



NESCAN HUB

NESCAN's Ethical Engagement and Communication Framework











Introduction

NESCOAN Hub, as part of its role in supporting communities and encouraging coordination and collaboration across the region, approves membership to NESCOAN, regularly sends out information about funding and other opportunities to members, and engages with stakeholders on matters related to a just transition and climate action. In line with our core values (sustainable, ethical, inclusive, responsive) and our overall vision for a sustainable North East Scotland, we need to do this in ways that do not enable greenwash and/or miscommunication of the values of the network, whilst fulfilling the role we have as the North East Regional Hub for community climate action.

There are inevitable tensions between organisations/ groupings who broadly align with the ambition of supporting a Just Transition across our communities, those who are either not quite there yet, and those who appear to be opposed to or disinterested in it. The NESCOAN Hub Board agrees that these tensions need to be navigated carefully and sensitively, respecting the wishes of members.

This paper sets out the key principles and agreed framework to guide the determination of membership, gaining of funding for the Hub, communications and information sharing etc. that NESCOAN Hub staff undertake. This paper is the product of several discussions between and among Board members and Hub Members.

Framework for Determining Engagement

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Principles:

- NESCAN Hub exists to support community climate action. This includes, but is not limited to, climate activism.
- NESCAN Hub does not support greenwash, and will not promote or profit from it, but might seek proactive and frank engagement with external companies or groups even if their values do not align with those of NESCAN.
- Companies, organisations and groups need to be supported to change their activities and behaviours in positive ways and directions towards the Just Transition, and NESCAN Hub has a role to play in providing this support.
- NESCAN hub will act with transparency, so that Members know why decisions have been made the way they have.
- NESCAN Hub will act in good faith in all their interactions with members and others, mindful of its power as a gatekeeper of information and resources.
- NESCAN Hub acknowledges the agency of community groups and members and will seek to support and empower them to act as they see fit.

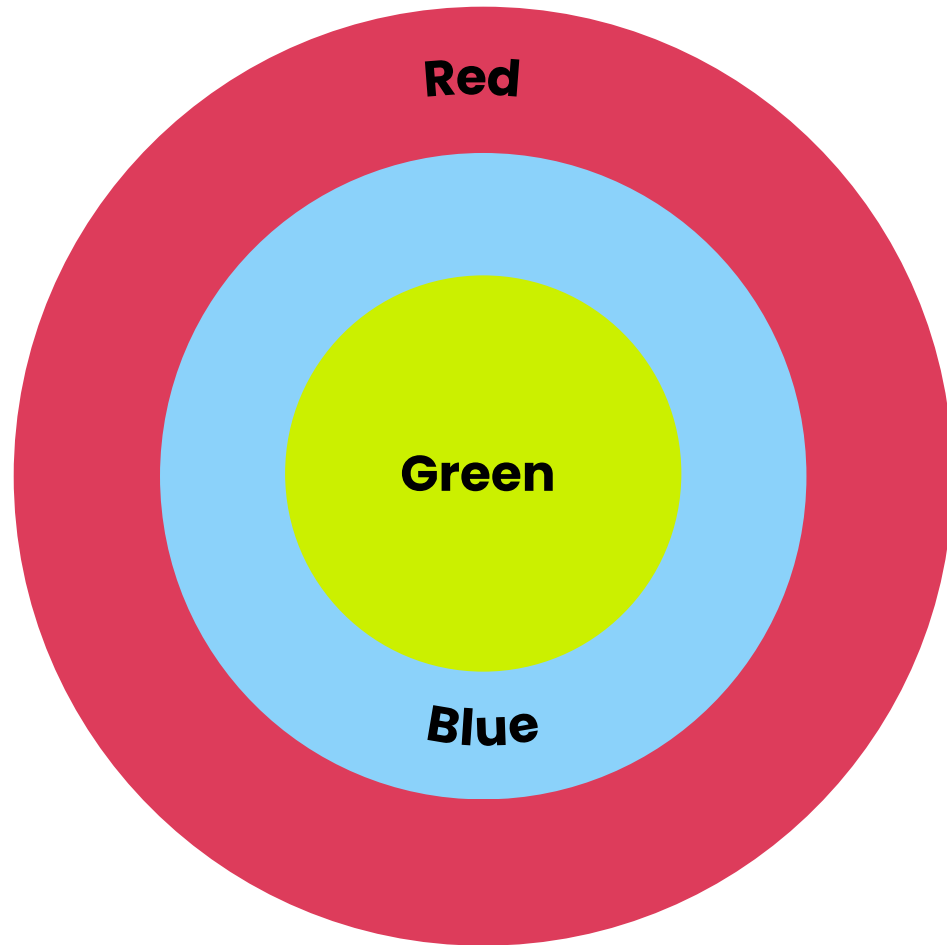
Responsibilities of NESCAN Hub:

