



Going for Growth: Cumbria's Economic Strategy 2025 – 2045

Final Draft [v3] – to be designed up

Foreword

Placeholder: forewords to be provided by Enterprising Cumbria – likely signed by Cllr Mark Fryer, Cllr Jonathan Brook and David Beeby.

- **Exciting period of growth:** This strategy builds on a mix of ongoing projects and bold new initiatives designed to accelerate progress. Some of these priorities – such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and a sustainable and productive visitor economy – are well-established as regional strengths requiring continued focus. Others represent innovative opportunities for growth, such as leveraging our natural assets and expertise to make Cumbria a national hub for AgriTech, including plant sciences, and the introduction of the *Cumbria Commitment*. This flagship initiative will connect employers, educators, and young people, providing a comprehensive support system to showcase economic opportunities, foster skills development, and deliver a best-in-class careers package tailored to local needs.
- **Statement on devolution:** Devolution represents a pivotal opportunity to take greater control over Cumbria’s future, enabling localised decision-making that will drive investment, unlock potential, and empower communities. Cumbria is firmly committed to devolution and is proud to be part of the government’s priority programme. Our focus is on securing a devolution deal that truly meets the needs of our region, equipping us with the tools and powers necessary to deliver on the ambitions outlined in this strategy.
- **How the strategy has been developed:** This strategy is both evidence-led and engagement-driven, ensuring it reflects a robust understanding of Cumbria’s challenges and opportunities. It builds on comprehensive research and data analysis, while also incorporating the voices of our partners, businesses, and young people. These contributions have highlighted the issues most critical to achieving transformative and inclusive growth across the region.
- **This is not a delivery plan:** This document presents our vision and the core changes we want to see. We will work with stakeholders to develop and implement delivery plans which draw on Cumbria’s existing levers for change as well as the additional powers afforded through devolution to journey.

Executive Summary

Cumbria 2045: a modern and entrepreneurial economy where world-leading sector strengths and an outstanding natural environment drive shared prosperity for all people and places, from its vibrant urban centres to its thriving rural communities.

Cumbria is going for growth – defining the opportunity that large, dispersed regions can make to the UK’s modern industrial strategy, productive growth, and net zero. Cumbria is already seeing billions of pounds of investment: leading the next generation of the nuclear deterrent; £250 million investment in town growth and regeneration; £4.9 million investment in a new nuclear robotics and AI cluster; and new plutonium immobilisation facility to support thousands of skilled jobs. This strategy builds momentum to deliver more economic growth as well as innovating how we deliver services and supporting nature recovery.

Our strategy prioritises the sectors and clusters where we have significant opportunities, including advanced manufacturing, robotics, defence, clean growth and visitor economy, and addresses the binding constraints on growth and the barriers to investment in Cumbria:

- **Infrastructure** to support and enable growth projects – with shorter journey times, improved grid connectivity, and to support major investment in nuclear decommissioning and in our nuclear deterrent.
- **Faster productive growth** – building on our sector strengths and growth opportunities, and supporting all businesses to innovate and become more competitive.
- **Defence and energy security** – maintaining our UK critical role, preparing for future investment, and increasing local spend in supply chains.
- **Enhancing nature** – building a growth plan that delivers 30x30, with increased investment, skills, and jobs in land-based industry.
- **Innovating in public service design and delivery** – to equip our people to be ready for these opportunities and ensure businesses have access to the skills they need.
- **Accelerating major housing developments in thriving places** – supporting the two local authorities to deliver sites such as 10,000 new homes at St Cuthbert’s Garden Village and 800 new homes at Barrow Marina Village, and create places that people want to live, work and study, with creativity and culture built into plans.

Purpose of this strategy

This strategy sets out a new economic vision for Cumbria. Grounded in robust evidence and extensive engagement, it provides the direction for our collective efforts to unlock the full potential of our assets and address persistent barriers to growth, and will form the basis of our devolution ambitions. *Going for Growth* is about showcasing our potential and contribution to national priorities, but it is first and foremost a Cumbria document, focused on the region-wide solutions whilst recognising the need for tailored approaches that reflect the diversity of our places.

But this strategy is more than just a policy document—it's a renewed partnership approach and a call to action. It urges our local and national partners to leverage every available tool and take an active role in driving Cumbria's growth story.

The strategy is composed of four key sections:

- **Introduction to *Going for Growth***: sets the context for the strategy and provides an overview of its development.
- **State of the Region 2025**: summarises the economic evidence base that underpins the strategy.
- **Cumbria 2045**: presents our vision for growth and six key priorities for action.
- **Delivering our vision**: defines the core strategic outcomes that will be monitored through forthcoming delivery plans.

We are Cumbria

We are home to a heritage key city, three ports, industrial urban areas, 180 miles of coastline, an enterprise zone and rural areas that boast two national parks. Cumbria is a £12bn economy, which brings together two of the UK's newest, largest and most sparsely populated, and rural unitary councils. We cover nearly half of the North West's land mass, are home to 7% of its population and 9% of businesses. Our natural assets are internationally known; our employment rate outperforms the national average, as does our rate of growing businesses. Our sector strengths align closely with the growth-driving sectors outlined in the Invest 2035 green paper, the forthcoming Modern Industrial Strategy, including advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, and defence.

This economic strategy sets out a vision for maximising these strengths to put Cumbria on the map as a region which offers not only a competitive business environment but also a high-quality place to live and grow, where innovation, industry, and natural assets work in harmony. By connecting sectors, fostering collaboration, and leveraging our outstanding environment, we will create an economy that attracts talent, drives investment, and sustains long-term prosperity that provides safer, stronger resilient communities.

[DRAFTING NOTE: the below to be designed up into graphics]



We are a clean energy super sub-region

- Six offshore wind farms supplying 16% of the UK's capacity, alongside onshore wind, emerging hydrogen, tidal, solar, and carbon capture strengths.
- Driving forward Small Modular Reactor (SMR) deployment across West Cumbria, exemplified by TSP Engineering's development of the NuCell, scheduled for production by 2027.
- c£50m recent investment by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero for the Barrow Green Hydrogen Project, led by Carlton Power.



We are a world leader in nuclear expertise

- 31% of the UK's nuclear workforce is based in Cumbria, working across key employers such as Sellafield Ltd, BAE Systems, National Decommissioning Authority, Low Level Waste Repository and the National Nuclear Laboratory, etc.
- Sellafield Europe's largest nuclear site, drives £1.8bn in annual supply chain through its decommissioning programme.
- Under consideration to host the UK's first Geological Disposal Facility (GDF), a 175-year project expected to create 2,000 jobs annually and over 4,000 in the first 25 years



We are at the heart of UK's defence deterrent

- UK's primary site for designing and building nuclear-powered submarines.
- £900m Dreadnought contract and £3.95bn SSN AUKUS programme cement Cumbria's pivotal role in the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, with SSN AUKUS alone creating 6,000+ new jobs in Barrow.
- £200 million award for Team Barrow highlights our ability to harness local strengths to generate opportunities while tackling challenges related to geography, deprivation, and social immobility, enabling and sustaining the defence nuclear enterprise and diversification of the local economy through increasing productivity.



We are leaders in land-based industries and vibrant visitor economy

- Two iconic National Parks and Hadrian's Wall and three National Landscapes.
- Cumbria's agriculture, land-based and visitor economy employs around 60,000 FTE jobs.
- Attract over 42m visitors annually contributing £1.2bn in GVA.
- The county with the most Michelin starred restaurants outside of London.



We are a manufacturing powerhouse

- A broad and diverse manufacturing base, providing just under 16% of all jobs.
- Pirelli and M-Sport leading in automotive innovation, James Cropper and Holmen Iggesund driving sustainable materials and packaging, and Bender UK, Anord Mardix, and Siemens advancing cutting-edge engineering solutions.



We are home to unparalleled natural environment

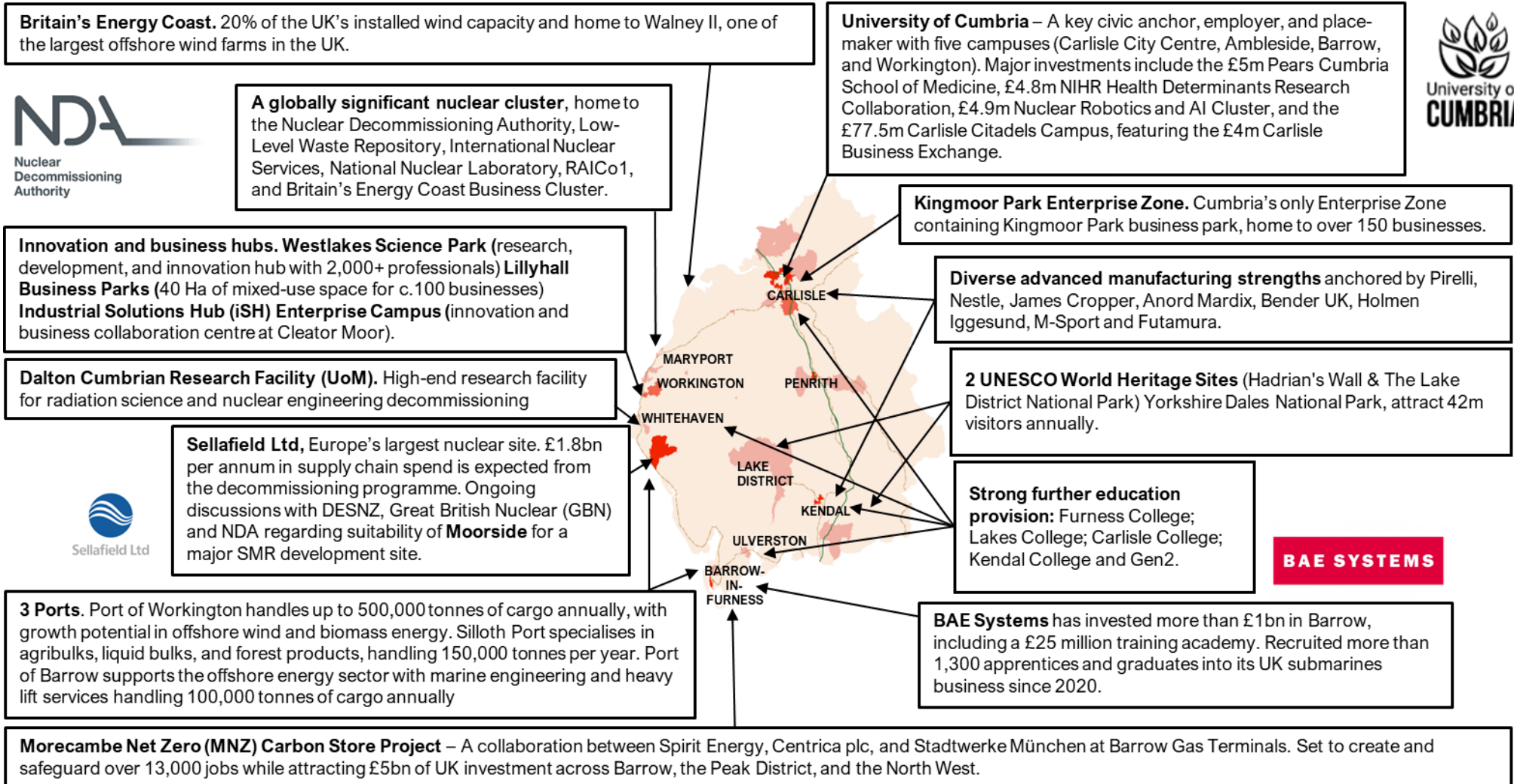
- Over half of Cumbria's landmass falls into protected landscapes, making us a key player in 30x30 – the UK's commitment to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030.
- Integral player in water security, with treatment works processing over 220m litres daily.
- Over 40 green projects away under Cumbria, totalling over £4.3m in nature-based projects.



