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CONSULTANT BRIEF

Morrige Hill Country Landscape Enhancement – Green Finance Consultant

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1. Background

Restoring nature across our Protected Landscapes is vital to combat both the climate and biodiversity crises. Morridge Hill Country (MHC) is an area of upland and associated foothills in the south-west part of the Peak District National Park (PDNP).

The ambition of the MHC Landscape Enhancement project is to provide hope and inspiration for enhancing biodiversity in one of the worlds most visited national parks – The Peak District, by working with 15 private and public landowners across 3500ha to create a ‘bigger, better, and more connected natural landscape’.¹ This project is managed by a partnership of organisations led by the PDNP Authority and the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

The Vision for the Southwest Peak (included in the [National Park Management Plan 2023](#), and reflected in [the Protected Landscapes Targets & Outcomes Framework 2024](#)) is of an *“intimate mosaic of heathland, blanket bog, woodland, grassland and wetland habitats on ridges, plateaus, and slopes. This diverse mosaic, sensitively managed by private and public landowners, will support fringe species which rely on more than one habitat”*.

We will aim to restore nature with the following broad actions during the implementation phase:

1. **Peat and Blanket Bog restoration** – the moors above Buxton and Leek in MHC provide a mosaic of moorland with bog, heath and rushy pasture mixed together. The problem is the upper headwaters exhibit degraded peat and acid moorland which cover c2200ha
2. **Woodland creation and restoration** – semi natural woodland along the river corridor and tributaries linked to field woody hedges, shelterbelt woodlands and wood pasture to create a connected mosaic of native woodland rich habitat throughout the catchment. The potential is estimated at c700ha.
3. **Wetland creation** – we will help develop more connected ecological wetland networks linked with the Rivers Manifold, Dove and Hamps for wading birds, invertebrates and migratory fish. The potential is estimated at c50ha.
4. **Lowland hay meadow and species-rich grassland creation** – our ambition is to create 100ha of new hay meadows and species-rich grasslands.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) are supporting this vision with a Landscape Recovery Grant (LRG) for the development of MHC. **This two-year development stage will involve converting the partners’ restoration vision into an investable proposition.**

Landscape recovery provides the opportunity to thoroughly explore green finance investment and ecosystem markets we know are available (e.g. carbon, biodiversity net gain, water quality). By developing novel private finance access for family farms, we seek to increase local sustainable food production alongside increasing abundance of keynote species, restoring important biodiverse habitats, increasing woodland cover, and improving hydrology.

¹ Note that we are currently at 2,600 ha and 15 landowners, but we hope to extend the area to 3,500 ha once more landowners within the project area have registered their interest

2. The Green Finance Consultant

To develop this proposition, we are contracting a Green Finance Consultant to undertake a comprehensive review of available green finance opportunities and design the business model to deliver the nature restoration vision for MHC. We have a clear ambition to develop a sustainable farm business model for upland family farms which delivers nature recovery. We are interested in hearing from consultants who can develop new and innovative ways of utilising private finance for nature restoration. This could be, for example, by making our project more attractive to investors, or by demonstrating value-for-money by leveraging public funds to close the “funding gap”.

The business model is a key project deliverable, and there is a stipulation that the public funds given to the project implementation do not “crowd out” private finance. DEFRA require that the business model outline the following:

- the costs of delivering the project over the life of the Landscape Recovery grant agreement, the length of which will be bespoke, decided when preparing for the next phase of the project, but is expected to be > 20 years
- any sources of private investment - this could include income over the life of the project, for ecosystem services such as (biodiversity, carbon or ecotourism), and upfront investment from private organisations
- the conditions of any private investment such as repayment terms or monitoring and reporting needs
- how cash flow will be directed to capital projects
- how public funds can be used to make the project financially viable
- risks to the projected cashflow

Due to the broad nature of the business model we are open to organisations tendering for the work together (i.e., in a joint bid).

