

# Building a Green Future: Transforming Land Use for Net Zero, Nature and People (LUNZ)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Programme Scope

- 1) *Are Coastal and Marine Systems (including aquaculture impact assessment and management, marine spatial management, organic enrichment and coastal eutrophication management etc.) in the scope of this funding call?*

**Answer:** This is Land use sector programme so Marine (including marine spatial management) is out of scope. Coastal research from the perspective of the land is within scope provided it aligns with the wider call objectives. Aspects of coastal eutrophication could be in scope if also aligned to the wider call scope. Meanwhile, the definition of 'agriculture' in the context of the LUNZ programme includes aquaculture.

- 2) *Would research around protecting our coastline erosion with planting "super" vegetation to act as carbon capture/sink be one of the objectives of the Call?*

**Answer:** As a coastline management and carbon sequestration activity this would be in scope provided the research is aimed at delivering to the themes of the call and exploring the plausibility of these managements actions as pathways to net zero.

- 3) *Does the call include urban land use etc?*

**Answer:** Yes, the call has three themes – soil health, agricultural systems, and land use change. All three theme have aspects and challenges relevant to the urban environment.

- 4) *How strict is that restriction of research to UK-based land use? Can we say anything useful about how land-use affects net zero if we are restricted to the UK?*

**Answer:** Research will be limited to land use options within the UK, looking at the costs, benefits, trade-offs, and unintended consequences of the various land use policy options. However, the synthesis of existing and emerging evidence, and related analyses will need to factor in the dependency of UK on food imports and the carbon footprint associated with it.

- 5) *How do we ensure that the UK does not achieve net zero by simply shifting its carbon footprint offshore through out-sourcing all of its food production overseas?*

**Answer:** While the primary focus is to reduce emissions through novel approaches to managing UK farms, land and soil, analysis of UK's offshore carbon footprint will inform policies on international research collaboration and trade agreements. In this regard, consortia may collaborate with international partners for evidence gathering and knowledge synthesis, noting that the overseas partners will not be eligible for funding through this programme. While there may be gaps in the offshore data required for the evidence analysis, offshore field research to fill these data gaps will not be in scope for this programme.

- 6) *Do net zero obligations include Scope 3 emissions, many of which will be overseas?*

**Answer:** There could be merit in looking at scope 3 emissions that have direct implications for the objectives of this programme especially those linked with the agriculture supply chain e.g., direct food imports and farm inputs such as notably fertilizers and pesticides. As stated in response to Q5, consortia may collaborate with international partners for gathering and synthesis of data on such, but the overseas collaborators will not be eligible for funding through this programme.

7) *Is fire safety of farm structure included in this hub?*

**Answer:** The Hub will be addressing research and policy questions on how to reduce farming emissions (emissions associated with farm operations). Therefore, safety of farm infrastructure, be it against fire or other hazards, would not be in scope.

8) *Would construction materials from agricultural waste be included?*

**Answer:** This would be in scope in the context of agriculture systems enabling decarbonisation of other sectors, in this case, production of low-carbon building materials. However, proposals that wish to cover this aspect will have to consider it only as part of a bigger project covering the broader scope of reducing agriculture emissions and other land use and/or soil health objectives as defined in the scope of the [call](#).

9) *Are Greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural activities included in the remit of the Hub?*

**Answer:** The Hub covers all three themes of the programme – ‘Land use change’, ‘Reducing agricultural emissions’, and ‘Soil system health and carbon dynamics’

## 2. Eligibility

10) *We're considering including an independent researcher in our consortium, but they may not be eligible to directly receive funding as set out on the UKRI opportunity page. Could they be sub-contracted?*

**Answer:** Yes, an independent researcher who is not directly eligible for UKRI funding can be part of the consortium. Subcontracting is one option, but an independent researcher may also be supported by eligible research organisations. Please see: [Applicants and co-applicants – BBSRC – UKRI](#)

11) *What options are there for funding a knowledge exchange charity for both opportunities?*

**Answer:** Funding for a knowledge Exchange charity can be done using the same approach as explained in question 10 above for specific individuals as part of the Hub consortium. The charity as an organisation is unlikely to be eligible for direct funding, but can be funded as part of the Hub for specific activities. If unsure about the eligibility of the charity, contact us by email to [tlunznp@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:tlunznp@bbsrc.ukri.org) for guidance.

