

**NIAB**

# **Summative Assessment of the Growing Green Project**

Final Report


December 2022

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Final Report

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

AMION Consulting, in association with Spirul, was appointed to carry out a summative assessment (hereafter called 'evaluation') of the Growing Green project on behalf of NIAB. The project is funded by the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and the evaluation has therefore been carried out in accordance with CRF evaluation guidance.

### The Growing Green project

The Growing Green project provided support to SMEs in the food and drink sector in Kent & Medway in relation to reducing carbon levels and improving environmental performance.

The support provided through the project comprised: online training; a net-zero diagnostic; one-to-one support from a practitioner to develop and refine an Action Plan to reduce emissions; the opportunity to attend knowledge exchange events; and grant funding to help implement low carbon projects.

The objectives of the project were: to recruit 40 micro and SME businesses onto the project; to upskill 15 practitioners and 40 businesses with regard to net-zero; to provide diagnostic support to businesses leading to 40 Innovation Action Plans; to provide opportunities for 36 businesses to attend knowledge exchange events; and to provide grants to 36 businesses to support the net-zero business innovation activities identified in the Innovation Action Plans.

The project retained its consistency with a range of policies and strategies at the national and sub-national levels, including the national Clean Air Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy and, at the Kent level, the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy. This consistency resulted from the project's focus on supporting the low carbon agenda and promoting sustainable business growth.

The main environmental issues of relevance to the project were:

- a lower rate of decline in carbon emissions in Kent and Medway between 2015 and 2020 than the regional and national averages;
- carbon emissions from agriculture being higher in Kent and Medway in 2020 than in 2015 compared to decreases across the South East and England;
- a lower rate of decline in carbon emissions per capita in Kent and Medway than the regional and national averages between 2015 and 2020; and
- a lower rate of increase in renewable energy generation in Kent and Medway than the regional and national averages between 2015 and 2020.

The rationale for intervention with regard to the Growing Green project was largely based on asymmetric information and the risks involved in investing in low carbon growth as businesses often lack the knowledge needed to make informed choices about appropriate technologies and approaches.

## Project progress

The project was funded by the CRF, with match funding provided by project partners and beneficiaries. The project was delivered for an overall CRF cost of £473,241, which was below the target CRF expenditure levels as a result of the lower-than-expected number of grants provided.

There was a shortfall in project outputs largely due to the reduced time period for the project and the difficulty in engaging food and drink businesses over the summer.

Table ES1 provides summary details of spend and output performance.

Table ES1: Spend and output performance				
Indicator	Target	Projected performance at project closure		Overall assessment
		Number	% of target	
CRF expenditure	£513,122	£473,241	92%	Slight shortfall
Businesses receiving non-financial support	40	33	83%	Shortfall against target
Businesses receiving grants	36	24	67%	Shortfall against target
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	40	29	73%	Shortfall against target
Organisations receiving non-financial support	4	5	125%	Target exceeded

## Management and delivery

Growing Green was well managed and delivered, with a strong team in place to ensure that the project was well-designed and responsive to client needs.

The main strengths of the project, as identified through consultations, were that the project was successfully delivered within a tight timescale, the role of the practitioners in ensuring that businesses remained engaged, the success of the project in facilitating co-innovation between businesses and practitioners and the upskilling of practitioners. From a beneficiary perspective, the main strengths were the support and expertise of the practitioners, the quality of the online training and the knowledge sharing events.

Areas for improvement identified by consultees included the need for more sustainability expertise among the practitioners, the need for more practitioner training and the need for the training sessions to be in person rather than online. From a beneficiary perspective, the main areas for consideration included the need for better communication from the practitioners and the need for a longer programme.

## Outcomes and impacts

The Growing Green project is expected to deliver significant environmental benefits, with all of the beneficiaries who completed Action Plans expecting their carbon levels to reduce as a result

of the support provided. The support provided is also expected to lead to a range of other environmental benefits such as reduced waste, more recycling and less water being used.

The project is also expected to deliver significant economic benefits, with 21 gross jobs and 14 net additional jobs expected to be created. By 2028, the project is forecast to deliver over £3 million in net additional GVA in Kent and Medway.

Furthermore, the project has successfully addressed a range of barriers to improving environmental performance faced by beneficiaries. These include accessing dependable advice, the costs associated with innovation and new technologies and access to finance.

In addition, as a result of the support provided, beneficiaries expect to continue with their low carbon journeys through, for example, working with other businesses and organisations to improve their environmental performances.

### Value for money

The project had processes and procedures in place to ensure that it was delivered in an economical manner, such as through grant recipients having to adhere to public sector regulations and all salaries being at market rates. The project has also been largely successful in terms of meeting its own objectives, with any shortfalls in relation to objectives being due to the shortened project period and therefore being beyond the control of the project team.

By 2023 the project is expected to have a CRF cost per business recruited of £13,521, a CRF cost per decarbonisation plan of £16,319, a CRF cost per net job of £33,803 and a return on investment of 1.4:1.

The long-term value for money of the project will be substantially greater. For example, by 2028 the return on investment is forecast to increase to 6.4:1.

### Future needs of beneficiaries and willingness to pay

Beneficiaries identified a number of types of support that they would like in relation to further improving their environmental performance, with the most commonly identified being access to finance, business planning advice and opportunities to work with universities and research centres.

There was, however, only limited willingness to pay for the types of support provided through Growing Green, with only 10% of survey respondents confirming that they would be prepared to contribute financially towards the support provided.

### Lessons and recommendations

A number of lessons and recommendations have been identified for future support initiatives. Elements of good practice which should be continued on future initiatives include:

1. to continue with the practitioner approach as this increases the likelihood of businesses remaining engaged with the project;
2. to continue to promote co-innovation as this enables all parties to identify and implement sustainability actions;

3. to continue to provide training to practitioners as this will enable them to support businesses beyond the life of the project;
4. to continue to promote long-term systematic approaches to improving environmental performance rather than short-term activities;
5. to continue to provide grants as many businesses would not implement actions without financial support;
6. to continue to promote signposting to other support provided by project partners; and
7. to continue with a wide-ranging support package which covers a broad spectrum of business needs.

Recommendations for consideration on future initiatives include:

1. to consider a wider geography at the outset of any future project. Focusing on individual local authority areas limits the pool of potential beneficiaries thereby making recruitment more challenging. It also excludes many businesses from within the wider area who could benefit significantly from support and who may not be able to access support elsewhere. Any future project should consider adopting a Kent and Medway wide geography at the start;
2. to identify practitioners with greater sustainability knowledge;
3. to invest more time in training practitioners;
4. to provide more face-to-face training sessions as these allow greater sharing of knowledge and greater interaction between businesses and practitioners;
5. to provide guidance on grant applications at an earlier stage; and
6. to ensure that practitioners can be contacted more easily.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

AMION Consulting, in association with Spirul, was appointed to carry out a summative assessment (hereafter called 'evaluation') of the Growing Green project on behalf of NIAB. The project is part-funded by the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) and the evaluation has therefore been carried out in accordance with CRF evaluation guidance.

## 1.2 Purpose of the report

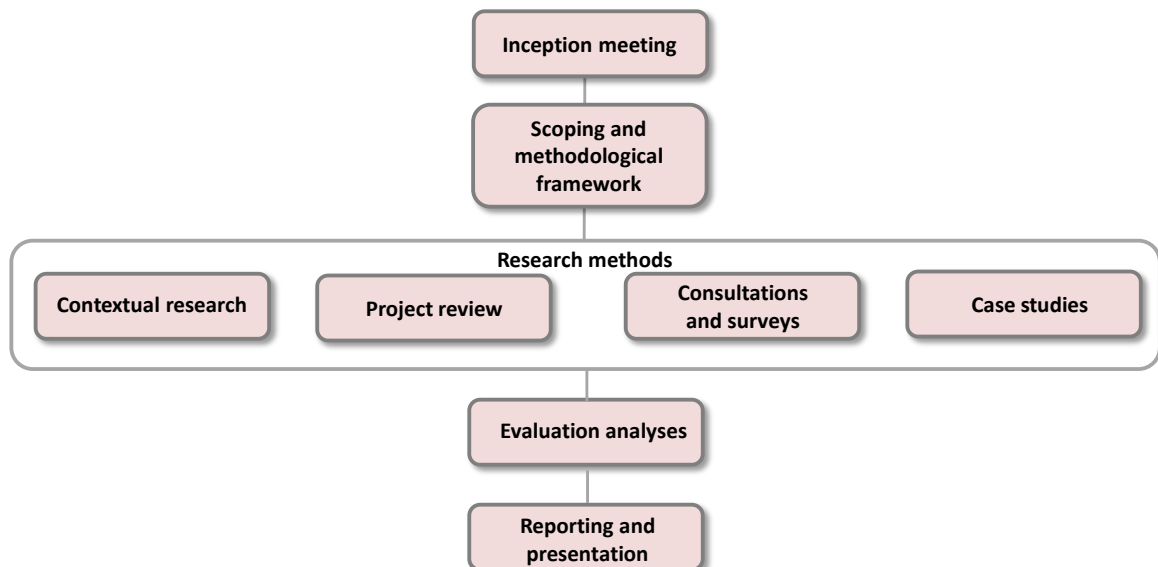
The main purposes of this report are:

- to assess the performance of the project in relation to its outputs and expenditure;
- to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the project;
- to determine the potential impacts, wider benefits and value for money of the project; and
- to identify lessons and recommendations for future activity.

## 1.3 The evaluation approach and framework

Figure 1.1 outlines the main components of the approach to the evaluation.

**Figure 1.1: Approach to the evaluation**



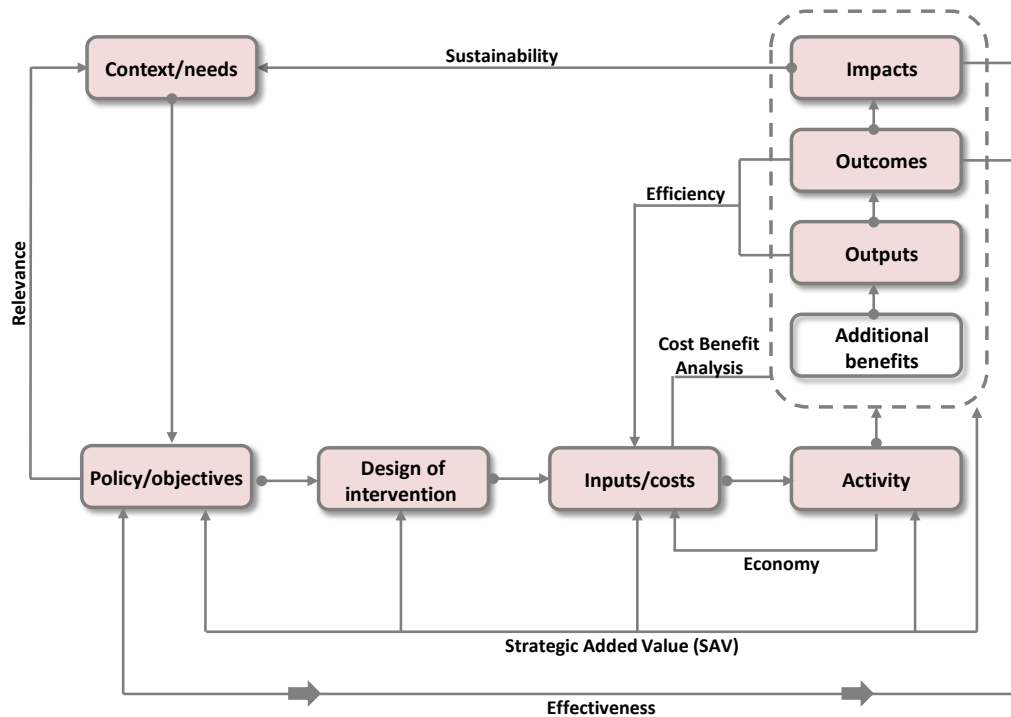
The main research stages were as follows:

- (i) *Contextual research* – this included a review of relevant strategies and policies at the national and sub-national levels. An assessment of the environmental context has also been carried out.
- (ii) *Project review* – this was based on documentary evidence provided by NIAB, including the Funding Agreement, and discussions with the project team.
- (iii) *Business survey* – Spirul carried out a survey of 20 businesses which have, over the course of the project, benefited from support. This equated to 65% of the overall number of beneficiaries who completed the support programme. These surveys were carried out in order to determine the impact of the project on environmental and business performance. They also identified elements of the project which participating businesses felt worked well or could have been improved, barriers to improving environmental performance faced by beneficiaries and the types of support businesses would like to be provided with in future.
- (iv) *Consultations* – these were carried out with the project team and partners in order to determine views of the project. A list of consultees is provided in Appendix A.
- (v) *Case studies* – detailed discussions were held with three beneficiaries. The findings from these discussions can be found in Appendix C. In addition, project partners produced a number of video case studies. These can be accessed at:
  - Nim’s Fruit Crisps: <https://youtu.be/ncoU8wHKFaY>
  - Zak’s Kombucha: <https://youtu.be/5PB4K0Sz-lc>
  - Roughway Online: <https://youtu.be/iWnA6qs2CIU>
  - Pleasant Land Distillery: <https://youtu.be/rscPLwhwDIE>
  - Ro-Gro: <https://youtu.be/V0YmbSf8DHE>
  - JIB Cannon & Sons: [https://youtu.be/6Q\\_NlI6jAVU](https://youtu.be/6Q_NlI6jAVU)

The evaluation has been carried out in a manner that is consistent with guidance such as HM Treasury’s ‘Green Book’ and ‘Magenta Book’ on appraisal and evaluation in Central Government and the guidance on carrying out summative assessments of CRF-funded projects prepared by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC).

The evaluation addresses and analyses a number of critical issues, which are set out within the evaluation framework diagram (see Figure 1.2).

**Figure 1.2: Evaluation Framework**



## 1.4 Structure of the report

The report continues in seven sections, as follows:

- Section 2 - sets out a description of the project and the extent to which there was a need for the project;
- Section 3 - assesses the performance of the project in relation to expenditure and outputs;
- Section 4 - assesses the management and delivery of the project;
- Section 5 – provides an assessment of the outcomes and impacts of the project;
- Section 6 - provides an assessment of the value for money of the project;
- Section 7 – identifies the future needs of beneficiaries; and
- Section 8 - presents the conclusions of the report and sets out the lessons and recommendations learned from the evaluation.

## 2 The Growing Green project

### 2.1 Introduction

This section sets out the background to the project along with its objectives. It also sets out the need for the project from both an environmental and strategic perspective.

### 2.2 The Growing Green project

#### 2.2.1 *Overview*

Growing Green was a response to the transition towards net-zero and the consequential need for more sustainable and decarbonised business models. In Kent & Medway, 'Produced in Kent' (the area's main food and drink promotion and business support organisation) found that there were a number of businesses in the sector with ambitions to become more sustainable but which lacked the appropriate capabilities and capacities.

This project was aligned to Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M) which aims to deliver an uplift in the region's economy through inclusive and innovation-led growth by supporting the horticultural food production and processing industries. The Growing Green pilot project provided an additional offer to GK&M.

The project aimed to exploit the expertise and networks that already existed in the GK&M cluster and extend the impact of the cluster in the region specifically around the net-zero agenda. This was delivered through a business support programme based on co-innovation between businesses, R&D specialists and business support providers.

Growing Green was led by NIAB and delivered in partnership with the GK&M innovation cluster. This included the University of Kent, Locate in Kent, Low Carbon Kent, Produced in Kent, Kent Foundation and regional business partners such as the APS Group.

The initial geographical focus of the project was on the Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge & Malling local authority areas (the former two areas being 'priority places' within Kent), but businesses from elsewhere in Kent were also accepted as the project developed due to the difficulty in onboarding sufficient numbers of businesses from the 'priority places'.

The original project application as submitted in May 2021 is included in Appendix D for information.

#### 2.2.2 *Objectives*

The objectives of the project were:

- to recruit 40 micro and SME businesses to participate in the Growing Green pilot;

- to co-develop and deliver business-focused upskilling around net-zero to 15 Growing Green practitioners and 40 micro and SME businesses in the horticulture and food processing sector in Kent;
- to co-develop and deliver a diagnostic audit to identify opportunities for net-zero business innovation resulting in 40 Innovation Action Plans;
- to provide opportunities for 36 businesses to attend at least one net-zero demonstration / knowledge exchange opportunity; and
- to issue 36 grants to support the net-zero business innovation activities identified in the Innovation Action Plans.

### 2.2.3 *Support provided*

The project provided support through:

- online training sessions – these helped beneficiaries to, for example, better understand the meaning of net-zero, learn how net-zero can be achieved, discover what businesses can do and explore the potential market opportunities and risks;
- a net-zero diagnostic – businesses worked with practitioners to determine the current environmental performance of the business and discuss actions to decarbonise the business;
- one-to-one support from a practitioner to develop and refine an Action Plan to reduce emissions;
- knowledge exchange opportunities such as demonstrator projects to show net-zero initiatives in action; and
- grant funding to help implement low carbon projects.

The project also provided training to staff from delivery partners to enable them to take on the role of practitioner and provide the direct link to beneficiaries. Practitioners provided support at the diagnostic stage and in the preparation of Action Plans. They also provided support in preparing grant applications.

### 2.2.4 *Targets*

Table 2.1 sets out the targets for the project.

Table 2.1: Growing Green – targets	
Output indicator	Target
Businesses receiving non-financial support	40
Businesses receiving grants	36
Organisations receiving non-financial support	4

***Image 2.1: Knowledge exchange event on 14 October at NIAB in East Malling***



## 2.3 The need for the project

### 2.3.1 Overview

In relation to environmental factors, the main issues of relevance to the project were:

- carbon emissions in Kent including from agriculture; and
- renewable energy generation.

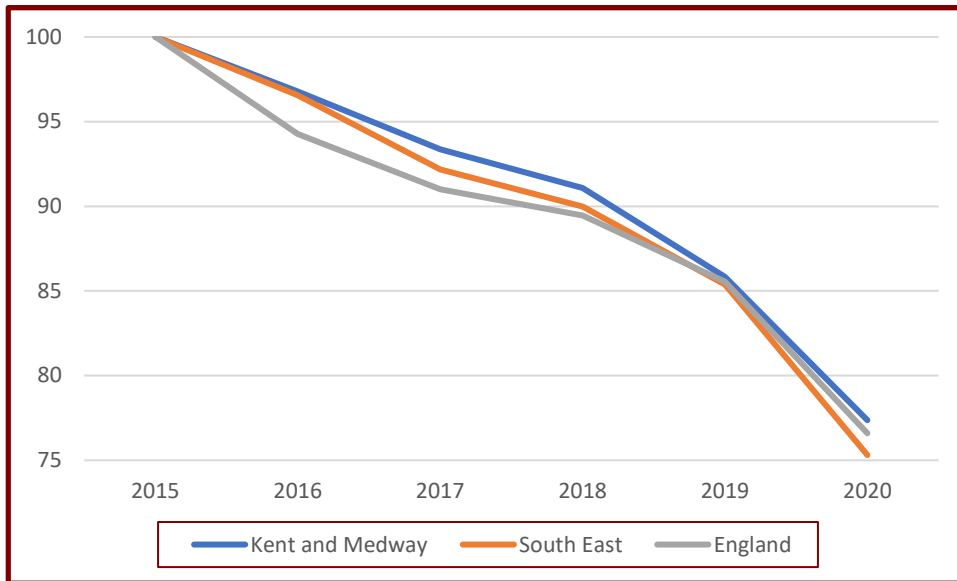
These issues are covered in the sub-sections below.

### 2.3.2 Total carbon emissions

Between 2015 and 2020, total carbon emissions in Kent and Medway fell by 22.6% to 7,292.8 kilotonnes (kt). This rate of decline was below the South East rate of 24.7% and the rate for England of 23.4%.

Figure 2.1 shows the indexed change in carbon emissions for the period from 2015 to 2020.

**Figure 2.1: Indexed change in total carbon emissions, 2015 to 2020 (2015=100)**

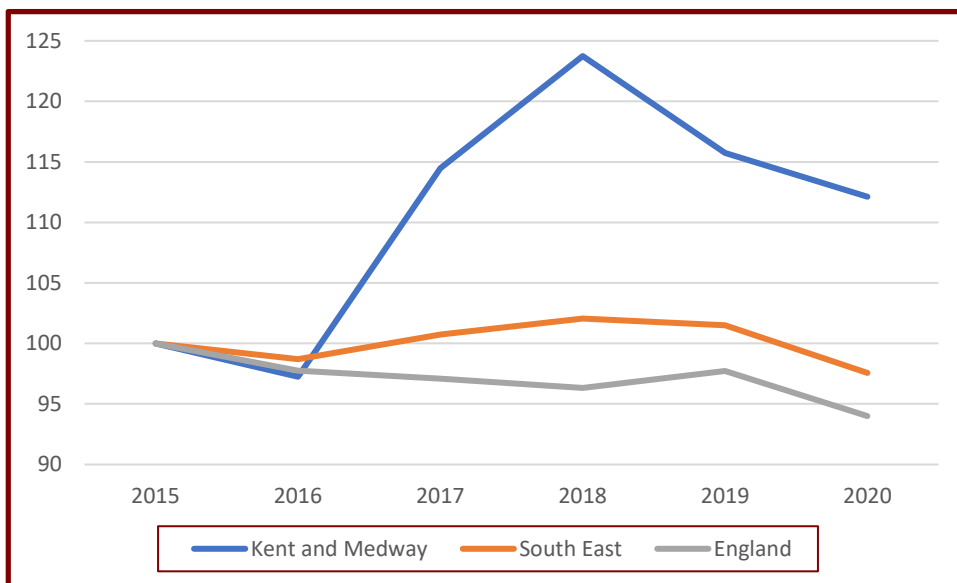


Source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)

### 2.3.3 Carbon emissions from agriculture

Carbon emissions from agriculture in Kent and Medway were higher in 2020 than in 2015. The figure for 2020 was, at 231.4 kt, 12.1% above the figure for 2015, although the figure had fallen since 2018. Between 2015 and 2020 there had been a decline in emissions from agriculture at the regional and national levels, as shown in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2: Indexed change in carbon emissions from agriculture, 2015 to 2020 (2015=100)**

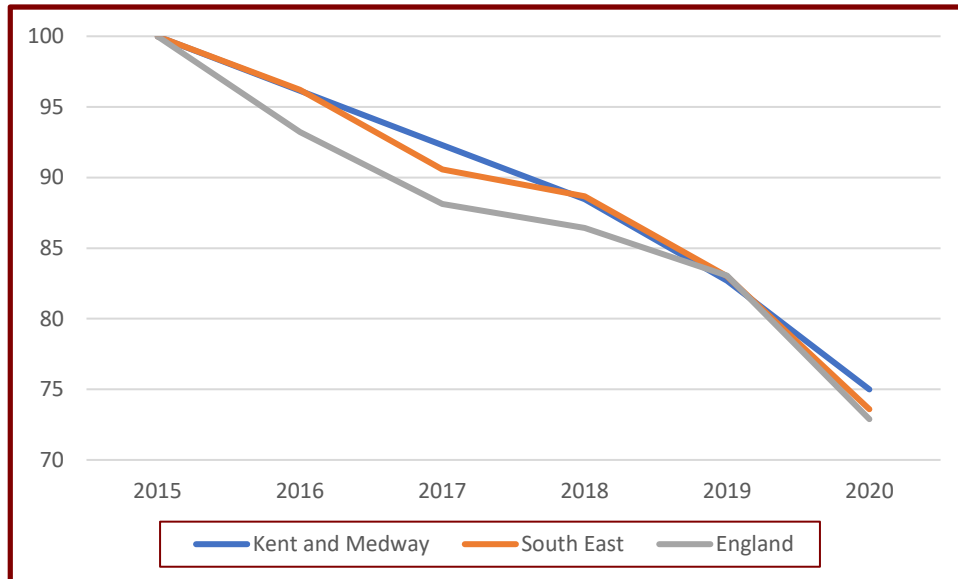


Source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, BEIS

### 2.3.4 Carbon emissions per capita

In 2020, the carbon emissions figure per capita for Kent and Medway stood at 3.9 tonnes, the same as the South East figure and below the figure for England of 4.3 tonnes. However, between 2015 and 2020 the figure for Kent and Medway had declined by only 25%, below the regional and national rates, as shown in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3: Indexed change in per capita carbon emissions, 2015 to 2020 (2015=100)**



Source: UK local authority and regional greenhouse gas emissions statistics, BEIS

### 2.3.5 Generation of renewable energy

Between 2015 and 2020 the amount of renewable energy generated in Kent and Medway increased by 18% to 5,320,034 Megawatts. This rate of increase was lower than the regional rate of 40% and the rate for England of 25% (source: renewable energy by local authority, ONS).

