

AGENDA

EXECUTIVE

MONDAY 20 JULY 2020 at 4.00 PM

This meeting will be a virtual meeting and therefore will not take place in a physical location

VIRTUAL MEETING – LINK TO VIEW

This meeting will be a virtual meeting and therefore will not take place in a physical location following guidelines set out in Section 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

Register of Attendance and Declarations of Interest

A roll call of persons in attendance will be taken and Members are invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and any interests, relating to any item on the agenda at this stage.

Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence.

Public and Press

To agree that the items of business within Part A of the agenda should be dealt with in public and that the items of business within Part B of the agenda should be dealt with in private.

Minutes

To confirm the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive held on 10 February; 9 March; 30 April; 27 May and 22 June 2020. The Chair will sign the Minutes at the first practicable opportunity.

[Copy Minutes in Minute Book Volumes 46(6) and 47(1)]

PART A

To be considered when the Public and Press are present

A.1 DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021/22 TO 2025/26 1 - 40 (Key Decision – KD.15/20)

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to submit a report seeking consideration of the Council's Draft Medium Term Financial Plan which will inform the budget process.
(Copy Report RD.09/20 herewith)

A.2 DRAFT CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22 TO 2025/26 41 - 68 (Key Decision – KD.15/20)

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to submit a report seeking consideration of the Council's draft Capital Investment Strategy which is intended to direct the Council's Capital Programme and the allocation of resources for the five year period 2021/22 to 2025/26.
(Copy Report RD.08/20 herewith)

A.3 DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021 TO 2026 69 - 88 (Key Decision – KD.13/20)

The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to submit a report on the Council's Draft Asset Management Plan 2021 – 2026.
(Copy Report GD.33/20 herewith)

A.4 SOLWAY COAST AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

89 - 162

(Key Decision – KD.16/20)

Pursuant to Minute EX.60/20, the Corporate Director of Economic Development to submit a report seeking adoption of the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020 - 2025. The Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel received the report 'for information only'.

(Copy Report ED.21/20 herewith)

A.5 NEW CUMBRIA CHOICE ALLOCATIONS POLICY AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

163 - 308

(Key Decision – KD.18/20)

Pursuant to Minute EX.68/20, the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to submit a report concerning the new Cumbria Choice Allocations Policy and Equality Impact Assessment. The Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel scrutinised the matter on 16 July 2020.

(Copy Report GD.28/20 herewith / Minute Excerpt to follow)

Background Papers –

Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Carlisle 2015-20

<https://www.carlisle.gov.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=O7JyYfUVYt4%3d&tabid=1888&portalid=0&mid=8408>

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

A.6 BORDERLANDS PLACE PROGRAMME

309 - 322

(Key Decision – KD.19/20)

The Corporate Director of Economic Development to submit a report outlining the Borderlands Place Programme purpose and process and seeking approval of Longtown as the town to be included for the Carlisle District.

(Copy Report ED.29/20 herewith)

A.7 NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

323 - 336

(Non Key Decision)

The Notice of Executive Key Decisions, published on 19 June 2020, is submitted for information.

(Copy Notice herewith)

A.8 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS 337 - 340

(Non Key Decision)

A Schedule detailing decisions taken by Portfolio Holders under delegated powers is attached for information.

(Copy Schedule herewith)

Background Papers – as detailed within the Schedule

A.9 SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS TAKEN BY OFFICERS

341 - 342

(Non Key Decision)

A Schedule detailing decisions taken by Officers under delegated powers is attached for information.

(Copy Schedule herewith)

Background Papers – as detailed within the Schedule

A.10 JOINT MANAGEMENT TEAM

343 - 344

(Non Key Decision)

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Management Team held on 22 June 2020 are submitted for information.

(Copy Minutes herewith)

A.11 REVIEW OF CAR PARKING INITIATIVES

345 - 352

(Non Key Decision)

The Deputy Chief Executive to submit a report outlining initiatives to encourage use of the Council's car parks across the year and targeted towards key dates of the year to replace the Free After Three initiative at the end of the trial period on 31 August 2020.

(Copy Report CS.16/20 herewith / outcome of consultation to follow)

A.12 SELF AND CUSTOM BUILD HOUSING GRANTS

353 - 358

(Non Key Decision)

The Corporate Director of Economic Development to submit a report setting out proposals for the introduction of a grant funding programme to assist applicants on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Housing Register with a contribution of up to £2,000 towards the set-up costs of building their own homes, using 'New Burdens' funding already held by the Council.

(Copy Report ED.25/20 herewith)

Background Papers:

- **Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015)**
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/contents/enacted>
- **Housing and Planning Act (2016) – Part 1, Chapter 2**
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/contents/enacted>

A.13 CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL'S ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

359 - 372

(Non Key Decision)

The Chief Executive to submit a report, the purpose of which is to provide Members with an update and overview of the work that the City Council has been doing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Copy Report CE.04/20 herewith)

A.14 FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

373 - 382

(Non Key Decision)

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to submit a report providing a summary of the financial implications arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Copy Report RD.10/20 herewith)

A.15 CARLISLE'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RENEWAL POST COVID-19

383 - 402

(Non Key Decision)

The Corporate Director of Economic Development to submit a report outlining key work streams that will contribute towards Carlisle's recovery from the challenges presented as we move out of the COVID-19 lockdown and towards economic recovery and renewal. The Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel scrutinised the matter on 9 July 2020.

(Copy Report ED.28/20 herewith / Minute Excerpt to follow)

PART B

To be considered in Private

B.1 OUTCOME OF OLD FIRE STATION TENDER

(Key Decision)

(The Leader has agreed to this Key Decision item being considered at this meeting, although not in the Notice of Executive Key Decisions)

** information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

B.2 GLL COVID SUPPORT

(Key Decision)

(The Leader has agreed to this Key Decision item being considered at this meeting, although not in the Notice of Executive Key Decisions)

** information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

B.3 LAND AND PROPERTY TRANSACTION

(Non Key Decision)

** information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

Members of the Executive:

Councillor J Mallinson (Leader's Portfolio)
Councillor G Ellis (Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder)
Councillor N Christian (Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder)
Councillor S Higgs (Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder)
Councillor Mrs E Mallinson (Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder)
Councillor P Nedved (Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder)

Enquiries, requests for reports, background papers, etc to: Morag Durham, Democratic Services Officer – morag.durham@carlisle.gov.uk

Notes to Members:

Decisions made at this meeting, if not subject to call-in, will normally become live on 30 July 2020

Report to Executive

**Agenda
Item:**

A.1

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Finance, Governance and Resources
Key Decision: Yes: Recorded in the Notice Ref: KD15/20
Within Policy and Budget Framework YES
Public / Private Public

Title: DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2021/22 to 2025/26
Report of: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES
Report Number: RD09/20

Purpose / Summary:

The Medium-Term Financial Plan sets out the current framework for planning and managing the Council's financial resources, to develop its annual budget strategy and update its current five-year financial plan. The Plan links the key aims and objectives of the Council, as contained in the Carlisle Plan, to the availability of resources, enabling the Council to prioritise the allocation of resources to best meet its overall aims and objectives. The MTFP will inform the budget process and will be updated for changes when known.

Following consideration by the Executive and the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel, final recommendations will be made to Council on 8 September 2020.

Recommendations:

The Executive is asked to:

- (i) Comment on the draft MTFP for consideration by the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel on the 23 July 2020.

Tracking

Executive:	20 July 2020
Overview & Scrutiny:	23 July 2020
Executive:	17 August 2020
Council:	08 September 2020

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is the key policy document to guide the Council's forward financial planning process. The attached report details the current Plan for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26. The MTFP is reviewed annually starting with the assumptions made in the Budget Resolution approved by Council on 4 February 2020. The starting point for the MTFP is to show the impact of the Council Resolution and raise awareness of the issues that are on the horizon that will need to be considered as part of the detailed budget process.
- 1.2 The Corporate Charging Policy has also been reviewed and included within the MTFP. It provides a framework detailing potential policy options for each Charging area. This recognises that different approaches may be required for different services and that there are a variety of influences that need to be acknowledged in charge setting.
- 1.3 The MTFP has been prepared at a time of great uncertainty in respect of the economy, especially in terms of the impact of leaving the European Union, the financial impact and economic recovery from COVID-19 and also in terms of the Government's wider approach to Public Sector Funding in general and particularly for Local Government Funding.

2. KEY DATES

- 2.1 Following consideration of the current MTFP and other key Policy documents by the Executive and Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel, these will be formally approved by Council on 8 September 2020.
- 2.2 A timetable for the budget process will be prepared and the overall budget position for revenue and capital, and individual reports on spending pressures, saving proposals, and charging reports will be considered by the Executive at its meeting on 9 November. These reports will be scrutinised by the three Scrutiny Panels at the end of November and beginning of December.
- 2.3 Development of the budget consultation documents was undertaken as part of previous year's process with improved visuals produced including a 'Have your say' document. This provided more clarity on the budget pressures the Council faced and assisted stakeholders in their understanding of the budget process

3. KEY MESSAGES

- 3.1 The MTFP shows the starting position for budget considerations for the next five years and gives an indication of the likely factors that will have an impact in the budget setting process. Key to these considerations will be:
- Further clarity on the future of local government funding through the Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and any changes to future Business Rate Retention schemes, that may pass on added responsibilities to the Council.
 - Achievement of transformation savings;
 - Further reductions in government grant as part of the Fair Funding Review, e.g. New Homes Bonus, Housing Benefit Admin Grant;
 - Longer term impact of COVID-19
- 3.2 As well as some significant pressures, there is scope for some additional savings and additional income opportunities to be considered as part of the budget process too. These considerations are likely to be around:
- More commercial and investment opportunities

4. RISKS

- 4.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan contains risk analysis of the issues that could potentially affect the budget and financial planning position.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The draft MTFP, particularly the Financial Principles, has been considered by the Senior Management Team and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Resources.
- 5.2 The Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel will consider the MTFP on 23 July, and recommendations made to full Council on 08 September.
- 5.3 The Budget Process and MTFP are also informed by consultation with wider stakeholders, including residents. Each year the Council consults with the Business Community and also carries out public consultations as appropriate

6. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The Executive is asked to:
- (i) Comment on the draft MTFP for consideration by the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel on the 23 July.

7. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

7.1 The Medium-Term Financial Plan outlines how the Council will prioritise its financial resources in the delivery of services

Contact Officer: Alison Taylor

Ext: 7290

Appendices attached to report: Appendix 1 – Medium Term Financial Plan 2021/22– 2025/26

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

Legal – The Council has a legal duty to put in place a balanced budget to the satisfaction of the Council's Section 151 Officer. The Medium-Term Financial Plan is an important part of fulfilling this obligation.

Finance – Contained within the MTFP

Equality – Corporate Charging Policy includes considerations for the targeting of concessions for named protected characteristic.

Information Governance - There are no Information Governance Implications

Property Services - The Medium-Term Financial Plan links with the Asset Management Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26 to provide details on how the City Council will utilise its property assets to assist with the Council's finances and development new infrastructure for the City.

Draft Medium-Term Financial Plan

Carlisle City Council

2021/22 to 2025/26

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The overarching policy guidelines of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) are that resources will be redirected to Council priorities via the budget process within the overall caveats that: -
- Redirection of resources towards areas of high priority will be contained within existing budgets, unless increases can be justified and funded through the budget process.
 - Council Tax increases will be limited to fair and reasonable levels, taking account of national guidance from Government.
 - External grants and income will be maximised wherever possible to mitigate the effects of budget increases.
 - Partnership working and funding opportunities will be explored wherever feasible.
- 1.2 The Medium-Term Financial Plan sets out how Carlisle City Council will manage its finances to deliver against its corporate priorities, whilst protecting its financial standing and responding to the many challenges it faces.
- 1.3 Economic growth in Carlisle will impact on the income the Council receives and also the support it is able to give to vulnerable residents. Treasury Management income will be limited whilst interest rates remain low, and the available institutions with which the Council can invest with diminishes due to restrictions in bank credit ratings. The effects on the MTFP of any changes to the state of the economy, including the impact of leaving the European Union, will need to be closely monitored in order to react effectively to changing situations. The Government's approach to public sector funding beyond 2020/21 in terms of the Review of Local Authorities Relative Needs and Resources, the Business Rate Retention Reform (including pooling arrangements), and the Comprehensive Spending Review, will be a significant factor for the lifespan of this MTFP. The impact of COVID-19 will be one of the most significant risks facing this authority in terms of additional costs, reductions in income, and economic recovery especially in terms of receipts of council tax and business rates income. This impact is likely to extend beyond the current financial year and into 2021/22.
- 1.4 The Medium-Term Financial Plan provides the corporate financial planning framework to provide strategic direction to the Council for the next five years and to ensure that the financial resources of the Council are directed to achieving the Council's key corporate priorities.

2.0 Financial Principles supporting the MTFP

2.1 The key principles to be applied to the MTF are set out by theme below:

Financial Principle 1 – Revenue Budget Strategy

- Guide the integration of financial planning with the priorities set out in the Carlisle Plan to ensure that spending decisions contribute to the achievement of the Council's priorities;
- Guide and be informed by Directorate Service Plans and other relevant strategies and plans of the Council, which set out how resources will deliver the outcomes and priorities specified in the Carlisle Plan;
- Forecast a minimum five -year corporate and financial planning horizon, with longer periods developed where necessary;
- Manage performance management and decision-making procedures to help achieve the best use of available resources;
- Monitor and evaluate proposed and actual spending to ensure that value for money is obtained;
- Review the Council's Reserves and Balances Policy in line with CIPFA and other best practice guidance to ensure that all the reserves held by the Council are still applicable and relevant;
- Achieve a minimum level of General Fund Reserves of £3.1m over the life of the MTFP subject to an annual risk assessment (Appendix A);
- Consider the use of earmarked reserves to support non-recurring expenditure;
- Commitment to minimise staff compulsory redundancies;
- Consider the impact of any other Government Budget initiatives e.g. 75% retention of Business Rates, Business Rate Baseline resets, the Fair Funding Review and any Comprehensive Spending Review implications;
- Assess the impact of the decision to leave the European Union may have on the Council's budgets, e.g. changing forecasts for interest rates, inflation forecasts, pension fund revaluation and changes in legislation;
- Consider the implications of the use of financial resources on the levels of Council Tax and other Council charges;
- Services that have a statutory requirement to be self-financing need consideration in the budget process e.g. Licensing, Building Control;
- Consideration to the use of revenue grants received and held in the Revenue Grants Earmarked Reserve to support the revenue budget;

- Develop and implement a robust savings and additional income plan to close the anticipated £1million per annum funding gap (from 1st April 2021);
- Undertake and implement a base budget review.
- Limit revenue budget bids to those which are unavoidable and which cannot be accommodated within existing base budgets.

Revenue Budget Assumptions:

- *Reduction in overall funding from Business Rates of £1,500,000 for 2021/22 pending notification and implications of revised retentions scheme, pooling arrangements and baseline reset;*
- *Inflation is assumed in the MTFP at 2% for expenditure and 3% for income;*
- *Pay Award is assumed in the MTFP at 2%.*

Financial Principle 2 – Commercial and Income Generation

- Annual review of the Corporate Charging Policy to identify areas of potential charging and opportunities for increasing income;
- Consider the levels of income achievable as part of Corporate Charging Policy;
- Consider other sources of potential income generation such as advertising and sponsorship;
- Consider the development of a commercialised culture where the charging powers of the organisation are maximised and encouraged;
- Seek to develop investment opportunities to maximise the use of the Council's asset portfolio;
- Develop a commercial strategy which defines what commercialisation means in Carlisle, risk appetite and potential scope of commercial activity;
- Consider the funding strategy with a view to maximising external grants and contributions.

Charging/Income Assumptions:

- *Income from fees and charges currently achieve approximately £5m per annum;*
- *The Corporate Charging Policy assumes that income from fees and charges will increase at 1% above the inflation rate set for expenditure.*

Financial Principle 3 – Council Tax & Business Rates Policy

- Provide value for money to residents through efficient management of council tax collection;
- Determine Council Tax levels that are prudent and retain stability in the Council's financial strength;
- Annual review of the Business Rate Pooling arrangements and whether this should or can continue for 2021/22 onwards depending upon the outcome of the reset of Business Rate Retention scheme (currently delayed);
- Assessment of the impact of business rates retention including impact on Section 31 grants and funding for Small Business Rate Relief and any additional burdens on councils;
- Consider any implications of the Enterprise Zone on the City and potential resources allocated for future projects;
- Annual review and approval of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS);
- Consider any likely reductions to Housing Benefit Admin Grant and the impact on the Council with the onset of Universal Credit.

Council Tax and Business Rate Assumptions:

- *Council tax levels currently assumed at a £5 increase per annum (Band D Equivalent) over the lifetime of the MTFP;*
- *Business Rate Retention growth assumed at £900,000 (reduced from £2,400,000 in 2020/21) above the baseline level set by Government pending the reset and re-design of the Business Rate Retention Scheme.*

Financial Principle 4 – Treasury Management

- Annual review of the Treasury Management budget for revised interest rates, changes to average balances and the effects of capital spending decisions;
- Consider appropriate levels of prudential borrowing that is affordable, sustainable and within acceptable council tax levels, and delivers objectives aligned to the Council priorities;
- Treasury Management Strategy to achieve the optimum return on investments, with the security of the principal sum always being the primary consideration.

