North East Carbon and Nature Marketplace

Marketplace Guide

Carbon and Nature Marketplace powered by:

North East Combined Authority

NET ZERO NORTH EAST ENGLAND

Developed in collaboration with: CUNDALL

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The marketplace is hosted on the Net Zero North East England website, and is accessible via the following link:

MARKETPLACE.NETZERONORTHEASTENGLAND.CO.UK

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Welcome to the Marketplace

1. Welcome to the Marketplace

Imagine a world where every pound spent on carbon offsets directly transforms your local environment, and where local projects receive funding to create green jobs, restore nature and drive real, visible climate action right here in the North East.

That's exactly what the **North East Carbon and Nature Marketplace (NECaNM)** delivers.

We are revolutionising the voluntary carbon market by keeping carbon finance local - ensuring that every project supported through the marketplace delivers tangible benefits within our region, rather than being exported to distant, unverified schemes overseas.

This report provides a high-level overview of the marketplace and its core functions, supported by a more detailed companion document – The Market Playbook – which offers in-depth guidance on key topics such as responsible offsetting, calculating and verifying emissions, re-baselining, additionality, permanence, and carbon pricing.

What is the NECaNM?

The NECaNM is a first-of-its-kind, high integrity carbon and nature marketplace designed to connect local projects with investors who want to make a real impact.

Unlike traditional markets that often funnel money into global, often opaque offset schemes, the NECaNM ensures that every credit purchased, and every project funded, **stays in the North East,** creating a **richer, greener, and more sustainable future for our region.**

Our Vision – A Local Net Zero Revolution

The NECaNM is pioneering a new way forward for voluntary carbon markets. Our goal is to shift the narrative, proving that carbon markets don't have to be faceless transactions - they can be transformational tools for local change. We are here to:

Power the North East's Net Zero Transition

Giving businesses and individuals the tools to invest in real, measurable local carbon reductions.

Raise the Integrity Standard

Cutting through greenwashing and ensuring every carbon credit and every funded project represents genuine, additional climate action.

Maximise Regional Benefits

Ensuring that carbon finance is reinvested into the local economy, creating green jobs, thriving communities, and restored landscapes.

This is not just about carbon and nature recovery. This is about building a greener, fairer, and more resilient North East.

2.
How the Marketplace Works- A Transparent & Transformative Approach

2. How the Marketplace Works – A Transparent & Transformative Approach

The NECaNM isn't just a platform – it is **a new era for climate-positive investment.** Here, businesses, local authorities, and individuals can support a wide range of high-integrity projects – from **carbon reduction and sequestration to community-led environmental and social initiatives** – knowing that every penny stays within the North East, driving real, visible impact.

No vague offsets. No hidden loopholes. Just **clear, transparent, climate-positive opportunities that directly benefit our region.**

The Power of a Local Marketplace

Traditional climate investment – whether for carbon offsets or environmental projects – often means sending money thousands of miles away, to initiatives with little visibility, limited accountability, and no guarantee of lasting impact. The NECaNM turns this model on its head by keeping everything local.

Projects are located within the North East, meaning you can see the impact of your investment.

Projects meet rigorous integrity standards, ensuring that emissions reductions and co-benefits are real, additional, and long-lasting.

Buyers and sellers can connect directly, fostering transparency, collaboration, and shared commitment to regional net zero goals.

How It Works – A Simple Yet Powerful Process

Step 1: Local Projects Apply for Listing

A range of high-quality projects – including, but not limited to, initiatives such as forestry, peatland restoration, solar farms, energy efficiency upgrades or housing retrofit schemes – can apply to be listed on the marketplace. These projects have the option to either sell carbon credits, or seek monetary funding to achieve project ambitions.

To be listed, these projects then must undergo a clear and structured due diligence process designed to uphold high environmental and ethical standards. This ensures the credibility and integrity of the marketplace while maintaining a straightforward and supportive process for project suppliers.

What this means:

- All projects must demonstrate **additionality** (they wouldn't happen without carbon finance or other private funding).
- Projects selling carbon credits must be verified by a **credible third party assessor.**
- Projects are encouraged to outline their **wider co-benefits** and must provide their **carbon reduction/removal potential** if applicable.

What does Additionality mean?

Think of additionality like funding a new public park. If the park was already going to be built anyway, your donation wouldn't make a difference. A project is only 'additional' if it genuinely needs carbon finance or other private funding to go ahead - meaning your offset purchase or project donation is truly creating a new positive impact.

Step 2: The Value Matrix Assesses Impact

Every project is assessed using the **NECaNM Value Matrix,** a bespoke tool designed to evaluate not just the carbon impact, but the wider benefits to people and nature.

Projects are scored across five categories:

- **Social Value & Community Benefits** – Does the project create jobs, provide skills training, or support the local economy?
- **Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement** – Does it restore habitats, protect wildlife, or improve ecosystems?
- **Climate Resilience & Adaptation** – Will it help the region adapt to extreme weather or future climate challenges?
- **Air & Water Quality Improvements** – Does it reduce pollution, improve water retention, or enhance filtration?
- **Waste Reduction & Circular Economy** – Does it reduce waste, recycle materials, or promote a circular economy?

