

Northern Powerhouse Minister visits Cumbria

Local politicians, skills providers and business leaders have welcomed the visit of the new Northern Powerhouse Minister to Cumbria today. (June 27th)

Jake Berry MP visited two of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership's key projects, the University's of Cumbria's new Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) labs and Carlisle airport. The Minister also met local political and business leaders.

The Local Enterprise Partnership, the county's strategic economic body, has invested £784,000 in the STEM labs to address the area's skills shortages, and is supporting the airport with funding of £4.75m to improve Cumbria's connectivity.

Rob Johnston, who is on the Board of Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and CEO of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, said "I welcome the fact that the Minister has come to Cumbria less than two weeks after being appointed and seen two of the LEP's key projects.

"We had a very useful meeting in which I and others stressed to the Minister the importance of Cumbria to the success of the Northern Powerhouse and the UK economy: the need for the government to do everything possible to deliver Moorside; and that although we are anticipating international investment of £25bn within the next decade, we still need support and investment in infrastructure, skills and flood resilience."

The minister was shown around the University of Cumbria, STEM labs by Sandra Booth, the Pro Vice Chancellor for Enterprise Business Development and Engagement.

The £3.5m labs were created to respond to Cumbria's shortage of graduates with science skills, to support industry requiring skilled staff and to create more opportunities for young people to study STEM subjects in the area.

University of Cumbria Pro Vice Chancellor Sandra Booth said " Northern Powerhouse projects create demand for engineering and science graduates, and people with project management skills. STEM is therefore a major priority for the university and is reflected in our Strategic Plan as an area of growth for the institution. The development of the university's new science, and engineering portfolio is in direct response to local industry needs. The skills and knowledge students acquire from studying degrees and apprenticeships in STEM subjects at the university, together with professional body accreditation and opportunities for work experience with partners, will enhance their employability prospects and create a wider pool of skilled graduates providing a significant long-term boost in human capital to Cumbria's economy."

At Carlisle airport, the Minister met Andrew Tinkler CEO of Stobart Group who own the airport.

The money Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership plans to invest in Carlisle airport will improve the runway and the terminal. This will allow the creation of new passenger routes to Belfast, London Southend and Dublin, an international hub with direct flights to most of Europe and cities in the US including New York, Boston and Washington.

Rob Johnston says “Carlisle airport is crucial to Cumbria’s growth ambitions. It is a key strategic asset for the county. Developing the airport’s passenger offer will play an important role in maximising Cumbria’s tourism potential by helping to increase international visits. It will also allow easier business travel to and from the county.

“The airport will also help facilitate wider economic growth, and reinforce Cumbria’s position in the nuclear and renewable energy sectors. It has the potential to become a strategically significant logistics hub.

“It could also enable a number of sectors to move freight by air, therefore reducing congestion on the road and rail network. “

The Local Enterprise Partnership funding for the STEM labs and the Carlisle airport was obtained via the government’s Growth Deal allocation to the county.

The local politicians and business leaders at the meeting with the Minister included Rob Johnston who is on the board of Cumbria LEP and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, Councillor Ian Stewart from Cumbria CCC, Councillor Colin Glover, Leader of Carlisle City Council, Jason Gooding CEO of Carlisle City Council, Jamie Reed from Sellafield, Andrew Tinkler CEO of Stobart Group, Ross Nicholson from Kingmoor Park, Paul Ashley, Chairman of Clarks Doors and Adam Wellings, Commercial Director of AST Signs.

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For media information please contact Karen Gardner at Osprey Communications on 015394-42436.

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.