Treasury Management Assumptions:

- *Rate for refinancing stock issue currently included in MTFP at an assumed rate of 2.7% on a principal and interest loan;*

- *Average investment return assumed at 1.2% for 2021/22.*

Financial Principle 5 – Capital Investment

- As set out in the Capital Investment Strategy;
- Review of capital financing decisions which will likely have a revenue budget impact due to lack of capital resources (E.g. through re-profiling of capital receipts and borrowing);

Capital Investment Assumptions:

- *The current capital programme is forecast to utilise all forecast capital receipts (including from Asset Disposal Programme) and includes a borrowing requirement to fund the planned programme.*

3.0 Links to other Strategies

3.1 The Carlisle Plan

3.1.1 The Carlisle Plan forms part of the Policy and Budgetary Framework for the Council. These frameworks work together to create the strategic framework.

3.1.2 The Medium-Term Financial Plan must both support and inform the Council's vision for the Carlisle area and the strategic direction set out in the Carlisle Plan. This is to enable resources to be matched against the agreed priorities and any other supporting needs.

3.1.3 The Medium-Term Financial Plan takes account of other Council Plans and Strategies of the Council, which have a potential impact on the use of resources by the Council. Particularly consideration is given to the following key strategies: -

- The Capital Investment Strategy, which provides information on the proposed level of investment in capital projects and the consequent impact on the revenue budget;
- The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy, which sets out the assumptions for financing requirements and interest rates and their effect on the revenue budget;
- The Asset Management Plan, which provides forecasts of necessary investment in the Council's land and property portfolio;
- The Procurement and Commissioning Strategy;
- Local Plan/Local Development Framework;
- The ICT Strategy;
- The Organisational Development Plan, which highlights the need for a thorough review of the Council's staffing needs and skill levels to ensure that the Council improves its performance to deliver excellent services to the local community in the future;
- There are also a number of strategies, which set out policy direction for key Council priority areas, and these include the Economic Strategy, and Housing Strategy and Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Directorate Service Plans will be used to inform the budget setting process and identify key strategic and operational objectives and the resources required to deliver those.

4.0 Revenue Budget Forecasts

4.1 Current Budget Forecast

4.1.1 The Council has well established mechanisms in place for forecasting resources and expenditure over a five-year planning period. Projections will inevitably change over the period of the plan and these forecasts are updated as part of the detailed budget process.

4.1.2 The Council approved the current forecast for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25 in February 2020 and updated for the 2019/20 outturn position and details are shown below together with the base estimate figures for 2025/26.

2020/21 Revised £000	Summary Net Budget Requirement	2021/22 Budget £000	2022/23 Proj £000	2023/24 Proj £000	2024/25 Proj £000	2025/26 Proj £000
14,527	Total Recurring Expenditure	12,507	12,528	12,753	13,030	13,397
	Non Recurring Revenue Expenditure					
(685)	Existing Commitments	(36)	(45)	0	0	0
811	Carry Forward	0	0	0	0	0
14,653	Total Revenue Expenditure	12,471	12,483	12,753	13,030	13,397
	Less Contributions (from)/to Reserves:					
(1,141)	Recurring Commitments Sub Total	(287)	16	121	180	155
(126)	Non Recurring Commitments					
	- Existing Commitments	36	45	0	0	0
13,386	Total City Council Budget requirement	12,220	12,544	12,874	13,210	13,552
688	Parish Precepts	705	723	741	760	779
14,074	Projected Net Budget Requirement for Council Tax purposes	12,925	13,267	13,615	13,970	14,331

Table 1a: Summary Budget Position (Expenditure)

The budget requirement is funded as follows:

2020/21	Total Funding and Council Tax Impact	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
34,468.61 £000	Estimated TaxBase	34,911.93 £000	35,261.05 £000	35,613.66 £000	35,969.80 £000	36,329.50 £000
	Projected Net Budget Requirement for Council Tax Purposes (Schedule 5)					
13,386	- City	12,220	12,544	12,874	13,210	13,552
688	- Parishes	705	723	741	760	779
14,074	Total	12,925	13,267	13,615	13,970	14,331
	Funded by:					
(7,487)	- Council Tax Income	(7,757)	(8,011)	(8,269)	(8,532)	(8,799)
(3,335)	- Retained Business Rates	(3,513)	(3,583)	(3,655)	(3,728)	(3,803)
(2,400)	- Business Rate Growth/Pooling	(900)	(900)	(900)	(900)	(900)
(134)	-Business Rate Multiplier Grant	0	0	0	0	0
(30)	- Estimated Council Tax Surplus	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
(688)	- Parish Precepts	(705)	(723)	(741)	(760)	(779)
(14,074)	TOTAL	(12,925)	(13,267)	(13,615)	(13,970)	(14,331)
£ 217.20	City Council Tax Band D Council Tax	£ 222.20	£ 227.20	£ 232.20	£ 237.20	£ 242.20
£5.00 2.36%	Increase over Previous year: £ %	£ 5.00 2.30%	£ 5.00 2.25%	£ 5.00 2.20%	£ 5.00 2.15%	£ 5.00 2.11%

Table 1b: Summary Budget Position (Funding)

4.1.3 The assumptions built into the MTFP that form part of the figures above are detailed at section 7.

4.2 Funding Prospects

4.2.1 The Council receives core funding from Government each year as part of the Settlement Funding Assessment which comprises of the Business Rates baseline funding level and information on tariffs and top ups. Although the Government set the Business Rates Baseline, the actual funding is received via the Non- Domestic Rates income the Council collects.

4.2.2 As well as the core funding as agreed in the Settlement Funding Assessment, the Council is also the recipient of other support from central government in the form of specific grants. These are included in the budget as income rather than funding and are linked to specific schemes or services. Further details of grants included in the MTFP are given at section 6.3.

4.2.3 Spending Review

The Chancellor announced on 24th March that the Comprehensive Spending Review 2020 would be delayed to enable the government to remain focused on responding to the public health and economic emergency. Therefore, the Spending Review for 2020, that would have announced the overall funding available to Local Government for the next few years will be deferred until 2021. The government have said they will continue to work with councils on the best approach to the next financial year, and the approach to the 2021/22 local government finance settlement. This means that there will be again, only a 1-year settlement for 2021/22 and will also mean the deferring of the implementation of the Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Retention reset (outlined below). **This will increase uncertainties in the Medium-Term Financial Plan with a further delay to future funding and the implications it will have on the Council.**

4.2.4 Fair Funding Review & Business Rate Retention

The Government have also confirmed that the Review of Relative Needs and Resources ('Fair Funding Review') and 75% Business Rate Retention will no longer be implemented in 2021/22. The Government will keep an open dialogue with local authorities about the best approach to the next financial year, including how to treat accumulated business rates growth and potentially including a reset of the business rate base and the approach to the 2021/22 local government finance settlement. On the latter point, it is understood that this means that some form of a reset of retained business rates next year has not been ruled out. In the longer-term, the Secretary of State reiterated his commitment to reforms.

Therefore, it is very difficult to predict the future potential funding for the Council from Central Government beyond 2020/21. The Fair Funding Review will also have an impact on and be impacted by revisions to the Business Rates Retention system and also specific grants awarded by central government e.g. New Homes Bonus and Housing Benefit Administration Grant.

4.2.5 Business Rates Baseline

The Council budgets for income from Business Rates at the baseline level as set in the Settlement Funding Assessment. However, the income collected and paid over to the main preceptors (Central Government, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council) is based on the projections in the NNDR1 return to Government. Any difference in these amounts is included in the

MTFP as part of the Growth/Pooling amount anticipated of £2,400,000 for 2020/21 falling to £900,000 for 2021/22. **However, uncertainty about the future retained business rates scheme beyond 2020 means that there may be resets to the scheme that could erode any additional income above baseline levels that have been built up under the previous scheme. Until full details of a future scheme are known it is prudent not to over-estimate any future income from business rates.**

Due to the deferral of the 75% Business Rates Retention Scheme, the Council continued to participate in the Cumbria Business Rates Pool, during 2020/21, which enables the County and the Council to retain more of the growth it generates. Given that the Retention Scheme has been deferred again, the specific impact on Carlisle is yet to be understood, but any proposals will likely come with an understanding that local authorities will have to take on additional responsibilities (e.g. absorbing some current one-off grants such as Housing Benefit Administration Grant), which may mean additional cost pressures.

4.2.6 The summary of funding included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan is as follows:

	Budget	Forecasts				
	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Business Rates Baseline % Change	(3,335)	(3,513) 5%	(3,583) 2%	(3,655) 2%	(3,728) 2%	(3,803) 2%
Rates Growth/Pooling % Change	(2,400)	(900) -63%	(900) 0%	(900) 0%	(900) 0%	(900) 0%
Total Funding	(5,735)	(4,413)	(4,483)	(4,555)	(4,628)	(4,703)

Table 2: Funding

4.2.7 Council Tax

The MTFP includes Council Tax increases from 2021/22 onwards at £5 per Band D equivalent.

The MTFP assumes an increase in the taxbase of 1.00% per year and the City Council's share of the Collection Fund Surplus is assumed to be a recurring £50,000.

Any increase in the tax base as a result of new housing developments and/or population increases will also mean a requirement to provide services to those households. Although there will be an increase in the amount of funding received through Council Tax, there will also be a cost of providing council services. Further work on the net unit cost of providing services for new developments and population growth will be undertaken during this budget process.

The MTFP also assumes continuation of the statutory Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) as the Council's localised scheme. Any support provided through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be fully funded by all the main preceptors on the Collection Fund i.e. the Council, the County Council and the Police & Crime Commissioner. Consideration will need to be given as to whether this scheme is to be continued in the same format or incorporate changes to the level of support provided.

	Budget	Forecasts				
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Council Tax Base	34,468.61	34,911.93	35,261.05	35,613.66	35,969.80	36,329.50
% Change		1.29%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%	1.00%
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Council Tax Surplus	(30)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
% Change		67%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Band D Council Tax	217.20	222.20	227.20	232.20	237.20	242.20
% Change		2.30%	2.25%	2.20%	2.15%	2.11%
Total Yield	(7,487)	(7,757)	(8,011)	(8,269)	(8,532)	(8,799)

Table 3: Council Tax

The recent comprehensive funding package announced by the Government refers to:

- A phased repayment of Collection Fund deficits over the next 3 years;

- A commitment to determine what support is needed to help councils meet the pressures of irrecoverable tax income at the Spending Review.

However, until final details are provided the impact on the MTFP cannot be assessed.

A significant risk relates to how the expected overall increase in CTRS claimants (as a result of COVID-19), and the associated cost of CTRS relief, will be funded and be provided to the Council. An increase in claimants directly impacts on the council tax base and ultimately the yield from council tax.

4.3 **Efficiency Strategy**

4.3.1 In order to ensure the Council maintains a minimum level of reserves to the end of the MTFP period, efficiencies are required throughout the period of the plan. The efficiency strategy will concentrate on the following areas:

- Asset Strategy – to focus on ensuring the council's asset portfolio maximises the benefit to the Council through income generation or by realising receipts of assets that do not generate a return that can then be utilised to ease pressures in capital and revenue budgets through the most appropriate means, e.g. re-investment in new assets and supporting the capital programme to reduce the CFR
- Service Reviews – A review of services to include their purpose and relevance in achieving the Carlisle Plan priorities, including a review of those services which do not fall within the Council's core priorities or which are not statutory will be undertaken to ensure that services and resources are properly aligned to what the Council wants to achieve.
- Core Budgets – a review of base budgets, including income generation and a fundamental zero-based budget review of all base budgets, to ensure compliance with best practice and outcome based budgeting and other appropriate budget disciplines.

The recent Peer Review has recommended 3 actions which Members may wish to consider as part of this Savings Strategy:

- Develop a commercial strategy which defines what commercialisation means in Carlisle, risk appetite and potential scope of commercial activity;

- Develop and implement a robust savings and additional income plan to close the anticipated £1million per annum funding gap (from 1st April 2021);
- Undertake and implement a base budget review.

4.3.2 The savings currently included in the MTFP total £1million on a recurring basis increasing by a further £850,000 on a recurring basis:

	Cumulative savings required £	In year savings required £
2020/21	0	0
2021/22	1,000,000	1,000,000
2022/23	1,000,000	0
2023/24	1,850,000	850,000
2024/25	1,850,000	0
2025/26	1,850,000	0

Table 4: Savings

4.3.3 Further savings will be dependent upon future funding settlements, Council Tax increases and changes to income and expenditure levels (pressures and savings) that are outwith the current Medium-Term Financial Plan. Savings will be profiled in the most effective way to ensure that they are achievable, timely and ensure reserves are not adversely affected.

5.0 Provisions, Reserves & Balances

5.1 The Council holds balances in order to meet future commitments. The Council policy on the use of reserves is as follows:

- Reserves generally will not be used to fund recurring items of expenditure, but where it does steps will be taken to address the situation.
- Reserves will not become overcommitted.
- The Council benefits from its level of reserves as it is able to: -
 - Meet its capital programme obligations, with borrowing only undertaken where funded from existing revenue budgets;
 - Fund exceptional increases in its net budget requirement without affecting the Council Tax charged to its taxpayers;
 - Ensure that surplus resources are retained for the general benefit of the Council to protect against large increases in Council Tax;
 - Maximise income received from the investment of its reserves to contribute to the budget requirement of the Council, which is a key part of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

5.2 General Fund

5.2.1 Having undertaken a risk assessment considering the risks and working balances required, the balance on the General Fund reserve indicates that this should broadly equal £3.1m as a prudent level. The risk-based assessment of the appropriate level of this reserve is carried out as part of the budget process and the current assessment is shown at **Appendix A**, which will be updated during this budget process. The prudent level of reserves may need to be revised in the medium term to reflect the changes circumstances around funding changes retention of business rates.

5.2.2 If the balance in the short-term falls below minimum levels, the Council will top-up the balance to this level from the General Fund Income and Expenditure Account.

5.2.3 If the balance in the short-term exceeds minimum levels then the surplus will be transferred to the Council's Project Reserve.

5.3 **Earmarked Reserves**

5.3.1 Earmarked reserves will not be used for recurring items of expenditure, nor become over-committed.

5.3.2 For each earmarked reserve there will be a clear protocol in place setting out:

- The purpose of the reserve.
- How and when the reserve can be used.
- Procedures for the management and control of the reserve.
- Processes for the review of the use of the reserve to ensure that it continues to have an adequate level of funds and remains relevant to the business of the Council.

(Further details of this are shown at **Appendix B**)

5.3.3 The revenue reserves the Council currently holds are as follows:

	31/03/2020 £000	31/03/2021 £000	31/03/2022 £000	31/03/2023 £000	31/03/2024 £000	31/03/2025 £000
General Fund Reserve	3,100	2,431	2,180	2,241	2,362	2,542
Projects Reserve	836	0	0	0	0	0
Carry Forward Reserve	654	632	632	632	632	632
	4,590	3,063	2,812	2,873	2,994	3,174
<u>Revenue Earmarked Reserves</u>						
Flood Reserve	1,948	4	4	4	4	4
Cremator Reserve	1,080	1,111	1,111	1,111	1,111	1,111
City Centre Reserve	5	5	5	5	5	5
Planning Services Reserve	196	182	182	182	182	182
Prosecutions Reserve	36	36	36	36	36	36
Waverley Viaduct Reserve	30	30	30	30	30	30
Revenue Grants Reserve	1,939	1,495	1,495	1,495	1,495	1,495
Apprentices Reserve	78	78	78	78	78	78
Building Control Reserve	100	100	100	100	100	100
	5,412	3,041	3,041	3,041	3,041	3,041
Total Revenue Reserves	10,002	6,104	5,853	5,914	6,035	6,215

Table 5: Revenue Reserves

5.3.4 The MTFP does not assume any use of earmarked reserves.

5.3.5 As well as revenue earmarked reserves, the Council also holds a small number of earmarked reserves for capital purposes. These are as follows:

	31/03/2020 £000	31/03/2021 £000	31/03/2022 £000	31/03/2023 £000	31/03/2024 £000	31/03/2025 £000
<u>Capital Earmarked Reserves</u>						
Usable Capital Receipts	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unapplied Capital Grant	136	112	112	112	112	112
Lanes Capital Reserve	75	90	105	120	135	150
Total Capital Reserves	211	202	217	232	247	262

Table 6: Capital Earmarked Reserves

5.4 **Provisions**

- 5.4.1 The Council holds a number of provision balances for items where future commitments are likely and use of these are delegated to the relevant Corporate Director in consultation with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.

5.5 **Charitable and Other Bequests**

The Council holds a number of bequests for use by the Council. These funds can only be released with the full approval of the Council under the terms set out when the bequest was given. In the first instance it will be the responsibility of the Executive to consider a report outlining proposals for the use of the bequest prior to submission of the request to Council.

5.6 **The Responsibilities of the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources**

- 5.6.1 The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources will review each reserve and its protocol annually and produce a report for the Executive as part of the annual budget process detailing: -
- Compliance with the use of reserves and associated protocols,
 - Movements in the level of reserves, including the purposes for which reserves were used during the previous financial year,
 - The adequacy of the level of reserves and the effects on the Council's budget requirement,
 - Any reserves which are no longer required,
 - Proposals to set up new reserves, including purposes, protocols, funding sources and potential impact on the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan.

- 5.6.2 The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources will review this policy at least annually and will obtain the approval of the Council for any change

required to either the policy or protocols associated with specific reserves.

5.7 **Planned Use of Reserves**

- 5.7.1 When the budget was set in February 2020, it assumed that there would be contributions to and from General Fund Reserve over the life of the MTFP. With the outturn position for 2019/20 now confirmed, the General Fund Reserve and Projects Reserve has been updated as shown in Table 5 above.
- 5.7.2 The reserves position is also subject to the savings required (as in Table 4) being met as scheduled. Any slippage on savings or any savings made in advance will impact on the contributions to and from reserves.