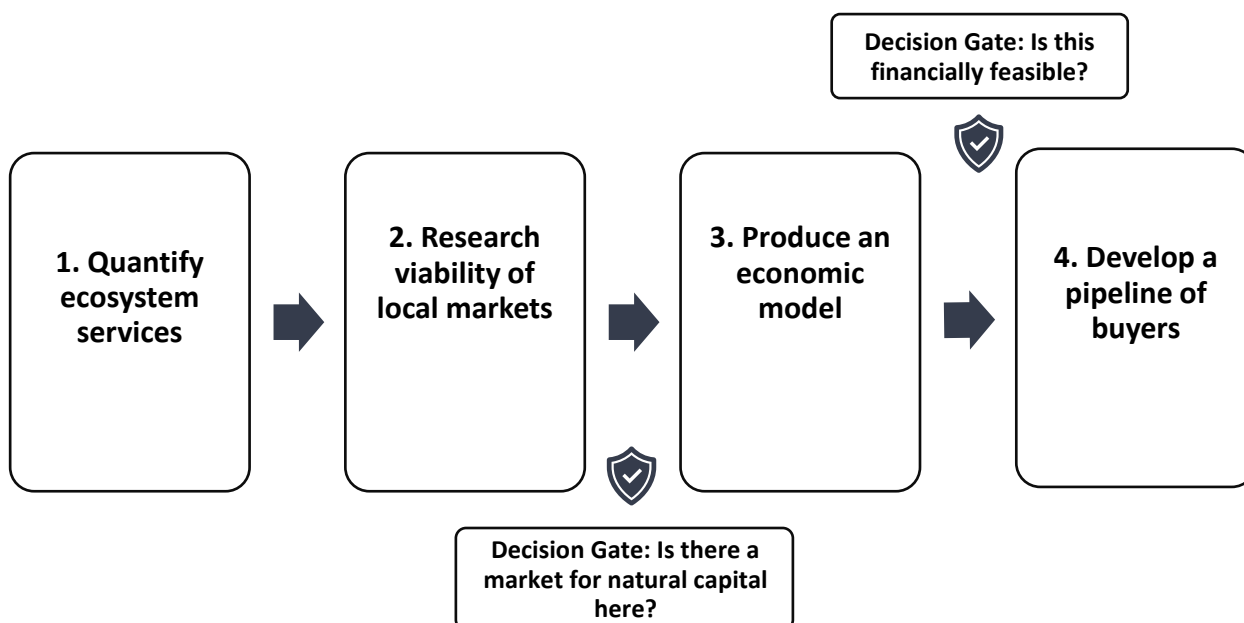


Figure 1: an outline process for the development of the business model

3. Requirements

Below we have provided details of the main work packages that need completing to develop the business model. Further information will be provided upon securing the contract.

Table 1: Business model work packages

Work Package	Detail
1. Quantify ecosystem services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building on and combining current datasets, the consultant will establish the habitat baseline, and the impacts of our proposed changes (for example: woodland creation, peatland restoration, wetland creation, and lowland hay meadow creation). - The consultant will benefit from a high-resolution habitat map produced by the PDNPA, as well as pre-existing survey data. - Quantify the amount of ecosystem services we can generate in the project area in the context of income generation via private finance. This will be possible using existing metrics (Woodland Carbon Code/Peatland Code) and Biodiversity Metric 4.0. - For water quality and natural flood management, determine whether it's feasible for us to access markets for these ecosystem services, or whether it is more appropriate to try and "bundle" these co-benefits into carbon or biodiversity credits/units.
2. Research the viability of local markets for ecosystem services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need to explore payments for carbon, biodiversity, water quality, and natural flood risk management. Whilst there are not active markets for the latter two, we need to understand whether there are buyers who will pay for these added co-benefits. - Develop the MHC "product": bundled cultural, regulating and provisioning ecosystem services generated by the project. We need to understand the appetite from buyers to purchase credits/units from the project, the price of which takes into account the special qualities of the National Park. - The consultant will analyse local planning systems and interview key stakeholders, including utilities and local property developers, to understand whether there is a viable buyer pipeline for biodiversity or water quality credits.
3. Conduct holistic financial modelling of the restoration plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The consultant will create a detailed financial model for the project that shows where it is possible for private finance to fund our core nature restoration actions. This model should test the viability of these actions for farmers/landholders in the context of their farm business. - The model should highlight where private finance is <i>not</i> viable and where public money will be required, ideally emphasising value-for-money. - The aim is to demonstrate an innovative blend of public and private funds for the Implementation Phase that does not "crowd out" private finance. - This model will need to consider payment rates and mechanisms for landowners, inflation, and volatility in environmental markets.

