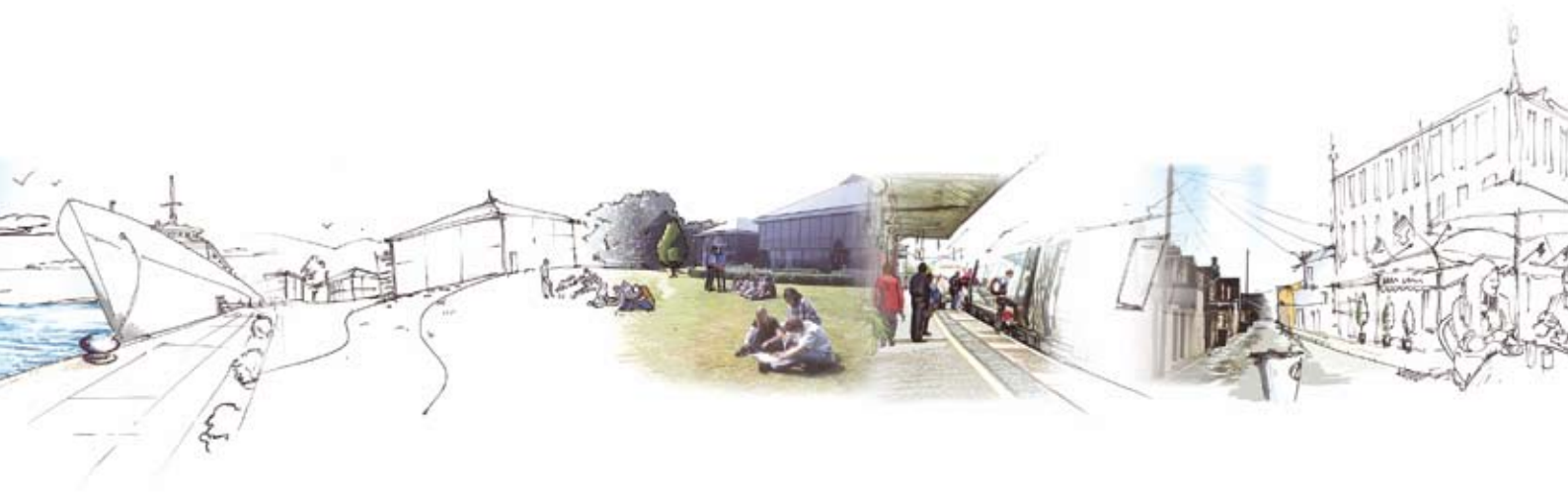


The Cumbria Agreement



A rough guide to the governance framework

**Supporting the achievement of outcomes in the
Cumbria Local Area Agreement**

A Rough Guide to the Cumbria Agreement Governance Framework

The Cumbria Agreement is Cumbria's first Local Area Agreement (LAA).

What is an LAA?

An LAA is a 3 year agreement between Central Government and an area (Cumbria). The agreement sets out the priorities for the local area in the form of outcomes supported by relevant indicators and targets.

What is the Governance Framework?

The Governance Framework is intended to help partners implement the Cumbria Agreement, i.e. achieve the outcomes set out in the agreement. It does this by setting out the roles, accountabilities and responsibilities of those involved, and how performance, risk and finance will be managed.

What is the role of Cumbria County Council?

Cumbria County Council is the Lead Authority and Accountable Body for the Cumbria Agreement. This means that it is responsible for ensuring that robust performance and financial management arrangements are in place. Cumbria County Council is the Accountable Body for the funds pooled within the agreement which means ensuring that the funds are spent within the terms and conditions Government has set out in the Grant Determination.

The funding pooled within the Agreement is made up of existing funding streams. Government does not include extra funding to support the achievement of outcomes. The focus of the Cumbria Agreement is on partners in Cumbria working in a new way, in partnership, to achieve better outcomes for the people of Cumbria and using existing resources more effectively.

The Local Committees of the County Council have a role in championing local priorities and ensuring effective delivery at a local level. The Local Committees will also, in some instances, have delegated authority to carry out the Accountable Body function of the County Council in relation to the Agreement.

What is the role of the Cumbria Strategic Partnership (CSP)?

The CSP Executive will oversee the implementation of the Cumbria Agreement, including performance and the operation of the Governance Framework across the Thematic Partnerships. The Executive will also ensure that Government reporting requirements are met and will meet with Government Office North West (GONW) regularly to discuss progress.

Who will manage the delivery and development of the Cumbria Agreement?