## 2.4 Strategic policy context

### 2.4.1 Overview

In undertaking the evaluation, consideration has been given to whether or not the project was consistent with the policy and strategy environment. There are a wide range of strategies and policies at the national and sub-national levels which consider environmental and business support issues. A number of these are identified below.



## 2.4.2 *National policies and strategies*

### ***Clean Air Strategy (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), 2019)***

This Clean Air Strategy aims to tackle air pollution, thereby making the air healthier to breathe, protecting nature and boosting the economy.

The Growing Green project was consistent with a number of the priority areas set out in the Strategy:

- research and innovation – this priority aims to maximise the advantages for UK industry from the global shift to clean growth through leading the world in the development, manufacture and use of technologies, systems and services that tackle air pollution. The Growing Green project was consistent with this priority as it supported businesses to adopt innovative new technologies to protect the environment.
- reducing emissions from farming – this priority aims to support farmers to make investments in farm infrastructure and equipment that will reduce emissions. The Growing Green project was supportive of this priority as it supported agricultural businesses to invest in emissions reducing technologies and practices.
- reducing emissions from industry – this priority aims to make UK industry world leaders in clean technology and to secure further emissions reductions. The project was consistent with this priority as it supported innovation in emissions reduction technologies.

### ***Clean Growth Strategy (BEIS, 2017)***

The Strategy aims to deliver increased economic growth while decreasing emissions. A number of actions are identified in the Strategy, with the Growing Green project being consistent with the following:

- developing green finance capabilities – Growing Green has supported this by improving access to finance for businesses looking to reduce emissions through the provision of grants; and
- developing measures to support businesses to improve their energy productivity – Growing Green has supported businesses to develop Action Plans and put in place measures to address energy efficiency.

### ***25 Year Environment Plan (DEFRA, 2018)***

This 25 Year Environment Plan sets out government actions to help the natural world regain and retain good health. It aims to deliver cleaner air and water in our cities and rural landscapes, protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats.

Among the priorities set out in the Plan is reducing emissions from the food supply chain, with the ambition being to reduce by 20% the greenhouse gas intensity of food and drink consumed in the UK. Growing Green contributed to the achievement of this ambition.

### ***Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth (HM Treasury, 2021)***

Among the aims of the Plan is to invest in net zero to create new opportunities for economic growth and jobs across the country. The Plan also sets out ambitions to develop technologies that

will support a sustainable and high-growth economy and to support access to finance to help fund innovation.

Growing Green was consistent with the Plan as it supported the transition to a net-zero economy and supported innovation in low carbon technologies through advice and funding.

### 2.4.3 *Sub-national policies and strategies*

#### ***South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (March 2021)***

The Strategy sets out an ambition to deliver clean growth by cutting carbon emissions to move to net-zero. This includes supporting actions to:

- raise awareness of and respond to the challenges of climate change and moving to a net zero economy – this includes working with businesses to understand the barriers and emerging opportunities that the shift to a net-zero carbon economy presents;
- support businesses in implementing low carbon practices and taking advantage of green opportunities for longer term prosperity; and
- support the development of low carbon technologies and behaviours.

The project has been fully consistent with the Strategy as it increased awareness of environmental issues within businesses and supported them in improving low carbon practices and using low carbon technologies.

#### ***Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (June 2020)***

The vision underpinning the Strategy is that *'by 2050 the county of Kent has reduced emissions to net-zero and is benefiting from a competitive, innovative and resilient low carbon economy, where no deaths are associated with poor air quality.'*

Among the priorities set out in the Strategy is *'supporting low carbon businesses'*. The Strategy recognises that, whilst many Kent businesses have already taken action to reduce their impact on the environment, there is a need to expand and rapidly accelerate this activity if the area is to achieve its low carbon vision. The Strategy advocates providing support to businesses to help them reduce their environmental impact and drive a low carbon economic recovery.

Growing Green has been fully consistent with this priority as it provided support to businesses to help them deliver carbon reduction Action Plans and deliver the activities set out in these plans.

#### ***Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan (Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, 2020)***

The Plan seeks to deliver against three key principles, one of which is *'Greener Futures'*, which aims to build a more sustainable and lower carbon economy. The Plan aims to support measures to promote carbon reduction and sustainable development where they contribute to jobs, innovation and future economic growth.

Among the actions supported by the Plan is financial support in implementing measures that will reduce firms' carbon footprints.

The project was consistent with the Plan as it promoted innovation to reduce carbon levels and provided grants to help businesses deliver their carbon Action Plans.

### ***Tonbridge and Malling Climate Change Action Plan 2021 / 22***

Among the aims of the Plan is to support local businesses and encourage sustainable growth in the economy. The Plan supports the provision of finance to assist businesses in their decarbonisation activities through a Green Business Grant Scheme. It also aims to promote partnership working to support the low carbon agenda across the area.

The project was consistent with the Plan as it provided financial support to businesses looking to decarbonise and brought together a range of partners to promote the low carbon agenda to the business community.

## **2.5 Market failure**

The rationale for public sector intervention will normally involve justifying an activity in terms of its expected impact on economic efficiency, or in terms of stated Government policy objectives (such as social objectives) or some combination of the two. Where markets fail to work perfectly, resource allocation does not occur relative to the marginal cost of provision. The correction of market failures leads to improvements to the supply side of the economy and increases productive capacity. In the case of sustainable development projects such as this, the rationale will often be based upon the correction of a market failure or missing market issue<sup>1</sup> and/or the enhancement of the quality of life of disadvantaged groups (equity).

The main market failure of relevance to the project is asymmetric information. In the case of the Growing Green project, NIAB and its partners have a greater knowledge than SMEs in relation to, for example, approaches to decarbonisation. Hence, there is sub-optimal decarbonisation activity among businesses. Intervention through initiatives such as the Growing Green project remedy this market failure by bringing NIAB, along with its partners, and SMEs together.

Another market failure of relevance to the project is risk. For SMEs, investment in decarbonisation is by definition an uncertain business. In undertaking an investment an SME is spending a significant proportion of its budget in an area in which it may have little knowledge about for example, the timescales over which the investment will have paid for itself through lower costs. Working with NIAB and its partners allows SMEs to reduce their costs with regard to the investment through a grant. This makes investment less of a risk and therefore encourages SMEs to invest in decarbonisation.

Another key reason for intervention in encouraging decarbonisation is the existence of positive externalities. When firms make decisions regarding investment in any activity, they do so based on the expected return to their organisation only. They may or may not recognise that others also benefit, such as suppliers, customers, competitors, even other companies in other sectors and society in general. However, as those outside the organisation cannot be made to contribute directly towards the cost of the investment the firm does not value these benefits regardless of their scale or scope. Where the benefits to the organisation are considered too few relative to

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<sup>1</sup> Market failures can arise as a result of externalities, imperfect information, market power and public goods.

the cost to the organisation no investment will take place even if the benefits external to the organisation would be sizeable. The public sector, however, on behalf of society in general, recognises the wider benefits of decarbonisation and therefore, through support such as that provided through the Growing Green project, contributes directly to the cost of the investment. Particular externalities relating to the project are:

- providing a better environment for current and future generations and alleviating the long-term impacts of climate change;
- providing a better working environment for beneficiary staff through, for example, improved heating and lighting;
- improved health among the population and lower healthcare costs associated with an improved environment;
- improving the image of Kent as a business and low carbon location by showcasing Kent's low carbon credentials;
- providing supply chain opportunities for businesses providing low carbon technology to beneficiaries;
- providing upskilling opportunities for the practitioners trained to provide support to beneficiaries; and
- enhancing the reputation of NIAB and its partners through providing opportunities for partners to support SMEs.

## 2.6 Evidence of need for project activities

AMION has compiled evidence from a number of previous evaluations to show that there is an ongoing need for the types of support provided through the Growing Green project. On all of our evaluations we include survey questions on future support needs.

An assessment of future needs was carried out on our evaluation of the Cornwall New Energy (CNE) project for PRP in 2019, which is our closest comparator project. The Growing Green project addressed five of the six highest scoring needs from this project, as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 also shows that the project met the needs of businesses supported through other innovation projects. These are:

- the Smart Innovation and Networking for Growth (SING) project – this Loughborough University project provided innovation support to SMEs in the Leicester and Leicestershire LEP area; and
- the Alderley Park Accelerator (APA) project – this BioCity project provided business and innovation support to SMEs in the life sciences sector in the Cheshire and Warrington LEP area.

Table 2.2: Future support needs (% of respondents)				
Support needs identified by beneficiaries	CNE	SING	APA	How Growing Green addressed these issues
Access to Finance	76%	86%	56%	Growing Green provided beneficiaries with a grant of up to £8,000 to address the needs identified in their low carbon action plan.
Advice in relation to new technologies and innovations	66%	7%	11%	Beneficiaries were provided with opportunities to see new technologies and innovations in action.
Mentoring from an expert in the field	45%	7%	39%	Growing Green recruited and trained practitioners to give advice to businesses.
Opportunities to collaborate with other businesses	34%	14%	39%	The project developed a business-to-business demonstrator network which provided a forum for knowledge exchange.
Opportunities to work with universities and research centres	21%	45%	33%	Growing Green provided opportunities for businesses to work with the University of Kent and NIAB.

There is therefore evidence that Growing Green addressed business needs in relation to the low carbon economy.

## 2.7 Summary

The Growing Green project provided support to SMEs in the food and drink sector in Kent & Medway in relation to reducing carbon levels and improving environmental performance.

The support provided through the project comprised: online training; a net-zero diagnostic; one-to-one support from a practitioner to develop and refine an Action Plan to reduce emissions; the opportunity to attend knowledge exchange events; and grant funding to help implement low carbon projects.

The objectives of the project were: to recruit 40 micro and SME businesses onto the project; to upskill 15 practitioners and 40 businesses with regard to net-zero; to provide diagnostic support to businesses leading to 40 Innovation Action Plans; to provide opportunities for 36 businesses to attend knowledge exchange events; and to provide grants to 36 businesses to support the net-zero business innovation activities identified in the Innovation Action Plans.

The project retained its consistency with a range of policies and strategies at the national and sub-national levels, including the national Clean Air Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy and, at the Kent level, the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy. This consistency resulted from the project's focus on supporting the low carbon agenda and promoting sustainable business growth.

The main environmental issues of relevance to the project were:

- a lower rate of decline in carbon emissions in Kent and Medway between 2015 and 2020 than the regional and national averages;
- carbon emissions from agriculture being higher in Kent and Medway in 2020 than in 2015 compared to decreases across the South East and England;
- a lower rate of decline in carbon emissions per capita in Kent and Medway than the regional and national averages between 2015 and 2020; and
- a lower rate of increase in renewable energy generation in Kent and Medway than the regional and national averages between 2015 and 2020.

The rationale for intervention with regard to the Growing Green project was largely based on asymmetric information and the risks involved in investing in low carbon growth as businesses often lack the knowledge needed to make informed choices about appropriate technologies and approaches.

## 3 Progress of the project

### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides details of project performance in relation to expenditure, project activity and outputs.

### 3.2 Funding

The project was funded by the CRF with match funding provided by project partners and through beneficiary contributions to their grant funded activities.

The initial CRF funding allocation for the project was £513,122. Ultimately, the project is expected to be delivered for a CRF total of £473,241. This equates to an underspend of 7.8%. This shortfall is due to the lower-than-expected number of grants provided. The initial forecast was for 36 grants to be provided, but only 24 grants were provided by project closure.

Further detail of project expenditure is provided in Appendix B.

Table 3.1 sets out the funding for the project by priority locations and non-priority locations.

Table 3.1: Funding in priority and non-priority locations				
Place	Delivery Partner	Partner spend in region	Small grant spend in region	Total project spend in place
<b>Priority Place, Thanet</b>			£10,896	<b>£10,896</b>
<b>Priority Place, Swale</b>			£32,687	<b>£32,687</b>
Other Place, Tonbridge & Malling	NIAB	£250,925		
Other Place, Tonbridge & Malling			£38,135	
<b>Other Place, Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>				<b>£289,060</b>
Other Place, other regions in Kent	Low Carbon Kent	£25,228		
Other Place, other regions in Kent	Univ Kent	£17,310		
Other Place, other regions in Kent			£98,061	
<b>Other Place, other regions in Kent</b>				<b>£140,599</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£293,463</b>	<b>£179,779</b>	<b>£473,242</b>

The UKCRF spend has been tracked through the project reporting. Claims for incurred and defrayed costs have been made by the main delivery partners – NIAB, Low Carbon Kent and University of Kent. Although expenditure has been for the benefit of the project as a whole and for all the supported businesses it has been allocated (for this assessment of expenditure against ‘place’) against the registered office of the relevant delivery partner. The small grant spend has been allocated to the ‘place’ based on the number of businesses that received a grant in each location. Combined this determines the total spend in each ‘place’.

Project activity was delivered in two ‘priority places’ – Thanet and Swale, £10,896 and £32,687 respectively. Project activity was also planned for delivery in Tonbridge & Malling albeit this was not a priority place (£289,060). Together this project spend of £332,643 was spent in the areas identified in the bid (70% of project expenditure).

The remaining expenditure (£140,599) was spent in the Kent region but in areas that were not pre-identified in the bid (30% of project expenditure). The majority of this spend was allocated to supporting businesses through the small grants scheme outside of Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge & Malling.

### 3.3 Project activity

Project activity was delivered by NIAB, working with a number of key delivery partners (Low Carbon Kent and University of Kent) and a number of organisations that provided practitioners. The support provided to beneficiary businesses has been summarised in section 2 of this report.

NIAB reported to Kent County Council on project activity and delivery on a bimonthly basis using a standard template to capture financial, technical and output/ outcome data. The report was supported with a financial claim of incurred and defrayed expenditure by project delivery partners. All evidence of expenditure and defrayal of expenditure was supplied with each claim. The reporting systems were relatively simple to complete but time consuming in relation to presenting all the evidence of defrayed expenditure.

Further detail of project performance within each claim period is presented in Appendix B.

### 3.4 Output performance

#### 3.4.1 Overview

By project completion there was a shortfall against most of the target outputs, as shown in Table 3.2.



Table 3.2: Output performance		
Indicator	Target	Achieved at completion
Businesses receiving non-financial support	40	33
Businesses receiving grants	36	24
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	40	29
Organisations receiving non-financial support	4	5

The original target was for 40 businesses to be supported through the training programme and with a 10% attrition rate (based on previous regional experience). Therefore, it was expected that only 36 businesses would proceed to the award of a small grant.

58 businesses registered an interest in joining the project. Some were found to be ineligible for support and some decided not to progress beyond the initial expression of interest. 35 businesses started the training programme, with two dropping out. Hence, there were 33 businesses that completed the support programme. The difficulty in enrolling beneficiaries was largely due to the shortened duration of the project coupled with the project running over the summer when many food and drink businesses are particularly busy. This made it very difficult for many businesses to engage with the project.

Of the 33 businesses that completed the training a further four did not go on to implement their new knowledge within their business, resulting in 29 businesses completing their innovation/ decarbonisation action plans.

Of these 29 businesses three did not submit project plans for approval and issue of grant. Therefore, 26 applications for grant funding were received. Grant Funding Agreements were issued to 24 businesses who delivered their decarbonisation – innovation projects. These businesses submitted financial claims and were paid in arrears.

### 3.4.2 Breakdown by size of business

Table 3.3 provides a breakdown of beneficiaries by size and shows that the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries were small businesses.

Table 3.3: Breakdown of beneficiaries by size				
Size of business	Initial target		Achieved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Micro / small	37	93%	32	97%
Medium	3	7%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Project monitoring

### 3.4.3 Breakdown by location of business

The project initially focused on businesses in Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge & Malling. Table 3.4 provides a breakdown of beneficiaries by location.

Table 3.4: Breakdown of beneficiaries by location				
Location	Initial target		Achieved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Swale	24	60%	6	18%
Thanet	6	15%	2	6%
Tonbridge and Malling	10	25%	7	21%
Elsewhere in Kent	-	-	18	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Project monitoring

Onboarding businesses from within the priority places was exceptionally difficult despite extensive communication campaigns and awareness raising in the limited time available to onboard and then deliver the full programme. It became apparent very quickly that the project would not be able to onboard sufficient businesses from within the priority places and thus the programme was opened-up to eligible businesses within the wider Kent region. Even with this geography it proved difficult to onboard the target number of businesses within the available timeframe.

### 3.4.4 Breakdown by sector/economic activity of businesses supported

Table 3.5 provides a breakdown of beneficiaries by sector.

Table 3.5: Breakdown of beneficiaries by sector			
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Manufacturing	Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
Businesses – micro/ small	16	14	2
Businesses - medium	1	0	0
Businesses - large	0	0	0
<b>Total Businesses</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Project monitoring

Appendix B provides further detail and breakdown of businesses supported by size, location, economic sector and type of support received.

The organisations supported are those organisations that provided Growing Green Practitioners who were then trained and subsequently worked with the beneficiary businesses. Five organisations in total provided Practitioners. These included two small trade promotion organisations, one large private sector company, one research organisation (private) and one university.

In total, these organisations provided 11 Practitioners rather than the 15 forecast at the bid stage.

Table 3.6 provides a breakdown of the organisations by type.

Table 3.6: Breakdown of organisations by type				
Type of organisation	Initial target		Achieved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Public	2	50%	0	0%
Private	1	25%	4	80%
University	0	0%	1	20%
Voluntary Sector	1	25%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Project monitoring

Appendix B provides further detail and breakdown of the organisations supported by type and by type of support received.

### 3.5 Outcomes performance

By project completion there was a shortfall against the target outcomes, as shown in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Outcome performance		
Indicator	Target	Achieved at completion
Businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support	36	0
Innovation plans developed as a result of support	40	29
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	40	29

The original ambition was that each supported beneficiary business that completed the training programme and spent a grant would go on to improve their business performance by introducing new products to the firm. None have achieved this to date but may yet go on to do this once the grant has been spent and the innovation/ decarbonisation project put into action.

It was expected that all 40 supported businesses would produce decarbonisation – innovation plans. With lower than expected take-up (35 businesses), drop-out through the programme (two

businesses) and non-completion of the programme (four businesses), 29 of these plans were produced. These can be provided as verification evidence.

Further details on the type of support provided for the businesses introducing new products, processes or services and the types of support provided are shown in Appendix B.

### 3.6 Summary

The project was funded by the CRF, with match funding provided by project partners and beneficiaries. The project was delivered for an overall CRF cost of £473,241, which was below the target CRF expenditure levels as a result of the lower-than-expected number of grants provided.

There was a shortfall in project outputs largely due to the reduced time period for the project and the difficulty in engaging food and drink businesses over the summer.

Table 3.8 provides summary details of spend and output performance.

Table 3.8: Spend and output performance				
Indicator	Target	Projected performance at project closure		Overall assessment
		Number	% of target	
CRF expenditure	£513,122	£473,241	92%	Slight shortfall
Businesses receiving non-financial support	40	33	83%	Shortfall against target
Businesses receiving grants	36	24	67%	Shortfall against target
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	40	29	73%	Shortfall against target
Organisations receiving non-financial support	4	5	125%	Target exceeded

## 4 Project management and delivery

### 4.1 Introduction

This section presents a review of the management and delivery of the project. This has been informed by a review of documentary evidence and consultations.

### 4.2 Management and delivery

#### 4.2.1 *Overview*

Growing Green was delivered through a partnership which included NIAB, the University of Kent, Locate in Kent, Low Carbon Kent, Produced in Kent, Kent Foundation and regional business partners such as the APS Group. All of the project partners provided practitioners to support the beneficiaries.

NIAB were the project lead and were responsible for the management and administration of the project. Low Carbon Kent were responsible for managing the grant programme due to their previous experience of similar programmes.

The partnership was viewed by those consulted as having worked well, with a strong working relationship developed and all partners being clear about expectations and roles.

Support was provided throughout by GORSE Services. GORSE helped to develop the initial concept for the project and assisted in preparing the CRF funding application and bringing the partnership together. GORSE also provided training for the practitioners and contributed to the development of the training programme.

#### 4.2.2 *Practitioners*

Practitioners provided direct links between the project and the beneficiaries. All of the practitioners were recruited from within the delivery partners and provided with training to ensure that they had the required skills and knowledge to assist the businesses.

The role involved working with beneficiaries to identify their needs in terms of improving their environmental performance and helping to prepare the Action Plans and grant applications.

As far as possible, there was a rationale for placing each practitioner with specific businesses. For example, particular expertise in a sector and, in the case of some University of Kent PhD. students who contributed as practitioners, the practitioner was linked to the business based on their areas of study, thus enabling co-learning which the practitioners can use in their future studies and careers.

Practitioners were not necessarily environmental experts but their knowledge increased as they moved through the programme.

The practitioners were vital to the success of the project and often provided more time to beneficiaries than they were contracted to provide.

The general view among those consulted is that the project would have been less successful without the practitioners and the number of businesses that the project supported would have been considerably lower.

