Carlisle City Council
Report to Place Panel

Report details

Meeting Date:	02 March 2023
Portfolio:	Economy, Enterprise and Housing
Key Decision:	No
Policy and Budget Framework	No
Public / Private	Public
Title:	Carlisle Rural Strategy
Report of:	Corporate Director of Economic Development
Report Number:	ED.06/23

Purpose / Summary:

This report provides members of the Place Panel with an overview of the emerging Rural Strategy for the Carlisle area. The strategy, which is included as Appendix 1, has been developed following the workshop with Members that was held on 3 November 2022, where a number of recommendations were made. The Strategy sets out six aims designed to deliver economic, demographic and environmental sustainability for the Carlisle's rural communities and businesses.

Recommendations:

Members of the Place Panel are asked to:

1. Note the contents of the Strategy in terms of the challenges, opportunities, strategic aims and objectives.
2. Provide feedback on the Strategy to inform its development, prior to its submission to the Executive.

Tracking

Executive:	**20 March 2023**
Scrutiny:	**02 March 2023**
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The production of the Carlisle Rural Strategy ("the Strategy") has been evidence-led to ensure that it is developed to respond to rural needs and opportunities of the area. Up-to-date data has been used to ensure that the approach is pertinent to the current socio-economic situation and challenges.

1.2 The Strategy also takes account of existing economic development strategies that relevant are to the area, including the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the Carlisle City Council Plan and the Carlisle Economic Strategy. The Strategy has also been developed considering the priorities set out in the Cumberland Council Plan, which will come into effect on 1 April 2023. The recently approved Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan for Carlisle, including the Rural England Prosperity Fund addendum, has also informed the approach.

1.3 The first stage in the production of the Strategy involved the collation of a comprehensive evidence base. This included a gathering range of data sets covering the whole of the area and where relevant, exploring differences between the rural and urban areas) under the following headings:

- Population and demographics
- Deprivation
- Economy, productivity and incomes
- Housing
- Skills, jobs and recruitment
- Digital and physical connectivity
- Agriculture and natural capital

1.4 From the data analysis, a high-level summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) was produced. The SWOT identified a number of issues, both positive and negative, that have implications for the future economic, demographic and environmental sustainability of Carlisle's rural communities and businesses.

2. WEAKNESSES AND THREATS FACING RUAL CARLISLE

RURAL DEMOGRAPHY

2.1 Rural Carlisle's population has a high proportion of people over retirement age, which impacts across a number of different issues such as recruitment, the provision of public services and transport infrastructure.

2.2 Increase to the average working age will mean a greater need for more social and health care services in the future and will continue to cause recruitment problems for local businesses. At the same time, the outward migration of young people reduces the level of economic activity and impacts on vibrancy and diversity of the area.

LOCAL DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL CONNECTIVITY

2.3 Public transport systems only operate on radial routes in and out of the City from market towns, with the north-east of the district having very little provision. This results in a high-level of car dependency and a greater level of transport disadvantage / deprivation in the outlying rural areas.

2.4 Digital connectivity for both broadband and mobile is below the average for rural England making it more difficult for residents living in rural parts of Carlisle to work remotely and connect to the internet. It also affects business performance and limits the ability for hybrid working.

PRODUCTIVITY AND RECRUITMENT

2.5 Productivity is rural Carlisle is generally low and this had created a 'cyclical effect', as low productivity results in lower business growth, higher operational costs and consequently, means businesses are less inclined to invest in new technology.

2.6 Recruitment is an issue, with businesses experiencing difficulties filling both skilled and unskilled positions. There is a labour force shortage, that is being exacerbated by the out migration of young people and the impacts of Brexit.

3. STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL CARLISLE

LOCATION

3.1 As the only city and the largest settlement of the Borderlands area, Carlisle acts as a sub-regional hub. There is an opportunity to capitalise on this role to drive rural growth and deliver economic, demographic and environmental sustainability for rural communities and businesses.

3.2 Carlisle has good connectivity to other key regions of the UK, which provides opportunities for rural economic growth. The district forms significant link between the Scottish and English economies, being well connected to Scotland's central belt via the A/M74, the south via the M6 and the north-east via the A69.

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL CAPITAL

3.3 Carlisle has benefits from high-quality natural spaces, including sections of the Solway Coast and North Pennines Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These provide a high quality-of-life offer and also the opportunity for growth in the visitor economy.

3.4 Large amounts of agricultural land and natural capital provide an opportunity for environmental sustainability projects and renewable energy generation. The growing issue relating to UK food production and food security creates a strategic opportunity for agricultural investment to increase local production.

POST COVID INCREASE IN REMOTE / HYBIRD WORKING

3.5 The response to Covid-19 has opened up more opportunities and potential for workers to work from home. Changes in lifestyle and working patterns make living in Carlisle a more realistic offer for more people, as proximity to workplace becomes less important, and flexible / hybrid working arrangements become more commonplace.