Each project receives its own **Value Profile** based on these scores, helping buyers and funders understand the full picture of a project's impact.

What is a Value Profile?

Think of a Value Profile like a project's sustainability report card. It doesn't just tell you how much carbon it reduces - it gives you a complete picture of all the environmental and social benefits the project delivers.

Step 3: Buyers Choose Their Impact

Once projects are listed, buyers (businesses, organisations or individuals) can purchase carbon credits or fund projects that align with their sustainability goals.

Whether a company wants to offset its carbon footprint, a local business wants to invest in regional net zero efforts, or an individual wants to fund a high-impact green project, the marketplace provides clear, trustworthy options.

Buyers benefit from:

- **Transparency** – Every project is fully documented, with clear verification and reporting upon request.
- **Real Local Impact** – Unlike generic carbon offsets, these projects deliver visible improvements in the North East.
- **Flexible Purchasing –** Buyers can choose projects based on their priorities, whether it's carbon sequestration, social value, biodiversity, nature recovery, or other environmental benefits.

Step 4: Ensuring Ongoing Integrity & Accountability

Some international carbon and nature markets have a history of greenwashing - but not here. The NECaNM has clear, structured processes in place to mitigate the risks of greenwashing from both buyers and sellers.

To ensure the credibility of projects selling carbon credits, the marketplace:

- **Conducts strict Due Diligence** – Every project is assessed before listing to ensure high-integrity, additional carbon savings.
- **Uses a Two-Stage Assessment Process** – Ensuring projects meet their claims before and after listing.
- **Maintains Ongoing Monitoring** – If concerns arise (such as greenwashing, misrepresentation, or project failure), then the marketplace will investigate and delist projects that don't meet the standards.
- **Encourages Public Engagement** – Buyers, stakeholders, and communities can see and understand the impact of the projects they support.

What is Greenwashing?

Imagine a company claiming to be 'eco-friendly' while secretly polluting more than ever. Greenwashing happens when environmental claims are exaggerated or misleading. The NECaNM is built to eliminate greenwashing, ensuring all projects meet real, measurable climate standards.

3.
How to List a Project on the Marketplace

3. How to List a Project on the Marketplace

The NECaNM provides a structured and transparent process for listing high-integrity projects that deliver measurable climate action and regional co-benefits. If you're a project supplier interested in listing an opportunity, this section outlines everything you need to know, from eligibility requirements to the step-by-step process of getting your project approved.

Who Can List a Project?

The marketplace is open to project developers, landowners, businesses, and organisations delivering carbon reduction, removal, or other climate-positive initiatives within the North East region. All projects must align with the marketplace's integrity principles, ensuring they are high-quality, verifiable, and deliver additional environmental or social value, while maximising co-benefits for the local environment and communities.

Eligible Project Types:

- ✓ Nature-Based Solutions (e.g. afforestation, peatland restoration).
- ✓ Renewable Energy (e.g. solar, wind, hydro).
- ✓ Energy Efficiency & Built Environment (e.g. community energy schemes, housing retrofit schemes).
- ✓ Waste & Circular Economy Initiatives (e.g. industrial decarbonisation, resource recovery).
- ✓ Other innovative carbon reduction projects with measurable impact.
- ✓ Projects seeking funding to deliver environmental or social benefits without generating or selling carbon credits.

Ineligible Projects:

- × Projects outside the North East region.
- × Carbon credit projects that lack third-party verification or credible monitoring mechanisms.
- × Projects that do not demonstrate additionality (i.e. they would have happened anyway without carbon finance or other private funding).

Defining the North East Region

For the purposes of project eligibility, the North East region refers specifically to the local authority areas covered by the North East Combined Authority. These include:

- **Northumberland**
- **North Tyneside**
- **Newcastle upon Tyne**
- **South Tyneside**
- **Gateshead**
- **Sunderland**
- **County Durham**

Projects must be physically located within one or more of these areas to be eligible for listing on the marketplace. This ensures that the environmental and social benefits are retained within the North East region, while reducing the risk of greenwashing through enhanced local transparency and accountability.

The Project Listing Process

The process for listing a project on the marketplace is designed to be structured yet supportive, ensuring that only credible, high-impact projects – whether generating carbon credits or simply seeking funding - are showcased to potential supporters. The steps are as follows:

Step 1: Project Information

Project suppliers are asked to complete the **Project Due Diligence Template**, a structured form that collects essential project details including project type, carbon savings (if applicable), delivery partners and verification or monitoring arrangements. This ensures that the **core integrity standards** required for marketplace listing are clearly evidenced.

The template is straightforward and designed to help project suppliers present their work in the best light. Supporting documents can be attached as needed to reinforce key claims. The more thoroughly the information is provided, the more efficiently the due diligence review can proceed and the quicker the listing process.

Step 2: Project Due Diligence

Once submitted, the information is reviewed by a **North East Combined Authority (North East CA)** representative using the **Due Diligence Matrix**. This tool applies a consistent set of checks across all projects to ensure transparency and quality.