## 4.3 Strengths of the project and areas for consideration

### 4.3.1 *Strengths*

The main strengths of the project, as identified by those consulted, were:

- the project was put in place very quickly as a result of the initial delays and delivered within a relatively short period. Given the circumstances, the project was successful in recruiting businesses and providing a high-quality training programme.
- practitioners have been important in ensuring that businesses take action to reduce their carbon footprint. Delivery during the summer months made it challenging for many businesses to fully commit to the support programme. The practitioners have provided support which has enabled business participation. This includes assisting with grant applications, which many businesses lacked time to do without support.
- Growing Green has successfully led to co-innovation. For example, businesses attending the knowledge exchange events have learned from each other's experiences and practitioners have also learned approaches that can be used in their organisations. For example, APS Group learned about water harvesting.
- Growing Green has successfully enhanced resource efficiency and energy use among beneficiaries. For example, one beneficiary has been supported to collect winter rainfall and save it for use during the summer.
- practitioners have been upskilled with regard to learning about the complexities of the journey to net zero for businesses and approaches to progressing on this journey. They have also learned how to mentor businesses. These skills will be of value beyond the life of the project.
- Growing Green has enabled businesses to learn about the importance of a long-term systematic approach to improving environmental performance rather than undertaking numerous unrelated short-term activities.
- the grants have enabled beneficiaries to implement their low carbon activities quicker.
- the success of the partnership arrangements have enabled businesses to be signposted to other support provided by project partners and to increase their awareness of the overall support package available in Kent and Medway.
- the overall support package provided a holistic approach which ensured that businesses received a thorough understanding of how to approach the journey to net zero.

#### *4.3.2 Areas for consideration*

The main areas for consideration identified through the consultations were:

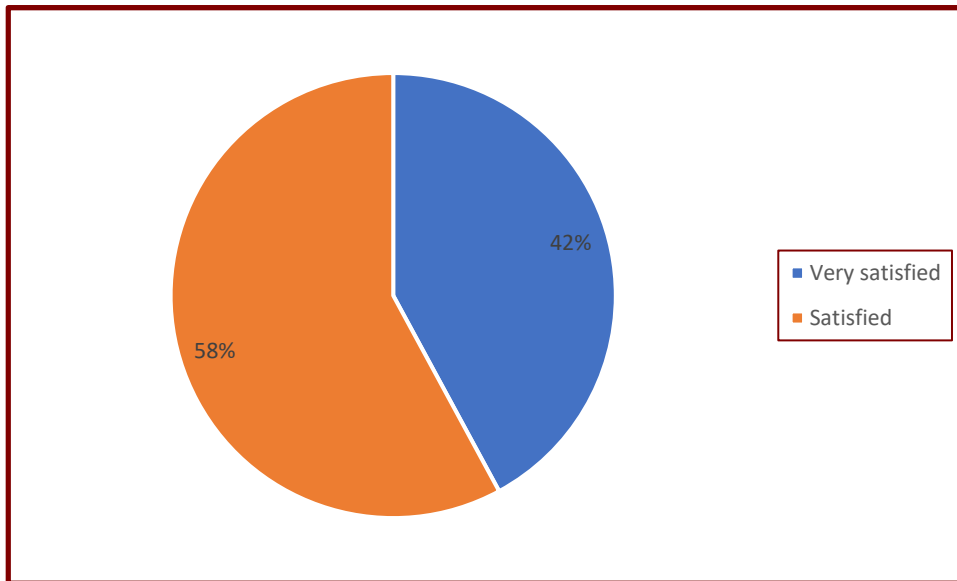
- many of the practitioners were not sustainability experts. Greater environmental expertise among practitioners may have provided more opportunities for knowledge exchange.
- The initial geographical target areas were too narrow. Focusing on three individual local authority areas limited the pool of potential beneficiaries thereby making recruitment more challenging. The project ultimately recruited beneficiaries from across Kent and Medway, with over 50% of beneficiaries being from outside the three target local authority areas;
- on any future programme, more time should be invested in training practitioners so that they have greater knowledge and confidence. More of the training provided to practitioners should have been face-to-face to ensure greater interaction and knowledge sharing.
- the practitioners provided support on a voluntary basis and much was required of them in terms of supporting businesses. Having more practitioners may have decreased the workload.
- much of the online training for businesses was generic in nature. This led to less interest in the training stages in the later sessions.
- the online training sessions provided few opportunities for business-to-business experience exchanges. Although there was a forum for businesses and practitioners to exchange knowledge and experience after each online training session, there was limited participation. Face-to-face training sessions would have provided more opportunities for interaction.
- the guidance on grant applications was provided very late in the process. Had the guidance been provided earlier it would have made the application process easier.

### **4.4 Beneficiary views**

#### *4.4.1 Online training sessions*

Satisfaction levels for the online training sessions were very high, with all of the survey respondents finding the sessions to be either very satisfactory or satisfactory, as shown in Figure 4.1.

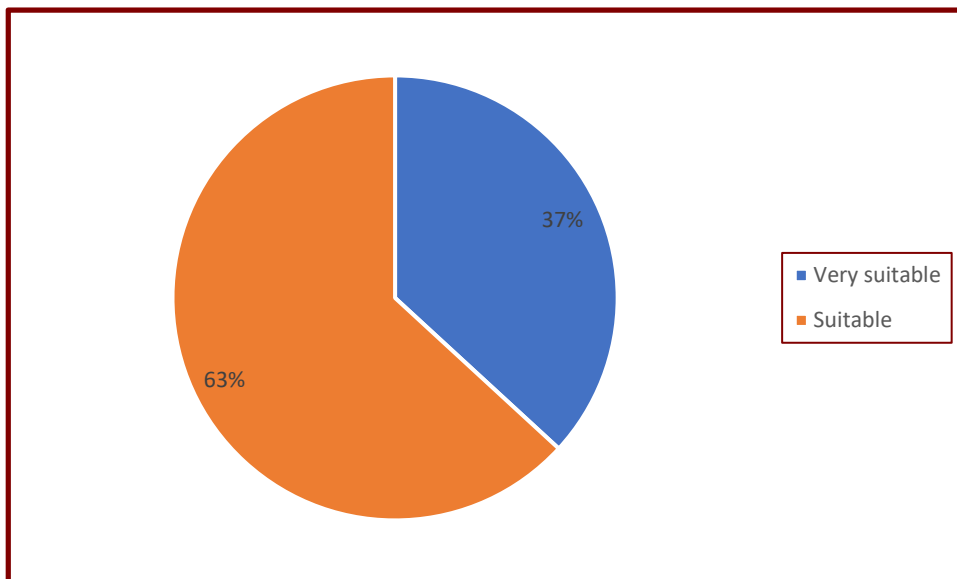
**Figure 4.1: Online training sessions – satisfaction levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Suitability levels for the online training sessions were also very high, with all of the survey respondents finding the sessions to be either very suitable or suitable for their needs, as shown in Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.2: Online training sessions – suitability levels**



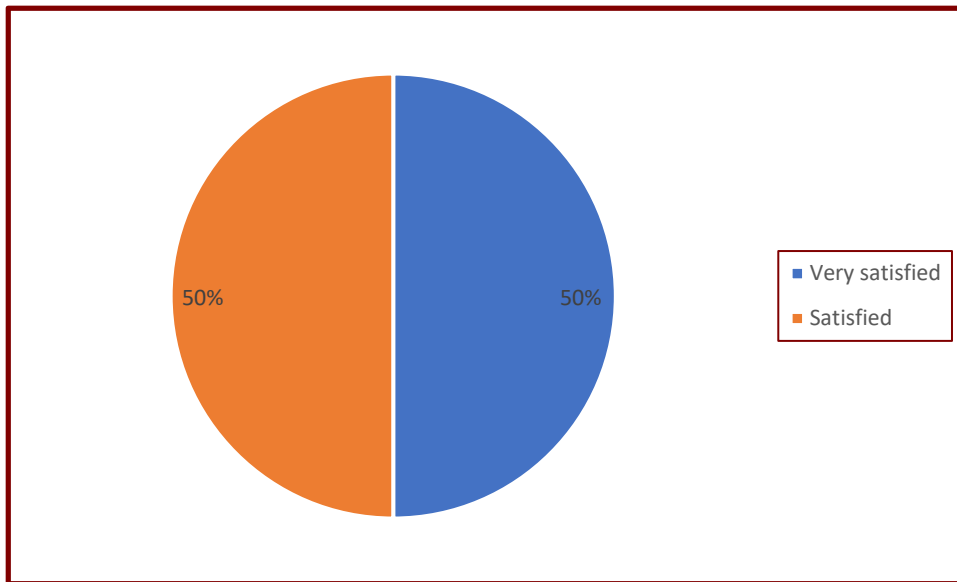
Source: beneficiary survey, 2022



#### 4.4.2 *Net-zero diagnostic*

Satisfaction levels for the net-zero diagnostic were also very high, with all of the survey respondents finding the diagnostic to be either very satisfactory or satisfactory, as shown in Figure 4.3.

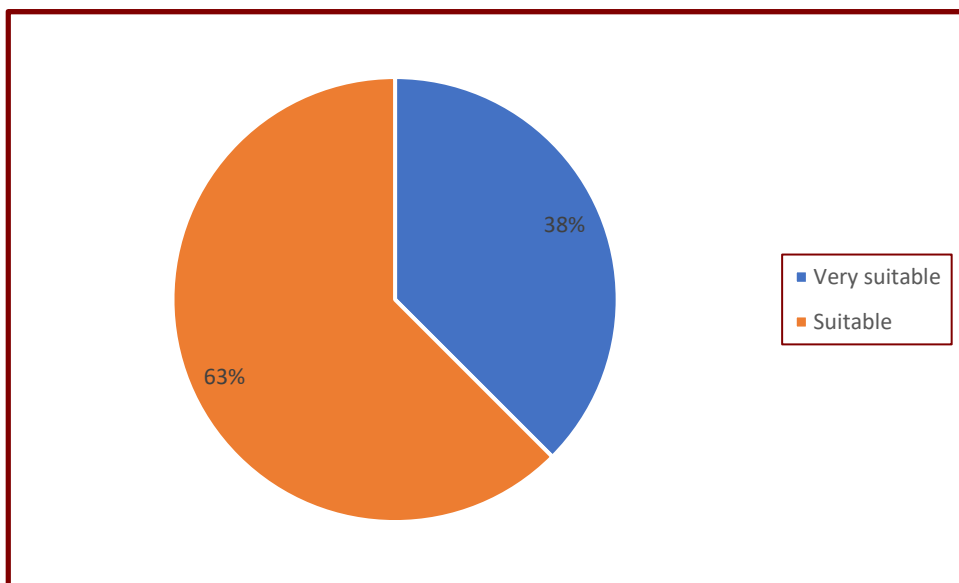
**Figure 4.3: Net zero diagnostic – satisfaction levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Similarly, suitability levels for the net-zero diagnostic were also very high, with all of the survey respondents finding the diagnostic to be either very suitable or suitable for their needs, as shown in Figure 4.4.

**Figure 4.4: Net zero diagnostic – suitability levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

#### 4.4.3 Support from practitioners

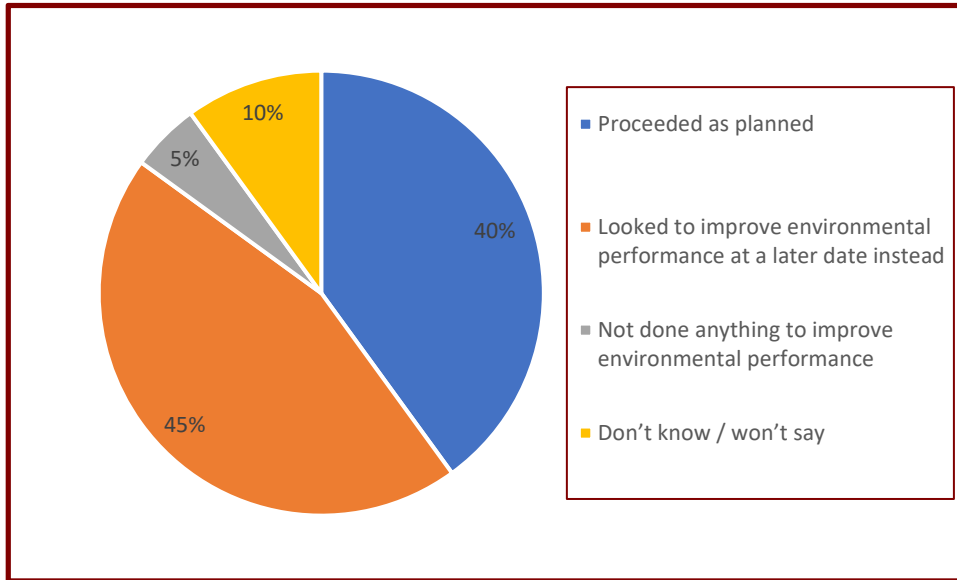
Practitioners were seen as important by beneficiaries in terms of helping businesses to understand the opportunities and innovations available and helping businesses to identify the most appropriate solutions to reducing carbon levels and improving environmental performance, as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Importance of practitioners		
Level of importance	% of respondents	
	Importance in helping businesses to understand the opportunities and innovations available to reduce carbon levels and improve environmental performance	Importance in helping businesses to identify the most appropriate solutions in relation to reducing carbon levels and improving environmental performance
Very important	30%	30%
Important	35%	30%
Neither important nor unimportant	20%	25%
Unimportant	15%	15%

Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

The practitioners have also played a significant role in ensuring that beneficiary low carbon projects proceeded as planned, with only 40% of projects being expected to proceed without practitioner support, as shown in Figure 4.5.

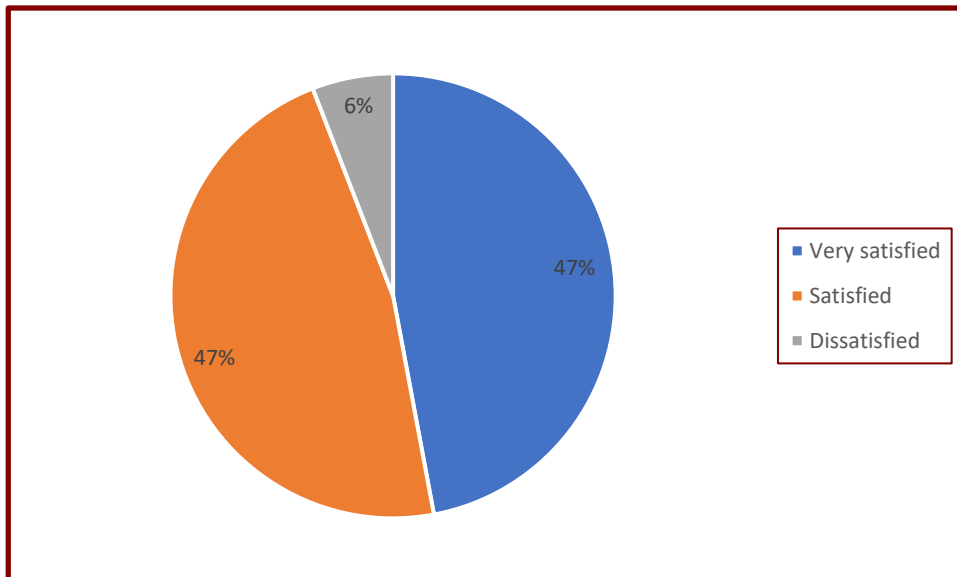
**Figure 4.5: Importance of practitioners in ensuring that low carbon project proceed**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Satisfaction levels for practitioner support were high, with 94% of survey respondents finding the support to be either very satisfactory or satisfactory, as shown in Figure 4.6.

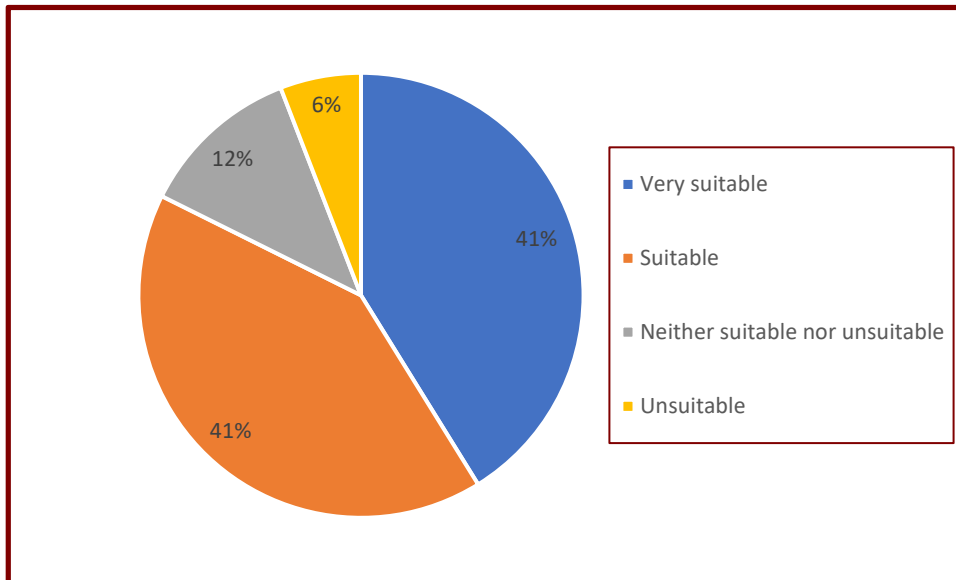
**Figure 4.6: Practitioner support - satisfaction levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Suitability levels for practitioner support were a little lower, with 82% of survey respondents finding the support to be either very suitable or suitable for their needs and 6% finding the support to be unsuitable, as shown in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.7: Practitioner support – suitability levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

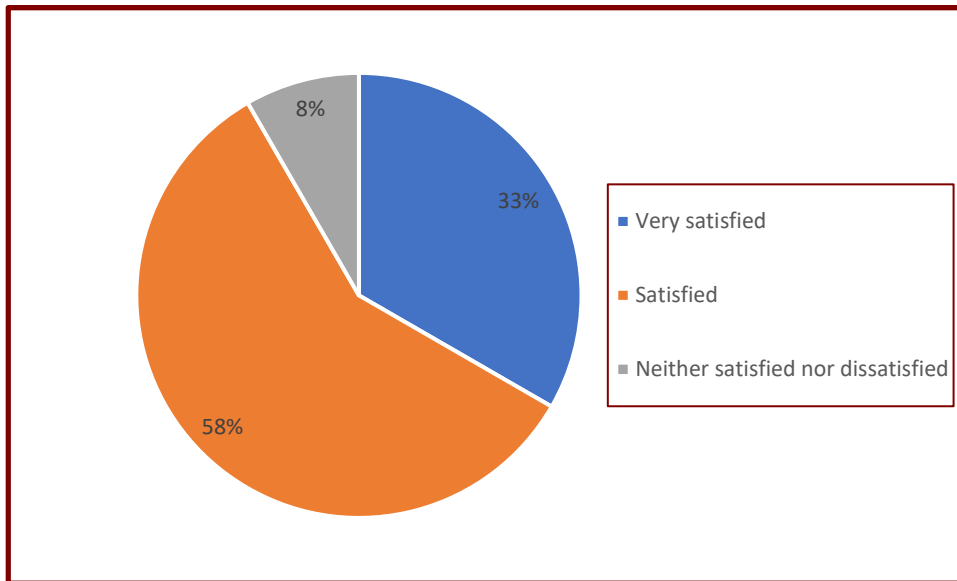
#### 4.4.4 Peer-to-peer networking opportunities

Peer-to-peer networking opportunities were also considered important by beneficiaries in terms of helping businesses to understand the opportunities and innovations available to reduce carbon levels and improve environmental performance, with 45% of survey respondents stating that the opportunities were either very important or important.

In addition, 30% of survey respondents have identified actions that other businesses are carrying out to reduce carbon levels and improve environmental performance that they are considering carrying out in their businesses.

Satisfaction levels for the business-to-business networking opportunities were high, with 91% of survey respondents who took advantage of the opportunities finding the opportunities to be either very satisfactory or satisfactory, as shown in Figure 4.8.

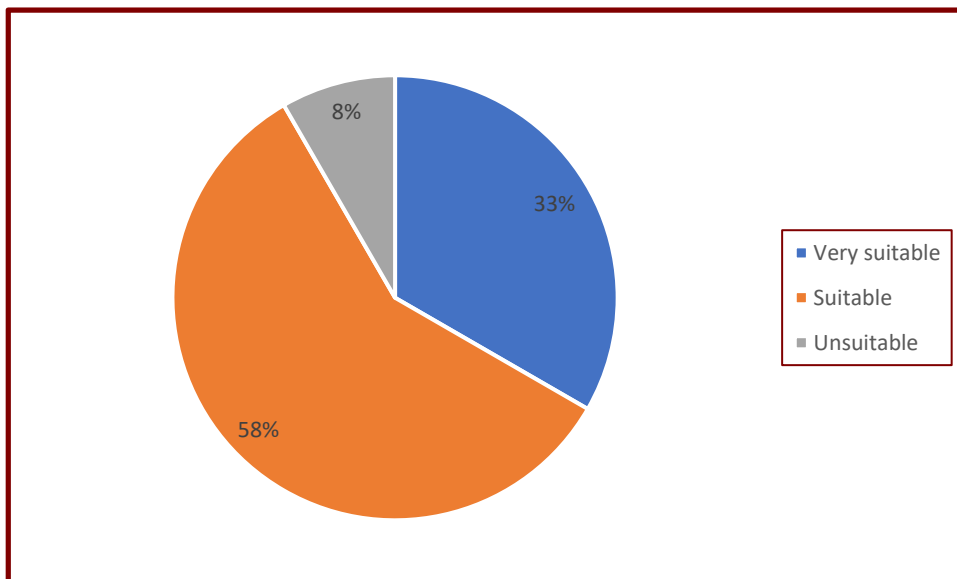
**Figure 4.8: Business-to-business networking opportunities - satisfaction levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Suitability levels for the business-to-business networking opportunities were also high, with 91% of survey respondents who took advantage of the opportunities finding the opportunities to be either very suitable or suitable for their needs, as shown in Figure 4.9.

**Figure 4.9: Business-to-business networking opportunities – suitability levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

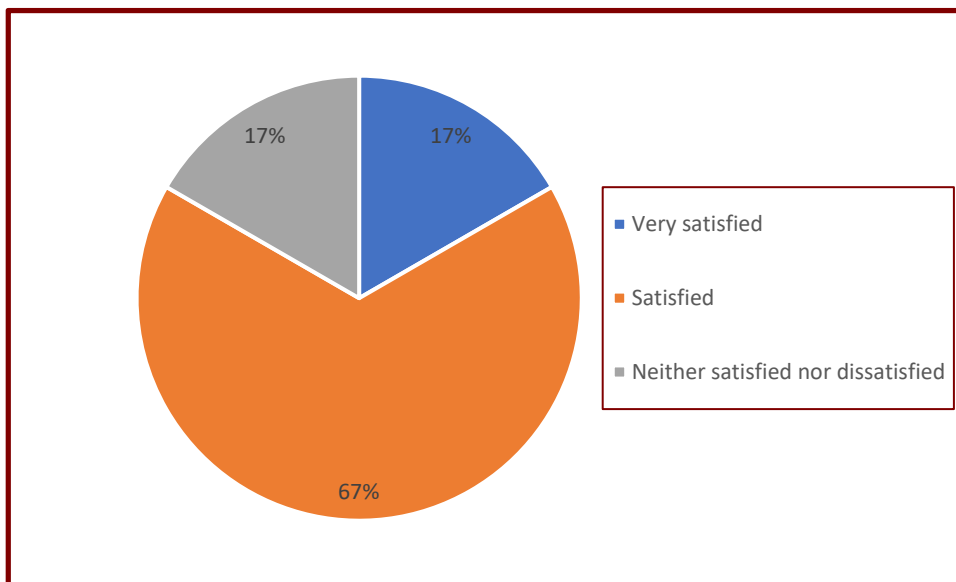
#### 4.4.5 Knowledge exchange events

At the time of the survey, only seven survey respondents had attended knowledge exchange events, with all seven considering the events to be either very important or important in helping them to understand the opportunities and innovations available to reduce carbon levels and improve environmental performance.