The management of the Agreement is focussed in the Thematic Partnerships of the CSP. The Thematic Partnerships will manage the implementation, delivery and refresh of the Agreement.

Each Thematic Partnership will take ownership of an identified part of the Agreement – a set of outcomes, indicators and targets. They will be assigned accountability for use of resources and responsibility for over/underperformance. They will also make recommendations about the use of pooled funding to Cumbria County Council (as Accountable Body).

The operation of the Thematic Partnerships will be overseen by the CSP Executive.

Who will actually deliver the Cumbria Agreement?

Partner organisations will undertake actions in order to achieve the targets and outcomes set out in the Cumbria Agreement. The outcomes and actions will need to be included in the strategic and operational plans of individual partner organisations.

Organisations may be commissioned to deliver specific work – if this includes use of pooled funds there will be a financial agreement drawn up between the County Council as Accountable Body and the organisation leading the activity. Organisations will also align their own mainstream funding streams to achieving the LAA outcomes where appropriate.

Who will scrutinise the operation of the Agreement?

Local Authority scrutiny members will hold the CSP Executive to account on the progress of the Agreement. One focus will be on challenging Thematic Partnerships on progress towards the 12 ‘stretch’ targets in the Agreement. These are 12 areas where agreement has been reached with Government to ‘stretch’ performance with the opportunity of attracting some ‘reward’ funding into Cumbria if these targets are achieved. Scrutiny Members will also consider how they may add value to the achievement of the other outcomes in the agreement. At the time of writing this guide, it is acknowledged that the role of Scrutiny in regard to the LAA needs strengthening and to this end, County and District Council Officers are currently working on options for effective scrutiny from a thematic and local perspective, as well as strategic and operational delivery perspectives.

What is the role of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)?

LSPs will play a key role in the delivery of the Cumbria Agreement. They provide a focus for locality input into the Thematic Partnerships of the CSP by bringing together a wide range of partners in the locality, including Borough/District Councils, Parish Councils, partners from the private and third sectors. The Thematic Tasks Groups of the LSPs will link to the Thematic Partnerships of the CSP.

What will happen to locality-based funding?

Some funding which has previously been paid by Government directly to the locality is now pooled into the Cumbria Agreement. In 2007/08 where funding is allocated to address deprivation in a particular area, recommendations on how it will be spent will be made by the relevant LSP and/or the relevant Neighbourhood Management Board. Recommendations will be considered by the relevant Cumbria County Council Local Committee, acting as the local arm of the County Council as Accountable Body.

What will happen in cases of under or over performance?

The relevant Thematic Partnership will regularly receive ‘exception’ reports on performance. These reports will highlight instances of under and over performance against targets in the Agreement. The Thematic Partnership will follow a ‘ladder of intervention’ which sets out the steps to be taken. These include close monitoring of the situation to see whether the situation persists, developing and monitoring corrective action plans and making appropriate recommendations to the CSP Executive and the County Council.

The performance reports produced in relation to the Cumbria Agreement will be made available on the CSP website (www.cumbriastrategicpartnership.org.uk).

Summary

A range of outcomes – supported by relevant indicators and targets – have been agreed by partners in Cumbria with Central Government. The Thematic Partnerships of the CSP will agree action plans that set out how partner organisations will achieve the targets. The individual partner organisations will ensure that the actions they are responsible for are included in their own strategies and operational plans and are budgeted for.

Funding may include the organisation’s mainstream funding, a mix of funding streams from a variety of partners or LAA ‘pooled funding’ allocated in respect of particular outcomes and targets. In the case of pooled funding, recommendations on spend will be made, via Thematic Partnerships and the CSP Executive, to the County Council as Accountable Body. In 2007/08 in areas where ‘locality-based’ funding is pooled, recommendations will be made by the LSP and/or the Neighbourhood Management Board to the County Council Local Committee.

Performance, and spend of pooled funding, will be monitored by the relevant Thematic Partnership and corrective actions put in place where performance isn’t as it should be. The CSP Executive will meet regularly with Government Office North West to report on progress.

The relevant Local Committees will contribute to ensuring effective delivery at a local level. Local Authority scrutiny members will also monitor progress and challenge the CSP where necessary.

Detailed practice notes on decision making, performance management and financial management are included as appendices to the full Governance Framework. These documents are available on the CSP website.

For further information about the Governance Framework please contact Duncan McQueen at duncan.mcqueen@cumbriacc.gov.uk or telephone 01228 606293.