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| 4. Pitch any resulting proposal to interested investors and buyer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the feasibility study indicates that we have an investable model, the consultant will pitch our Implementation Phase to investors and buyers of ecosystem services. - We do not require the consultant to secure agreements, but we need to identify potential private buyers and investors, and where possible secure agreements in principle or expressions of interest. - “Investors” might pay for the delivery of the work for philanthropic or CSR purposes, or they might purchase credits/units from the project generated by ecosystem services. |
| 5. Landowner and land manager engagement and aggregation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We need to understand how viable our proposed interventions are for farm businesses in the project area. - This will mean ensuring our interventions are at the right scale and level of financial reward for individual landholdings, and “ground truthing” the results of the financial modelling. - Produce Heads of Terms for landowners, a template for contract negotiations in implementation, and recommendations for managing the landlord/tenant relationship in implementation. - We do not require the Green Finance Consultant to directly liaise with landowners, but rather through the PDNPA Property Manager. The consultant will determine what is required from landowners and work with the Property Manager to get this information. - This will include many meetings with the Property Manager and potentially with landowners/land managers in a supporting role. |
| 6. Build a business model and business case for implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write, consult and approve strategic investment business case for funding implementation. - This will involve preparing the business model in the format required by Defra, and demonstrating value-for-money from blended public and private funding across the whole-project costs. |
| 7. Implementation governance & finance (negotiations and approvals) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing the lead organisation for implementation - Provide a key set of recommendations to support the lead organisation in negotiation of project costs and business case with Defra and investors - Provide a full project plan to assist with securing approvals from Defra for each of the core Landscape Recovery project deliverables |

4. Outputs and Timescales

Table 2: outputs and timescales for the 24 month project period (July 2024 – February 2026)

Blended Finance Plan	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Nov-25	Dec-25	Jan-26	Feb-26	Mar-26	Apr-26	
Evaluate the feasibility of natural capital investment																									
Quantify ecosystem services																									
Produce an economic model																									
Site visits and workshops																									
Legal support and negotiation with MHC landowners																									
Write, consult and approve strategic investment business case for funding implementation																									
Implementation governance and finance																									

5. Costs

Up to £130,750.00 is available. An estimated breakdown of how this should be split across the outputs is given in Table 2

Table 2: Costs for delivering the outputs of the Green Finance and Business model

Output	Budget
Evaluate the feasibility of natural capital investment	£35,750.00
Quantify ecosystem services	£27,000.00
Produce an economic model	£32,000.00
Site visits and workshops	£6,000.00
Liaise on landowner contracts and Heads of Terms with Authority Property Manager	£12,000.00
Write, consult and approve strategic investment business case for funding implementation	£9,000.00
Implementation governance and finance recommendations	£9,000.00
Total: £130,750.00	

Provide a summary of qualifications/ experience, and day rate, of each person who would be delivering the contract.

Provide an itemised breakdown of costings against the elements of the brief above, including day rates for each person, travel and subsistence costs.

For queries or questions, email Suzanne Fletcher at Suzanne.fletcher@peakdistrict.gov.uk; and Hannah Turner at Hannah.turner@peakdistrict.gov.uk