



Evaluation Report for the Skell Enterprising Landscape Project

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Executive Summary

The Skell Enterprising Landscape project aimed to explore how businesses in Ripon and along the Skell Valley could come together to invest in landscape outcomes in which they have a common interest such as flood management and silt reduction. This would be trialled using an adapted version of the Landscape Enterprise Network model (LENs). The LENs model is a system for organising the buying and selling of ecosystem functions. In the context of the Skell Valley, it connects the tourism businesses along the valley and in Ripon with the farmers and landowners upstream to improve the resilience of the landscape and local economy.

The project was developed and delivered by the National Trust, Nidderdale National Landscape, the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and North Yorkshire Council. North Yorkshire is recognised for the quality of its landscape and the LEP and North Yorkshire Council were keen to develop pilot projects to explore the role that the landscape plays in a successful local economy. The Skell LENs was identified as a pilot project first by the LEP strategy in 2018 and then the Defra Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme in 2023. The project was finally delivered, in part, under the North Yorkshire Council LINC programme which ran from October 2023 to March 2025.

The LENs model has some key stages in its implementation. First the business community along the Skell Valley must come together to agree key landscape outcomes of interest to their businesses. These would be captured in business cases which set out the financial benefits of investing in the landscape. This then sets the demand side of the model. The farmers would then be engaged as suppliers of the landscape outcomes which could include Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures to reduce flooding downstream or works to benefit nature. An initial trade would then be brokered. This is a complex process involving auditing options and requirements, agreeing how budgets and outcomes are split between businesses, establishing a platform for the trade and then conducting the trade and formalising agreements between the businesses and farmers. A budget was included in the project to pump-prime the first trade.

The project was not delivered in full. The trading part of the LENs model was not implemented and this meant that the model was not fully tested. However, there were some key learnings from the pilot:

- The LENs model was a complex concept for the project team to understand and there was a lack of capacity and experience within the team of delivering a LENs model or other green finance initiatives. Specialist consultancy support was costed into the project budget, but this was hard to commission due to procurement requirements around National Lottery Heritage Fund grant funding. During the development phase it was anticipated that 3Keel, the owners of the LENs model, would tender for the work but they advised the available budget was no longer sufficient for them to support delivery of the project.
- The structure of the local economy in Ripon and along the Skell Valley was identified as a challenge during the development phase of the project. The local economy is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) who had been hit hard financially by the Covid pandemic, cost of living crises and high energy prices. Funding was built into the project plan to pump-prime the first trade to overcome this. Even with this pump-priming there are still challenges around what is known as demand aggregation when working with small businesses. This is developing a set of shared outcomes agreed by all businesses such as flood mitigation works or improvements to water quality. These shared outcomes then become the basis for the

trade with the suppliers, which is a fundamental element of the LENs model. The interviews with 11 local businesses suggested that they would only be willing to put in small amounts of funding and would expect other partners and the local community to also contribute.

- This business engagement around landscape outcomes and the role of the landscape in the success of their businesses was one of the most valuable outcomes of the pilot project. It raised awareness among the 11 local businesses interviewed of the ecosystem services provided by the local landscape, such as flood mitigation. The businesses were also open in sharing their views on the concepts behind the LENs model such as the value placed on landscape outcomes and ecosystem services. The key findings from the business engagement were:
 - Recognising the value of natural capital requires a shift in attitude from the traditional concept of ownership.
 - Education and engagement are vital if this change in mindset is to be addressed.
 - With suitable engagement, businesses could be persuaded to contribute small amounts for flood mitigation.
 - There is a need for communication and co-operation between landowners who manage sections of the river course.
 - Engagement with the community at large will enhance engagement with the business community.
- It was decided by the project team not to engage with the landowners and farmers, the main suppliers of the ecosystem services, until the engagement work had been done with businesses to look at demand and a trade was imminent. The project team felt they already had a good understanding of land use in the valley. The Opportunity Mapping undertaken for the Payment by Results (PbR) scheme had mapped the opportunities for future Natural Flood Management work. It also set out a methodology for assessing land holdings within the catchment for NFM opportunities and the project team felt that the LENs trade would be a chance to test this methodology. However, because of staff capacity and timescales for delivery of PbR, the key stage in the LENs model of connecting businesses with farmers never took place. The results from the business engagement work had also indicated that businesses would only be willing to make a small contribution to LENs so a trade was not likely to take place.
- The model had proposed using the pilot PbR scheme as a method for measuring the impact of the NFM measures delivered by the farmers. This would help the buyers, in this case the local businesses, understand the service they were paying for. The PbR scheme was developed alongside the Skell LENs. It sets out three different levels of monitoring available to determine the impact of any NFM measures installed by farmers as part of the LENs trade. It was felt important to determine the level of monitoring necessary and set a baseline before the trade took place and account for the associated costs.
- Development of the project did lead to some good partnership working and workshop discussions around concepts like ecosystem services. A project narrative was agreed by the partners setting out the costs of the work along the valley which now sits on the Defra Projects for Nature website which aims to connect businesses with nature recovery. The partners also discussed options for taking forward the LENs with the idea of the National Trust as anchor organisation. In many ways this is challenging for the Fountains Abbey estate which is itself a

SME with a small property team and a relatively small annual turnover when compared with organisations such as Nestle Purina and Diageo which anchor the Yorkshire LENS.

Background to the project

The Skell Enterprising Landscape Project was developed as one of the 15 sub-projects that sit under the Skell Valley Project. The aim of the project was to explore how businesses in Ripon and along the River Skell could come together to invest in landscape outcomes in which they have a common interest, such as flood mitigation and silt reduction. The project would make connections between these businesses and the farmers delivering land management upstream using the Landscape Enterprise Network model (LENs). The LENs model is a system for organising the buying and selling of nature-based solutions. Nature based solutions are land management measures that deliver ecosystem functions, such as water quality management, flood risk management, carbon or biodiversity outcomes.

The project was initiated through discussions between the National Trust, Nidderdale National Landscape and the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Economic Partnership (LEP) in 2018. North Yorkshire is recognised for the quality of its landscape and the LEP were keen to identify new ways to recognise the role that the landscape plays in a successful local economy. The consultancy 3Keel were commissioned by the LEP and the York and North Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership to look at the feasibility of setting up some pilot LENs in North Yorkshire. One of the areas identified in this work was the Skell Valley.

The LEP and York and North Yorkshire Local Nature Partnership also carried out some analysis of the structure of the local economy in the Skell Valley in their report 'Connecting Landscape and Economy in Yorkshire – the case for doing business with Yorkshire's landscapes' which shaped how the project was developed. The report found:

- The area around Ripon and Fountains Abbey, linked by the River Skell, is a quintessential Yorkshire landscape – characterised by mixed farming, sporting estates and historic monastic ruins. It is **deeply rural in character, and while farming makes up only 3% of Gross Added Value (GVA)**, the quality and performance of the landscape has a core part to play in the success of a wide range of sectors, from local SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) to larger businesses downstream in York.
- **Tourism, at 23% of GVA, is the biggest sector in the local economy**; comprising small family enterprises, up to large hospitality and field sports venues and the National Trust's World Heritage Site at Fountains Abbey. The attractiveness of the landscape is an obvious asset for all of these. But so too is the health and stability of soils, which has knock-on sedimentation impacts on angling, and notably on the Studley Royal water gardens – an important 'anchor' for local tourist business.
- Landscape quality and performance is similarly valuable for the **range of service sector SME businesses in Ripon**, making it a desirable place to live, which in turn helps them to attract and retain talent.
- **The same 'liveability' function is relevant to employers further down the river catchment**, too, such as manufacturers, the University, tech and service sector employers in York. While people may not move to or stay in York specifically to be close to the Skell and Fountains Abbey, the landscape contributes to a wider regional appeal. In a similar cumulative way, the performance of the Skell has a part to play in the wider role upper catchment tributaries to the Ouse have in flood risk mitigation through York.