3.6 Carlisle is an affordable place to live with average house prices significantly lower than the England average. Combined with the strategic connectivity to other key regions of the UK, this makes Carlisle potentially attractive for people seeking to relocate.

NEW TECHNOLOGY

3.7 Advances in digital technology provides potential solutions to some of the challenges facing rural Carlisle. The development of digitally enabled rural 'request a ride' transport schemes could be supported to address transport disadvantage and the lack of public transport options.

3.8 Advances in renewable energy technology present an opportunity for rural Carlisle in current context of the current energy crisis. The available land allows for greater deployment of bioenergy, hydro, PV, wind and battery storage scheme. This in turn

creates potential supply chain and research and development opportunities for the local economy.

4. RURAL STRATEGY AIMS

4.1 The Strategy has been developed following the workshop with Members on 3 November 2022. Members considered that the Strategy should be deliverable, that the aims should focus on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and ensuring that the activities and investments improve the health and wellbeing for all sections of the rural community.

4.2 Consequently, the Strategy has a strong focus on deliverability, taking into account the amount of central government funding that is likely to be available in the coming years. The broad approach is to progress partnership working to maximise the benefits from mainstream service provision and be more entrepreneurial / innovative with the involvement of existing businesses and third-sector organisations.

4.3 As agreed with Members, a 'hub and spoke' approach underpins the Strategy with an emphasis on actions, activity and investment that amplifies the roles of the market towns (Longtown, Brampton and Dalston) as centres for services, business, entrepreneurship, transport and community. The objective is to ensure that activity is sufficiently concentrated to be effective for the benefit of the majority of residents and businesses, including those located within the deeper rural areas of the district.

4.4 The complexity and interrelated nature of rural Carlisle's strengths, weaknesses, threat and opportunities requires a diverse set of aims to deliver sustainability for Carlisle's rural communities. The Strategy sets out six aims that build on the strategies set out in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the Carlisle Plan, and the Carlisle Economic Strategy.

1. Maintaining a productive and stable business environment:
   - Boost survivability and growth in existing sectors, including agriculture
   - Develop the role of the rural hubs – Longtown, Brampton and Dalston
   - Increase the value of the visitor economy by supporting entrepreneurship and farm diversification

2. Improving physical and digital connectivity to services and jobs:
   - Increase reliability, coverage and speed of internet access.
   - Support the delivery of EV charging stations in the rural hubs

- Develop innovative solutions to rural transport / mobility, including digitally enabled ‘request-a-ride’ services

3. Supporting the development of a high-quality and accessible built environment:
    - Continue to support the delivery of new housing in rural areas, with a focus on the supply of low-cost and affordable units
    - Enhance the quality of formal blue / green spaces for leisure and recreation
    - Improve energy efficiency in residential and commercial buildings in terms of both new build and retrofitting

4. Promote sustainable use of the environment and natural capital:
    - Explore opportunities for the energy production and storage
    - Protect the natural environment and explore opportunities for biodiversity enhancement
    - Support the agriculture sector, with a focus on developing supply chains, driving innovation and supporting food production

5. Encourage growth of a qualified, balanced and engaged workforce:
    - Attract / retain economically active residents to grow the workforce
    - Improve access to education and training
    - Enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of apprenticeships

6. Foster healthy, vibrant and resilient rural communities:
    - Promote community-led regeneration and local decision-making
    - Improve health and wellbeing
    - Encourage social enterprise, co-operatives and volunteering

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The consultants appointed to support the development of the Strategy conducted a series of interviews with Members, businesses and stakeholders and partners over the course of the scoping and production of the evidence base for the Strategy.

5.2 An in-person workshop with Members was held on 3 November 2022 to review and make recommendations on the emerging Strategy. Further modification was recommended and in particular, strengthening the focus on deliverability, the likely levels of government funding available and maximising opportunities from mainstream service provision.

6 CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 This Strategy sets out a framework - based on analysis of the key issues, challenges and opportunities - to drive inclusive and sustainable rural growth within the Carlisle area. Its production has been evidence-led in order to ensure that it responds to local needs and opportunities, with the use of up-to-date data so that it is pertinent to the current economic climate and challenges.

6.2 The Strategy recognises the role this Council has to play in delivering the Strategy through leadership, proactively using our resources and available powers where appropriate. Nevertheless, it equally recognises that that Council does not have control over all the actions and activities required to deliver it. Therefore, it reinforces the commitment to working in partnership with our public, private and voluntary sector partners to deliver the objectives and outcomes.

6.3 It is recommended that Members of the Place Panel:

- Note the contents of the Strategy in terms of the challenges, opportunities, strategic aims and objectives.
- Provide feedback on the Strategy to inform its development, prior to its submission to the Executive.

7 CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

7.1 The delivery of the Rural Strategy will support the delivery of the vision set out in the Carlisle Plan, which is to enable Carlisle to grow and prosper as the capital of the Borderlands region.