This assessment takes place in two stages:

- First Assessment: An initial review to identify any gaps, clarifications or outstanding items.
- Second Assessment: A follow-up review once the project supplier has responded to any required actions.

Following the second assessment, North East CA will present the proposed project to the Project Advisory Board. The Project Advisory Board includes representatives from all seven constituent local authorities within the North East CA region, providing both regional oversight and local representation to ensure robust scrutiny of project listings.

Step 3: Project Value Assessment

Carbon credit project suppliers are also asked to complete the **Value Matrix Project Supplier Information Template**, which is designed to gather information about the wider **co-benefits of the project** – such as social value, biodiversity impact, climate resilience, and more.

This is the supplier's opportunity to showcase the broader value of their project beyond carbon savings. The more detailed and well-evidenced the responses, the more likely the project will perform strongly in the **Value Matrix** assessment.

The **Value Matrix** is a structured assessment tool used to evaluate a project's social and environmental co-benefits across a set of clearly defined criteria. It provides a consistent, transparent way of understanding how a project contributes beyond just carbon reduction.

A **North East CA representative** will then use the information provided by the supplier to score the project against each value category. These scores then form the basis of the **Value Profile**, a visual summary of the project's overall contribution to people, place and the planet.

Supplying clear and relevant supporting evidence – such as impact assessments, community engagement records, or biodiversity strategies can significantly enhance the strength of the project's profile and appeal to potential buyers.

Step 4: Value Profile Creation

Once the **Value Matrix** has been completed, a **Value Profile** is generated to summarise the project's overall performance across a range of environmental and social value categories.

This profile is designed to clearly communicate the project's co-benefits to prospective buyers, increasing visibility and appeal on the marketplace.

Each **Value Profile** includes a radar chart and summary scores across the five key value categories:

- Social Value & Community Benefits
- Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement
- Climate Resilience & Adaptation
- Air & Water Quality Improvement
- Waste Reduction & Circular Economy

The **Value Profile** becomes a core part of the project's marketplace listing, providing buyers with a clear, at-a-glance overview of the project's wider impacts beyond carbon.

Step 5: Project Listing

Once the project's **Value Profile** is finalised and all **due diligence** requirements have been met, the project can be listed on the marketplace.

The listing will showcase the project's verified carbon benefits alongside its broader environmental and social value, helping it stand out to potential buyers.

Being featured on the marketplace increases the project's visibility within a **trusted, regionally focused platform,** making it easier to connect with buyers seeking to buy high-quality carbon credits or fund high-integrity projects.

The project listing represents a key milestone in the process, signalling that the project has met the **necessary integrity standards** and is ready for external engagement.

Step 6: Continued Project Enhancement

After a project is listed, the marketplace encourages continued engagement through updates when new or improved information becomes available.

This **flexible, ongoing process** gives project suppliers the opportunity to strengthen their **Value Profile** over time – highlighting updates such as verification milestones, enhanced co-benefits, or new supporting evidence.

Regular updates help ensure that buyers have access to the most **accurate and up-to-date information,** reinforcing transparency and supporting more informed purchasing decisions.

Projects selling carbon credits must regularly update their project listing to remove credits that are no longer available. For example, if they have been sold via an alternative arrangement or are otherwise unavailable for purchase.

Ultimately, this dynamic approach benefits both project suppliers and buyers – building long-term credibility, **strengthening trust and helping to maximise the project's impact.**

Streamlined Project Listing for Marketplace Success

Step 1: Project information

The project supplier provides the required project information to North East CA through the Project Due Diligence Template.

Step 2: Project due diligence

The North East CA representative undertakes the Due Diligence Assessment to determine if the project is eligible for listing.

Step 3: Project value assessment

The project's co-benefits are assessed using a structured evaluation framework, providing a consistent comparison of impact across all listed projects.

Step 4: Value Profile Creation

A visual summary is created to clearly communicate the project's overall social and environment co-benefits, helping buyers quickly understand its broader impact.

Step 5: Project listing

The project is listed on the marketplace, highlighting its verified carbon and co-benefits, ready for engagement with potential buyers whose sustainability goals align with the project's impact.

Step 6: Continued project enhancement

Projects can strengthen their presence on the marketplace by sharing new milestones or enhanced co-benefits, keeping their listing fresh, relevant, and appealing to potential buyers.

Benefits of Listing on the Marketplace

Access to a High-Integrity Carbon and Nature Market

The marketplace is designed to attract responsible buyers looking for high-quality, transparent carbon credits or projects requiring funding.

Showcase Co-Benefits

The Value Matrix ensures projects are not only recognised for carbon savings but also for their broader contributions to society and the environment.

Increased Local Investment

Buyers are incentivised to invest in regional projects, keeping financial and environmental benefits within the North East.

Transparency & Credibility

Listing a project on a structured, independently assessed marketplace enhances trust and credibility with stakeholders.

By following these steps, project suppliers can successfully list their initiatives, attract investment, and contribute to a stronger, more resilient, and more sustainable North East.