Furthermore, six of these seven businesses had identified actions through the knowledge exchange events that they are considering adopting to reduce carbon levels and improve environmental performance.

Satisfaction levels for the knowledge exchange events were high, with 84% of survey respondents who attended the events finding the events to be either very satisfactory or satisfactory, as shown in Figure 4.10.

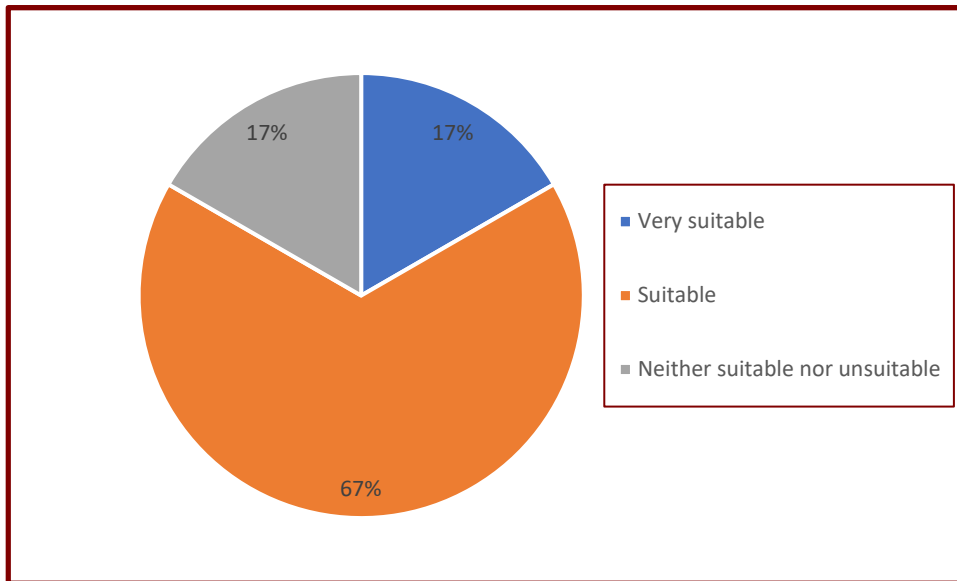
**Figure 4.10: Knowledge exchange events - satisfaction levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Suitability levels for the knowledge exchange events were high, with 84% of survey respondents who attended the events finding the events to be either very suitable or suitable for their needs, as shown in Figure 4.11.

**Figure 4.11: Knowledge exchange events – suitability levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

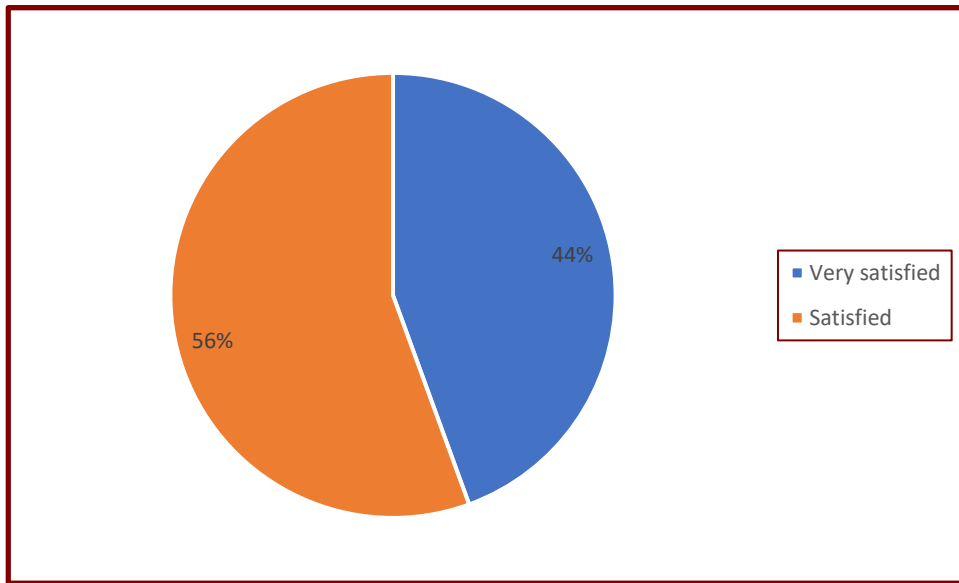
#### 4.4.6 Grants

18 of the 20 survey respondents will receive grants through the Growing Green programme and all 18 consider that the grants will be very important in carrying out their planned activities to reduce carbon levels and improve environmental performance.

Without the grant, 12 of these 18 businesses (67%) would have delayed their efforts to improve their environmental performance and the remaining six (33%) would not have done anything to improve their environmental performance.

Satisfaction levels for the grants were very high, with all of the survey respondents who received grants finding them to be either very satisfactory or satisfactory, as shown in Figure 4.12.

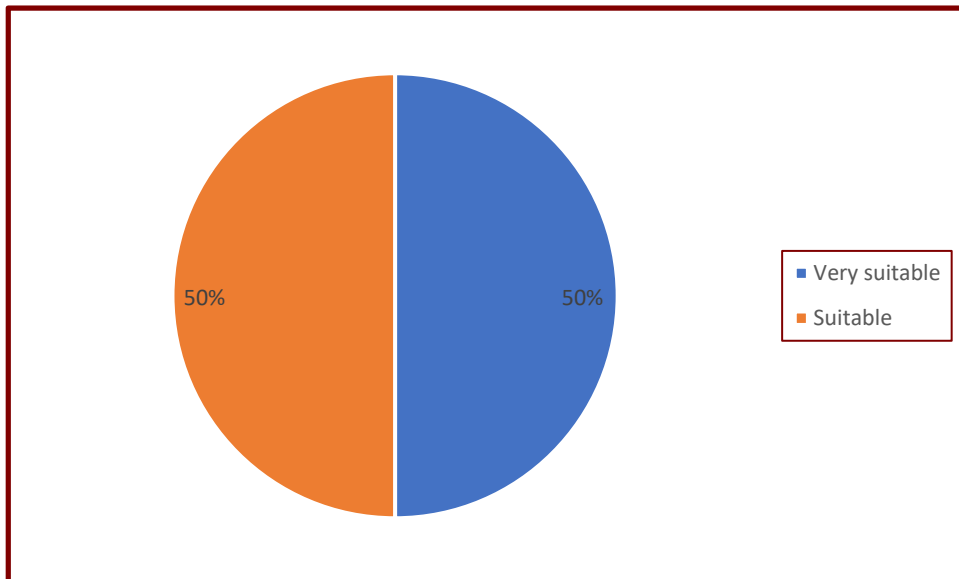
**Figure 4.12: Grants – satisfaction levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

Suitability levels for the grants were also very high, with all of the survey respondents who received grants finding them to be either very suitable or suitable for their needs, as shown in Figure 4.13.

**Figure 4.13: Grants – suitability levels**



Source: beneficiary survey, 2022



#### 4.4.7 Strengths and areas for consideration

The main strengths of the project, as identified by beneficiaries were the support and expertise of the practitioners, the quality of the online training and the knowledge sharing events. Table 4.2 shows the main strengths from the perspective of beneficiaries.

Table 4.2: Strengths of the project – beneficiary perspective	
Benefit	% of respondents
Support provided by the practitioners, including their expertise	28%
Quality of the online training	28%
Quality of the knowledge exchange events	28%
Overall quality of support	22%
The support programme was well-organised	17%
Access to grants	11%

Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

The main area for consideration, as identified by beneficiaries, was that some practitioners were difficult to contact and lacked expertise in the relevant field. It should be noted that 20% of survey respondents could not identify any potential improvements. Table 4.3 shows the main areas for consideration from the perspective of beneficiaries.

Table 4.3: Areas for consideration – beneficiary perspective	
Benefit	% of respondents
Practitioners were difficult to contact and / or lacked relevant knowledge	40%
The programme was too short and this made it difficult to find suppliers	15%
The grant process was bureaucratic and time consuming	15%
The need for more technical support	5%
The need for more follow-up after activities	5%

Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

## 4.5 Summary

Growing Green was well managed and delivered, with a strong team in place to ensure that the project was well-designed and responsive to client needs.

The main strengths of the project, as identified through consultations, were that the project was successfully delivered within a tight timescale, the role of the practitioners in ensuring that businesses remained engaged, the success of the project in facilitating co-innovation between



businesses and practitioners and the upskilling of practitioners. From a beneficiary perspective, the main strengths were the support and expertise of the practitioners, the quality of the online training and the knowledge sharing events.

Areas for improvement identified by consultees included the need for more sustainability expertise among the practitioners, the need for more practitioner training and the need for the training sessions to be in person rather than online. From a beneficiary perspective, the main areas for consideration included the need for better communication from the practitioners and the need for a longer programme.

## 5 Project outcomes and impacts

### 5.1 Introduction

This section sets out the benefits delivered by the project. These include environmental benefits and economic benefits as well as a range of wider benefits. Note that economic benefits are based on the 33 beneficiaries which completed the support programme, even though some of these did not complete decarbonisation – innovation plans or receive grants, rather than the 35 which started the support programme. Businesses which did not complete their plans or access grants may still have delivered positive impacts through applying learning from the project in their activities.

### 5.2 Environmental benefits

#### 5.2.1 Carbon reduction

All 20 survey respondents stated that they expected their carbon footprints to be lower as a result of the support provided. Only four of the businesses could provide an estimate of how many tonnes of carbon could be saved per year as a result of the support provided, with the figures being 1 tonne, 4 tonnes, 40 tonnes and 9,000 tonnes.

#### 5.2.2 Other environmental benefits

The support provided is expected to lead to a range of other environmental benefits according to survey respondents, with the most commonly cited being less waste and more recycling. Table 5.1 sets out the other environmental benefits expected.

Table 5.1: Other environmental benefits	
Benefit	% of respondents
Producing less waste	60%
More recycling	60%
Using less water	55%
Using more recycled materials	45%
Using fewer materials	45%
Better energy storage	5%

## 5.3 Economic benefits

### 5.3.1 Employment

10 of the 20 survey respondents stated that they expected jobs to be created in their businesses as a result of the support provided, with 13 jobs being created in these 10 businesses. This suggests that among the 33 businesses which completed the support programme there is the potential to create 21 jobs.

The additionality of the project in relation to jobs has been assessed through assumptions in relation to leakage, displacement, multiplier effects and deadweight. The adjustments made to allow for additionality are based upon the responses to the surveys and standard benchmarks:

- leakage – a leakage rate of 16.9% has been used. This is consistent with the mean figure for 'Sector / Cluster Support' initiatives as set out in 'Research to Improve the Assessment of Additionality' (BEIS, 2009);
- displacement – a displacement rate of 22.4% has been used. This is consistent with the mean figure for 'Sector / Cluster Support' initiatives as set out in 'Research to Improve the Assessment of Additionality';
- multiplier - a multiplier of 1.26 has been used. This is consistent with the mean figure for 'Sector / Cluster Support' initiatives as set out in 'Research to Improve the Assessment of Additionality'; and
- deadweight – the survey indicates that 17.5% of the gross jobs created would have been created without the project.

Table 5.2 sets out the number of net additional jobs created by the project to the end of the second quarter of 2022.

Table 5.2: Net additional jobs expected to be created	
	Jobs
Gross jobs created	21
Leakage (16.9%)	4
Gross local direct effect	17
Displacement (22.4%)	4
Net local direct effect	14
Multiplier effect (26%)	4
Total gross local effect	17
Deadweight (17.5%)	3
<b>Total net additional job created</b>	<b>14</b>

Note: Figures subject to rounding

The project is therefore forecast to have created 14 net additional jobs.

### 5.3.2 Turnover and GVA

13 of the 20 survey respondents stated that they expected their turnover to increase as a result of the support provided, with the annual increase being £1,402,700 among these 20 businesses. This suggests that among the 33 businesses which completed the support programme there is the potential to generate £2,314,455 per annum in additional turnover.

This turnover increase equates to an annual GVA increase of £800,801 resulting from the support provided, based on a GVA to turnover ratio of 34.6% for the South East derived from the annual business survey. The discounted gross GVA generated for the five-year period from 2023 to 2028 is therefore forecast to be £3,742,145 for the 33 businesses completing the support programme.

Net additional GVA has been calculated by adjusting for displacement, deadweight and multipliers, for which the rates identified in Section 5.3.1 have been applied. As GVA is a workplace-based measure, no allowance for leakage has been included.

Table 5.3 sets out the gross and net additional GVA generated by the project to the end of 2023 and 2028.

Table 5.3: Gross and net additional GVA to 2023 and 2028		
	To 2023	To 2028
Gross GVA	£800,801	£3,742,145
Displacement (22.4%)	£179,379	£838,240
Net local direct effect	£621,422	£2,903,905
Multiplier effect (26%)	£161,570	£755,015
Total gross local effect	£782,991	£3,658,920
Deadweight (17.5%)	£137,023	£640,311
<b>Net additional GVA</b>	<b>£645,968</b>	<b>£3,018,609</b>

Note: Figures subject to rounding

The project is therefore forecast to generate over £600,000 in net additional GVA by the end of 2023 and over £3 million by 2028.

### 5.3.3 Local expenditure

Survey data indicates that among the 33 businesses which completed the project there will be a total spend in Kent of £397,815 in relation to achieving their Action Plan targets. This equates to an additional £137,644 in GVA, again based on a turnover to GVA ratio of 34.6%.

## 5.4 Wider benefits

### 5.4.1 Employee benefits

11 of the 20 survey respondents (55%) stated that there have been or are expected to be benefits to their employees resulting from the support provided. These include:

- jobs safeguarded;
- tasks made easier;
- the use of lighter and quieter equipment; and
- improved working environment.

### 5.4.2 Tackling barriers to improving environmental performance

The Growing Green project has been successful in addressing the barriers to improving environmental performance faced by beneficiaries. The most common barriers were accessing dependable advice and the cost of implementing new technologies.

Table 5.4 sets out the main barriers and the extent to which the project has addressed these.

Table 5.4: Barriers to improving environmental performance		
Barrier	% of respondents identifying as a barrier	Very effective / effective at addressing barrier
Accessing dependable professional advice	90%	100%
Cost of innovation and implementing new technologies	85%	94%
Access to finance	80%	94%
Lack of knowledge of low carbon technologies and approaches	80%	87%
Perceived economic risk	65%	92%
Disruption to business activities caused by change of approach	20%	100%

Source: Beneficiary survey, 2022

Note: the second column shows the percentage of respondents identifying a barrier. The final column shows the percentage of those identifying a barrier who felt that the programme had addressed this. Respondents could identify more than one barrier.

### 5.4.3 Other wider benefits

According to survey respondents, a range of other wider benefits are expected to result from the support provided. These are set out in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5: Other wider benefits	
Benefit	% of respondents
Looking for further ways to decrease carbon levels from the business	100%
Looking to make other environmental improvements in the business	100%
Investing further in new equipment	95%
Invest future cost savings in the business	95%
Working with other businesses and organisations to decrease carbon levels	90%
Accessing funding from public sources other than the project grant	80%

## 5.5 Summary

The Growing Green project is expected to deliver significant environmental benefits, with all of the beneficiaries who completed Action Plans expecting their carbon levels to reduce as a result of the support provided. The support provided is also expected to lead to a range of other environmental benefits such as reduced waste, more recycling and less water being used.

The project is also expected to deliver significant economic benefits, with 21 gross jobs and 14 net additional jobs expected to be created. By 2028, the project is forecast to deliver over £3 million in net additional GVA in Kent and Medway.

Furthermore, the project has successfully addressed a range of barriers to improving environmental performance faced by beneficiaries. These include accessing dependable advice, the costs associated with innovation and new technologies and access to finance.

In addition, as a result of the support provided, beneficiaries expect to continue with their low carbon journeys through, for example, working with other businesses and organisations to improve their environmental performances.

## 6 Value for money

### 6.1 Introduction

This section sets out an assessment of the value for money of the project. It comprises an analysis of economy, effectiveness and efficiency.

### 6.2 Economy

The project was delivered economically. For example, all salaries were at market rates and all procurement was in compliance with public sector regulations. Grant applications were thoroughly scrutinised to ensure compliance with public sector regulations.

### 6.3 Effectiveness

The Growing Green project has contributed to the delivery of the objectives of a number of strategies and policies, as shown in Section 2.4 of this report. Table 6.1 sets out an assessment of the extent to which the project met its original objectives.

Table 6.1: Effectiveness of the Growing Green project		
Objective	Achievement to date	Comments
To recruit 40 micro and SME businesses to participate in the Growing Green pilot.	✓✓	The project successfully recruited 35 businesses, with 33 completing the support programme.
To co-develop and deliver business-focused upskilling around net-zero to 15 Growing Green Practitioners and 40 micro and SME businesses	✓✓✓	The project successfully delivered upskilling support to 14 practitioners and 35 businesses, although two of the businesses dropped out during the project.
To co-develop and deliver a diagnostic audit to identify opportunities for net-zero business innovation	✓✓✓	Diagnostic audits were delivered to 18 businesses who progressed past the initial training.
To deliver 40 Decarbonisation - Innovation Actions Plans	✓✓	Decarbonisation - Innovation Action Plans delivered by 29 businesses
For 36 businesses to attend at least one net-zero knowledge exchange event	✓✓✓	The 33 businesses which remained on the project all attended at least one event.
To issue 36 grants to support net-zero business innovation activity identified in the Innovation Action Plans	✓✓	24 grants were issued.

✓ = minimal achievement

✓✓ = moderate achievement

✓✓✓ = significant achievement



It should be noted that shortfalls in relation to some of the objectives were largely the result of the shortened delivery period for the project, which made recruiting businesses challenging, particularly as many food and drink businesses are busy during the summer months. The shortened period also made it difficult for businesses to apply for grants as there was little time to source suppliers and spend the grant before project closure.

## 6.4 Efficiency

### 6.4.1 To 2023

Table 6.2 sets out an assessment of the efficiency of the project to 2023.

Table 6.2: CRF value for money of the project to 2023		
		Growing Green
A	Total CRF cost (£)	£473,241
B	Businesses recruited	35
C	Businesses completing the support programme	33
D	Decarbonisation plans developed	29
E	Gross jobs created	21
F	Net jobs created	14
G	Net additional GVA generated	£645,968
H	CRF cost per business recruited	£13,521
I	CRF cost per business completing the support programme	£14,341
J	CRF cost per decarbonisation plan developed	£16,319
K	CRF cost per gross job created	£22,535
L	CRF cost per net job created	£33,803
M=G/A	Ratio of GVA increase to CRF cost	1.4:1

### 6.4.1 To 2028

The only output or impact change by 2028 will be an increase in net additional GVA to £3,018,609. This will improve the ratio of GVA increase to CRF cost to 6.4:1.

## 6.5 Summary

This section has demonstrated that the project had processes and procedures in place to ensure that it was delivered in an economical manner, such as through grant recipients having to adhere to public sector regulations and all salaries being at market rates. The project has also been largely successful in terms of meeting its own objectives, with any shortfalls in relation to objectives

being due to the shortened project period and therefore being beyond the control of the project team.

By 2023 the project is expected to have a CRF cost per business recruited of £13,521, a CRF cost per decarbonisation plan of £16,319, a CRF cost per net job of £33,803 and a return on investment of 1.4:1.

The long-term value for money of the project will be substantially greater. For example, by 2028 the return on investment is forecast to increase to 6.4:1.

## 7 Future needs of beneficiaries and willingness to pay

### 7.1 Introduction

This section identifies the activities that beneficiaries would like to be provided with on future carbon reduction programmes.

### 7.2 Future support needs

The survey was used to ask businesses about the types of support they will need in future in relation to improving their environmental performance. Businesses were able to select their most important three needs from a pre-determined list of activities.

The most commonly cited needs were access to finance and business planning advice, as shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Future support needs	
	% of respondents
Access to finance	85%
Business planning advice	55%
Opportunities to work with universities and research centres	45%
Mentoring	40%
Opportunities to collaborate with other businesses	30%
Guidance on feasibility	25%
Graduate and Postgraduate placements	20%

Source: beneficiary survey, 2022

### 7.3 Willingness to pay for support

There is some uncertainty over the availability of future funding for initiatives such as Growing Green. It may be that business support projects will need to consider beneficiary contributions as a means to cover any shortfalls in programme or project funding.

As part of the evaluation, we asked beneficiaries whether they would be willing to contribute financially in order to access the non-grant elements of support. Table 7.2 sets out the percentages of beneficiaries who would be willing to contribute.

Table 7.2: Percentage of beneficiaries willing to contribute financially	
	Percentage of survey respondents
Willing to contribute financially	10%
Not willing to contribute financially	80%
Don't know / won't say	10%

Source: Beneficiary survey, 2022

Table 8.1 shows that there is limited willingness among beneficiaries to pay for the type of support provided.

Only one business provided a figure for the amount they would be willing to pay. This figure was £3,000.

## 7.4 Summary

Beneficiaries identified a number of types of support that they would like in relation to further improving their environmental performance, with the most commonly identified being access to finance, business planning advice and opportunities to work with universities and research centres.

There was, however, only limited willingness to pay for the types of support provided through Growing Green, with only 10% of survey respondents confirming that they would be prepared to contribute financially towards the support provided.

## 8 Conclusions and lessons learned

### 8.1 Introduction

This section sets out the main conclusions of the evaluation. It also identifies a number of lessons that can be learned from the project and recommendations for future activity.

### 8.2 Conclusions

The project has had a positive impact in terms of improving the environmental performance of SMEs in the food and drink sector in Kent and Medway. It is forecast that all 33 businesses which completed the support programme will reduce their carbon footprints. A range of further environmental benefits are also expected, such as the generation of less waste, more recycling and less water use.

Growing Green is also expected to deliver substantial economic benefits, including job creation and the generation of additional GVA for Kent and Medway. GVA benefits are expected to increase significantly over the next few years.

Furthermore, the project has also delivered a range of wider benefits including generating further interest in reducing carbon levels and generating interest in other environmental improvements. The project has also addressed the main barriers to improving environmental performance faced by beneficiaries, including accessing dependable advice and the cost of implementing new technologies.

The project has been successful in responding to the needs of beneficiaries by addressing the support needs of businesses, including grants and one-to-one support from practitioners. This has resulted in high satisfaction rates among beneficiaries with the services provided.

The project has been well-managed and delivered by an experienced team. This has ensured that beneficiaries have been provided with a valued support package.

A further survey of beneficiaries will be carried out within six months of the beneficiary project end (31 October 2023). This will provide some time for beneficiaries to implement their low carbon initiatives and to see the benefits and will therefore provide increased certainty with regard to the current and future impacts of the project. In addition, Low Carbon Kent are preparing a number of case studies of project beneficiaries and their engagement with the project with a focus on measurement of carbon benefits achieved post innovation project.