Regular meetings were held in early 2020 between 3Keel, the LEP and the National Trust to develop a project plan for the development of a LENs for the Skell Valley that could be included in the bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. These discussions had started pre-Covid and were finalised

through that period. As part of the development of the project some local businesses and stakeholders in the valley were interviewed by 3Keel to see what interest there would be in forming a network. These included Farmisons, a local meat business based in Ripon, Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal estate, Ripon Racecourse, Yorkshire Yurts and Harrogate Borough Council. These conversations identified some key shared areas of interest:

- There was a real interest in reducing flooding and sedimentation, particularly where a reduction in flooding would have a positive impact on businesses. Floods in 2020 had a direct effect on Fountains Abbey, Ripon Racecourse and Farmison's.
- Harrogate Borough Council (now part of North Yorkshire Council) were interested in land-based carbon mitigation and sequestration to reach their target of net zero by 2038 with a particular interest in tree planting.
- Covid had impacted on many businesses in Ripon and along the Skell Valley with many just focussed on financial survival and no capacity to be involved in a Skell LENS.
- The Ripon Business Improvement District (BID) was in development and there was some general discussion about how the BID could collaborate with a future LENS.

Development of a LENS also involves the engagement of those supplying the services which in the case of the Skell Valley Project are the farmers and landowners upstream. Farmers had been involved in developing the wider Skell Valley project through a Natural Flood Management Facilitation Fund bid which supported a Skell Valley Farmer Network. The farmers weren't directly consulted on a future LENS.

This development phase work identified some unique challenges to formation and development of a LENS network in the Skell around two key areas,

- a) the structure of the local tourism industry; and
- b) the effect of the Covid pandemic and cost of living crisis on the local economy.

The tourism and hospitality industry in Ripon and the Skell Valley is mostly made up of SMEs which are unlikely to have budgets for this type of investment or to have thought about it at all. Their smaller size means it's unlikely they will have money to put towards landscape investment without a very clear business case which shows evidence of a return on their investment. Any funds they would be able to direct to landscape investment is unlikely to be significant on their own. This means that engaging businesses could be challenging. In addition, the tourism industry in this area was hit hard by the Covid pandemic and continues to feel the impacts of the current cost of living crisis. This has been exacerbated in recent years by the rise in energy costs.

The project set out objectives and actions that would adapt the LENS methodology to look at new processes to overcome these challenges. These hadn't been tackled by any of the existing LENSs. Part of the adaptation involves understanding how starter funding could enable a much higher level of support and engagement for the initial development of a network. This would mean that businesses could participate without needing to put up any capital in the first few stages. It would also explore ways to support SMEs involvement by involving a wider range of the demand-side partners including public bodies such as local councils and the Environment Agency.

Following this development phase work, the final project that was submitted as part of the NLHF bid in 2020 aimed to continue to work in partnership with the LEP to develop and trial an adapted LENS approach for the Skell Valley.

Scope and delivery of the Skell LENSs

The Skell Enterprising Landscape Project aimed to explore ways to adapt the LENS approach to address the unique challenges identified in the Skell Valley. It also wanted to identify a mechanism for the long-term sustainability and maintenance of the landscape and natural flood management measures implemented during the four-year delivery phase of the overarching Skell Valley Project. The framework below shows the typical LENS process and the adaptations that were part of the Enterprising Landscapes project plan.

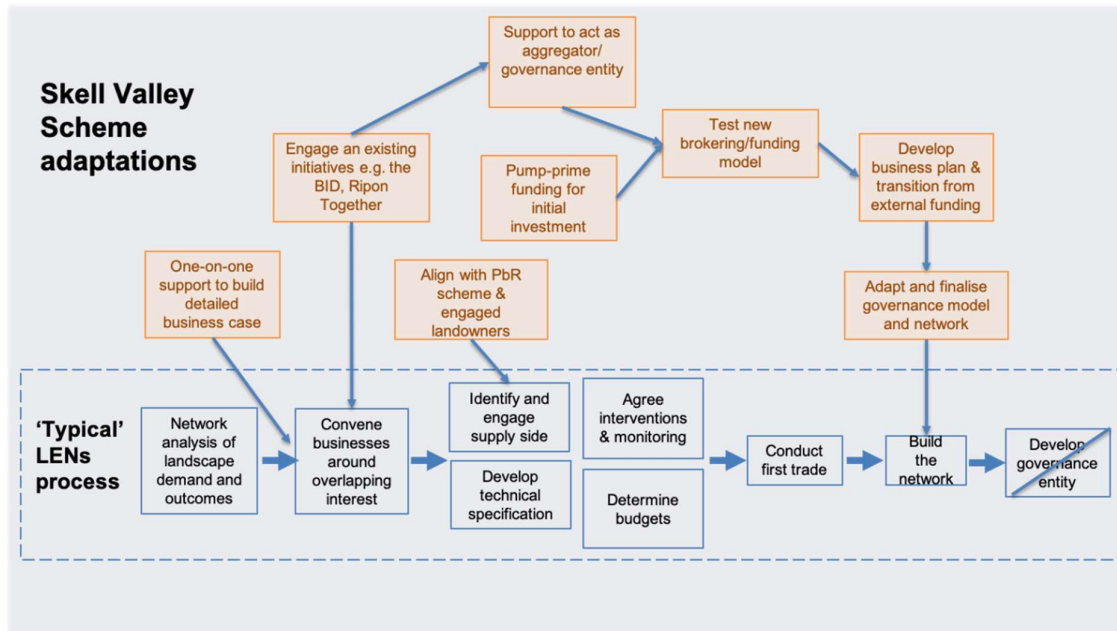


Figure 1 - Conceptual framework for LENS development within the Skell Valley Project (source: Skell Enterprising Landscape Project Plan)

The project aims set out in the project plan were to:

- Develop partnerships with local businesses and organisations such as the Environment Agency, Ripon Together and the Ripon BID to develop a LENS for the Skell Valley
- Engage the business community in Ripon to enhance their understanding of, and explore their connections to, the ecosystem services delivered by the landscape managers upstream through a programme of workshops and improved joint working.
- Create a connection and shared understanding between the people in the Skell Valley who will benefit from reduced flood risk and sediment reduction (the business community, residents and other organisations affected by flood risk and sedimentation) and the people who manage the land to deliver flood and sediment reduction (farmers and land managers).
- Ensure the long-term legacy of the natural flood management and sediment control measures that the project will deliver across the Skell Valley by exploring how the Skell LENS operates and can be developed to manage and maintain the high quality NFM and sediment reduction measures
- Explore links between the LENS model and Payment by Results trial and contribute to regional and national discussions and learning on how these innovative approaches can work together
- Provide a boost to the local economy through the creation of profitable and resilient business in Ripon and downstream whilst also supporting farm businesses upstream through recognition (and payment) for the service farmers are delivering for wider area

It was intended that the project be delivered over the four-year delivery phase of the Skell Valley Project and that the Skell Valley project team would lead the project with support from the LEP and North Yorkshire Council. The following programme was set out:

<p><i>Year 1 - Building engagement</i></p>	<p>The key challenge identified in the development phase was around business engagement, due to prominence of the tourism sector, its heavy proportion of SMEs, and the detrimental effects on the sector of Covid-19. The most important stage of the action plan was how to engage businesses and retain their engagement as this was crucial to the formation of the network and sustainability of the project. This would be done through engaging with regional groups such as the Ripon BID to understand their priorities and ways they can support the project. The initial interviews with businesses would also be developed further to identify key landscape outcomes of interest to local businesses. A key output for the project was the development of business cases for landscape investment for each business to explore what would make it viable and genuinely beneficial for them to invest in the landscape upstream. This work would be connected to the work of the iCASP team on the Payment by Results for measuring and monitoring the impact of the farmer's Natural Flood Management measures on flooding and silt deposition. The business engagement would also include discussion around the pump-priming of the initial trade and the fact there would be no need for any upfront financial contribution by businesses.</p>
<p><i>Years 2 and 3 - Developing a network</i></p>	<p>Once a core group of businesses had been engaged and there were clear business cases for landscape investment that demonstrated real benefit to the businesses as well as the landscape, it would be time to start setting up the first network. This would include analysis of which outcomes to focus on, and how to set up a brokering system that efficiently manages numerous small businesses and is able to leverage the potentially small individual contributions they are able to make into something larger that can achieve real impact in the landscape and provide a viable maintenance mechanism for the landowners. This would involve bringing together businesses to agree the outcomes to focus on for the first trade alongside working with regional groups such as the Ripon BID to see if the project could work with them to broker the initial trade. Some gaming workshops would be held with the project team, regional groups and businesses to test how to manage the transactions between the group of businesses and the supply side of farmers. The initial pilot trade would then be set up. At this stage there would be work with businesses and the Payment by Results scheme to look at the services for the supply side based on the outcomes identified with businesses. A list of intervention measures (this could include NFM measures such as woody debris dams or tree planting) and locations in the valley would be drawn up to be subject of the trade. The suppliers, the farmer in this case, would need capacity and resource to deliver what was required and to participate in the trade. This set up of the initial trade is a complex process involving auditing options and requirements, decisions on how budgets and outcomes are split between businesses, establishing a platform for managing the trade and then conducting the trade and formalising agreements. A workshop would then be held to review learnings from the trade. The intention was also that the LENs would provide the financial means and governance to maintain the Payment by Results scheme upstream.</p>

<i>Year 4 - Creating a legacy</i>	The business engagement and detailed exploration and testing of brokering mechanisms in the first three years of the project should provide learnings to inform the development of a governance model for maintaining the progress to date and supporting it into the foreseeable future. This legacy is fundamental to the entire Skell Valley Scheme; it should provide a well-planned and tested mechanism for ensuring that the gains made throughout the project, and particularly with the Payment by Results scheme, are not lost because of a lack of funding. Key outputs at this stage were establishment of a governance system and business plan for maintaining and building the network and then workshops and learning report and toolkit for transferring the methodology to other areas.
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The programme set out above was not followed in delivering the Skell Valley Project. The project team prioritised delivery of the Natural Flood Management measures upstream of Ripon as the funding for those works was through a European grant which had strict deadlines for spending. There was no activity on the Enterprising Landscapes project until 2023.

The opportunity to join a wider LENS community in Yorkshire

By early 2023 when the project was revisited the project team identified significant changes which impacted on the delivery of the project. These were:

- The domination of Ripon by SMEs was identified as a challenge during the development phase of the project. However, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and increase in energy bills means it was felt they were even less likely to engage in a scheme that added to their costs.
- Farminsons, one of the key businesses in Ripon, went into administration and was bought out at the last minute. It was felt unlikely that they would want to add to their costs by being involved in the LENS scheme.
- 3Keel, the consultants who own the LENS model and wrote the project plan, stated the project budget was no longer sufficient for them to deliver the project.

Alongside these changes there had also been development of an active LENS community and delivery body in North Yorkshire. A new Community Interest Company (CIC), the 'Resilient Landscapes Yorkshire CIC' was established to facilitate the LENS trading. The first trade in 2023 aimed to deliver measures to increase soil fertility and biodiversity while reducing emissions on arable farms in the Vale of York. After this initial trade, the plan was to expand the LENS to encompass a wider range of interests across Yorkshire. It was felt by the project team that this provided an opportunity for the Skell Valley Project to be part of an existing LENS and the growing stakeholder community already developing in North Yorkshire.

It was agreed through a project change request to NLHF in May 2023 that the team could explore opportunities that the wider Yorkshire LENS scheme presented. This would mean some small changes to the outputs in the existing project plan. These included engaging more actively with the emerging North Yorkshire LENS rather than establishing a new LENS in the Skell Valley. The proposal to trial a local LENS trade in the Skell Valley was retained as an output. A programme of workshops was set out to bring together local SMEs with members of the North Yorkshire LENS community to share learning. A follow-up workshop was then to be held with local businesses to explore what ecosystem services they might be interested in funding and then following the initial LENS trade

planned for Summer 2024 there would be a final workshop to review the process. It was argued that by joining the existing LENS community there could be opportunities to engage with larger companies to explore funding opportunities while also allowing the project to trial a LENS trade in the valley involving local SMEs. There was also a commitment to retain the output to produce an end of project lessons learnt report.

Change in approach - the Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) pilot project

In September 2023, the Skell project team were approached by York and North Yorkshire Local Investment in Natural Capital (LINC) programme who put forward a proposal to use the Skell Enterprising Landscape project as one of their case studies. York and North Yorkshire had secured £1 million funding from the Government's Local Investment in Natural Capital Programme (LINC). This two-year programme is a key workstream within DEFRA's portfolio of Green Finance projects.

As part of the devolution deal agreement, York and North Yorkshire have committed to become a leader in Natural Capital investment. The York and North Yorkshire LINC programme will prepare a Natural Capital Investment Plan and deliver a series of nature-based solution demonstration projects by March 2025. The programme will be delivered locally through a partnership of North Yorkshire Council, City of York Council and other key stakeholders such as the LEP.

The focus of the York and North Yorkshire LINC programme is to understand how to increase green finance for nature-based solutions, such as tree planting, peatland restoration, flood management and supporting farmers in accessing new private sector investments that increase resilience in the landscapes that they manage. In doing so communities and businesses can benefit through improved knowledge and access to funding streams, greater support regarding well-being, increased resilience to flooding, improved crop quality and measures to remove and store carbon from the atmosphere.

This initiative strongly aligned with the Skell Enterprising Landscapes project objectives and would provide a staff resource and funding to complement the NLHF grant to develop and trial the LENS approach. A change request was submitted and approved by NLHF in December 2023.