4. How to Purchase Credits

4. How to Purchase Credits

The NECaNM provides a **transparent and high-integrity platform** where buyers can discover and connect with projects that deliver **meaningful carbon reductions and wider environmental and social co-benefits.** Unlike traditional carbon markets, which often rely on international offsetting schemes, this marketplace ensures that investment stays within the North East, creating tangible benefits for the region's **communities, biodiversity, and climate resilience.**

This section outlines how individuals and organisations seeking to buy carbon credits can interact with projects listed on the marketplace, ensuring they can make informed, responsible offsetting decisions that align with their sustainability goals.

Who Can Engage With the Marketplace?

The marketplace is designed for a wide range of organisations and stakeholders looking to invest in high-quality, North East-based carbon, nature and social value projects, including:

- **Businesses & Corporations** – Companies looking to support climate and environmental initiatives as part of their wider sustainability or net zero strategies.
- **Local Authorities & Public Sector Organisations** – Public bodies seeking high-integrity projects that deliver measurable regional benefits for climate, nature and communities.
- **Developers & Infrastructure Projects** – Organisations required to invest in environmental or community projects as part of planning conditions or regulatory commitments.
- **Individuals & Community Groups** – People and grassroots organisations wishing to back local action on climate and nature, with the assurance that their support leads to real, lasting impact.

While all projects are based in the North East, individuals and organisations from outside the region are both welcome and encouraged to support them – whether by purchasing carbon credits or funding impactful initiatives. Unlike many global schemes that lack transparency, the NECaNM offers a clear, high-integrity alternative with locally verified projects and visible, lasting outcomes.

By providing transparent project information, the marketplace enables buyers to align their investments with their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals.

What are Buyers Supporting?

When engaging with carbon credit projects listed on the marketplace, buyers are investing in far more than carbon reduction alone - they are supporting initiatives that deliver **wider co-benefits for biodiversity, communities, and climate resilience.**

Unlike conventional offsetting platforms, where credits may be purchased without visibility of the underlying project, the NECaNM ensures that all listed projects have been assessed through the Value Matrix. This provides buyers with clear insight into each project's environmental and social contributions, ensuring responsible and high-integrity climate action.

Key Features of Marketplace Projects:

Transparent & Verified

All projects undergo rigorous due diligence and independent verification.

Regional Impact

Every project is based within the North East, ensuring benefits stay within the local area.

Co-Benefit Focused

Projects are evaluated on biodiversity, social value, circular economy principles, and more.

Buyers can browse projects based on their sustainability priorities, selecting those that align with their broader environmental and corporate responsibility goals.

The Process for Buyers

The marketplace serves as a platform for connecting buyers and project suppliers, ensuring transparency and integrity in project selection. While transactions occur externally, the marketplace facilitates access to credible projects through the **structured due diligence and evaluation process.**

Step 1: Explore Verified Projects

Buyers can explore a range of verified projects, each with a detailed **Value Profile** outlining its expected environmental and social impact.

The **Value Profile** highlights how the project performs across key co-benefit categories, including biodiversity conservation, social value, and climate resilience.

Buyers can compare projects based on these attributes, selecting those that align with their sustainability strategies.

Step 2: Align Value

Each project listed on the marketplace has passed the structured due diligence process, providing assurance that it meets the high standards required for inclusion.

Buyers can explore the project's **Value Profile** in more detail, which presents a clear and consistent summary of its performance against key impact areas including:

- **Carbon Reduction Impact** – The project's estimated lifetime contribution to emission reduction or removal.
- **Co-Benefit Scores** – Performance across wider value areas including social value, biodiversity, climate resilience, air and water quality and circular economy.

This transparent and standardised format empowers buyers to make more informed, responsible investment decisions, aligned with their climate and sustainability goals.

Step 3: Register for the Marketplace

If a project captures a potential buyer's interest, they will need to **register for a buyer account** on the marketplace.

The registration process is simple and user-friendly, but includes a short section asking buyers to outline their existing efforts to reduce their own environmental impact. This helps ensure that the marketplace attracts buyers who are genuinely committed to sustainability - prioritising internal action alongside project funding or carbon credit purchases.

Once registered, buyers will be reviewed and approved by a representative from North East CA. If any further clarification is needed, the team may follow up with a brief request for additional information regarding the buyer's environmental commitments.

Step 4: Contact the Supplier

Buyers interested in supporting a specific project can reach out to the listed project supplier directly using the contact details provided on the marketplace listing to discuss a potential purchase and learn more about the project's benefits.

The marketplace ensures buyers have access to all the necessary project details to engage in meaningful discussions with suppliers about potential involvement.

If none of the listed projects align with a buyer's specific interests or goals, they can use the 'Request a Project' feature to outline the type of initiative they would like to support. A representative from North East CA will review the request and collaborate with existing or prospective project developers to explore whether the proposed project - or a similar opportunity - can be brought to life and listed on the marketplace.

Step 6: Report Responsibly

Buyers are encouraged to align their engagement with listed projects as part of a broader, credible sustainability strategy. The marketplace supports responsible climate action by promoting the use of **high-quality carbon credits** as a complement to - rather than a substitute for - direct emission reductions.

Step 5: Confirm Engagement

Once interest is established, buyers and project suppliers can finalise the terms of engagement directly, outside of the marketplace platform.