### 8.3 Lessons learned and recommendations

A number of lessons and recommendations have been identified for future support initiatives. Elements of good practice which should be continued on future initiatives include:

- to continue with the practitioner approach as this increases the likelihood of businesses remaining engaged with the project;

- to continue to promote co-innovation as this enables all parties to identify and implement sustainability actions;
- to continue to provide training to practitioners as this will enable them to support businesses beyond the life of the project;
- to continue to promote long-term systematic approaches to improving environmental performance rather than short-term activities;
- to continue to provide grants as many businesses would not implement actions without financial support;
- to continue to promote signposting to other support provided by project partners; and
- to continue with a wide-ranging support package which covers a broad spectrum of business needs.

Recommendations for consideration on future initiatives include:

- to consider a wider geography at the outset of any future project. Focusing on individual local authority areas limits the pool of potential beneficiaries thereby making recruitment more challenging. It also excludes many businesses from within the wider area who could benefit significantly from support and who may not be able to access support elsewhere. Any future project should consider adopting a Kent and Medway wide geography at the start;
- to identify practitioners with greater sustainability knowledge;
- to invest more time in training practitioners;
- to provide more face-to-face training sessions as these allow greater sharing of knowledge and greater interaction between businesses and practitioners;
- to provide guidance on grant applications at an earlier stage; and
- to ensure that practitioners can be contacted more easily.



## Appendix A: Consultees

Consultations have been carried out with:

- Robert Saville (NIAB)
- Scott Raffle (NIAB)
- Flora O'Brien (NIAB)
- John Hutchins (GORSE Services)
- Emma Green (GORSE Services)
- Floortje Hoette (Produced in Kent)
- Chris Baldwin (APS Group)
- Rob Robinson (Low Carbon Kent)
- Robert Barker (University of Kent)
- Mark Ezegbogu (University of Kent)

## Appendix B: Breakdown of project activity, funding and businesses supported

### Introduction

This appendix provides further detail of the project activity completed including a breakdown of project expenditure and businesses supported.

### Breakdown of expenditure

Table B1 provides a breakdown of project expenditure.

Table B1: Project expenditure	
<b>Project Grant awarded</b>	<b>£513,121</b>
<b>Actual expenditure</b>	
Incurred and defrayed expenditure, claim 1&2	£10,884
Incurred and defrayed expenditure, claim 3	£27,550
Incurred and defrayed expenditure, claim 4	£32,738
Incurred and defrayed expenditure, claim 5	£44,956
Incurred and defrayed expenditure, claim 6	£218,919
Incurred and defrayed expenditure, claim 7 (not yet verified by Kent Council)	£138,195
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£473,242</b>
Over/ (Underspend) against original grant	(£39,879)

The projected underspend relates to small innovation grants that have not been disbursed and a small under-spend in delivery partner operating costs. These are detailed below:

- £216,000 was budgeted for small grants. £179,779 of this was defrayed, resulting in an underspend £36,221.
- project partner underspend on operational activities was £3,658.

Table B2 sets out the funding for the project by priority locations and non-priority locations.



Table B2: Funding in priority and non-priority locations				
Place	Delivery Partner	Partner spend in region	Small grant spend in region	Total project spend in place
Priority Place, Thanet			£10,896	<b>£10,896</b>
Priority Place, Swale			£32,687	<b>£32,687</b>
Other Place, Tonbridge & Malling	NIAB	£250,925		
Other Place, Tonbridge & Malling			£38,135	
<b>Other Place, Tonbridge &amp; Malling</b>				<b>£289,060</b>
Other Place, other regions in Kent	Low Carbon Kent	£25,228		
Other Place, other regions in Kent	Univ Kent	£17,310		
Other Place, other regions in Kent			£98,061	
<b>Other Place, other regions in Kent</b>				<b>£140,599</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£293,463</b>	<b>£179,779</b>	<b>£473,242</b>

## Overview of project delivery

The project started November 2021. A breakdown of activities by period is provided below.

### Period 1 - 3 November 2021 to 31 December 2021

Absence of funding agreement and guidance delayed project activity during November and December.

### Period 2 - 1 January to 28 February 2022

Project mobilisation took longer than expected so limited activity took place during January 2022.

Kent County Council Funding Agreement received 31 January 2022.

Recruitment of Growing Green Practitioners commenced in early February.

Development of communications materials and assets completed in February.

### Period 3 – March and April 2022

Growing Green Practitioners signed up in early March. Two sessions on ‘Train the Trainers’ held on-line on 10 March and 17 March.

Interim business sign up form replaced with Eligibility Questionnaire, which went live on 9 March.

Tranches of businesses processed for eligibility to receive aid/ subsidy and two business induction events held on-line on 1 April and 19 April, attended by 10 and 16 businesses respectively.

By end of April, 46 businesses had applied to join the scheme: 9 were eligible, 4 ineligible and 33 needed subsidy control follow up.

27 businesses were matched to Practitioners.

Training modules were developed in outline concept (April).

Moodle online training platform developed (April) as more resources became available.

Some Practitioners started working with their allocated businesses (by end April).

Contributed to Kent County Council Interim Report to UK Government highlighting risks around shortened project duration and levels of business engagement/ match funding achievable.

Confirmation of project extension and match funding removed (April). Awaiting formal variation to contract.

#### **Period 4 – May and June 2022**

Following the two business induction events held live (as reported in period 3) businesses in the latter cohorts were signed up directly to the training platform where they could watch a recording of the induction and access the necessary documents.

By early June, 58 businesses had applied to join the scheme, when the project team stopped eligibility checking as any further businesses would not have had sufficient time to complete the training programme.

35 businesses started the training sessions.

Training events held weekly through this period.

Internal meeting with Low Carbon Kent to plan decarbonisation plans and grant application process.

Awaiting formal variation to contract from Kent County Council.

#### **Period 5 – July and August 2022**

33 beneficiaries progressed into final few weeks of training.

Final training events held on 6 July and 27 July (postponed from end June).

Briefing event for Practitioners (5 July) on development of decarbonisation plans. Information rolled out to beneficiaries 7 July along with a process flow chart.

Deadline set for 31 July for submission of beneficiary decarbonisation plans (which was a key deliverable) with their previously completed Diagnostic/ Needs Assessment.

Grant application form issued to practitioners and beneficiaries for completion (mid August).

Awaiting formal variation to contract from Kent County Council.

Potential risks around underspend in the project discussed with Kent County Council – expenditure across the project (largely due to timing of spend), potential underspend in subcontractors and potential underspend in grants awarded to beneficiary businesses.

By end August, 29 decarbonisation - innovation plans received from businesses that completed the training programme.

#### **Period 6 – Sept and October 2022**

Independent evaluation undertaken with survey and interviews with delivery partners and beneficiary businesses.

Deadline of 15 September set for grant funding applications.

Following agreement with Kent County Council, grant available for each business raised from £6,000 to £8,000.

26 applications for grant funding submitted to Low Carbon Kent for discussion and decision by funders panel:

- two submitted plans but failed to complete the paperwork in time and hence were not issued a Grant Funding Agreement (GFA).
- 24 businesses were issued a GFA.
- 24 businesses returned signed GFA and delivered their projects.
- 24 businesses submitted claims for payment and were reimbursed as per GFA.

Programme of four Growing Green Site Visits delivered across the region attended by Growing Green beneficiary businesses.

Videos filmed for a number of businesses to capture their experience of the Growing Green project.

Wrap-up event delivered on 14 October at Bradbourne House, East Malling.

31 October was last date for beneficiaries to submit claims for processing and payment.

Awaiting formal variation to contract from Kent County Council.

#### **Period 7 – November 2022**

Videos completed. 10 videos published.

Final payments to businesses were made following submission of claims.

Legacy activity undertaken to promote Growing Green achievements.

### **Output performance**

By project completion there was a shortfall against most of the target outputs, as shown in Table B3.

Table B3: Output performance		
Indicator	Target	Achieved at completion
Businesses receiving non-financial support	40	33
Businesses receiving grants	36	24
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	40	29
Organisations receiving non-financial support	4	5

## Breakdown by size of business

Table B4 provides a breakdown of beneficiaries by size and shows that the overwhelming majority of beneficiaries were small businesses.

Table B4: Breakdown of beneficiaries by size				
Size of business	Initial target		Achieved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Micro / small	37	93%	32	97%
Medium	3	7%	1	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Project monitoring

## Breakdown by location

The project initially focused on businesses in Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge & Malling. Table B5 provides a breakdown of beneficiaries by location.

Table B5: Breakdown of beneficiaries by location				
Location	Initial target		Achieved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Swale	24	60%	6	18%
Thanet	6	15%	2	6%
Tonbridge and Malling	10	25%	7	21%
Elsewhere in Kent and Medway	-	-	18	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Project monitoring

## Breakdown by sector / economic activity of businesses supported

Table B6 provides a breakdown of beneficiaries by sector / economic activity.

Table B6: Breakdown of beneficiaries by sector			
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Manufacturing	Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
Businesses – micro/ small	16	14	2
Businesses - medium	1	0	0
Businesses - large	0	0	0
<b>Total Businesses</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>

Source: Project monitoring

## Business information

Table B7 provides details of the 33 beneficiary businesses that completed the training.

Table B7: Beneficiary information						
Business name	Post code	Address	Type of business	Company registration number	Sector	Size of business
<b>Swale</b>						
AM Espresso Ltd	ME9 7NE	40 Playstool Road, Newington, Kent	Private Limited Company	13277933	Wholesale and retail trade	Micro
Edibleculture Ltd	ME13 8RZ	The Horticulture Unit, C/O The Abbey School, London Rd, Faversham, Kent	Private Limited Company	9804813	Wholesale and retail trade	Micro
Machere Ltd.	ME9 9BJ	Hempstead Farm, Hempstead Lane, Bapchild, Kent	Private Limited Company	12960151	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Micro
Nim's Fruit Ltd	ME10 2PG	3/1 Trinity Trading Estate, Tribune Drive, Sittingbourne, Kent	Private Limited Company	06961718	Manufacturing	Small
S.C.Berry (Brenley) Ltd	ME13 9LY	Brenley Farm House, Brenley Lane, Faversham, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
Wild Bread Bakehouse	ME13 8GE	Unit 1C Sidings Close,	Private Limited Company	09470985	Manufacturing	Micro

Table B7: Beneficiary information						
Business name	Post code	Address	Type of business	Company registration number	Sector	Size of business
		Jubilee Way, Faversham, Kent				
<b>Thanet</b>						
Create Your Table / New Wave of Margate	CT9 1FE	22 Weymouth House, Margate, Kent	Private Limited Company	13238691	Manufacturing	Micro
Monkton Court Farms	CT7 0PZ	Hall Farm Barn, St Nicholas-at- Wade, Birchington, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
<b>Tonbridge and Malling</b>						
Adrian Scripps Ltd	TN12 6RR	Moat Farm, Whetsted Road, Five Oak Green, Tonbridge, Kent	Private Limited Company	799657	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Medium
Communigrow	ME18 5JL	Hazel Hall, Church Road, West Peckham, Maidstone, Kent	Registered Charity	Charity Number: 1159534	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Micro
iFruit Ltd	ME18 5BZ	Barham Court, Teston, Maidstone, Kent	Private Limited Company	08380940	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
JIB Cannon and Son	TN11 9SN	Roughway Farm, Roughway Lane, Tonbridge, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
Robert Mitchell farms	TN15 0LZ	Sheet Hill Farmhouse, Winfield Lane, Plaxtol, Sevenoaks, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
Roughway Farm Online	TN11 9SN	Roughway Farm, Plaxtol, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Micro
Victoria Farm Ltd	TN11 0LS	Victoria Farm, Victoria Road, Nr Tonbridge,, Kent	Private Limited Company	04668413	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
<b>Elsewhere in Kent and Medway</b>						
A Little Bit Food Company	CT4 5HW	The Bee Barn, Highland Court Farm, Bridge, Kent	Private Limited Company	8872196	Manufacturing	Micro
Coldblow Coffee	TN30 6RR	1 Golden Square, Tenterden, Kent	Private Limited Company	10713539	Manufacturing	Micro

Table B7: Beneficiary information						
Business name	Post code	Address	Type of business	Company registration number	Sector	Size of business
Docker Brewery	CT21 4NB	Unit 14, Riverside Craft Centre, West Hythe, Kent	Private Limited Company	12027960	Manufacturing	Micro
E.H.Holdstock and son	CT3 4AS	Higham Farm, Stodmarsh Road, Canterbury, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
Events Meets World	ME16 0US	5 Saffron Close, Maidstone, Kent	Private Limited Company	12396274	Manufacturing	Micro
Frasers	TN27 9DD	Coldharbour Farm, Barhams Mill Road, Egerton, Ashford, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Micro
J Myatt & Co	ME3 8SR	Mockbeggar Farm, Town Road, Cliffe Woods, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
JA Colthup & Partners	CT4 8JE	Hares Farm, Shottenden Road, Shottenden, Canterbury, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
Loddington Farm Ltd	ME17 4AG	Loddington Lane, Linton, Maidstone, Kent	Private Limited Company	00356817	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Micro
Maidstone Distillery	ME14 1HP	Unit 5, The Market Buildings, Maidstone, Kent	Private Limited Company	11498761	Manufacturing	Micro
Nightingale Cider Company	TN30 7DH	Gibbet Oak Farm, Appledore Road, Tenterden, Kent	Private Limited Company	10822737	Manufacturing	Micro
Old Dairy Brewery	TN30 6HE	Tenterden Station Estate, Station Road, Tenterden, Kent	Private Limited Company	7036202	Manufacturing	Small
Pleasant Land Distillery	TN25 7DF	Building 3, Bank Farm, Bank Road, Aldington, Kent	Private Limited Company	13412102	Manufacturing	Micro
Rebel Farmer	TN25 5PB	The Willows, Spelders Hill, Brook, Ashford, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Micro

Table B7: Beneficiary information						
Business name	Post code	Address	Type of business	Company registration number	Sector	Size of business
S W Highwood (Pluckley) Ltd	TN27 0PN	Sheerland Farm, Pluckley, Ashford, Kent	Private Limited Company	1103285084	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	Small
Simply Ice Cream	TN25 7BA	The Nook, Bonnington, Ashford, Kent	Private Limited Company	05581328	Manufacturing	Micro
Woodchurch Wine Estate	TN26 3RE	Susan's Hill, Woodchurch, Kent	Private Limited Company	13978430	Manufacturing	Micro
Zak's Kombucha	TN25 5HE	Building 4, Roberts Dane Premises & Stores, Coldharbour Lane, Hastingleigh, Ashford, Kent	Sole Trader or LLP	N/A	Manufacturing	Micro

## Organisation information

Table B8 provides details of the organisations supported within the training component of the Growing Green project.

Table B8: Breakdown of organisations by type				
Type of organisation	Initial target		Achieved	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Public	2	50%	0	0%
Private	1	25%	4	80%
University	0	0%	1	20%
Voluntary Sector	1	25%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Project monitoring



## Outputs - businesses

Figure B1 below provides a breakdown of outputs by size of business. This includes type of business, type of support and intensity of support.

**Figure B1: Outputs by size of business**

Businesses	Output achieved during project	Type of business:				Support Type				Support intensity (1): Trainer or Advisor to Beneficiary ratio						Support intensity (2): Hours of support or training provided					Support intensity (3): Value of support provided £'s				
		Public Limited Companies	Private Limited Companies	Limited Liability Partnerships	Other	Face to face	Online	Mix	Other	1:1	1:2 - 1:5	1:6 - 1:10	1:11 - 1:15	1:16 - 1:20	1:20+	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+	0-5k	6-10k	11-15k	16-20k	20k+
Small (0-49 employees)	32		20		12			32			32							32			9	23			
Medium (50-249 employees)	1		1					1			1							1				1			
Large (250+ employees)			0																						
<b>Total Businesses</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Outputs - organisations

Figure B2 below provides a breakdown of outputs by type of organisation.

**Figure B1: Outputs by size of organization**

Organisations	Output achieved during project	Size of organisation				Support Type				Support intensity (1): Trainer or Advisor to Beneficiary ratio						Support intensity (2): Hours of support or training provided					Support intensity (3): Value of support provided £'s				
		0-10 employees	10-49 employees	50-249 employees	250+ employees	Face to face	Online	Mix	Other	1:1	1:2 - 1:5	1:6 - 1:10	1:11 - 1:15	1:16 - 1:20	1:20+	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+	0-5k	6-10k	11-15k	16-20k	20k+
Public / Local Authority																									
Private	4	2		2				4			4					4					4				
Voluntary Sector																									
University	1				1			1			1					1					1				
HE College																									
Other																									
<b>Total Organisations</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## Outcomes performance

By project completion there was a shortfall against the target outcomes, as shown in Table B9.

Table B9: Outcome performance		
Indicator	Target	Achieved at completion
Businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support	36	0
Innovation plans developed as a result of support	40	29
Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support	40	29



## Outcomes – businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support


Figure B3 below provides a breakdown of businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support.

**Figure B3 - Businesses introducing new products to the firm as a result of support**

Specify type:			Type of business:				Size of business:					Support Type				Support intensity (1): Trainer or Advisor to Beneficiary ratio						Support intensity (2): Hours of support or training provided					Support intensity (3): Value of support provided £'s					
New Product:	New Process:	New Service:	Public Limited Companies	Private Limited Companies	Limited Liability Partnerships	Other	Sole Proprietorship (1 self-employed)	Ordinary Partnership (2 or more self-employed)	Small (0-49 employee s)	Medium (50-249 employee s)	Large 250+	Face to face	Online	Mix	Other	1:1	1:2 - 1:5	1:6 - 1:10	1:11 - 1:15	1:16 - 1:20	1:20+	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	20+	0-5k	6-10k	11-15k	16-20k	20k+	
0	0	0		0		0	0	0	0	0				0		0								0			0			0		

## Appendix C: Case studies and videos

<p><b>Simply Ice Cream</b></p>	
<p>Simply Ice Cream is a company based near Ashford. The company produces ice cream and was created in 2005. Since it started, the company has expanded significantly and built a factory on a new site in 2022.</p> <p>Sally Newall, the owner of the company, is on the board of Produced in Kent and it was through this connection that the company learned of the Growing Green project.</p> <p>The company were supported through the online training, peer networking groups and the events programme. They were also supported by a practitioner, but due to time constraints there was only limited engagement with the practitioner. However, additional support was provided to the company by Flora O'Brien from NIAB.</p> <p>Simply Ice Cream produced an Action Plan and received a grant to upgrade the company's freezers to lower emissions models. The freezers were sourced locally through the contractors who were building the new factory, thereby providing additional carbon savings through reducing the need for transport. The freezers are already contributing to lowering the company's carbon footprint.</p> <p>The main strengths of the project according to Simply Ice Cream are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the peer networking – this helped to identify actions that can be taken to reduce carbon levels and protect the environment;</li> <li>• the quality of the online training; and</li> <li>• the easy process for applying for the grant.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>Communigrow</b></p>	
<p>Communigrow is a registered food education charity based in East Malling and is focused on reconnecting people to freshly grown food, the outdoor environment it comes from and the soil it grows in. The organisation teaches people from all walks of life about how to grow their own food and reconnect with nature.</p> <p>Communigrow heard about the Growing Green project through contact from Robert Saville from NIAB, who went on to become the organisation's practitioner on the project. Communigrow joined the project in order to improve their environmental credentials and performance with regard to sustainability.</p> <p>The company were supported through an initial assessment of their carbon footprint, the online training and the events programme.</p> <p>Communigrow produced an Action Plan and received a grant of £8,000 for the acquisition and installation of solar panels, which will arrive in January 2023. The solar panels have been sourced reasonably locally (Sussex). Other activities identified in the Action Plan were increasing surface water collection and reviewing their waste management systems.</p> <p>The solar panels will have a major impact on Communigrow as the team will be able to stay on site for longer due to access to electricity. Previously, staff were unable to recharge their laptops at the organisation's facility. The solar panels will also power the generator and will therefore ensure that staff stay warm. This is important for team well-being and morale.</p> <p>The main strengths of the project according to Communigrow are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the project supported the organisation to look at activities that they would not normally consider;</li> <li>• the project enabled Communigrow to learn what other businesses are doing and apply it to their work, such as water collection; and</li> <li>• Communigrow now have a close working relationship with NIAB which will be of benefit moving forward.</li> </ul>	

Nim's Fruit Crisps	
<p>Nim's Fruit Crisps are located in Sittingbourne and produce air-dried fruit and vegetable products including crisps, drinks and garnishes. All of the products are made using fruit and vegetables rejected by supermarkets.</p> <p>The company heard about the Growing Green project through Medway Food Innovation Centre and joined because the project was consistent with the company's sustainability principles with regard to reducing food waste.</p> <p>The company were supported by a practitioner who helped them to prepare an Action Plan which set out three activities; improved lighting; using a different fuel in the airdrying machines; and purchasing a machine to turn waste food into a powder and thereby ensure that it lasts longer. The company received a grant to acquire a machine for the last of these activities.</p> <p>The new equipment will have significant environmental impacts through preventing food being wasted. It is also expected to have substantial economic impacts as it will enable the company to provide new products which will increase turnover and create up to three jobs.</p> <p>The main strengths of the project according to Nim's Fruit Crisps are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the online portal and online training were very valuable and enabled the company to learn a great deal about options for sustainability;</li> <li>• the practitioner was in regular contact to help the company with the grant application and provide advice;</li> <li>• there was regular communication from the project team; and</li> <li>• the grant application process was very easy.</li> </ul>	

In addition, project partners produced a number of video case studies detailing how they are investing their grant funding and reflecting on the positive impact Growing Green has made to their business. These can be accessed at:

- Nim's Fruit Crisps: <https://youtu.be/ncoU8wHKFaY>
- Zak's Kombucha: <https://youtu.be/5PB4K0Sz-lc>
- Roughway Online: <https://youtu.be/iWnA6qs2CIU>
- Pleasant Land Distillery: <https://youtu.be/rscPLwhwDIE>
- Ro-Gro: <https://youtu.be/V0YmbSf8DHE>
- JIB Cannon & Sons: [https://youtu.be/6Q\\_NII6jAVU](https://youtu.be/6Q_NII6jAVU)

A number of additional videos were made that showcase some of the innovation taking place in local businesses who were visited during the knowledge exchange events. These can be accessed at:

- Smurfit Kappa: <https://youtu.be/Qs4tWF5dxTM>
- Re-generation Earth: <https://youtu.be/QlasL4gMtm0>
- GADDs' Ramsgate Brewery: <https://youtu.be/l0sR8JHdJyQ>
- NIAB: <https://youtu.be/jQDcgTGNAAn0>



## Appendix D: Community Renewal Fund application





UK Government

## UK Community Renewal Fund Application Form

This form is for project applicants, applying for funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund across the UK. **Annex D in this document includes General Guidance for Completing the Application Form.**

The UK Community Renewal Fund Prospectus, Assessment Criteria, a Technical Note for Project Applicants and Deliverers and Technical Note for Lead Authorities are available [here](#).

The level of information provided should be proportionate to the size and complexity of the project proposed.

