

UK and Ireland Lakes Network (UKILN) Charitable Structure Review Consultant Brief

1. Introduction

The UK and Ireland Lakes Network (UKILN) is looking for a consultant to evaluate and recommend an effective not-for-profit structure that supports our long-term goals, legal obligations, and funding opportunities.

Why Now?

UKILN has operated successfully under a Charitable Trust model, but as we grow and seek to expand our impact, this structure is proving restrictive. We need a more flexible and sustainable model that allows us to:

- Access a wider range of funding sources beyond our current limitations.
- Strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, funders, and community groups.
- Ensure long-term resilience in how we operate, plan events, and influence freshwater conservation efforts.

This review is driven by key recommendations from the UKILN Legacy Meeting of Minds Co-Design Report and the UKILN Charitable Structure Review. These reports highlight the need for a structure that:

- Better supports engagement and community involvement.
- Provides the resources and governance needed for long-term sustainability.
- Aligns with best practices from similar environmental and peer-to-peer networks.

See table below for the priority list of recommendations UKILN is seeking to progress with.

Table 1 - UKILN Recommendations from “Meeting of Minds” Evaluation Report

Recommendation (as numbered in the report)	UKILN priority for this contract
2. create a Multi-Level Engagement Structure	TBC – review strategic direction
3. engage in earlier strategic event planning	TBC – review strategic direction
4. strengthen community voices for future event development	High – how do we shift outcomes for stillwaters without widespread support?
5. enhance event accessibility	
6: establish a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion framework	
7. develop supporting engagement infrastructure	TBC – review strategic direction
8. strengthen evaluation and knowledge sharing	TBC – review strategic direction
9. prioritise development of a long-term resourcing model	Critical to resilient and sustainable activity and impact

Why This Scope?

The consultant's work will focus on:

1. Refreshing UKILN's strategic direction – ensuring our vision, mission, mandate and business model align with our ambitions.
2. Assessing viable governance and funding models – evaluating structures that give us greater flexibility and access to funding while remaining legally compliant.
3. Developing a clear transition roadmap – identifying the steps, risks, and opportunities in shifting to a new structure.

UKILN faces a chicken-and-egg challenge: the funding we can access depends on our structure, but our current structure limits our ability to secure diverse funding. This review will help break that cycle, identifying the best approach to unlock new opportunities while maintaining our core values and mission.

Now is the right time to take action. Without change, we risk missing opportunities for growth, funding, and greater impact in protecting and managing freshwater environments across the UK and Ireland. This structured review will ensure that UKILN's governance and financial foundation are fit for the future.

2. Scope of Work

The consultant will be responsible for the following key areas:

Phase One: Refresh mission, business plan and non-profit structure

1. Facilitate review/refresh of UKILN mission statement, vision, mandate and strategic objectives and Operation
 - Review/refresh the mission statement, vision, mandate (what is “the gap” and options around future UKILN role), and strategic objectives for UKILN. Consult with the UKILN Management Team and conduct other engagement with key stakeholders (one-to-one conversations etc). There is need to define the space that UKILN fits into the context of other freshwater-focussed groups and how they function and reach their audiences. Drawing on best practice from other sectors similar types of peer-to-peer networks. Also review how other similar organisations have gone about reviewing where they best fit to avoid competition, fill a gap and promote collaboration, and ultimately increase impact. See supporting table of likely organisations/bodies/groups that participation could be drawn from (Appendix 1). Requirement for the Management Team and a group of key stakeholders in an in-person meeting, with online input, to test the outcomes of this preliminary review. The final output of this element is a key milestone that needs to be shared and agreed by the UKILN Management Team.
 - Assess the strengths and limitations of UKILN's current Charitable Trust model in the light of the recommendations in the Evaluation Report and the [Esmee Fairbairn Report on organisations working to restore freshwater](#)
 - Evaluate how the structure impacts governance, financial management, and external partnerships, and vice versa

2. Assess available funding and income options
 - Review of funding and income sources that meet refreshed UKILN strategic objectives and potential operational scope.
3. Facilitate development high-level business plan for the next five-year period
 - Using the outputs of 1 and 2 above, facilitate discussion with UKILN Management Team representatives to agree the scope
 - Provide a template and outline costs
4. Evaluate Alternative Not-for-Profit Structures
 - In the light of 1-3 above, conduct a comparative analysis of viable legal structures, including:
 - Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) – Foundation and Association models
 - Registered Charity
 - Community Interest Company (CIC)
 - Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG) with Charitable Status
 - Any other models?
 - Provide an assessment of governance, financial compliance, legal obligations, and operational flexibility for each option.
5. Identify Best-Fit Model for UKILN
 - Short and punch summary of the refreshed vision, strategic objectives, business plan and most suitable structure based on UKILN's strategic priorities, funding ambitions, operations, and partnership needs.
 - Outline key governance and financial implications for the proposed structure.

Phase Two: Stakeholder Engagement and Testing

1. Engage Key Partners and Stakeholders
 - Test the feasibility and compatibility of all of the above recommendations with UKILN's partners/representative stakeholders.
 - Gain UKILN agreement on the preferred option.
2. Develop a Transition Strategy
 - Provide a step-by-step roadmap for transitioning to the new structure, including legal registration, governance setup, financial planning, and compliance.
 - Define the timeline, key milestones, and resource requirements for implementation.
 - Identify potential challenges and mitigation strategies.

