

Cumbria LEP welcomes industrial strategy white paper

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership has welcomed the publication of the Government's industrial strategy white paper, its emphasis on people and places, and strong signals from Whitehall that it is firmly committed to strengthening the LEP's role to support local economic growth.

The white paper cites five 'foundations of productivity': innovative ideas, people and jobs, major infrastructure upgrades, business environment and places for more prosperous communities.

As part of the overall strategy, the LEPs are set to be given a more clearly defined set of activities and objectives in early 2018.

The Government white paper states that it will support 'Local Industrial Strategies' which will be developed locally and agreed centrally, helping to more accurately identify priorities to improve skills, increase innovation and enhance infrastructure and business growth. It will also make additional financial resources available to LEPs which demonstrate ambitious levels of reform.

Next year, the Prime Minister will also preside over a biannual 'Council of Local Enterprise Partnership Chairs', providing an opportunity for LEP leaders to inform national policy decisions.

The county's strategic economic body has been lobbying for additional financial resources and is now commencing discussions with its partners, key stakeholders and other organisations about working on an updated Strategic Economic Plan to ensure it is fully aligned with the new industrial strategy.

Graham Haywood, director of Cumbria LEP explains: "The industrial strategy is an opportunity for Cumbria and we will be looking at the details of the white paper in the coming days.

"We also welcome the government's intentions to enhance our role. It represents a real sea change in the government's attitude to LEPs and recognition that it sees us far more as strategic economic bodies, rather than organisations just delivering government programmes. This gives us an exciting future with greater opportunities to shape policy and programmes."

Local industrial strategies will be long-term, based on clear evidence, and aligned to the national industrial strategy. They will identify local strengths and challenges, future opportunities and the action needed to boost productivity, earning power and competitiveness. A recent example is the Heart of the South West LEP working with Cumbria LEP to develop proposals for the nuclear industry.

Graham Haywood adds: "These changes give Cumbria LEP the opportunity to build on the good work we have done over the last seven years, and also look at our future role right up to the 2030s, with support for effective, locally-targeted national policies. It will include measures to put board, executive and other staffing levels on a more permanent footing. At the moment most of the staff are on short-term contracts, or secondment from other organisations."

Cumbria Local Enterprise is currently investing over £60m of funding from the Government's Growth Deal programme in a range of projects designed to accelerate economic growth in the county. For further details about Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, go to www.cumbrialep.co.uk

Ends

For media information please contact Karen Gardner at Osprey Communications on 015394 42436 or email karen@ospreycommunications.co.uk

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/