

ANNEX

Regional Economic Strategy Proposed Response

1. The Regional Economic Strategy needs to provide an effective framework to guide the rapid transformation of the West Cumbrian economy.

Government and its partners on the West Cumbria Strategic Forum have agreed that public sector policies should be West Cumbria proofed. It would seem to me that this is a process yet to be applied to the draft Regional Economic Strategy. West Cumbria partners would be happy to work with NWDA staff and take the draft through a full West Cumbria proofing exercise.

2. We note that the key thrust of the approach is to build on the concept of City Regions (Liverpool/Manchester/Central Lancashire) being drivers of the economy and having development priority on the basis that there will be 'trickle down' to the rest of the region. I can accept this concept for large parts of the North West and to some extent for parts of Cumbria. However, it is hard to envisage these successful drivers have any significant impact on the economy of West Cumbria. On page 5 reference is made to Cumbria's "particular challenges" but these are not elaborated on. The following sentence alludes to the contribution the rural economy makes to the North West region. As West Cumbria is later referred to as urban, we assume the reference is, therefore, about rural Cumbria rather than the challenge of nuclear decommissioning in West Cumbria. The issues in West Cumbria are not made clear anywhere in the document nor are they followed through the sections with appropriate references, projects and transformational schemes as the City Regions are.
3. It is clear the West Cumbria situation is a special case. The NWDA and Government have accepted this in entering into the commitments through the West Cumbria Strategic Forum and the Memorandum of Agreement. The latter confirms the intentions of Central Government, The NWDA, the NDA and the local authorities to work together to achieve the agreed objective in relation to management of the socioeconomic transition. However, this is not reflected in the strategy.
4. The Regional Strategy needs to clearly support the above commitments but also the transformation projects that are being agreed through the national West Cumbria Strategic Forum and the regional level commitments that alongside these. In the current draft this does not seem to be the case. We would ask that West Cumbrian decommissioning issues and the commitments referred to above are highlighted on page 06 in the European, National or Regional Policy context, alongside the Northern Way Growth Strategy. The latter is highlighted apparently because it has the support of RDAs and Government, as does the approach to transformation in West Cumbria. Clear commitment to projects for West Cumbria should then follow under each theme where there are few references at present. Given West Cumbria's need for urgent transformation we would expect to see transformational projects for West Cumbria in the 'transformational actions' sections.

COMMENTS ON THEMES

5. Under Business Activities section 1, reference should be made to development the critical mass of knowledge around Higher Education, restoration nuclear research and development, national laboratory and related medical applications to assist in the transformation of West Cumbria. They could sit next to the similar statement for Liverpool, Manchester, Preston etc.
6. Under the same section a specific reference could be made to the importance of creating an area of excellence in West Cumbria in relation to ICT development linked to encouragement of ICT Broadband usage and web based business highly suited to meet the needs of the perfectly located West Cumbria.

7. Under Section 3 (Business) reference could be made to attracting entrepreneurs back to live in West Cumbria (in a similar way to the second last item under Section 2 but more nationally focussed than internationally).
8. Include under Business Transformational Activities reference to the development of the existing mass of knowledge activities mentioned above.
9. We welcome the reference to tackling the low skills and attainment issue in West Cumbria – Skills and Employment (2). However, we need to be developing a skill base not just to meet the needs of the nuclear sector and decommissioning but also to support the rapid diversification that is needed in West Cumbria over the next ten years. This needs to be clear in this section.
10. The Skills and Employment Transformation Activities Section should include reference to the need to re-skill the West Cumbrian workforce to support rapid transformation and diversification into new sectors. In relation to nuclear skills referring to the Nuclear Academy and Nucleus should be made.
11. Under Regeneration, Context for the North West, West Cumbria should be mentioned. This should include reference to few economic drivers and to the decommissioning of Copeland's only economic driver and our remoteness from major areas of growth. The commitment to transform West Cumbria and the Memorandum of Agreement should be mentioned here. Under North West Key Facts the projected employment impacts for Copeland and West Cumbria should be referred to.
12. Under Regeneration Activities there should be a separate section for West Cumbria and the commitment to transform the economy in the same way that 1 refers to realising urban renaissance in the City Regions.
13. Under the current section 2 on worklessness and employment there should be a specific point referring to the need to avoid mass worklessness in West Cumbria as a result of nuclear decommissioning.
14. Under Section 3, we do not accept that developing the potential of nuclear decommissioning in West Cumbria should be the reference under creating the conditions for sustainable growth. Nuclear decommissioning opportunities need to be grasped. They are vital to retaining jobs for local people and securing a base from which West Cumbria can diversify. However, the key point here is diversification. The reference to West Cumbria under this section should be along the lines of:

"Agreeing and delivering a programme of transformation activities that will allow West Cumbria to diversify in a sustainable manner, away from its dependency on the nuclear sector which is now being decommissioned. This programme would include communications infrastructure development, higher education and research and a range of diversification projects".

15. The current reference to the opportunity of nuclear decommissioning should be moved into section 4 of Business Activities under the Energy and Environmental Technology paragraph.
16. We note the reference to 'future proofing' in section 5, Regeneration, and that the commitment agreed to West Cumbria proofing is not referred to in the strategy. We would ask that this is included as it is a commitment given by the Secretary of State.
17. Under Indicators and Targets, the Target NWDA and Government signed up to in the West Cumbria Memorandum of Agreement and incorporated into the Terms of Reference of the West Cumbria Strategic Form should be included.

18. In the Infrastructure section, reference should be made to West Cumbria's remoteness from the North West mass communications infrastructure system.
19. Improving access specifically to West Cumbria needs to be referred to in Section 1. It was a priority in the last RES and should be referred to again. This can be added to the last point alongside Barrow and the Furness peninsula. In addition a further point needs to be added on the need to develop an effective air transport services to support transformation in West Cumbria.
20. Under Section 2, Infrastructure, reference should be made to improving the connectivity of West Cumbria's ports with other areas.
21. Under Section 7 Infrastructure, reference should be made to the need to allow flexible housing allocations in West Cumbria to recognise the speed of transformation that is needed in the economy and the subsequent need for a rapid change in the nature of the housing available to support this change.
22. Also under Section 7 Infrastructure, recognise that the City Regions will have little impact on transforming the West Cumbria economy unless the latter is managed with complementary measures and that Regional Strategy will need to be West Cumbria proofed to ensure they support the transformation needed.
23. Under Quality of Life Section 5 reference should be made to the need to capitalise on the potential of West Cumbria and for the critical mass of activity on the edge of the North West's top brand, the Lake District, to encourage longer stays and assist in the transformation of West Cumbria (links in to point 3 section 1, Quality of Life). Reference should be made to this under Transformational Activities.