6.0 Income

6.1 Fees & Charges

6.1.1 Fees and Charges for individual services generate in the region of £5m p.a. for the City Council. **Appendix C** sets out the Council's approach to the reviewing and setting of fees and charges on an annual basis. The overall aim is to increase the proportion of income raised from users of discretionary services to ensure that they meet the full cost of these services, rather than the costs falling on Council Taxpayers in general.

6.1.2 In the past the income target has been set at 1% above the inflation rate. Each directorate must prepare a Charges Review Report as part of the budget process that must clearly set out the overall policy objective. In the past few years, increases in income from charges have not always resulted in the MTFP target being achieved.

6.1.3 There are certain functions the Council provides where it has little or no control over the charges to be set and where the service is statutorily bound to be self-financing, for example Building Control. This requirement is likely to extend to Licensing in the future and this means that any surplus income generated by raising fees has to be ring-fenced to these functions.

6.1.4 The main areas of fee generating income are shown in the table below:

	2018/19 Actual £000	2019/20 Actual £000	2020/21 Budget £000
Parking	(1,195)	(1,088)	(1,095)
Bereavement Services	(1,596)	(1,713)	(1,615)
Development Control	(689)	(435)	(602)
Total	(3,480)	(3,236)	(3,312)

Table 7: Main areas of Income

6.2 Property Rentals

6.2.1 Income received from property rentals is in the region of £4.1 million per annum.

6.2.2 The yield from property rentals included in the MTFP is shown in the following table: -

	2018/19 Actual £000	2019/20 Actual £000	2020/21 Budget £000
The Lanes	(1,080)	(1,028)	(950)
The Market	(132)	(68)	(88)
Industrial Estates	(2,784)	(2,662)	(2,596)
Misc Properties	(363)	(393)	(484)
Total	(4,359)	(4,151)	(4,118)

Table 8: Property Income

6.2.4 The MTFP makes no provision for additional rental income from assets via rent reviews.

6.3 **Grants & Contributions**

The Council receives grants from various sources as part of its overall funding. Some of these grants are given as part of the Settlement Funding Assessment by MHCLG and as such, these are budgeted only when notification is received.

6.3.1 **New Homes Bonus**

The Council receives central funding in relation to the New Homes Bonus Scheme. The Council used to receive an allocation of funding under the scheme each year and each allocation lasted for four years. However, as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2020/21 indicative figures were provided for one year only (with no legacy payments being made in subsequent years) with any new funding beyond 2020/21 being subject to the 2020 Spending Review with possible revisions to the scheme too. The MTFP does not therefore assume any new allocations of New Homes Bonus beyond 2020/21; however, it does include the continuation for 4 years of those allocations received in previous years. **Revisions to the New Homes Bonus scheme are expected alongside the Fair Funding Review and changes to Business Rates Retention. It should be anticipated that there may be changes to the scheme that reduce the amount of grant that may be awarded in the future.**

Details of allocations included in the MTFP as shown in the table below:

Allocation Year	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000
2015/16						
2016/17	(480)					
2017/18	(476)	(476)				
2018/19	(259)	(259)	(259)			
2019/20	(351)	(351)	(351)	(351)		
2020/21		(408)	?	?	?	?
2021/22			?	?	?	?
2022/23				?	?	?
Total	(1,566)	(1,494)	(610)	(351)	0	0

Table 9: New Homes Bonus

6.3.2 Housing Benefit Admin Grant

The Council receives grant funding towards Housing Benefit Administration. The Council currently has a recurring budget of £423,500 for this grant. Allocations are received on an annual basis. However, it is likely that this grant will eventually reduce with the onset of Universal Credit and the resultant downsizing of Housing Benefit Administration by the Council. This reduction in grant will need to be considered in line with any reductions in workload associated with any transition.

7.0 Assumptions

7.1 The MTFP includes assumptions regarding the main items of income and expenditure. Some of these assumptions have been previously explained, e.g. Government Funding and Council Tax. The following sections provide further details of the assumptions currently included in the MTFP. Any deviation from these assumptions will be included in the budget process for 2021/22 as pressures or savings.

7.2 Pay

- Annual increase in MTFP **2%**
- Salary Turnover Savings **£442,100**
- Pension Contribution Rate (Current Service) **19.9%**
- Sensitivity & Risk Analysis:

	Base Level	Sensitivity		
	£000	+/-1%	+/-2%	+/-3%
Pay Award (£000)	14,148	141	283	424
Pension Contribution (£000)	1,769	18	35	53
		Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
<u>Pay Award</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				
<u>Salary Turnover</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				
<u>Pensions</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				

- Key Considerations:
 - The pay award for 2020/21 has not yet been agreed. 2% is factored into the MTFP.
 - Implications of the triennial pension revaluation for 2020 are incorporated into the budget.

7.3 **General Inflation**

- Annual increase in MTFP for expenditure **2%**
- Annual increase in MTFP for Income **3%**
- Sensitivity & Risk Analysis:

	Base Level	Sensitivity		
	£000	+/-1%	+/-2%	+/-3%
Expenditure (£000)	8,967	90	179	269
Income (£000)	(4,623)	-46	-92	-139
		Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
<u>Pay Award</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				
<u>Salary Turnover</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				

- Key Considerations:
 - Inflation level of 2% is set at the Bank of England target for inflation.

7.4 **Investment Income**

- Investment Returns –

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Investments	0.30%	0.30%	0.50%	0.95%	1.33%
Property Fund	4.00%	40.00%	4.00%	4.00%	4.00%

	Base Level	Sensitivity		
	£000	+/-1%	+/-2%	+/-3%
Treasury Income (£000)	30,956	310	619	929
Property Fund Income (£000)	3,383	34	68	101
		Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
<u>Investment Income</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				
<u>Property Fund Income</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				
<u>Average Balances</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				

- Key Considerations:
 - Use of and Contribution to Reserves will impact on average balances and subsequently investment return achieved.
 - Capital Investment decisions will affect the Capital Financing Requirement and average balances
 - The investment returns used when the budget was set in February 2020 will need to be updated given current guidance on when interest rates are expected to change.

7.5 **Borrowing**

- Assumed Borrowing - 2020/21 **£22.0m**
- Assumed Borrowing Rate - 2020/21 **2.25% - 2.46%**

Borrowing assumptions are based on a Principal (capital) and Interest repayment loan

- Assumed Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) & Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP):

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CFR	7,342	13,020	39,943	39,389	39,251
MRP	-	-	150	957	941

	Base Level	Sensitivity		
	£000	+/-1%	+2%	+/-3%
Borrowing Rate (£000)	22,000	220	440	660
MRP	0	0	0	0
		Risk		
		High	Medium	Low
<u>Increase to Borrowing Rate</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				
<u>Increase to CFR</u>				
Likelihood of Change				
Impact of Change				

- Key Considerations:
 - Borrowing assumed in MTFP for Leisure facilities, Gateway 44 and Southern Relief Road
 - Any future Capital Programme decisions will likely require a borrowing requirement, either internal or external which will have an impact on the revenue budget
 - Re-profiling of anticipated capital receipts will impact on CFR, and subsequently MRP charge

8.0 Appendices

Appendix A – Risk Assessment of Minimum Level of General Fund Reserve 2020/21

Potential Risk	Financial Impact	Financial Exposure (£000)	Probability	Weighting	Risk Score	Balance Required (£000)	Comment (Basis of Financial Exposure)
Base Budget Contingency for inflation or other unanticipated rise.	2	132	2	50%	4	66	1% of Net Revenue Recurring Budget
Underachievement of Charges Income targets and spending exceeds budgets	3	225	3	75%	9	169	5% Charges Income forecasts for 2019/20
Underachievement of Investment Income	2	95	1	25%	2	24	0.5% of exposure of average balance of £19m
Insurance Excesses	2	500	2	50%	4	250	Based on maximum excess for flood (£500k)
Fall in Rental Income from Property	3	215	1	25%	3	54	5% of Rental Income (assumed at £4.5m for 2019/20)
Transformation not met	4	1,134	2	50%	8	567	Transformation savings still to be agreed
Loss of Income from Retained Business Rates	4	1,154	3	75%	12	866	Safety Net Threshold for Business Rates Retention Scheme + Business Rate Pooling
Additional Redundancy Costs	3	200	2	50%	6	100	Not met from Transformation Reserve
Emergency Contingency	4	1,000	4	100%	16	1,000	Emergency contingency fund - Council practice to allocate £1m for any unforeseen emergencies
TOTALS		4,656				3,095	
Maximum Risk Based Reserve Balances						4,656	
Minimum Risk Based Reserve Balances						1,164	
Current Level of Reserves (Projected as at 31/03/21) (General Fund including carry forward reserve)						3,063	
Projected Shortfall/(Excess) of Current Reserve Balance over Risk Based Reserves						-32	

Appendix B – Reserves & Provisions

Reserves

Reserve	Balance 31/3/20	Purpose	Conditions of Use	Future of the Reserve
<i>Capital Reserves</i>				
Usable Capital Receipts	0	To provide funds to support the capital programme	Capital receipts can only be used to support capital spending or the repayment of debt. Management of the use of the receipts rests with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources but approval of their use must be given by Council.	
Lanes Capital Reserve	75	To provide funds to meet potential exceptional capital works under the terms of the lease agreement.	Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services who will be responsible for developing proposals requiring funding from the reserve. Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Council.	This reserve is still required
<i>Revenue Reserves</i>				
General Fund Reserve	3,100	To be a general working capital / contingency to cushion the Council against unexpected events and emergencies	<p>Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources. The use of the reserve is dependent on judgements taken when setting the Council's revenue budget on: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cash Flow requirements - Inflation and interest rates - Demand Led Budget Pressures - Efficiency and Productivity Savings - The Availability of funds to deal with major unexpected events or emergencies - Risks arising from significant new funding partnerships, major outsourcing arrangements or major capital developments <p>Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Council as part of the budget process, or through</p>	This reserve is still required

Reserve	Balance 31/3/20	Purpose	Conditions of Use	Future of the Reserve
			<p>consideration of supplementary estimates on an ad-hoc basis</p> <p>Where there is a critical need to access the emergency element of the Fund of 825£1m on the grounds of protection of persons or property or in any way safeguard the interests of the Council then this can be accessed through agreement with the Leader, Portfolio Holder and Leader of Main Opposition party and will be reported to the next available Council meeting</p>	
Projects Reserve	836	The balance at 31 st March shall be earmarked to support potential revenue budget shortfalls identified by the Medium-Term Financial Plan. Additions to the balances thereafter can be used either to support revenue budget shortfalls or projects within the Council's capital programme	Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources. Funding for the Reserve will be provided by windfall gains over and above those required to maintain the General Fund at its approved level and balances on reserves that are no longer needed. Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Council either as part of the budget process, or through consideration of supplementary estimates on an ad-hoc basis.	This reserve is still required
Carry Forward Reserve	654	To establish a reserve to hold carry forward budgets. Any expenditure in relation to a carry forward listed below will if possible be funded from base budgets but can be called from this reserve if the section is likely to be in an overspend position at year end.	Management of the Reserve rests with Corporate Director of Finance and Resources. Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and/or The Chief Executive.	This reserve has been reviewed and re-allocated to specific projects

Reserve	Balance 31/3/20	Purpose	Conditions of Use	Future of the Reserve
Building Control Reserve	100	To provide funds for improvements to the delivery of the Building Control function.	Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Economic Development. The balance is ring-fenced by statute to support improvements to the Building Control Service and is not available for general use by the Council. Funding is provided from surpluses generated by the service annually. Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by Corporate Director of Economic Development via an Officer Decision Notice	This reserve is still required
Conservation Reserve	0	To purchase historic buildings at risk or fund repairs and / or improvements to historic buildings	Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Economic Development. Funding is provided from the sale of property. Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Executive of the Council.	This reserve is still required
Cremator Reserve	1,080	To build up resources to replace cremators when required	Management of the reserve rests with the Deputy Chief Executive. Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Executive of the Council.	This reserve is still required
City Centre Reserve	5	To establish a reserve for the future Festive Lighting Programme.	Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by an Officer Decision Notice by The Chief Executive in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.	This reserve is still required
Repairs & Renewals Reserve	0	To establish a Repairs and Renewals Fund that can be used for revenue and capital items in the future, e.g. ICT, Vehicles	Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by the Executive of the Council.	This reserve is still required
Flood Reserve	1,948	There are likely to be further costs that are not recoverable from insurers and it is proposed to establish a new reserve to contribute to these costs.	Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources with the use of the Reserve requiring an Officer Decision notice by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.	This reserve is still required and will be released in 2020/21 to support the reinstatement of the Civic Centre

Reserve	Balance 31/3/20	Purpose	Conditions of Use	Future of the Reserve
Prosecutions Reserve	36	For future anticipated Barrister & legal fees	Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by an Officer Decision Notice by the Corporate Director of Governance & Regulatory Services in consultation with the Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder & Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.	This reserve is still required
Revenues Grants Reserve	1,939	To hold grant funds received by the Council which have not yet been utilised.	Approval to release funds from the reserve only be given by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the relevant Chief Officer.	This reserve is still required but should be subject to a review to determine if all balances held therein are still required
Planning Services Reserve	196	To establish a reserve for the 20% uplift on the new planning fees which are to be spent on the planning service to improve performance.	Approval to release funds from the reserve can only be given by an Officer Decision Notice by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Corporate Director of Economic Development, Portfolio Holder & Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.	This reserve is still required
Apprenticeship Reserve	78	To establish a reserve for the committed balances from the annual Apprentice Infrastructure budget that will be required in future years of the employment contracts.	Management of the Reserve Rests with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources. Approval to release funds from the reserve only be given by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the relevant Chief Officer.	This reserve is still required
Waverley Viaduct Reserve	30	To earmark funds towards the development of the Waverley Viaduct	Management of the Reserve Rests with the Corporate Director of Governance & Regulatory Services. Approval to release funds from the reserve only be given by the Corporate Director of Governance & Regulatory Services.	New Reserve
BRR Volatility Reserve	0	To cushion against losses in Business Rate income as a result of being part of the Cumbria Business Rates Pool	Management of the reserve rests with the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources with the use of the Reserve requiring an Officer Decision notice by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources.	This reserve is still required

Provisions

Provision	Balance 31/3/20	Purpose	Future of the Provision
Business Rate Appeals	1,321	To provide an amount for settling outstanding appeals made against business rate liabilities by ratepayers. This amount represents the Council's 40% share of total appeals under business rate retention. This amount is charged against the Collection Fund when settled.	The provision is reviewed annually as part of the closure of accounts and adjusted according to the outstanding estimated appeals anticipated.
Insurance Provision	156	To provide an amount for settling outstanding insurance claims taking into account excesses to be paid by the Council and claims to be settled by insurers. The provision at 31 March 2019 also included amounts relating to excess payments due as part of the flood claim.	The provision is reviewed annually as part of the closure of accounts and adjusted according to the outstanding insurance claims at 31 March. Any reductions in to the provision are credited back to general fund and any increases required are charged to general fund as part of the outturn.
Rickergate Ringfenced Account	176	This provision was established to hold the net income received from properties acquired with NWDA funding in Rickergate. Funding was received to acquire the properties and the funding agreement obliged the Council to ring-fence the rental income achieved on the properties pending the final outcome for development of the area. There is therefore a potential obligation to repay these sums if no development occurs.	This provision is reviewed annually and the income generated in the year is added to the balance carried forward. Therefore, the provision is still required.
Land Charges Provision	34	This provision was established to provide a sum to settle claims against the Council for overpaid land charges. A national claim was brought forward that argued that Council's had overcharged for Land Charges in previous years.	This Provision is still required for land and property initiatives
Cemeteries Perpetuity Fund	75	This provision was established to maintain and repair cemetery headstones where owners cannot be contacted.	This Provision is still required
Licencing Appeals	20	This provision was established to provide a sum for settling costs associated with appeals to licensing decisions.	This Provision is still required

Provision	Balance 31/3/20	Purpose	Future of the Provision
Licensing Taxi Plates	7	This provision was established to hold sums paid for Taxi plate deposits	This Provision is still required
Standards Committee Complaints Provision	10	This provision was established to provide a sum for settling costs associated with complaints made from Standards Committee decisions.	This Provision is still required
Property Deposits	1	These provisions hold deposits made to the Council for property (e.g. grazing land), enterprise centre and market by tenants. If tenants vacate deposits are repaid.	This Provision is still required
Market Hall Deposits	9	These provisions hold deposits made to the Council for property (e.g. grazing land), enterprise centre and market by tenants. If tenants vacate deposits are repaid.	This Provision is still required
Enterprise Centre Deposits	9	These provisions hold deposits made to the Council for property (e.g. grazing land), enterprise centre and market by tenants. If tenants vacate deposits are repaid.	This Provision is still required
Civil Penalties	23	To establish a provision in relation to costs to be funded from Civil Penalties income in accordance with the Housing & Planning Act 2016.	New Provision
Working Time Directive	62	To establish a provision in relation to costs associated with the Working Time Directives.	New Provision
Bequests	18	These provisions hold balances in relation to bequests made to the Council. The Parker bequest was established in 1954 and was to benefit disabled children and other young residents of the City. The District Nursing Amenity Fund was established to provide amenities for nurses homes and retirement allowances to nurses.	These provisions are still required; however it is recommended that these provisions be reviewed to determine how best they can be utilised in line with their original purpose.

Appendix C - Corporate Charging Policy

This appendix sets out the corporate approach to the setting of fees and charges.

