

Cumbria LEP chair to stand down after seven years in post

The chair of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, George Beveridge, is to step down from the role after seven years, during which time he has helped to implement a multi-million-pound programme of economic development projects around the county.

As head of Cumbria's strategic economic body, an unpaid role, he has overseen the ongoing investment of over £60m of funding from the Government's Growth Deal programme designed to accelerate economic growth in the county.

Large scale LEP projects include the regeneration of the Barrow Waterfront site to transform derelict land into a new business park; new advanced manufacturing centres at Carlisle and Furness colleges; STEM labs at the University of Cumbria; investment in Carlisle Airport; access improvements to the Port of Workington and Durranshill; and investments in road improvements and broadband across the county. New major investments are also planned for Whitehaven Town Centre and Carlisle.

Local businesses have also been awarded over £4m of grants, under the Regional Growth Fund programme, to help them create jobs and grow.

These investment programmes are set to create over 4,300 new jobs, 4,200 training places for local people and attract an additional £53m in private and public sector investment in the county.

George Beveridge says: "I am very proud and privileged to have been chair of Cumbria LEP since it was set up - and of the LEP's achievements during that period. The role of chair involves a substantial time commitment and the last seven years have been hard work, but extremely satisfying.

"I am particularly pleased that we have secured investment to grow higher level STEM skills capacity in Cumbria to meet employers' needs through investment at Furness and Carlisle colleges and the University of Cumbria in Carlisle. Providing high quality training routes and career paths for our next generation in Cumbria is something I have been passionate about.

"I am also pleased to see much better recognition of Cumbrian transport infrastructure needs through our engagement with Transport for the North (TFN), Highways England and Network Rail. I have been a member of the TfN Board and have worked to ensure our needs are both well evidenced and recognised and the results of that will be seen in the Northern Transport Strategy to be published shortly for consultation.

"The LEP will shortly start work on developing a Local Industrial Strategy. This is an important piece of work that will take the county forward to the 2030s and requires a significant long-term commitment from the chair of the Board.

"Also, changes that the Government will shortly be bringing forward represent a new chapter for LEPs.

"I therefore felt it is the right time to step down so that someone can be appointed who is able to lead the organisation over the next few years."

The role of Cumbria LEP involves working with local authorities and the private sector to determine local economic priorities and undertake activities to drive economic growth and the creation of jobs.

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership's director Graham Haywood says: "George has been a key figure in the Cumbrian economy over the last seven years, working tirelessly to help deliver key programmes which are now bringing many benefits for the county. The LEP has achieved a huge amount since 2011 and on behalf of the Board, and our partners, I thank him wholeheartedly for his unstinting commitment.

“The projects which he has helped to bring to fruition have produced additional private sector investment and business premises, improvements to transport and infrastructure, thousands of learning opportunities, new jobs, flood resilience measures and better IT and broadband access.”

Jackie Arnold, vice chair of Cumbria LEP adds: “I have worked with George since the establishment of Cumbria LEP in 2011 and his outstanding commitment to his role as chair has been crucial to the organisation’s continued development. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank him for all his hard work over the last seven years.”

Warren Ralls, director of the LEP Network, which represents LEPs nationally, says: “George Beveridge has played a key role in the LEP network nationally, as a powerful advocate to government for LEPs, and in particular for Cumbria.

“I’d like to thank George for his work on behalf of the LEP Network over the last seven years, and wish him all the best for the future.”

George Beveridge says: “I remain committed to Cumbria. I am particularly enthusiastic about the skills agenda and improving career opportunities for local young people. I will continue to work as chair of Inspira, a career management and development organisation, and also as a non-executive director working with the Regional Schools Commissioner for the North.”

George Beveridge has spent over 30 years in a variety of roles in the UK nuclear industry. He was a founding director of the Cumbria Inward Investment Agency, and is a former chair of CBI North West. He has also been representing Cumbria on the Transport for the North Board, the new strategic transport body for the north of England.

The recruitment process for a new chair of Cumbria LEP will be announced shortly.

For further information about the LEP, please visit www.cumbrialep.co.uk

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Notes for editors

- Cumbria LEP provides a strategic lead for all activities contributing to the growth and vibrancy of the county’s economy and where appropriate takes positive action, using the skills, capability and networks of LEP partners.
- The LEP is keen to work with all partners and stakeholders (private and public) to undertake actions, secure funding and implement initiatives to support sustainability and growth of Cumbria’s economy.
- A copy of the Cumbria Strategic Economic Plan is available at: www.cumbrialep.co.uk/what-we-do/sep/