7.2 The Strategy will contribute directly to the priority of delivering inclusive and sustainable rural economic growth, by improving the health and wellbeing of our local communities and making Carlisle a more attractive place for investment.

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Appendices attached to report: **Appendix 1 – Draft Carlisle Rural Strategy**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- **None**

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – Local Government Reorganisation occurs on 1 April 2023 and with this in mind the Place Panel and Executive are to work up the policy for onward recommendation to the new Cumberland Council. Accordingly, there are no formal decisions being made which will give rise to implications.

PROPERTY SERVICES – The Council owns a significant property portfolio that can assist with delivery of the strategy however careful consideration will be necessary to ensure that income generation is retained/maximised.

FINANCE – The Council supports the activities to underpin the Economic Strategy through investment in base budgets to fund the Economic Development team which then allows it to look towards inward investment opportunities and receipt of significant grant funding opportunities. External funding such as Towns Deal, Future High Street Fund, Garden Village, Borderlands Growth Deal and UK Shared Prosperity Fund will all help the Council to achieve the priorities outlined in the Strategy.

EQUALITY – The Strategy references protected characteristics, in particular age in the context of an ageing rural population

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – There are no information governance implications with this report

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

Reaching rural Carlisle

Rural strategy

January 2023

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CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

Reaching rural Carlisle

A draft report for Carlisle City Council

Emmanuel Campion-Dye, Clare Leckie,
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Please note numbers in tables may not add due to rounding.

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Carlisle's rural needs

Carlisle district is largely rural by land mass

Carlisle is a large local authority district in the North West of England. In April 2023, it will form part of Cumberland unitary authority alongside Allerdale and Copeland.

Except for the city itself, Carlisle is an entirely rural place according to government's classification of small areas. Longtown and Brampton are designated as rural towns and the remainder of the district is comprised of other villages and dispersed settlements. Those that surround the city such as Dalston to the southwest and Wetheral to the east are significantly less sparsely populated than those to the northeast of the district.

Not all needs can be met in particularly sparse communities, as the 'rural premium' for delivering services rises in harder to reach places, while the population that benefits from such efforts is relatively small. It is therefore imperative to the sustainability of these communities that local centres or 'rural hubs' remain prosperous and accessible in key strategic locations across the district. However, it is not always practicable or desirable for local centres to cater for all needs and access to Carlisle city and other urban centres will remain important.

In many respects rural Carlisle is not unlike other rural places in the United Kingdom. However, the specific combination of strengths, opportunities, challenges and threats that it faces is unique. This rural strategy is informed and supported by an evidence base document, a high-level summary of which is set out on the following page. It is expected that the overarching approach and many of the aims, objectives and actions identified herein will be relevant to rural Allerdale and Copeland as well.

Rural urban classifications
Carlisle District, lower super output areas, 2021

Source: Pragmatix Advisory with Office for National Statistics classifications

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Strengths

Carlisle has a well-developed plan, which provides a strong strategic framework for economic development and growth.

Residents tend to be older, with significant levels of inward migration for the 50-64 age bracket who often bring with them substantial savings and professional experience. Many support the active volunteer community.

Income deprivation is relatively rare outside Longtown and Brampton, and mass unemployment is not a concern. GCSE pass rates and apprenticeship starts are both high, particularly outside the market towns and areas near the Scottish border.

Housebuilding is facilitated by the planning department, with more dwelling starts per capita than the average for urban areas and housing is generally more affordable than other parts of England.

It has large natural spaces, including parts of the Solway Coast and North Pennines Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and significant heritage assets such as Hadrian's Wall.

Strong road and rail links to London, Scotland and elsewhere in the north.

Weaknesses

An ageing population means services, such as health and public transport, face especially high provision costs. Recruitment of workers can be a challenge across all sectors, but especially for low-paying or specialist roles, given high living costs.

Mental and physical health is poor, especially in Longtown and the borderlands area, and obesity is a particular problem.

Digital connectivity for both broadband and mobile is below the average for rural England, with large 'not spots' outside market towns.

Public transport systems only functional for radial routes in and out of Carlisle city from market towns, with the northeast of the district having almost no provision. High transport emissions per capita result from frequent car usage and limited active travel.

Poor housing quality with limited options for energy supply affect rural areas across the entire district, although Brampton suffers less than most places. Fuel poverty is a particular issue in the borderlands and to the east of the district.

Wages and productivity are generally lower than some other places in England.

Opportunities

Improved digital connectivity of the rural area could support access to education, work and services as well as social and civic activities.

Post-covid increase in remote and hybrid working has the potential for workers to move out from urban centres. Carlisle's housing affordability is not decreasing at the rate of most other places in the country. This could be attractive for inward immigration of remote workers.

Small-scale innovative transport schemes, particularly with digital solutions, could help to address transport challenges.

Significant amounts of open land and natural capital provide an opportunity to take a lead in environmental sustainability, food security and renewable energy generation.

Unexpected rises in living costs may lead some of the many retired residents to re-join the workforce. Out of work older people could further contribute to local communities, through volunteering and/or part-time roles.