### **Applicant Information**

**Applicant name:** NIAB

**Bid Manager Name and position:** Dr Nicola Harrison  
Programme Director (Growing Kent & Medway)

**Contact telephone number:** 01223 342200

**Email address:** nicola.harrison@niab.com

**Postal address:** NIAB EMR, New Road, East Malling, Kent, ME19 6BJ

Registered office: 93 Lawrence Weaver Road, Cambridge, CB3 0LE

**Website:** www.emr.ac.uk & www.niab.com

**Company Registration Number (where relevant):** 03395389

**Charity Registration Number (where relevant):** 1064230

**Senior Responsible Officer contact details:** Professor Mario Caccamo  
Managing Director (NIAB EMR)

**Please confirm the type of organisation:**

- |                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local authority<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private sector<br><input type="checkbox"/> Voluntary sector<br><input type="checkbox"/> University | <input type="checkbox"/> FE College<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)<br><b>NIAB is also a registered charity</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<b>Value being Requested (£):</b> 513,122
-------------------------------------------

<b>The Bid – investment priority</b>
--------------------------------------

Please select which investment priority or priorities of the UK Community Renewal Fund are you applying under:
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Investment in skills<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Investment for local businesses<br><input type="checkbox"/> Investment in communities and place<br><input type="checkbox"/> Supporting people into employment |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<b>Private and Voluntary Sector Applicants.</b> Please confirm you have attached a copy of the applicant's last three years of accounts, and you permit Kent County Council to perform a credit check.
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Yes
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## Part 1 - Project Summary

### 1a Project Name

### Growing Green: A net-zero innovation pathway for micro and SME businesses

For questions 1b-1f, please describe in 500 words or less per question. Please be as concise as possible.

### 1b What activities will take place?

Climate change and the movement towards net-zero is changing the landscape of business risk and opportunity. Transition towards more sustainable and decarbonised business models is increasingly incentivised by clean growth policies, regulatory requirements, new technologies and market drivers. Innovation is key to establishing routes to business growth while cutting carbon emissions.

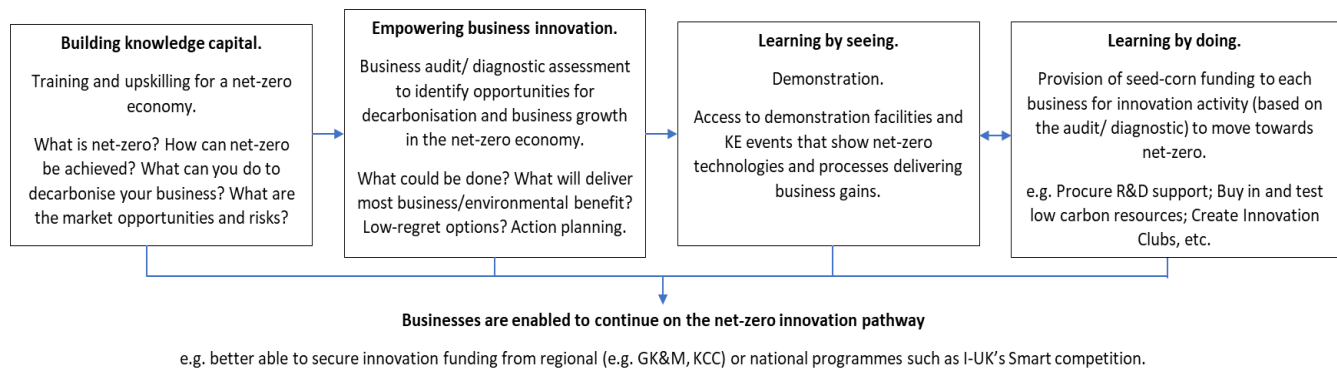
Within the Kent & Medway region, Produced in Kent (the region's leading food and drink promotion and business support organisation) has identified a need among businesses who have ambitions to become more sustainable, but who feel they lack the capability and capacity to do so.

"Growing Green", a programme that upskills and enables micro- and SME businesses to innovate and respond to the economic and commercial opportunities of a net-zero economy will be piloted. This pilot project is aligned to Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M) which was awarded £18 million in UK Government support from the Strength in Places Fund in June 2020. GK&M aims to deliver an uplift in the region's economy through inclusive and innovation-led growth by supporting the horticultural food production and processing industries. Our proposed Community Renewal Fund pilot project will be additive to GK&M. By exploiting the expertise and networks that already exist in the GK&M cluster, our "Growing Green" project will extend the impact of the cluster in the region specifically around the net-zero agenda. Learning from this pilot project will be transferable to other sectors across the region and nationally.

An integrated and incentivised business support programme will be developed and tested through co-innovation between businesses, R&D specialists and business support providers. Based on models of behavioural change, "Growing Green" will enable micro- and SMEs who don't normally access innovation support to embark on an innovation journey for the net-zero economy (Figure 1). It is well recognised that businesses who innovate, grow more quickly and employ more people than those that do not (e.g. ERC 2018). Key elements of the programme include:

- Upskilling through the delivery of a bespoke training package to overcome barriers around knowledge and language in relation to net-zero and the challenges and opportunities it brings to micro and SME businesses.
- Business focused diagnostic audit to identify opportunities to innovate and introduce new processes or technologies to the business for net-zero. Development of Innovation/ Decarbonisation Action Plans specific for each business.
- Learning by seeing through participation in demonstration and KE to overcome barriers to adoption by showcasing commercially relevant net-zero technologies and processes.
- Learning by doing through the provision of seed corn/ innovation grants to de-risk business engagement in net-zero innovation activity identified in the Innovation/ Decarbonisation Action Plans.

**Figure 1 Growing Green: A net-zero innovation pathway for small businesses**



### 1c Who will deliver the activities?

The “Growing Green” pilot project will be led by NIAB EMR (based in Tonbridge & Malling, Kent) and delivered in partnership with the Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M) innovation cluster.

NIAB EMR will work with other GK&M organisations including, the University of Kent, Locate in Kent and regional business partners such as APS Produce Limited to deliver the project activities. As key business support organisations in the region, Produced in Kent and The Kent Foundation will also be important partners. These organisations will provide staff (co-investment) from their pool of existing employees who will be trained to become Practitioners of the “Growing Green” Programme. This process will involve significant levels of co-innovation with the participating businesses (see Q1d).

Micro- and SME businesses from the horticultural and food processing sector will contribute to the project activities as co-innovators of the programme. They will be drawn primarily from the priority areas of Thanet and Swale, together with Tonbridge & Malling. As part of the co-innovation, these supported businesses will participate in the different elements of the pilot programme (Figure 1 - upskilling, diagnostic audit, learning by seeing, and learning by doing) to develop a peer-to-peer network of business innovators. They will also provide an essential test-bed and feedback resource for programme evaluation and improvement.

Low Carbon Kent, in partnership with other providers, will help in building knowledge capital through the delivery of a bespoke training package and diagnostic audit to upskill businesses around net-zero. Low Carbon Kent will be used to help manage and administer the programme of innovation grants for the participating businesses.

Because we have identified delivery partners and will be using existing employees, risks around recruitment and procurement are considered to be low and manageable.

### 1d How will the activities be delivered?

“Growing Green” aims to give businesses the know-how to identify opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of their operations; the confidence to make changes through seeing net-zero technologies and practices in commercially relevant settings; the capability to access R&D support; and the confidence to undertake business innovation for transition to net-zero.

As a result of participation in the “Growing Green” programme, businesses will embark on a pathway of innovation to reduce carbon emissions. The aim is to catalyse long-term behavioural change whereby a business will continue to look for opportunities to innovate for net zero, and importantly access resources and financial support to move their business forwards.

Net-zero carbon emissions targets are ambitious. Achieving them will require action across the full breadth of business types and activities, and not simply by relying on the actions of early adopters and innovation-active businesses. Our project will stimulate change in businesses who don't normally innovate as a critical step in the delivery of the UK Government's net-zero targets.

To achieve these aims, the "Growing Green" pilot project will be delivered over a 7-month period (September 2021 – March 2022) through six integrated work-packages (Figure 2). The work packages are as follows:

**WP1.** Identify and recruit 40 businesses and 15 practitioners to participate in, and co-innovate the "Growing Green" programme.

**WP2.** Build knowledge capital through bespoke training provision for both supported businesses and practitioners.

**WP3.** Develop and test the net-zero business diagnostic audit and brokerage service using business and practitioner co-innovation.

**WP4.** Learning by seeing through the provision of industry-relevant demonstration and KE opportunities.

**WP5.** Learning by doing through the provision of seed-corn innovation grants to support business-focused innovation for net-zero.

**WP6.** Project management, learning and scale-up.

These work-packages involve significant levels of co-innovation to ensure outputs are relevant to the needs and aspirations of business, and that they deliver real commercial benefit while still delivering on the net-zero agenda. It is widely accepted that co-innovation is key to overcoming barriers to technology adoption or take up. NIAB EMR has proven experience in using this type of approach (see Q4a). We recognise the risks associated with the timescales available to for this pilot project (Annex C Risk Register), but also see them as an important opportunity to drive co-innovation activity.

Work-packages will run concurrently in order to achieve our desired outputs within the timeframe available. Timelines for these activities are presented in the Project Plan/ GANTT chart (Figure 3).

**Figure 2 - Delivery of Growing Green pilot project (work package structure)**

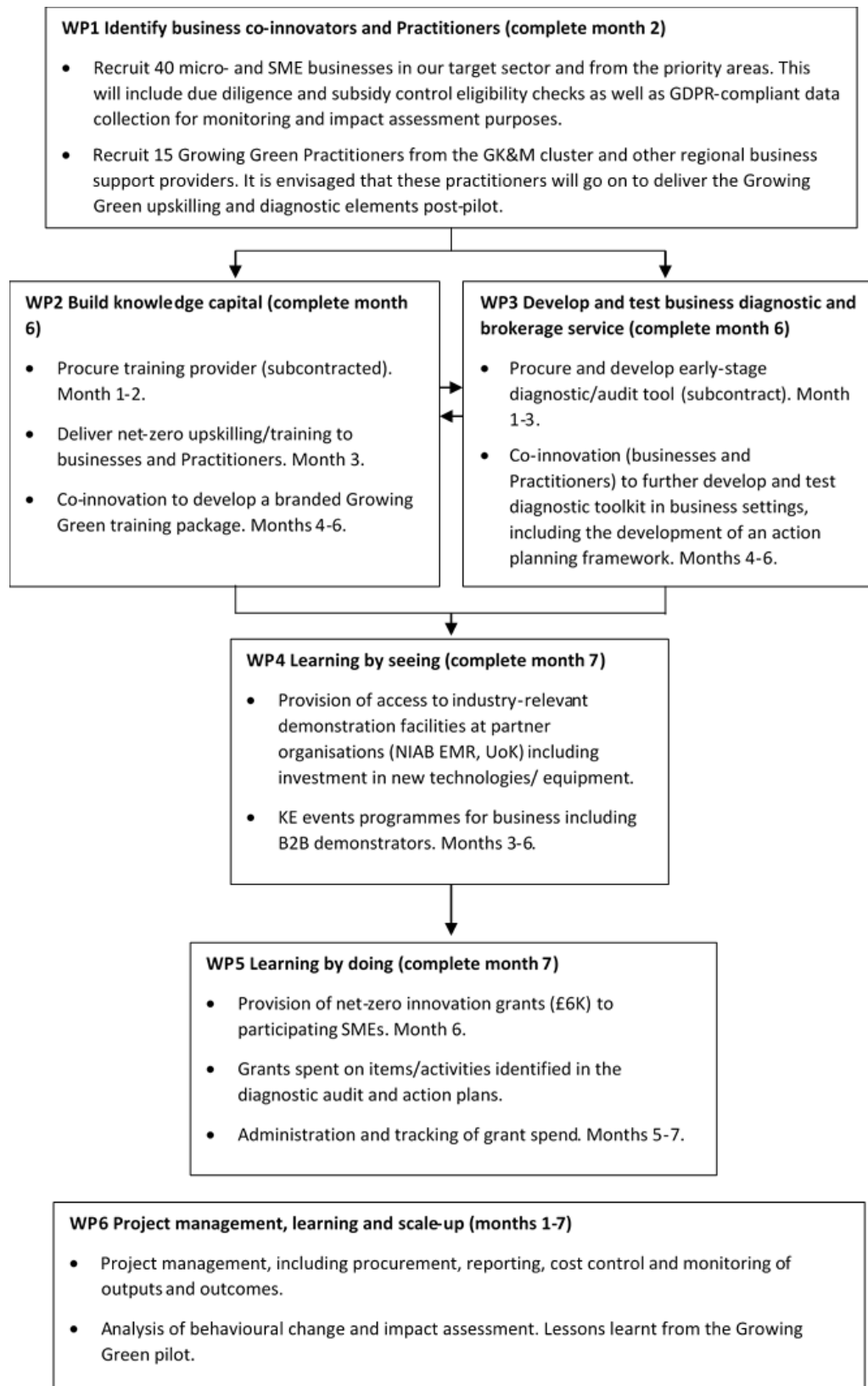
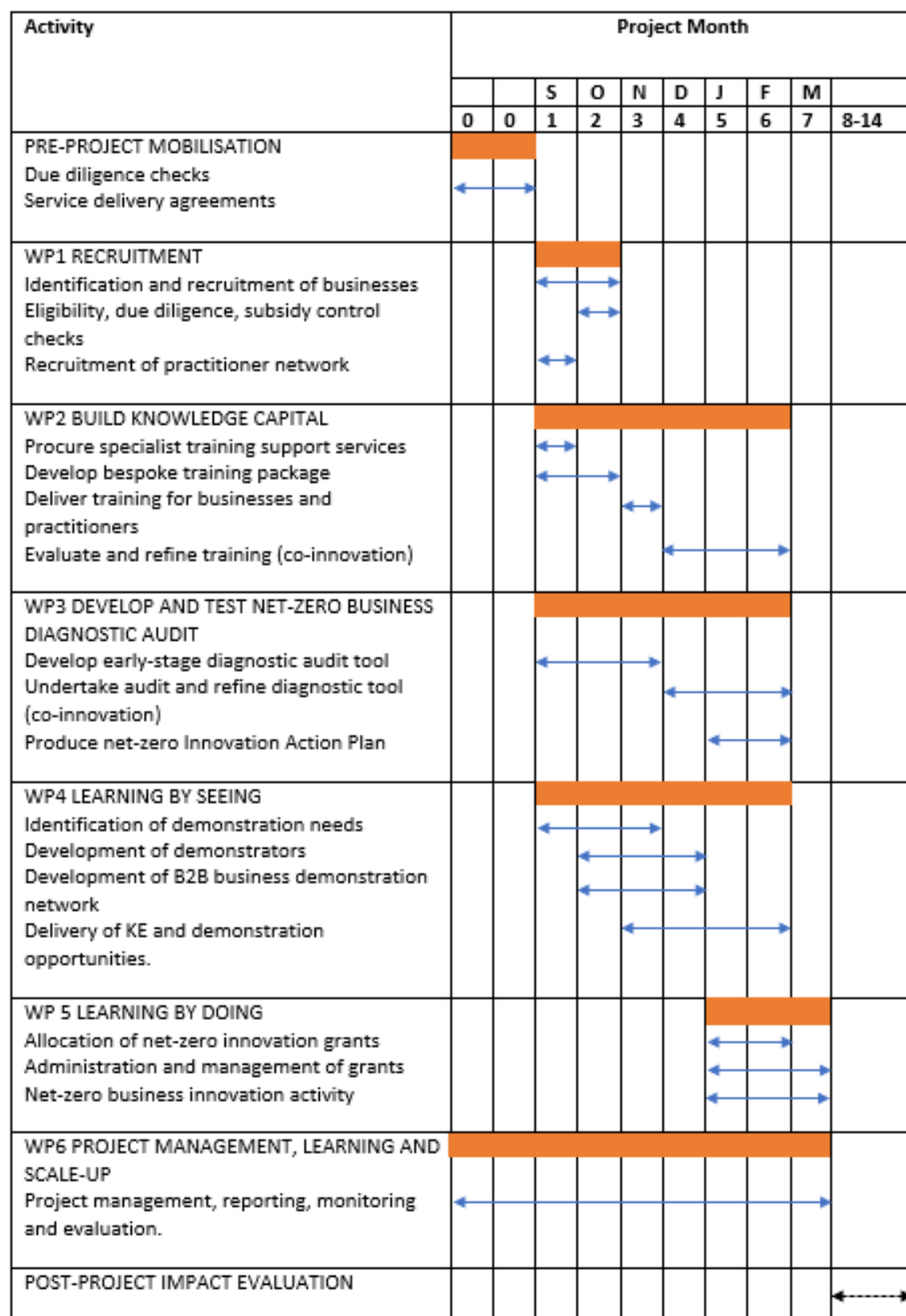


Figure 3 - GANTT chart – Growing Green pilot project



### **1e Who will be the beneficiaries of the project?**

This project will directly benefit micro- and SME businesses who operate in the horticultural and food processing sector in the region. They will be drawn primarily from the priority areas of Thanet and Swale, together with Tonbridge & Malling. Through their participation, these businesses will have the opportunity to build their knowledge, skills, confidence and capability to access innovation support as a means to improve productivity and address the challenges and opportunities of a net-zero economy.

The food production and processing sector faces unprecedented challenges and meeting the net-zero target will require significant levels of innovation around issues such as energy optimisation, waste elimination, input reduction and advanced manufacturing. Circa 2,400 businesses in the food and drink production sector support over 16,000 jobs in Kent and Medway. The region accounts for 40% of the UK's horticultural production and around 80% of all fruit imports, re-packing and distribution. This pilot project will, therefore bring direct benefit to an important source of regional economic activity and employment.

Organisations within GK&M, together with Produced in Kent, The Kent Foundation and other partners, will benefit by becoming Practitioners of the "Growing Green" Programme. This will enable them to drive change around carbon emissions and sustainability within their own organisations and supply chains (i.e. to deliver impact beyond the micro- and SME businesses that are being directly supported in this pilot project). It will also provide them with opportunities to extend their service delivery and expertise into other businesses.

"Growing Green" will bring additionality to the GK&M cluster by exploiting existing expertise and networks to extend its reach and impact around net-zero. The GK&M innovation cluster within the wider Kent and Medway region, will benefit through the creation of a pipeline of innovation-ready businesses who may choose to apply for follow-on R&D/innovation grants or who may wish to collaborate with other members of the cluster. Furthermore, we would ultimately aim to provide "Growing Green" as a commercial service that could be delivered through GK&M and/or the organisations within the cluster.

The project will deliver wider benefit because the lessons learnt will enable the programme to be scaled and transferred into other sectors and supply chains in the region and further afield nationally by providing SME's with a framework to embark on their own net-zero journey. Engagement with 'harder to reach' and non-innovating businesses represents a critical step in achieving net-zero carbon emissions. We will explore the opportunity to develop a "Growing Green" digital business tool/app/platform to be made available to the GKM membership and wider business community.

### **1f Where will the activities take place?**

The participating businesses who will co-innovate the programme and receive support are primarily drawn from the priority areas of Thanet and Swale, together with Tonbridge & Malling. The businesses carry out their main economic activity in these areas.

The lead organisation, NIAB EMR is based in Tonbridge & Malling. Other delivery partner organisations are located in Ashford (Locate in Kent; Produced in Kent); Canterbury (University of Kent); Maidstone (The Kent Foundation); Ash (APS Produce Limited).

Upskilling and training will be undertaken at NIAB EMR and University of Kent facilities (including, their Innovation Hubs in Ramsgate, Thanet and Kent Science Park, Swale). The diagnostic audits will be conducted within the participating businesses and activities related to the grant spend will be undertaken in different areas depending on the innovation needs of individual beneficiaries.

Demonstration activities will be delivered at NIAB EMR, the University of Kent and across businesses in the region who participate in the B2B demonstrators.



1g When will the project start?	01/09/2021	When will the project end?	31/03/2022
1h Which places (district or unitary areas) will benefit from the activity?			
Local Authority Area		Approximate percentage of activity / expenditure	
Swale		60%	
Thanet		15%	
Tonbridge & Malling		25%	
1i What are the key milestones for the development and implementation of the project?			
Milestone			Target Month
Co-develop and deliver business-focused upskilling around net-zero to 15 Growing Green Practitioners and 40 micro and SME businesses (horticulture and food processing) in Thanet, Swale and Tonbridge & Malling.			Nov 2021
Co-develop and deliver a diagnostic audit to identify opportunities for net-zero business innovation. 40 Innovation Actions Plans delivered			Feb 2022
36 Grants issued to support net-zero business innovation activity identified in the Innovation Action Plans.			Feb 2022
36 Businesses attend at least one net-zero demonstration/KE opportunity.			Mar 2022

## Part 2 – Project Impact

For questions 2a-2d, please describe in 500 words or less per question. Please be as concise as possible.

### **2a What will be the short and long term benefits of the project on its beneficiaries and the wider community?**

Transition to a net-zero economy will require businesses to adopt new processes, practices and technologies while at the same time working to improve productivity and profitability. This will necessitate significant levels of innovation. This project addresses a market failure in that a notable proportion of businesses do not undertake innovation activity because they face a variety of barriers to accessing support for innovation. Ranking 28/38 for English LEPs, just 37% of firms in the South East LEP are innovation active (UK Innovation Survey; BEIS, 2021).

“Growing Green” aims to facilitate transition to net-zero by enabling micro and SME businesses to more easily access support and be more innovation active. This is an essential step for meeting net-zero emissions target. The pilot project will work with businesses, R&D specialists and business support organisations to co-develop and test this programme over a 7-month period.

Short-term objectives include:

- Recruit 40 micro and SME businesses to participate in the Growing Green pilot (October 2021)
- Co-develop and deliver business-focused upskilling around net-zero to 15 Growing Green Practitioners and 40 micro and SME businesses (horticulture and food processing) in Thanet, Swale and Tonbridge & Malling (November 2021).
- Co-develop and deliver a diagnostic audit to identify opportunities for net-zero business innovation. 40 Innovation Actions Plans delivered (February 2022).
- 36 Businesses attend at least one net-zero demonstration/KE opportunity (February 2022).
- 36 Grants issued to support net-zero business innovation activity identified in the Innovation Action Plans (February 2022).
- Learning from this project will include identification of the:
  - Most impactful approaches for business engagement and upskilling;
  - Best ways to work with businesses to undertake net-zero diagnostic audits and formulate Innovation Action Plans that focus on delivering commercially beneficial innovation to those businesses;
  - Types of demonstration/KE opportunities which best catalyse business innovation for net-zero;
  - Optimal levels of financial incentive for stimulating business innovation activity;
  - Identification of ‘big’ shared challenges that require high-level support and co-ordination (e.g. hydrogen-fuel transport networks; low carbon materials and infrastructure).