In 2024, the LINC project team supported by the Skell Valley project team agreed to deliver the following programme:

1. Refresh the analysis of ecosystem services
2. Kickstart business engagement building on the work already undertaken by 3Keel and the LEP
3. Connect with landowner networks already established
4. Carry out an options appraisal to review different financial mechanisms including the Community Interest Company approach.
5. Meeting with CIC including to discuss possible trade(s)
6. Co-design workshop(s) involving landowners and businesses
7. Based on Steps 1- 5, develop possible trade(s) and generate outline business cases
8. In parallel with earlier steps, investigate options to make use of the North Yorkshire CIC to facilitate trades and continue investigation of other investment vehicles/models that could be used (e.g. community investment)

The LINC project delivered items 1, 2 and 4 on the list above. A more detailed description of delivery against the agreed project outputs is set out in Appendix 4. The following were key areas of work undertaken at this stage of the project:

1. Refresh the analysis of ecosystem services by key stakeholders

A workshop was organised by the LINC officer in May 2023 to refresh the analysis of ecosystem services both in terms of supply and demand. The Skell Valley project team, Nidderdale National Landscape team and North Yorkshire and Yorkshire LEP attended. This included a review of available baseline data and considered likely beneficiaries building on initial scoping work. The group also prepared a list of the key ecosystem assets that underpin the Skell Valley and the ecosystem services they provide. The dominant assets identified were a mix of improved and semi-improved grazing land, conifer plantations and heather moorlands. The key ecosystem services these provided included:

- Flood protection, water storage and quality and climate regulation more broadly
- Timber and food
- Potentially carbon storage – amount unclear without data
- Habitats
- Landscape aesthetic

There was a general discussion around who supplies the ecosystem services. The Skell project had worked with around 20 landowners, and a farmer facilitation group is in place. The landownership has been mapped, and most landowners manage improved grassland sites. Sheep grazers are mostly concerned with business survival and see themselves as key food producers and part of the rural community. The conifer plantations tend to be owned by grouse or pheasant shoots. There are a couple of big moorland owners at the top of the catchment. Government policy changes such as Biodiversity Net Gain and nutrient neutrality are causing uncertainty for tenants and landowners. Some landowners see themselves as playing a role in supporting the World Heritage Site.

The group then analysed the landscape demand for ecosystem services around business sectors. Hospitality was a key area with larger tourism businesses like the luxury hotel at Grantley Hall being potential anchors for a LEPs. Other hospitality businesses included the National Trust at Fountains Abbey, Yurtshire at Eavestone Lake, the Ripon Inn and Bed and Breakfast businesses. Manufacturing was also important and including businesses such as Farmison's Butchers, Grantley Saw Mill and Wolseley Trade Supplies. The service sector includes Marks and Spencers, Booths, Aldi and McDonalds and the local pubs and restaurants. The group noted there could be opportunities to tap into Corporate Social Responsibility objectives and scope to offer workforce volunteering opportunities. It was felt that for all businesses and the local community that the high-quality environment will support a healthier and happier workforce and may help to attract and retain workers. Finally, the recreation and tourism sector is extensive in Ripon and includes the National Trust owned World Heritage Site at Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal. There is a lot of wealth built around tourism.

The opportunities for investment offered by new development were also discussed. A significant amount of development is planned around Ripon including redevelopment of the former Army Barracks. There could be scope for landowners to access Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) funding which is a financial payment made by the developer through the planning system to create and enhance habitats for nature. The BNG can be delivered off the developer's land by buying off-site biodiversity units on the market.

In terms of setting up a LENS it was suggested that other investors could include North Yorkshire Council and the Mayoral Combined Authority. There would need to be a clear set of collective benefits such as flood management and investment in a quality environment. Some of the common needs that businesses could convene around included workforce and workforce retention, delivery of carbon net zero targets, business survival and continuing to attract tourists through sustaining landscape quality and spirit of place.

2. Kickstart the business engagement

In January 2024, Next Step consultants were appointed by the project team to engage with local businesses, assess business needs and identify businesses with a deeper interest in ecosystem services in the valley. The work included development of an outline project narrative to share with businesses and interviews with 11 businesses and representative bodies. The following businesses and groups were interviewed – Ripon BID, the Ripon Inn, Ripon Races, Valentino's Restaurant and the Water Rat Pub owner, Newby Hall, Booths Supermarket, Yurtshire at Eavestone Lake, Grantley Hall Hotel and Spa, NFU Mutual, Hardcastle Rural Surveyors and Highside Butchers. The findings below are taken, almost in full, from the Next Step 'Report of Business Engagement to inform landscape investment in the Skell Valley, North Yorkshire'.

The interviews focussed on two areas:

Local business perceptions of the value of landscape

None of those interviewed had previously thought about placing a value on the landscape or quantifying that value to their business. All participants expressed appreciation for the surrounding countryside and recognised its significance to the local economy, quality of life and staff recruitment. Two businesses didn't think the local landscape had any impact on their business. These were Ripon Races who gets a significant income from TV rights and Highside Butchers who make most of their income from local households.

8 of the 11 businesses were aware of the River Skell but none recognised that flooding could lead to closure of the Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal visitor attraction and how that impact could extend beyond the estate. All businesses agreed that could be devastating for the local economy. There was an inclination for the businesses interviewed to focus on their own premises and immediate area and a deeper level of thinking was required to consider impact of events beyond their own premises. Larger businesses were used to considering the wider area but usually regarding demand for products, staff recruitment and marketing rather than the surrounding natural capital/landscape.

The assumption of responsibility for one's own premises continued in the businesses situated directly on the River Skell. For example, the owner of Yurtshire feels responsible for Eavestone Lake which is within his land and the team at Grantley Hall have plans for the section of the Skell that runs through the Grantley Hall estate. All businesses through which the river runs, including Newby Hall which is downstream of Ripon, could see that river maintenance requires collaboration with others.

The idea that businesses might consider the natural landscape in terms of value to their business was discussed. Most participants assumed there would be a charitable element to any donations and there was clearly a desire for businesses to be seen to support environmental causes. If businesses want to use such initiatives for marketing, then an award or logo could encourage businesses to engage.

Most businesses felt the responsibility for flood mitigation should come from the council or government. After discussing the impact of flooding on visitor attractions along the Skell, particularly

Fountains Abbey, most participants could accept the case for local engagement. But, as we continue to face challenges from climate change, there could be long term indifference with multiple environmental projects because more and more areas will need to fund flood mitigation and other climate-related natural disasters. Most participants thought that, in the long term, these issues would be more efficient and successful if managed centrally.

Despite this, there was enthusiasm from most businesses for some engagement with the Skell Valley project. Some businesses could make small and regular financial contributions, support with sharing information about the project and promoting it to visitors. One participant felt that businesses would be more inclined to support the project if the financial burden was perceived to be shared. Offering visitors and residents the opportunity to contribute would reassure businesses that all parts of the community are involved rather than businesses being targeted for what could be considered an extra tax.

The importance of engagement

The importance of engagement was the most repeated comment in the interviews. Several businesses shared the view that people struggle to perceive danger from uncertain risks or potential problems at an unspecified time in the future. Businesses and communities are more likely to support flood mitigation when flooding is apparent and present, but the issues are quickly forgotten when the floods subside or even if the floods are being managed successfully. For this reason, businesses felt engagement and information is crucial to maintain funding from supporters.

Valuing natural capital challenges our traditional concept of ownership and responsibility. Most participants recommended in-person engagement at least initially, to develop a foundation on which to build ongoing dialogue. Understanding the impact of events 'upstream' requires a change in mindset, and that is a challenge. Suggestions aimed at kick starting a change of view for businesses included: in-person meetings, visiting existing groups such as Ripon Together, having breakfast/supper meetings with featured speakers, and incorporating this into business training events. When communicating with larger businesses, both the local contact and the head office need to be approached.

Suggestions to engage with the general public included posting QR codes outdoors at significant beauty spots with information and links to donate, social media, leaflets and press articles. Liaison with schools was suggested as a long-term policy. Businesses identified some existing avenues for publicity. The Ripon Inn should be considered as a tourist information source and will share printed information with visitors. Most of their visitors already have an interest in the natural landscape. Booth's have a community engagement policy.

