

What is LENS?

The Landscape Enterprise Networks (LENS) approach links the management of landscapes to the long-term needs of business and society. It does this by helping businesses to work together to influence the quality and performance of the landscapes in which they operate.

Rather than starting with a top-down plan for the landscape, LENS looks at the landscape from the perspective of business need: what are the risks and opportunities that landscapes present to individual businesses, and therefore why should they engage?

Why it is needed?

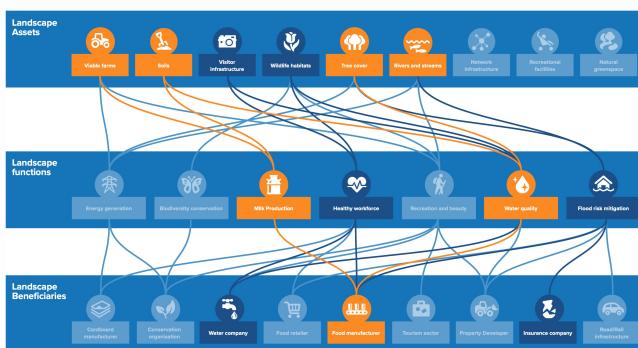
Business interests can range from resilient crop production, flood risk, carrying capacity of water catchments, management of carbon or biodiversity, to health and quality of life for their workforce. However, it has historically been difficult to engage these businesses in landscape approaches. LENS mobilises those business interests by building a series of place-based chains of transactions – ‘collaborative value chains’ – which enable groups of businesses to co-procure landscape outcomes from land-based organisations that can make things happen on the ground.

How LENS works

LENS works by establishing and managing a regional trading system of collaborative value chains, each driving specific landscape outcomes for different groupings of businesses. This system is established through three steps:

1. Network Opportunity Analysis

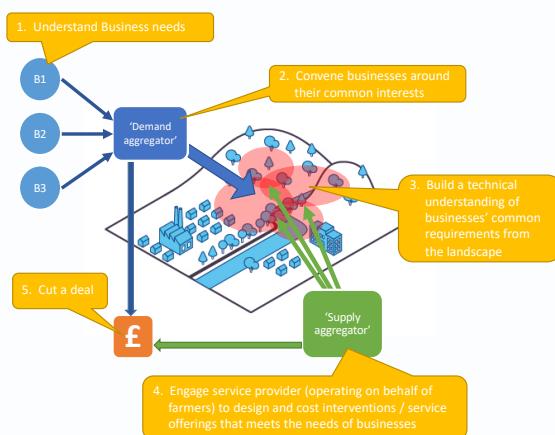
This involves a systematic process for understanding which sectors in a region have most at stake as a result of landscape performance, which landscape assets underpin that performance, and where there are cross-overs in interest for different businesses or sectors in the same landscape assets. Importantly, the objective here isn't about building up a comprehensive picture or plan. It's about using data, intelligence and insight to identify the most promising place to start building a network.



2. The Basic Operating Unit – a collaborative value chain

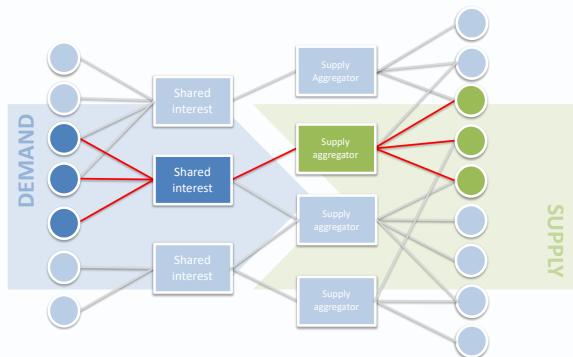
This step focuses on building a first ‘anchor’ value chain. In essence, the process involves working with ‘demand side’ interests to define a common specification for services; with the ‘supply side’ to define a service proposition; and then working with both to broker a deal.

In our experience the supply side can work best when coordinated through ‘supply aggregators’, who help land enterprises to work together as a group and create a joined-up proposition.

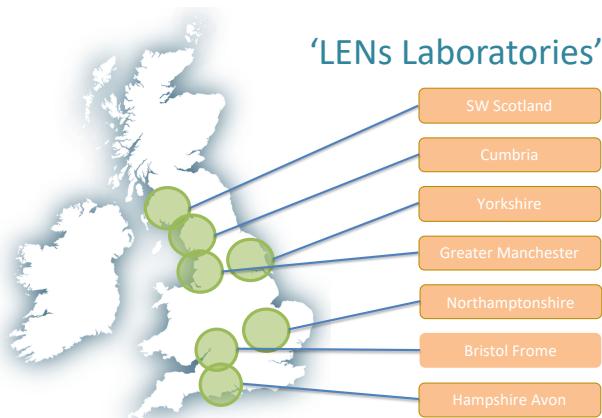


3. Growing and formalising the regional network

Building a functioning first anchor value chain creates momentum and interest, and leads naturally to both extending the first value chain – by attracting more customers and suppliers – and building the next. It is at this point that some form of organisational infrastructure, and governance, is required to manage and broker trades in an equitable, transparent, and locally accountable manner. This is an active area of development for the LENS programme.



‘LENS Laboratories’



How LENS is being developed

LENS is being developed through a set of live collaborations and projects across the UK. These ‘LENS Laboratories’ are at various stages on the three-step process described above. They include rural, urban and peri-urban landscapes, and involve interests from a range of sectors including water utilities, food manufacturers, property developers and local authorities.

The LENS Laboratories provide a practical format within which to develop and prove the LENS process, as well as a range of ancillary capabilities – for instance identifying, evidencing, and agreeing landscape interventions, working with trading platforms, exploring monitoring and auditing functions, and developing practically grounded governance models.

Research needs and collaboration with the academic community

Research and development are key needs for LENS moving forward, so that we can understand the right measures and interventions for the outcomes required, and so that we can monitor and evidence outcomes in ongoing projects. We are keen to work with the academic community to identify research needs, fill evidence gaps, and explore practical methods for monitoring and evaluation. In Cumbria we are currently running as part of a GFS-funded project on dairy resilience in the UK, led by Leeds University, and we are looking for further collaboration opportunities in this area. There is particular interest for research and evidence on landscape interventions to procure outcomes such as health and mental health, flood risk mitigation, and quality of life.

We think the best way to explore LENS is to start building a LENS process in a place where your research has a significant vested interest in landscape performance and quality. Please get in touch if you're interested in exploring ways to collaborate.