We are an economy which continues to innovate and evolve

- Emerging specialisms in robotics, geospatial economy, AgriTech and environmental consultancy
- We are positioned to lead the UK in robotic and AI solutions for challenging environments, built upon our existing nuclear and defence expertise, which can be applied to other sectors such as space, mining and subsea.
- Recent announcement of £4.9 million Nuclear Robotics and AI cluster, with the University of Cumbria as a key partner.

Cumbria's Economic Assets



Turning our strengths into a plan for growth - Cumbria's case for change

Addressing Cumbria's productivity gap

Low productivity has a direct and far-reaching impact on living standards. With a £3 billion productivity gap, our economy is held back by an underrepresentation of high-value sectors and a skills base that is not fully aligned with the demands of emerging sectors. Poor transport and digital connectivity compound these challenges, limiting investment and restricting businesses' ability to access markets, talent, and supply chains.

Boosting the working age population

Successful delivery of the priorities in this strategy will create more new jobs. Cumbria is creating jobs with an estimated 6,000 new jobs to deliver the nuclear deterrent and 200 new jobs from the UKRI-funded nuclear robotics and AI cluster based in Whitehaven. This means we need the working age population to meet the needs of our growing economy. There is currently a projected 6% decline in Cumbria's working-age population to 2045. Targeted interventions around housing, connectivity, promotion, and public services will attract and retain younger workers and upskill the existing workforce, supporting a vibrant and resilient Cumbria.

Unlocking the potential of our people

Health outcomes in Cumbria vary significantly between areas, reflecting disparities in socioeconomic conditions and access to services. Despite progress in increasing the number of residents with RQF4+ qualifications, Cumbria lags behind the North West and national averages, limiting business ability to attract the higher level skills they need in the workplace. Sustained investment in health and skills, supporting people into work and to stay healthy in the workplace, is essential to build a more productive workforce.

Driving growth through nature recovery and net zero

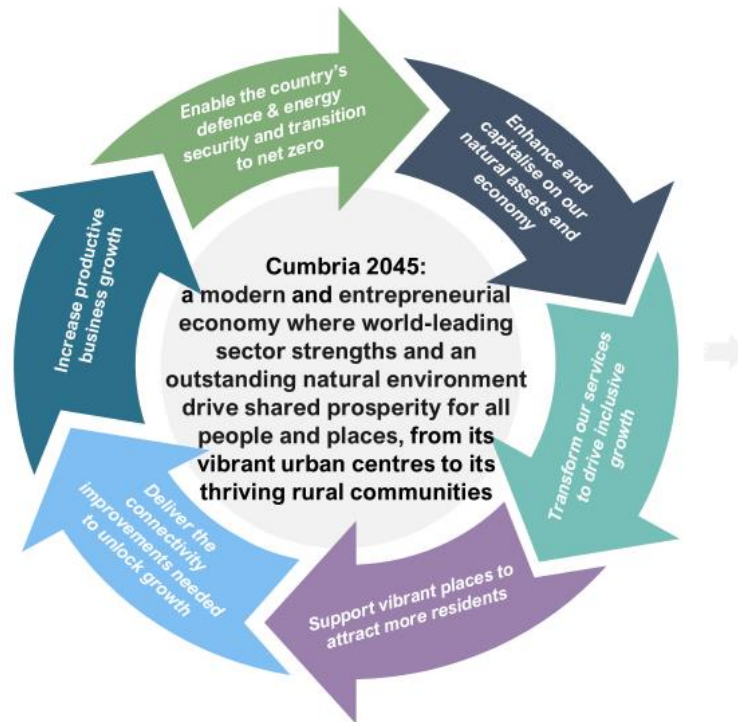
Our economic performance is intrinsically linked to the health and resilience of our natural environment. Protecting and enhancing these natural assets ensures the continued vitality of the visitor economy while supporting land-based industries such as agriculture and forestry. Cumbria's clean energy ambitions depend on its natural environment, which provides a foundation for sustainable practices and attracts investment in green innovation. It is strongly linked to our existing commitments to deliver Net Zero by 2037. Investing in nature recovery, such as natural flood management, strengthens climate resilience and reduces the economic risks associated with environmental degradation.

Our framework for growth

Together with partners, we have codesigned six evidence-led priorities for growth that are focused on the Cumbria-wide challenges and opportunities best addressed collaboratively and in alignment with the respective Local Authority economic strategies.

Underpinning these priorities are areas of focus which will guide early delivery of our strategy. These build on foundations already established by Cumberland and Westmorland &

Furness Councils, Enterprising Cumbria, and other stakeholders, while introducing initiatives to accelerate growth and unlock opportunities across the region. They draw on the levers we have to accelerate productive growth - notably skills, data, research and development, infrastructure technology adoption, access to finance, grid connections, trade – whilst making bold commitments to strengthening cross regional and national relationships to drive investment into Cumbria.



Increase productive business growth

Champion Cumbria's sector strengths in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

Promote Cumbria's diverse advanced manufacturing sector

Build a best in class enterprise support system

Expand place promotion and trade to boost inward investment and exporting activities

Increase the year-round value and productivity of Cumbria's visitor economy, supporting sustainable tourism and vibrant communities

Further embed employers in skills provision to more effectively match supply and demand of training in emerging sectors

Strengthen Cumbria's innovation ecosystem

Transform our services to drive inclusive growth

Innovate in employability support, joining up work, health and wellbeing

Work with Cumbria's VCSE sector as an integral part of local services and communities

Work in partnership to develop the *Cumbria Commitment* supporting young people's skills, aspirations, and career prospects

Support vibrant places to attract more residents

Develop and maintain a Spatial Development Strategy

Support Cumbria's cultural ecosystem to drive sector growth and offer

Maintain creative and enterprise space for collaboration, networking and ideas

Promote the region as a leading destination for work and leisure

Develop a place-based impact investment portfolio and partnership

Enhance and capitalise on our natural assets and economy

Secure funding for nature-based projects and implement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Build a national reputation for land & nature skills and education

Grow Cumbria's high quality local food and drink production & processing capacity

Establish the region as a national hub for AgriTech, bioeconomy and plant sciences

Secure the sustainable future of farming and position Cumbria as a leader in national food security

Deliver the connectivity improvements needed to unlock growth

Secure full funding for a future-ready transport system

Become the UK's rural transport innovation testbed

Connect all of Cumbria to improved digital infrastructure

Invest in Cumbria's long term energy security

Maintain an investment pipeline of nationally critical infrastructure

Enable the country's defence & energy security and transition to net zero

Deliver the Defence Nuclear Enterprise

Become a significant provider for new nuclear and capitalise on nuclear heritage

Be a global leader in the safe management of nuclear materials and decommissioning

Expand clean energy generation capacity, with more local manufacturing and maintenance as well as delivering storage solutions

Work with the North West Industrial Cluster to deliver industrial decarbonisation and clean growth

Growing our economy with purpose

Our economic success depends on delivering transformational change that secures long-term vitality and resilience for businesses, communities, and the natural environment. Four strategic outcomes, set out below, provide the cornerstones of our strategic vision which will drive the sustainable, inclusive and productive growth Cumbria needs.



Higher productivity to raise living standards

We will have led the way in driving productivity across all our sectors, by leveraging world-class expertise and innovation to create high-quality jobs and improve living standards. Cumbria will have a reputation as a leading place to start and grow a business due to our pro-innovation enterprise ecosystem which attracts international investment. By 2045, we will have raised Cumbria's productivity by 14% above projected growth.



Increased Working Age Population to meet the needs of our growing economy

We will have a growing, dynamic, and diverse working-age population, supported by a responsive skills system, innovative infrastructure, affordable housing and a vibrant culture and leisure offer. Cumbria will attract and retain talent by offering exceptional opportunities, world-leading sectoral strengths, and a high quality of life. By 2045, we will have reversed the current projected decline to add over 27,000 people to our workforce.



Better population health, supporting people back into work

Our innovative model for public services, thriving VCSE sector and dynamic, employer-led skills system will have supported improved population health. Inequalities will be reduced; people, regardless of age, background or location, will be empowered to participate in the workforce, fostering a thriving economy that supports individuals and communities alike. By 2045, we will have raised Healthy Life Expectancy by 5 years from current levels in all parts of Cumbria.



The UK's Nature Capital, where land and sea deliver biodiversity and productivity gains

We will have enhanced our land and seas for biodiversity, creating job opportunities, and bolstering economic resilience to climate change. Our natural assets will deliver economic growth with new jobs created in the transition to Net Zero. Local energy generation will fuel manufacturing, robotics and AI cluster growth, fostering high value and sustainable

job opportunities. By 2045, Cumbria will be recognised as the UK's nature capital, having achieved Net Zero by 2037 in alignment with Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership targets.

Turning our vision into reality

This is a strategy, not an action plan. We have outlined our ambitions and priorities, leaving the specific details of projects to be developed through delivery plans co-created with stakeholders, and co-ordinated through devolution. Strategy delivery plans will be regularly reviewed by the JEC and Cumbria Economic Growth Board, enabling us to remain flexible to adapt to emerging opportunities while staying focused on Cumbria's long-term vision.

Devolution for Cumbria will give us the powers and tools to not only maximise our contribution to national defence, clean energy, and housing delivery, but also to break down the barriers to opportunity for local people. Deeper partnerships—locally, regionally, and nationally—are essential to fully harness the tools at our disposal. Central to this transformation is the Cumbria Contract, our blueprint collaboration between the public, private, and third sectors, championing creativity, compelling case-making, and conservation in how we work together.

To guide the early implementation of our ambitious programme, we have identified the following priority focus areas for collective action.

Cumbria's early focus areas

- Refresh the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan
- Champion Cumbria's sector strengths and potential in the national Modern Industrial Strategy, including advanced manufacturing, clean growth, and defence
- Position Cumbria as the UK's leading region for robotics and AI in challenging environments, highlighting opportunities with the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
- Accelerate housing delivery, working with Homes England to address viability gaps
- Deliver the Local Skills Improvement Plan and build the land and nature skills offer
- Implement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Develop a bold new approach to investment and trade
- Build the new employment and health support offer, accelerating devolved powers around employment support
- Develop and maintain a Spatial Development Strategy
- Design the Cumbria Commitment

We are ready to deliver at pace. Local Government Reorganisation in April 2023 paved the way for the creation of the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) and Enterprising Cumbria, equipping us to deliver swiftly and effectively. Together we'll realise our vision for Cumbria in 2045: the modern, entrepreneurial economy where world-leading sector strengths and an outstanding natural environment drive shared prosperity for all people and places, from its urban centres to its thriving rural communities.

This is just the start of Cumbria's growth story. We hope you join us on this journey.

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Introduction to Going for Growth

This economic strategy sets out priorities for growth, building on strengths while addressing structural barriers to productivity. It reflects Cumbria's offer to be a major contributor to UK growth and the UK Modern Industrial Strategy. Central government has been clear about its ambition to transfer deeper and broader powers to local leaders, and we are seizing the opportunity to develop growth plans and delivery arrangements which are right for Cumbria, with the economic strategy as a foundational document for delivering growth.