Presenting information in person was noted as important for long-term engagement with local businesses. Continuing to report back on the project over time is essential to maintain interest. Reporting on the success of flood mitigation is even more crucial when it succeeds – because then there are no floods to draw attention to the importance of the project.

The approach to businesses should consider the different levels of engagement. For example, businesses on the River Skell would require a different level of approach from others whose interest is several steps removed. It would be useful to facilitate a communication network for businesses directly located on the Skell and to promote collaboration and education. Grantley Hall's Kaplan Turbine and Eavestone Lake's siltation should all be discussed as part of a whole-river policy. The river is a great symbol of communal responsibility and this could be emphasised.

Likewise, part of the message to businesses in the wider area could emphasise the value of collaboration. Ripon's independent businesses have initiated an impressive collaborative network in the last two years. If the Skell Valley project managed to inform some businesses within this network, the message would be embraced by many. Ripon BID's manager suggested looking at the Totally Locally campaigns for engagement ideas. For example, there could be a trail of QR codes with questions about the Skell Valley, posted in different independent shops. This could engage residents, visitors and shop owners.

Funding models proposed by businesses

The most popular model for financial contribution was the BID levy, presented as a collective pool for the greater good. A similar model for smaller businesses would be a Netflix subscription. Small monthly payments under £10 are not seen as a 'considered purchase'.

The participants were undecided about the pros and cons of using a democratic vote to employ the levy or not. But most participants thought a small fee, relative to the size of the business, would be the best approach. Of those who suggested it, all agreed that the fee would have to be compulsory. One participant suggested that participating businesses could be given one pass to Fountains Abbey. This could develop a feeling of co-operation with the site and would draw in more local visitors.

Businesses have a variety of priorities for their own investments. Staff and recruitment was shared as a priority for several. Others have maintenance projects or are recovering financially from expansion or preparations for the start of the visitor season.

Most businesses recognised the significance of Fountains Abbey to them and would be prepared to join in a collaborative effort if needed to protect the World Heritage Site. The perception was that financial contributions would be part of a collaborative venture. The assumption was that many participants would contribute small amounts. This impact would include engagement, information and education in addition to the financial contribution.

Several people raised the point about 'sharing the load'. Businesses feel quite bruised by the economic situation. It would be important to share news if finance were also raised from other sources such as charitable donations, voluntary contributions or match funding from Government.

Some businesses have been directly affected by flooding or siltation. Ripon Racecourse only hosts 17 meetings per year. If the racecourse is flooded on one of those days, that has a catastrophic effect on the annual turnover. The racecourse has incurred enormous costs on flood protection measures. Newby Hall has water pumps for the garden features that silt up and require cleaning. Eavestone Lake at Yurtshire is heavily silted. These businesses have always assumed that they are responsible for incurring these costs. Raising the idea of corporate responsibility for flood mitigation could draw other businesses into the conversation. This would have the advantage of ensuring river maintenance is co-operative and managed properly. It could also lead to expectations for funding from businesses that currently maintain their areas of the river.

Other ideas

There are opportunities to revolutionise communication between the National Trust and key businesses in Ripon and the surrounding area. There are already some great examples of collaboration: Grantley Hall has discussed taking guests for river cruises at Newby Hall and on guided walks to Fountains Abbey, the Ripon Inn is working with the Racecourse to co-ordinate events for racegoers.

The National Trust could develop a network of local independent traders, hospitality venues, campsites and outdoor pursuit centres and use that to share information about the Skell Valley Project. The National Trust could include much smaller businesses in this project and recognise the immense value that engagement could have for the Skell Valley Project and for the local visitor economy. One participant suggested introducing a 'tourism tax', recognising that the hospitality sector was the most likely to benefit from the natural landscape.

The River Skell lends itself to an image of collaboration. This could be used in a marketing campaign which would tie in with Ripon's growing reputation as a City in which independent traders co-operate for the greater good. Collaboration could include the sharing of information within and between businesses and with customers and visitors. Sharing the message about the Skell Valley project is a key factor in the success of ongoing engagement with businesses. Businesses will want to contribute to a project that is known and respected.

Summary of key points:

- Recognising the value of natural capital requires a shift in attitude from the traditional concept of ownership.
- Education and engagement are vital if this change in mindset is to be addressed.
- With suitable engagement, businesses could be persuaded to contribute small amounts for flood mitigation.
- There is a need for communication and co-operation between landowners who manage sections of the river course.
- Engagement with the community at large will enhance engagement with the business community.

3. Connect with landowner networks already established including the Skell Valley Farmers network.

It was agreed this area of work would be delivered by the National Trust and would include looking in detail at land uses and any restrictions on land use change and understanding landowner goals. The project team were engaging the farmers and landowners with the Payment by Results (PbR) scheme and opportunity mapping at the same time timescales that the Enterprising Landscapes project was being undertaken. As the project team were therefore aware of the opportunities available for funding through the LENs model it was decided that the farmers and landowners would be made aware of the LENs project and invited to a business -landowner meeting after the business consultation had been undertaken and the LENs model was gaining traction. In the meantime, the project team could therefore act on behalf of the main suppliers of ecosystem services.

The ongoing partnership between Nidderdale National Landscape and the National Trust was vital in gaining this knowledge and understanding of the land use and the restrictions in place, such as environmental stewardship agreements, and permissions needed, such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) without having to engage the landowners unnecessarily. The project team also had experience from the installation of the NFM measures being delivered in another project: Healthy Land, Healthy River, which involved the installation of various NFM measures from hedgerows to tree planting, to pond building and leaky barrier installation.

4. An Options Appraisal to review financial mechanisms for the Skell Valley

In July 2024 the LINC project officer facilitated a workshop with North Yorkshire Council, the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, the National Trust, Nidderdale NL, the Environment Agency and 3Keel to agree a way forward to the LINC Skell Valley pilot project. The workshop aimed to agree the project outcomes, to build on the LENSs approach to bring green finance into the Skell Valley, to agree on a preferred option to take the project forward and agree next steps for the pilot project. The vision and outcomes for the project hadn't changed much from the project initiation – it was principally about exploring how the LENSs model can work for SME businesses in catchments like the Skell, so as a demonstrator project, but at the same time at a very practical level, providing a sustainable funding model to provide a future for the environmental improvements delivered along the River Skell.

The group assessed six options during the workshop. These were

Option 1 - To do nothing. This option proposed that there should be no further approach to businesses to ask for support and funding for NFM and nature-based projects in the Skell Valley. Moving forward the projects would be funded through a mixture of public grants and support from the National Trust. It was felt this approach would be the most straightforward but wouldn't deliver what was needed and there would be a reputational risk of not exploring innovative approaches.

Options 2 – Deliver a straight LENSs supported by public sector funding. The idea of this option was that anchor funding would be provided by the public sector to pump prime an initial transaction and some additional contributions provided by Ripon businesses Landowners would be paid for ecosystem service outcomes such as NFM which in turn support landscape quality and tourism. The main features of a LENSs would be retained, and Resilient Landscapes Yorkshire CIC could help facilitate the trade. There were some issues that would need to be resolved around resources for the LENSs facilitator and bringing businesses on board. It was felt though that this approach would be supported more by businesses as most of the implementation costs would be covered by grants.

