

East of England

Landscape Enterprise Network

Informational Manual 2024

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Background and Context

Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) is a system for organising the buying and selling of ecosystem-service outcomes such as water quality improvement, flood risk management, resilient supply of ingredients, carbon reduction in supply chains, carbon sequestration or biodiversity. The parties who seek and co-fund the delivery of these ecosystem-service outcomes are called ‘demand’ side organisations.

Outcomes are delivered through the implementation of land management measures. Typically, it is farmers and land managers (the ‘supply’ side) who can implement these measures and deliver the outcomes sought by the demand side.

LENs has been active in the UK since 2018, with 2024 marking the fourth trade in the East of England. The inaugural partners in Trade 2021 were Anglian Water, Cereal Partners UK and Nestle Purina. Affinity Water, Cargill and West Northants Council joined in Trade 2022 with PepsiCo joining in Trade 2023. British Sugar and Nestrade join for Trade 2024.

The network is facilitated by Resilient Landscapes East of England – a Community Interest Company created to run LENs East of England.

An introduction to Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs)

[Landscape Enterprise Networks \(LENs\)](#) develops markets for ecosystem services, to restore the natural resources we depend on. Ecosystem services are the benefits (e.g. water quality, flood mitigation, crop production) enjoyed by society. Ecosystem services are underpinned by natural assets e.g. soils, habitat, a stable climate. When these natural assets degrade, associated ecosystem services fail, creating risk for all organisations (public and private) and people who depend on them.

There is growing awareness of societal and organisational dependence on ecosystem services. LENs matches organisations with the foresight and motivation to restore and safeguard the services on which they depend, with those who can restore and improve these services – typically farmers and land managers.

LENs provides a process for building networks of market opportunities around ecosystem services, each involving a consortium of buyers (e.g. businesses, utilities, local authorities), and a consortium of land management enterprises (e.g. farmers, land managers).

LENs aggregates both the ecosystem service outcomes desired by the demand parties, and their associated funding. LENs invites land managers in the appropriate areas to submit proposals that will deliver those ecosystem service outcomes. Land managers select measures from a list agreed by all parties or can submit their own ideas. Farmers submit their proposals through an online portal, called NatureBid.

Farmers (the suppliers of ecosystem services) work through a Supply Aggregator, an intermediary between demand parties and farmers/land. This could be a grain merchant, an eNGO or another organisation which has a strong network of farmers.

The Supply Aggregator collates proposals from multiple farmers into a single proposal for the demand parties to consider.

Your Supply Aggregator is the *organisation from whom you received this document*. All communications should be handled through your Supply Aggregator.

LENs is neither grant based nor philanthropic. LENs results in commercial, contracted transactions between buyers and sellers. There are clear and defined specifications to achieve the outcomes of interest to the buyers, with agency for land managers to deliver in a way, and at a price, that suits the farm business. Prices are quoted by land managers as part of their proposal and, if the proposal receives interest from funders, may be negotiated before a final price is agreed.

In addition to procuring specific ecosystem service outcomes, demand parties wish to promote a more general transition to more resilient and more sustainable land management practices. LENs seeks genuine change in the landscape over the long term, with projects operating around the UK and in Europe. To date, over £8m worth of measures have been contracted through LENs projects since 2021. LEN operates a trade annually.

Submission of a proposal does not guarantee acceptance of a proposal in full or in part by the demand parties. Historically, the value of proposals received has exceeded the available budget. As a result, not all proposals are able to progress to contract.

Farmers/land managers who are unsuccessful are encouraged to re-apply in subsequent trades, if approached and invited by their supply aggregator to do so.

Outcomes of interest

The ecosystem (environmental) outcomes of interest to the demand parties in 'Trade 2024' are:

- Reduction of carbon emissions in supply chains
- Carbon removals (sequestration)
- Improved soil health
- Flood risk mitigation
- Reduction of risk to water quality
- Reduction of risk to water resources
- Increased biodiversity
- Delivery of 'regenerative agriculture' practices
- Growing communication networks around 'regenerative agriculture'

Non-ecosystem outcomes of interest are:

- Resilience / security in supply in supply chains of wheat and sugar.
- The scale up of regenerative agriculture practices across the agricultural landscape.
- Development of a farm plan for the next 3-5 years to illustrate how each farm business will continue to build in resilience through 'regenerative agriculture' methods.
- Sharing of experience and knowledge between farm businesses with regards resilience and 'regenerative agriculture'.
- Attainment of 'Advanced' level in the Nestle farm Assessment tool (Nestle businesses only).
- Demonstration of how farm businesses are leveraging UK gov schemes (ELMS/SFI and CS) alongside LENSs to maximise and optimise beneficial impact on farm.