- Keep lines of communications with all members open to ensure member groups can inform NESCAN Hub of any issues with external agencies or other members.
- Regularly (at least twice yearly) ask members by email and at Members' Meetings for updates on any positive relationships or disputes with external agencies.
- Attach the following disclaimer to all NESCAN Hub communications:
 - a. *"NESCAN Hub does not endorse or support the activities undertaken by all external organisations or funding sources, and the sharing of this information does not represent an endorsement of those external agencies, nor does it imply that the information/funding source meets the ethical standards of all our members. Members are encouraged to contact NESCAN Hub if they have any issues with any of the information contained in this communication."*

Responsibilities of Members:

1. Let NESCAN Hub staff know if and when you are in dispute with a developer, energy company, public body, etc. so that NESCAN Hub can take this into consideration in any communications and information sharing.
2. Let NESCAN Hub staff know if and when you have a positive relationship/engagement with another body, including other NESCAN Hub members, so that NESCAN Hub can take this into consideration in any communications and information sharing.
3. Let NESCAN Hub staff know if any unethical behaviour or activities (such as links to modern slavery, greenwash, etc.) of an external group or agency comes to light, so that NESCAN Hub can share this information with others.
4. Let NESCAN Hub staff know if you have any absolute red lines/no-go businesses/companies.

NESCAN Hub's Model of Engagement – the NESCAN Onion



NESCAN Hub will apply for funding and positively endorse events, services or funding.



NESCAN Hub will publicise events, services or funding. Members should decide on their own approach to these opportunities.



NESCAN Hub will not publicise events, services or funding. NESCAN Hub will, where appropriate, communicate and engage with these groups, being mindful of greenwashing/optics/reputational issues.

Key for layers:

- CENTRAL or GREEN RING: Clear alignment of ethics and values.
- BLUE RING: Funding may come from larger energy companies, when the money comes from/is focused on community benefit from renewables, or from other agencies/groups that support community action; NESCAN Hub staff will make decisions on a case by case basis, based on information available to them at the time (note: this information can change with time, and therefore decisions may be adapted to reflect this).
- OUTER or RED RING: the primary purpose of these business is the extraction of fossil fuels, and/or organisations that have a reputation for greenwashing and no viable plan to decarbonise.

As our work to support a Just Transition progresses, we want to see more and more organisations, agencies and groups aligning with the values and principles of NESCAN. NESCAN Hub, therefore, wants to see the centre of the Onion grow, with the outer layers reducing. If the Just Transition is successful, we should, at some point in the future, have all companies and agencies in the North East region sitting comfortably within the green core. This means that NESCAN Hub staff are likely to have increasing engagement with companies clearly in the red zone and will have due regard of the reputational risks associated with this. Members support this activity and will raise any specific issues with staff as and when they arise.

Making difficult decisions

NESCAN Hub and NESCAN Members agree that there will be some difficult questions to be made about the boundaries of the different rings of the Onion. This will be increasingly the case as more and more companies and external bodies seek to adopt the language of Just Transition and Community Benefit, even if their wider actions are not congruent with this. NESCAN Hub staff will consider such cases on merit and be transparent about how decisions about the passing on of information are taken.

The NESCAN Hub Board will regularly review the operation of this framework, seeking input and feedback from members on a regular basis.

Funding decisions

Members are clear: there is an important distinction between engagement with an external agency and accepting funding from that agency. The bar for funding is high, given the values and principles NESCAN holds. Engagement should be possible even with agencies whose primary purpose is the extraction of fossil fuels.

NESCAN Hub will maintain the highest possible standards when accepting money for its own activities. NESCAN Hub will retain control of the distribution of the funding it receives, so as not to be controlled by an external body. This will become increasingly important as funding options diversify.

NESCAN Membership

NESCAN Hub receives applications from a variety of individuals and groups. As a Charity, there are some restrictions on the types of membership we can support.

Individual Membership:

- Hub membership applications from individuals will be accepted if the individual has a clear link with the region.
- Any group membership applications from individuals will be accepted if the individual lives in the region.

Group Membership:

- Membership applications from groups will be accepted if the group aligns with NESCAN values, and if they are community based within the region.
- Membership applications from companies and other agencies (including political parties) will not be accepted.

Considerations for future work

As indicated above, this will be an ongoing conversations within the NESCAN Hub and with our members. We want to retain flexibility and agility as the context within which we operate changes. There have been several suggestions made that could be exploded further about how NESCAN Hub engages with and seeks funding from external agencies.

- As a standard MoU that external agencies agree to (like an accreditation system) in order to have their information and funding circulated to Members (this would require significant work, so is not feasible at this stage).
- Linked to or separate from the MoU point could be standard method of assessing ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) statements, but NESCAN Hub does not have the capacity for this at this stage.
- Pro-active engagement with the Red Zone companies: when resources and capacity allow, this might be important strand of work, but NESCAN Hub is not at this stage yet.