Option 3 – Deliver a straight LENSs supported by anchor organisation funding (e.g. the National Trust). This would be similar to option 2 but the Trust would be covering most of the costs of works upstream. The strengths were that the Trust has some funding and the businesses would find it more attractive. It was felt it was important that the LENSs facilitator was neutral and that the outcomes of the NFM works would need to be verified.

Option 4 – Deliver an adapted LENSs working with Ripon Business Improvement District (BID). This option proposed working with the existing BID network providing access to nearly 300 existing businesses in Ripon who are already providing contributions, for example to environmental improvements. The Ripon BID would act as 'anchor' in this context, pooling contributions. It was felt unlikely that this would provide sufficient funding and pump-prime support would need to be provided by the public sector or the National Trust.

Options 5a and 5b – Explore other options to bring in private sector support. A couple of other options were discussed about exploring business philanthropic giving and using a local version of the Project for Nature Platform with upfront funding from public sector and the National Trust. Option 5b then also looked at bringing in community donations.

It was agreed that option 2 would be progressed through the LINC pilot project. However, there has been no further work on LENSs since this workshop and in practice the Option 1 – Do Nothing has

been taken. This was partially because of issues recruiting a new project manager for the Skell Valley Project which meant there was no project management capacity to deliver this complex element of the project.

Lessons Learnt - Why could the adapted LENS model not be fully delivered?

By the end of the Enterprising Landscape project the aim was to test whether a LENS approach works in a locality like the Skell Valley, to understand what demands local businesses have on the local landscape and what outcomes they would be willing to invest in and to explore local landowner objectives. Finally, the project would set out the most appropriate financial and governance mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of the landscape as part of the legacy of the project.

It is clear from the process this project has been through during the four-year delivery phase of the Skell Valley Project that it was a challenge to deliver for the Skell Valley project team. Only a few of the outputs identified in the original project plan and then retained in the later iteration as a LINC pilot project were delivered. No further progress was made on project delivery following the Options Appraisal workshop in July 2024. However, there were some positives to the process including the raising of awareness of landscape value to the local economy with local businesses and the partnership working between Nidderdale National Landscape, National Trust, North Yorkshire Council and York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (previously the LEP).

Complexity of delivering the LENS model

A decision was made by the LEP that the LENS model would be piloted in North Yorkshire as part of the Economic Strategy. Many of the concepts and processes that are set within the LENS model are complex and untested in economies dominated by SMEs. An in depth understanding of the LENS model and green finance more generally among the project team was critical. The team would have to explain terms like ecosystem services and natural capital both to the farmers and landowners, in effect the suppliers upstream, and the local businesses. There was a lack of capacity, knowledge and experience within the project team of delivering a LENS model or other green finance initiatives. As a result, the Enterprising Landscapes project was subject to two change requests to the National Lottery Heritage Fund which both reflected the need for some additional expertise and support for the establishment of the LENS. The first looked at delivering the Skell LENS under the umbrella of the newly formed Yorkshire LENS and the second by delivering the project as a pilot through the North Yorkshire LINC programme.

The trade element of LENS is also challenging to manage. There was discussion both through the development phase and delivery of the project about a suitable facilitator for the first trade. The Ripon BID had been suggested as a potential LENS operator who would manage the network and organise the trade process. However, by delivery phase the Ripon BID officer already had a clear focus on more local improvements for businesses in Ripon such as marketing and this meant there was no organisation to take the lead on this. Preparatory work also had to be carried out before a trade could be undertaken. This included the engagement of businesses and identification of the demand for landscape outcomes, work with the farmers on the supply side and a platform established for the trade. Progress was made on some elements of this process but not all and this meant the structures and agreements were not in place for a trade to go ahead.

The project was set up to trial the LENS concept which had never been implemented in an economy like the Skell Valley with its dominance of SMEs. It was designed to trial and test the approach, with the intention that the lessons learnt through this project could be shared widely both in North

Yorkshire but also within the National Trust and the family of National Landscapes who are looking at Green Finance models. There may be other green finance models now available which are simpler to operate and more suited to the local economy and structure of farming in the Skell Valley.

Ownership of the LENS model by 3Keel

The LENS model was developed by the consultancy 3Keel and they were commissioned by the LEP and then the National Trust to scope out an action plan for implementing an adapted LENS model in the Skell Valley during the development phase of the project. The Skell Valley project team had been keen to continue to work with 3Keel to deliver the LENS based on their in-depth knowledge and experience of the model both locally and nationally. However, National Lottery Heritage Fund procurement requirements require at least three quotes for all work commissioned as part of the project. This created some constraints around continued working with 3Keel which was further complicated by 3Keel's ownership of the model. In 2023, 3Keel also indicated that the budget which had been included in the costed project plan was not sufficient for them to deliver the project.

Structure of the local economy and the lack of an anchor organisation

At the outset of the project the challenge of engaging SMEs was identified and that these businesses were unlikely to have the money to invest in landscape outcomes without clear evidence of the benefits. The Covid 19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis had impacted on the small to medium tourism businesses which form the backbone of the local economy along the Skell Valley. This has been further exacerbated as the project developed by the rise in energy prices and additional National Insurance cost for employers.

The project plan proposed to address this by providing some pump-priming for the first trade so there would be no requirement for businesses to make a financial contribution to the network. A set of business cases would also be produced as part of the project to clearly show the benefits to businesses of investing in ecosystem services. These business cases weren't produced but some good business engagement work was undertaken as part of the LINC pilot project.

Most successful LENS operating in England have a large anchor organisation. One example is Nestlé Purina who have worked with Diageo to support farmers in Selby, Thirsk and Vale of York to introduce a wide range of regenerative agriculture practices which will deliver multiple benefits including increased soil fertility, reductions in on-farm greenhouse gas emissions and habitat improvements. The project has been delivered through LENS with the support of consultancy 3Keel. These large organisations tend to have a large staff and financial resource and the benefit of a clear demand for a particular ecosystem service such as delivering the benefits of regenerative farming or improving water quality. When trying to work with multiple businesses each may have demands for different ecosystem services from the landscape. These demands must be understood and aggregated before a trade can take place.

During the options appraisal workshops there was a suggestion that the National Trust act as an anchor organisation. However, the National Trust estate at Fountains is itself a SME with fewer than 250 staff and an annual turnover of ***. The property team does not have the capacity to act as anchor for a LENS.

Views of local businesses

The business engagement around landscape outcomes and the role of the landscape in the success of their businesses was one of the most valuable outcomes of the pilot project. It raised awareness among the 11 local businesses interviewed of the ecosystem services provided by the local

landscape, such as flood mitigation. The businesses were also open in sharing their views on the concepts behind the LENs model such as the value placed on landscape outcomes and ecosystem services. The key findings from the business engagement were:

- Recognising the value of natural capital requires a shift in attitude from the traditional concept of ownership.
- Education and engagement are vital if this change in mindset is to be addressed.
- With suitable engagement, businesses could be persuaded to contribute small amounts for flood mitigation.
- There is a need for communication and co-operation between landowners who manage sections of the river course.
- Engagement with the community at large will enhance engagement with the business community.

Although there were many useful outcomes from the business engagement it failed to specifically brief businesses on the LENs model or to set further sessions to establish a network. This combined with the lack of engagement with farmers meant the model was never moved forward to carry out a trade.

Lack of engagement with the farmers on the supply side and progress on Payment By Results

Although engagement was carried out with businesses there was no engagement with farmers specifically around LENs. It was decided by the project team not to engage with the landowners and farmers, the main suppliers of the ecosystem services, until the engagement work had been done with businesses to look at demand and a trade was imminent.