Threats

Projected increase in proportion of population over working age will mean more social care and health services are needed.

At the same time, outward migration of young people reduce density of economic activity and may impact on diversity and/or vibrancy. A reliance on private cars may discourage young families from moving to the area, exacerbating the demographic shifts.

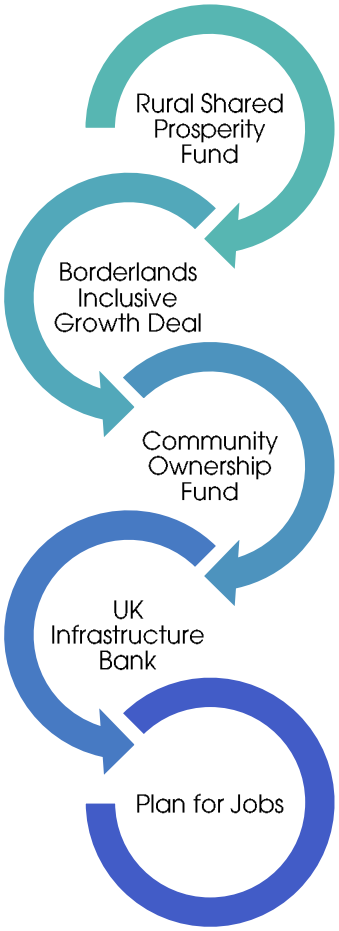
Failure to improve digital connectivity could penalise businesses and limit hybrid/remote working.

Agriculture is under threat from future changes to the subsidies regime and changing market of food. Old farms have been bought for sequestration by corporations from outside the district.

Low productivity leads to cyclical effects, since it results in less investment. Wage depression makes it less likely that people will migrate inwards.

Increasing difficulties keeping pubs and cafes open and attracting staff may threaten the existing tourism offer.

This rural strategy is focussed on deliverability



Examples of external funding schemes and grant programmes
Carlisle District, 2022

The focus of this strategy is on deliverability and it therefore takes a pragmatic view of the amount of central government funding that is likely to be available in the coming years.

Delivery of the strategy should be overseen by a steering group with a membership drawn from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. More focused working groups may also be formed to progress specific actions where needed.

Given the likelihood of funding scarcity, the approach adopted in developing the action plan is to promote partnership working to maximise the benefit from existing resources in so far as this is possible. Ways in which this might be achieved include:

- Maximising opportunities from mainstream service provision;
- Being entrepreneurial and making use of resources within existing businesses and third-sector organisations;
- Using public land and property resources efficiently, often in partnership with others; and
- Better utilising under-used and vacant buildings in private ownership.

Where additional funding is necessary to progress certain actions, the steering group will need to work with partners to access external funding and investment. With new grant schemes and bidding opportunities likely to emerge at short notice, the development of a strong project pipeline will ensure that the steering group has a range of 'oven ready' projects ready to access public funding as it is made available. The action plan also seeks to extend the efforts of the Carlisle Plan for 2021-2023 to proactively position Carlisle for future investment where this aligns with the overall aims of the strategy.

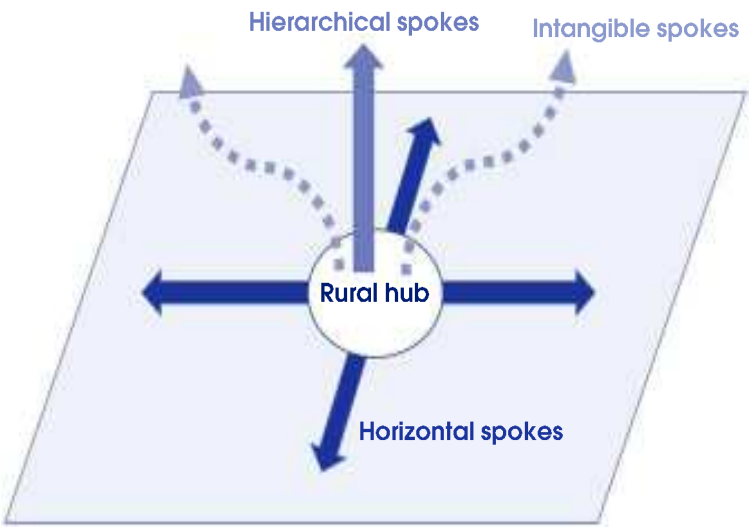
A hub-and-spoke model will be most effective

Even with additional grant monies, this strategy will not be able to deliver everything everywhere.

In light of this, a hub-and-spoke approach underpins this strategy, with a focus on developing multi-activity hubs in Longtown, Brampton and Dalston. It is envisaged that they will each serve as centres for enterprise activity, transport, services, creativity and community, with interventions and support appropriate to the locality.

