

## DRAFT Community Strategy

Cumbria – a county with energy

### **Foreword:**

Stand in the middle of a familiar Cumbrian landscape on a still day and you could be forgiven for thinking you are in a world unchanged by the passage of time. It is possible to feel a unique sense of serenity, space and stillness.

Some of our communities with their traditions, dialects, and warmth may feel as though they are from a gentler age; where life moves with a slower, more natural, rhythm.

But stand atop a Cumbrian mountain and you witness Cumbria coming alive as nature's energy is unleashed. Walk through the centre of our city or towns and see world-class businesses and communities energised and engaged by ambitious, but measured, plans for regeneration. See their vibrancy, emerging as they tackle the stark inequalities between lives in different parts of the county, creating opportunities for young and old alike.

Through history, our communities have been built around industries and commerce favoured by the natural environment: agriculture, shipping, mining, steelmaking, power generation and nuclear energy. This has been both strength and weakness. It's brought opportunity but also created isolation for some. It's meant strong, self-reliant communities, but sometimes made Cumbria seem unnecessarily detached from regional and national agendas.

This is changing fast. Cumbria will be centre stage in addressing one of the biggest challenges facing society. Our workforce has the skills and knowledge to help the world manage the transition from old to new and more renewable sources of energy. The natural energy that shaped our landscape is now a potential source of sustainable power.

Cumbrians are passionate about the places they live and are actively involved in making them better for future generations. Visitors come, not just to view one of the world's most precious landscapes from a distance, but to enjoy an active experience.

To understand Cumbria you have to see and feel the harmony between energy and tranquillity, between cultural tradition and unceasing momentum. This unique balance is our strength and our future.

Cumbria is strongest when the equilibrium is sustained. Without energy, tranquillity and stillness can become inertia, a lack of ambition and a reluctance to change. A conscious respect for our natural serenity helps us achieve our energetic aspirations whilst safeguarding our precious environment.

Through this strategy we want to energise Cumbria in partnership, to inspire and focus our work to make our county an even better place in which to live and grow up, do business and visit.

*Bill Lowther, Chairman, Cumbria Cumbria Strategic Partnership*  
*Tim Stoddard, Leader of Cumbria County Council*

## The Vision:

Our Cumbria will be a place where we work together to...;

## Energise...

- **... safe and strong, cohesive communities:** Children and young people will see bright prospects and diverse opportunities. They will get the best possible start in life and feel they have an important part to play in Cumbria's future.

Our communities are made safer, stronger and more inclusive by helping more people get involved and make a difference to the place they live, confident that everything is being done to further reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behavior:

- **.... Health and well-being throughout life:** We will live healthier lives and enjoy high quality support whatever our health and social care needs. We are committed to involving people more in decisions about their lives and their communities which will reinforce this approach.

Health inequalities across the county will be reduced by targeting neighbourhoods in greatest need. Cumbria will be a great place for people to enjoy active, healthy and fulfilling lives. We will value the contribution that people of all ages make to the social, economic and cultural diversity of the county.

- **... a sustainable and prosperous economy:** A dynamic and diverse Cumbria earns a place in the global economy by capitalising on our world class assets – our landscape and our energy. Our diverse heritage and culture are celebrated to create a vibrant and exciting range of sporting, artistic and cultural attractions for residents and visitors
- **... effective connections between people and places:** The energy and potential of people is unlocked through improved transport connections which help people access jobs and services and link us to the rest of the UK and beyond. As well as these physical links, connections between organisations and communities in Cumbria will promote excellence by learning from what works best.
- **... world class environmental quality:** We have a passionate enthusiasm for celebrating, conserving and enhancing our inspiring world class natural environment, culture and heritage. We will lead international thinking on sustainable energy, lifestyles and communities.. Energetic communities are helped to flourish by providing decent, high quality and affordable homes for everyone in the places where people want to live and work, and through a public realm which matches the quality of our landscape

## Why write another strategy?

Cumbria is not short of strategies or partnerships, so why have we written another? Highly capable organisations are individually leading development and implementation of a comprehensive set of visionary economic, environmental and social policies. At a local level, communities across the county are separately planning for their futures, integrating their thinking on all aspects of well-being, and seeking commitment from key organisations with responsibility for delivery.