The Enterprising Landscapes project plan had proposed using a pilot Payment by Results scheme as a method for measuring the impact of the NFM measures delivered by the farmers. The PbR scheme was another sub-project under the wider Skell Valley Project. The timescale for delivery of the PbR scheme meant it wasn't in place to inform establishment of LENs. It was intended that the scheme would help the buyers, in this case the local businesses, understand the service they were paying for. The scheme set out three different levels of monitoring available to determine the impact of any NFM measures installed by farmers. It was felt important to determine the level of monitoring necessary and set a baseline before the trade took place and account for the associated costs.

The project team also felt they had a good understanding of land use in the valley. The Opportunity Mapping undertaken for the Payment by Results (PbR) scheme had mapped the opportunities for future Natural Flood Management work. The PbR scheme also set out a methodology for assessing land holdings within the catchment for NFM opportunities and the LENs trade would be a chance to test this methodology. However, because of staff capacity and timescales for delivery of PbR, the key stage in the LENs model of connecting businesses with farmers never took place. There was also a perception that businesses would only be willing to make a small contribution to LENs so a trade was not likely to take place.

Challenge of putting a value on nature-based solutions

Although a project narrative was developed as part of the business engagement it was hard to demonstrate to the SMEs along the Skell Valley and in Ripon the direct financial benefit to them of the Natural Flood Management measures delivered by the farmers. Most of the businesses interviewed were not directly impacted by flooding but when prompted did acknowledge that if Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal were to close due to damage by flooding this would have wider negative impacts for the local economy.

In terms of Natural Flood Management works the actual impact on rate of siltation or reduction of flood events is very hard to measure. The wider Skell Valley Project involved additional monitoring of river levels and siltation along the river as part of the PbR scheme, but this data needs to be collected over a long period of time and there are many variables which impact on the monitoring data.

Way Forward

Green finance initiatives are a policy issue at the forefront of government policy. The Skell Valley Project sits on the Defra Projects for Nature platform. The narrative produced by the LINC project as part of the business engagement work is the basis for the project, setting out the costs of protecting the World Heritage Site and nature along the Skell Valley. The project has only received £10 so far though through this crowdfunding platform.

[Restoring Nature, Saving Fountains Abbey - a Environment crowdfunding project in Ripon by National Trust](#)

The National Trust is a partner in Nature North. Nature North is a cross sector, pan-regional partnership of businesses and agencies working for nature recovery across the North of England. The new strategy produced by the partnership makes the case for the North to become a nature positive region, explains how investing in nature recovery will bring economic and social benefits for people and places across the North, and sets out clear steps to enable greater investment in nature. There is a very powerful business case for investment included in the strategy which then connects to the investable propositions. The Skell Valley Project could fit within the Rivers Nature North prospectus.

[Strategy - Nature North](#)

Nidderdale National Landscape is part of the National Landscapes Association's Nature Recovery Projects Platform. This is a similar format to the Defra Project for Nature platform where National Landscapes showcase opportunities for businesses or other funders to support projects in National Landscapes. The site principally describes the projects and then connects potential funders with project teams.

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All the above initiatives are quite static in nature and rely on potential funders seeking out the Skell project. Without a push by key partners these approaches are unlikely to raise necessary funding for maintenance and further development of NFM and nature improvements along the Skell. In practice a blended finance model may work which makes the most of the existing platforms above but also builds on the business engagement undertaken as part of the project at a local level and continues to raise money through National Trust fundraising at Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal estate.

Resources

3Keel (2020), Skell Enterprising Landscapes – Description and Action Plan

Next Step Consultants (2024) Report of business engagement to inform landscape (ecosystem) investment in the Skell Valley, North Yorkshire

North Yorkshire Council (2023) Skell Valley project scope and analysis of ecosystem services along the Skell Valley - Workshop Notes

North Yorkshire Council (2024), Skell Valley Options Appraisal - Workshop Notes

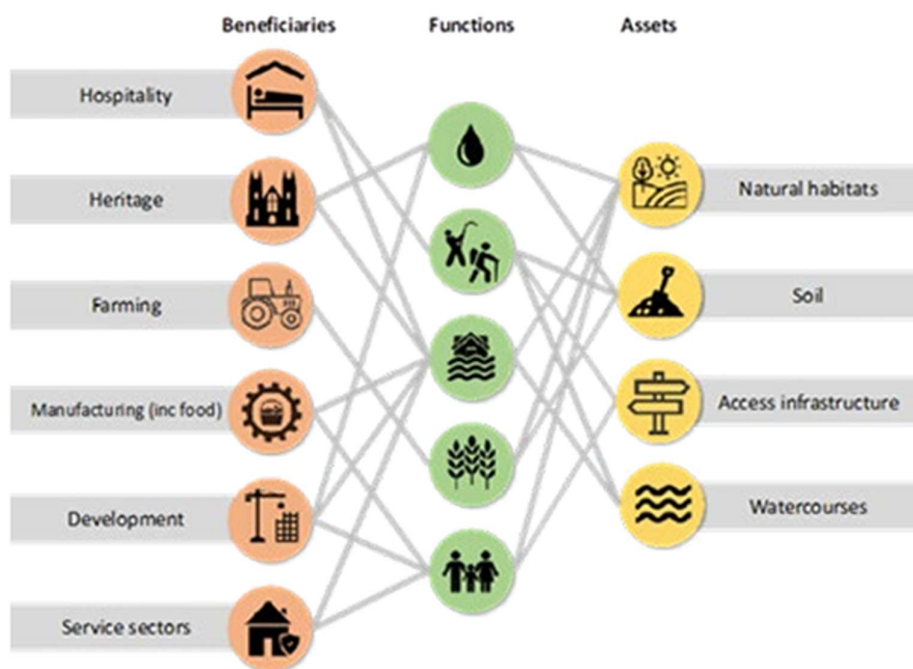
Skell Valley Project Team (2024) Skell Valley Enterprising Landscape Narrative – Protecting Yorkshire’s unique world heritage

Appendix 1 – The green finance models and initiatives explored as part of the Skell Enterprising Landscapes Project

Landscape Enterprise Networks

Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENs) bring together businesses and farmers to invest in and deliver nature-based and agricultural measures that make local landscapes healthier, more productive and resilient. The LENs approach develops private markets for ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are benefits to humans produced by natural resources. Examples include good water quality, food production and flood mitigation.

LENs facilitate collaboration between different sectors such as food and drinks manufacturers, water companies, local authorities, national governments, farmers and land enterprises, to influence the quality of the landscape they all rely on. They provide a process for setting up landscape transactions around ecosystem services – so there are group of shared interest buyers (such as private businesses, local authorities, charities like the National Trust) at one end and the land management enterprises (such as farmers and land managers) at the other.



LENs negotiate and broker a five-step process in a cycle that aligns with the agricultural calendar:

1. Identify shared commercial land management needs, such as resilient crop production, mitigating flood risk, capacity of water catchments, biodiversity management, and quality of life;
2. Businesses invest jointly in solutions to share the cost;

3. Landowners and farmers bid together for the investment to implement the solutions;
4. Results are measured, reported and verified by external experts;
5. Cycle repeats, building a trading community that connects economic activity, local communities, and the environment.