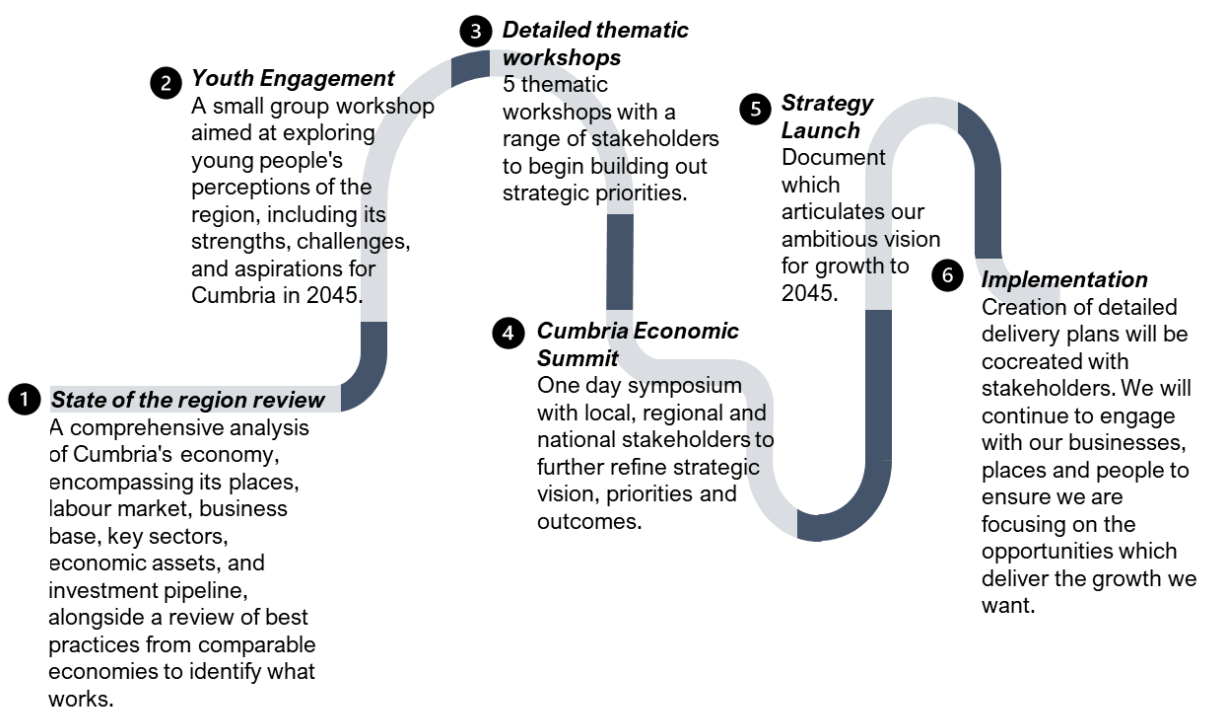
Co-developed in collaboration with Cumbria's business, community, and third sector representatives, this strategy speaks directly to local stakeholders. It reflects our shared vision for Cumbria and prioritises the areas that will deliver the most impact. In a time of change, how Cumbria builds this is vital to secure sustainable and inclusive prosperity for the long term. We are acting now to change the course of Cumbria's economic story.

This strategy will:

- ✓ **Reset Cumbria's economic narrative**, defining what growth means to the area
- ✓ **Set the strategic direction for Cumbria-wide activity**, outlining a common set of priorities to be developed into detailed implementation plans
- ✓ **Be evidence led, to prioritise the most critical economic opportunities and challenges**, ensuring focus on what matters most to Cumbria
- ✓ **Focus on Cumbria level action**, complementing the local authority level strategies in development. That does not mean that implementation can or should be uniform across Cumbria.
- ✓ **Speak to our local stakeholders and delivery partners**, whilst showcasing Cumbria's economic potential to national government to make the case for investment and policy support
- ✓ **Highlight key projects and initiatives** that drive growth, without duplicating details from existing strategies and documents

We have developed numerous strategies over the past twenty years, but we have not always seen the change we want. Success in twenty years means we will have achieved our aims and have a new set of opportunities and challenges to grip. This strategy represents our commitment to do things differently. This includes engaging almost 400 stakeholders, consisting of local business, anchor and third sector representatives and our partners across central government and relevant arms' length bodies. In its development and delivery, we are forging a renewed partnership with our partners, business community, VCSE sector, and the people and places of Cumbria.

Figure 1. Codesigning our vision for growth



Driving growth: a call to action

This economic strategy lays the foundation for Cumbria's future, capitalising on opportunities to drive sustainable growth and deliver prosperity for all our communities. Overseen by the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) and delivered through Enterprising Cumbria and partners, it provides a clear and ambitious framework to guide decision-making and ensure all strategic activity supports long-term, inclusive growth. The strategy is set out into the following sections:

The *State of the Region* provides a summary of the economic evidence base built to inform the strategy, with analysis of the binding constraints on growth and the sector strengths and opportunities to fuel future growth.

Cumbria 2045 sets out the vision and six priorities to deliver growth:

- Deliver the connectivity improvements needed to unlock growth

- Increase productive business growth
- Enable the country's defence & energy security and transition to net zero
- Enhance and capitalise on our natural assets and economy
- Transform services to drive inclusive growth
- Support vibrant and thriving communities to attract more residents

The final section, *Delivering our growth ambitions*, sets out the outcomes that will be monitored through the forthcoming delivery plans, alongside next steps and the changes we will make in ways of working to deliver the strategy.

Finally, the annex maps all the priorities against the outcomes, showing the relationships between each and sets out the detail of the indicators to measure progress.

State of the Region 2025

Our large geography is diverse. We are home to a heritage key city, three ports, industrial urban areas, 180 miles of coastline, an enterprise zone and two national parks. Barrow-in-Furness, Workington, Whitehaven, and Maryport, serve as vital hubs for energy production and advanced manufacturing. Carlisle, the region's largest urban centre and heritage city, is strategically located on the West Coast Main Line, connecting Cumbria to other major cities and positioning us as a gateway to the North West and Scotland. We are part of Britain's Leading Edge - a collaboration of rural local authorities without major cities. We are reframing the story of the contribution that rural regions can make to a sustainable national economy.

Cumbria's economic and natural assets are driving investment into the region – totalling over £4.5bn in the last six years alone.

This strategic geography has long enabled Cumbria's role in driving national prosperity. Location and natural assets have fuelled our growth, with a rich history as a powerhouse for steel production, iron ore and coal extraction. The shipyard at Barrow was founded in 1871 and has produced some of the most significant marine vessels. Since 2000 it has produced the Astute Class submarines, and trains world class engineers at the Submarines Academy for Skills and Knowledge. Our reputation for scientific and energy innovation has grown from the establishment of Windscale (now Sellafield Ltd) in 1947, marking the advent of the UK's nuclear power industry. The designation of the Lake District National Park in 1951 put us a on the map for environmental stewardship, building on centuries old upland farming practices which have shaped Cumbria's cultural identity whilst contributing to national food security.

Our economy benefits from our broader links and strong partnerships with neighbouring geographies. Our position within the Borderlands, a key region at the UK's geographic centre, has channelled significant investment into places such as Carlisle through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Collaboration with Lancashire, particularly around Morecambe Bay, has fostered growth through labour market connections and sectoral clustering in nuclear, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing. Additionally, our membership in the Northern Powerhouse, Transport for the North, and the North West Industrial Decarbonisation Cluster provides a platform to attract further regional investment in major projects and showcase local businesses.

A local economy shaped by our natural setting

From Scafell Pike, England's highest mountain, to the coastal and estuarine habitats of the Solway Firth and Morecambe Bay, our natural environment includes everything from grasslands and limestone pavement to ancient and broadleaved woodlands, peatlands and montane habitats, and rivers, lakes and tarns. Over half of Cumbria's landmass falls into protected landscapes, making us a key player in 30x30 – the UK's commitment to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of land and sea for biodiversity by 2030.

This provides the backdrop to our three major land-based industries: farming (which accounts for 9% of Cumbria's economy), conservation and countryside management, which contributes over 1.6bn to the local economy, and tourism.¹ Our distinct natural environment is not only the lifeblood of many of our sector strengths, it's also a key driver of investment into Cumbria. Farming, land and water management support a large downstream supply chain and a variety of upstream businesses. The £2.8m of investment raised by Invest Lake District to support the preservation of our landscapes, wildlife and cultural heritage and £900,000 DEFRA funding to create Cumbria Community Forest are just two examples of our green investment pipeline.

Strong foundations for growth

Cumbria is home to some of the **UK's most innovative front-line industry in nuclear, defence, clean energy, creative industries and advanced material manufacturing**. Nearly 40% of local organisations are engaged in some form of innovation, drawing in nearly £7m of Innovate UK funding on research and development across Cumbria.²

Cumbria's entrepreneurial potential and capacity for growth is exemplified in our rate of growing businesses – organisations which have seen a 10% increase in employment and/or turnover in the last 12 months – outperforming the England average.³

Emerging cross cutting specialisms in Automation and Robotics, AgriTech, Geospatial Economy and Software make us well-placed to be a testbed for new technologies in the growth sectors outlined in Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy.⁴ This potential is exemplified by the recent £4.9 million UKRI investment in the Nuclear Robotics and Artificial Intelligence (RAI) cluster, connecting Cumbria and Oxfordshire to advance the decommissioning of the UK's legacy nuclear facilities, led by the UK Atomic Energy Authority with the University of Cumbria.

We perform strongly on employment. Cumbria's employment rate is above the national rate and both our claimant count (2.5%) and proportion of 16- and 17-year-olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (5.7%) are below the regional and England averages.⁵ A higher proportion of Cumbrian residents work in skilled trades occupations (13%) than at the national level (9%). This, combined with our strengths in apprenticeship up starts, notably in engineering, construction and manufacturing, reflect the reputation of our workforce for technical expertise.⁶

¹ ONS, Regional Accounts (GVA constant prices), 2022.

² UK Innovation Survey, 2023; Eurostat, 2018.

³ FAME, 2024.

⁴ Invest 2035 identifies advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries; defence; digital and technologies; financial services; life sciences; and professional business services as the eight sectors which offer the highest economic growth opportunities.

⁵ ONS, Annual Population Survey, 2023; UK Claimant Count, 2024.

⁶ ONS, Annual Population Survey, 2023.

Cumbria's sector strengths



A centre for **manufacturing** excellence, anchored by multinationals (**BAE Systems, GSK, Kimberley Clark, Nestle and Pirelli**)



Critical to the **UK's defence deterrent**. £40bn Dreadnought and £3.95bn SSN AUKUS programmes in delivery by BAE Systems in Barrow



Growing capabilities in **robotics & automation** driving innovation in **Nuclear Energy, Manufacturing, Agriculture and Energy**

Clean energy super subregion

Sellafield is Europe's largest nuclear site



Home to **31% of the UK nuclear workforce**

6 offshore wind farms accounting for 15.9% of UK energy generation by source and **247 onshore wind installations** accounting for 1.3% of UK energy generation by source



Specialisms in **tidal, solar and hydrogen**, alongside expertise in carbon capture



22 anaerobic digestion installations

Experts in agriculture and land management



Over **5,000 farm holdings** and the **England's most important sheep farming area**



The most Michelin stars outside of London and nationally recognised food and drink producers



Home to the **2nd largest dairy herd in the UK** – 100,000 dairy cows producing over 900m litres



Emerging strengths in **AgriTech, Geospatial economy and Environmental consultancy**