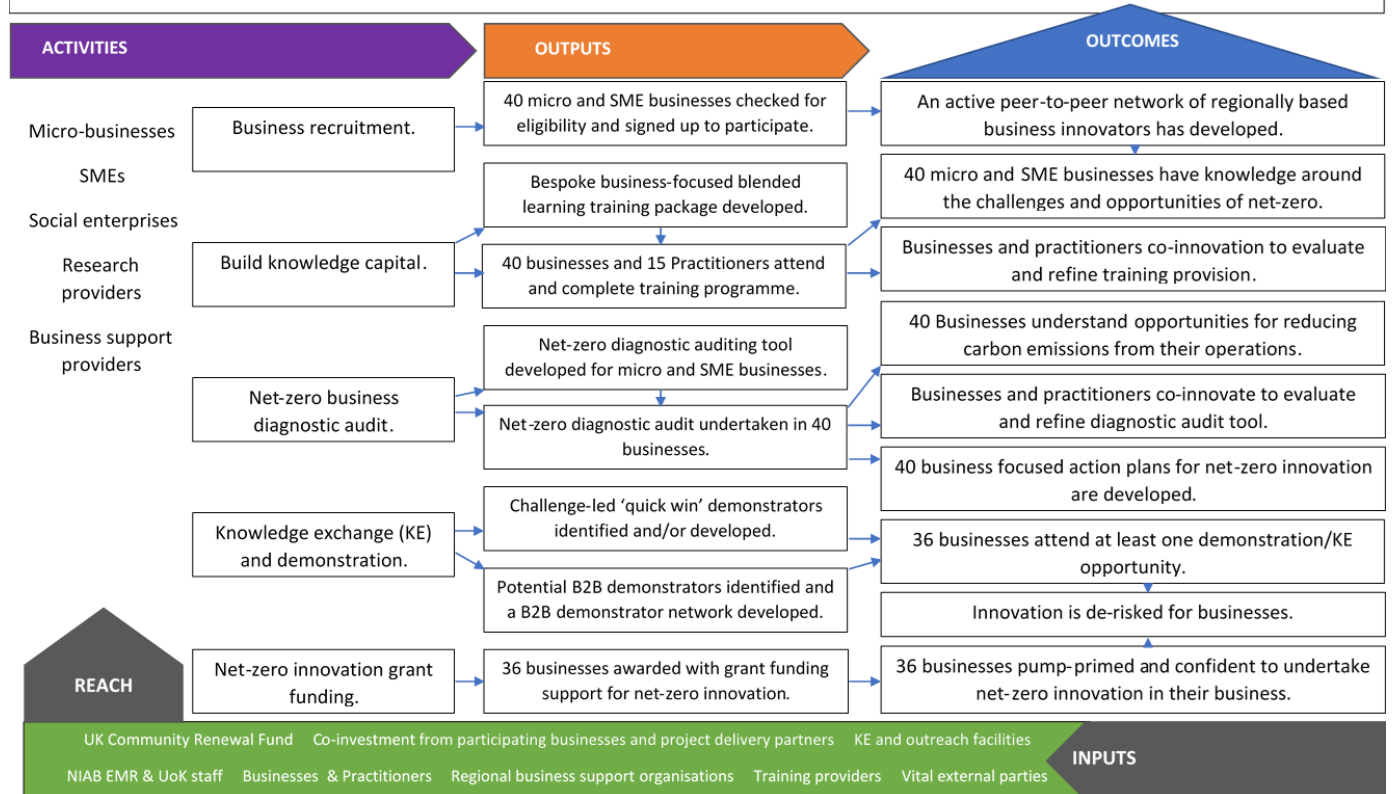
Longer-term benefits of the project on its beneficiaries are the development of a peer-to-peer network and an increased confidence and capability to embark on innovation journeys for transition to net-zero. Innovating businesses grow more quickly than those that do not; they employ more people and are more economically active (ERC, 2018). This will deliver inclusive growth opportunities to areas in Kent where there are significant prosperity gaps.

The project will also build a cohort of trained practitioners capable of scaling the “Growing Green” programme across their own organisations and more widely. A further legacy is a net-zero business service that could be provided commercially outside of the region and into other sectors.

The Logic Model (Figure 4) shows the pathways by which this pilot project will deliver short-term benefits and wider, long-term impacts in the region.

**Figure 4 – Logic model for Growing Green pilot project**

**IMPACTS:** Micro and SME businesses in the horticultural and food processing sector have been enabled to start on the innovation journey for net-zero. They begin to develop, test and introduce new processes and technologies into their business to reduce carbon emissions. They have the confidence to seek further support and undertake more innovation activity leading to business growth and employment opportunities in Thanet, Swale and Tonbridge and Malling. A peer-to-peer network of business innovators has been created for the sharing of ideas and a network of 'Growing Green' practitioners has been developed enabling reach into the wider business community. The pilot project has generated new learning so that it can be refined and transferred to a wider group of businesses and other sectors in the region and beyond.



## 2b How does the proposal align with local needs and long-term strategic plans for local growth?

Our "Growing Green" proposal is closely aligned with the recently updated SELEP Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (SELEP, March 2021) and the Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan (KMEP, August 2020). These set out a framework for building a clean and sustainable economy post Covid-19.

Our proposal delivers against the three key principles outlined in the KMEP Plan around building a more sustainable, lower carbon economy; supporting long-term productivity growth; and ensuring that people are able to gain from a more resilient economy. In particular, "Growing Green" will deliver against the Plan's third Activity Channel to support business innovation and growth in a sector that is synonymous with the region. In line with the KMEP's ambitions for economic renewal, we will:

- Increase levels of support for 'challenge-led' business innovation;
- Provide advisory and financial support to help businesses to reduce their carbon footprints;
- Help businesses to exploit new market opportunities around sustainability and net-zero;
- Catalyse the development of business networks along supply chains;
- Add value to existing programmes and strengths such as the Growing Kent & Medway innovation cluster and the LoCASE low carbon programme; and

- Improve interactions between businesses, business support agencies and the R&D expertise that exists in the region.

Sitting within the framework of the Kent Environment Strategy (2016), the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy was published in August 2020. With a vision of Kent being net-zero by 2050, the Strategy sets out how Kent County Council will drive clean, resilient economic recovery across the region. Our proposal aligns with Priority 9 of the Strategy which aims to support low carbon businesses, for example, by engaging with the LoCASE initiative. LoCASE provides business development grants for “low carbon” businesses, grants to support the installation of energy efficiency measures, and support around environmental management systems aligned to ISO14001.

Informed by, and building on LoCASE, our project will pilot a different, but complementary and additive model. “Growing Green” will offer a fully integrated, end-to-end programme of support to upskill, incentivise and enable businesses to innovate new processes, practices and/or technologies for transition to net-zero.

Our proposal has a significant focus on delivering support to businesses that are based in Thanet and Swale. These areas have significant prosperity gaps (English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019) and have been identified as being particularly vulnerable in respect to economic recovery from Covid-19 (Kent and Medway Covid-19 economic recovery dashboard). Through the enablement of business innovation, “Growing Green” will contribute to the levelling up agenda by creating conditions for clean business growth and new employment opportunities. These outcomes are fully aligned with SELEP’s strategic objectives to “support equality” and “promote greater resilience in our places” (SELEP, 2021).

With an initial focus on the horticultural and food processing sector (but directly transferable into other supply chains), we are working with a sector that is both economically important and culturally significant to the region.

## **2c How does the project support the Government’s Net Zero ambitions or wider environmental considerations? (This is not a requirement for employment support proposals)**

“Growing Green” aims to give businesses the know-how to identify opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of their operations; the confidence to make changes through seeing net-zero technologies and practices in commercially relevant settings; and the capability to access R&D support and undertake business innovation for transition to net-zero. As a result of participation in the “Growing Green” programme, businesses will embark on a pathway of innovation to reduce carbon emissions. The aim is to catalyse long-term behavioural change so that micro and SME business continue to look for opportunities to innovate for net zero.

The UK Climate Change Act contains a legally binding long-term goal to reduce the UK’s net emissions of greenhouse gases to zero in 2050. More recently, the UK Government has enshrined in law a target to cut carbon emissions by 78% by 2035. By developing innovative solutions to drive down carbon emissions in business operations, our programme will contribute towards achieving these targets. As emissions are driven out of supply chains, ongoing innovation to overcome difficult challenges will become increasingly important as ‘easy wins’ will no longer be sufficient.

We will focus on overcoming barriers such as awareness, capacity, and access to expertise and financial support to innovate for low carbon processes, practices and technologies. Our proposal, therefore, aligns with the ambitions of the UK Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy (2021). It will deliver on the UK’s Industrial Strategy Clean Growth Grand Challenge and it has a close strategic fit with the UK Government’s Transforming Food Production agenda which looks to drive productivity in food production whilst transitioning to net-zero emissions.

Our proposal demonstrates strategic alignment with the UK Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan which includes ambitions to make use of natural assets more sustainably and efficiently, minimise waste and mitigate climate

change. Alignment also exists with other important initiatives such as the Courtauld Commitment 2025 to cut the carbon, water and waste associated with food & drink, and the landmark Agriculture Act 2020 which more closely links food production with caring for the environment.

Following a successful pilot, the “Growing Green” programme will add to the activities of the wider Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M) cluster that is funded under the UKRI Strength in Places programme. GK&M has a strong focus on reducing the environmental impact of food production and processing, for example, through waste minimisation, reduced inputs and circularity. “Growing Green” aligns with the strategic aims of GK&M and it is expected that many of the net-zero innovations that businesses choose to adopt will also deliver other environmental benefits (e.g. switching growing media from coir to a more sustainable substrate; introducing low-carbon packaging; or developing new products or energy sources from waste materials).

## **2d How does the project demonstrate innovation in service delivery?**

With a focus on enabling those micro and SME businesses who don’t normally access innovation, our funding and support project demonstrates innovation in service delivery through a number of different routes.

**Co-innovation.** The “Growing Green” pilot programme will involve co-innovation between the participating businesses, R&D specialists and business support agencies. It is widely accepted that co-innovation ensures that service provision reflects the needs and challenges faced by the end-user, and leads to increased uptake. Through “learning together”, it is also expected that the “Growing Green” Practitioners will gain a better insight into the needs and ambitions of local businesses and will, therefore, be better placed to work with other businesses post-pilot to support their innovation activity.

**Integration.** The “Growing Green” pilot programme is a fully integrated package that supports businesses on the innovation journey. Based on models of behavioural change, it aims to enable businesses who don’t normally access innovation to build knowledge, confidence and capability. It gives businesses an understanding of the challenges and opportunities around net-zero, providing them with the language and access to ‘know-how’ to identify net-zero opportunities for their operations. Having the confidence to invest in innovation and adopt new processes or technologies is a key barrier, particularly if a business is uncertain about the commercial benefit that the change will bring. This is addressed through “Growing Green’s” commercially-relevant demonstration activities and its financial support to incentivise businesses and de-risk the innovation pathway.

**Collaboration.** Through “Growing Green”, a peer-to-peer network of businesses and practitioners from a range of organisations will be developed. This will strengthen relationships between public agencies and business support providers, innovators, R&D specialists, and the businesses community. These types of connections facilitate the sharing of ideas and experiences to create new concepts and collaborations.

**Along a supply chain.** Our pilot programme will work with business along the food production and processing supply chain. Working with a range of businesses will highlight a wider range of business problems that need to be solved around net-zero. This will ensure that the development of the programme’s training element and its diagnostic audit tool is more robust and wide reaching. In the longer-term, an integrated supply chain approach will enable businesses to co-innovate and drive down Scope 1, Scope 2 and the more challenging Scope 3 emissions from their operations.

It is envisaged that learning gained from this pilot programme will allow it to be refined and transferred into other sectors.

## **2e Which groups will your UK Community Renewal Fund project target?**

*Please describe below and complete Annex A – Project Impact Indicators*

Annex A Project Impact Indicators – completed.

We will recruit 40 businesses from the horticultural and food processing sector drawn from Tonbridge & Malling, Thanet and Swale to participate in the Growing Green pilot. This represents c.15% of the relevant business population in these areas.

The relative allocation of businesses who we will recruit is based on ONS data from the UK Interdepartmental Business Register for March 2020 (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/idbrlu> . Accessed 30 April 2021). Our allocation is derived from the number of local units categorised by industry (7 digit SIC code) and employment size band for our chosen sector and locations.

- Tonbridge & Malling: 10 micro and small businesses.
- Thanet: 6 micro and small businesses.
- Swale: 24 micro, small and medium businesses.

Practitioners who will participate in this pilot programme have been recruited from six Kent based organisations. These organisations either provide business support in the region, deliver business-focused KE consultancy, and/or undertake collaborative R&D. They regularly engage with the business community and will work with our business participants to co-innovate the programme. Practitioners are drawn from: NIAB EMR (a private organisation); University of Kent (public organisation); The Kent Foundation (voluntary sector); Produced in Kent (small business) and Locate in Kent (small business). As a member of the Growing Kent & Medway consortium, and a key business in the region, APS Produce Limited (large business) will also contribute to this Practitioner network.

As well as the 40 businesses who are being directly supported, this pilot project will build a cohort of trained practitioners capable of scaling the “Growing Green” programme within their own organisations. Further businesses will be supported in the longer-term as “Growing Green” is developed as a commercial service that can be delivered into other sectors and regions.

## **2f Please describe how you have considered the equalities impacts of your proposal, the relevant affected groups based on protected characteristics, and any measures you propose in response to these impacts.**

“Growing Green” is closely aligned to the Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M) programme which has a commitment to deliver inclusive growth in the region by targeting 30% of its business support activities at hard-to-reach and under-served groups or communities. By focusing on businesses that do not usually access innovation support in areas that suffer notable prosperity gaps, this pilot project shares these same ambitions.

“Growing Green’s” aim is to enable businesses to be more innovation active and as a consequence to grow and create new employment opportunities particularly in areas that have been vulnerable to the economic impacts of Covid-19. GK&M have identified women, young people and young parents as being particularly under-represented in business innovation activity. While our proposed “Growing Green” Programme will engage with a relatively small number of businesses, we will aim to secure an appropriate representation from these groups wherever possible.

The project will be in full compliance with the Equality Act and will deliver against the UK Government ambition to create a fairer economy. In line with NIAB EMR’s established structures and processes, a commitment to Equality,

Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) will be embedded in the management and leadership of the project. All partners, suppliers and participating businesses will be required to demonstrate and deliver a clear commitment to EDI. Through the collection of appropriate data (in line with data protection and privacy laws) we will monitor the equalities impacts of our pilot project.

## **2g What UK Community Renewal Fund Outcomes will the project deliver?**

*Please describe below and complete Annex A – Project Impact Indicators*

Annex A Project Impact Indicators – Completed.

Pathways to project outputs and impacts are outlined in the Logic Model (Figure 4). The project will deliver the following UK Community Renewal Fund Outcomes:

**40 x Innovation plans developed as a result of support.** These will be co-developed by businesses and practitioners as an output of the diagnostic audit carried out within the business to identify opportunities for net-zero innovation.

**40 x Decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support.** These will be co-developed by businesses and practitioners as an output of the diagnostic audit carried out within the business to identify opportunities for net-zero innovation.

**36 x Businesses introducing new products (or processes) to the firm as a result of support.** As a result of upskilling, diagnostic audit, learning by seeing and incentivised learning by doing, it is expected that businesses will adopt new products, processes or technologies within their business operation that allows them to move towards net-zero.

Wider outcomes (beyond the 40 directly supported businesses) include a cohort of trained practitioners capable of scaling the “Growing Green” programme within their own organisations. Further businesses will be supported in the longer-term as “Growing Green” is developed as a commercial service that can be delivered into other sectors and regions. We will explore the opportunity to develop a ‘Growing Green’ digital business tool/app/platform to be made available to the GKM membership and wider business community.

## **2h How have the outcomes been estimated?**

We expect that the 40 businesses recruited at the start of the pilot programme will complete the first two phases of the programme (upskilling and business diagnostic audit for net-zero) and as a result will produce action plans for net-zero innovation.

Based on lessons learnt from Low Carbon Kent and LoCASE, we expect a 10% attrition rate of participating businesses meaning that they do not complete phases 3 and 4 of the programme. As a result, 36 businesses will successfully introduce a new product, process or technology that helps the business to reduce the carbon footprint of their operations.

## **2i Would you expect to achieve any of these outcomes without UK Community Renewal Fund support?**

Without UK CRF support we would not expect these outcomes to be achieved within the timeframes envisaged.

The types of business we aim to work with, do not normally access support for, or undertake innovation activity. This is because they face a variety of barriers including a lack of awareness of what support is available to them; a lack of understanding around net-zero challenges and opportunities that could be addressed in their business

operations; and a lack of confidence, capacity or capability to secure funding and undertake innovation activity. Our project aims to overcome these barriers and enable businesses to innovate for net-zero.

Without support of the UK CRF we would not be in a position to bring together our collaboration of businesses and partner organisations to co-develop and test our programme. Businesses may seek to secure more mainstream grants around energy efficiency measures. However, innovation to develop and adopt other processes and technologies for net-zero within the types of businesses we are targeting, would be at a much slower pace and scale.

### Part 3 - Funding Package

#### 3a How much UK Community Renewal Fund investment is sought?

*Please also complete Annex B – Funding Package and Profile*

For the pilot project being delivered by NIAB EMR its partners we are requesting an investment of £513,122 from the UK Community Renewal Fund. This grant will be matched with co-investment from project partners and beneficiaries to provide a total funding package of £802,906 to deliver the Growing Green pilot project. Further breakdown of the funding package is provided in the following responses. Annex B has been completed as requested.

#### 3b Does the funding package include any match funding? If so, how much?

When will any funding that is not in place be secured?

Yes, the funding package being proposed for the Growing Green project has co-investment (match) funding that is being provided by the lead organisation and a network of project partners. This match funding is valued at £289,784 from both public and private sources.

NIAB EMR the project applicant will provide £101,132 of match funding covering the salary and overhead costs of NIAB staff involved in the project where they are not being paid by the CRF grant funding. NIAB will provide senior management support at the organisation's own cost to manage the project. This co-investment/ match funding is already in place. It will be drawn from NIAB EMR's own resources and from their Growing Kent & Medway project, which is complimentary to the initiative proposed here.

The University of Kent will make a co-investment of £40,369 on staff costs and overheads. This co-investment/ match funding is already in place.

Similarly, Low Carbon Kent will make a co-investment of £13,483 on staff costs and overheads. This co-investment is already in place.

The four other organisations that will contribute staff to be trained as the "Growing Green" practitioners will provide these staff resources on an in-kind basis to the project. As this represents a real cost to the organisations concerned this will form part of their co-investment. This contribution is valued at £16,800 and will be in place should the CRF grant be secured. Hence when asked is the funding in place, we have selected 'partial' in the application form.

Similarly, the 40 businesses drawn from the three districts in Kent will be expected to provide a single member of staff to take part in the programme – to be trained and take part in the audit/ diagnostic/ innovation plan development. The costs of these staff inputs are real for these businesses and will be provided on an in-kind basis as



part of their co-investment. This contribution is valued at £112,000 and will be in place should the CRF grant be secured. Hence when asked is the funding in place, we have selected 'partial' in the application form.

We have budgeted £6,000 co-investment for Monitoring & Evaluation activity as this will be completed after the project funding period has closed i.e. March 2022. This will be co-investment by NIAB EMR and is in place.

### **3c What will the funding package be spent on?**

The funding package (or the TOTAL project costs) will be allocated as follows:

#### **Staff costs** of key delivery partners and supported businesses

For NIAB staff costs associated with two senior staff, a 0.5% FTE project manager, two part time administrators (each 0.25 FTE), technical staff and five Practitioners. Total cost of £79,690.

For Low Carbon Kent two staff. Total cost of £25,814 to cover two staff, one a senior manager providing supervision and direction and the second an FTE project officer who will work on the project almost full time.

The University of Kent have budgeted staff costs associated with one administrator (0.25% FTE), six Practitioners and management time by one senior member of staff. Total cost of £28,321.

Four organisations providing staff to be trained as "Growing Green" Practitioners. Total estimated cost of £16,800.

40 supported businesses from across Swale, Thanet and Tonbridge & Malling, providing one member of staff to be trained and complete the audit/ diagnostic of their business. Total estimated cost of £112,000.

**Overhead costs** associated with NIAB, Low Carbon Kent and University of Kent. These costs are £70,587; £10,326 and £24,478 respectively. Only £9,349 will be claimed against the CRF grant in line with the guidance in the Technical Note.

**Travel and Subsistence.** Associated with T&S costs of the delivery partners in carrying out project activities. A budget of £5,500 has been allocated.

**Subcontractors.** We are holding budget to engage with a range of external suppliers of services; including provision of content and copy for delivery of training around net zero and environmental sustainability, audit/ diagnostic tool development, support to manage grant programme and consultancy to support the co-innovation process. Total budget £83,640.

**Cost of materials, events, demonstration, knowledge exchange.** We have allocated £60,000 for the organisation and operational costs of events, demonstrations, knowledge exchange activity including all promotional and marketing material.

**Grants provided to beneficiaries.** A core component of the project is the provision of a small grant to each supported business, to use as they see appropriate, to deliver against their specific business Innovation/ Decarbonisation action plan. We have budgeted for 36 grants of £6,000 each; giving a total cost of £216,000 for the project.

**Training participant costs.** We expect to reimburse the staff of the supported businesses and the Practitioners for their travel and subsistence costs incurred in attending the training courses, where these take place in a face-to-face environment. A budget of £250 per person has been allocated with a total cost of £13,750.

**Equipment for demonstration purposes.** We envisage purchasing small items of equipment for the demonstration activities. We have allocated a budget of £15,000 which represents circa 1.9% of the total project cost.

**Monitoring and Evaluation.** We have budgeted for 2% of the approximate total project size of £800,000; hence a budget of £16,000 has been allocated.

**Project administration cost.** This has been budgeted at 2% of the approximate grant size of £500,000; hence a budget of £10,000 has been allocated for use by Kent County Council.

**Irrecoverable VAT.** We have budgeted 3% of the estimated grant spend of £500,000; hence a budget of £15,000 has been allocated.

### **3d How has the overall budget been estimated, what has been done to test that it is accurate, how would any unexpected costs be managed?**

The budget has been developed and refined using standard procedures within NIAB EMR and the delivery partners for the development of cost budgets for projects.

**Staff costs** are based on estimated days of input of existing staff to deliver the project activities, using upto date salary information, and known levels of NIC and pension contributions. This would all be evidenced through PAYE returns.

**Overhead costs** are based on agreed levels with UKRI Research Councils in the case of NIAB EMR and University of Kent. Low Carbon Kent have used their standard overhead in their costs. No other overheads are being paid for.

**Subcontractor costs** have been benchmarked against previous quotes and tenders for comparable services or against commercially available market rates.

**The small grants programme** has been based around the size of grants offered in previous projects (based on delivery partner experience) and the potential number of applicants. Based on lessons learnt from Low Carbon Kent and their LoCASE programme, we expect a 10% attrition rate of participating businesses meaning that they do not complete phases 3 and 4 of the programme. On this basis we reduced the number of grants to be offered from 40 to 36.

**All other costs** have been estimated based on a unit rate multiplied by the number of months of project activity, or the number of beneficiaries. The unit rates have all been based on costs incurred in comparable project activity.

## **Part 4 – Project Applicant Experience and Capacity**

Please limit your responses to each question to 250 words or less. Please be as concise as possible.

### **4a What experience does the organisation have of delivering this type of activity?**

NIAB EMR has the capacity, capability and proven experience in leading regionally-based multi-partner projects of this type.