This will ensure that the actions identified within this strategy are sufficiently concentrated to be effective for the benefit of all rural residents and businesses in the district and beyond, without compromising their distinctly rural character. These hubs are and will be more than just agglomerations of people and resources. By actioning bespoke local plans that build on the place planning work in the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, these rural hubs will be a driver of community interactions that spread beyond the boundaries of the market towns, and once established could provide a focal point for engagement with policy makers.

While much of this strategy focusses on the development of the hubs, their outward linkages in the local rural and regional economy will be equally significant for the achievement of the strategy's aims. Much of the focus in this strategy and its accompanying action plan is on the horizontal spokes that reach out across space to other rural parts of the district and the new Cumberland unitary authority. The vertical spokes that link the hubs to Cumbria-wide, regional and national institutions, and the more intangible identity-based spokes that influence how rural Carlisle is perceived from an external perspective are also considered.



Representation of horizontal, hierarchical and intangible spokes
Longtown, Brampton and Dalston

Source: 'All hubs and no spokes? Exploring the potential of hubs to sustain rural and regional development' (November 2021)

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Towards a sustainable rural Carlisle

Carlisle's rural strategy has six aims

This rural strategy has six aims designed to deliver sustainability for Carlisle's rural communities.

There are challenges ahead that will especially impact Carlisle's rural areas due to their ageing population, constrained digital connectivity and often higher living and infrastructure costs. This strategy is not about maintaining a status quo. It's about getting to a point that is economically, demographically and environmentally sustainable.

As it stands, Carlisle's communities and economy are unlikely to be sustainable at current projected population levels, with a dependency ration of 97 per cent (compared with 83 per cent for England) forecast for 2042, up from 81 per cent today. Population growth will likely be necessary to ensure the ratio of workers to non-workers is adequate and to take advantage of economies of scale.

The complexity and interrelated nature of rural Carlisle's strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities calls for a diverse set of aims, many of which build on the ongoing work of the Carlisle Plan 2021-2023, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, and Shared Prosperity Fund investments. Failure to make progress towards any one of these aims risks undermining the remainder of the strategy.

Many of the actions identified are intended to be short to medium term interventions, with benefits apparent within two to five years. However the overall strategy has been designed with a view to achieve long term impact, with some benefits continuing to develop for ten to fifteen years and beyond.

Aims of rural strategy
Carlisle, 2023

1. Maintain a productive and stable business environment

2. Improve physical and digital connectivity to services and jobs

3. Support development of a high-quality and accessible built environment

4. Promote sustainable use of the environment and natural capital

5. Encourage growth of a qualified, balanced and engaged workforce

6. Foster healthy, vibrant and resilient rural communities

Source: Pragmatix advisory modelling using Office for National Statistics population projections (left)

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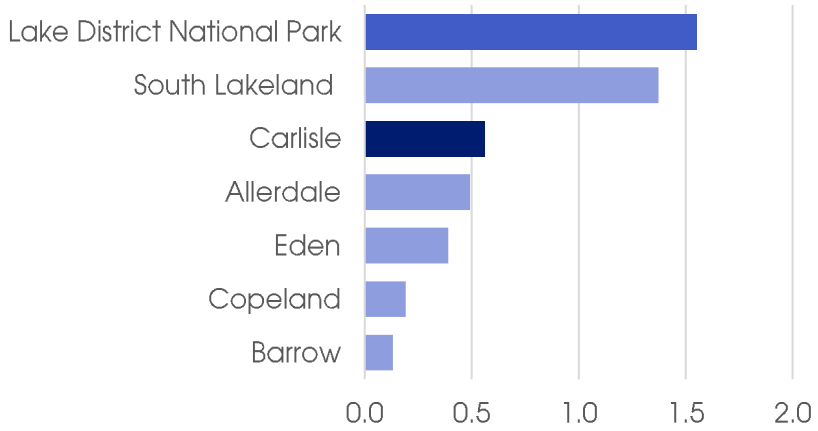
In the context of ongoing economic uncertainty, interventions should boost survivability and growth in existing sectors.

Now is the time to double down on current strengths, foster peer networks and provide cross-industry support to access financial resources and advice that builds on existing business support. In the short to medium term, a focus on the development of rural hubs with enterprise centres, affordable co-working spaces and the provision of rural services will help existing businesses to remain open, safeguard local jobs and ensure that households can continue to meet their needs within the local economy.

Having left the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, it remains unclear what the United Kingdom's funding model for farming will be. Particular attention should be paid to ensure that agriculture-specific support is accessible to farmers.

Total economic impact of tourism
Cumbria, 2019, £ millions



Objectives related to first aim of rural strategy
Carlisle, 2023

Rural hubs will help to attract greater footfall and facilitate economic development in the long term.

Most new businesses are started in Carlisle as entrepreneurs and small business owners are attracted to the lifestyle that the district offers. While progressive planning and strong business services won't hurt, any attempt to be overly prescriptive within this strategy with respect to which new industries to target is unlikely to present good value for money.