Proposals that address at least two outcomes are preferred; the more co-benefits (e.g. multiple outcomes) that can be achieved, the stronger the proposal will be. The demand parties are keen to see "next level" practices where possible.

Supply Aggregator Role

The Supply Aggregator is an intermediary between demand parties and farmers/land managers, a full description of their remit is described below.

Process Overview

1. Farmers and land managers are asked to submit measure proposals to the Supply Aggregator for delivery of measures which return the outcomes of interest above.
2. Farmers and land managers, supported by Supply Aggregators or advisors on their behalf, will develop a farm plan detailing the direction of travel in terms of the farm's adoption or development of regenerative agriculture practices.
3. Measure proposals should include the measures (practices) the farmer would like to deliver, on which land, for how long, and at what price. Measures should be priced based on an understanding of implementation cost as well as the number of outcomes achieved by the measure.
4. Measure proposals will be developed and submitted online using NatureBid – a spatial mapping tool allowing farmers to design and price different measures on specific parcels of land. **A link and password for NatureBid will be provided by the Supply Aggregator.** A user guide for NatureBid will be included in the NatureBid portal.
5. The Supply Aggregator will review proposal submissions from farmers/land managers during the proposal period. At its discretion, the Supply Aggregator may contact farmers to discuss various elements of each submission, for example to flag where a proposed price is an outlier (either high or low), or where greater efficacy might be achieved through adjustments to proposed measures. Ultimately, the Supply Aggregator has sole discretion on which measures are passed through to the demand parties.
6. Once the proposal period has ended, the Supply Aggregator will collate all proposals for submission to the demand parties.
7. New for Trade 2024, the Supply Aggregator is being asked to prepare a narrative to accompany the aggregated measures. The narrative should include:
 - a. an overview of the total proposal
 - b. how it meets the outcomes of interest
 - c. an overview of advice provided to farm businesses at proposal stage.
 - d. as far as possible, how ELMS/SFI and or CS, are being leveraged alongside LENS to maximise and optimise beneficial impact on farm.
 - e. Copies of a 'farm plan' for each farm included in the proposal. This will be a simple .xls sheet, provided by LENS EoE.
8. The Supply Aggregator will also collate the farm plans to form a narrative around the farms it services.
9. The demand parties will consider the overall collated proposal submitted by the Supply Aggregator alongside the collated farm plans. The objective is to reach a set of measures at a price that is right for all parties. To that end, the demand parties may discuss and negotiate the measures and prices proposed with the Supply Aggregator. This process will be brokered by Resilient Landscapes East of England.

10. The demand parties will communicate to the Supply Aggregator which measures they wish to procure, who will in turn inform farmers. Procurement of measures will be managed under contract.
11. MRV Providers will contact farmers to arrange the data collection period, before preparing the report to be shared with the funders and farm.
12. The Supply Aggregator will manage delivery and verification of measures with individual farm businesses/land managers.
13. The Supply Aggregator will manage payments to farmers on provision of evidence that a measure has been completed.

Measures

The LENS demand parties wish to procure ecosystem service outcomes by funding the delivery of key 'measures' or practices on the ground. The LENS East of England Technical Guidance – developed by LENS and LENS partners in consultation with the demand parties – lists those measures and provides a specification for each.

There are 3 categories of measure:

A - In-field options – measures which generally apply to specific field areas and which are generally incorporated into rotations. Some of these measures are agreed on a one-year term, while other measures are contracted over a longer contract term.

B - Capital items – measures which are permanent and involve a higher capital cost of implementation, e.g., hedgerow planting, or the purchase and shared use of specific equipment. Most capital measures will be contracted on a multi annual basis e.g. 5 or 10 years.

C - Innovation items – measures of a land managers own devising which do not appear elsewhere in the list of measures. Innovation items offer a space for land managers who know their land best, to suggest measures which will deliver the benefits sought by the demand parties.

Some measures include annual maintenance requirements. Farmers proposing these measures will need to specify both implementation and maintenance costs in their proposed price extending over the term of the contract period. (See Maintenance section below and see the Technical Guidance document for more detail).

Measures have been drawn from credible sources and are selected against a reasonable weight of evidence of the efficacy of each measure to deliver the outcomes required. Measures have been developed by LENS and LENS Supply Aggregators, in consultation with the demand parties.