The Corporate Charging Policy applies to those fees and charges that the Council has control over and can set independently of any statutory provision. Any services where charges are set by Government or where services have to be self-financing are excluded from the Corporate Charging Policy.

The Corporate Charging Policy assumes that Income from fees included in the Charging Policy will increase by 1% above the inflation rate set for expenditure. For 2020/21 this equates to a 3% increase. The MTFP assumes that income will increase by 3% although this does not necessarily mean that charges have to increase by 3% as increases in demand could account for additional income.

Each service is required to consider how and to what extent each of the following applies to the fees and charges it proposes to set:

1. Objectives of Charge - Set out the principal objective(s) of setting the charge:

- Recover cost of service provision
- Generate Surplus Income (where permitted)
- Maintain existing service provision
- Fund service improvements or introduction of new service(s);
- Manage demand for service(s)
- Promote access to services for low-income households;
- Promote equity or fairness;
- Achieve wider strategic policy objectives (e.g. encouraging green policies);

2. Other factors influencing decisions on whether and how much to charge:

- The Council's historic approach to charging
- The views of local politicians, service users and taxpayers
- Other councils' and service providers approach to charging
- Levels of central government funding and policy objectives
- The Council's overall financial position
- Changes in demand for services
- Policy on Concessions
- Availability of powers to charge for discretionary services (e.g. pre-application planning advice)
- Central government policy objectives

3. Targeting Concessions - The following target groups should be considered:

- Persons over the age of 65
- Unemployed
- Young persons under the age of 18
- Students in full time higher education
- Community Groups
- Armed Forces Veterans
- Those in receipt of supplementary benefits, tax credits, attendance allowance, disability living allowance and other appropriate groups

4. Trading

The Council is empowered to sell goods or services to other public bodies or trade commercially through a company with non-public bodies. The objectives should be considered for relevant services (including Building Cleaning and Maintenance, Vehicle Maintenance, Grounds maintenance, Legal Services, Human Resources, IT, Payroll, Planning and Development Services) as follows to:

- Deliver services more strategically on an area-wide basis
- Achieving greater efficiency
- Capitalise on expertise within the council
- Utilise spare capacity
- Generate income
- Support service improvement

5. Value For Money

- Has charging been used as a tool for achieving strategic policy objectives?
- Has the optimum use of the power to charge been used?
- Has the impact of charging on user groups been monitored?
- Has charging secured improvements in value for money?
- Has charging been used as a tool to reduce increases in Council Tax?

Appendix D – Gross Expenditure Breakdown

	Original Budget 2020/21 £
Expenditure	
Employee Related	15,894,000
Premises Related	4,091,100
Transport Related	1,415,000
Supplies & Services	4,341,300
Third Party Payments	2,319,200
Transfer Payments	26,516,600
Support Services	12,113,100
Capital Financing Costs	2,470,100
Carry forward approvals	811,000
Recharges	(14,223,700)
Total Expenditure	55,747,700
Income	
Government Grants	(1,676,800)
Specific Grants	(27,013,400)
Other Grant/Reimbursements/Contributions	(1,846,400)
Interest	(265,700)
Customer and Client Receipts	(10,292,400)
Total Income	(41,094,700)
Net Budget Requirement	14,653,000
Funded By:	
Council Tax	(7,487,000)
Council Tax Surplus	(30,000)
Retained Business Rates	(3,468,900)
Business Rates Growth/Pooling	(2,400,000)
Reserves	(1,267,100)
Total Funding	(14,653,000)

Report to Executive

Agenda
Item:

A.2

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Finance, Governance and Resources
Key Decision: Yes: Recorded in the Notice Ref: KD15/20
Within Policy and Budget Framework: The YES
Public / Private: Public

Title: DRAFT CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2021/22 - 2025/26
Report of: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES
Report Number: RD08/20

Purpose / Summary:

The Council's draft Capital Investment Strategy is intended to direct the Council's Capital Programme and the allocation of resources for the five-year period 2021/22 to 2025/26. The guidance in this strategy complements and supplements the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Following consideration by the Executive, the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel will consider the draft on 23 July, with final recommendations to Council on 08 September 2020.

Recommendations:

The Executive is asked to:

- (i) Comment on the draft Capital Investment Strategy for consideration by the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel on the 23 July 2020.

Tracking

Executive:	20 July 2020
Overview and Scrutiny:	23 July 2020
Executive	17 August 2020
Council:	08 September 2020

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Capital Investment Strategy is a key policy document, providing guidance on the Council's Capital Programme and the use of capital resources. The Strategy supplements guidance contained in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- 1.2 The Capital Investment Strategy is reviewed annually alongside the MTFP, starting with the assumptions made in the Budget Resolution approved by Council on 4 February 2020. This position has been updated to reflect any known changes since that date. The Strategy also incorporates the requirements under the Prudential Code 2017 to link capital investment with treasury management activity and service objectives.

2. KEY MESSAGES

- 2.1 The Capital Investment Strategy shows the starting position for the budget considerations for the next five years and gives an indication of the likely factors that will have an impact in the budget setting process. The Capital Programme and the financing of the programme are going to play an important role in shaping future budget considerations due to:
- The re-profiling of asset sales will be updated as part of the budget process, especially in regard to the timing and level of receipts as a result of COVID-19; this may have a significant impact on the revenue budget through the requirement to fund the capital programme with an additional borrowing requirement;
 - Additional Capital investment decisions will likely require revenue funding, either as a direct contribution from revenue reserves or through borrowing costs;
 - Impact of COVID-19 on the deliverability of capital projects.
- 2.2 Although there is a forecast borrowing requirement to fund the capital programme, there are some factors that will also need consideration. These are:
- Asset sales generating receipts over current estimate levels will reduce any borrowing requirement;
 - The ability to make a recurring revenue contribution to fund the capital programme will reduce any borrowing requirement;
 - A review of the current programme may relieve some of the expenditure pressures.

3. RISKS

- 3.1 The Capital Investment Strategy contains risk analysis of the issues that could potentially affect the budget and financial planning position.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The draft Capital Investment Strategy has been considered by the Senior Management Team and the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Resources.
- 4.2 The Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel will consider the report on 23 July 2020 and recommendations made to full Council on 08 September.

5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Executive is asked to:
Comment on the draft Capital Investment Strategy for consideration by the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel on the 23 July 2020.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The Capital Investment Strategy contains the current capital programme and how this aims to enhance the Carlisle area through the development of new infrastructure to both improve service delivery and provide additional facilities in the area.

Contact Officer: Alison Taylor

Ext: 7290

Appendices Appendix 1 – Capital Investment Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26
attached to report:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: • None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:

Legal – The Council has a fiduciary duty to manage its resources correctly. The Capital Investment Strategy is an important part of the budgetary process and seeks to ensure a planned and coordinated approach to the delivery of projects within the parameters of our financial resources.

Finance – contained within the report

Equality – Strategy includes expenditure forecast for Disabled Facility Grants

Information Governance - There are no Information Governance Implications

Property – The Capital Investment Strategy links with the Asset Management Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26 to provide details on how the City Council will utilise its property assets to assist with the Council's finances and the development of new infrastructure for the City.

Draft Capital Investment Strategy

Carlisle City Council

2021/22 to 2025/26

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Capital Investment Strategy is a key policy document for the Council and provides guidance on the Capital Programme and the use of capital resources and Asset Management Plans. The strategy reflects the links to other Council plans and is based on the guidance in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Capital Investment Strategy is written following guidance included in the Prudential Code (2017) and is required to be approved by Full Council.

The objectives of the Capital Investment Strategy are to:

- Provide an overview of the governance process for approval and monitoring of capital expenditure;
- Provide a longer-term view of capital expenditure plans;
- Provide an overview of asset management planning;
- Provide expectations around debt and use of internal borrowing to support capital expenditure;
- Define the authority's approach to commercial activities including due diligence and risk appetite;
- Defines the available knowledge and skills to the authority in relation to capital investment activities.

- 1.2 Capital spending is strictly defined and is principally incurred in buying, constructing or improving physical assets such as buildings, land and vehicles, plant and machinery. It also includes grants and advances to be used for capital purposes. The Council's policy on capitalisation is included in the Accounting Policies of the Statement of Accounts. The policy states that items of vehicle, plant and equipment over £5,000 will be capitalised and expenditure on land, buildings and other structures over £20,000 will be capitalised. Expenditure under these limits is deemed to be a revenue cost.

1.3 **Evaluation and Monitoring of Capital Projects**

The evaluation and monitoring of capital projects is important to enable the Council to determine:

- If projects have met their individual objectives for service provision,
- If projects have been delivered on time and to budget, or whether lessons need to be learned to improve processes in the future,
- If projects have contributed to the overall aims and objectives of the Council.

1.4 To assist with these processes, the Council has a series of procedures in place as a capital project develops. These consist of: -

- Consideration of all aspects of a capital project by the Transformation Sub-Group, comprising senior officers of the Council, whose purpose is to lead on the prioritisation of capital investment through the consideration of business cases and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of individual capital projects. All proposals for investment will be submitted to members for consideration as part of the normal budget process.
- The development of a risk-assessed project plan for every project, which is subject to regular monitoring against key milestones by a nominated project officer.
- Changes to capital budgets, scheme costs, the inclusion or removal of individual schemes and information on remedial action needed to bring projects back on track are reported to Council as required.
- The Senior Management Team and the Executive receive quarterly monitoring reports on the Capital Programme to review progress on the delivery of projects. This process also includes the evaluation of completed capital projects to assess if their individual aims and objectives have been met, and makes recommendations where necessary to improve the delivery of similar projects in the future.
- The Council's Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel also critically examines the performance in delivering capital projects on a quarterly basis.

1.5 **Current Asset Portfolio**

The Council holds a significant asset portfolio that supports both its operational activities and non-operational activities from which it receives significant rental income.

The rental income it receives is used to support Council services and provides a significant proportion of the income it receives. The income from rentals on the non-operational asset portfolio is approximately 60% of what the Council receives in funding from Council Tax.

Asset Category	Valuation 31/03/20 £000	Rental Income £000	Other Income £000	Total Income 20/21 £000
Investment Property	79,905	4,118	0	4,118
Surplus Assets	961	0	0	0
Land & Buildings	32,255	0	3,924	3,924
Infrastructure	5,114	0	0	0
Community Assets	4,128	24	0	24
Dwellings	201	0	0	0
Vehicles Plant & Equipment	5,896	0	0	0
Heritage	19,502	0	0	0
Assets Under Construction	4,218	0	0	0
TOTAL	152,180	4,142	3,924	8,066

Investment Property (Non-Operational)

These assets include Industrial Estates, land held for capital appreciation and rental income, Lanes Shopping Centre

Surplus Assets (Non-Operational)

These assets include land held that do not generate significant rental incomes or are held for capital appreciation

Assets Held for Sale (Non-Operational)

This relates to assets that have been identified for sale and are in the process of being disposed at the Balance Sheet date.

Land & Buildings (Operational)

These are operational properties that are used to deliver council services and include Council accommodation, community centres, car parks and hostels

Infrastructure (Operational)

These assets include bridges and footpaths

Community Assets (Operational)

These assets include parks and open spaces

Dwellings (Operational)

These assets are primarily homeshares used by the homelessness service

Vehicles, Plant and Equipment (Operational)

These assets are used in the delivery of Council services and include all Council owned vehicles, IT equipment, play equipment and green spaces equipment

Heritage (Operational)

These assets relate to items of heritage and include the Tullie House Museum Collection and statues and monuments.

Assets Under Construction (Non-Operational)

These are assets that are in the course of construction but have not yet been completed.

The assets held on the balance sheet are offset by the long-term debt currently held on the balance sheet. As at 31 March 2020, this totalled £29million, which represents a debt cover ratio of 18.9%.

2.0 Financial Principles supporting the Capital Strategy

2.1 Capital expenditure is to be incurred in line with Financial Procedure Rules as follows:

- The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources is responsible for ensuring that a capital programme is prepared on an annual basis for consideration by the Executive before submission to the Council (FPR2.14);
- Capital Programme – Key controls and responsibilities of the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and Corporate Directors (B.51 – B66).

2.2 The key principles to be applied to the Capital Investment Strategy are set out below:

- Capital resources are held corporately and are allocated according to the priorities set out in the Carlisle Plan (i.e. there is no automatic ring-fencing of resources for specific purposes with the exception of the repayment of Renovation grants);
- Capital receipts will be allocated in accordance with Council priorities;
- Specific repayments of Renovation Grants will be reinvested in the programme and be used to support Private Sector Renewal Grants;
- Income generated from the sale of vehicles, plant and equipment will be reinvested in the programme and be used initially to fund future replacements;
- The Council will seek to maximise the use of grants and external funding;
- The Council is committed to deliver capital investment with partners to maximise benefits where this fits with Council priorities;
- Redirection of capital resources from one project to another will be contained within existing budgets, unless increases can be justified through the budget process;
- Capital budgets are generally cash-limited i.e. no provision is made for inflation which effectively means that over time there is a real reduction in the value of resources allocated to specific capital projects;
- Council Tax increases will be limited to fair and reasonable levels. This requires a full assessment of the revenue consequences of capital projects and their respective methods of finance;
- Any shortfall against the capital receipts forecast to be received will have significant implications on the ability to deliver the forecast levels of investment without incurring borrowing;

- Review of capital financing decisions which will likely have a revenue budget impact due to lack of capital resources (E.g. through re-profiling of capital receipts and borrowing);
- Review the Asset Review Business Plan to see if any asset sales can be re-profiled and whether expected proceeds require revisions;
- In order to reduce the exposure of the council to a borrowing requirement the following steps should continue to be examined:
 - Review of existing capital programme to ensure that schemes are still required and are accurate;
 - Maximisation of the use of grants and contributions from external sources;
 - Providing a recurring revenue contribution to the capital programme;
 - Invest to save schemes that can repay the capital investment over a period of time.

Capital Investment Assumptions:

- *The current capital programme is forecast to utilise all forecast capital receipts and includes a borrowing requirement to fund the planned programme.*

2.3 **Carlisle Plan and Other Council Strategies, Plans and Policies**

The Carlisle Plan forms part of the Policy and Budgetary Framework for the Council. These frameworks work together to create the strategic framework.

The Capital Strategy must both support and inform the Council's vision for the Carlisle area and the strategic direction set out in the Carlisle Plan. This is to enable resources to be matched against the agreed priorities and any other supporting needs.

The Capital Investment Strategy takes account of other Council Plans and Strategies of the Council, which have a potential impact on the use of resources by the Council. Particularly consideration is given to the following key strategies:

- The Medium-Term Financial Plan, which provides information on the proposed revenue budget and considerations that will impact on future budgets.
- The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy, which sets out the

assumptions for financing requirements and interest rates and their effect on the revenue budget.

- The Asset Management Plan, which provides forecasts of necessary investment in the Council's land and property portfolio.
- The Procurement and Commissioning Strategy.
- Local Plan/Local Development Framework.
- The ICT Strategy.
- The Organisational Development Plan, which highlights the need for a thorough review of the Council's staffing needs and skill levels to ensure that the Council improves its performance to deliver excellent services to the local community in the future.
- There are also a number of strategies, which set out policy direction for key Council priority areas, and these include the Economic Strategy, and Housing Strategy.
- Directorate Service Plans will be used to inform the budget setting process and identify key strategic and operational objectives and the resources required to deliver those.

3.0 Capital Expenditure

3.1 Capital Investment Priorities

The Capital Investment Strategy needs to ensure that any capital investment decisions are both affordable and achieve the priorities as set out in the Carlisle Plan. The Council is at a point where capital resources have become scarce and as such any investment in assets will have implications on the revenue budget.

The Capital Investment Strategy must therefore recognise the implications of capital investment decisions and ensure that they are in line with Council priorities and financing requirements are robustly evaluated and understood.

The current capital programme includes provision for investment in new Leisure facilities at £25.5million primarily funded from borrowing that will be offset by a reduction in the subsidy payable on the Leisure contract. The programme also includes provision for Gateway 44 investment and Carlisle Southern Relief Road.

Other capital investment opportunities may present themselves over the lifetime of the MTFP; each will be subject to further business cases on investment opportunities and the benefits that could be made from those investments.

All business cases will be subject to the usual due diligence to ensure that they afford the best value for money for the Council, align with its core priorities and do not expose the Council to unnecessary risk that could put future delivery of services in jeopardy. Further details on the Council's attitude to risk and due diligence is given at section 5 (Commercial Activity).

The table below shows the current capital resources before any new decisions around capital investment are made.

	Budget	Forecasts				
	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Borrowing Requirement B/Fwd	2,711					
Estimated resources available in year (Table 3)	(9,555)	(6,204)	(2,454)	(2,454)	(2,899)	(2,454)
Proposed Programme (Table 2)	29,896	10,387	7,996	2,869	3,714	2,866
(Surplus Capital Resources) / Borrowing Requirement - Cumulative	23,052	27,235	32,777	33,192	34,007	34,419

Table 1: Current Capital resources

3.2 **Current Expenditure Forecast**

The Council approved the current forecast for the period 2020/21 to 2024/25 in February 2020 and details are shown below adjusted for the outturn from 2019/20 and also for decisions made in relation to capital investment between April and June 2020.