A coordinated approach to marketing Carlisle's tourism offering in conjunction with that of the rest of Cumberland is likely to have a significant impact on the value of the visitor economy by increasing the number of visitors at any one time, increasing their spend and extending the tourism season. Experiential tourism is rising in popularity and festivals and special events provide a real opportunity to drive high-value, year-round green tourism.

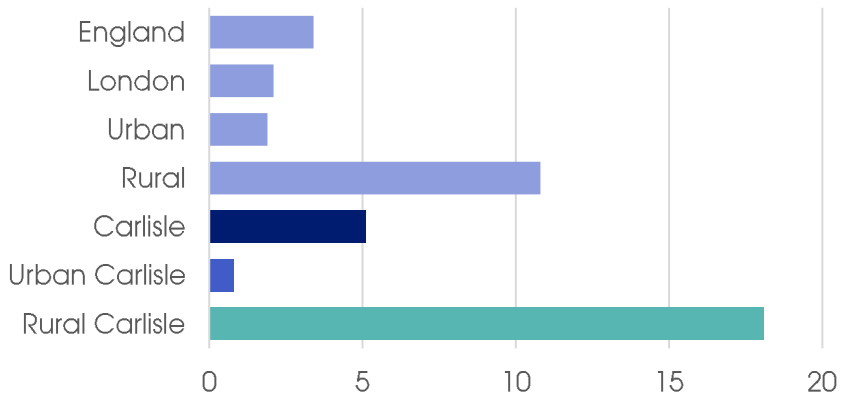
Source: STEAM Tourism Economic Impacts (top right)

Almost one in five in rural Carlisle can't receive fast broadband, versus one in ten in other rural areas.

A lack of digital connectivity limits access to jobs, education, and services, and has a negative impact on businesses and the promotion of the visitor economy. While broadband and mobile connectivity is rolled-out and upgraded across other parts of Carlisle with the support of the Borderlands Digital programme, rural hubs should offer public broadband access alongside workspaces and service provision.

But the need to travel will remain. And for this residents in rural Carlisle continue to be dependent on private cars. This is partly associated with older residents, but largely due to the reduced availability of alternatives with thin public transport services and a lack of appropriate active travel infrastructure, including safe walking and cycling routes between towns and villages.

Proportion of houses unable to receive 30 megabits per second upload speeds
Lower super output areas, 2022, per cent



Objectives related to second aim of rural strategy
Carlisle, 2023

Increasing data and digital capability will unlock new digitally-enabled models of transport provision.

Such platforms can be flexible in the services they provide to meet demand, increasing their commercial viability, while providing greater convenience for users. Building on the experiences of Cumbria County Council's Rural, Village and Community Wheels programmes, new models of `feeder services' such as shared taxis and demand-responsive transport, could be trialled. Digital applications for car and ride-sharing can make these services easier to use.

The extension and improvement of cycle paths and walking routes that connect into the ongoing upgrades to active travel opportunities in Carlisle city centre will help local people access services, education, and work in local hubs and support the growth of green tourism options.

Source: Ofcom Connected Nations (top right)

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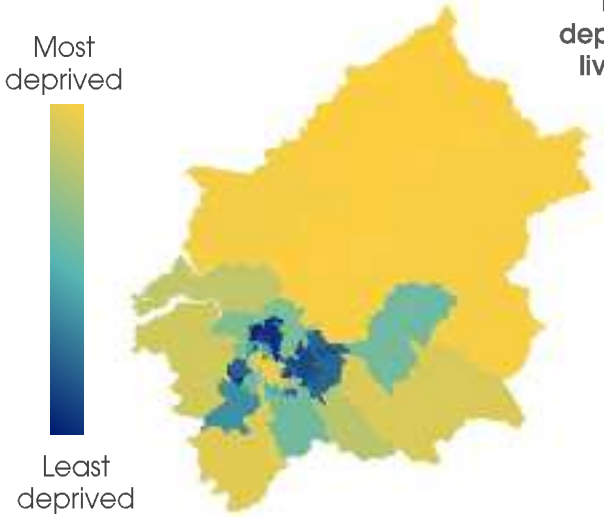
As more activities move online, high streets and town centres may look different going forward.

This provides smaller, local businesses an opportunity to move into now vacant spaces. But with lower barriers to entry there is a risk that profit-margins could be eroded. It may be prudent to convert current retail space to flexible workspaces, or even affordable residential buildings. It might be necessary to support local businesses with grants to ensure that high streets remain balanced and productive during this transition.

Ensuring that the appropriate quantum of affordable housing is made available within rural hubs could help to entice more working age households to the area and make local service provision more viable. Communities will be encouraged to work proactively with their planning authority to identify private and public sector vacant buildings to repurpose and improve.

Objectives related to third aim of rural strategy
Carlisle, 2023



Index of multiple deprivation, indoors living environment score
Carlisle, 2022, national scale

While houses are not especially expensive, housing quality is poor, and fuel poverty remains a concern.