Measures are curated to deliver the outcomes of interest to the demand parties in a given trade area. Not all demand parties work in all areas, therefore the measures available differ in different trade areas, depending on the outcomes of interest relevant to the demand parties in any given area.

Maintenance

Some measures are required to be maintained annually, for the duration of the contract term. Measures longer than a 1-year term typically need to be either:

- maintained each year e.g. creation of new woodland has a cost of whips and planting in year 1, followed by annual costs to maintain (e.g. suppress grasses) for the term of the measure, or
- repeated each year for the duration of the contract term, e.g. reduced cultivation must be conducted every year for at least 4 of the 5-year term.

In NatureBid, and in contracts, the term “Maintenance” is used to reflect both conditions above - i.e. both maintenance in the true sense of the word, and repeat annual delivery of a measure.

Applicants proposing measures which include “maintenance” (both definitions above) will be committing to maintaining the measure in an operational, effective and beneficial state, or repeating the measures each year, for the course of the contract term. When pricing these measures in the NatureBid platform, applicants will, in addition to entering an initial ‘Implementation Cost’, need to include a figure for follow-on ‘Maintenance’ (both maintenance or repeat annual delivery). The Maintenance cost should be one figure for the combined ‘maintenance’ cost of the measure, over the full term of contract and NOT the maintenance cost per year.

The contract term per measure, and whether maintenance is required, is specified in the Technical Guidance document, where applicants will find further information on how to present pricing for “maintenance”.

Additionality

Given the demand parties are *procuring* specific ecosystem service outcomes, the outcomes sold by applicants must be ‘additional.’ That is, the outcome must be only generated as a result of the funded measure and would not have happened anyway.

Example: If an applicant already grows a cover crop on 30 ha of land, the applicant *cannot* apply to LENS to cover the ongoing cost of those 30 ha, because it is happening already and would not therefore be additional. The applicant *can* apply for funding to grow an additional 20ha (e.g.) of cover crops, or for a *different* measure (e.g. reduced cultivation) on the same 30ha.

LENS cannot be used to as a source of income to fund existing practices - this is not additional. Applications are additional and valid where an applicant wishes to go further or faster in terms of their existing sustainable/regenerative/resilience practices.

Given demand parties are *procuring* ecosystem service outcomes, the environmental outcomes resulting from LENS-funded practices will be included in the annual accounts and sustainability reporting of the demand parties. LENS does not turn these outcomes into

credits for sale. The farm entity can also account for the outcome generated in for e.g. the farms own carbon accounts.

Given rules surrounding the accounting of greenhouse gases, and other environmental outcomes like biodiversity, farmers/land managers may not use LENS-funded activities to create or sell carbon, biodiversity or any kind of credit or benefit that is sold or given to any other party. This does not mean that the benefit is ‘taken away’ from the farm business who can still account for the outcome in any farm sustainability accounts, but the benefit cannot be given away or conferred to another 3rd party e.g. Agreea.

See the MRV section in the Technical Guidance for more information.

Who can submit a proposal?

If you have been contacted by the Supply Aggregator, you will be able to submit a proposal. If you have been contacted by a party who *cannot* confirm if they are a confirmed Supply Aggregator, you will not automatically be able to submit applications through LENS but should contact george.hayes@3keel.com

2024 Timeline

The NatureBid platform will open for proposals on 19th January and close on 28 February 2024. Supply Aggregators will work with farmers and land managers during this period to develop proposals. Demand parties will review proposals in spring with a view to contracts being signed as soon as possible thereafter (May).

How long do agreements last?

Contracts may include multiple measures. Each measure may have a different ‘term’ or duration. The LENS East of England Technical Guidance document details the term length for each measure. In general, there is a mix of 1 and 5 year in-field measures, as well as longer-term (3, 5 or 10 year) capital and infrastructure measures. The contract will last the longer term of the included measures. E.g. if 2 measures with 1-year and 5-year terms are agreed, the contract will last 5 years.

Where capital items and infrastructure items are agreed, works must complete within 12 months of the date of the agreement. In-field options must be carried out or established during the first 6 months of the agreement unless the requirements of the measure stipulate otherwise.

Terminating agreements early:

In certain circumstances it may be possible for farmers/land managers to end an agreement early by written notice to the Supply Aggregator. The process for early termination is detailed in the contract. Please discuss any potential termination with the Supply Aggregator before acting.