	Budget	Forecasts				
	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Disabled Facilities Grants	2,865	1,467	1,467	1,467	1,467	1,467
Vehicles Plant & Equipment	1,532	1,215	1,158	976	1,851	1,003
Property Enhancements	377	250	250	250	250	250
ICT Strategy	311	101	76	131	101	101
Recycling Containers	45	45	45	45	45	45
Play Area Developments	83	0	0	0	0	0
Gateway 44	4,622	0	0	0	0	0
Bits Park Flood reinstatement	22	0	0	0	0	0
Planning Software	150	0	0	0	0	0
Cemetery Infrastructure	36	0	0	0	0	0
Open Space Improvements	81	0	0	0	0	0
Minor Works Grants	23	0	0	0	0	0
Carlisle Southern Relief Road	0	0	5,000	0	0	0
On Street Charging Points Infrastructure	204	0	0	0	0	0
Civic Centre Development	2,581	1,021	0	0	0	0
Savings to be identified	0	(200)	0	0	0	0
LED Footway Lighting Installation	203	0	0	0	0	0
Skew Bridge Deck	70	0	0	0	0	0
Central Plaza	12	0	0	0	0	0
Leisure Facilities	16,679	6,488	0	0	0	0
Total Programme	29,896	10,387	7,996	2,869	3,714	2,866

Table 2: Current Capital Programme

3.3 **Current Resource Forecasts**

The Council's capital programme can be financed, (or paid for), through a variety of sources and the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources will make recommendations on the most effective way of financing the Capital Programme to optimise the overall use of resources. The availability of staff resources to deliver the approved programme will need to be considered during the budget process. Table 3 shows the estimated level of capital resources, which will be generated over the next five years.

	Budget	Forecasts				
	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Capital Grants & Contributions	4,254	1,467	1,467	1,467	1,467	1,467
Capital Receipts (Asset Review)	2,078	3,750	0	0	445	0
Revenue Financing	3,223	987	987	987	987	987
Total Resources Receivable in Year	9,555	6,204	2,454	2,454	2,899	2,454
Borrowing Requirement (in Year)	20,341	4,183	5,542	415	815	412

Table 3: Current Proposed Resources

There is a further £112,000 held within capital grants unapplied account that is not currently allocated to fund specific projects and is therefore not included within the figures above or the opening balances. These can only be utilised on projects linked to the original grant allocations. £750,000 has also been received in relation to a specific Cumbria LEP funded scheme which is not yet in the current programme.

3.3.1 **Capital Grants**

The Council receives one primary capital grant from central government to support its role in providing Disabled Facilities Grants. For 2020/21 the Council has budgeted to receive £1,467,300 which will increase to £1,899,800 now that the 2020/21 allocation has been confirmed. The grant continues to be distributed through the County Council, as the Better Care provider, who then allocates funding to the District Councils.

3.3.2 **Revenue Contributions and Reserves**

The capital programme can also be financed through the use of reserves (both capital and revenue) although revenue contributions will have an overall effect on the General Fund revenue budget

3.3.3 Capital Receipts

Capital Receipts arise principally from the sale of Council capital assets.

The sale of assets as part of the Asset Review are now utilised to support the Capital Programme in the Capital Strategy. Sales of £2.078million are included in the Capital programme to be achieved in 2020/21.

3.3.4 Borrowing Requirement

The borrowing requirement includes £34m (external) borrowing over the next five years for the funding of Leisure Facilities, Gateway 44 project and Carlisle Southern Relief Road and this is to be paid for through a reduction in the Leisure contract fee, increased income and developer contributions.

3.4 Asset Management

A separate Asset Management Plan is produced annually by the Council that outlines the ongoing asset management requirements to maintain the property portfolio. This Plan is considered alongside the MTFP and the Capital Investment Strategy.

The Council also maintains a vehicle Plant and Equipment Replacement Plan which outlines the anticipated replacement lifecycle for the main items of fleet it requires to operate services. This plan is updated annually and is fed into the budget process to determine the capital requirement.

4.0 Debt, Borrowing and Treasury Management

4.1 **Borrowing**

Rules on borrowing have been relaxed since the introduction of the Prudential Code in April 2004 with authorities now able to borrow as much as it wishes provided that it can afford the repayments from its revenue budget.

The Council has identified that it may need to borrow £34million to fund the current capital programme to support the development of Leisure Facilities, Gateway 44 project and Carlisle Southern Relief Road. The cost of this borrowing is included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan and is also offset by a corresponding savings from the Council's Leisure Contract, increased income and developer contributions.

Borrowing can be undertaken through external loans with, for example, the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb), or can be undertaken by utilising internal resources, i.e. investment balances. This is known as internal borrowing.

The Corporate Director of Finance and Resources is delegated with responsibility for the financing of the capital programme and as such may make borrowing decisions based upon interest rates, the Council's cash flow projections and other economic factors, in order to optimise the overall use of resources. External advice will be sought from the Council's Treasury advisors, Link, if necessary.

In order to reduce the exposure of the council to a borrowing requirement the following steps should be examined when determining proposed capital programmes:

- Fundamental review of existing capital programme to ensure schemes are still required and are accurate;
- Maximisation of the use of grants and contributions from external sources;
- Providing a recurring revenue contribution to the capital programme;
- Invest to save schemes that can repay the capital investment over a period of time.

Where possible the Council will attempt to avoid using any debt financing for capital projects, however, it recognises that this is not always possible. In cases where debt financing is unavoidable, the Council will consider robust business cases to ensure the servicing of debt costs can be adequately met

from revenue resources without having an adverse impact on service delivery. Where possible, debt will be repaid at the earliest opportunity, and the type of borrowing undertaken will always reflect the need the Council has at the point in time it is taken out. The Council will look to repay all borrowing either before or upon its actual maturity profile.

4.2 **The Capital Financing Requirement**

The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) represents the Council's underlying need to borrow. This is different to any actual borrowing. If the Council generates the same amount of resources in a year to meet its capital expenditure requirements, then there is no change to the CFR. However, if the Council spends more than the resources it generates in year, the CFR will increase as in effect the Council has created a borrowing requirement to bridge the gap in the resources it needs and the resources it has.

Although the CFR does not necessarily reflect actual borrowing taken from an external source, it can reflect the use of internal cash resources, i.e. internal borrowing.

Where the Council has a positive CFR, i.e. an underlying need to borrow, it must make provision to repay that 'debt', or repay the cash used through internal borrowing. This is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). The Council's current policy, as set out in the MRP Strategy is to charge MRP on a straight-line basis at 3% of the CFR. As MRP is a non-cash transaction it has the effect of increasing the cash balance of the Council.

The current forecast for the CFR and MRP based on the current capital programme is as follows:

	Budget	Forecasts				
	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Total Capital Expenditure	29,896	10,387	7,996	2,869	3,714	2,866
Capital Resources Receivable in Year	(9,555)	(6,204)	(2,454)	(2,454)	(2,899)	(2,454)
MRP & Repayment of Debt	(12)	(12)	(158)	(969)	(953)	(1,188)
Change in Underlying need to borrow	20,329	4,171	5,384	(554)	(138)	(776)
CFR Brought Forward	14,485	34,814	38,985	44,369	43,815	43,677
CFR Carried Forward	34,814	38,985	44,369	43,815	43,677	42,901
Adjustment A Revision	(4,426)	(4,426)	(4,426)	(4,426)	(4,426)	(4,426)
Adjustment for Assets Under Construction	(23,046)	(21,539)	0	0	0	0
CFR FOR MRP PURPOSES	7,342	13,020	39,943	39,389	39,251	38,475

Table 6: Capital Financing Requirement

4.3 Investment and Reserve Balances

An important consideration to understand when making capital investment decisions, especially when a borrowing requirement exists is the relationship between the Council's available cash investment balances and its reserves.

At 31 March 2020, the Council had cash and investments of £30.956million. If all revenue and capital budgets are spent in line with the budget and all receipts are received in line with expectations then at 31 March 2021, investment balances would be £12.3million. The following table shows the breakdown of the investment balance and what the cash relates to:

	Outturn	Forecasts					
	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
Total Investments	30,956	12,349	6,547	4,647	3,741	2,477	1,828
<i>Made up of:</i>							
General Fund Reserves	4,590	3,063	2,812	2,873	2,994	3,174	3,329
Capital Reserves	75	90	105	120	135	150	165
Earmarked Revenue Reserves	5,413	3,041	3,041	3,041	3,041	3,041	3,041
Provisions	2,552	2,552	2,552	2,552	2,552	2,552	2,552
Collection Fund Adj Account	1,101	1,101	1,101	1,101	1,101	1,101	1,101
Capital Grants Unapplied	136	136	136	136	136	136	136
Working Capital	2,799	2,799	2,799	2,799	2,799	2,799	2,799
Capital Receipts applied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Working Capital & Balances	16,666	12,782	12,546	12,622	12,758	12,953	13,123
Surplus Cash/(Cash Deficit)	14,290	(433)	(5,999)	(7,975)	(9,017)	(10,476)	(11,295)

Table 7: Investments and Reserves

The figures above are based on assumptions regarding budgets being fully spent with no over/under spends and reserves utilised as per current budget projections.

The surplus/deficit cash position represents how much of any borrowing requirement identified can be met from internal resources (internal borrowing) or how much will need to be met from actual external borrowing up to 2025/26.

This can also be shown when comparing the difference in the CFR (underlying need to borrow) and the actual borrowing level.

	Outturn	Forecasts					
	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000	2024/25 £000	2025/26 £000
CFR (Underlying Need to borrow)	14,485	34,814	38,985	44,366	43,813	43,677	42,901
Total Borrowing	28,775	34,381	32,986	36,391	34,796	33,201	31,606
(Over)/Under Borrowing Position	(14,290)	433	5,999	7,975	9,017	10,476	11,295
Less Capital Receipts Applied	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(Over)/Under Borrowing Position	(14,290)	433	5,999	7,975	9,017	10,476	11,295

Table 8: Borrowing position

Therefore, the Council is holding £14.290million of cash in its investment balances at 31 March 2020 that can be attributed to the amount of debt it

holds. Where actual debt is greater than the CFR, the Council holds this surplus cash in its investment balances and this is known as over-borrowing.

As the figures shown above are based on forecast levels of expenditure linked to current budgets and anticipated receipts, actual figures will vary in each year depending upon actual expenditure and income levels.

4.4 **Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary**

The Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary are set in line with the requirements of the Prudential Code and are included in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and approved by Council in February each year.

The Authorised Limit is consistent with the authority's current commitments, plans and proposals for capital expenditure and its financing. **However, the overall authorised limit should not be exceeded without prior Council approval.**

The operational boundary is based upon the same estimates as the authorised limit but without the headroom included within the authorised limit to allow for unusual cash movements. As with the authorised limit, the Council is asked to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources to effect movement between the separately agreed limits for borrowing and other long-term liabilities. The operational boundary can be exceeded in exceptional circumstances without prior Council approval providing that it remains within the authorised limit.

The limits shown below will be reviewed during the consultation process of the Capital Investment Strategy and recommendations will be made in the final versions to be considered by Council in September 2020 on adjusting the limits in line with the current projections for the CFR.

PRUDENTIAL INDICATOR TREASURY MANAGEMENT INDICATORS	2019/20 actual	2020/21 estimate	2021/22 estimate	2022/23 estimate	2023/24 estimate	2024/25 estimate
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Authorised Limit for External Debt:						
- Borrowing	44,000	44,000	43,000	42,000	40,000	39,000
- Other Long Term Liabilities	100	100	100	100	100	100
TOTAL	44,100	44,100	43,100	42,100	40,100	39,100
Operational Boundary for external debt:						
- Borrowing	39,000	39,000	38,000	37,000	35,000	34,000
- Other Long Term Liabilities	100	100	100	100	100	100
TOTAL	39,100	39,100	38,100	37,100	35,100	34,100

5.0 Commercial Activity

5.1 The Council has used its asset portfolio to operate in a commercial manner for many years. Much of the investment property portfolio is held on long term leases which provide a guaranteed rental return from the asset with regular rental review built into the terms of each lease. This way of operating therefore provides some certainty about the income levels receivable.

With reductions in funding the Council is having to look at commercial activities to supplement its income and support service delivery. However, to minimise risk of potential loss of income in the longer term it needs to ensure that any investment opportunities are based upon sound decision making that consider the future likelihood of investment income reducing.

Therefore, when making commercial investment decisions the Council will follow the principles set out below:

- Commercial capital investments will only be made to enhance the Council's asset portfolio and will be linked to the delivery of the Carlisle Plan;
- Consideration will be given to the economic development potential of any investment decision;
- Expert advice will be sought to ensure any investment decision is based upon sound market intelligence, forecasts for future investment returns and yields that offer a sound investment return without risking the capital invested;

- Any borrowing linked to investment opportunities is secured upon the potential guaranteed element of the investment return so that any liability can be met from the activity undertaken;
- Investment opportunities will always ensure that the Council's investment is protected as far as possible either through increases in capital value or from guaranteed revenue income;
- Capital investment decision will be subject to the usual governance processes of consideration by Executive, scrutiny by the appropriate panel and Council approval where a budget is required to be established.

6.0 Other Long-Term Liabilities

- 6.1 The Council currently holds a £15million stock issue loan that is due for redemption in 2020. This debt is factored into the Medium-Term Financial Plan to be re-financed in 2020 at a lower rate of interest. The loan is currently repayable at 8.75% and the MTFP assumes that the new borrowing will be at a lower interest rate, however, the actual rate achieved will depend on prevailing market rates at the time the loan is re-financed. The MTFP also assumes that any new loan will be taken on a principal repayment term so that the debt repaid fully once the new term ends.

7.0 Knowledge and Skills

7.1 The Council utilises the knowledge and skills of its internal officers when considering capital investment decisions and where necessary it also relies on the expert knowledge of specialist external advisors.

7.2 The Council employs professionally qualified legal, finance and property officers who are able to offer advice and guidance when considering any capital investment decisions.

7.3 **Finance**

Finance staff are professionally qualified to advise the Council on all financial aspects of capital decisions. They also have the necessary experience of how the Council works having been in post for a number of years. Finance staff also undertake Continuous Professional Development and the Council is an accredited body of the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountancy) CPD scheme. They maintain knowledge and skills through regular technical updates from appropriate bodies.

7.4 **Property**

The City Council's in-house property team is made up of a number of Chartered Surveyors who advise the Council on all property matters. They are all members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and comply with the RICS's rules in relation to Continuing Professional Development. The Property Services Manager is also an RICS Registered Valuer. The Council is a member of ACES – the Association of Chief Estates Surveyors and Property Managers in the Public Sector. The team have extensive property knowledge and have worked for the Council for a number of years.

7.5 **Legal**

Legal Staff are professionally qualified as either solicitors or legal executives and are regulated by their respective professional bodies (Solicitors Regulation Body/Institute of Legal Executives). The staff undertake Continuing Professional Development and their rules of conduct require that they have an appropriate level of skill and expertise to deal with the particular matter with which they are dealing. All staff are aware of the operational structure of the Council. They maintain knowledge and skills through regular technical updates from appropriate bodies.

7.6 **External Advice**

The Council uses external advisors where necessary in order to complement the knowledge its own officers hold. Some of these advisors are contracted on long term contracts or are appointed on an ad-hoc basis when necessary. The main advisors the Council uses are as follows:

- **Link Asset Services** – Treasury Management, including Cash investments, borrowing and capital financing
- **ChanceryGate** – Property and Asset Management and asset development opportunities in relation to Kingstown Industrial Estate

APPENDIX A**Capital Programme – Risk Assessment**

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Capital projects are approved without a full appraisal of the project and associated business case.	Remote	High	Strengthen the role of Transformation Sub-Group when considering capital project appraisals, to include consideration of business cases
Full capital and revenue costs of a project not identified.	Remote	High	Capital spending must meet statutory definitions. Financial Services to regularly review spending charged to capital. Appraisals to identify revenue costs, including whole life costs to improve financial planning.
VAT partial exemption rules are not considered.	Remote	High	Reduced impact following the decision to elect to tax land and property. To be considered as part of Project Appraisals and assessed by Financial Services.
Capital projects are not monitored nor reviewed (post contract) to ensure that the original business case assumptions have been achieved	Reasonably probable	Marginal	Better project management skills (including contract monitoring) have been introduced through PRINCE 2. Project managers to take more ownership and responsibility for the delivery of projects, including post contract reviews.
Capital projects are not delivered to time	Reasonably Probable	High	Significant slippage in the current capital programme. Better project management skills to be introduced through PRINCE 2. Project managers to take more ownership and responsibility for the delivery of projects. The review of the capital programme currently underway will address some of these issues.
Capital projects are not delivered to budget. Major variations in spending impact on the resources of the Council.	Reasonably Probable	High	Improved capital programme monitoring through PRINCE 2 and monthly financial monitoring. Corrective action to be put in place where necessary.
Assumptions on external funding for capital projects are unrealistic	Remote	High	Potential shortfalls arising from changes to external funding have to be met from other Council resources, so assumptions need to be backed by firm offers of funding before projects are submitted for appraisal. Risk increased due to uncertainty around funding, e.g. MHCLG grants
Spending subject to specific grant approvals e.g. housing improvement grants, disabled persons adaptations varies from budget	Remote	Marginal	Specific grants are generally cash limited so variations in projects supported by funding of this nature will be monitored closely to ensure target spend is achieved to avoid loss of grant or restrictions on subsequent years grant funding.
Shortfall in level of capital resources generated from Capital Receipts	Probable	High	Economic downturn will impact - early warning so as not to over commit capital resources.

Report to Executive

**Agenda
Item:**

A.3

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
 Portfolio: Finance, Governance and Resources
 Key Decision: YES: Recorded in the Notice Ref: KD. 13.20
 Within Policy and Budget Framework Yes
 Public / Private Public

Title: Draft Asset Management Plan 2021 to 2026
 Report of: The Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
 Report Number: GD 32.20

Purpose / Summary:

The Asset Management Plan is being updated to reflect the key issues and changes affecting the management and use of the City's property resources.