The index of multiple deprivation score for indoors living environment measures houses that don't have central heating, and that fail to live up to the 'Decent Homes' standard. Rural Carlisle is high on both these measures. Poorly insulated housing that is unconnected to mains gas will require owners to spend much more on alternative fuel sources to heat, incurring further unseen costs of everyday living.

The costs associated with improving energy efficiency are high and many households will be unable to afford the upfront investment required to improve insulation and switch fuel sources. But such investments are vital to reduce fuel poverty and meet environmental targets. Lobbying central government for additional funding to support this will be important.

Source: Index of Multiple Deprivation (top right)

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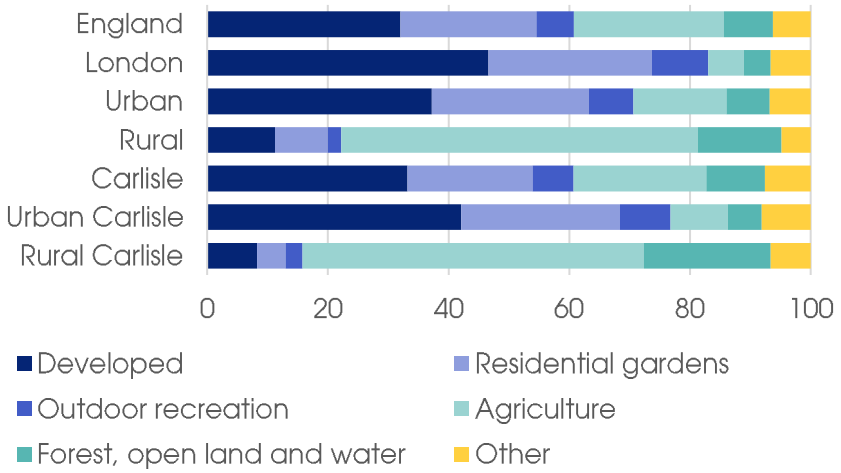
Rural Carlisle has plenty of land that could be used for multiple purposes and a wealth of natural capital.

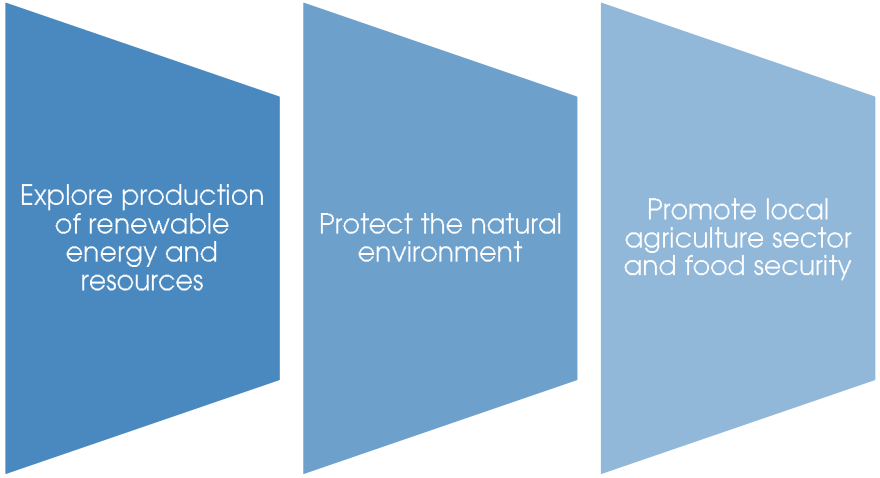
The district currently generates relatively small amounts of renewable energy considering its land mass and rurality. Though some communities have historically been opposed to the development of projects in their local areas, perceptions may be changing with the current energy crisis. Renewable energy generation via solar panels, biomass or wind turbines, energy storage could potentially take place on land that is also used for agriculture and or tourism purposes.

This presents both an opportunity to attract investment to the district, but also means that protecting the environment must remain a priority now and in the future. With natural disasters such as floods likely to continue rising, measures to prevent against environmental degradation are needed.

Share of land by use
Lower super output areas, 2022, per cent



Objectives related to fourth aim of rural strategy
Carlisle, 2023



The main two uses of land in Rural Carlisle are for agriculture and for forestry, open land and water.

Although it accounts for only a small proportion of both local jobs and economic output, agriculture is an important feature of rural Carlisle's local landscapes and identity. Very little of its land is suited for crops and cereals so most of the farming in the district is livestock-related. It contributes almost two per cent of England's cattle despite accounting for less than one per cent of total farmed area.

This presents both an opportunity to attract investment to the district, but also means that protecting the environment must remain a priority now and in the future. With natural disasters such as floods likely to continue rising, measures to prevent against environmental degradation are needed.