12) *Can Defra arms' length bodies (PSRES) be part of consortia (Env Agency, Natural England, Forest Research, Kew etc)?*

**Answer:** PSRES can be part of consortia and for those PRSES that are currently not eligible for UKRI funding there are instructions in the call text on how to apply for eligibility. If there are specific questions needing clarity on this, please contact us by email to: [tlunznp@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:tlunznp@bbsrc.ukri.org)

13) *Given the scope and ambitions of the programme, could the eligibility for funding be extended to allow a wider diversity of partners to participate in both the hub and projects?*

**Answer:** For this programme we will follow the standard BBSRC eligibility criteria as set out in the [BBSRC guidance for applicants](#). Widening access to research funding, and supporting more diverse sources of ideas and thinking, are key strategic goals of UKRI. As part of our work towards these, we had planned to announce changes in grant eligibility with our launch of responsive mode opportunities on The Funding Service. We have recognised, however, that changing grant eligibility may have implications for research organisations and their staff. To minimise any challenges or disruptions that may arise from this transition we are taking some additional time to engage with research organisations to help them understand and prepare for the changes.

In the meantime, we have made some changes to grant roles. Find out more [here](#). Please note that these role changes will not be applicable for the Hub call as this is run through Je-S. They will only be applicable for the Research projects call which is run through The Funding Service.

14) *Would members of the successful hub consortium be fully eligible to lead and/or participate in research projects or would some restrictions apply?*

**Answer:** A member of the Hub consortium can also participate in a research project consortium as PI or Co-I. The only restriction is that the same individual cannot lead in more than one application.

15) *If there are eligibility restrictions, would this be at the level of the investigator, research department or organisation?*

**Answer:** As stated above, an individual can feature in both the Hub and a research project consortium. A research department or an institution (Research Organisation) can also feature both in the Hub consortium and in research project consortia. However, the Research Organisation (and by implication, the department or the individual) can only lead in one consortium, be it the Hub or a research project.

16) *Can PSREs lead hub applications?*

**Answer:** The Announcement of Opportunity explains a condition under which a PSRE can lead a consortium, be it the Hub or a Research Project: "PSREs with 10 or more researchers with PhDs (or equivalent) are eligible to lead on an application"

17) *To what extent can the 'big names' in the energy industry or other companies be included as a stakeholder?*

**Answer:** We cannot prescribe which industry partner an applicant should or should not include in their proposal. Industry participation is welcomed for any proposal, but companies are not eligible to receive direct UKRI funding for these opportunities.

### 3. Funding

18) *Can you provide clarification on the total funding provided to a consortium applying for the hub and research projects?*

**Answer:**

There is £6.25M for the Hub. This will cover 80% of the full Economic cost of the Hub. This means that the full budget of the Hub (100% fEC) can be up to £7.8M.

There is £14M available to support at least 4 research projects. The full cost of individual projects can range from £2.5m to £4.5M, of which the funders will provide 80%, that is £2.0M (for £2.5M project) to £3.6M (for a £4.5M project).

19) *Would funding be at 80% FEC for non-academic/PSRO etc partners, or potentially 100%?*

**Answer:** There is no blanket approval of 100% fEC funding for any category of applicants. All successful proposals will be funded at 80% fEC as a package but specific elements of the grant costs may be considered for 100% funding provided there is acceptable justification for this in the proposal. Further details will be provided to those who submit successful expressions of interest.

20) *Are there any expectations on minimum levels of partner support for proposals?*

**Answer:** There are no expected minimum or maximum levels of support to leverage from project partners, but you should consider how different partnerships can add value to the research.