The Plan will also report on the current position and performance of the Portfolio, and the Asset Disposal Programme.

Recommendations:

The Executive notes the position and approves the update to the Draft Asset Management Plan in order for it to proceed for consideration by the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel, back to the Executive and then full Council.

Tracking

Executive:	20 th July 2020
Scrutiny:	23 rd July 2020
Executive:	17 th August 2020
Council:	8 th September 2020

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Council's property assets are one of the essential resources used to carry out our day to day business, generating income to support services, and delivering economic development goals and housing opportunities.
- 1.2. The Asset Management Plan (AMP) outlines how the Council's strategies and policies for its property portfolio are used to support corporate priorities and directorate service plans.
- 1.3. The AMP outlines the overall performance of the asset base, what it is costing and producing, and how it is being used and reviewed. It also takes account of, and links into, the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Capital Strategy (CS), which provides guidance on the Capital Programme and use of resources. The AMP is part of the Council's Budget.
- 1.4. For a number of years, the Council has been working towards the recommendations within the Asset Review Business Plan, approved by Council in January 2011. Along with the redefining of the Portfolio, the Business Plan proposed staffing and management structures should be realigned to provide the appropriate resources, skills and experience to run each category of asset. This has happened in the context of service transformation and is continually evolving.
- 1.5. An appraisal of the property portfolio identified a requirement to rationalise and consolidate assets and a programme of disposals has taken place to re-engineer the investment portfolio. A revised Disposal Programme was approved by the Executive in December 2018 with the aspiration to generate £10m in capital receipts.
- 1.6. Because of service transformation the Council has been looking at its operational assets. The Accommodation Review aims to more efficiently and cost effectively meet future service delivery, identifying savings and opportunities to generate additional income.
- 1.7. The AMP is reviewed annually and updated, along with the MTFP and CS, all documents forming part of the Council's Budget (Article 4 of the Constitution).

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The AMP provides a succinct document that reflects;
 - The Asset Review Business Plan & Disposal Programme – progress on the implementation and the impact on the Portfolio and its future management,
 - Structural changes in the portfolio – the makeup of the operational and non-operational assets, current capital worth and rental levels,

- Performance of the assets and how these are constantly reviewed and challenged,
- Condition of the Portfolio – the standard of our properties, current maintenance requirements, suitability and sustainability for future use, and the steps which are being taken to improve energy efficiency,
- Accommodation Review – the outcomes, achievements and next steps to improve the use and efficiency of our operational property portfolio,
- Capital Schemes and Maintenance Budget – where the money is going,
- Property acquisitions – what has been done to reinvest in assets to produce income, maintain service delivery, support economic development initiatives and deliver services,
- Future Asset Management Options at our Kingstown and Parkhouse estates, and
- How our Economic Development property portfolio is being managed to support economic growth.

3. RISKS

- 3.1 By having an Asset Management Plan the Council can ensure that it uses its assets efficiently and that they support the Council's priorities.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Internally via the Council's corporate structures and processes. The Draft Plan will go to Business and Transformation Overview & Scrutiny Panel on 23rd July for consideration, comment and feedback.

5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1.1. To update the Council's Asset Management Plan and the position of the property portfolio in the light of the Asset Review Business Plan and Disposal Programme and other corporate initiatives.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The proper management of the Council's property resource makes an essential contribution the achievement of the Council's action plans and priorities.

Contact Officer: Mark Walshe

Ext: 7427

Appendices attached to report: Draft Asset Management Plan 2021 - 2026

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL - The Council has a fiduciary duty to properly manage its assets and the Asset Management Plan is a vital part of this process. It is also a designated budget document in accordance with the Council's Budget & Policy framework and, as such, as the report indicates, it is required to follow the usual route of consideration by Scrutiny and, thereafter, recommendation by the Executive to the Council.

FINANCE – The Asset Management Plan provides details on the Council's asset portfolio and the issues around the management of these assets. This will be used to inform the Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting process for 2021/22 to 2025/26.

EQUALITY – None

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – N/A



Managing property as a resource for the City

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

2021 – 2026

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1. The Council

- 1.1 Carlisle City Council delivers services to around 108,000 people and for the year 2020/21 has a net revenue budget of £14.65 million and capital expenditure budget of £29.92 million. The Council uses its property resources to deliver services, either directly or through the rental income it earns, and improve the quality of life for local people.
- 1.2 The Council's asset base produces a rental income of around £4.46 million per annum, from its non-operational property, with a net asset value, taking account of depreciation, of circa £80 million.

2. Purpose, Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's approach to managing its land and property assets and aligns to Council's policies and strategies, particularly the Carlisle Plan, Directorate and Service Plans, the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy.
- 2.2 The aim is to own assets which are fit for purpose and sustainable, to enable services to be delivered effectively and with equality of access, and to meet the strategic objectives outlined below:
 - Identify all property the Council owns or uses, maintaining accurate records, establishing its value and the function it performs, ensuring a reliable and accurate property management system is in place.
 - Make services aware of the costs of occupying property, maximising the use of the asset base, identifying 'expensive' and 'obsolete' assets.
 - Respond to changing property needs for service delivery improvements, identifying improvements to assets or the asset base to enhance service delivery, disposing of assets no longer required for operational purposes and acquiring new assets to support service delivery.
 - Generate capital for investment purposes aligned to corporate objectives.
 - Ensure a healthy and safe environment for property users.

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- Apply “Green Design” principles to construction, refurbishment and maintenance projects and encourage environmentally sustainable management of operational properties.
- Encourage community and partnership use of assets by identifying opportunities for shared services, liaising with partners and working with the community.
- Contribute to the Council’s Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy, identifying investment opportunities.
- Provide sustainable planned maintenance programmes for a 5-year period by undertaking and reviewing condition surveys.

3. **Property Strategies and Principles**

3.1 The Council has developed the following strategies and principles:

- **Operational Property Investment Principles** – Investment will be made where a property is required for the medium or long-term use, enhances service delivery, improves environmental sustainability, improves utilisation, increases efficiency, adds value, and addresses statutory obligations.
- **Non-Operational Property Strategy** – to own property that supports the growth of Carlisle and the Economic Development Strategy, provides a sustainable income stream, is a key component of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- **Non-Operational Property Investment Principles** - commercial property will only be held where it provides an acceptable financial return, there is potential to deliver economic development objectives, it contributes to the delivery of other Council priorities, it addresses legal or contractual liabilities and obligations.
- **Surplus Property Strategy** – the Council will dispose of surplus assets on a freehold or leasehold basis at best consideration. Disposals at less than best consideration may be agreed subject to the necessary statutory and Council approvals.
- **Surplus Property Principles** - operational and non-operational property will be sold unless occupied for service provision, used to deliver social, housing, economic or environmental benefits meeting agreed priorities, or it is a long-term strategic investment.

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- **Property Acquisition Strategy** - the Council will acquire assets; that improve service delivery, assist with delivery of Economic Development policy, develop opportunities to assemble sites to deliver Council objectives, improve the financial returns and deliver the Asset Review Business Plan.
- **Property Acquisition Principles** - property will only be acquired where whole life costings and option appraisal exercises are undertaken and meet set target criteria around risk, income returns and yields.

4. **Value for money**

- 4.1 There is a Council-wide approach to managing assets as a corporate resource, using assets to help to deliver social, environmental and economic outcomes for local communities.
- 4.2 Collaborating with partner organisations on strategic asset management planning is an important requirement. The Council will continue to develop its strategic approach to working with other bodies to identify opportunities for shared use and alternative options for the management and ownership of its assets.

5. **Property Services**

- 5.1 Property Services are responsible for managing the City Council's extensive property portfolio. The multi-disciplinary team cover everything from ad-hoc property repairs to multi-million-pound developments such as the Sands Centre and Gateway 44. The service is supplemented by external resources when specialist assistance is required.
- 5.2 The property team face many challenges in supporting the Council with the competing pressures to deliver income whilst supporting the delivery of front-line services and realising ambitions for economic growth. Our aim is to provide a first-class property service for the City Council.

6. The Portfolio and Current Performance

6.1 Gross Asset Value as at 31 March 2020

	Operational assets		Non-operational assets		Total
	Community Assets	Land & Buildings	Investment	Surplus	
No of assets	72	64	52	13	201
Total income	£23,600	£3,923,800*	£4,118,600**	-	£8,066,000
Capital value	£4,128,000	£32,255,000	£79,905,000	£961,000	£117,249,000
Capital Expenditure	£51,691	£195,846	£168,930	-	£416,467
Outstanding Maintenance		£2,380,200	£2,000,000	-	£4,380,200
* Income from operational assets (i.e. car parks, crematorium, Civic Centre rents)					
** Rental income from investment assets					

6.2 The total capital spend on property assets in 2019/20 was £3.18 million.

6.3 The figure for the outstanding maintenance on the operational buildings is based on a costed 5-year plan. The condition surveys were last undertaken in the summer of 2018. The information which has been derived from the surveys has been considered to assess the current condition of the portfolio, whilst further having regard to the work undertaken during the same financial period. Outstanding maintenance has reduced from circa £2,587,300 to £2,380,200. The Pools continue to be removed from the programme given their impending closure as part of the Sands Centre redevelopment.

6.4 We are currently spending £250,000 p.a. to enhance our operational portfolio as detailed below in a bid to reduce the risk of major long-term capital expenditure being required.

6.5 Non-operational outstanding maintenance relates primarily to historical infrastructure costs associated with our industrial estate ground rent portfolio. We are currently in the process of reviewing the non-operational maintenance liability and anticipate that the level of outstanding maintenance will reduce given the asset

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disposals and investment undertaken at Durranhill and Kingstown Industrial Estates.

6.6 Outstanding Maintenance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Total Revenue Budget	£745,900	£760,700	£776,000	£791,500	807,400	823,500
Capital Schemes Special Projects	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Ratio Planned: Reactive Maintenance	76 : 24	76 : 24	76 : 24	76 :24	76:24	76:24

6.7 Based upon the final condition surveys, the annual planned maintenance programme has been further developed for the operational assets. As discussed above, there is unplanned maintenance currently assessed at £2,380,200 for the portfolio of operational buildings. The planned delivery programme to reduce this, incorporates a degree of flexibility to respond to the demands of service delivery, asset review, and other circumstances which may arise during the programme. Members approved a 3-year programme of planned and reactive maintenance on 18 November 2019 (report reference GD.62/19). In condition category terms the split is:-

Condition Category (as a % of Gross Internal Area Operational Property)			Sustainable Criteria
	2019-24	2020-25	
A. (Excellent)	0.73%	0.73%	Yes
B. (Good)	89.42%	89.42%	Yes
C. (Mediocre)	9.85%	9.85%	Review
D. (Poor)	0%	0%	No

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6.8 The table above shows the condition categories of the operational portfolio. There has been no overall change to the condition categorisation of operational assets over the last year as work undertaken has focused on addressing maintenance issues rather than improvements. The condition is continually reviewed and for over 90% of the portfolio classed as either excellent or good, is a testimony to the proactive management regime, which would otherwise leave the portfolio falling short of that required to provide the Council's services.

6.9 Energy Efficiency

6.10 A programme of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects has been carried out with significant investment in former years. We continue to look to incorporate energy efficiency measures as part of any improvement works. Projects are being considered to incorporate whole place energy efficiency measures where possible, in addition to that required to meet current building regulation standards.

6.11 The solar photovoltaic arrays at the Civic Centre and Sands Centre continue to be successful in terms of electricity generation and income received from the feed in tariff.

6.12 The operational and investment portfolio has been assessed to produce up to date Display Energy Certificates (DECS) or Energy Performance Certificates (EPCS) as legally required. This exercise has created an understanding of the implications of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) on the sale and let ability of the non-operational assets and provide a benchmark from which to improve the CO2 emissions of the publicly funded buildings.

6.13 The data forms part of the wider consideration of the asset management of the property portfolio and particularly when assessing the viability of the long-term use, maintenance and ownership of the assets.

6.14 Where assets have fallen below the required standard this has been assessed and maintenance work has been completed. On a larger scale Capital works are completed to meet the relevant building standards and where financially viable and opportunities are available additional initiatives are being incorporated to further improve the energy standard of the asset stock.

6.15 Capital Works and Repairs

6.16 The programme of works identified in the Capital Major Repairs Programme is initially shaped by a 5-year maintenance plan produced from condition surveys and adjusted each year to keep abreast with new legislation. The Council has a

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legal duty to maintain its properties and the programme is required to meet those statutory duties. Report GD.62/19 was presented to the Executive with proposals for capital investment for planned major repairs which was approved as follows:

Property	Description of works	Estimated Cost
Cemeteries	Resurfacing	£30,000
Carlisle Cemetery	Decoration to perimeter railings	£10,000
Bousteads Grassing	Roller shutter renewals	£10,000
Bousteads Grassing	Main office re-roof	£30,000
Crematorium	Flat roof and felt gutter renewal	£15,000
Tullie House	Pitched roof repair and rainwater goods renewal	£10,000
Talkin Tarn Tea Room	Fire escape staircase renewal	£15,000
Civic Centre	Concrete balcony repairs	£15,000
Civic Centre	Lift motor bearings renewal	£10,000
Richardson Street Football Changing Rooms	Demolition of premises	£10,000
Belah Park Depot	Demolition of premises	£10,000
Old Town Hall	External redecoration	£10,000
Stony Holme Club House	Flat roof renewal	£20,000
Tullie House	Plant replacement	£20,000
Talkin Tarn	Aeration system compressor renewal	£10,000
Melbourne Park Changing Rooms	Flat roof renewal	£10,000
Greystone Community Centre	Repointing and masonry repairs etc.	£5,000
Various	Legionella risk assessment updates and renewals (30 properties approx.)	£10,000
Total 2020 / 2021:		£250,000

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- 6.17 Due to resourcing issues and a series of Storm events which reduced the safe working period the following items of Capital Repairs are subject to a carry forward request. Some items have since been completed and pending final sign off.

Works Carried Forward From 2019 / 2020

Civic Centre	Flat roof repairs over rates hall / customer contact centre	£20,000
Bousteads Grassing	Depot resurfacing (right hand side)	£10,000
Currock CC	Flat roof renewal	£14,400
Monuments	James Creighton & Queen Victoria refurbishment	£10,000
Monuments	James Steele & Earl of Lonsdale refurbishment	£10,000
Enterprise Centre	Fire alarm upgrade	£20,000
Civic Centre	Roof beam covers	£30,000
Dixons Chimney	On-going stone & pointing repairs	£21,400
Carlisle Cemetery	Decoration to perimeter railings	£5,000
General fund c/f		£6,000
Total C/F:		£146,800

7. Continuous Review and Challenge

- 7.1 The Council continuously reviews and challenges how to best use its asset portfolio;
- The Council holds a significant, numerous and diverse portfolio of assets across the city, which generates considerable income and which has an important impact

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on the local economy. The Council uses property well to meet its aims and is planning future investment and development to allow it to continue to do this.

- The Council has a highly rationalised operational portfolio, however the significant level of maintenance yet to be carried out will present challenging issues going forward. New investment in assets such as the Sands will help alleviate issues by removing older, poorly functioning assets such as the current Pools facility.
- The accommodation review and Asset Review Business Plan is an ongoing programme that will continue to deliver efficiency benefits.
- The Council has a diverse and mixed non-operational portfolio which, through rationalisation, is becoming more efficient but has considerable further potential. This will be further explored and actions taken to realise efficiencies with the resources currently available.
- The Council is taking a more commercial approach to the management of the portfolio in order to strategically balance the need for operational assets, income generation and economic development, in support of the local economy, the protection of public services and other priority objectives.
- The Transformation Programme has identified the need for further rationalisation and consolidation of the operational property to improve access to public services and efficiency. The accommodation review will address these needs.

7.2 Accommodation Review

- 7.3 An Accommodation Review of both back office and front public facing service delivery assets is ongoing. This comprises an analysis of accommodation needs and the existing provision, exploring future solutions and implementing the most beneficial models for the Authority.
- 7.4 It seeks to deliver effective and efficient accommodation that suits the needs of each service, establish a more corporate approach to accommodation, make more effective use of space, improve the working environment and make the accommodation as productive as possible.
- 7.5 Works have commenced on the redevelopment of the Civic Centre ground floor and are scheduled for completion during 2021. The new accommodation will allow modern ways of working to be embraced, with more flexible multi-purpose space

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

available. The design has incorporated flood resilience and energy efficiency where possible.