### **... To effectively tackle complex issues**

Each of the most challenging issues we face, set out in this vision, are highly complex in their underlying causes. They require equal sophistication in designing successful solutions.

All the priorities outlined in this strategy need action which cuts across organisational boundaries.

The unique value and demand for this strategy is therefore to ensure that Cumbria is able to achieve much more by working together than can be secured through the each partner acting in isolation.

### **... To strengthen understanding of our potential**

This strategy also seeks to constructively challenge regional, national and, sometimes our own, perceptions of Cumbria – what it is ‘for’ and where it is going. These perceptions are largely positive, accurate and supportive of our vision for the future but can sometimes underestimate, and therefore constrain, the county’s pace, innovation and appetite for change.

For example, Cumbria is rightly perceived as having a world class natural environment with designated landscapes inspiring generations of artists and writers. But this look back is just part of the picture.

Cumbria is looking ahead, striving to be a place which offers opportunity and choice for its citizens of the future.

Cumbria is well recognised as an international centre for research and development in nuclear and energy technologies and has been at the forefront of successive waves of industrial revolution.

But alongside that relatively familiar story are increasingly diverse strands of activity which are bringing more strength and resilience to our economy. For example, in distribution and logistics, in food based manufacturing, the cultural and creative industries, the personal care sector and tourism related businesses, Cumbria is capitalising on the energy, innovation and expertise of its people.

### **... To deliver real added value**

This sustainable community strategy therefore has a unique and vital role to play. Rather than duplicating, and thus possibly undermining the excellent work focused on prosperity, health inequalities, children and young people etc., it focuses on how these issues are dependent on each other.

Instead of repeating, and therefore confusing, the intensively local consultation and engagement in community or area based strategies, it explores what needs to happen at a Cumbria-wide level to unlock the potential from our diverse communities and citizens. Critically it provides a means of focusing energy and attention on issues, on places and on achievement of outcomes that can have maximum impact and return on investment.

### **... To give focus and leadership for action**

It is a deliberately and yet realistically aspirational strategy. It provides part of the context for selection and review of specific outcome priorities negotiated annually through the Cumbria (Local Area) Agreement. These will focus on tackling inequalities, narrowing the gaps within Cumbria, and between the county and the best performing parts of the UK.

But as well as providing a framework for action to put things right, it sets out a vision for where Cumbria wants to be in 20 years by identifying and seeking to build upon the county’s strengths

## The Cumbria context

Almost all of the issues facing Cumbria over the next 30 years are common to the UK as a whole. Climate change and the impact of action to mitigate its effects, changing demographics creating older, more single-person and more culturally diverse households, increasing expectations for personalisation and quality of public services are just some of the specific priority issues we will all face together.

Perhaps our biggest single challenge is the number of young people leaving the county to find opportunities – employment and lifestyle – which they don't yet see offered in Cumbria. Reversing this trend is important for the future of our communities and county.

### Key issues for Cumbria

Some of these factors though will impact much more dramatically, acutely or quickly on life in Cumbria than elsewhere. An increasingly ageing population balance, the restructuring of the economics of agriculture and land-management, changing demands and expectations from tourism and the future for UK energy policy, will have particularly strong resonance here, because of our current context, and based on predictable future trends.

On many of these issues Cumbria is potentially in the vanguard of national thinking, and has a chance to capitalise by spearheading innovation.

### Distinctive solutions for Cumbria

Other dimensions of these issues – like provision of effective and efficient public services and the need for our economy to respond to globalisation will need particularly distinctive Cumbrian solutions, reflecting our settlement pattern, geography and history.

We have the chance to carve out unique solutions, drawing strength from our understanding of place rather than having to accept off the shelf national blueprints or models.

### Narrowing gaps, tackling inequalities

In some cases though, broadly average county-wide performance on a range of quality of life indicators obscures sharply localised inequalities for specific communities and neighbourhoods. Issues like worklessness, crime and disorder, health and educational attainment and participation in higher education show stark inequalities across and within the county.