Our collaboration includes core delivery partners - the University of Kent and Low Carbon Kent, and practitioner partners – Locate in Kent; Produced in Kent; The Kent Foundation and APS Produce Limited. Together we combine the necessary skills, experience and capability to deliver a project of this nature with its focus on regional economic development and support for business innovation.

NIAB EMR is the single largest horticultural research organisation in England, experienced in managing a diverse range of projects. NIAB EMR performs well above the national average for competitive research funding, bringing in over £5 million of research to agri-business in the region. NIAB EMR has significant reach into the business

community via its KE and industry-related research, for example, through the WET Centre; the Collaborative Training Partnership for Fruit Crop Research; East Malling Strawberry Breeding Club and East Malling Viticulture Consortium.

NIAB EMR are currently leading Growing Kent & Medway (GK&M), a five-year, £30 million regional economic development project, part funded through the UK Government Strength in Places Fund. This project involves a consortium of two universities and 11 businesses with the support of regional civic leadership.

GK&M aims to deliver an uplift in Kent and Medway's economy through inclusive and innovation-led growth. GK&M will stimulate research, innovation and business growth by investment in state-of-the-art infrastructure, delivery of a grant funding programme, skills development, a business mentoring programme and tailored business support mechanisms.

#### **4b Describe the resources (e.g. staff) the organisation has available now to deliver the project?**

NIAB EMR is able to draw upon an extensive range of resources within the organisation itself, and from the wider NIAB Group and the broad range of partners that are represented in the project.

NIAB EMR will be responsible for project team integration and the management and delivery of the project:

- Project activities will be delivered through key delivery partners that include University of Kent and Low Carbon Kent.
- The Growing Green practitioners will be drawn from a number of supporting organisations including Locate in Kent, Produced in Kent, APS Produce Ltd, and the Kent Foundation.

NIAB EMR have previously worked with the University of Kent and a number of the partner organisations through the Growing Kent & Medway cluster.

Project roles will be co-ordinated by a Senior Manager from NIAB EMR (Dr Nicola Harrison) reporting to the Senior Responsible Officer (Professor Mario Caccamo). They are the Programme Director and SRO in the GK&M project respectively.

We recognise the short timescale for delivery of the project. Nonetheless, appropriate governance of the project will be implemented by Nicola Harrison who will chair a monthly meeting of the Project Delivery Group comprising key partners in this project. Meetings will review project progress, outputs and risks.

Nicola Harrison will be supported by key staff including a project manager, two administrative staff, and the back-office resources of the NIAB Group (comprising over 250 staff) including an experienced Finance team. Subcontracted resources, will be used where necessary, to ensure successful project delivery.

#### **4c If the organisation will have to recruit staff or appoint contractors what plans are in place to manage the risk of delay?**

This project has an extremely short timescale and requires a rapid mobilisation and deployment of staff and subcontractor resources. The UK CRF guidance notes suggest an indicative timeline of Lead Authorities being notified of success in late July 2021 and entering into funding agreements with successful bidders thereafter.

On this basis, we would expect to use part of August 2021 to mobilise for a project start on 1 September 2021.

NIAB EMR, the University of Kent, Low Carbon Kent and the four other organisations that are providing "Growing Green" Practitioners have confirmed that existing staff resources (circa 25 individuals) will be deployed, on a part time basis. This will enable project activities to commence on time.

Subcontractors are to be used for specific support and advice. NIAB EMR have well established procedures to ensure the transparent procurement and management of consultants and have factored sufficient time in the programme for these processes. All subcontractors will be issued written contracts with clear specification of service required and timelines for completion of project activities.

There is, therefore, limited risk of delays in recruitment or procurement impacting on project delivery and progress against specified milestones. Contingency plans would involve drawing down upon the resources from within the wider NIAB Group and project partners should delays be experienced in appointment or procurement of subcontracted services.

**4d Describe the systems and processes that will be used to ensure only costs directly related to the project will be included in grant claims.**

NIAB EMR's financial management team has considerable experience in managing and delivering complex multi-partner projects. All necessary staff, systems, and standard operating procedures are in place ensuring utmost integrity of data collection, cost allocation and grant claim management.

- All listed staff will be on a payroll and subject to PAYE.
- All staff will complete project timesheets recording hours spent on project activity.
- Where a business does not operate a company PAYE scheme, labour records will be kept as hours worked and costs estimated at a maximum of 8 hours per day, up to 40 hours per week, £22 per hour, with costs being recorded through the business accounts.
- Records of all project expenditure will be maintained where purchases are made from third-parties. Costs must be demonstrated to be necessary and incurred exclusively for this project.
- Reasonable travel and subsistence costs for eligible staff will be allowed at economy travel rates.
- All grant claims will be made once costs have been incurred and defrayed.

To protect against fraud, we will use:

- Strict financial control and contracts of employment (staff) or contracts of service (consultants). Payment of the latter will only be completed on sign-off of contract deliverables by Nicola Harrison.
- Processes and Qualified Persons for the disbursement of small business innovation grants. These are currently deployed by our delivery partners with experience in this activity (Low Carbon Kent).
- Records and evidence of costs incurred and grant claimed will be maintained in line with organisational procedures, typically 5-6 years after project completion.

**Part 5 – Project Risk Management**

Please limit your responses to each question to 250 words or less. Please be as concise as possible.

**5a Summarise the key risks to the project in Annex C – Project Risks**

Risk table completed in Annex C

## **5b Describe the process and that will be used to monitor risk.**

We will operate a proactive risk management process, including Best Practice risk assessment that ensures risks are continuously identified and monitored, owners and managers assigned and mitigation measures implemented.

The Risk Table (Annex C) includes key high-level risks/uncertainties that have been identified to date, covering all aspects of the project. It has been developed using The Association for Project Management's principles with consideration given to the potential for technical, commercial, managerial, economic, political and environmental risks.

This assessment will form the basis of a Risk Register owned by the Senior Responsible Officer (Professor Mario Caccamo) and managed by the Project Manager (Dr Nicola Harrison).

The risk register identifies risks associated with key uncertainties around the project life-cycle notably, milestones, gateways and critical paths, and those linked to resource scheduling. As the project lead, the owner of all risks is NIAB EMR. However, in line with good practice, mitigation measures can be actioned by members of the project team.

For each risk, a trigger will be documented in the Risk Register. The trigger identifies risk warning signs which indicate that a risk has occurred or is about to occur. By using 'risk triggers' and established 'escalation' procedures, a conscious and focused approach to risk management will be embedded. This allows for timely and effective communication of concerns to the project leadership and relevant stakeholders.

As part of regular progress reviews, the status of each risk will be reported to the Project Delivery Group and updated. Mitigation measures will be amended accordingly.

## **Part 6 – Evaluation**

**6a A key objective of the UK Community Renewal Fund is to try new ways of delivering activity to businesses and people. It is important that projects are robustly evaluated and that learning is shared with others.**

Please limit your responses to around 500 words and describe

- how the project will be evaluated, in terms of how it was delivered and its impact on clients
- how the findings of the evaluation will be disseminated

We will undertake Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activity both within the grant funded project period and over a six-month period after the funded project has completed. The Senior Responsible Officer (Mario Caccamo) will be responsible for all M&E activities. We will draw on learning from our Growing Kent & Medway project to assist with this process, particularly in relation to post-project monitoring.

### **BUDGET & TIMESCALE**

A total budget of £16,000 has been allocated for M&E activity, roughly 2% of the total funding package. The budget comprises £10,000 funded through the CRF grant and £6,000 through co-investment by NIAB EMR.

The CRF funded element will be delivered within the grant funded phase of the project and completed by 31 March 2022. This will focus on the direct outputs of the project and the lessons learnt from the delivery of the pilot Growing Green programme. Our evaluation will be presented in the Final Project Report and shared at a UK CRF evaluation conference in 2022.

The M&E activity undertaken in the post- project period will be presented in a Final Impact Review. This will focus on understanding the impact of the Growing Green programme on the businesses supported, particularly in relation to innovation activity and transition to net-zero. Post-project evaluation will be necessary to assess the longer-term impacts of the project. This will be completed by 31 September 2022.

#### **WITHIN-PROJECT M&E AND FINAL REPORT**

M&E activities will focus on project performance against primary deliverables (outputs) and milestones outlined in the Project Plan and GANTT chart. Internal monitoring will be undertaken on a monthly basis so that data are collected from the outset and continuously analysed.

We will undertake a survey of our businesses, prior to and after receiving our support package so that we can determine its impact on attitudes towards and levels of business innovation activity and decarbonisation. We will also identify lessons learned, particularly around approaches towards and the benefits of co-innovation, and the optimization of grant levels for de-risking and facilitating behavioural change around innovation.

A Final Project Report will be completed within 10 working days of the project completion date (31 March 2022). We will agree the format for this Report with the Lead Authority during the first three months of the project. The objectives of this report are to:

- Summarise the work undertaken and its success in meeting the project's agreed objectives;
- Explain and justify expenditure, both through CRF grant and partner/ beneficiary co-investment;
- Undertake a process review of programme delivery.
- Provide the Lead Authority and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) **with a report to share with stakeholders.**

#### **IMPACT REVIEW (delivered by 31 September 2022)**

The review will provide a follow-up analysis of the impact of the project on the supported businesses and practitioners. We will repeat the business survey and undertake a small number of more in-depth case studies. We also aim to explore impact attribution, through comparison against businesses that did not receive our support (counter factual group).

### **Part 7 – Subsidy Control**

All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control (or State Aid for aid in scope of the in Northern Ireland Protocol) as per UK Government guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/complying-with-the-uks-international-obligations-on-subsidy-control-guidance-for-public-authorities>

**7a Does any aspect of the project involve the provision of subsidies (or State Aid)?**

Yes

**7b If yes, briefly explain how the subsidies or state aid are compliant with the UK's subsidy control regime as set out in the guidance.**

Public funding will be used to support economic development activities within the Kent region and funding will be given to a number of different organisations – a Research and Technology Organisation (NIAB EMR), a university (University of Kent), a number of businesses and organisations within the private and voluntary sector (who will be providing the “Growing Green” practitioners), the 40 businesses drawn from across Thanet, Swale and Tonbridge & Malling and any suppliers/ contractors who will provide goods or services to support the project.

On this basis and considering the four tests below, we believe that a subsidy may be applied:

1. The grant funding would contribute a financial (or in kind) contribution
2. The grant funding is provided by a public authority
3. The grant funding would confer a benefit on the recipient in the sense of an economic advantage that is not available on market terms
4. The grant funding may cause a distortion in or harm to competition, trade or investment.

We believe that Test 4 would not be satisfied with the level of aid being proposed here. However, if Test 4 was considered to be met, then subsidy control would be necessary.

With that in mind,

We are not providing prohibited subsidies.

We are not providing subsidy that will apply within Northern Ireland nor will impact on trade with Northern Ireland therefore we believe that we do not need to apply the Northern Ireland Protocol (which largely EU State Aid rules).

Any subsidy (if provided) would follow the UK using the procedures set out in the Technical Guidance note on the UK's international subsidy control commitments published 31 December 2020; that took effect from 1 January 2021.

Any subsidy (if provided) would be within the scope of the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement and would fall within the scope of the principles defined therein.

In terms of management of any potential subsidy:

- NIAB EMR, the University of Kent and Low Carbon Kent would not be considered 'economic actors' (or "undertaking" using the EU terminology) and therefore would not be in receipt of subsidy.
- As beneficiaries of grant for the organisations providing Practitioners, the level of subsidy provided would be within the 325,000 Special Drawing Rights over three years (similar to the 'de minimis' regulations under EU terminology).
- As beneficiaries of grant for the supported businesses in the Kent region, the level of subsidy provided would be within the 325,000 Special Drawing Rights over three years (similar to the 'de minimis' regulations under EU terminology).
- As beneficiaries of grant for suppliers and subcontractors providing goods and services to NIAB EMR they would not be in receipt of subsidy because all goods and services would be procured at market rates.

We will continue to seek legal advice as the selection process is undertaken for CRF funding.

## Part 8 - Branding and Publicity

Guidance on the branding and publicity requirements for the UK Community Renewal Fund is set out in the Fund Technical Note for Project Deliverers.

**8a Please confirm that you have read and will comply with all aspects of the Fund branding and publicity requirements.**

Yes

### Data Protection

Please note that the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (the Department) will be a Data Controller for all UK Community Renewal Fund-related Personal Data collected with this form and submitted to the Department, and the control and processing of Personal Data.

Mayoral Combined Authorities, the Greater London Authority, County Councils or Unitary Authorities, have been designated as a 'Lead Authority' in Great Britain for the UK Community Renewal Fund. Each Lead Authority has been invited to run a local bidding process and will be a Data Controller for all UK Community Renewal Fund related Personal Data collected with the relevant forms as part of this process, and the control and processing of Personal Data, where such applications are not submitted to the Department for consideration.

The Lead Authority (in Great Britain) and the Department will process all data according to the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (UK GDPR) all applicable laws and regulations relating to processing of Personal Data and privacy, including, where necessary, the guidance and codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner and any other relevant data protection regulations (together "the Data Protection Legislation (as amended from time to time)").

As a Processor of UK Community Renewal Fund-related Personal Data your organisation and the Lead Authority (when acting in Great Britain) must ensure that such Personal Data is processed in a way which complies with the Data Protection Legislation (as amended from time to time).

By proceeding to complete and submit this form, you consent that the Lead Authority (in Great Britain) and its contractors where relevant, and the Department, and its contractors where relevant, may process the Personal Data that it collects from you, and use the information provided as part of the application to the Department for funding from the UK Community Renewal Fund, as well as in accordance with its privacy policies. For the purposes of assessing your bid the Department may need to share your Personal Data with other Government departments (such as the Department for Work and Pensions) and departments in the Devolved Administrations and by submitting this form you are agreeing to your Personal Data being used in this way.

Data Controller, Personal Data, Personal Data and Processor all have the meaning given to them in the Data Protection Legislation (as amended from time to time).

You can find more information about how the Department deals with your data here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus>



## Part 9 - Project Applicant Statement

I declare that I have the authority to represent the project applicant in making this application.

I understand that acceptance of this application form by the Lead Authority (in Great Britain) or the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (the Department) does not in any way signify that the project is eligible for funding under the UK Community Renewal Fund or that any such funding has been approved towards it.

On behalf of the project applicant and having carried out full and proper inquiry, I confirm to the Lead Authority (in Great Britain) and the Department that:

- the project applicant has the legal authority to carry out the project; and
- the information provided in this application is accurate.

I also confirm to the Lead Authority (in Great Britain) and the Department that:

I have informed all persons whose personal information I have provided of the details of the personal information I have provided to you and of the purposes for which this information will be used, and that I have the consent of the individuals concerned to pass this information to you for these purposes;

I consent to the Personal Data submitted with this form being shared as set out in this form and in accordance with the Lead Authority's Privacy Policies (in Great Britain) and the Department's Privacy Policies;

I shall inform the Lead Authority (for Great Britain projects) if, prior to any UK Community Renewal Funding being legally committed to the project applicant, I become aware of any further information which might reasonably be considered as material to the Lead Authority or the Department in deciding whether to fund the proposal;

For Northern Ireland projects, I shall inform the Department if, prior to any UK Community Renewal Funding being legally committed to the project applicant, I become aware of any further information which might reasonably be considered as material to the Department in deciding whether to fund the proposal;

Any match funding that has been set out in part 3 will be in place prior to any award of UK Community Renewal Funding; and

I am aware that if the information given in this application turns out to be false or misleading, the Lead Authority (where relevant) or Department may demand the repayment of funding and/or terminate a funding agreement pertaining to this proposal.

I confirm that I am aware that checks can be made to the relevant authorities to verify this declaration and any person who knowingly or recklessly makes any false statement for the purpose of obtaining grant funding or for the purpose of assisting any person to obtain grant funding may be prosecuted. A false or misleading statement will also mean that approval may be revoked and any grant may be withheld or recovered with interest.

I confirm that I understand that if the project applicant commences project activity, or enters in to any legally binding contracts or agreements, including the ordering or purchasing of any equipment or services before the formal approval of the project, any expenditure is incurred at the organisation's own risk and may render the project ineligible for support.

For and on behalf of the project applicant Name:	Professor Mario Caccamo			
Position	Managing Director	Date	<b>04/05/2021</b>	

## Annex A – Project Impact Indicators

### 1a Which groups will your UK Community Renewal Fund project target?

Main Indicator	Indicator Subset	Target Group	Number
People	Economically Inactive	No	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Unemployed	No	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Employed	No	Click or tap here to enter text.
	Total		Click or tap here to enter text.
Businesses	Small <sup>2</sup>	Yes	37
	Medium <sup>3</sup>	Yes	5
	Large <sup>4</sup>	Yes	1
	Total		43
Organisations	Public	Yes	2
	Private	Yes	1
	Voluntary Sector	Yes	1
	Total		4

### 1b What types of support will you provide via your UK Community Renewal Fund project?

Main Indicator	Indicator Subset	Proposed Support Type	Number
Direct support	1 to 1	Yes	55
	1 to many	No	Click or tap here to enter text.
Financial Support (£s)	Grant	Yes	£216,000
	Voucher	No	Click or tap here to enter text.

### 1c What UK Community Renewal Fund Outcomes will the project deliver (see Technical Note for Project Applicants and Deliverers for details)?

Outcome	Total
Businesses introducing new products to firm as a result of support	36
Innovation plans developed as a result of support	40
Decarbonisation plans as a result of support	40

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/46/section/382>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/46/section/465>

<sup>4</sup> Any business that does not qualify as a small or medium business

Annex B – Funding Package and Profile			
	Amount	513,122	
(a) UK Community Renewal Fund Requested	£		
(b) Other Public Funding	£	In place	Partial
(c) Private Funding	£	In place	Partial
(d) Total Project Costs (a+b+c)	£	802,906	
Expenditure Profile. How much will be spent in:			
Jul – Sept 2021	£	80,000	
Oct – Dec 2021	£	370,000	
Jan – Mar 2022	£	352,906	
<b>Total</b>	£	Must equal (d) 802,906	
How much of the budget will be spent on capital costs?	£	2%	
If the project will deliver under more than one of the UK Community Renewal Fund's investment priorities, please estimate how much will be spent under each theme			
Investment in skills	0%	Investment for local businesses	100%
Investment in communities and place	0%	Supporting people into employment	0%

## Annex C – Project Risks

### Project Risk Management

Please be as concise as possible.

Summarise:

- the key risks to the delivery and success of the project
- who is responsible for managing the risk, the Owner
- the probability of the risk occurring, is it high, medium or low?
- what would be the impact of the risk, high, medium or low?
- The mitigation plans in place to manage the risk occurring or to deal with the risk if it does occur

Risks Description	Owner	Probability (H,M,L)	Impact (H,M,L)	Mitigation
1. Project does secure the requisite levels of business engagement and participation. Fewer businesses join the Growing Green pilot programme leading to low levels of co-innovation, poor uptake of diagnostic audit and grant funding. Project fails to deliver expected impacts and learning from the pilot is limited.	NIAB EMR	M	H	<p>Project delivery partners have significant reach into the Kent business community which we will leverage during our business recruitment drive (e.g. Produced in Kent has a membership of c.300 businesses in the food and drink sector, The Kent Foundation works with over 120 businesses).</p> <p>NIAB EMR, University of Kent, Locate in Kent and APS Produce Limited are members of the Growing Kent &amp; Medway innovation cluster. This initiative has received significant investment from the UKRI Strength in Places Fund and as such as a high profile in the region. The GK&amp;M network will be leveraged during our business recruitment drive.</p> <p>Our proposed programme is specifically designed to overcome barriers to business uptake of innovation support and innovation activity. While businesses will be asked to co-invest their time to participate, training costs will be covered and innovation activity will be incentivised via a seed-corn grant.</p>

<p>2.The project fails to engage sufficiently with target businesses in the priority areas of Thanet and Swale. Fewer businesses from these priority areas join the Growing Green pilot programme meaning that the project fails to deliver its expected impacts in these areas.</p>	<p><b>NIAB EMR</b></p>	<p><b>M</b></p>	<p><b>H</b></p>	<p>We have access to physical spaces within the areas where our businesses will be drawn from, including the University of Kent's Innovation Hubs in Ramsgate (Thanet) and Kent Science Park (Swale). These will provide points through which engagement and training can be delivered. Project delivery partners such as Produced in Kent, the Kent Foundation and Locate in Kent have significant reach into the region's business community. NIAB EMR has strong links with the horticultural sector across the region and University of Kent hosts the Annual Kent Business Summit which is attended by c. 400 businesses. All of these connections will be leveraged to target the recruitment of our businesses in the priority areas of Thanet and Swale.</p> <p>The wider Growing Kent &amp; Medway cluster has a commitment to supporting specific hard-to-reach and under-served communities and as such is developing an Inclusive Growth and Engagement Strategy. We will draw on this to help us achieve engagement and reach into Thanet and Swale.</p>
<p>3. Covid-19 prohibits the delivery of certain project activities or leads to over-runs.</p> <p>The proposed programme of work cannot be delivered to its full extent within the 7-month timescale. Project fails to deliver expected impacts and learning from the pilot is limited.</p>	<p><b>NIAB EMR</b></p>	<p><b>M</b></p>	<p><b>M</b></p>	<p>Partners operate Covid secure workplaces and have home working arrangements in place wherever possible.</p> <p>Participating businesses will be required to demonstrate appropriate working arrangements as part of the recruitment process.</p> <p>Project meetings can take place remotely. Training will include a 'blended' learning approach to allow for flexibility in training delivery and participation.</p> <p>Covid status will be monitored continuously during the project and activities will be undertaken according to the level of Covid risk and in line with Government requirements at the time.</p>

4. Short timescale of the Community Renewal Fund means that the project cannot complete all of its activities, and the full amount allocated to innovation seed-corn grants is not spent by participating businesses within the required timescales. Project fails to deliver expected impacts and learning from the pilot is limited.	NIAB EMR	M	M	<p>The project lead recognises the short-timescales and has designed the pilot programme so that different elements will run concurrently to ensure they can be completed within the required timeframe.</p> <p>Recognised project management processes will be in place including regular review and reporting. Critical pathways have been identified and time-bound milestones identified against which progress can be monitored so that concerns can be flagged at an early point, escalated and mitigation measures put in place.</p> <p>NIAB EMR has the capacity, capability and proven experience in leading regionally-based multi-partner projects (e.g. Growing Kent &amp; Medway).</p>
5. Fraud risk is not adequately managed meaning that the project is defrauded by grant beneficiaries. Project funding is not used to support the activities described, meaning that the project fails to deliver its expected impacts.	NIAB EMR	M	H	<p>A trusted partner (Low Carbon Kent) will be responsible for the administration of business innovation grants. They have Qualified Persons in place, and a strong track record and robust systems to deliver this activity.</p> <p>Recognised systems and processes will be used for the management of our grants through their full lifecycle. These include pre-award due diligence checks (including subsidy control eligibility, and company/business checks); contract award specifying the awardee-beneficiary partnership and requirements of the grant award; and tracking and reporting systems for proper accounting practices and financial transparency. The award and management of our grants will be in line with current legislation.</p>