This step allows for **open dialogue** around the project's impact, how contributions will be used, and how the partnership aligns with the buyer's **broader sustainability goals.**

While the marketplace does not facilitate transactions directly, it plays a vital role by connecting buyers with **high-integrity, pre-vetted projects that meet rigorous due diligence standards.**

The Buyer Process

Step 1: Explore verified projects

Buyers browse a range of projects, each with a clear Value Profile summarising environmental and social benefits - helping to find the best fit for their sustainability goals.

Step 2: Align value

Buyers can explore each project's Value Profile in more detail, gaining a clear and consistent summary of its carbon impact and wider co-benefits to help guide informed, aligned investment decisions.

Step 3: Register for the marketplace

Buyers create accounts and outline their existing sustainability efforts, before being reviewed and approved by a North East CA representative.

Step 4: Contact the supplier

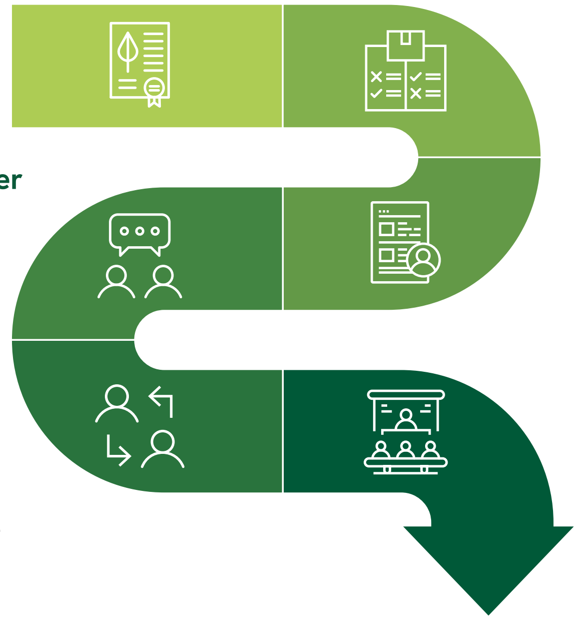
Buyers reach out to the project supplier directly using the contact information provided on the marketplace listing to discuss potential collaboration and learn more about the project's benefits.

Step 5: Confirm engagement

Buyers and suppliers connect directly to agree terms, discuss project impact, and ensure alignment with sustainability goals.

Step 6: Report responsibly

Buyers are encouraged to use the marketplace's high quality credits to complement, not replace, their own emission reductions - supporting credible, responsible climate action.



To enhance transparency and climate leadership, buyers are also encouraged to publicly disclose their environmental contributions in line with recognised reporting frameworks, such as:

- Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi)
- Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative
- Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures
- UK Government DESNZ Principles for Voluntary Carbon & Nature Market Integrity

By engaging with verified, high-integrity projects through the marketplace, buyers can strengthen their environmental credibility while supporting real, measurable impact.

Ensuring Transparency & Integrity in Climate Action

Unlike many voluntary carbon markets which allow for opaque trading of credits, the NECaNM ensures that every listed project has undergone a rigorous due diligence and evaluation process. This means buyers can be confident in the quality, integrity, and real-world impact of the projects they choose to support.

No Hidden Transactions

Buyers engage directly with project suppliers, ensuring full transparency.

Due Diligence Verified

All projects listed pass a strict approval process before inclusion.

No Greenwashing

Buyers are guided to ensure that their involvement in projects supports credible, responsible climate action.

By engaging with projects listed on the NECaNM, buyers contribute to regional sustainability, drive local environmental improvements, and ensure their investment delivers real, lasting impact.

5. Funding-Only Projects

5. Funding-Only Projects

Not all impactful projects are actively seeking to generate carbon credits for sale – yet many still deliver **exceptional environmental and social benefits** that align with the values of purpose-driven organisations and individuals. To broaden opportunities for both project developers and potential funders, the marketplace includes a **dedicated pathway** for projects seeking funding, i.e. **'funding-only' projects.**

What are 'Funding-Only' Projects?

Funding-only projects are **high-integrity** nature-based or community-focused initiatives that are not actively generating or selling carbon credits but are still **delivering measurable co-benefits** – such as habitat restoration, community engagement, biodiversity enhancement or climate resilience. Instead of offering credits for offsetting, these projects are looking for **financial contributions or partnership support** to bring their work to life.

While they may not follow the same certification or offset methodologies as carbon-credit projects, these initiatives are **no less impactful.** In fact, they often deliver **hyper-local benefits**, helping to **restore landscapes, support rural economies and enhance the natural capital of the North East region.**

Benefits for Project Developers

Participating in the marketplace allows funding-only projects to:

- ✓ **Gain visibility with value-aligned businesses** and organisations seeking to invest in local impact.
- ✓ **Attract funding and support** from responsible buyers who want to contribute to regional nature recovery and social value outcomes.
- ✓ **Access a high-integrity, credible platform** that ensures due diligence and presents projects in a professional and standardised way.