21) *How can the research community usefully engage the general public, given that many people want to get involved in/encourage change and are at risk of being frustrated/wasting time, if not involved?*

**Answer:** There is no restriction on who can be engaged in the research, except that not everyone who would like to get involved can get direct funding from UKRI. Partners that are not eligible for UKRI grants can be engaged as sub-contractors. The general public can be engaged in funded activities of the Hub, such as surveys, Town Hall events, etc., for which they do not need to be listed as beneficiaries of the grant

22) *What proportion of the budget is anticipated for commissioning e.g. evidence reviews (outside of the consortium), work done directly by the consortium, work commissioned to external (non-academic) partners/sub-contractors, etc?*

**Answer:** We would not prescribe how the grant should be allocated to various components of the project. The applicants have the freedom to allocate resources as they deem most appropriate for the proposal, and they will be required to provide justification for the allocation. The justification will be part of the assessment criteria.

#### 4. Process

23) *Will there be any matchmaking by BBSRC after the EoI?*

**Answer:** BBSRC has organised Community workshops for the two calls, and these are expected to enable potential applicants to come in contact with each other and start establishing partnerships. However, we recognise that not all interested potential applicants would have attended the workshops so BBSRC will also share contact details of applicants that have submitted an EoI with each other to enable them reach out to potential partners. BBSRC will not specifically undertake match-making activities but may, on specific request and subject to mutual consent, facilitate introductions, pointing a potential consortium lead to other expertise that may be needed to complete the team, or pointing an individual with expertise in a particular area to a consortium where such expertise may be required, or where the need for it has been expressed.

24) *How can one join a consortium or communicate with a potential consortium member?*

**Answer:** After the deadline for Expressions of Interest (EoI), the list will be shared among potential applicants that have submitted an EoI to enable them to contact each other (except for individual who may have opted for their contact details not to be shared). The community workshops will also provide an opportunity for attendees to interact with each other and explore possibilities of working together.

25) *There is emphasis on a new way of working with government. Is there a cross-government (including DAs) commitment and capacity to achieve this?*

**Answer:** There is a sense of commitment across government and each of the Government partners involved in the programme has committed to providing physical resources to support the day-to-day oversight of the Hub activities in particular, and the overall implementation of the programme in general.

26) *How can research offices view the details of the full call for projects in order to best support applications, considering that information will only be available via academic leads who put in EOIs?*

**Answer:** The full calls are published on the UKRI funding finder and are accessible to ROs of all eligible institutions. However, the ROs will not see all EoIs as these will only be shared among individuals who have submitted the EoIs and have consented to their information being shared. For the strategic research projects call, being run through the new UKRI funding service, then research offices will be able to see proposals being developed in real time, one of the features of the new funding service. Please see the funding finder text for further information for research offices.

27) *What is the timeline for upcoming research project calls?*

**Answer:** The timelines are stated in the Announcement of Opportunity (see UKRI Funding Finder). Important dates to note include:

- Community Workshop – 12 June 2023 (venue tbc). Register before 16:30 on 5<sup>th</sup> June
- Deadline for Expressions of Interest – 16:00 on 11th July
- Deadline for submission of Full proposals – 16:00 on 18th October
- Estimated date for Panel Review – January 2024
- Estimated projects start date: 01 March 2024

28) *Will all partners need to be identified at the expression of interest stage?*

**Answer:** All partners do not need to be identified at the EoI stage. Where already known these can be listed but it is not a requirement. However, the full consortium members must be listed in the full proposal.

29) *Since, this is an interdisciplinary project, does it have to have public and private partners? What other stakeholders should we engage in our hub consortia?*

**Answer:** Both the Hub and research consortia are expected to involve public and private sector (industry) partners in co-design and co-delivery to ensure that the solutions and trajectories that are agreed to for the transition to net zero are considered from a broader perspective than just academic and policy/government.

30) *How do we reach out to policy makers? Will a standard letter of support be sufficient?*

**Answer:** There will be an opportunity at the community workshop and thereafter for interested applicants to engage with Government departments on how to work together and how policy makers could be represented in the consortia. This may include having follow up meetings in small groups or 1:1. Standard letters of support must not be sought. There have to be named policy and business partners in the consortium at the full proposal stage and their roles in the project must be well defined.

31) *Why is the duration for the hub limited to 40 months?*

**Answer:** The Hub is designed to start before the research projects to make sure it is well established and runs till the end of the whole programme. Setting the duration of the Hub at 40 months and the research projects at 36 months ensures that both components of the programme end at the same time. Due to funding limitations, we cannot commit any grants beyond these durations.