A world-renowned visitor economy



42 million visitors to Cumbria



£1.2bn GVA to Cumbria's economy, supporting **45,800 direct FTEs**



£4.6bn total visitor spend in 2023

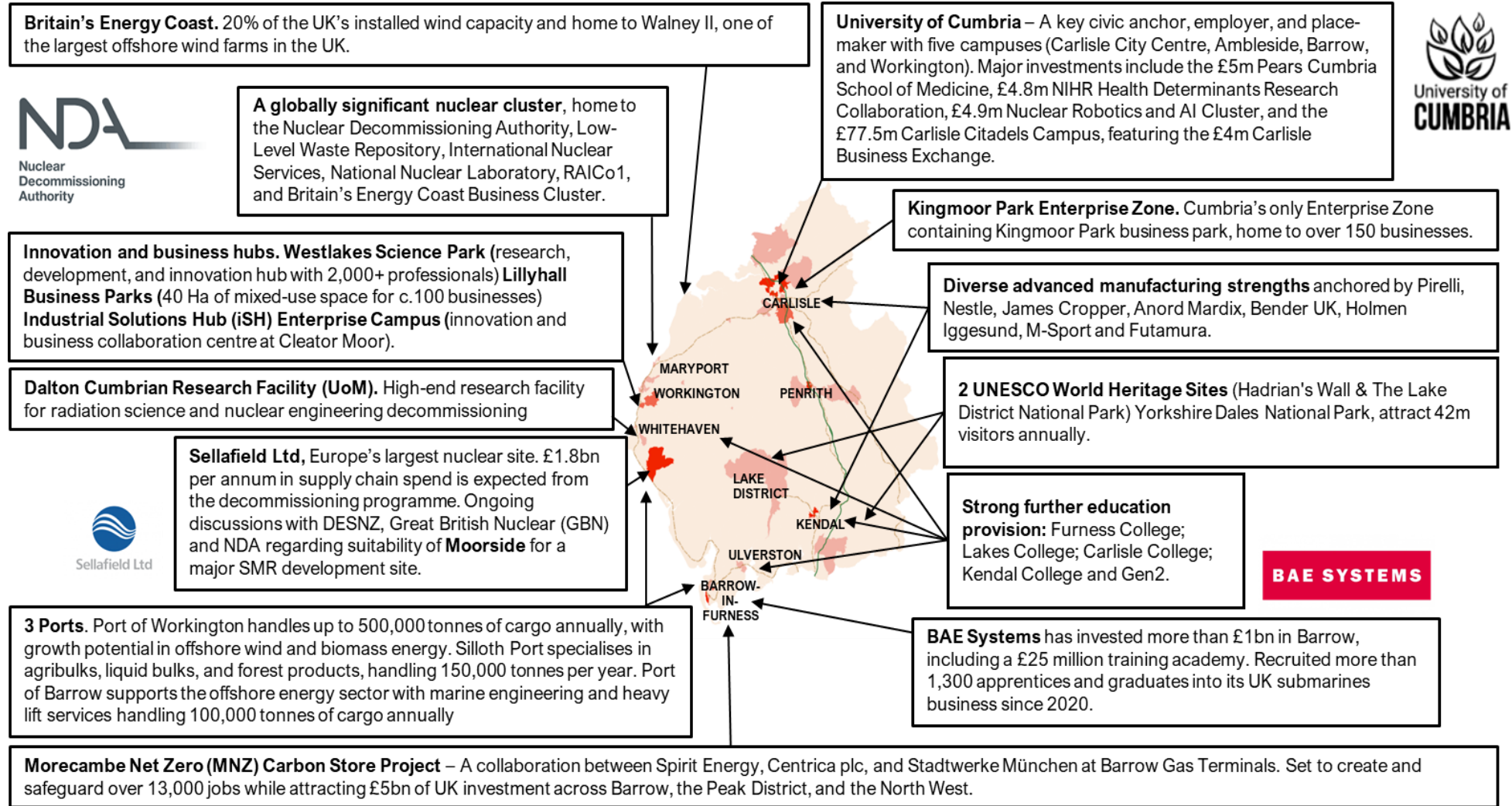


Over **44 cultural and creative** enterprises, including 12 National Portfolio Organisations

10,000 FTEs employed in **voluntary and social enterprises**



Figure 2. Cumbria's key economic assets and employment sites



Tackling the binding constraints on growth

The Productivity Gap



£32.30

GVA per hour (2022)
UK: £40.30

Cumbria faces productivity challenges typically associated with large, rural and with post-industrial areas.⁷ Nearly half (9 out of 19) of Cumbria's main sector groups face productivity gaps compared to the England average, including key contributors like manufacturing where productivity is 8% below the national average for this sector.⁸ Without intervention, this will limit our ability to compete on a national scale.

Human capital



34%
RFQ4+
qualification
UK: 45%

We have made good progress in increasing the number of residents with RFQ4+ level qualifications in the last two decades, but the proportion of residents with higher skills qualifications remains below the national average. This contributes to skills shortages, exacerbated by Cumbria's tight labour market.

While we have high levels of economic activity, pockets of health and skills deprivation are evident across Cumberland and Westmorland and Furness.⁹ Long-term sickness is particularly acute in Barrow, where 6.9% of people report bad or very bad health.¹⁰ Demographic trends are an ongoing area of concern for Cumbria.



15,600 residents
economic inactivity
due to **long term**
sickness



Projected **6%** decline
in **working age**
population to 2045

While the population has grown slightly over the past two decades, this has been driven largely by a 36% increase in residents aged 65 and over.¹¹ The working-age population is declining. This places strain on the labour market, making it difficult for businesses to recruit the talent they need to grow.

Infrastructure

The five major employment centres: Sellafield, Barrow, Kendal, Penrith, and Carlisle are not easily accessible for all residents. Poor public transport frequency and coverage restrict commuting options; although private car use expands access, it poses a challenge to achieving net zero. Our infrastructure is vulnerable to climate change, extreme weather and

⁷ ONS, Subregional productivity in the UK, 2022.

⁸ ONS, Regional Accounts (GVA constant prices), 2022.

⁹ MHCLG, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019.

¹⁰ ONS, Annual Population Survey, 2023.

¹¹ ONS, Mid-Year Estimates 2022, 2023.

flooding, whilst constrained grid capacity can also be a barrier to industry who wish to decarbonise, as well as acting as a barrier to new digital businesses and manufacturers who require higher levels of energy.



65% of premises have access to gigabit capable broadband
UK: 86%

We have worked to overcome historic challenges in digital infrastructure, and we deliver the Borderlands 5G Innovation Region programme, an initiative led by Connecting Cumbria. However, weak mobile coverage and digital connectivity hinder economic mobility and deter investment.

Housing and rental prices in Cumbria are generally lower than the national average. However, areas like Eden and South Lakeland face specific affordability challenges, exacerbated by pressures from second-home ownership and a 289% increase in Airbnb-style lettings between 2015 and 2022, which contribute to challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers.¹² We have a strong track record on housing delivery -- completing over 10,890 builds across Cumbria between 2015 and 2022 -- but we will need to go faster.¹³ The St Cuthbert's Garden Village, a development of over 10,000 new homes, as well as planned developments at Derwent Forest and Marina Village in Barrow provide a strong starting point for this.



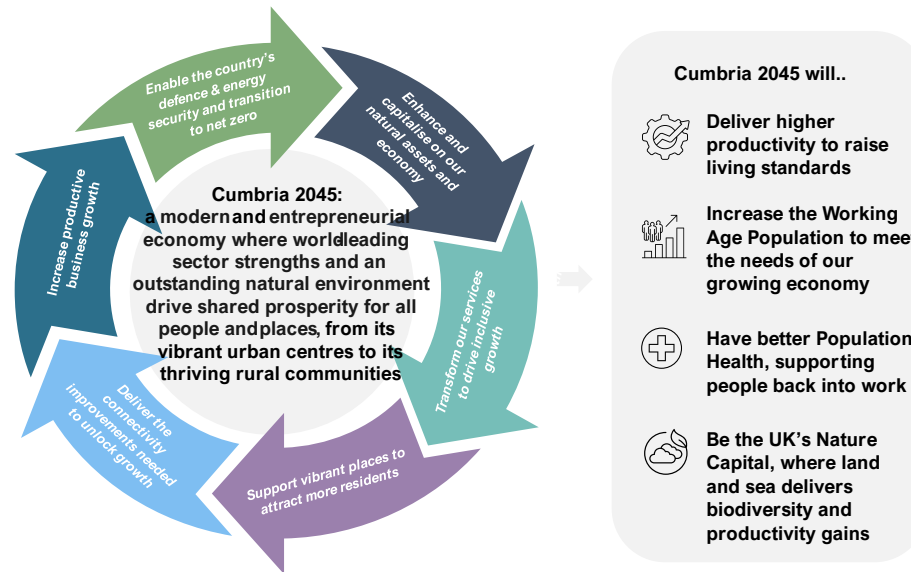
£200,677 mean house price
UK: £305,370

¹² Cumbria Tourism, Cumbria STEAM April 2024, 2024.

¹³ ONS, Housing Affordability in England and Wales, 2023.

Six interconnected priorities will help us deliver our vision. Underpinning areas of focus have been co-developed with stakeholders. These draw on the enablers which create the conditions for prosperity, and the levers that will allow us to capitalise on growth opportunities.

Figure 1. Our framework for growth



Deliver the connectivity improvements needed to unlock growth



65% of premises in Cumbria have access to gigabit capable broadband (UK 83%). Outdoor geographic mobile connectivity from all 4 Mobile Network Operators stands at 76% (UK 80%).¹⁴



26 minutes average travel time on public transport to eight key services¹⁵, compared to 19 minutes nationally



Major proposed infrastructure projects including **dualling of A66 and Cumbrian Coast Line upgrades** aim to unlock productivity and new jobs

Stronger transport infrastructure will increase business productivity, enable our residents to access more economic opportunities, and support sectors such as our visitor economy. Improving local sustainable transport options reduces the risk of social and economic exclusion and support our residents to access the services they need to thrive. Improved digital and mobile connectivity are central to our growth ambition, however the proportion of premises with access to gigabit capable broadband in Cumbria currently lags the national picture. Connectivity improvements extend to improving access to reliable necessities such as power and water are crucial in placemaking and boosting productivity.

Secure full funding for a future-ready transport system

We will refresh the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan (CTIP) to deliver a future-ready transport system, strengthening our relationships with Network Rail and National Highways to address capacity constraints and improve journey times across key economic corridors and employment centres. We will align the CIP with our Local Area Energy Plan to ensure grid capacity enables sustainable mobility and our growth ambitions. Key actions include:

¹⁴ Ofcom, Connected Nations, 2024.

¹⁵ The average of minimum journey times to medium sized centres of employment (500-4,999 jobs), primary schools, secondary schools, further education, GPs, hospitals, food stores and town centres.

- Cumbria's A-Road network: championing East-West connectivity through the dualling of the A66 from Scotch Corner to Workington; increasing capacity of the A590 and A69; improvements to the A595 to improve North – South connectivity.
- Upgrading rail infrastructure: improving the frequency, reliability and connectivity across Cumbria's rail network, including upgrades detailed in the Energy Coast Rail upgrade and enhancements to the West Coast Mainline.
- Cumbria's ports: maximising the potential of our ports, focusing on last-mile connectivity to enhance freight movement and boost trade potential.
- Active travel: establishing comprehensive walking and cycling networks to promote sustainable travel options, working closely with Sustrans to linking settlements to key destination and improve access to services.

Become the UK's rural transport innovation testbed

Public transport travel times are nearly double the England average, impacting productivity, labour shortages and contribute to social exclusion. In engagement we heard a strong appetite to explore innovative localised transport solutions which are cognisant of our low population density and service viability challenges. This could include financially sustainable demand-responsive transport that connects communities with key employment hubs, services and train stations. Early actions include:

- Consolidate our evidence base on public transport related socioeconomic exclusion in Cumbria, drawing on TFN research and existing bus service improvement plans.
- Develop a set of clear use cases, drawing on UK and international best practice, to assess financial and operational feasibility in Cumbria.
- Explore demand-responsive and integrated transport pilots, tailored to Cumbria's rural needs, to test scalable and sustainable solutions.

Connect all of Cumbria to improved digital infrastructure

Strategy engagement highlighted how fragmented digital and mobile connectivity poses substantial barriers to economic growth. Leveraging Connecting Cumbria's track record, we will accelerate our digital ambitions to reach 100% mobile and full gigabit coverage to support our long term vision for growth and create the resilient digital network that businesses and entrepreneurs need. Early actions include:

- Continued delivery of the Shared Rural Network Programme and the Borderlands 5G Innovation Region programme to develop the advanced wireless market and models to support rural tourism.
- Deliver the investment pipeline—including £108m from Project Gigabit—set to extend gigabit coverage to 99% of properties by 2027.

- Work with government to secure additional funding for gigabit capable connections across the region to help meet national targets.
- Update the Cumbria Digital Infrastructure Strategy to reflect our ambition for Cumbria to be testbed for new technology in rural and dispersed geographies, including improved connectivity across the two National Parks.