Benefits for Buyers and Funders

For buyers and supporters, funding-only projects offer a powerful opportunity to:

- ✓ **Invest in high-integrity initiatives** that create tangible environmental and social outcomes.
- ✓ **Demonstrate local impact** and leadership on nature and climate action.
- ✓ **Support causes** that reflect broader ESG goals – even when carbon offsetting is not the primary driver.
- ✓ **Develop strategic partnerships** with on-the-ground project developers and communities.

The Process

The pathway for **funding-only projects** has been designed to maintain the integrity and quality standards of the marketplace while providing a **flexible route** for initiatives that are not currently offering verified carbon credits but are seeking funding to **deliver measurable environmental or social benefits.**

Step 1: Project Information

Project suppliers provide the relevant information about their initiative through a **dedicated submission process.** This includes key details about the purpose of the project and the positive outcomes it aims to deliver. While carbon credit data is not required, the **clearer and more compelling the information provided,** the more likely it is to **attract potential funders.**

Step 2: Initial Screening

While these projects are not selling carbon credits, a **light-touch due diligence process** is still applied to ensure they are **high-quality, credible and aligned with the ethos of the marketplace.** This screening helps protect funders from reputational risks and ensures that only **trustworthy, value-driven initiatives** are featured.

Step 3: Project Listing

Once approved, the project is listed on the marketplace under a dedicated **Projects Seeking Funding** section. Each listing includes a **project summary, its objectives, alignment with relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs),** and a **clear funding target.** This makes it easy for buyers or funders to identify initiatives that match their sustainability goals and values.

Step 4: Connect and Collaborate

Interested buyers, sponsors or funders can contact the project supplier directly using the details provided. Any financial contributions or partnership arrangements are made outside the marketplace, allowing for **flexible, direct engagement** tailored to the needs of both parties.

Step 5: Showcase Impact

Funders are encouraged to share the projects they support as part of their wider sustainability and social value strategies. Highlighting contributions to high-integrity, local initiatives can **strengthen ESG reporting, demonstrate alignment with the UN SDGs and build trust with stakeholders.** Supporting funding-only projects also offers a meaningful way to deliver **real, place-based impact** beyond carbon reduction.

The Funding-only Project Process

Step 1: Project information

Project suppliers provide key details about their initiative and intended outcomes through a simple submission process.

Step 2: Initial screening

Each project is reviewed to ensure it is credible, impactful, and aligned with the ethos of the marketplace.

Step 3: Project listing

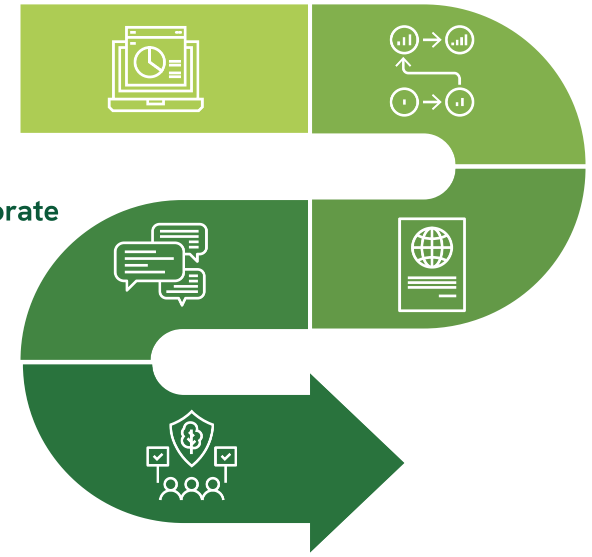
Approved projects are listed under a dedicated section of the marketplace, outlining clear objectives, funding targets, and SDG alignment.

Step 4: Connect & collaborate

Funders reach out directly to project suppliers to discuss support - outside the marketplace platform.

Step 5: Showcase impact

Funders can highlight their support for local, high-integrity projects in ESG reporting and sustainability communications.



Why This Matters

Opening up the marketplace to funding-only projects ensures that **impact isn't limited by certification or credit status.** It provides a platform for powerful initiatives to be recognised and supported, driving positive change across the North East and giving funders a **trusted, transparent way to contribute.**

Whether you're restoring wetlands, building green infrastructure, improving public green spaces, or working with communities on climate adaptation – if your project delivers measurable benefits, the marketplace offers a route to **connect with like-minded supporters** who want to invest in lasting, meaningful outcomes.

6.
Why Choose the NECaNM?

6. Why Choose the NECaNM?

The NECaNM is not just another carbon marketplace - it is a **transformative, high-integrity platform** designed to deliver **real, measurable impact** within the North East of England. Unlike conventional voluntary carbon markets, where investments often fund international projects with limited local oversight, the NECaNM keeps investment in the region, ensuring that the environmental and social benefits of carbon finance are felt where they matter most.

By choosing the NECaNM, organisations, businesses, and individuals can confidently invest in carbon reduction, nature recovery and social value projects that align with the highest standards of **integrity, transparency, and regional benefit.**

A Marketplace Designed for Regional Impact

Keeping Benefits Local

One of the biggest differentiators of the NECaNM is that it exclusively supports projects within the North East.

