

## **Cumbria LEP publishes Rural and Visitor Economy Growth Plan**

Priorities for growth in Cumbria's rural and visitor economies over the next five years have been published by Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership.

In consultation with its partners, representative organisations and rural businesses across the whole of Cumbria, the county's strategic economic body has produced a Rural and Visitor Economy Growth Plan.

It aims to tap into the vibrancy of rural communities and ensure market growth in areas such as the food and drink sector and tourism excellence in outdoor activities, events, festivals, attractions and accommodation.

It will help underpin future investment by both the public and private sectors, with identified, specific opportunities for growth and a list of stated priorities for both the rural and visitor economies. These are:

- **Rural economy growth priorities**
  - Maintaining and enhancing the special qualities of Cumbria's rural areas.
  - Capitalising on our rural strengths:
    - Exploiting our brand
    - Adding value to under-exploited rural resources
    - Deepening existing rural supply chains/clusters.
  - Building a location for future businesses.
  - Exploiting major new project opportunities for local rural supply chains.
- **Visitor economy growth priorities**
  - Growing Cumbria's international visitor numbers.
  - Enhancing Cumbria's adventure pursuits, cultural and heritage offer.
  - Capitalising on opportunities from business tourism.
  - Continued investment in and promotion of existing attractions, accommodation and infrastructure.
  - Improving access to digital information and the ability to get around Cumbria.

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership board member Nigel Wilkinson says: "Cumbria's visitor economy is already thriving, but it has even greater potential for growth. The plan identifies ways to extend the 'adventure' experience, support events, enhance attractions and experiences linked to food, drink and culture, influence access into Cumbria and travel within the county, and maximise the benefits from emerging digital opportunities.

"While the plan has a focus on new opportunities, it also recognises the importance of continued investment in, and promotion of, existing attractions, accommodation and infrastructure, as well as maximising the potential of the Lake District, now designated as Cumbria's second World Heritage Site.

“Maintaining and enhancing the special qualities of Cumbria, capitalising on our rural strengths, building a location for future businesses and ensuring that local supply chains derive maximum benefit from major projects are all exciting opportunities for the county’s rural economy.

“An important thread running through the Growth Plan is the need to fully exploit the potential of new technologies in attracting residents, businesses and visitors alike.

“The Rural and Visitor Economy Growth Plan is very much a ‘live’ document which we will review in consultation with our partners and in the context of the changing economic environment.”

Under the LEP’s overall Strategic Economic Plan for the county, a Vibrant Rural and Visitor Economy is one of the four main delivery objectives. The Rural and Visitor Economy Growth Plan is aligned with the LEP’s stated economic drivers to ensure rural economic growth and a successful visitor economy.

For further information about the Rural and Visitor Economy Growth Plan, please visit [www.cumbrialep.co.uk](http://www.cumbrialep.co.uk)

**ENDS**

#### **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/](http://www.cumbrialep.co.uk/what-we-do/sep/)