Invest in Cumbria's long term energy security

Grid capacity constraints are a major barrier to business productivity, deterring investment and reducing the region's attractiveness as a place to live and work. Developing a Local Energy Area Plan will provide a strategic framework for decarbonising energy systems, ensuring every part of Cumbria can meet its current and future energy demands while supporting innovation, sustainability, and economic competitiveness. Early actions include:

- Develop a Local Energy Area Plan.
- Strengthen relationships with Electricity North West, National Grid, and North West Industrial Decarbonisation Cluster to deliver grid and net zero investment.
- Champion Cumbria's needs in the Regional Energy Strategy Planning process
- Promotion of energy efficiency measures in private and commercial properties
- Expansion of EV charging infrastructure.
- Explore low carbon energy solutions such as district heat networks, heat pumps and smart grid technologies.
- Work with education and training providers on relevant workforce upskilling.

Maintain an investment pipeline of nationally critical infrastructure

Investment in climate adaptation, flood resilience, and cybersecurity is essential to protecting these nationally significant industries, ensuring supply chain stability, economic resilience, increased productivity and long-term sustainability. Without targeted investment, ageing infrastructure, wastewater management challenges, and cyber threats will constrain growth whilst also undermining our ability to continue delivery of critical services and resources nationally. Early actions include:

- Strengthen Cumbria wider advocacy to government and relevant agencies, reinforcing national importance of Cumbria's infrastructure in water, energy, natural assets and cyber security in devolution discussions and beyond.
- Advance wastewater treatment projects, starting with the £150m Windermere and Ambleside initiatives to reduce six overflows in the Lake District, and explore clean energy generation from wastewater.
- Enhance cyber resilience for Cumbria's nuclear and defence assets by supporting the new Group Cyber Collaboration Centre and collaborating with the skills systems to build the future cyber talent pipeline.

Increase productive business growth



GVA growth in **Manufacturing** (2% between 2015-22), and potential for growth in Advanced Manufacturing and robotics



Cumbria is **under-represented by people with RQF4+**, but over-represented by people with RQF3 only, RQF2 only, RQF1 only, and no qualifications



Cumbria has fewer **business births** than national average (59 per 10,000, compared to 84 per 10,000)

Good jobs attract people to the region, and we must continue to support sectors to grow. We are not starting from scratch, with plans to grow key sectors already in place, and a near term opportunity to influence the National Industrial Strategy as well as the national Small Business Strategy development and implementation. Clusters of industrial space are dispersed around Cumbria, for example around the ports of Barrow and Workington, the Sellafield Ltd nuclear site, and Kingmoor Business Park sitting within Cumbria's enterprise zone. Our growing university and four further education colleges build the local skills pipeline, working together through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

Champion Cumbria's sector strengths in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

The Modern Industrial Strategy will act as the foundation upon which the government will direct streams of investment funding into sectoral growth over the coming years. We must champion Cumbria's expertise across combinations of these sectors, considering where local clusters of industry can be supported to deliver greater growth. Early actions include:

- Influence the prioritisation of subsectors within broad sectors in the Modern Industrial Strategy, which are currently in development.
- Review developments in the Devolution White Paper and National Planning Policy Framework to explore the potential for innovative approaches to building new partnerships around the assembly of land and finance for the creation and/or extension of major employment sites.

Promote Cumbria's diverse advanced manufacturing sector to drive investment, innovation and supply chain growth

Manufacturing is one of our powerhouse sectors, driving innovation, highly skilled jobs, and export-led growth. Alongside our engineering expertise in energy and marine industries, we have notable strengths in wood and paper manufacturing, as well as a thriving food production sector. Targeted support for these industries will unlock opportunities for our SME network while increasing the proportion of the advanced manufacturing in the business base. Early actions include:

- Boost the supply of high-quality employment sites for advanced manufacturing starting with a comprehensive investment plan for existing sites such as Ulverston Park, potentially attracting a new ‘anchor’ organisation to spur innovation and enterprise.
- Increase the reach of Made Smarter in Cumbria to encourage our SME base to adopt advanced digital technologies.
- Map Cumbria’s local supply chain to strengthen engagement with regional and national sector bodies, such as Make UK and AMRC North West, and ensure the region’s pivotal role is recognised in future sector plans.
- Facilitate engagement between suppliers, buyers and decision makers, so that national contracts generate more local spend.

Expand place promotion and trade to boost inward investment and exporting activities

Feedback from our local business community emphasised the importance of showcasing the diversity and innovation of local entrepreneurship to strengthen Cumbria's reputation as a pro-business environment. We are building on strong foundations – Cumbria’s Chamber of Commerce continues to support local businesses in international trade through its Export Documentation Service, enabling companies to navigate global markets effectively. Initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse Export Champions further highlight local success stories, such as Kendamil, the Kendal-based baby milk brand named Northern Powerhouse Exporter of the Year in 2024. Early actions include:

- Establish Enterprising Cumbria as the front door to investors.
- Develop and implement an internationalisation strategy, identifying specific market opportunities, building a clear narrative of Cumbria’s most valuable exporting industries as well as its strategic positioning in the UK.
- Showcase a pipeline of investable propositions into major employment sites, pitching to and partnering with property developers, national delivery bodies and institutional investors.
- Build the international events & trade missions programme, including UKREiiF, sector events, and closer work with Department for Business and Trade.

Increase the year-round value and productivity of Cumbria's visitor economy, supporting sustainable tourism and vibrant communities

Our Destination Management Plan, launched in 2024, sets out a joined-up approach to support a successful and sustainable visitor economy, supporting the sector to deliver inclusive, accessible world class experiences in and outside of the core period, increasing the number of staying visitors, the number and share of international visitors as well as visitor spend across the whole of Cumbria. Early actions include:

- Deliver the actions and priorities in the Destination Management Plan to grow visitor value, including spreading visitors both geographically and over the course of the year, thereby reducing the pressures that visitor volumes can bring to certain locations.
- Work with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and the Visitor Advisory Council to ensure Cumbria's priorities are represented in the national plans to drive growth of the tourism industry.
- Propositions to widen Cumbria's tourism offer outside of the Lake District, focussing on the heritage assets of historic towns and villages and improving tourist infrastructure along the West Coast and Morecambe Bay
- Evolve Carlisle's evening economy and cultural offer, positioning Cumbria's city as a premier visitor destination while strengthening its role as a vibrant hub for local communities. Progress is already being made in this area with £170m of investment across Town Deal, Future High Streets Fund, Borderlands Fund, and Levelling Up Fund.

Further embed employers in skills provision to more effectively match supply and demand of training in emerging sectors

Engagement has shown that whilst there is an extensive network of training programmes, firms are continuing to report skills shortages, providers report issues in coordinating delivery with businesses and schools, and young people report a lack of clear opportunity outside of nuclear waste and engineering. Led by local businesses, our LSIP is a strong foundation for the provision of training and skills, which should be complemented by a programme of strategic skills activity which is responsive to current and future skill demands and tackles cold spots.¹⁶ Early actions include:

- Deliver on remaining LSIP targets and collaborate with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce to develop a refreshed LSIP for Cumbria, enhancing workforce insights and piloting innovative solutions to overcome transport barriers to reskilling and upskilling.
- Champion the availability of technical progression routes and professionalisation of employment in key local industries such as hospitality, tourism, social care, agriculture and conservation.
- Plan for increased control over the Adult Skills Fund will help target provision and ensure progression routes are available into priority sectors, and for priority cohorts (for example economically inactive, NEET, care experienced, SEND and those with disabilities).
- Boost the activities of the Cumbria Careers Hub, building on Cumbria Careers Day 2025, to showcase the variety of opportunities and to enable work experience and apprenticeship routes into small businesses in addition to major anchors.
- Ensure a clear role for employers on investing in skills and training, linked to consideration of Good Work Charter and social value in procurement.

Build a best in class enterprise support system, from start up to scale up and follow on support for large businesses to continue to grow

Evidence shows a low number of startups in Cumbria as well as a large proportion of businesses with low turnover. Engagement consistently saw local SMEs reporting a lack of understanding of their needs and a lack of support for businesses once they reach 250 employees. Our engagement and work through the Growth Hub has enriched our understanding of enterprise support needs. Early actions include:

- Map the current enterprise ecosystem to identify support gaps and duplication.

¹⁶ Cumbria Chamber, Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress report, 2024.

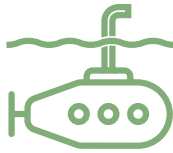
- Act as a convenor to facilitate knowledge exchange, talent development, and innovation through networking programmes like the Growth Hub and business groups such as CBI, Make UK, and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Match businesses at different stages of their growth cycle to each other for mentoring, including leadership and management support.

Strengthen the innovation ecosystem, building on Cumbria's emerging sector strengths in robotics and automation, and advanced manufacturing potential

High-end, highly innovative research and development (R&D) may represent a small share of employment in any region, but it plays a critical role in attracting investment, skilled talent, and driving productivity—key factors behind the success of England's most prosperous and fast-growing areas. Cumbria has strong innovation assets, including the University of Cumbria, R&D-led businesses, and sector-specific innovation centres, but there is significant potential to strengthen the local innovation ecosystem by aligning skills, investment, business support, physical infrastructure, and networks. A major opportunity exists for Cumbria to position itself as the UK's leading region for robotics and AI in challenging environments, leveraging existing demand from Sellafield Ltd and BAE Systems. RAICo1, Cumbria's dedicated robotics and AI innovation hub, is already at full capacity and delivering significant benefits—including accelerating knowledge transfer, engaging end users, and strengthening the local supply chain. Expanding this capability and investment in R&D infrastructure will further embed Cumbria's reputation as an innovation leader, unlocking growth across emerging sectors. Early actions include:

- Review local business success with Innovate UK funding, focussing on investable opportunities to build a joint innovation action plan, considering a regional investment programme as well as how to support businesses to connect with Angel investors and UK Wealth Fund.
- Support University of Cumbria as it creates a research and innovation hub in Barrow-in-Furness that will support the advance manufacturing, digital and technologies, defence, and clean energy sectors.
- Strengthen the links between existing and upcoming digital hubs in Cumbria, such as those in Whitehaven and Sellafield Ltd, with regional digital hubs and clusters such to build a strong regional ecosystem for tech innovation.
- Work with the UK Atomic Energy Authority and partners to secure investment and delivery for RAICo2, a cutting-edge R&D facility which will attract industry and talent to deliver a world class robotics and AI innovation ecosystem.

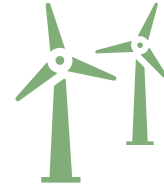
Enable the country's defence & energy security and transition to net zero



BAE Systems awarded the initial **£4bn SSN AUKUS contract** to design a fleet of next-generation nuclear-powered submarines for the UK and Australia in October 2023



Sellafield is the **only site in the country** that can **safely manage all forms of nuclear waste** and is the largest nuclear site in Europe



6 offshore wind farms accounting for **16%** of UK energy generation by source

Energy and defence security are at the heart of Cumbria's economy, driven by our world-class assets, expertise, and strategic importance to national resilience and growth. Cumbria's proud nuclear and manufacturing heritage and future attracts investment, supports high-value jobs, and underpins our local economy. Our long-standing role in energy generation extends to renewables, contributing 6% of the UK's electricity in 2020.¹⁷ Cumbria is well-positioned to lead on emerging technologies such as Small Modular Reactors and advanced fuel systems. These strengths are catalysts for expanding supply chains, driving exports, and securing inward investment. Prioritising investment, sectoral growth, and skills development is critical to achieving our goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2037, while cementing Cumbria's reputation as a nationally significant hub of industry and innovation and leading contributor to the government's national missions and delivering higher productivity and investment in local supply chains.