Payment

Unless otherwise agreed, payment is made after submission of the relevant verification and claims materials. Verification materials include before and after photos and receipts for bought in goods and services as a minimum, but may include more, depending on the

measure. Detail of verification materials for each measure can be found in the Technical Guidance document. Claims materials include an invoice from the farm business to the Supply Aggregator along with a record (in the LENS .xls claim form) of the land parcels over which the measure has been implemented.

For measures that require maintenance over a period of years, an initial 'Implementation' payment is made in the first year once verification and claims materials are submitted evidencing the completion of the implementation stage (e.g. functional field margin buffer strips are created). 'Maintenance' payments are made annually thereafter, on verification that the relevant maintenance work has been completed.

In specific instances where initial capital outlay is high, the first-year implementation payment may be made at least partially in advance of completion.

Funds will be routed through the Supply Aggregator who will make payments to farmers/land managers.

General Applicant Responsibilities

Responsibilities are defined and governed under contracts provided by LENS. Responsibilities of applicants submitting proposals include but are not limited to the following:

- Compliance with all relevant legislation in relation to implementation or maintenance of measures. This includes, but not limited to, health and safety at work, environmental permitting and disposal of contaminated waste legislation.
- Avoiding damage to existing features of wildlife value, such as priority habitat.
- Obtaining any necessary licences, consents or planning permission as required.
- Maintaining measures in a functional state for the term of the measure, ensuring that it continues to meet the specification given.
- Allowing access to the representatives from the Supply Aggregator, LENS or MRV provider, for monitoring and verification purposes upon reasonable notice.
- Ensuring that contracts are legally transferred to the new occupier if the land is sold or tenanted.

Regulatory compliance and other funding mechanisms

The demand parties cannot fund measures that should already be undertaken by the farmer/land manager in compliance with regulation. This includes Farming Rules for Water; SSAFO (Storing Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) Regulations and Cross Compliance; the Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) regulations and any other relevant regulations.

Applicants are responsible for securing any consents or permissions required prior to undertaking capital and/or infrastructure work.

Double funding is not permitted: the demand parties cannot fund measures on a parcel of land where those same measures are already funded through other mechanisms such as Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), Countryside Stewardship, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) Greening: Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs) features, Countryside Productivity Scheme or any other grants schemes. Proposals for *different* measures on the same parcel of land are permitted.

Accessing LENS alongside SFI payments

With recent updates to the Government Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), LENS is evolving to complement SFI wherever possible to optimise funding potential for Farmers and landscape scale restoration. This guidance document outlines the options that LENS offers in the context of available public funding at a measure specific level and the practical process that farmers can expect to go through in LENS trade 2024.

Key points:

- Growers are encouraged to access both SFI and LENS funding where appropriate. SFI and LENS funding can both be accessed to fund different activities across a grower's farm.
- As per table 1 below:
 - Some measures may be funded by either SFI or LENS, not both.
 - One SFI measure can be enhanced by LENS.
 - Some LENS and SFI measures do not overlap, meaning you can apply for funding regardless of involvement in the other scheme.
- Note that the current LENS rules stipulate that the grower may not access both LENS and external funding for the same activity on the same piece of land in a given year.
- SFI now provides non-competitive funding for several 'regen ag' farming practices.
- LENS is a competitive scheme, so funding is not guaranteed.
- LENS provides funding and support for a wider range of regenerative agriculture practices, including more advanced measures.
- LENS allows for innovative, bespoke measures, tailored to your specific farm and requirements.
- LENS offers extra support from Supply Aggregators from farm planning to measure implementation.

SFI & LENS interventions breakdown:

There are 12 measures (included in table 1) where the SFI and LENS schemes interact.

In each case, a measure cannot be implemented on the same parcel of land, using funds from both SFI and LENS together. Only one source of funding is permitted to avoid double funding.

The SFI measure can however be funded on one parcel of land, and the LENS measure funded on a different parcel of land.

However, there is one instance where a SFI intervention can be enhanced by LENS: SFI SAM 2 can be funded by SFI, with a **top up** from LENS A54, on the same parcel of land to enhance the measure. Specifically, SFI SAM 2 includes the use of a two species cover crop. LENS can provide top up funding to allow a four species cover crop mix to be used. In this case, the farmer should apply for the LENS measure 'SFI Top Up - SAM2 Cover crops + 2 species' alongside the 'Multi-species winter cover crops' SFI measure.

All other SFI and LENS interventions (not included in table 1) can be funded regardless of involvement in the other scheme.

Farmers who wish to access SFI with LENS top-up funding should discuss potential LENS value-add options with their Supply Aggregator.

Table 1 stipulates the SFI and LENS measures that interact this year.