Phase 3: Final Report and Transition

1. Final Reporting & presentation UKILN Management Team
2. Assist the transition to the preferred non-profit structure
 - Support for registration and Charity Commission requirements

3. Deliverables

Phase One: Mission, Business Plan, and Non-Profit Structure Review (suggested report between 10-30 pages, plus appendices)

1. Refreshed UKILN Mission Statement, Vision, Mandate and Strategic Objectives – A documented and agreed-upon vision, mission, mandate and strategic direction for UKILN.
 2. Evaluation Report on the Current Charitable Trust Model – An assessment of the strengths and limitations of UKILN’s existing structure, including governance, financial management, and partnership impacts.
 3. Funding and Income Review Report – A summary of potential funding sources aligned with the refreshed strategic objectives.
 4. High-Level Five-Year Business Plan – A template with outlined costs, strategic priorities, and an implementation framework.
 5. Comparative Analysis of Alternative Not-for-Profit Structures – A report assessing various governance models (CIO, CIC, CLG, etc.), including their legal, financial, and operational implications.
 6. Recommended Best-Fit Legal Structure for UKILN – A clear, evidence-based recommendation with a short summary of how it aligns with UKILN’s goals and funding potential.
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Phase Two: Stakeholder Engagement and Testing

7. Stakeholder Engagement Report – A summary of consultations with UKILN partners, including feedback on the proposed structure and governance model.
 8. UKILN Agreement on Preferred Governance Model – A documented decision on the recommended structure following stakeholder engagement.
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Phase Three: Transition Strategy and Implementation

9. Transition Strategy & Roadmap – A step-by-step guide outlining key actions, milestones, risks, and mitigation strategies for transitioning to the new structure.
 10. Final Report and Recommendations – A comprehensive report summarising all findings, recommendations, and next steps.
 11. Presentation to UKILN Management Team – A final presentation summarising the outcomes and proposed transition plan.
 12. Support for Legal Registration and Compliance – Assistance with the registration process and meeting regulatory requirements (e.g., Charity Commission filing).
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Additional Deliverables

13. Project Timeline with Key Milestones – A structured plan aligning with UKILN’s deadlines.
14. Regular Progress Updates – Interim reports or check-ins to keep UKILN informed of project status.

4. Consultant Requirements

- Expertise in non-profit/social enterprise governance, charity law, and organisational structures in the UK and Ireland.
- Experience in advice and logistical assistance for environmental or membership-based organisations on governance, business planning and funding models.
- Strong stakeholder engagement and facilitation skills.
- Expertise in guiding organisations on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

5. Delivery Timeline

- Phase One: Facilitate the refresh of mission, vision, strategic objectives, business plan and transition to a different non-profit structure – May-September 2025
- Phase Two: Stakeholder Engagement & Testing – October 2025
- Final Report, Presentation & Transition Support – December 2025

6. Supporting Documents – please email info@ukandirelandlakes.org for copies

1. UKILN Legacy Meeting of Minds Co-Design Report
2. UKILN Charitable Structure Review
3. UKILN Charitable Trust Deed
4. Blank contract template

7. Budget and Application

Interested consultants should submit a proposal that is deliverable with a budget that does not exceed £12,000 (including VAT, if VAT registered):

- A proposal outlining their approach to the project, with a detailed breakdown of how they would approach Phases 1-3 in the Scope of Works and complete the Deliverables.
- Relevant experience and case studies of similar work.
- A full breakdown of fees and estimated timeline.
- Suggest any specific added value they can provide.

8. Evaluation

Each proposal received will be evaluated on :-

- the quality of the proposal to deliver the Scope of Works.
- Demonstration of the consultant’s relevant skills and experience
- Total cost and added value
- Ability to meet UKILN’s timescale in section 5: Timeline

9. Submission and procurement timeline

- Deadline for applications: 12:00 (midday) 7th May 2025
All final submissions to be sent by email to info@ukandirelandlakes.org
- Confirmation of preferred consultant: 21st May 2025
- Kick off meeting: Fri 23rd May

10. Contact and queries:

Any queries regarding this work or to discuss further, please contact

Dan Hoare UKILN Chair, c/o dan.hoare@broads-authority.gov.uk

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Appendix 1.

Groups from which to draw representatives to gather insight to inform the review

Stakeholder Type	Comments
The missing	Not yet identified (unknown unknowns)
International contacts: Global Nature Fund EU FutureLakes project	
Community led initiatives and partnerships E,g SW Lakes Trust / Rivers Trusts with significant Stillwater interest including Lough Carra Association Wildlife Trusts	
Catchment stakeholder assemblages (CaBA in England, Lawpro in Ireland, Forever Lough Neagh project (National Trust) etc)	
People’s assemblies Civic initiatives Citizenship initiatives (e.g. Jon Alexander’s Citizenship community) Community activists	

Young people Skills / future people interests	
Local Authorities including national park authorities	
eNGOs with wider geographic – RSPB, National Trust, the Rivers Trust	
Business: Tourism Outdoor leisure providers Transport Farming / estates / representatives / supply chains Consultancies Engineering contractors / construction Innovative technologies Food supply chain Supporting & dependent industries – finance / legal etc	
Navigation / boating / sailing	
Wild swimmers	
Angling / fisheries	
Heritage, culture and arts	
Governmental bodies and regulators	How do this at 5 nations level?
Water companies	Operational / Strategic / Climate adaptation?
Public health	
Industry bodies e.g. CIWEM	
Funders e.g. Esmee Fairburn	
Academia and research e.g. CEH, FBA, Cranfield social impact specialists	
Other networks (from environmental and wider sectors) Ecosystem Knowledge network GFI RRC	