Enable and sustain the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, strengthening supply chains and attracting investment

The Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE) is the network of organisations and systems responsible for maintaining the UK's nuclear deterrent and submarine forces. The award of the £900 million Dreadnought contract and the £3.95 billion SSN AUKUS nuclear-powered attack submarine programme to BAE Systems firmly establishes Cumbria as a critical player in successfully delivering the DNE. It will support the creation of an additional 6,000 jobs in Barrow, necessitating major investment in infrastructure, skills, and advanced

¹⁷ Cumbria Clean Energy Strategy, 2022.

technologies to support the growing demands of submarine production and sustainment. Early actions include:

- Support the Team Barrow initiative, leveraging the £200m Barrow Transformation Fund to attract additional funding for essential infrastructure improvements needed to accommodate workforce growth to enable and sustain the defence nuclear enterprise and support diversification of the local economy through increasing productivity
- Promote skills development through existing talent outreach networks, encouraging young people across Cumbria to access opportunities such as the Ordnance Munitions and Explosives apprenticeship, Defence STEM undergraduate sponsorship, and DNE partnership graduate apprenticeships.
- Strengthen partnerships with international stakeholders, enhancing the region's global reputation and competitiveness while securing long-term economic growth and innovation.

Become a significant provider for new nuclear and capitalise on nuclear heritage

We will position Cumbria as a national centre of nuclear excellence—both as a leading provider of new nuclear technologies and the heart of the UK's nuclear heritage—to drive economic growth, attract investment, and create high-value jobs. By celebrating our cultural and scientific achievements, we will enhance tourism, education, and inspire future generations of engineers and manufacturers, showcasing the achievements of the last century and the role Cumbria has (and continues) to play in scientific advances. Early actions include:

- Delivery of the Cumbria Clean Energy Park, a clean energy and production hub for advancing technologies like Small Modular Reactors and enabling the commercialisation of cutting-edge research.
- Review with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority opportunity to deliver growth from nuclear heritage, including potential for World Heritage Site status.
- Continue engagement with NESO and Electricity North West to address grid requirements for new nuclear.
- Work with Britain's Energy Coast Business Cluster to grow the advanced manufacturing supply chain for wider nuclear industry growth – including national projects such as Sizewell C.

Be a global leader in the safe management of nuclear materials and decommissioning, generating greater local benefits

Sellafield Ltd has established Cumbria as a global leader in nuclear decommissioning. Two significant future projects could be a final plutonium disposition facility and hosting a

Geological Disposal Facility (GDF). A multibillion-pound plant to process plutonium is expected to bring thousands of skilled jobs in the coming decades. Hosting the UK's first GDF offers a long-term economic opportunity for the area, which is expected to deliver over 4,000 jobs during the first 25 years of construction and generate over £300 million GVA annually, alongside significant infrastructure investment over its 125-year plus lifespan.¹⁸ Early actions include:

- Work closely with Nuclear Waste Services (NWS) and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) on siting decisions the GDF, ensuring local community needs informs decision making.
- Support the Robotics and Nuclear AI cluster partners to develop a long-term innovation pipeline which capitalises on industry demand for nuclear decommissioning to open new markets and strengthen industrial trade relationships.
- Prioritise local SMEs through tailored procurement frameworks and providing targeted support for companies to the meet technical and regulatory requirements of nuclear decommissioning contracts.
- Continue to work with education and training providers, such as Gen 2, to meet nuclear decommissioning skill demands, drawing on levers - apprenticeships, degree sponsorship and on the job training – to provide inclusive pathways for residents to upskill and reskill.

Expand clean energy generation capacity, with more local manufacturing and maintenance as well as delivering storage solutions

The 2022 Cumbria Clean Energy Strategy and the Cumbria Distributed Energy Strategy outline a bold vision to position Cumbria as a leading testbed for renewable energy technologies, providing a clear roadmap for establishing the region as a hub for clean energy generation and storage. Delivering Cumbria's Clean Energy Cluster Ambition will be a key part of this, requiring targeted investment for key energy hubs across the region. Early actions include:

- Secure investment for energy hubs: Workington Energy Hub for hydrogen and offshore energy; Moorside modular reactors, solar, nuclear, offshore, and synthetic fuels; Barrow for hydrogen, carbon storage, and offshore wind
- Work with partners across the ports of Barrow, Workington, and Silloth to maximise their role in energy infrastructure, maintenance, and exports, starting with advancing the full business case for the Port of Workington to establish a thriving clean energy, manufacturing, and intermodal logistics hub—driving regional growth and anchoring Cumbria's Clean Energy Coast Cluster.

¹⁸ National Waste Services, GDF Report 2024 – Protect People and Our Environment (2024).

- Build the case for a Cumbria-Wide Rural Test Bed for hydro/tidal, bioenergy, solar, and geothermal innovation.
- Explore the potential for Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) in Cumbria, leveraging our wider clean energy expertise to support R&D and supply chain development.
- Maintain a pipeline of green jobs and continue to work with training providers to codevelop and promote new training pathways, including apprenticeships, reskilling programmes, and modular courses tailored to the needs of Cumbria's green economy.

Work with the North West Industrial Cluster to deliver industrial decarbonisation and clean growth

Our membership to the North West Industrial Cluster (NWIC) - one of the UK's largest industrial decarbonisation initiatives with £40bn of investment-ready projects and £207bn overall investment opportunity – provides an avenue to drive clean economic growth in Cumbria.¹⁹ Early actions include:

- Strengthen our presence and engagement in the cluster, expanding our collaboration beyond SMR deployment in West Cumbria.
- Align our expertise in engineering, advanced manufacturing, and nuclear innovation and apprenticeships with local training provision, to address the cluster's critical skills shortages and provide a pipeline of technical talent to support priority projects whilst supporting residents to access high quality employment opportunities in Cumbria's new green economy.

¹⁹ Net Zero North West, Pioneering a Net Zero Future, 2023.

Enhance and capitalise on our natural assets and economy



Home to **279** Special Sites of Scientific Interest, Special Conservation Areas and Special Protection Areas; **5** Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance); **24** National Nature reserves and **8** Local Nature Reserves; **1600** County Wildlife Sites



Cumbria has the highest land and highest rainfall in England, with an average of **81.7 flood incidents per year between 2012 – 2021**



3 major land-based industries: farming (£1.1bn of the economy); **conservation** incl. countryside management and outdoor heritage & culture (£1.6bn of the economy); **visitor economy** (42 million visitors, 25% of economy)

Cumbria's vast landmass and abundance of wildlife as well as expansive areas of natural beauty have shaped the region's economy of today and are one of the reasons people chose to move, work and visit in Cumbria. The contribution of the land also goes beyond the Cumbrian borders, acting as a vital water source for the North West and nationally through its dairy herds. Protecting and enhancing these natural assets is essential for Cumbria to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth, as the two are inextricably linked. Damaged biodiversity or environmental degradation would ultimately lead to economic harm via a shrinking visitor economy, employment loss from nature reliant or related jobs and reduced productivity of the land in terms of agricultural or farming output. Population health and growth is supported by high quality landscape and air quality; maintaining and promoting the quality of life in Cumbria is essential to deliver our population growth outcome.

Secure funding for nature-based projects and implement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Cumbria is and has often been a recipient of funding for nature-based projects. A key example being allocations from DEFRA for a tailored nature-based recovery strategy, namely the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This is a mechanism that aims to protect the habitats and species present in Cumbria as an area of healthy rural landscapes and to support key industries such as agriculture and tourism. Early actions include:

- Collaborate with the Centre for National Parks and Protected Areas at the University of Cumbria to carry out research on protecting species, habitats and ecosystems from biodiversity loss.
- Integrate nature recovery into planning policies and procurement levers to ensure habitat and ecosystem protection is central to new developments and services.
- Implement robust monitoring systems to track progress on targets and demonstrate the economic and environmental benefits of nature recovery to help secure further investment, including access to carbon off set markets and biodiversity net gain funding.
- Develop citizen science and wider nature economy initiatives targeted to community and visitors to increase participation in local projects whilst showcasing Cumbria's natural capital.

Build a national reputation for land & nature skills and education

Building a national reputation for land and nature skills is not just an economic opportunity for Cumbria—it is essential for ensuring the skills and workforce needed to sustain the region's natural assets and rural economy. Being at the heart of UK successes from the 30x30 initiative will require these skills, and Cumbria can attract new residents who come here to training in world class land and nature skills provision. The Land and Nature Skills Service (LANSS) for Cumbria connects people with learning and training opportunities in the land and nature-based sectors, with a focus on facilitating the development of skills provision to meet learner and employer needs. While land and nature-based Further Education (FE) provision remains in Cumbria -through Furness and Myerscough College programmes in agriculture and arboriculture, and the Countryside Worker apprenticeship launching at Kendal College in 2025 - the closure of Newton Rigg agricultural college was noted in engagement as a challenge to maintaining a strong pipeline of land-based skills and workforce development. Early actions include:

- Build a resilient approach to training, working with local employers, the national parks, and ecologists to design a leading edge skills offer.
- Continue to support LANSS as well as building out the educational offer sustainably, attracting students and income external to the region.
- Explore connections to other land-based colleges across the country in a new partnership model approach.

Grow Cumbria's high quality local food and drink production & processing capacity

We are renowned for our high-quality local produce, and engagement has shown a strong sense of pride in showcasing it more prominently. Cumberland sausages, cuts of lamb, Grasmere Gingerbread and growing businesses such as Hawkshead Relish

Company are just some examples of the Cumbria produce which is exported. We already have a strong food manufacturing sector in the region; by improving processing capacity of manufacturers at all levels can help keep more of the supply chain in Cumbria, improve productivity and competitiveness. Early actions include:

- Focus on promoting Made in Cumbria, championing local food production and processing to create greater ownership of local produce.
- Provide small businesses with entrepreneurship support as a first step in helping rural enterprises build sustainable businesses, advocate more for their high-quality local produce, and expand their markets – including with online presence.
- Align and mobilise our key emerging sectors in Robotics, Automation and AgriTech with rural enterprises to help small businesses to scale and facilitate innovation.

Establish the region as a national hub for AgriTech, bioeconomy and plant sciences

The UK AgriTech sector has seen significant growth in recent years. It encompasses subsectors including plant and animal science, precision agriculture, aquaculture, and disruptive technologies like robotics and drones. This is a new growth opportunity to attract significant investment and forging strategic partnerships with leading national institutions to drive innovation and build world-class expertise; places like Norwich, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire are building related clusters and we want to explore the opportunity and strengths that Cumbria can contribute to this important agenda to improve technology adoption & innovation and strengthen biodiversity & ecosystems. Early actions include:

- Engage with technology developers, farmers, investors, and academic institutions to build a roadmap that is right for Cumbria.
- Explore potential for biorefineries as well as bio-based and biodegradable materials, working with manufacturers and organisation such as the Centre for Process Innovation.
- Review potential in the innovation ecosystem for this offer – and any gaps - which will help to attract, for example, UKRI investment, and a national profile can help us attract further funding, infrastructure, and talent to bolster a cluster.
- Invite DEFRA to work closely with us as a ‘home of AgriTech’ to trial new approaches and evaluate their success and potential for the rest of the country.

Secure the sustainable future of farming and position Cumbria as a leader in national food security

Cumbria is a vital provider of food for the nation; farmers protect our landscapes as well as produce the high-quality food we are known for. To secure a sustainable farming

future, we want to build a sector which is less reactive to the changing subsidy landscape and requirements that we have seen in national Environmental Land Management schemes. We want to support the regional adoption of new technologies to both boost the economic productivity of farming, the quality of life of the farming community (e.g. the capacity and willingness of young people to enter/continue farming) as well as supporting decarbonisation. Early actions include:

- Work with the sector and representatives to define what a nature friendly and regenerative farming future looks like.
- Work with DEFRA to position Cumbria as a pathfinder for new funding and support administered at a Cumbria level to grow and maintain a resilient, productive agriculture sector over the long term and at the same time achieve targets for the environment and climate.