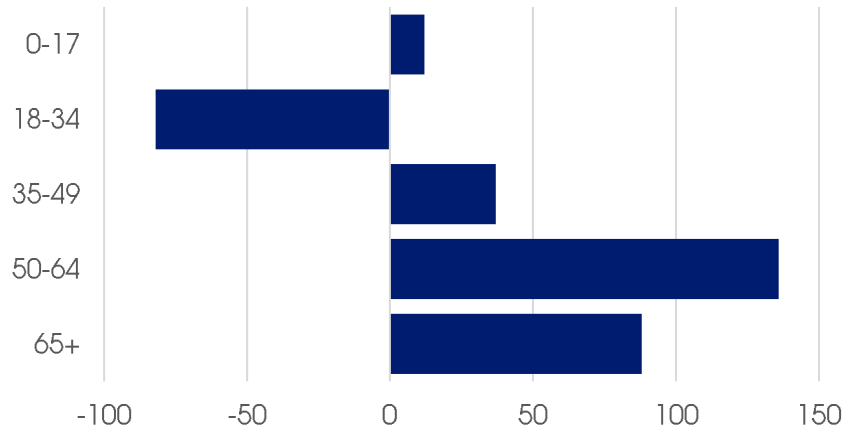
Source: Office of National Statistics (top right)

Younger people and older people tend to leave Carlisle, while the middle-aged move in.

Many people leave the district upon finishing secondary school, and inward migration is dominated by those aged 50 and older. This migration pattern is not entirely bad for Carlisle – older people are likely to have greater professional experience and savings, and older workers remain productive.

However, sectors that tend to rely on entry-level and other junior staff to fill customer service roles, often face recruitment challenges. This migration pattern limits Carlisle's ability to coordinate early-career training in priority skills areas and `brain drain' remains a risk as some students seek education and professional opportunities in larger cities. The importance of ensuring the availability and accessibility of quality education leading to local jobs must not be overlooked.

Net number of people migrating in by age group
Carlisle, 2020



Objectives related to fifth aim of rural strategy
Carlisle, 2023

Promoting and enhancing Carlisle's strengths will help to attract and retain economically active residents.

People choose to migrate for diverse reasons, and it is not the aim of this strategy to reduce this in an absolute sense. However, by promoting the opportunities offered to workers, and particularly to young people—such as its strong transport links elsewhere in the United Kingdom, University of Cumbria campuses, proximity to beautiful outdoor spaces, culture and engaged communities—rural Carlisle may be able to capitalise on changing work and lifestyle preferences post-pandemic. This could help to create a larger and more balanced workforce.

Skills gaps will be closed by signposting employers and employees to training, and by bringing service providers, students and employers together in rural hubs to make sure that there is a pipeline of talent that is relevant to the roles available.

Source: Office of National Statistics (top right)

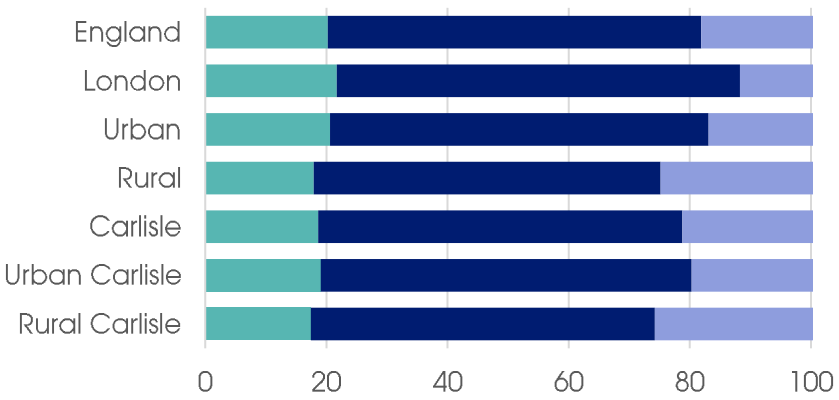
Over a quarter of the population of rural Carlisle is over the age of 65, making it 'super-aged'.

With such a large proportion of older people in the population, more spending is required on services such as social work, healthcare and public transport, while making it more difficult for local businesses to fill vacancies.

Official population projections suggest that this trend is only likely to increase over time, as both young and working-aged people look set to decline relative to older people. However, these projections were developed before the pandemic, and are based on historical trends continuing. With the rise of remote working, and the potential to live away from key metropolitan areas without losing out on earnings potential the demographics of rural Carlisle could look very different.

Proportion of usual resident population in three age groups

Lower super output areas, 2020, per cent



Objectives related to sixth aim of rural strategy

Carlisle, 2023

Decisions can be tailored to local needs by continuing to engage with the Borderlands Place Plan community-led regeneration frameworks.

Rural Carlisle has a strong community of volunteers. By providing structured volunteering opportunities, communities are not only better able to address issues important to them, but it also helps to combat poor mental health among the individual volunteers by increasing social and purpose-driven activities.

There is scope within this strategy to support the social economy to provide needs in local communities and foster pride in place. As far as possible parish councils and community groups will be encouraged to play a role in its delivery. While much of this strategy has focussed on coordinating the development of rural hubs, empowering local groups will help to accommodate a hyperlocal response to specific needs outside the market towns.

Source: Office of National Statistics (top right)

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