The priority which needs to be given to tackling these inequalities is highlighted throughout the strategy and will be addressed through a particular focus on narrowing the gaps within the LAA.

This section sets out key aspects of this context for Cumbria against each element of our vision. At the heart of this approach is a belief Cumbria can transform its approach to governance and dramatically improve quality of life for all. To do this the county needs to work more strategically, with a better understanding of links between issues and areas.

## ***Energising... safe and strong, cohesive communities***

Cumbria in the future will be a place young people want to stay, come back or relocate to. A diverse age profile for the county is key to our future. Young people growing up in the county must feel it is a welcoming place with opportunities to tap their energy and commitment.

Young people living and working in Cumbria can expect to grow up in a County which is increasingly attuned to their needs and expectations. Inequalities in educational attainment will be addressed. Nationally innovative collaboration between the new University of Cumbria, the Further Education Colleges, schools, business and the voluntary sector, will help re-skill and up-skill the county's workforce. It will also encourage local businesses to work with it, provide relevant education and training and undertake research in fields of benefit to Cumbria and beyond. By these means the University will help stimulate economic regeneration across the sub-region through the creation of learning opportunities that meet current needs and also, by helping to grow future economic opportunities.

The early 21<sup>st</sup> Century is radically challenging assumptions which equate youth and growing up with urban culture. Information technology is increasingly making social networks virtual, 'Facebook' knows no geographical boundaries. 'MySpace' can be anywhere. Cumbria can and will benefit immeasurably from these social changes. Children growing up in Millom or Alston, Maryport or Kendal need now be no more socially or culturally isolated than their peers in Manchester or Merseyside.

People here are passionate about the strength of their communities, evidenced by high levels of volunteering, self-help and community activism. Cumbria bucks the national trend of individuals withdrawing from civic society. It has the potential to

further build on this strength and nurture those who contribute directly and personally to their communities. Fostering and investing in active, engaging, self-help promoting communities will underpin achievement of the entire strategy for Cumbria.

This will support strong and cohesive communities, deriving resilience from their increasing diversity as Cumbria welcomes increasing numbers of people from across the European Union to meet the needs of key sectors of our economy, particularly in tourism and agriculture. We want Cumbria to be an open welcoming place where people from all backgrounds get on well together.

Cumbria is a safe county. However, there are community concerns over the fear of crime which need to be addressed. Cumbria cannot be complacent about crime in general and every community and neighbourhood needs to prevent violent crime, disorder and substance misuse becoming the challenges faced by other places. This in turn will support greater cohesion and confidence within Cumbria.

Set against this positive, creative vision for Cumbrian society, are very real concerns about the quality, accessibility and performance of local services. Across a range of sectors, pressure for efficiency and modernisation have led to fears about centralisation and consequentially reduced access for local, particularly rural, communities. Our vision though is that Cumbria's citizens of the future will be better informed than ever, wanting and receiving choice and individualisation in the services they need.

Their expectations will be for services tailored around their needs, not those of a remote delivery organisation. They will expect organisations to share and manage data, enabling them to 'say it once', 'do it many times', having an interaction with intelligent public services as a whole, rather than having to deal separately and repeatedly with individual services in isolation.

To achieve this vision, public services in Cumbria will pool capacity to increase quality.

They will use the push for more efficiency and value for money to integrate policy and strategy, develop common back office support, and base their services in single locations within communities. This will get most value from limited resources. It will, together with use of information technology, improve access to high quality services across Cumbria.

A commitment to a shared approach to consultation and engagement with communities will enable citizens to benefit from one-stop access to services from all organisations. This will simultaneously improve efficiency and effectiveness. It will also reconnect public servants with communities, making them directly accountable to the local population instead of remote administrations.

### ***Energising... health and well-being throughout life***

Our population has an increasingly ageing profile – markedly ahead of national trends. We want to use this to give valuable insight on issues which will soon have national and international resonance. By leading work to support older people to stay fit, remain active and engaged in society, people growing older in Cumbria will benefit from investment in increasing independence.

This investment will be returned through the massive contribution older people will make to cohesive and strong Cumbrian civic society through their spending power, enthusiasm for volunteering and community activism. They will bring their experiences to bear on issues and challenges in their neighbourhoods.