Transform our services to drive inclusive growth



8% of Cumbria's LSOAs are in the top 10% most deprived nationally, with clusters of deprivation in coastal communities and Carlisle



18% of neighbourhoods are in the top 10% of neighbourhoods nationally for health deprivation



2294 third sector organisations, employing over 10,000 FTEs and contribute **£508m** to the Cumbrian economy

Cumbria has high levels of employment and low levels of economic inactivity. At the same time, Cumbria has a significant proportion of residents with low or no skills, experiencing transport-related socioeconomic exclusion, deprivation in health, and living in poor quality housing. We need more local jobs and better connectivity to the wider Cumbria jobs market. Success will include growing the overall working population of Cumbria and enabling everyone in Cumbria to participate in and benefit from growth and jobs.

Innovate in employability support, joining up work, health & wellbeing

Cumbria has significant pockets of deprivation, particularly concentrated along the West Coast in areas such as Whitehaven, Workington, and Barrow-in-Furness, where long-standing challenges related to health, employment, and educational attainment persist. The Get Britain Working White Paper has renewed the national drive to better connect employment, health and skills support, within the context of reformed and devolved local leadership. Within this context, we must be bold in our understanding of the challenges involving health and low productivity in Cumbria and make clear the corresponding scale of need as well as our strong appetite to co-design targeted employment support with DWP. Early actions include:

- Deliver the Connect to Work, Musculoskeletal Community Delivery Programmes, and WorkWell pilot in South Cumbria.
- Implement a robust evaluation and learning approach to build the evidence base of what works, using insights to secure fundings for interventions in areas of acute deprivation and to position Cumbria as a leader in addressing transport-related barriers to healthcare access.
- Work with Barrow Rising to share progress of Team Barrow delivery with regional and national partners to showcase best practice in collaborating with local anchor firms to prioritise health and education in workforce development.

- Support Cumberland’s Health Determinants Research Collaboration and the University of Cumbria’s Medical Research Hub to advance understanding of local health inequalities and create new research and training opportunities.
- Review existing community health infrastructure to identify opportunities to enhance resident access and support localised interventions, including the launch of Community Wellbeing Hubs in Workington and Carlisle in January 2025.²⁰
- Identify potential opportunities for operational and service integration between local providers, including ICBs, the Police, and childcare and employment services, to position Cumbria as a leader in innovation and attract additional funding.

Work with Cumbria’s VCSE sector as an integral part of local services and communities

VCSEs have a strong understanding of the complex challenges that our residents face across different parts of Cumbria, and are at the forefront of innovative programmes that are tailored to these needs. Our VCSE sector has strong existing networks that we will work with – for example Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership supports the social enterprise sector, which has grown almost 50% in ten years, and Cumbria CVS offers help, advice, training and support to third sector groups throughout Cumbria.²¹ Early actions include:

- Support and promote existing initiatives such as Fit 4 Life, a fitness and rehabilitation gym for chronic conditions in Maryport and other parts of Cumbria, and Growing Well, a mental health charity in Cumbria and North Lancashire.²²
- Empower our VCSEs to deliver place-based initiatives that respond to local needs, responding to feedback through our engagement on the support they need to flourish. This includes the provision of resources for VCSEs to develop their organisations, boosting investment in IT and software systems, skills support, HR and logistics.
- Better use convening powers to match up VCSEs with local anchor firms, which can help to connect ‘givers’ with ‘needs’, i.e. tailoring local firms’ procurement and social value commitments to the needs of organisations that can reach the community.
- Encourage residents of all ages to participate in local volunteering opportunities that enhance economic vitality, strengthen social cohesion, and support Cumbria’s commitment to becoming an age-friendly community.

²⁰ NHS Foundation Trust, New Community Hubs Launch in Workington and Carlisle, 2024.

²¹ [Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership](#)

²² [Fit for Life Cumbria](#); [Growing Well](#).

Work in partnership to develop the *Cumbria Commitment*, supporting young people's skills, aspirations, and career prospects

Our engagement with young people in Cumbria has highlighted a perceived lack of visibility and accessibility to the diverse opportunities and career pathways available within the region. While many employers are already providing high quality work experience and career guidance, there is clear demand for a more coordinated, region-wide approach to enhancing these efforts. We will co-develop and implement the Cumbria Commitment, an all-ages platform designed to connect residents with the region's diverse economic opportunities, starting with targeted school engagement to inspire and support early years cohorts. Early actions include:

- Assess the feasibility of implementing a tailored local model, similar to Youth Guarantee trailblazer areas, to better align and promote the existing entitlements and provisions for 18–21-year-olds.
- Explore strategic deployment of the Growth and Skills Levy in partnership with local employers, supporting the development of new foundation and short-duration apprenticeships designed to meet workforce needs.
- Consider the establishment of a regional Apprenticeship Training Agency, providing a mechanism to facilitate the recruitment and management of apprenticeships outside of traditional full-time roles.
- Develop and implement an all-age career strategy for Cumbria, ensuring that individuals at every stage of their working lives have access to clear, tailored career guidance, training, and upskilling opportunities that align with the needs of the local economy.

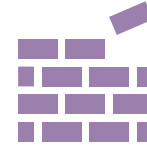
Support vibrant places to attract more residents



Cumberland **annual housing target rising** from 224 to 1,217 and Westmorland & Furness from 227 to 1,430



Employment in **Arts, entertainment and recreation declined by 18%** in Cumbria between 2015-22



£250m Towns Fund allocation for place-based regeneration projects

To attract and retain more people to live and work in Cumbria we need the jobs for people to work in, but this is only part of the picture. We need a diverse offer of homes, infrastructure, retail and leisure offers to attract families, young people, and older workers. It means improving the physical and social infrastructure where people live, work, and connect. Expanding and diversifying opportunities for cultural, creative, and leisure engagement will be critical not only for retaining young people and growing the working-age population but also for driving innovation and cross-sector advancements. Much of this is undertaken at local authority level, who lead on planning and services and who are developing local plans.

Develop and maintain a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) to deliver the mixed tenure, type, and affordable housing we need in the right places

New government targets will require a 487% increase in housing delivery targets for Westmorland & Furness and a 383% increase in Cumberland, demanding a rapid and coordinated response.²³ Cumbria's SDS will align housing delivery with employment growth, transport and digital connectivity, social infrastructure and local services to ensure that new developments are well-planned, sustainable, and supportive of long-term economic and sustainable growth. A core focus will be on accelerating housing delivery to meet targets and the demands of our growing economy where there is new and planned jobs growth. The SDS will also prioritise making better use of empty sites and improving the quality of existing housing stock. With 35% of Cumbria's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) ranking in the top 10% most deprived nationally for indoor living environment,

²³ MHCLG, Annual Net Additional Dwellings, 2024.

improving housing quality is essential for health and work.²⁴ The SDS will build on our Local Plans, the CTIP and our Digital Infrastructure Strategy. Early actions include:

- Develop a strategic partnership with Homes England to unlock stalled sites.
- Successfully deliver 10,000 new homes at St Cuthbert's Garden Village and 800 new homes at Barrow Marina Village.
- Progress additional sites such as Windermere Gateway and Ulverston Swarthmoor – 940 new homes.
- Increase cross-authority collaboration with partners such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, and United Utilities to overcome barriers like Nutrient Neutrality.
- Improve housing quality and energy resilience to reduce costs for residents, support Net Zero targets, and lower overall energy demand.

Support Cumbria's cultural ecosystem to drive sector growth and offer

Cumbria's cultural ecosystem spans theatres, museums, art galleries, cinemas, libraries, concert halls, heritage assets, UNESCO World Heritage sites, grassroots organisations and creative industry businesses. These entities are vital to Cumbria's economy, attracting considerable investment – such as the £1.1m per year Arts Council England funding secured by Cumbria Museum Consortium – creating high value jobs as well as opportunities for skills development. They enhance the visitor experience and play a crucial role in preserving and celebrating Cumbria's heritage and assets. Early actions include:

- Collaborate with the full range of Cumbria's cultural organisations to understand challenges to growth and co-design tailored support aimed at enhancing sector resilience, building events and experiences, and fostering career development opportunities to attract talent into cultural and ancillary industries.
- Work with University of Cumbria, who has provided mentorships to creative residencies for multi-disciplinary artists as well as supporting the development of arts-based collective and encouraging more diverse visitor engagement.
- Deepen relationships with relevant government departments and national organisations across culture, arts, heritage, sports, and the visitor economy to create new opportunities for joint working to strengthen Cumbria's offer.

Maintain creative and enterprise space for collaboration, networking and ideas

Young people expressed a strong desire for spaces that foster creativity and idea development, referencing examples like Fraser House in Lancaster—a flexible co-working

²⁴ MHCLG, Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019.

space supporting tech and digital businesses in growth, innovation, and collaboration. These hubs provide physical and social environments where individuals and organisations can share ideas, build networks, and develop commercial opportunities. By bringing together creative industries, businesses, and community groups, they will serve as catalysts for innovation and entrepreneurial activity. Crucially, these spaces must be distributed across Cumbria, in both larger urban centres and more rural communities, to provide physical access for all businesses and residents. Early actions include:

- Map existing provision as well as underutilised public assets which could be reimagined for new uses.
- Work with young people, enterprise space providers, and creatives to build the aspiration and specification for creative spaces in Cumbria.
- Support the development of the Carlisle Business Exchange, working alongside the University of Cumbria to promote opportunities for business-to-business collaboration and industry-academic knowledge exchange.

Develop a place-based impact investment portfolio and partnership

We will explore diverse investment approaches including place-based impact investing, leveraging public-private partnerships to maximise impact while empowering communities to invest in local initiatives that strengthen the vibrancy of their areas. Cumbria already demonstrates success in this approach, exemplified by Cumbria Community Energy, where investments in a hydroelectric plant at Killington Reservoir and a solar PV array at Murley Moss are projected to generate significant returns for community shareholders. Early actions include:

- Continue engagement with the Impact Investing Institute to identify impact investors to partner with Cumbria.
- Support the development of community-led investment initiatives, building capacity for locally driven projects and expanding the evidence base for of scalable community investment models that can be implemented across Cumbria.
- Work with the VCSE sector to showcase successful place-based investment case studies in Cumbria, demonstrating impact and attracting further investment from local and national partners.

Promote the region as a leading destination for work, culture and leisure

Cumbria benefits from strong destination marketing by organisations like Cumbria Tourism and the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP), which have established the Lake District, wider Cumbria and Yorkshire Dales National Parks as premier UK attractions. Building on this strong foundation, we will expand the focus to showcase the full breadth of Cumbria, highlighting areas outside of the traditional tourist footprint – including to attract talent to live in the region.

We recognise the broader value of the visitor economy in creating and driving sustainable, inclusive social and economic impact. We will capitalise on this, championing Cumbria as a great place to invest, live, work, study & visit; drive investment/regeneration countywide; support our food and farming sectors and underpin a resilient supply chain and services that benefit all.

Early actions include:

- Develop and implement a Cumbria-wide place marketing strategy for investment and talent attraction.
- Bring together local place makers and Cumbria Ambassadors to shape authentic narratives that reflect the unique histories, ambitions, and strengths of their communities, ensuring that every part of Cumbria is promoted as attractive places to live and work.
- Work with businesses to showcase the variety of jobs and opportunities in Cumbria, including those which may be less well known outside the region.

Delivering our growth ambitions

Our strategic outcomes

Our Cumbria 2045 vision lies at the heart of this economic strategy and is underpinned by four outcomes which reflect the change we want to see. Each outcome represents a building block of the vision, addressing economic challenge whilst maximising the opportunities afforded through Cumbria's assets.

None of the strategic outcomes will be pursued in isolation, but rather as part of a cohesive and cross partner effort where progress in the outcomes must be balanced – no one outcome can be delivered at the detriment of the others. Success comes from a balanced positive trajectory across the four outcomes.



Higher productivity to raise living standards

We will have led the way in driving productivity across all our sectors, by leveraging world-class expertise and innovation to create high-quality jobs and improve living standards. Cumbria will have a reputation as a leading place to start and grow a business due to our pro-innovation enterprise ecosystem which attracts international investment.

