

Appendix A

Comments on Cumbria Vision's Strategic Plan

Introduction:

- Remove reference to nuclear waste handling as Cumbria speciality but retain nuclear power.
- Refer to emerging West Cumbria Strategic Forum Masterplan alongside other strategies in the forward.

Executive Summary

- The 7 sectors identified should be supplemented by public sector service activities (one of the 3 current dominant sectors in Cumbria but not currently included in the targets) and internet-based business activities in any sector (future growth potential).
- We note you have identified 3 areas that need special attention, including West Cumbria and Furness. As Cumbria Vision are proposing to adopt an evidenced based approach and later in the strategy identify 'West Cumbria' as the only sub region in the UK experiencing an absolute decline, the latter should be given first priority and the remaining 3 areas second priority. It also be noted that GVA figures being used are out of date. Trends would indicate that the divergence between West Cumbria and the rest of the county would further increase. Add onto this the effect of decommissioning and West Cumbria must surely be singled out as the single top priority.
- Second paragraph, page 6, refers to the impact on decommissioning and the need to ensure projects are judged against their ability to replace lost GVA. They should also be judged on their ability to provide jobs for those people losing employment at Sellafield.
- Fourth paragraph on page 9 should note Copeland has the highest level of long-term unemployment.

Short Term Objectives:

1. should be altered to read "provide leadership on economic issues at a Cumbria wide level" as this allows for more local leadership on appropriate issues.

Strategic Fit Policy Context:

Page 21. References need to be made to, not only community strategies, but also local authority's economic development strategies.

Key Sectoral Priorities:

Whilst supporting the sectors identified some key opportunities are missing:

- a. The public sector, currently one of Cumbria's big 3 employers.
- b. Web-based business activity in all sectors will measure growth potential and sustainability in remote locations like Cumbria.
- c. The definitions of Knowledge and Education Priorities seem to miss some major opportunities, including high-level research and development activities in any sector such as testing laboratories. Educational facilities as business activities and not just providers of

local skills. There is a large sector of the economy around education. A University in West Cumbria meeting national or international needs in a number of specialisms would be a major economic driver and is needed.

Key Geographic Priorities:

Major opportunities in Copeland should be referred to on page 29 (second bullet point) as well as those in Allerdale, including further development at Westlakes, Whitehaven Coastal strip, Kangol site in Cleator.

General:

There is no reference to the urgent and fundamental need to diversify West Cumbria. The strategy needs to make it clear that urgent diversification of West Cumbria is a top priority. If it does not it fails to be an effective document for prioritising actions.

Working in Partnership:

Page 33. We would like to review with you alternative company structures for WLR. The current proposal that there is only one member of the Company (Cumbria Vision) effectively means Cumbria Vision will control appointment of all Directors. Local West Cumbria and Furness partnership is not enshrined in the arrangements.

Marketing:

We are concerned about the stated objectives of Cumbria Inward Investment Agency, which includes marketing the activities of Cumbria Vision. This potentially diverts much needed inward investment resource into other activities. CIIA should remain focussed on inward investment.

Delivery Arrangements:

We welcome the statement that West Lakes Renaissance funding will be ring-fenced. Having offices in Carlisle, Penrith and Kendal and not in Copeland does not show commitment to Copeland which should be Cumbria Vision's top priority if following an evidenced based approach.

West Lakes Renaissance:

We note reference to the 'Life Time' value of WLR programme. This level of funding is insufficient for the task and represents a reduction on original intentions. We believe that the level of funding and the life of West Lakes Renaissance need to be reconsidered. This is reflected by the low level of outputs set out on page 47 which will not deliver against expected needs.

We are also concerned about lack of clarity of dedicated staffing for West Lakes Renaissance in the future. Current dedicated staffing is inadequate and needs to be enhanced. The focus must be retained on delivering the WLR Business Plan.

It is noted the NWDA retain the right of veto over the West Lakes Renaissance business plan. We can see no reason for this if it is operating under the overall Cumbria Vision strategy.

Partnership Involvement:

Reference was made to working with local authority regeneration team, which collectively provide the largest pool of economic resource in the county. It is important that there is a structured process for liaising with Cumbria Vision. This does not currently exist and no arrangements are set out in the documents. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.