## Market Engagement Event

The market engagement event is an opportunity for delivery bodies to hear about Defra's requirement to create a Nature Markets Centre of Excellence (CoE) for stakeholders engaging with nature markets.

There is an opportunity to raise questions and provide feedback about the approach to market via a live Microsoft Teams Q&A and a questionnaire available here. We encourage you to complete the questionnaire after the market engagement event and by the 10th April 2026.

The event will take place on 1st April 2026 at 2.30pm until 4pm via Microsoft Teams. Please register your interest by 25th March 2026 here. Once registered, you will receive a Microsoft Teams link at least 1 working day before joining the event. At the event start time, please join the meeting on mute and with your camera off.

### Introduction

Defra's Nature Markets and Investment team leads work to grow private investment in nature recovery across England by developing the policy, market infrastructure, and investment conditions needed for a nature-positive economy. With the UK among the world's most nature-depleted countries, scaling both public and private finance is essential to reverse decline, meet Environment Act targets, and capture growing economic opportunities in nature markets, where the UK is already seen as a leader.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies now provide a national framework for prioritising action, while programmes such as Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund (NEIRF) and Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) have mobilised investment and revenue into nature recovery. They have also produced valuable market-enabling resources including financial models, legal templates, toolkits, and business case methodologies.

However, significant barriers remain: a fragmented and small project pipeline, limited long-term technical support for local partnerships, high transaction costs, gaps in project development capacity, skills shortages in designing measurable nature interventions, and insufficient engagement with buyers and investors.

To address these challenges, Defra intends to establish a Nature Markets Centre of Excellence (CoE, final title is to be agreed) with the aim of removing barriers to participation.

The CoE will act as a focal point for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and building supplier-buyer relationships. We would also like to explore the opportunity for a self-sustaining model after an initial Defra-funded period of up to three years.

### The requirement

Defra requires the appointment of a delivery body or consortium to deliver the functions of the CoE across four inter-related work packages. Please note, Defra reserve the right to amend, add or withdraw all or any part of the requirements presented.

| CoE Work Packages | Objective | Functions | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|
| **A: Methodologies, resources, templates and tools** | Building on existing spectrum of resources and best practice, develop and maintain consistent, high- | Provide tools, templates, methodologies, scalable project models, contracts, | Reduction in transaction costs for individual projects; standardised |

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| | quality material, guidance and tools to act as the single source of truth or central repository for nature market actors | legal and financial templates, case studies and other learning products | approaches created and adopted |
| **B: Capability Building and Learning** | Build long-term capability through targeted learning, policy translation, and support for emerging market needs, including addressing and filling skills gaps | Deliver learning events: policy and regulation workshops, rapid-response sessions, and specialist or focussed training to address skills gaps | Builds resilience and adaptability in the market; helps stakeholders navigate complex and evolving policy landscapes; addresses skills gaps |
| **C: Network and Collaboration** | Create networks across all nature market stakeholder groups, forums, and mechanisms, connecting with all existing networks and partnerships across the UK, to spread lessons learned and accelerate scaling | Host and coordinate a national stakeholder community designed for knowledge sharing, scaling and replication, bringing together supply and buy side stakeholders | Enables collaboration, peer learning, and trust-building across the market |
| **D: Market Intelligence and Data** | Strengthen understanding of market size, trends, and barriers through robust insights | Produce data collections, analysis, dashboards, and "State of the Market" reports | Provides transparency and evidence for investment decisions |

Interested parties should note these are high-level outlines of the requirement and additional views on the work packages and what they could include are welcome.

## Target Stakeholder Groups

The CoE is intended to serve the following stakeholder groups across nature markets, with a focus in England but with consideration of how audiences in devolved nations will be reached. The delivery body or consortium should demonstrate how their proposals will reach these audiences effectively, such as:

- Market shapers: local planning authorities, standard setters, crediting programmes, and market regulators
- Buyers: corporates, utilities and infrastructure developers, property developers, financial institutions, and public sector bodies
- Sellers and supply-side actors: project developers, landowners, farmers, land consultants, and brokers/intermediaries
- Investors: public sector, private investors, corporates, philanthropic foundations, financial institutions including development banks
- Assurance and validators: auditors, validation and verification bodies, accreditors, and rating agencies
- Other market intermediaries: brokers, trading platforms, registries, retailers, traders/fund managers, habitat banking platforms, information providers, and legal advisors

- Other groups: market experts/consultants, NGOs, ecosystem market networks, professional bodies, local communities, and the general public.

## Essential requirements

The delivery body or consortium should collectively demonstrate the following essential requirements:

- Framework and methodology design, including ability to build, test, and refine standardised approaches, templates, and models
- Technical writing and documentation, producing clear, authoritative guidance and toolkits
- Legal, environmental and financial literacy, with expertise in contracts, financial models, and compliance requirements relevant to nature markets
- Quality assurance and governance
- Learning design, facilitation, and delivery, with a track record in creating and delivering learning materials and event planning and delivery tailored to diverse audiences
- Policy translation and interpretation, converting complex regulation or policy into practical guidance
- Network building, active stakeholder engagement, and community onboarding and management
- Data collection, analysis, dashboarding, and insight communication
- Sector knowledge and market insight: understanding of land management, nature markets policy, practice, understanding of nature market actors, and the BSI Nature Investment Standards
- Multimedia production: ability to produce or oversee videos, diagrams, and animations
- Strategic communication: skilled in adapting content for different stakeholder groups
- Innovation in approach, and track record delivering new approaches
- A vision of how the CoE could, after the funding term concludes, become a sustainable resource with reduced/no Defra funding.

## Delivery

Delivery of the requirement calls for a deep understanding of the current status of nature markets, and appreciation of existing tools, evidence, practice initiatives and networks on which the CoE should be developed (this includes drawing from outputs from NEIRF, LINC and other nature market initiatives) to deliver value for money and impactful outcomes.

Therefore, the delivery body or consortium should include or be formed of partnerships with the many existing players in nature markets – this could include but is not limited to:

- Green Finance Institute (Green Finance Institute)- an independent organisation working with governments internationally, and partnering with financial institutions, corporates, NGOs, policymakers, academics and civil society experts, to create and scale innovative solutions that deliver practical outcomes for communities and economies.

- Ecosystems Knowledge Network (Wellbeing and prosperity for everyone through a healthy natural environment - Ecosystems Knowledge Network)- knowledge-sharing network that enables over 4,000 people to lead the way in the stewardship of land, water and nature throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- Network or partnership collaborations such as Nature North (Home - Nature North), Natural Capital East (Natural Capital East) and the BSI Nature Investment Standards hub (Homepage - Nature Investment Standards Hub).

As part of a competitive exercise we will invite proposals from interested parties which set out how the requirement will be fulfilled, including how the proposal will build on existing evidence, resources, market initiatives and the work of existing players.

Delivery of the requirement may involve a single organisation to lead a consortium or to manage sub-contractors for all work packages through which the collective programme of works is delivered through transparent governance and effective project management with clear demonstration of efficiency and cost effectiveness.

We invite organisations to consider the relationships therefore needed to deliver all the work packages, roles and responsibilities, and the decision-making processes. This should include clear structures for communication and escalation for issue and risk management across the delivery of all work components.

Suppliers should consider means by which the provision of the above will be sustained following the conclusion of government support, e.g. the design of membership fees, paid access mechanisms or funding from other sources.