By 2045, Cumbria's productivity will be 14% higher than business as usual

We will have a growing, dynamic, and diverse working-age population, supported by a responsive skills system, innovative infrastructure, affordable housing and a vibrant culture and leisure offer. Cumbria will attract and retain talent by offering exceptional opportunities, world-leading sectoral strengths, and a high quality of life.

By 2045, we will have reversed the current projected decline to add over 27,000 people to our workforce.



Increased Working Age Population to meet the needs of our growing economy



Better Population Health, supporting people back into work

Health and wellbeing will be prioritised as fundamental to economic productivity and prosperity, with a healthy workforce and communities in all parts of Cumbria. Our innovative model for public services, thriving VCSE sector and dynamic, employer-led skills system will have supported improved population health. Inequalities will be reduced; people, regardless of age, background or location, will be empowered to participate in the workforce, fostering a thriving economy that supports individuals and communities alike.

By 2045, we will have raised Healthy Life Expectancy by 5 years from current levels in all parts of Cumbria.

We will have enhanced our land and seas for biodiversity, bolstering economic resilience to climate change and providing a robust foundation for Cumbria's land-based industries and visitor economy. Our natural assets will deliver economic growth through new sectors and jobs created in the transition to Net Zero, making use of the coast in particular for wind, carbon capture & storage, and tidal power. Local energy generation will fuel manufacturing, robotics and AI cluster growth, fostering high value and sustainable job opportunities.

By 2045, Cumbria will be recognised as the UK's nature capital, having achieved Net Zero by 2037 in alignment with Zero Carbon Cumbria Partnership targets.



UK's Nature Capital, where land and sea deliver biodiversity and productivity gains

A framework for growth

Our priorities and outcomes are interconnected and interdependent and achieving them will require strong leadership and an integrated approach to implementation. Delivering transformative growth for Cumbria requires every stakeholder - local authorities, national government, strategic delivery partners, businesses, Universities, FE and Skill Providers, trade unions as well as voluntary and third sector organisations - to focus on their unique levers for change. We will convene action groups for each priority, bringing together partners to develop the detail that turns our economic vision into robust delivery plans.

Our new way of working is grounded in the following principles:

- **Collaborative:** within and outside Cumbria, working together and breaking down barriers between organisations to get things done.

- **Creative:** in developing ideas and solutions – harnessing the creativity in the county and listening to young people.
- **Competitive:** so that businesses and places are prioritised nationally for growth, ensuring that Cumbria is the place to invest, live, visit and work, with an international reputation based on our strengths.
- **Compelling:** in our case making that is rooted in evidence and building strong investment cases and new ideas to deliver our goals.
- **Conservation:** whilst we go for growth, we enhance our natural environment, recognising that nature is a vital part of the economy and our growth story.

The JEC and Cumbria Economic Growth Board will provide cross-cutting oversight of delivery plan development, ensuring alignment between priorities and read across to Cumberland and Westmorland & Furness Councils’ respective economic strategies. The Cumbria Economic Growth Board, an advisory body for the JEC will support the implementation of this strategy. Enterprising Cumbria are the economic development function across the region – supporting economic growth, investment in skills and promoting Cumbria as a great place to live, work and do business.

Devolution will be an important lever in delivering our growth ambitions. We are part of the government’s priority programme for devolution, which will give Cumbria more control over decision making to deliver the programmes we need to prosper. We will make the case for fair funding, reflecting that both the need and cost of delivering services costs more in our rural areas and, in due course, a Cumbria Integrated Settlement, enabling investment to be directed where it is most needed, rather than being constrained by nationally set criteria.

An integrated settlement forms only part of our approach to funding this strategy. We will work in partnership with the private sector and investors to increase business and institutional investment in Cumbria, as well as fully leverage public funding pots, such as the Clean Energy Investment Fund, to realise our vision.

We have identified areas of focus which we will prioritise for early delivery.

Cumbria’s priority focus areas

- Refresh the Cumbria Transport Infrastructure Plan
- Champion Cumbria’s sector strengths and potential in the National Industrial Strategy, including advanced manufacturing, clean growth, and defence
- Work with the emerging robotics & AI cluster and organisations to build a sector action plan, and highlight opportunities with Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
- Accelerate housing delivery, agreeing a strategic partnership with Homes England to address viability gaps
- Deliver the Local Skills Improvement Plan and build the land and nature skills offer
- Implement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- Develop a bold new approach to investment and trade, with an internationalisation strategy
- Build the new employment and health support offer, accelerating devolved powers around employment support
- Develop and maintain a Spatial Development Strategy
- Design the Cumbria Commitment

Measuring our success

The Cumbria of 2045 will be a place where others look to understand what excellence looks like in a modern, entrepreneurial economy.

To achieve this, we need to be purposeful in our approach to monitoring our progress and proactive in sharing what works with both local and national stakeholders. Robust monitoring and evaluation will be a key tool. The indicators for measuring our success therefore need to be broad, helping us monitor and understand the direction of travel for progressing against our core outcomes.

We will monitor progress against through the Joint Executive Committee and the Economic Growth Board using the indicators shown below, being transparent about what works and where we need to reset activity. We will communicate our progress and share success through annual reports which will be shared widely with key stakeholders.

Figure 2. Core outcome success measures

Outcome	Measure of success
Deliver higher productivity to raise living standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Prosperity • Increased Median full time resident pay • Increased Productivity • Increased Sector productivity • Increased Start ups per capita • Increased SME growth/growing businesses
Increased Working Age Population to meet the needs of our growing economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Working Age Population • Reduction in the % of NEETS • Increased housing completions • Reduced travel to work times
Better Population Health, supporting people back into work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Healthy Life Expectancy • Reduced economic inactivity due to poor health • Increase in skill levels • Self-report measures of social connection and mental wellbeing

Be the UK's Nature Capital, where land and sea deliver biodiversity and productivity gains

- **Biodiversity & biomass net gain**
- Reduced Territorial per capita CO2 emissions
- Increased % of energy generated from renewable electricity
- Increased growth in green jobs (to be defined through SIC codes e.g. Agriculture, Energy, Green Tourism)

Annex A: Outcome alignment

Priority	Area of Focus	Deliver higher productivity to raise living standards	Increased Working Age Population to meet the needs of our growing economy	Better Population Health, supporting people back into work	Be the UK's Nature Capital, where land and sea deliver biodiversity and productivity gains
Deliver the connectivity improvements needed to unlock growth	Secure full funding for a future-ready transport system	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Become the UK's rural transport innovation testbed	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Connect all of Cumbria to improved digital infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Invest in Cumbria's long term energy security	✓	✓		✓
	Maintain an investment pipeline of nationally critical infrastructure	✓	✓		✓
Increase productive business growth	Champion Cumbria's sector strengths in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy	✓			✓
	Promote Cumbria's diverse advanced manufacturing sector to drive investment, innovation and supply chain growth	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Expand place promotion and trade to boost inward investment and exporting activities	✓			✓

	Increase the year-round value and productivity of Cumbria's visitor economy, supporting sustainable tourism and vibrant communities	✓	✓		✓
	Further embed employers in skills provision to more effectively match supply and demand of training in emerging sectors	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Build a best in class enterprise support system, from start up to scale up and follow on support for large businesses to continue to grow	✓	✓		✓
	Strengthen the innovation ecosystem, building on Cumbria's emerging sector strengths in robotics and automation, and advanced manufacturing potential	✓	✓		✓
Enable the country's defence & energy security and transition to net zero	Enable and sustain the Defence Nuclear Enterprise, strengthening supply chains and attracting investment	✓	✓		✓
	Become a significant provider for new nuclear and capitalise on nuclear heritage	✓	✓		✓
	Be a global leader in the safe management of nuclear materials and decommissioning, generating greater local benefits	✓	✓		✓
	Expand clean energy generation capacity, with more local manufacturing and maintenance as well as delivering storage solutions	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Work with the North West Industrial Cluster to deliver industrial decarbonisation and clean growth	✓			✓
Enhance and capitalise on our natural assets and economy	Secure funding for nature-based projects and implement the Local Nature Recovery Strategy	✓	✓		✓
	Build a national reputation for land & nature skills and education	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Grow Cumbria's high quality local food and drink production & processing capacity	✓	✓		✓
	Establish the region as a national hub for AgriTech, bioeconomy and plant sciences	✓			✓
	Secure the sustainable future of farming and position Cumbria as a leader in national food security	✓			✓

Transform our services to drive inclusive growth	Innovate in employability support, joining up work, health & wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	
	Work with Cumbria's VCSE sector as an integral part of local services and communities	✓	✓	✓	
	Work in partnership to develop the Cumbria Commitment, supporting young people's skills, aspirations, and career prospects	✓	✓	✓	
Support vibrant places to attract more residents	Develop and maintain a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) to deliver the mixed tenure, type, and affordable housing we need in the right places	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Support Cumbria's cultural ecosystem to drive sector growth and offer	✓	✓	✓	
	Maintain creative and enterprise space for collaboration, networking and ideas	✓	✓	✓	
	Develop a place-based impact investment portfolio and partnership	✓	✓	✓	
	Promote the region as a leading destination for work and leisure	✓	✓	✓	
	Design safer communities that are supported by protective services	✓	✓	✓	

Annex B: Indicators baseline

Outcome	Measure of success	Indicator	Baseline	Year	Desired Direction	Source
Deliver high productivity to raise living standards	Prosperity	GVA per resident	£26.26	2022	↑	ONS, Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: all International Territorial Level (ITL) regions & ONS Population Estimates
	Resident pay	Gross median full time resident pay	£34,866	2023	↑	ONS, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
	Productivity	GVA per hour worked	£32.30	2022	↑	ONS, Subregional Productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district and UK ITL2 and ITL3 subregions.
	Sector productivity	GVA per person in employment	£49,494	2022	↑	ONS, Subregional Productivity: labour productivity indices by local authority district and UK ITL2 and ITL3 subregions.
	Start ups per capita	Monthly start-ups per 10,000 people	5	2022	↑	Banksearch

	SME growth	Growing businesses	6.3%	2024	↑	FAME
Increased Working Age Population to meet the needs of our growing economy	Increase in Working Age Population	Change in residents aged 16-64	-3.2%	2012 – 2023	↑	ONS, Mid-Year Population Estimates.
	Young people in work or training	% of 16–17-year-olds Not in Employment, Education, or Training	5.8%	2024	↓	Inspira/NCCIS
	Housing tenure & mix - completions	Annual completed dwellings	1,480	2022 /23	↑	MHCLG, Live Tables on Dwelling Stock.
	Travel to work times	Travel time via public transport to the nearest employment site with 5,000+ jobs, in minutes	57.2	2019	↓	DfT, Journey Time Statistics
	Better population health, supporting people back into work	Healthy Life expectancy	Male Healthy Life Expectancy (Cumbria)	78.62	2022	↑
Female Healthy Life Expectancy (Cumbria)			82.47	2022	↑	ONS, Health State Life Expectancies.
Healthy workforce		Percentage of total economic inactivity due to long term sickness	34%	2023	↓	Annual Population Survey (2023)
Improving skills across all levels		Proportion of working age people with no qualifications	7.8%	2023	↓	ONS, Annual Population Survey

		Proportion of working age people with RFQ1 qualifications only	3.9%	2023	↑	ONS, Annual Population Survey
		Proportion of working age people with RFQ2 qualifications only	23.1%	2023	↑	ONS, Annual Population Survey
		Proportion of working age people with RFQ3 qualifications only	27.4%	2023	↑	ONS, Annual Population Survey
		Proportion of working age people with RFQ4+ qualifications	34.4%	2023	↑	ONS, Annual Population Survey
Be the UK's Nature Capital, where land and sea deliver biodiversity and productivity gains	Biodiversity and biomass net gain	TBC	TBC	TBC	↑	TBC
	Reduction of CO ₂ emissions across the business base	Total CO ₂ emissions across the business base	375,929.3 (tCO ₂ e)	2022	↓	Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Carbon Emissions.
	Increased size of the green economy	TBC	TBC	TBC	↑	TBC