32) *Are research organisations limited to one expression of interest or one full proposal as lead organisation?*

**Answer:** There is no limit to the number of expressions of interest that can be submitted from any given institution. However, an institution can only lead on one full proposal, and can have co-Is on other proposals.

An individual can be listed in more than one proposal. However, the PI for a proposal can only feature in one other proposal as Co-I.

33) *Can an individual institution to apply for the research programme or it has to be part of consortia?*

**Answer:** We will, in principle, accept an application from an individual institution but the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that they meet all the requirements stated in the call text in relation to transdisciplinarity and inclusiveness, especially of industry and policy.

34) *How open are UKRI and Defra to supporting a process where the research projects of the hubs are not designed, but the process to define them is?*

**Answer:** UKRI and Government partners will appoint Programme Officers (POs) to support the consortia. The Hub consortium will be required to work together with these POs and agree on the process for commissioning the rapid response research grants, and this, in accordance with the UKRI standard practices of administering flexible funding by hubs and networks

35) *Will the research projects community workshop in June not be too late for consortium building if the expressions of interest are needed in July? Is there another focus for this workshop?*

**Answer:** Expressions of Interest do not have to wait until the workshop. The webinar on 19th April marked the opening of the call for EoI for both calls and that will continue till the indicated closing dates. The main goal of the workshop is to enable interested individuals to interact and create new partnerships to build consortia for the full proposals. Of course, attending the workshop is not a precondition to be part of a consortium as PI or Co-I but submitting an EoI is a precondition. Hence full proposals will only be invited from eligible EoIs.

## 5. Specific Questions on the Hub

36) *The call text clearly focuses on coordination and translation, but asks for 'the development of modelling tools': is this new modelling? Integration of models? Or development of user interfaces etc to make existing models more accessible?*

**Answer:** We would not prescribe the applicant's approach; however the hub team should demonstrate skills and experience in modelling and how this will generate research, tools and evidence that informs policy to explore different UK land-use scenarios and appraise the economic, energy security, biodiversity and carbon impacts of these.

37) *With the rapid reaction work to be taken on by the hub - how would this be commissioned? What do we mean by rapid reaction - 1 month, 1 week, 1 day?*

**Answer:** It is important the hub is agile and flexible to address emerging policy needs. There may be times when the hub is asked to respond flexibly to urgent and emerging policy questions, for example, acting as a sounding board, convening workshops or undertaking rapid evidence reviews. Therefore, the hub team is expected to demonstrate it has the capability and capacity in its team to respond to urgent and emerging policy questions

## 6. Specific Questions on the Research Projects

38) *Are the research grants (like the hub) able to access ESRC and other non-STEM parts of UKRI?*

**Answer:** Both calls are looking for transdisciplinary teams/ consortia therefore open to the entire UKRI research community, hence the listing of all the Research Councils in the Announcements of Opportunity on the UKRI funding finder

39) *How much of a 'portfolio approach' are you taking with regard to the research projects? Or is it solely excellent science, regardless of the policy gaps that might result?*

**Answer:** A portfolio approach will be taken in making the final funding decisions to ensure that the funded projects, cover the full scope of the programme (across the three themes).

## 7. Relation Between the Hub and the Projects

40) *Will the hub team be involved in commissioning the individual projects under the three themes?*

41) **Answer:** The Hub will manage a flexible fund for agile projects, that provide rapid responses to policy and decision-making needs throughout the programme, that have real world impact (for example, rapid evidence synthesis, convening expert advisory groups or workshops on key issues)

42) *Will the successful Hub consortium have any influence on the research projects in terms of numbers, scope, links between them, etc? What is the relationship between this hub and the research call which is to follow?*

**Answer:** The Hub will not have any influence on the selection of research proposals to be funded. However, the hub will ensure cohesion across the whole programme and develop synergistic links between research projects through events, papers and activities that provide knowledge mobilisation. This will include ensuring that the research feeds into the activities of the hub, and that the hub provides feedback to the strategic research projects.