This ensures that:

- ✓ Carbon finance is reinvested into the local economy, creating jobs and driving sustainable growth.
- ✓ Biodiversity and green spaces are enhanced within the region, rather than sending investments abroad.
- ✓ Communities benefit directly, with improved air quality, infrastructure, and access to nature.

Unlike global offsetting schemes, which often lack direct oversight, the NECaNM ensures that projects deliver measurable impact within the administrative boundary of the Combined Authority, creating a stronger, more resilient regional environment.

A High Integrity Marketplace You Can Trust

Stringent Due Diligence & Verification

Every project listed on the marketplace undergoes a rigorous two-stage due diligence process, ensuring that only credible, high-integrity projects are listed. This protects buyers and sellers from greenwashing, false claims, and substandard carbon credits.

Built on Transparency & Accountability

Unlike opaque carbon markets where credits are traded without visibility, the NECaNM provides full transparency into every listed project. Buyers can see who is supplying the credits, what impact they will have, and how they align with their sustainability goals.

No Speculative Trading or Intermediary Mark-Ups

The NECaNM does not facilitate speculative trading of credits or allow carbon offsets to be resold multiple times. Instead, it directly connects buyers with project suppliers, ensuring that every transaction contributes directly to tangible climate action.

Due Diligence as an Ongoing Process

Once a project is listed, due diligence does not stop. The NECaNM maintains ongoing oversight to ensure projects remain compliant with integrity standards. If new risks emerge, such as greenwashing concerns or underperformance, the marketplace retains the right to remove or re-evaluate listings.

Investing in More Than Just Offsetting

Beyond Carbon: Supporting Co-Benefits

While carbon reduction is at the heart of the marketplace, projects are evaluated holistically through the **Value Matrix to assess their co-benefits.** This ensures that buyers are investing in projects that provide wider environmental and social value, including:

Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement

Projects that protect and restore natural habitats, enhance ecological connectivity, and support native species and regional nature recovery.

Air & Water Quality Improvement

Projects that reduce pollution, enhance natural filtration systems, and improve overall environmental health.

Social Value & Community Benefits

Initiatives that create local jobs, provide training opportunities, and improve community well-being.

Waste Reduction & Circular Economy

Initiatives that reduce landfill dependency, integrate sustainable material use, and promote long-term behavioural change around resource efficiency.

Climate Resilience & Adaptation

Projects that enhance flood protection, drought resilience, and sustainable land management.

By evaluating projects based on all these factors, the NECaNM raises the standard for carbon finance, ensuring investments deliver maximum impact across multiple sustainability goals.

Empowering Responsible Carbon Investment

The NECaNM provides guidance and resources to ensure that carbon finance is used ethically and effectively. While carbon offsetting plays an important role in achieving net zero goals, it should always be combined with direct emissions reductions. Businesses and organisations should prioritise reducing their own emissions wherever possible and use high-quality offsets to complement these efforts.

The marketplace promotes a responsible approach to carbon finance by encouraging:

- **Carbon Offsetting as Part of a Holistic Climate Strategy** – Businesses are encouraged to pursue direct emissions reductions first and use offsetting to address any remaining emissions they cannot yet eliminate.
- **Transparent Reporting** – Ensuring that companies disclose their offsetting strategies in alignment with best practices like the SBTi, VCMI and TCFD, providing clarity on how carbon finance is being used.
- **High-Quality Project Selection** – Encouraging buyers to invest in projects that align with their broader sustainability commitments and provide demonstrable co-benefits beyond carbon reduction.

By aligning with global integrity initiatives while focusing on local impact, the NECaNM helps buyers take credible, high-integrity climate action while ensuring carbon finance delivers real, lasting benefits for the North East.

Driving a New Era of Local Climate Action

The NECaNM is not just another carbon platform - it represents a bold, transformative shift in how carbon finance is done. For too long, carbon markets have been dominated by distant, hard-to-verify projects, where the financial and environmental benefits often leave the region. The NECaNM changes the game by keeping investment, impact, and accountability within the North East, ensuring that every pound spent contributes to the region's sustainability, economy, and resilience.

By bringing together high-quality carbon reduction projects, transparent due diligence, and a clear value assessment framework, the marketplace offers a new model for responsible carbon investment - one that prioritises real, lasting impact.

Integrity First

Every project undergoes a rigorous evaluation, ensuring only credible and high-impact initiatives are listed.

Local Impact, Global Significance

Carbon finance stays in the North East, enhancing regional biodiversity, creating jobs, and boosting climate resilience.

Beyond Carbon: A Holistic Approach

The Value Matrix ensures that buyers see the full picture, rewarding projects that deliver environmental, social, and economic co-benefits.

Empowering Businesses & Communities

Whether you're a corporate buyer, local authority, or project developer, the marketplace provides a clear, structured way to invest in meaningful change.

This is more than just offsetting - it's about building a better future for the North East. The NECaNM is proof that carbon finance can be local, transparent, and transformative, setting a new standard for integrity-driven action.

The future of climate finance isn't just about reducing emissions - it's about ensuring that every investment makes a difference where it matters most. That's what the NECaNM delivers.