- 7.6 The redevelopment of the ground floor has reflected the changing business requirements of the City Council and sought to embrace modern ways of working whilst also incorporating flood resilience where possible. The new multi-functional chamber and enhanced parking facilities will also provide income generating opportunities.
- 7.7 The current programme of works is the first phase of a wider scheme to maximise space occupancy within the Civic Centre. The current Coronavirus pandemic has shown that alternative forms of working can be successful and the challenge going forward will be to incorporate these opportunities for greater space utilisation throughout the building.
- 7.8 We already have a number of public sector partners co-locating with the City Council and we are working with partners through the One Public Estate programme to encourage greater take up of vacant space in the building which will generate additional income as well as reducing the overall public sector property costs.
- 7.9 Agile working has not only cost benefits but others such as improving the attractiveness of the organisation to potential employees, improving both the health and well-being of staff and the local environment by reducing the need for travel.
- 7.10 Asset Review Business Plan
- 7.11 An asset review and investigation into the options for the development of a new approach to the management and use of the portfolio was concluded in 2010 with the adoption by Council of an Asset Review Business Plan (Report Ref. CE 39/10 refers).
- 7.12 Work continues on the implementation of the Business Plan as detailed below:

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

7.13 Disposal Programme

- 7.14 In December 2018 a revised disposal programme was approved by the Executive with the aspiration of generating £10m to assist with funding major developments such as the Sands Centre and Gateway 44 scheme.
- 7.15 Additional staff resources have been engaged to deliver this 5-year programme. To date over £3.2m has been generated, however we anticipate that the ongoing pandemic will delay progress as prospective purchasers concentrate on their existing portfolios rather than seek additional assets and inevitably there will be an impact on values. At this stage the full impact is not known and will only become clear over the coming years however we anticipate that there will be delays to the programme and capital values will be reduced.
- 7.16 A number of the assets identified for disposal have significant issues to resolve prior to marketing and this lull in the market is allowing the due diligence to be progressed in order that when market conditions improve, we are ready to proceed at speed.

7.17 Reinvestment Options

- 7.18 The Business Plan envisages capital receipts will be used to generate additional revenue and support purchases in the economic development and operational property portfolios.
- 7.19 Opportunity purchases into the Economic Development portfolios are being progressed to support the aspirations of the Borderlands Growth Deal and are discussed further in section 7.31 below
- 7.20 We continue to look for opportunities to enhance income generating opportunities for the City Council.

7.21 Sands Centre redevelopment

- 7.22 The redevelopment of the Sands Centre has commenced with the temporary accommodation for GLL & NHS complete at Newman School and the Sands. The decision was taken to lease space at the former Newman School and refurbish rather than take temporary portacabin accommodation to not only minimise cost but also to provide a more suitable temporary leisure facility and leave a legacy for

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

the city once we vacate. Temporary accommodation has also been provided at the Sands to allow events to continue in the main hall.

- 7.23 Once complete the development will provide a modern energy efficient leisure centre for the citizens of Carlisle. The current swimming facilities will be redeveloped as part of the Station Gateway project and will also reduce the Council's repairing liabilities. Works are scheduled for completion in spring 2021.

7.24 Chancerygate – Kingstown and Parkhouse

- 7.25 Chancerygate, the Council's appointed asset managers for their Kingstown & Parkhouse assets, continue to make good progress with the management and development of our portfolio north of the City.

- 7.26 They are currently project managing the construction of Gateway 44, a 42,000 sq. ft. bulky goods retail scheme at Parkhouse. The asset is being developed as an income generating asset and will be held as part of the investment portfolio. Completion of the build programme is anticipated in October 2020; this is slightly behind schedule due to inclement weather early in the build programme and the coronavirus pandemic. However, the construction team have done an incredible job to minimise delays with work continuing, albeit at a reduced pace, throughout lockdown.

- 7.27 Despite the turmoil in the retail sector we continue to generate interest and are working on potential deals. Unfortunately, Oak Furnitureland who were due to take space within the scheme have gone into administration, we are currently reviewing options for this unit.

- 7.28 Good progress has been made with the rent review programme with 36 having been completed within 2019/20 with the rent roll increasing by circa £31,000 p.a. Chancerygate currently have 63 reviews in progress.

- 7.29 In addition to this Property Services and their other advisors have completed 13 reviews during 2019/20 increasing rental levels by circa £5,000 p.a. A further 31 reviews are in progress.

- 7.30 Overall ground rent income has increased by 7.25%.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026

7.31 Economic Development Portfolio

7.32 The assets within this portfolio are directed towards supporting and creating opportunities for the growth of the City using employment, housing and retail development land.

7.33 The Borderlands Growth Deal presents a once in a lifetime opportunity for the growth of the city with Carlisle seen as the “beating heart” of the Borderlands region. Schemes are being developed to transform areas around the Citadel station and the Courts area. The Council are a key partner in both schemes and have property assets, such as The Pools and the Old Gaol site that will be integral to delivery of the projects. As well as dealing with our own assets we are also assisting with site assembly. The programme not only offers transformational opportunities for the City by developing a HS2 compliant station and a home for the University of Cumbria but also potential income generating opportunities in the future.

7.34 The Southern relief road opens up further opportunities for growth of the City. We are currently awaiting final scheme proposals before considering further the options for development of Council owned land outlined for the Morton District Centre which will encompass both a retail element and employment land.

7.35 St Cuthbert’s Garden Village scheme continues to make good progress, with the proposals now focusing on smaller settlements rather than one large one.

7.36 Coronavirus pandemic

7.37 The Coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on the operations of the City Council. The Authority has used its property portfolio to support the public sector response to the crisis by enabling the creation of a recovery centre at the Sands and public car parks have been converted to mobile testing stations.

7.38 From an operational perspective many buildings have been closed and colleagues working from home where possible. The challenge in the short term will be to install social distancing measures to allow buildings to safely reopen. The pandemic has demonstrated that large sections of the Council can work remotely and there is no longer the need for staff to be permanently based in offices such as the Civic Centre. Agile working is likely to become the norm in the future and now is the perfect time for the Council to grasp the opportunity.

7.39 There are a number of benefits for the Council; cost savings by reduced floor space requirements; environmental improvements with fewer people travelling into the

city reducing pollution; improved staff retention and recruitment, greater flexibility around the workplace is attractive to many especially younger job seekers who see agile working as an essential part of the package.

- 7.40 The UK economy is currently experiencing a period of severe contraction due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Short term income will inevitably be reduced and tenants will vacate despite the significant assistance provided by Central Government. The long-term impact is not yet clear, however it is likely that values will fall although this will vary between sectors and this will impact on the investment portfolio. Certain sectors such as the High Street will see major structural change and the Council aims to minimise the long-term effect on its income levels through proactive property management.
- 7.41 Further, the potential impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) and the uncertainty over its future trading relationship with the EU are other factors that could put downward pressure on property values.
- 7.42 The assets (and the values that will be realised from them) within the Disposals Programme will not be immune from the market influences and therefore the values achieved over the next few years may not be as great as previously forecast.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The Council has a highly rationalised and suitable service occupied portfolio. The key challenge will be to build on the opportunity that Coronavirus has given us to roll out agile working. The completion of the Civic ground floor redevelopment will provide an enhanced customer services operation and entrance to the building. Opportunities to co-locate with other public sector partners will be pursued.
- 8.2 The Sands Centre redevelopment offers an opportunity to enhance leisure facilities within the city it will also reduce our maintenance liability and support our aspirations for economic growth.
- 8.3 The Council has a significant investment property portfolio; the challenge will be to protect this income stream as the effects of the pandemic become clear.
- 8.4 The Council will continue to review its property portfolio and ensure that it is used to achieve the Council's operational, investment and economic development aims.

Report to Executive

Agenda
Item:

A.4

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise and Housing
Key Decision: Yes
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes
Public / Private: Public

Title: Solway Coast AONB Management Plan
Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Report Number: ED 21/20

Purpose / Summary:

Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 the City Council has a statutory duty to prepare and review a management plan for each of its two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). The current Solway Coast AONB Management Plan ends in 2020 and has therefore been reviewed and redrafted to cover the period 2020 – 2025. The Council ultimately needs to adopt the management plan to meet its statutory duty.

Recommendations:

Executive are asked to adopt the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-2025.

Tracking

Executive:	ED 21/20 (22/6/20) & (20/7/20)
Scrutiny:	EGSP ED 24/20 (9/7/20)
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Every five years the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan must be reviewed. The duty to produce this plan is placed on the three local planning authorities across whose boundaries the AONB lies. The plan is drawn up on their behalf by the Solway Coast AONB Partnership, which receives core funding from the City Council. A City Council officer is a member of the partnership's executive group, and there is member representation on the full partnership. The management plan focusses on the purpose of designation – the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty – and deals with natural and cultural heritage, and issues around promoting enjoyment and understanding of the area's special qualities. It is not a Local Plan.
- 1.2** The Solway Coast AONB covers the western edge of the district. It includes most of the village of Burgh by Sands, and the Solway marshes. The AONB lies within the boundaries of two adjoining local authorities – Carlisle and Allerdale, and wholly within the county of Cumbria.
- 1.3** AONBs are statutory landscape designations of national importance and are designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. In pursuing the primary purpose, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries, and of the economic and social needs of the local communities.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1** The current AONB Management Plan covers the period 2015 – 2020. The Partnership has recently reviewed and redrafted this plan to ensure that it is fit for purpose to guide the management of the nationally protected landscape for the period 2020 – 2025.
- 2.2** The purpose of the Management Plan is for the local authority to formulate their policy for the management of the AONB and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it. Whilst the Plan is not a land use planning document in the same way as the Carlisle District Local Plan, it has direct and complementary actions to the adopted Local Plan as follows:
- Nature recovery and landscape character – the Management Plan has an action which relates to local authorities having robust AONB policies in their

local plans to ensure that development protects the area's special qualities and does not compromise the purpose of designation. Policy GI 2 of the Local Plan makes provision for new development in the AONB to be appropriate to its surroundings and be suitably accommodated within the landscape;

- Cultural landscape and community – the AONB has evidence of the activities of its communities going back thousands of years from the Bronze age and the internationally significant Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall) World Heritage Site onwards to the Viking haaf netting fishing still practiced today, through to 20th century airfields and the 'glider traps' on the marshes. There are many scheduled monuments and listed buildings within the area, which the management plan seeks to protect through the planning system. The Local Plan recognises that heritage assets play a key role in reinforcing the District's distinctive identity as well as underpinning a strong tourism offer. The policies within the Local Plan seek to promote and protect the area's heritage resource;
- A natural place to explore and enjoy – the Management Plan highlights that the AONB is a stunning landscape and seascape of marshes, dunes, coastal cliffs mudflats, bogs, grassland, agriculture, wildlife and heritage, supporting strong, historic communities. Walking, cycling, riding, birdwatching and archaeological heritage are all reasons why people come to the AONB. The Plan advocates the use of planning policy to support development of an environmentally and economically sustainable visitor economy. Carlisle Local Plan recognises that tourism is vitally important to Carlisle as a generator of economic prosperity, and that tourism sectors are promoted and supported. This is reflected in Local Plan Policy EC11 which supports sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments where they respect the character of the countryside.

2.3 The vision for the management plan takes an ecosystems approach to the management of the AONB going forward, focusing on the protection, enhancement and restoration of habitat and species, seeking to enrich biodiversity through the restoration of saltmarshes, the Solway Mosses and mudflats ensuring they remain free from disturbance. Any surrounding land uses will need to be sensitive to the ecological needs of the area. The plan also seeks to ensure any future development contributes to and protect the area's quality and historic character. The plan seeks to ensure that the Solway Coast remains open to all, as a place to live, work, explore and enjoy through an increasingly environment-led economy.

- 2.4** Many organisations, individuals and communities will have a role in implementing the Management Plan, which will be used to develop projects and facilitate cooperation with statutory agencies, landowners and managers, businesses and the local community. The Plan highlights actions and activities that will conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage, help people discover, enjoy and understand the area, and support the economy in sustainable ways. The Plan focusses on desired outcomes which will be used in the process of monitoring progress during the life of the Plan. It will be accompanied by an Implementation Plan for the AONB unit staff team.

3. RISKS

- 3.1** The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a duty on all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' to the purposes of AONBs. However, the statutory responsibility to produce and review AONB Management Plans rests with the relevant local planning authority. In practice the Solway Coast AONB Partnership carries out this function on behalf of the two district authorities and Cumbria County Council across whose boundaries the AONB lies. Failure to discharge this duty would have significant implications for the management of the AONB.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1** There has been officer involvement throughout the review of the Management Plan through the Solway Coast AONB Executive Group. The member representative has been kept up to date of the process by the Partnership. Consultation has included members of the Partnership, the local communities across the relevant local authorities, representatives from a wide range of conservation, land management, tourism and other organisations and parish councils.
- 4.2** The consultation closed in January 2020. A report has been produced on the consultation responses and published on the AONB Partnership website. The Plan has been amended in light of the consultation where relevant and appropriate. The Plan has been endorsed by the AONB Partnership and submitted to the relevant local authorities for adoption, and to Defra.

5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The Solway Coast AONB Management Plan is required to be adopted by the City Council in fulfilment of its statutory duty under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Plan will be instrumental in conserving and enhancing this nationally protected landscape. It will assist in the implementation of many of the actions and activities that will conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the AONB and sustain the economy in sustainable ways.

5.2 It is a plan for the area, and many organisations, individuals and communities will have a role in implementing it. It focuses on landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage. It will also assist with securing external funding for project implementation.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

6.1 The Management Plan and the Council's ongoing work with the Solway Coast Partnership contributes to the Carlisle Plan priority 'Continue to improve the quality of our local environment ...'.

Contact Officer: Richard Wood

Ext: 7192

**Appendices Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-2025
attached to report:**

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – AONBs exist within the legal framework of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Act confirms the purpose and significance of AONBs, sets out the procedure for designation and creates a firm legislative basis for their protection and management. Section 89 and 90 in particular place a statutory duty on local planning authorities to prepare a management plan and to review and adopt published plans at intervals of not more than five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority they are required to do this 'acting jointly'.

FINANCE – the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan will be produced and implemented using existing base budgets under the control of the Economic Development Directorate

EQUALITY – an Equalities Impact Assessment will be available on the Solway Coast AONB website.

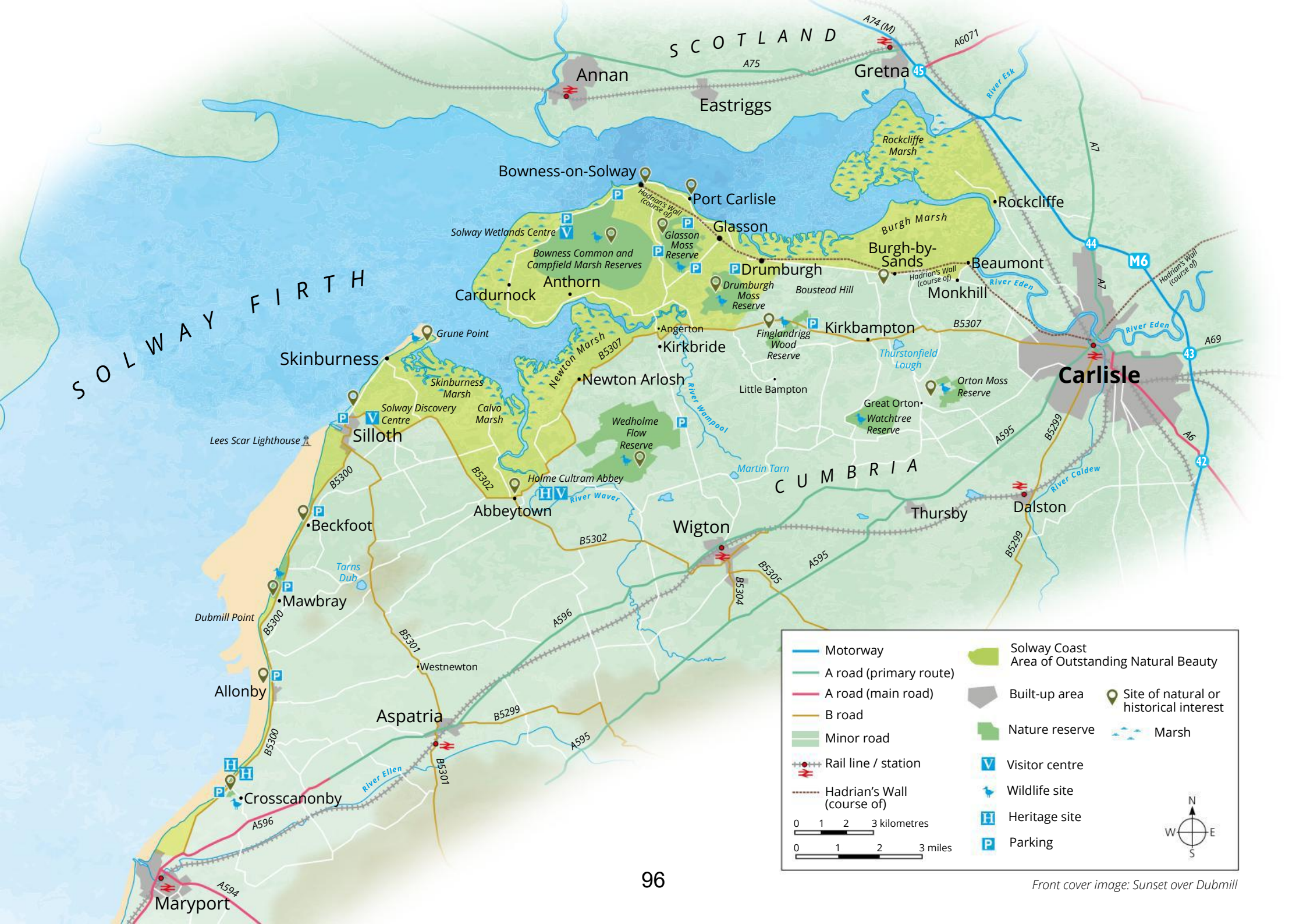
INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – there are no information governance implications with this report.

Solway
Coast
Area of Outstanding
Natural Beauty



Solway Coast

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Management Plan 2020-25



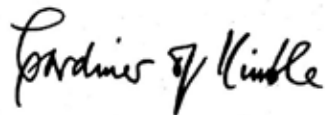
Ministerial Foreword

I am fortunate that England's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are part of my Ministerial responsibilities. Whether it be rolling hills, sweeping coastline or a tranquil village, spending time in an AONB can stir the heart and lift the spirit.