While life expectancy in Cumbria is higher than the national average, there are stark differences between the health of people living in different parts of the county, with those in some places dying an average of 13 years earlier than the county average. Similar unacceptable variation occurs across indices like poor diet, smoking and alcohol abuse, with under performance

closely correlated with other indices of deprivation.

Cumbria is committed to becoming a health promoting county, using the vibrancy of its communities, its considerable natural resources, easy access to sport and recreation and outstanding quality of life to deliver benefits for long term health and wellbeing. Whilst current performance shows relatively high levels of people experiencing long-term limiting illness or rating their health as 'not good', we believe this picture can be turned around through action across all elements of this strategy.

Ensuring stronger and more vibrant communities will improve mental well being, self confidence and increase the influence people have on their lives and surroundings – a major contributor to health and well-being. Building a stronger and more resilient economy will increase material wellbeing another key determinant. Tackling action in the round will make Cumbria a health promoting setting for all.

### ***Energising... a sustainable and prosperous economy***

Cumbria's economy will be transformed in the next thirty years. Knowledge based and creative industries which derive strength and resilience from our outstanding quality of life are turning around historic underperformance. Longstanding strengths in the energy, manufacturing and tourism sectors are being refreshed. The importance of farming and land management to the County's economy has sometimes been marginalised or ignored, but has to be central to our future vision, particularly given its role in creating and sustaining the high quality environment enjoyed by residents and tourists alike.

Unlike most of England there is almost no potential for investment in city regions to impact on or directly benefit Cumbria. Instead, as a strong, inter-dependent county region, Cumbria's future prosperity will come from investment and growth within the county, building on its intrinsic strengths. The collective potential resource from Cumbria's

diverse communities is a massive and potentially tremendously creative force for good. We will find ways to harness this diversity better and more consistently.

Cumbria enjoys substantial potential competitive advantage through the quality of its environment, its globally recognised 'Lakeland' brand, the clustering of high technology energy related businesses on the west coast and its focal position on major north-south routes from the North West into Scotland and the North East.

This advantage can best be realised through this strategy by ensuring the actions of all key organisations recognise and maximise their impact on prosperity, including creation of a public realm which matches the natural environment for quality, and public services – particularly health and education – which compare favourably with national best practice

## ***Energising connections between people and places***

Cumbria is often perceived as remote and distant from the major city regions – Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow and Edinburgh. These cities are nationally considered to be economic powerhouses for increased prosperity and cultural centres for vibrant urban lifestyles. Yet perversely this isolation, coupled with the sparsity of much of its settlement pattern, means that Cumbria's communities have a proudly independent spirit – a vibrancy of a very different, distinctive kind. It has also helped make Cumbria an influential meeting place, a border county able to draw strength from alliances and connections with other regions and nations.

Our vision is of a county which is effectively plugged into the mainline of communications, but whose tranquillity isn't diminished by strengthening improved, efficient and fit for purpose physical connections to major markets. We want to build a county where connections within

Cumbria help reduce inequality. It will be a County where information and learning on excellence flows effectively from place to place and from organisation to organisation, breaking down barriers without our distinctive and fiercely independent communities succumbing to the blandness which blights many town and city centres elsewhere in the UK.

The challenge for this strategy is to find ways of drawing strength from, and improving the connections between these diverse experiences of life from communities across Cumbria. It will focus our energy on narrowing these gaps – raising performance of the weakest to that of the strongest, capitalising more successfully on where Cumbria is strong.

## ***Energising world-class environmental quality***

Cumbria's environmental quality, diversity (including biodiversity) and resource is genuinely world-class, and yet sometimes an innate modesty and reserve results in a reluctance for Cumbrians to talk up this aspect of our county and to play to our unrivalled strengths. Two actual or potential world heritage sites, two National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Beauty, and a Heritage Coast have a fundamental impact on daily life in Cumbria and, alongside our vibrant communities, provide the resource which energises our vision for the future.

On the other hand, a chocolate box perception of Lakeland or Fellside Cumbria's rural communities can distort our understanding that for many people, a combination of physical isolation, poor access to essential services and lack of social networks blight quality of life. Beautiful scenery is no compensation for lack of opportunity.

A key element of such communities must be provision of affordable, decent standard housing which enables young people to stay in the county, and which is flexible enough to support people's needs for independence throughout their whole life.

Managing, sustaining and, where possible, enhancing Cumbria's unrivalled natural beauty and resource is also central to the achievement of much of this strategy.

A higher quality public realm which matches the standard of our landscape is one key to increased visitor returns and improved business performance.

In the context of intense global concerns about climate change, energy consumption and the management of waste, Cumbria aims to be a beacon for best practice on sustainable rural communities. It will be a lower carbon County with access to services which reduces the need for travel, and more energy efficient buildings.

Communities will be supported to play their part. Through easy and direct access to renewable energy sources, enthusiasm for community based recycling and waste reduction projects and commitment to taking care of communities for the benefit of all, Cumbria is well placed to lead national thinking in this area.

By offering sustainable tourism opportunities, encouraging home-based and micro business start ups, community transport provision, Fairtrade and local produce schemes, Cumbria will demonstrate excellence in creating and supporting sustainable communities.

## **Safe and strong, cohesive communities**

### **Vision**

Children and young people will see bright prospects and diverse opportunities. They will get the best possible start in life and feel they have an important part to play in Cumbria's future.

Our communities are made safer, stronger and more inclusive by helping more people get involved and make a difference to the place they live, confident that everything is being done to further reduce crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

### **Outcomes:**

- People find it easy to influence and shape services to ensure they are responsive to their needs including through volunteering and community based provision.
- People representing all parts of their community are involved and enthusiastically engaged in making decisions that affect them
- People from all cultures, backgrounds, ages, genders and abilities will feel part of their communities, better reflected in the make up of the County's community and organisational leaders, value and respect each other
- Children and young people in particular will be safe, healthy and empowered to get involved in their communities, motivating them to achieve, supporting them to promote this progressive vision for Cumbria
- Excellent life-long education and training provision in Cumbria will inspire young people, support the economic needs of the county now and in the future, growing its prosperity and sustaining diverse, healthy communities
- A thriving and vibrant Third sector will contribute to community life and be valued and respected as an equal partner by public and private sectors
- Basic services, essential to keeping communities alive will be supported
- People will feel Cumbria is a safe place with fewer crimes committed
- People will be using alcohol more responsibly and less harm will be caused by illegal drugs
- No-one is prepared to accept domestic violence
- Reduced levels of disorder and antisocial behaviour
- Fewer people will be killed and seriously injured on Cumbria's roads. In particular, young drivers in Cumbria will be encouraged and supported to drive safely
- Fewer fire related deaths and serious injuries

## Health and well-being throughout life

### **Vision:**

We will live healthier lives and enjoy high quality support whatever our health and social care needs.

We are committed to involving people more in decisions in their lives and their communities which will reinforce this approach. Health inequalities across the county will be reduced by targeting neighbourhoods in greatest need.

Cumbria will be a great place for people to enjoy active, healthy and fulfilling lives. We will value the contribution that people of all ages make to the social, economic and cultural diversity of the county

### **Outcomes:**

- People enjoy long, healthy, active, fulfilling and rewarding lives. Cumbria will be a pathfinder for national work on responding positively to the UK's aging population profile.
- People's well being will be improved by social inclusion and involvement with their families, neighbours and local communities
- Young people growing up in Cumbria will be supported to make the best possible start to their lives, using informed decisions which maximise health benefits throughout their lives
- The contribution older people make to the community will be recognised and cherished
- Older people will have access to the full range of leisure, learning, cultural, employment and social activities that help maintain healthy and active lifestyles
- Older people will live as independently as possible in their own homes or in a place they choose to call home, where necessary receiving personalised and responsive services that promote independence and give them maximum control over their lives
- Health and social care services will be of highest quality and responsive to personalised needs
- Later life will be a fulfilling and rewarding experience in Cumbria