Be part of the movement.
Get involved today.

7. Key Concepts & Definitions

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To fully understand the NECaNM and how it revolutionises carbon offsetting, it is important to break down some of the key concepts that underpin voluntary carbon and nature markets. Below, we provide clear definitions on some of the key concepts, as well as outlining how the NECaNM is setting a new standard in each area.

What are Carbon Credits?

Definition:

A carbon credit represents one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e) that is either reduced or removed from the atmosphere. These credits are generated by projects that actively cut emissions, such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, or nature-based solutions like tree planting and peatland restoration.

A carbon credit is like paying someone to plant a tree for you after a car journey that you could not avoid. It helps balance out those remaining emissions that are difficult to eliminate, by supporting something that reduces/sequesters emissions elsewhere.

How the NECaNM is Different:

Most carbon credits are purchased from projects abroad, meaning buyers in the UK have little visibility or influence over their impact. The NECaNM ensures all projects are based within the North East, meaning local businesses and organisations can directly support climate action in their own communities.

Additionality – Ensuring Your Purchase Creates Real Impact

Definition:

A project is only "additional" if it would not have happened without carbon finance. This means that buying a carbon credit directly enables new carbon reductions or removals rather than funding something that was going to happen anyway.

Imagine a school needing donations to build a playground. If they already had full funding, your donation wouldn't change anything. But if your money is the reason the playground gets built, that's 'additionality'.

How the NECaNM is Different:

Projects listed on the NECaNM must prove their additionality before they can be approved. This ensures that every credit drives new climate action, rather than funding projects that would have happened regardless.

Permanence – Making Sure Carbon Stays Locked Away

Definition:

Permanence refers to how long carbon remains stored or avoided. For example, a forest project must ensure trees won't be cut down within a few years, or the carbon would simply be re-released into the atmosphere.

Think of storing carbon like putting money in a savings account. If you withdraw the money too soon, it defeats the purpose of saving. Similarly, carbon storage must be long-term to be effective.

How the NECaNM is Different:

The NECaNM assesses permanence risks for each project, ensuring that appropriate safeguards and monitoring plans are in place to guarantee long-term carbon sequestration.

Double Counting – Avoiding Used Carbon Credits

Definition:

Double counting occurs when the same carbon credit is claimed by more than one party, effectively exaggerating the amount of emission reductions that have taken place.

Imagine two people splitting the bill at a restaurant. If one person pays but they both claim they paid the full amount, that's double counting.

How the NECaNM is Different:

Every project in the marketplace must demonstrate that credits are not being sold multiple times. This ensures that each carbon credit represents a unique, real climate action.

Co-Benefits – The Wider Impacts Beyond Carbon

Definition:

Most carbon offset projects don't just reduce emissions - they often bring additional benefits to communities, nature, and the economy. These co-benefits can include:

- Job creation and skills training
- Biodiversity protection and habitat restoration
- Improved air and water quality
- Enhanced climate resilience

Think of a tree planting project. Not only does it capture carbon, but it also improves air quality, provides a home for wildlife, and offers green spaces for people.

How the NECaNM is Different:

The marketplace goes beyond just carbon - it evaluates every project using the Value Matrix, assessing its social, environmental, and economic benefits. This means buyers can choose projects based on their full impact, not just their carbon reduction potential.

The Value Matrix – A Gamechanger in Carbon Market Transparency

Definition:

The Value Matrix is a tool designed to score projects across multiple sustainability criteria, ensuring that buyers get a holistic view of each project's real impact. Projects are assessed across five key areas:

- **Social Value & Community Benefits** – How does it support local people?
- **Biodiversity Conservation & Enhancement** – Does it protect or restore nature?
- **Climate Resilience & Adaptation** – Does it prepare communities for future climate risks?
- **Air & Water Quality Improvements** – Does it reduce pollution or enhance water retention?
- **Waste Reduction & Circular Economy** – Does it reduce landfill waste and promote reuse?

Think of the Value Matrix like a sustainability scoreboard. It's the assessment process that evaluates a project across multiple environmental and social impact areas. The results from this structured evaluation form the project's Value Profile, which acts as its report card, showing how well it performs across key sustainability metrics beyond just carbon reduction.

How the NECaNM is Different:

Most carbon markets focus only on CO_2 reduction, but the NECaNM is pioneering a more holistic approach. The Value Matrix ensures every project is evaluated on multiple dimensions, giving buyers confidence that they're supporting projects with maximum positive impact.

The Value Profile – A Simple Way to Understand Project Impact

Definition:

Once a project is scored using the Value Matrix, it receives a Value Profile - a clear, easy-to-read summary of its carbon impact and co-benefits. Each project's Value Profile includes:

- A breakdown of its scores across different impact areas
- A radar chart visualising its overall contribution
- Project details, including location, type, and key benefits

Think of the Value Profile like a project's report card. It summarises the key information, making it easy for buyers to compare options.

How the NECaNM is Different:

Instead of leaving buyers to decipher complex reports, the Marketplace provides a clear, visual summary of every project, making decision-making simple and transparent.

Carbon and Nature Marketplace powered by: North East Combined Authority

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