

## **LEP STRATEGY UPDATE**

### **1. ISSUE**

1.1 Updating the LEP Scrutiny Board on Cumbria LEP's (CLEP's) strategy work.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the LEP Scrutiny Board:

a) note this report; and

b) provide comment on the Apprenticeship Strategy, which is provided at Annex A.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 LEPs are assessed by Government against three main themes – governance, strategy and delivery. This report is focused on the strategy theme and provides an update on the LEP's current strategic priorities.

3.2 Work continues on implementing the strategy documents that the LEP Scrutiny Panel has previously considered including the Clean Energy Strategy, Business Decarbonisation 10 Point Plan, Sector Plans and Restart, Reboot, Rethink. However, the Scrutiny Board has previously expressed particular interest in the work that the LEP is doing to address Cumbria's acute labour and skills challenges and as such this report majors on this and provides a copy of the draft Apprenticeship Strategy, for comment.

#### **Apprenticeship Strategy**

3.3 Members of CLEP's People, Employment and Skills Strategy Group (PESSG) recognised the need to develop an Apprenticeship Strategy for Cumbria to provide clarity and direction as to what Cumbria wanted to achieve in relation to these. The rationale for this was to ensure that activity undertaken was complementary and that partners were not looking to progress activities that were mutually exclusive.

3.4 The production of this strategy was therefore included in the Labour Supply Action Plan recognising the importance of this in developing our future workforce. This is because apprenticeships play a significant role in all areas, but particularly in Cumbria, which has historically had one of the highest participation rates in the country, reflecting our economic structure.

3.5 Production of the strategy was delayed whilst awaiting the DfE apprentice data for 2021/2022, as this was necessary to provide a more realistic assessment of demand, following the pandemic.

3.6 The draft Apprenticeship Strategy has now been prepared and is provided at Annex A. This will be considered by the People, Employment and Skills Strategy Group at its meeting on 17 February 2023, prior to a stakeholder consultation event on 13 March 2023. The final draft will then be presented to the Board at its meeting on 31 March 2023.

**3.7 *The LEP Scrutiny Board is invited to review the Strategy and provide comment on this.***

### **Labour Supply Action Plan**

3.8 The People, Employment and Skills Strategy Group agreed a Labour Supply Action Plan in February 2022 with the following 10 themes forming the basis of the Plan:

1. Growing the Labour Pool
2. Retain Our Future Talent
3. Affordable and Available Housing Supply
4. Improve Transport Connectivity
5. Address Systemic Issues
6. Great Place to Work
7. Upskilling and Reskilling the Workforce
8. Address the Productivity 'Opportunity'
9. Develop an Apprenticeship Strategy
10. Promote Cumbria's skills and learning offer

3.9 Work continues on the implementation of the Plan, with the focus of recent activity being:

- **Refugees** – the formation of a specific Working Group to address the barriers to employment for refugees with a focus on streamlining the process and addressing barriers to employment.
- **Data Analysis** – securing a better understanding of those, who have exited the labour market with a view to encouraging them back into employment. The initial findings from this work was presented to the Labour Supply Working Group.
- **Housing Supply** – developing an Action Plan and implementing a Working Group to refine and prioritise this.

- **Skills Bootcamp** – securing new organisations to support the delivery of this programme, which is designed to meet the needs of the economy and businesses and identifying the priority needs for delivery in 2023/24.
- **Productivity** – progressing the Innovating for Success programme, which is designed to foster innovation as a mechanism to address productivity and reduce labour demand.
- **Our Future/Your Future Campaigns** – refining the updated campaigns to ensure that these will have the necessary reach and deliver the priorities of attracting and retaining talent.

3.10 There was a very productive first meeting of the Refugee Employability Working Group. The key actions that are now being taken forward from this are:

- **Employer Understanding** – CLEP to undertake activity to educate employers as to what they can and can't do on employing refugees.
- **Promotional Campaign** – CLEP to develop 'reference sell' with businesses, which had successfully employed refugees.
- **Our Future/Your Future Campaigns** – CLEP to integrate refugees into these campaigns to demonstrate integration.
- **Data/Intelligence** – CCC to continue the work on developing the evidence base, bringing CLEP in, as required.
- **Incubator/Escalators** – all members to provide suggestions on placements that would increase the employability of refugees.
- **United for Ukraine** – CLEP to work with Greater Manchester Growth Company to explore the experience and outcomes from using the site and how it might be further developed.
- **Letter to Top 10 employers** – CLEP to write to the largest businesses to invite them to 'lead by example' on refugee employment.