## **A sustainable and prosperous economy**

### **Vision**

A dynamic and diverse Cumbria earns a place in the global economy by capitalising on our world class assets – our landscape and our energy. Our diverse heritage and culture are celebrated to create a vibrant and exciting range of sporting, artistic and cultural attractions for residents and visitors

### **Outcomes:**

- Cumbria will be the fastest growing economy in England without undermining its unique environmental assets
- A workforce which is fit for the future, acquiring and able to continuously update its skills to meet current and future business needs
- Young people growing up in Cumbria can expect to have their high aspirations met for rewarding employment which uses their skills and enthusiasm and rewards them with nationally competitive wages and career development
- High quality employment opportunities with competitive wage levels and chances for personal and professional development for local people
- Deliver jobs, skills and training, housing and vibrant communities which enable and enthuse a generation of young people to stay in, come back and relocate to Cumbria
- Local producers, particularly of food and suppliers of services will be supported as far as possible within procurement law by Cumbria plc to compete favourably for business
- Balanced supply of housing which meets the needs for sustainable business growth and supports families and young people growing up to live locally
- Maximise the number of people enabled to work and contribute to society through targeted action on skills, accessibility of employment, self-confidence and belief, addressing worklessness in urban areas and underemployment in rural areas
- Physical and communication infrastructure which meets future business needs and Cumbria's external perception gateway

## **Effective Connections between people and places**

### **Vision**

The energy and potential of our people is realised through transport connections which help people access jobs and services and link us to the rest of the UK and beyond. As well as these physical links, connections between organisations and communities in Cumbria promote excellence by learning from what works best

### **Outcomes**

- Cumbria becomes a county which is enthused and enriched by a passion to share and learn from excellence – within and beyond its boundaries
- Cumbria's public services are committed to working together to maximise their quality, efficiency and impact on quality of life for all
- All partners are committed to fighting together for the county's interests regionally, nationally and beyond, recognising the importance of clarity, and consensus to maximise leverage, being proud of Cumbria, as well as places within the County
- Cumbria is well connected internally, to the rest of the UK and beyond through effective physical and ICT based infrastructure, successful and respected influence and through an enthusiasm for openness and the sharing of ideas
- Cumbria will enjoy strong and productive relationships with neighbouring parts of Scotland and the North East, as well as the North West of England, recognising economic and service interdependence for parts of the county
- The environmental impact from the way we travel is minimised with Cumbria recognised as a beacon for innovation in provision of co-located and on-line local public services reducing the need to travel and through community and public transport which is responsive to demand
- Cumbria's roads are as safe to use as possible, through design, adaptation and responsible, informed driver behaviour

## **World class environmental quality**

### **Vision**

We have a passionate enthusiasm for celebrating, conserving and enhancing our inspiring world class natural environment, culture and heritage. We will lead international thinking on sustainable energy, lifestyles and communities. Energetic communities are helped to flourish by providing decent, high quality and affordable homes for everyone in the places where people want to live and work and through a public realm which matches the quality of our landscape

### **Outcomes**

- Cumbria will lead national efforts to tackling climate change in the context of its particular transport and service provision challenges, tapping into the energy and creativity of its communities
- The environment in which people live, work and visit will be well planned, of high quality design, resource efficient and the history, heritage and distinctiveness of each place will be valued
- Landscape and environmental quality and character will be sustained and enhanced, matching the quality of the natural environment through development control and land management choices
- Biodiversity will be protected and enhanced. People will appreciate biodiversity as an asset and recognise its value for people, wildlife and the economy
- Public service organisations will work to reduce their carbon footprint through informed procurement decisions, sustainable travel plans and promotion of recycling
- Cumbria will become a vibrant, dynamic magnet for creative businesses, enabling them to thrive and contribute to sustainable economic success and quality of life
- Visitors will respect the areas they visit, recognising the diversity that Cumbria offers and be supported to make their visits as sustainable as possible
- Cumbria will be recognised as a landmark global cultural destination, celebrating its heritage, creativity, people and landscape
- Individual lives will be enriched, communities strengthened and improved through access to culture and sport as key drivers for investment and prosperity
- The diversity of Cumbria's cultural life is recognised, supported and meet the needs of the community