Local Investment in Natural Capital Programme (LINC)

In 2023, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority secured £1M from the Government's LINC programme. Through the LINC programme the Government was seeking to understand how to increase green finance for nature-based solutions such as tree planting and peatland restoration and support farmers to access new private sector investments that increase resilience in the landscapes they manage. In doing so communities and businesses can benefit through improved access, supported well-being, increased resilience to flooding, a better quality of crops and removal and storage of carbon from the atmosphere.

The two-year LINC programme which runs up to 2025 is delivered locally through a partnership of North Yorkshire Council, City of York Council and other key stakeholders such as the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The programme included a number of feasibility studies and pilot projects to develop an investible pipeline of natural capital projects. The Skell Enterprising Landscapes Project was selected as one of the pilot projects

The Government has set a target to raise at least £500 million in private finance to support nature's recovery every year by 2027 in England, rising to more than £1 billion per year by 2030.

Research shows that the right investment in natural capital could grow York and North Yorkshire's natural capital economy by 31% before 2050, which would translate into £946m GVA. The natural capital economy also plays an important role in the region's bid to reach net zero emissions by 2034 and carbon negative emissions by 2040. The ambition for a carbon negative economy is laid out in a 'Routemap to Carbon Negative', a strategic document which has influenced council net zero strategies and will be used to identify the significant economic opportunities for York and North Yorkshire by striving to meet such targets.

LINC in York and North Yorkshire will run to March 2025 but seeks to unlock long-term opportunities and private funding. It will deliver across three areas:

- A Land Use Assessment and Natural Capital Investment Plan (NCIP) in collaboration with potential investors and land managers will provide a strategic plan to unlock investment in the region's natural assets
- A pipeline of investible natural capital projects and piloting projects that test mechanisms for private investment
- Business cases for a self-sustaining Accelerator Programme and a local investment vehicle to ensure the continued development of a pipeline of investible projects and reduce reliance on public funding.

The programme has now ended and the LINC programme officer Juliette Young is no longer in post.

Appendix 2 - Timeline for the project

The Skell Enterprising Landscape project has probably been one of the most challenging of the 15 sub-projects to deliver. The scope of the project has changed over the last seven years – set out why.

Date	Event
2018	Initial meeting with the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP to scope out opportunities for joint working as part of developing the Skell Valley Project
2020	3Keel commissioned to produce a costed project plan for development of a LENS in the Skell Valley over the delivery phase of the Skell Valley Project. This included some interviews with local businesses and public bodies. The costed project plan was included in the NLHF bid for the Skell Valley Project
2021-22	No progress made on delivery of the Skell Enterprising Landscape Project
May 2023	A change request was submitted to NLHF for the Skell Enterprising Landscape Project. Since the Enterprising Landscape project plan had been developed, an active LENS community and delivery entity had developed in North Yorkshire. It was operated by a new Community Interest Company, the 'Resilient Landscape Yorkshire CIC', set up to facilitate the LENS trading. The main change to the Enterprising Landscapes project was to move away from developing a local governance system for LENS trading in the Skell Valley and instead engage with the emerging North Yorkshire LENS.
October 2023	A workshop was held to agree an amended project scope and resourcing for delivery the Skell Enterprising Landscapes project. The workshop was attended by North Yorkshire Council and the LEP, the National Trust and Nidderdale National Landscape. The group reviewed the overall project rationale.
December 2023	A further change request was submitted to NLHF for the Skell Enterprising Landscape Project. This time it was to seek agreement to the Enterprising Landscape project being delivered under the new York and North Yorkshire LINC programme. In effect the proposal was that the new LINC Officer would deliver the Enterprising Landscape project but under the umbrella of the new Defra LINC programme.
February to April 2024	Next Step were commissioned to carry out further business engagement with businesses linked to the Skell Valley. They carried out interviews with 11 businesses and produced a report of their findings.
July 2024	A Skell Valley Options Appraisal workshop was held and facilitated by Juliette Young, the LINC Natural Capital Project Officer at North Yorkshire Council. The workshop was attended by NT, NNL, 3Keel and the Environment Agency. The purpose of the workshop was to agree on a preferred way forward for the LINC Skell Valley Pilot Project.

Appendix 3 – Assessment of delivery of outcomes

Original outputs for Enterprising Landscape project in 2020	Revised outputs as part of the LINC pilot in 2023	Rationale for changes	Output delivered by end of project
Development of 6 detailed individual business cases for landscape investment	Development of a single business case for landscape (ecosystem) investment across the Skell Catchment, including case studies from 6 local businesses (by October 2024)	<p>The project would deliver a detailed over-arching business case based on consultation with local businesses. The business case would include 6 case studies based on engagement with local businesses.</p> <p>Partners at North Yorks Council & LEP proposed that a single coherent business case for investment in the whole valley would be a beneficial output from this project, taking into account the rapid developments in the field of private finance and the current financial climate.</p>	No business case was produced but a project narrative was prepared as part of the business engagement work. This sets out the ecosystem services, principally flood mitigation, to be delivered along the Skell to protect the World Heritage Site and the costs of each item. This project narrative is currently featuring on the Defra Projects for Nature platform as part of a crowdfunding programme for nature projects.
Establishment of an initial LENS network, including exploration of adoption and facilitation by groups such as Ripon BID, Ripon Together, or other local organisations.	Establish an initial LENS network for the Skell Valley with methodologies and templates that can be used in similar parts of North Yorkshire (by December 2024)	<p>No change</p> <p>Given that a North Yorks LENS scheme has emerged during the past year, it offers better value for money for the project to share resources with the existing LENS community and explore opportunities for local businesses to join the scheme</p>	Although there was engagement with businesses this was not developed into an initial LENS network.

Facilitation of initial trade on ecosystems services	Facilitation of at least one trade on ecosystem services (by October 2024)	No change	As a formal LENS network was not established there was no initial trade.
Demonstration of the importance of the landscape to the local economy in ecosystem services	Understand different financial mechanisms available and benefits / disbenefits of each (by October 2024)	<p>The field of private finance has progressed significantly rapidly since the project bid was written, with Government strategy released Spring 2023.</p> <p>The project now provides the opportunity to explore the various private finance mechanisms now in development and assess how they can work locally.</p>	An Options Appraisal workshop was
Monitoring of additional outcomes (e.g. biodiversity)	Monitoring plan (November 2024)	No change	
4 workshops will be held to develop ideas, promote the trade, and share learnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial workshop with LEP/LINC team and Skell Valley project team (October 2023) - Workshop with Skell Valley Farmers network and 1-2-1 follow up discussions if needed (see timeline for step 3 above) - Co-design workshop with landowners and businesses to match up possible trades (see timeline for step 6 above) 	<p>Initial workshop already held with LINC team.</p> <p>3 further workshops proposed, alongside 1-2-1 discussions with interested local businesses and representative bodies (maximum of 10)</p> <p>Ripon BID acts as an umbrella for local businesses in the city of Ripon, and so by working with them we would aim to convene individual businesses to develop an over-</p>	

	- Local Stakeholder workshop to share learnings (January/February 2025)	arching business case for investment around common interests	
Project learning report and toolkit for transferring methodology to other areas	Report on Learnings and Next Steps (January/February 2025)	No change	
Seminar/workshop to promote end-of-project lessons learnt	LINC workshop to share project learnings (January/February 2025)	No change	
Establish a concrete governance system and business plan for maintaining and building network	Governance system and business plan to maintain Skell Valley network, including identification of public funding to provide short-medium term certainty for businesses to invest (January/February 2025)	No change	