43) *Will there be a future role of the hub in identifying topics for new calls or evaluating proposals?*

**Answer:** *The hub will work in close partnership with government departments, devolved administrations, industry and other stakeholders to identify critical policy-relevant research questions and evidence gaps and provide long term solutions, that could be considered in future activities.*

44) *If the Hub consortium identifies topics for new calls, is there an expectation for exclusion from participating in the new call? If so, how is this specified (e.g., to the specific named investigators, their departments or their whole institution?)*

**Answer:** As there will be no named ownership of any emerging research ideas from the Hub, there will be no exclusion of individuals or institutions, unless where there is obvious conflict of interest.

## 8. Other General Questions

45) *How can we commence land use change without knowing payment rates from the new support scheme?*

**Answer:** The potential land use change required to meet Net Zero is substantial and if we are to meet our Net Zero commitments action must be taken urgently. Evidence gathering around Land Use is already ongoing. It is wider than just this programme, and it is currently being used to inform Environmental Land Management Scheme payment rates which will be periodically reviewed.

46) *In what ways is this call different to the AFN Network+ and the AgZero+?*

**Answer:** The agri-food for net zero network+ (AFN Network+) focuses on building an inclusive multi-stakeholder transdisciplinary research community; identifying and prioritising key research questions responding to different climate scenarios, and gathering evidence through small feasibility study grants to gather evidence for development of a route map to net zero. The is on agri-food and the scope covers the full agri-food supply chain from primary production to consumption and waste management.

The LUNZ hub focuses on embedding science into policy, and helping to translate existing knowledge to address policy questions. The focus is on the primary production segment of the agri-food supply chain, and the scope extends beyond agri-food, to include soil and land use in the broader context. It is expected that the AFN Network+ will feed into the work of the Hub, but also benefit from the hub through feedback on policy-relevant research needs.

The LUNZ research projects on building on previous and on-going research, and adding value to it to fast-track delivery of practical solutions to users, inform policy, and close knowledge gaps. This includes adding value or building on projects in AgZero+ and other related programmes.

The AgZero+ programme looks at reducing pollution and carbon emissions from agriculture whilst enhancing biodiversity, soil and water health. Scope-wise this is very similar to LUNZ except that the latter focuses more on embedding science into policy and establishing the much-needed connectivity across related initiatives. Another difference is that land use questions in AgZero+ are limited to how these relate to managing agricultural land to minimise adverse environmental

impacts whereas LUNZ looks at land use more broadly, including re-purposing agricultural land for alternative economic activity that would contribute to achieving net zero, e.g., renewable energy.

47) *How would you ideally like the AFN's activities to contribute to developing project/hub consortia in the short-term, and work alongside the hub once that's up and running?*

**Answer:** We hope the AFN and several other existing networks consider how they can contribute to this programme. As we encourage the hub to build on and link to relevant UKRI and wider UK investments in net zero, in the key themes covered in the scope of this funding opportunity, and other investments in the building a green future theme. However, we would not prescribe if or how network members should participate in the Hub or research project consortia.

48) *Are there mechanisms that might support stakeholder attendance at workshops e.g., with T&S?*

**Answer:** We, unfortunately, are not able to provide T&S support for stakeholders to attend the workshops. We understand that this can pose a limitation to many who might want to attend.

**Please note that attending the workshop is not a precondition for participating in a consortium.** We will make the workshop outcomes available to all potential applicants that have submitted an EoI and we will share contact details of all EoIs among the applicants except where consent for such data sharing is not granted. We may also be able to facilitate contact with individuals having interest and or expertise in areas that you want to know about, but only if they permit such introductions to be made.

49) *The policy 'scenes' are at quite different places across the nations of the UK. Do we essentially ignore what we know about SFI, SFS, etc., so that we start with a 'clean slate'? Or is it about improving what we already have?*

**Answer:** The LUNZ programme is not intended to 'start on a clean slate' but rather to build on, and add value to past and current investments across the UK, that are useful for providing policy and practice solutions to net zero and other environmental and societal challenges in the areas of agriculture, land use, and soil health.

LUNZ aims to provide the underlying evidence and different administrations will consider how they can apply that new knowledge or deeper understanding to their respective delivery systems.