3.11 On the Housing Supply work, Lichfield's has produced a draft Strategy document for CLEP, which will be shared with the Leaders, Portfolio Holders and lead officers of the new authorities, outlining the key issues in relation to 'right product, right place, right price.'

3.12 The vision for CLEP's document is *"To stimulate and sustain economic opportunity across all of Cumbria by facilitating the delivery of more high quality homes that are attractive and affordable to younger households in places they want to live. This will boost the local labour force into the longer term and ensure Cumbria's economy remains sustainable and vibrant by providing the right housing product, in the right place, at the right price."* In order to deliver the vision the strategy has five objectives:

- Increasing Housing Supply
- Making the Housing Offer More Attractive and Affordable to Younger Residents
- Managing the Impact of Second Homes
- Housing Seasonal and Temporary Workers
- Facilitate and Support the Reorganisation of the Local Government

3.13 CLEP is clearly not a statutory housing authority and as such is focused on how it can support Local Authority colleagues to deliver their statutory functions. The document therefore identifies a series of actions that CLEP can deliver or support the delivery of, to help the new authorities deliver on their statutory responsibilities. ***A copy of the draft Housing Strategy document is available, on request.***

### **Implementing the Rethink Themes**

3.14 Members are aware that CLEP identified six rethink themes on which Cumbria had a competitive advantage and which went with the grain of policy and investment. These are:

- **Clean Energy Production** – a world-recognised heritage and expertise which provides the platform for significant future investment in energy generation.
- **Diversify to Thrive** – building on the pivoting that has taken place and moving it to the next level in terms of localisation of supply chains, movement into new markets and extending inward investment.
- **The New Visitor Experience** – capturing the changes in sustainable visitor behaviour by offering a world class experience to a wide range of markets.
- **The Future of Food** – identifying opportunities to respond to new and changing opportunities building on Cumbria's existing meat and dairy

excellence.

- **Cumbria, The UK's Natural Capital** – promoting and exploiting the benefits created by having the most protected landscape in England.
- **The Way We Live, The Way We Work Now** - benefitting from the rethink that people are making about their lives and the way that they will live and work in the future.

3.15 Over the past six-month period work on all themes has continued with significant activity on Clean Energy generation, increasingly considering hydrogen opportunities. Alongside the focus on this the LEP has prioritised two themes for concentrated activity – the Future of Food and Natural Capital. A short update on each of these is therefore provided.

### ***Future of Food***

3.16 CLEP has appointed MetroDynamics to support it in developing the Future of Food workstream. This has resulted in the consideration of five trends - changing diets, climate change and the push for net zero, technological development, new trading relationships, and government funding and planning. A common theme across all five of these is **food security**. In each case there are issues that may impact food security, where Cumbria had the ability to respond.

3.17 MetroDynamics is currently assessing the following eleven developments to identify those that are most relevant to Cumbria:

- Using land for food production and environment good: developing options to pilot mixed land-use in suitable areas for pastoral/forestry and harvesting renewable energy.
- Reducing emissions in food production: for example through methane-reducing feedstock.
- Developing Cumbria's high-quality, distinctive market, potentially through cooperatives and/or increasing premium and organic offer, to capture and market the value of what Cumbria does best.
- Utilising livestock breeding technologies to accelerate desirable traits.
- Internet of things - wearable and monitoring devices for livestock to support farmers in managing and maintaining the health of livestock.
- Vertical Farming to diversify the Cumbrian food market without requiring traditional arable land.
- Genetic modification of breeds or animal feed to improve yields.
- Developing shared bids to trial new technologies, potentially through underwritten pilots.

- Targeted export promotion to take capitalise on lower tariffs for specific exported products.
- Establishing networks to share best practice, lobbying government to incentivise food production, influencing the farming policy agenda.
- Capitalising on benefits from local government reorganisation, influencing spatial planning to improve the use of land.

3.18 To decide on the ideas with the most potential for impact, and the most grounded case for development, a framework has been produced, with each strand being assessed against this. The results of this work will be presented to the Rural Sector Panel when it meets on 3 March 2023.

### ***Natural Capital***

3.19 Lord Inglewood has hosted two roundtable sessions with major landowners to explore how Cumbria's exceptional natural capital could be better commercialised for the benefit of the economy, businesses and citizens.

3.20 Stephen Nicol has been working with the Executive to develop a proposal for taking this work forward, in particular exploring whether the LEP could provide a matching function to link investable propositions with businesses looking for offsetting opportunities. The LEP Chair has agreed that funding should be provided to pump-prime this work. An update on the developing proposal is due to be presented to the CLEP Board at its March meeting.

3.21 ***The LEP Scrutiny Board is invited to note this report and raise any issues relating to this or any other strategic priorities being delivered by the LEP.***