This is a pivotal moment for all AONBs. The Government has set its ambition in the 25 Year Environment Plan which states clearly the importance of natural beauty as part of our green future, while AONBs retain the highest status of protection for landscape through national planning policy. Leaving the EU brings with it an opportunity to develop a better system for supporting our farmers and land managers, who play such a vital role as stewards of the landscape. And the Review of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty led by Julian Glover – the first of its kind for generations – has made recommendations to make sure our designated landscapes can flourish in the years ahead.

In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people – farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff – for the beautiful places they live and work in. In this spirit I am delighted to welcome publication of this Statutory Management Plan for the Solway Coast AONB. It is significant that this plan will be delivered in partnership by those who value the Solway Coast.

I would like to thank all those involved in the preparation of this document, and wish you the best of success in bringing it to fruition.



Lord Gardiner of Kimble,
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity



“In my visits to AONBs around the country, I have been struck by the passion of many people – farmers, volunteers, and hard-working staff – for the beautiful places they live and work in.”

Chairman's Foreword

The Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a very special landscape, nationally designated for its natural beauty, including its wide range of habitats, rich historical legacy as well as its wide open views and real sense of tranquillity. Having been born and bred on the Solway Coast, I am proud to be a member of the community here and share with others this wonderful place.

As we step forward into a new phase and a new Management Plan period, I would like to both reflect on the past and look forward to the future. The Solway was first designated in 1964, and we have now worked to conserve and enhance it for over 50 years, action having been carried out by a hugely experienced staff team and partnership as well as longstanding communities who have cherished and looked after it. We are very grateful for the long historical legacy behind us and the impact that has had. We now enter into a new era, and recognise the opportunity that five more years brings to really make a difference to the way this landscape develops into the future. Many challenges lie ahead – the future of farming support, the impact of climate change, the resilience of the coastline to erosion and nature recovery being just a few of them. At the same time there are opportunities – better connections with communities and visitors, the ability of wild open spaces to heal and improve wellbeing and strong partnerships with a whole range of organisations, businesses and community groups amongst others. We are excited about the direction set by the recent national Designated Landscapes review and hope that this will help us achieve more for the Solway over the next five years.

Much work has gone into this new Management Plan which has been reviewed on behalf of Allerdale Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council with support from Defra as well as many others. The Plan has evolved through discussions, meetings and feedback from a wide cross section of people, from the public, partners, community groups and other organisations and we are extremely grateful for everyone's input.

We hope that you feel inspired and optimistic about this Plan, and above all, enthusiastic to play an active role helping to deliver it. By doing so we can all make a difference in looking after, enjoying and understanding this wonderful place.



William (Bill) Jefferson, OBE
Chairman, Solway Coast AONB
Joint Advisory Committee

Our 2030 Vision

It is 2030. The Solway Coast is a more resilient landscape, richer in wildlife, with declines in biodiversity being reversed. Our saltmarshes and mudflats have stable populations of wildfowl and waders, benefiting from well-managed habitat, free from disturbance. Our sand dune systems are thriving, with a richer diversity of plants and animals.

The Solway Mosses have been restored, well-managed and better connected; surrounding land use is sympathetic to their conservation. They are valued by the public for their distinctive wildlife and as part of what makes the Solway special.

Our lowland farmland and marshy grasslands are richer in biodiversity than in 2020. High Nature Value farmers are rewarded properly for providing species-rich grassland, better-managed and connected kested hedgerows, and cleaner, more wildlife-rich watercourses.

Our historic environment, especially our legacy of traditional building styles and our rich historical legacy from the pre-Roman to the twentieth century, is better understood, conserved and celebrated. Our cultural heritage is widely recognised and valued and is continually evolving and growing richer.

Local communities have a strong sense of what's special about where they live, they celebrate their heritage together creatively and feel involved in its management. People increasingly value the Solway Coast's natural heritage for its own sake and for all that it provides for us.

The Solway Coast is a natural choice as a place to live, work, explore and enjoy. Well-managed, expertly interpreted and open to all, our natural and cultural assets underpin an increasingly environment-led local economy.

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The nature and purpose of this plan



This is the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan (2020-2025). It is the statutory plan for the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Solway Coast over the next five years. It focuses on landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural heritage which combine to create a sense of place; it also addresses issues around how people can better explore, enjoy and understand the landscape and in doing so support a nature and culture based economy. It is a plan for the area, not a work plan for the AONB staff team, and many organisations, individuals and communities have a role in implementing it.

Different people will use it in different ways

Local authorities: one audience for the plan are the three local authorities of the Solway Coast, as it is upon them that the duty is placed to produce the Plan (and to conserve and enhance the AONB, a duty also placed on all public bodies). The AONB Joint Advisory Committee, led in this context by the Officer Steering Group and the AONB staff team, discharges the plan-making

function on the authorities' collective behalf. Planning and other policies of local authorities should support the implementation of the plan.

Government agencies, statutory undertakers, utilities and public bodies: another important audience, these bodies must, in accordance with Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW), have regard to the purposes of AONB designation in the carrying out of their functions. The outcomes and actions in this Plan should guide them in the discharging of their duty under the Act.

Conservation organisations: the plan should play a leading role in setting their priorities in this area and should promote collaboration between organisations to meet shared objectives.

Farmers and landowners: this plan should help to guide the content and targeting of new locally-tailored agri-environment schemes and the elements of the proposed Land Management Plans for individual holdings in such schemes.



The plan sets out conservation priorities for the area and the public goods and services that can be delivered locally – farmers and landowners have the central role conserving our natural heritage and providing the benefits that flow to society from sound land management.

Communities: the content of the plan can help inspire and support community projects, providing a focus for activity.

For everyone: the plan highlights the area's special qualities, identifies actions that will bring about improvements and identifies where conservation priorities should lie. It should be used as evidence to support policy, strategy and action plan development, and, crucially to help justify the allocation of resources and applications for funding.

Not the plan for everything

The Plan is not intended to be a panacea for all the perceived problems which

local communities might face, nor is it intended to duplicate or replace other statutory plans which affect the area. It is, however, the only document with a focus on the purpose of AONB designation – the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. In addition to this Plan, the Solway Basin National Character Area Profile, the production of which was led by Natural England, is a good source of baseline data and an excellent companion document to this plan, as is the Solway Coast AONB Landscape and Seascape Character Assessment (2010).

Habitats Regulations

It should be noted that individual proposals flowing from the Management Plan that may themselves be considered to be projects for the purposes of the Habitats Regulations may require individual assessment and will need to be permitted in accordance with those Regulations in order to be compliant with the Plan.

Introduction



Barnacle geese over the Solway

As part of developing this plan, people were consulted in meetings, at events and online, on what matters to them about the Solway Coast and about the things they were either concerned about and/or wanted to see looked after. This brief introduction to this special landscape builds on and amplifies some of the things people said as part of that consultation – where better to begin this document that sets out what makes the Solway special and how it can be conserved?

At just 115km², the Solway Coast, designated in December 1964, is one of the smallest Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the country. Other places might be bigger, or better known than this narrow strip of coastline between Carlisle and Maryport, but the Solway is in some ways a well-kept secret. “Everyone knows about the Lakes but it’s surprising how many people outside the area have no idea what wonderful beaches and coastal areas there are.” It is understated in many ways, and what it lacks in relative size it makes up for in the beauty and wildness of the estuary, the mysterious feel of the mosses and the subtle nature of its farmed landscapes. As one resident said, “I love it. It’s so unspoilt, it feels like going back in time.”

The Solway Coast is perhaps most celebrated for its estuary landscapes – its saltmarshes, mudflats and dunes – that provide winter refuge for thousands of wintering wildfowl and waders. For many of us, the birdlife of the estuary provides “the natural soundscape” to the Solway. These are wide open

“Everyone knows about the Lakes but it's surprising how many people outside the area have no idea what wonderful beaches and coastal areas there are.”

Dog walkers on Glasson Moss

landscapes, with outstanding views into and out of the AONB. Nature and wide open spaces feature prominently in what people value, with one resident simply saying, “I love to watch the skies and the wildlife.”

If the estuary landscapes are wild and dramatic, the Solway Mosses are perhaps the most enigmatic part of the coast. They are easily dismissed as ‘wasteland’ and this can hamper their conservation, but they provide vital services to us all – carbon storage and sequestration in particular. They are also rich in wildlife, especially dragonflies, butterflies (notably the rare large heath), birds and specialist plants like sundews.

Set back from the coast, a gentle, rolling, pastoral landscape of improved and semi-improved grasslands is enclosed by ‘kestred’ hedgerows and cut through by sunken lanes and narrow roads. Here, and on the grazing marshes, farming remains an important part of the life of the Solway, whilst in the estuary there is a rich heritage of harvesting the fruits of the sea. This is captured well by someone who sees this clearly as part of what makes the area special and that it should continue to be so: “The Solway Plain has a rich agricultural and marine heritage which should be encouraged.”

Settlements and the wider landscape have a complex mixture of vernacular buildings, reflecting a long history of occupation and include fortified houses and churches, longhouses, ‘clay dabbins’ and cruck-roofed buildings. In these buildings and structures, and in the field and settlement patterns, place names and archaeological features, the past is with us all the time.

Hedgerows in winter



Meadow



Local people and visitors love to walk and cycle through this landscape and to enjoy its natural wonders and its cultural heritage, feeling that the Solway Coast can provide “a more balanced way of life where everyone can benefit from slowing down and tuning into nature for wellbeing and appreciation.” A visitor to the area summed up the impact the Solway has on their health and well-being, saying simply, “I feel I breathe better there.”

People value “the sheer beauty and essentialness of this area” and want to see it conserved and enhanced where possible. But looking ahead, they are concerned about the future of our landscape and its wildlife and habitats, about climate change and for people’s continued ability to explore and enjoy the area sustainably and learn more about it. They are also concerned about a potential increase in development pressure; the possible loss of special views; the loss of traditional buildings; the potential decline of farming and fishing. They see an increase in fly-tipping and litter. And they want to make sure these concerns are not realised and that the area has a bright future.

Put simply, they want to, “ensure that the Solway Coast remains an area of outstanding natural beauty.” That is what this Management Plan is all about, and if everyone can get behind the kinds of actions it promotes, we can achieve the Vision outlined on page 3, together.

“I feel I breathe better there.”

Horse riding on the beach





Background to the plan

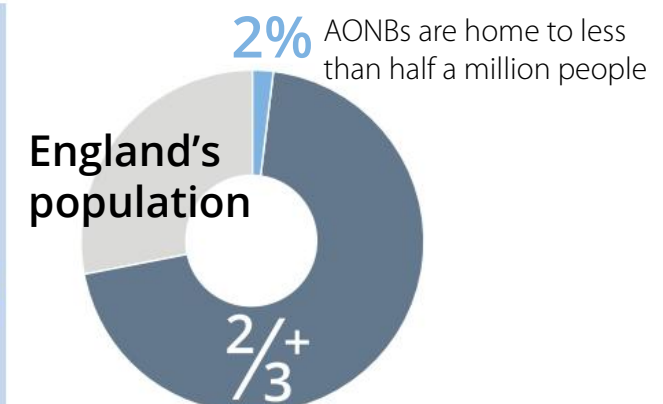


Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland cover approximately 1/5th of the land surface. The distinctive character and natural beauty of AONBs make them some of the most special and cherished places in England. AONBs are living, working landscapes that contribute some £16bn every year to the national economy. Although home to less than half a million people (under 2% of England's population), over two thirds of England's population live within half an hour's drive of an AONB and around 150m people visit English AONBs every year, spending in excess of £2bn.



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The AONBs of England and Wales





View over the Cardurnock Peninsula

Together with National Parks, AONBs represent our most outstanding landscapes; unique and irreplaceable national assets, each with such distinctive character and natural beauty that they are recognised internationally as part of the global Protected Areas family to be managed in the interest of everyone – local residents, businesses, visitors, and the wider public – and protected for future generations.

The legal framework

AONBs exist within a legal framework which has been progressively strengthened since the first AONBs came into existence after the Second World War. It may be strengthened further as a result of the Glover Review of Protected Landscapes which reported in September 2019.

The 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act first established the AONB designation, provided AONBs with protection under planning law against

inappropriate development and gave local authorities permissive powers to take action for ‘preserving and enhancing natural beauty’ in them (S.88).

The Countryside Act 1968 placed a responsibility on local authorities, the statutory conservation bodies, and civil servants, in exercising their functions under the 1949 Act (as amended by subsequent legislation) to ‘have due regard to the needs of agriculture and forestry and to the economic and social interests of rural areas’ (S.37). Within AONBs, this means a responsibility to acknowledge and, where appropriate to promote, farming, forestry and the rural economy wherever this can be done without compromising the primary purpose of conserving natural beauty.

The Environment Act 1995 introduced the phrase ‘conserve and enhance’ in place of ‘protect and enhance’ in relation to duties of local authorities, the Environment Agency and other bodies. No statutory duties were placed on local authorities actively to manage AONBs in any particular way.



Cows on Burgh Marsh

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) subsumes and strengthens the AONB provisions of the 1949 Act. It confirms the purpose and significance of AONBs, clarifies the procedure for their designation, and created a firm legislative basis for their designation, protection and management. In particular:

Section 82 reaffirms the primary purpose of AONBs: to conserve and enhance natural beauty.

Section 83 establishes the procedure for designating or revising the boundaries of an AONB, including Natural England's duty to consult with local authorities and to facilitate public engagement.

Section 84 confirms the powers of local authorities to take 'all such action as appears to them expedient' to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of an AONB, and sets consultation and advice on development planning and on public access on the same basis as National Parks in the 1949 Act.

Section 85 places a statutory duty on all 'relevant authorities' to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty' of AONBs when coming to any decisions or carrying out activities relating to or affecting land within these areas. 'Relevant authorities' include all public bodies (including county, borough, district, parish and community councils, joint planning boards and other statutory committees); statutory undertakers (such as energy and water utilities, licensed telecommunications companies, nationalised companies such as Network Rail and other bodies established under statute responsible for railways, roads and canals); government ministers and civil servants. Activities and developments outside the boundaries of AONBs that have an impact within the designated area are also covered by the 'duty of regard'.

Sections 86 to 88 allow for the establishment in an AONB of a Conservation Board to which the AONB functions of the local authority (including development planning) can be transferred. Conservation Boards have the additional but

secondary function of seeking to increase public understanding and enjoyment of the AONB's special qualities. They also have an obligation to 'seek to foster the economic and social wellbeing of local communities' in co-operation with local authorities and other public bodies.

Sections 89 and 90 create a statutory duty on all AONB partnerships (local authorities and Conservation Boards) to prepare a Management Plan 'which formulates their policy for the management of their area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it', and thereafter to review adopted and published plans at intervals of not more than five years. Where an AONB involves more than one local authority they are required to do this 'acting jointly'. Section 92 makes clear that the conservation of natural beauty includes the conservation of 'flora, fauna and geological and physiographical features.'

Cycling along the edge of Burgh Marsh



The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Section 99 formally clarifies in law that the fact that an area consists of or includes land used for agriculture or woodlands, or as a park, or 'any other area whose flora, fauna or physiographical features are partly the product of human intervention in the landscape' does not prevent it from being treated, for legal purposes 'as being an area of natural beauty (or of outstanding natural beauty).'

Schedule 7 asserts that an AONB joint committee of two or more local authorities, or a conservation board, can constitute a 'designated body' for the performance of functions allocated to Defra.

Responsibility for AONBs

The formal legal responsibility for both development control and for management of AONBs (including the duty to prepare an AONB Management Plan) lies with the local authorities in whose area(s) the AONB exists, except in two instances (the Chilterns and the Cotswolds AONB) where this is the responsibility of a statutory Conservation Board.

In addition, the duty of all public bodies and statutory undertakers to 'have regard' places an obligation on a wide range of organisations not just to consider any detrimental impacts of their policies and activities outside as well as within the boundaries of any AONB, but positively to consider how they might benefit the AONBs special qualities.

Statutory guidance for the production of AONB Management Plans is contained in former Countryside Agency guidance documents CA23 and CA221. These make it clear that preparation needs actively to engage and gain the support of all key stakeholders, who will assist in its delivery. The AONB Management Plan is a place-based plan derived through local consensus. It seeks to define the approach to conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the AONB through the application of local solutions to local challenges that also respect the national and international importance of the AONB. It is a plan not for the partnership but for the AONB as a whole.

History of AONB designation and milestone documents

AONBs emerged from the mood of civic renewal which characterised the decades following the end of the Second World War – the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was one amongst many – including health, education, agriculture and development planning – which established the basis for a ‘new Britain’. The need to designate special areas of the countryside against inappropriate development, to celebrate and conserve their distinctive features, encourage sustainable agriculture and foster local economic wellbeing was recognised well before the Dower (1945) and Hobhouse (1947) reports which led to the establishment of AONBs and National Parks.

Since their establishment by the 1949 Act there has been continuous development in the policy and legislative context of AONBs, shaped by a number of key policy documents including:

- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Policy Statement (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, 1991)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty – A Guide for Members of Joint Advisory Committees (Countryside Commission & Countryside Council for Wales, 1994)
- Protecting our finest countryside: Advice to Government (Countryside Commission, 1998)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans: A Guide (Countryside Agency, 2001)
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A Guide for AONB partnership members (Countryside Agency, 2001)
- Guidance for the Review of AONB Management Plans (Countryside Agency, 2006)
- Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England (Natural England, 2011)
- