document practical ways in which we can build a national and international research agenda for the project and influence wider change based on UNESCO and UN principles.

**The anticipated budget ceiling for this element of the brief is £25,000 (including VAT and consultant expenses)**

#### **4. Summary of outputs**

The consultant will be required to produce a clear and concise written report in proficient English, which includes policy analysis, case studies, and recommendations for how UNESCO sites can further advance place-based approaches to addressing interconnected sustainable development challenges. The consultant will also be required to produce an executive summary and slide deck that will be published and shared with the public and external partners.

The final report and accompanying executive summary must provide endnote references for all facts and statistics used, which should be clearly detailed in the report's bibliography. Primary sources must be used wherever possible over secondary sources. For example, the consultant should seek to reference a statistic to its original report, not where it is cited second-hand by a report or on a website.

All final outputs should be in line with UKNC visual identity guidelines:

- Finalised Research & Innovation Group short term work plan and Terms of Reference (*anticipated by end of November 2024*)
- An interim report on the progress of the group activity (2-3 pages), including any future collaboration, research partnerships or funding opportunities identified (*anticipated mid-late February 2025*)
- A visual Conceptual Framework, a clear and concise written research report in English (including executive summary, case studies, and bibliography) and slide deck exploring the research questions set out in section 8 (*anticipated by mid-late of April 2025*)
- A 5-10 year research agenda/strategy for the UKNC alongside prioritised next steps and recommendations (*anticipated by mid-late of April 2025*)
- Finalised decks/presentation on findings for public consumption, delivered in line with UKNC visual identity guidelines (*by end of May 2025*)

## 5. Intellectual Property

All contract outputs, including the full research report, executive summary and all raw data associated with the research, will be the intellectual property of the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

Authors will be encouraged to communicate about the report externally with prior approval from the UK National Commission for UNESCO.

Members of the Research & Innovation Group will be recognised as contributing partners to the final published material.

## 6. Contract Management and Key Timescales:

We expect the appointed consultant to begin **w/c 21st October 2024**, with a view to an initial in-person convening of the Research & Innovation Group taking place in late November 2024.

The final research report and agenda **will be required to be complete by Friday 2nd May 2025**, ahead of completion of all other deliverables (slides/presentation aids) by **Friday 30th May 2025**.

The anticipated budget ceiling for delivering this work is **£30,000** (including expenses and VAT). The payment schedule will be as follows:

50% of the agreed contract value on signing of contract (*est. Oct 2024*)

20% of the agreed contract value on an interim progress report on the activity of the Research & Innovation Group (*est mid Feb 2025*)

20% of the agreed contract value on successful completion of the draft research study and agenda (*est. end of April 2025*)

10% of the agreed contract value on successful completion of all deliverables (*est. end of May 2025*)

The consultant will be managed by the UKNC Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage Project Lead.

## 7. Proposal Specification

Prospective consultants are asked to briefly outline a potential design and methodology (max 1,500 words) to answer the research questions set out below, as well as identifying the potential risks and challenges for the evaluation and how these will be managed.

This proposal should include a clear outline research matrix (to be further refined in discussion with the project team if successful), showing how each of the questions below will be addressed, including an outline of potential data sources and research methods.

The proposal should also summarise the skills and expertise that will be employed to help convene and coordinate the Research & Innovation Group to ensure successful engagement.

### **Research Questions:**

**1. What are the roles of UNESCO sites, both in the UK and internationally, in effectively localising sustainable development challenges, and supporting/trialling new interconnected/nexus approaches to addressing them?**

- Considerations could include:
  - investigating the wider role of cultural and natural heritage in responding to global challenges, and contextualising how UNESCO sites contribute to wider place-based approaches
  - how to situate UNESCO sites and their practice in multidisciplinary, systems-based approaches, and to support the greater recognition of their potential as testing sites within and across wider sectors
  - understanding and quantifying the value of UNESCO sites as enablers of place-based, collaborative approaches.

**2. What current factors restrain or enable UNESCO sites to effectively test new approaches and demonstrate their wider relevance and utility?**

- Considerations could include:
  - the optimal arrangements and structures needed to further position UNESCO sites as visible, viable and valued 'testing-sites' for both academic and policy-based research
  - The required conditions and/or further research needed to ensure learning and resources from the UKNC Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage Project have relevance and applicability within different policy/research environments (both in the UK and Internationally)
  - an assessment of how the characteristics and composition of research outputs can be optimised to support effective real-world adoption (research translation), and the degree to which 'scalability' is a useful measure of success within the context of localised adoption of practice.

### 3. What are the opportunities and limitations of data (including data science advancements) in underpinning approaches to sustainability in UNESCO sites?

- Considerations could include:
  - a review of major data science initiatives/approaches currently being trialled elsewhere with merit to UNESCO sites in support of addressing sustainable development challenges
  - an assessment of how variation in data access, data quality and/or technical capability at the local level affects a site's ability to understand, contextualise and adopt emerging research and/or practice

#### In addition to the above specification, proposals should include the following information:

- Your overall budget plan, including details of staff allocated to the work, including allocation of days across members of your team (if applicable), your daily charging rates and an outline of internal responsibilities and liaisons
- Your timescale for carrying out this work
- An overview of your relevant experience and qualifications related to this brief (this may be in the form of supplementary CVs or similar)

#### Proposals will be assessed by UKNC against the following points:

- To what extent does the proposal demonstrate understanding of the issues and social values related to the project brief?
- To what extent is the methodology set out in the proposal appropriate to the requirements set out in the brief?
- What level of relevant experience and qualifications does the applicant demonstrate in order to successfully complete the work?
- Overall value for money and financial viability of the quote

## 8. Submitting a proposal

Proposals should address the specification set out in **Section 7** of this brief, and be submitted by email to the UKNC Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage Project Administrator, Aisling Parrish ([aparrish@unesco.org.uk](mailto:aparrish@unesco.org.uk)) no later than **12 noon on Friday 4th October**.

Interviews with shortlisted consultants are expected to be held week commencing **14th October 2024**. The successful applicant will be expected to start work on the contract by **28th October 2024**.

For general enquiries, please contact the UKNC Head of Policy, Research and Communications, Matt Rabagliati ([mrabagliati@unesco.org.uk](mailto:mrabagliati@unesco.org.uk)).



## Annex A:

### Research & Innovation Consultant: Supplementary background information

Tackling interconnected 21st-century challenges will require people and organisations to work together in new and unprecedented ways. From the catastrophic natural and socio-environmental impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, to social issues such as the loss of indigenous knowledge and persistent inequalities, closer collaboration is needed at local, national, and international levels. Building on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by 193 Member States of the United Nations in 2015, new intersectoral or ‘nexus’ approaches are increasingly being recognised as necessary to break down silos and form new partnership and governance structures that are anchored in the principles of sustainable development.

This growing need to address complex challenges, both systemically and through place-based approaches, has been recognised by many international organisations, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).<sup>1</sup> Many international organisations are also increasingly recognising the critical role of cultural and natural heritage – as well as the arts and creative industries – in localising global challenges and enabling transformative climate action.<sup>2</sup>

As a United Nations agency, UNESCO has started centrally positioning its global network of designated sites (Creative Cities, Geoparks, Biospheres, World Heritage Sites) as ‘living laboratories’ or ‘testing sites’ for new participatory approaches to tackling sustainable development challenges. In its Medium-Term Strategy and Budget, UNESCO states that:

*‘The Organization will further promote and strengthen the unique opportunities offered by UNESCO’s designated sites (Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO Global Geoparks and natural World Heritage sites) to combine scientific and local knowledge and participatory governance with a view to reduce loss of biodiversity, conserve geodiversity, improve livelihoods of local communities and enhance social, economic and cultural conditions, including employment opportunities for youth.’<sup>3</sup>*

UNESCO sites represent some of the world’s most important cultural and natural heritage, covering over 10 million km<sup>2</sup>, and are home to over 300 million people. In the UK, they cover more than 14% of its geographical landmass, and the UKNC’s analysis suggests that approximately 20% of people in the UK live in, or near, a land-based UNESCO designation (12.8 million people). Whilst UNESCO sites are at risk from multiple global challenges, research by the UK and Canadian Commissions for UNESCO has demonstrated that they also contain attributes that allow them to meaningfully generate and share solutions that can help to mitigate, adapt and tackle these very issues.<sup>4</sup> This includes their role as multi-stakeholder partnerships that bring together communities, businesses, and agencies

<sup>1</sup> In its latest Synthesis Report (March 2023), it advocates for the interdependence of climate, ecosystems, biodiversity and human societies, in designing better mitigation and adaptation solutions for people and the planet.

<sup>2</sup> Emirates Declaration on Cultural-based Climate Action (2023) [Emirates+Declaration+on+Culture+Based+Climate+Action\\_FINAL.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Medium Term Strategy, 2022-2029 (2022), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378083>

<sup>4</sup> UK and Canadian National Commissions for UNESCO, Sites for Sustainable Development (2022), [unesco.org.uk/unesco-sites-for-sustainable-development/](https://unesco.org.uk/unesco-sites-for-sustainable-development/)

through shared management plans. These arrangements aim to collectively protect and conserve their shared cultural and natural heritage and address growing interconnected social, economic, and environmental sustainable development challenges. However, the research has also shown that UNESCO sites often lack the human and financial capacity to bring partners together to systematically address these challenges actively.

The UKNC has successfully leveraged significant project funding to develop this baseline research further. This includes the [Local to Global \(L2G\) Project](#) funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and the [Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage Project \(CCUH\)](#) funded by HM Treasury and co-led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Through L2G, the UKNC has been working to build a resilient and effective network of UNESCO designated sites across the UK and beyond in three key areas: audience development, stakeholder mapping and inclusion; fundraising and financial sustainability; and digital transformation and web development. Through the CCUH pilot, public and private bodies and their data are being brought together within three UK UNESCO sites, to develop and test models of improved joint working, alongside new approaches and data tools to share and analyse climate-data effectively. The project also aims to explore collaborative approaches at the national level and to understand how these arrangements can best support effective and impactful place-based decision-making. Collectively, the project aims to enable the development of cross-cutting solutions to the impacts of climate change and to develop shareable tools and models for natural and heritage sites worldwide.

To support, contextualise and substantiate these programmes within UNESCO and beyond, the UKNC is establishing a Research & Innovation Group in 2024-25, comprising a wide range of expertise and cross-disciplinary specialisms. The Research & Innovation Group will consist of various academic institutions, researchers, funders and agencies, to explore how UNESCO sites can localise, identify, test and progress multiple innovative approaches to addressing 21st-century challenges. This will also ground UK and international UNESCO sites within the broader move to nexus/place-based approaches to sustainable development, and set a future-oriented and sector-wide research agenda for the next 5-10 years.

**In support of the delivery of this tender, the following programmes may wish to be consulted:**

UKNC programmes/initiatives of possible interest:

- Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage Project
  - Research and Innovation Group Participants
  - Collaborating Community (UK Government Departments)
- Network of UK UNESCO Chairs
- Local to Global project (and three pilot sites)
- Selected network of UNESCO sites in the UK and internationally
- UNESCO Secretariat, Paris,
- Other National Commissions

Non-UKNC programmes or initiatives of possible interest

- AHRC place-based approach

- British Academy Place
- English Heritage / World Monuments Fund Coastal Connections programme
- National Trust, 'A Climate for Change'
- Historic Environment Forum, 'Heritage Responds'
- Imperial College London, Climate Cares Centre
- V&A's 'Culture in Crisis' programme

### **Suggested further reading**

- British Council (2023): [The Missing Foundation: Culture's place within and beyond the SDGs](#)
- The British Council (2023): [Strategic Literature Review: Climate Change Impacts on Cultural Heritage](#)
- 'Group of Friends of Culture-based Climate Action at the UNFCCC' (2023): [Global Call to put cultural heritage, arts and creative sectors at the heart of climate action](#)
- Historic England (2021): [Championing Heritage, Improving Lives.. Historic England Future Strategy](#)
- National Lottery Heritage Fund (2023): [Heritage 2033 Strategy](#)
- UK Government (2023): [UK Government Risk Resilience Framework](#)
- UK Government (2024): [Partnerships for People and Place](#)
- UK National Commission for UNESCO (2020): [National Value of UNESCO to the UK](#)
- UK National Commission for UNESCO and PRAXIS (2021): [Heritage and Our Sustainable Future series of talks and reports](#)
- UK National Commission for UNESCO (2022): [Sites for Sustainable Development](#)
- UNESCO (2022): [Mondiacult Declaration \(2022\)](#)
- UNESCO (2023): [Cultural Heritage in the 21st Century. Call for action. 'the Spirit of Naples'](#)