Area	SFI action	LENs measure	SFI funding	either/or	
				LENs funding	SFI with LENS top-up funding
Soils	SAM2 - Multi-species winter cover crops	1 - Establish cover crops in the autumn - 1 to 3 species mix	X	X	X
	SAM3 - Herbal leys	42 - Herbal Ley	X	X	
Hedgerows	HRW2 - Manage hedgerows	20 - Manage hedgerows to benefit wildlife	X	X	
	HRW3 - Maintain or establish hedgerow trees	19 - Restore hedgerows	X	X	
Integrated pest management	IPM2 - Flower-rich grass margins, blocks, or in-field strips	8 - Plant grass or wildflower strips in or around arable fields	X	X	
	IPM3 - Companion crop on arable and horticultural land	41 - Companion cropping	X	X	
	IPM4 - No use of insecticide on arable crops and permanent crops	50 - Pesticide (herbicide, insecticide, fungicide) reduction approaches excluding mechanical weeding	X	X	
Nutrient management	NUM2 - Legumes on improved grassland	4 - Introduce or increase areas of legumes in grasslands to reduce inorganic fertiliser	X	X	
	NUM3 - Legume fallow	3 - Grain legumes before a main/cash crop with reduced fertiliser rate	X	X	
Farmland wildlife on arable and horticultural land	AHL2 - Winter bird food on arable and horticultural land	9 - Plant wild bird seed or wild bird/wildlife cover mixes	X	X	
Buffer strips	AHL4 - 4m to 12m grass buffer strip on arable and horticultural land	16 - Retain uncultivated uncropped unsprayed 6m watercourse/hedgerow buffers on arable fields	X	X	
Low input grassland	LIG1 - Manage grassland with very low nutrient inputs (outside SDAs)	7 - Manage species rich or semi-improved grassland	X	X	

Note: Before applying for LENS funding, the farmer should make sure they understand the implementation requirements for LENS measures as stipulated in the LENS 2024 Technical Guidance.

The LENS process for integrating LENS and SFI measures on farm:

LENs aims to provide tailored support to farmers looking to access both public and private funding. Supply Aggregators (SA) in the LENS programme can help to develop a plan that suits you and your farm. Farmers are welcome to access external advice on this topic as well. The process farmers in LENS can expect to go through is detailed below:

- Farmers in LENS, with SA support and guidance develop an integrated farm plan in year 1.

- Farmers can consider the outcomes they are looking to achieve over a 3–4-year period.
- The farm plan informs which measures could be applied for over the following years, considering a mixture of public and private funding options.
 - Measures attainable through SFI can be funded in this way.
 - Measures building on/not included in SFI could be funded through LENS measures.
- Implementation of LENS and SFI measures with SA support.
- See additional MRV guidance in the LENS Technical Guidance for MRV requirements.

LENS is looking to create more opportunities for farmer innovation, knowledge sharing and network building, alongside measures funding. Farmers are encouraged to consider both SFI and LENS funding options, to find the solution that works best for them, with LENS looking to support farmers to do this.

Monitoring, Reporting, and Verification (MRV)

There are two elements to MRV:

- Verification of Measure Delivery – i.e. proof the measures has been implemented. Applicants must supply the required ‘Delivery Verification’ for all measures when making payment claims. Typically, this includes before-and-after photos, receipts for bought in goods or services and any regulatory consents required. This may include additional verification undertaken by the Supply Aggregator (e.g. satellite confirmation of cover crop establishment).
- Verification of Measure Outcomes – quantification (as appropriate) of the outcome of a measure. An MRV delivery specialist will be used to provide ‘Outcome Verification.’ Applicants will not need to perform this verification themselves, nor pay for it, but will need to make data and field access available to the MRV delivery specialist.

See the Technical Guidance document for more detail on the MRV process.

Permits and Consents

It is the applicant’s responsibility to gain the necessary permits and consents prior to commencing any work. All works must also comply with other relevant environmental legislation.

Some of the measures listed pertain to works on or around water courses and may therefore require permits or consents. It is *not* necessary to have gained approvals before submitting the proposal in NatureBid. It *is* necessary to have gained all consents and permits before works are begun.

For more information see the Technical Guidance document.

Communications

In addition to general communications around the project, the demand parties will wish to develop case studies, share pictures, etc; they will work through the Supply Aggregator for any requests of this nature.

Where to get help

Questions and requests for support relating to any part of the process should be directed to the Supply Aggregator in the first instance. The Supply Aggregator will in turn be supported by Resilient Landscapes EoE.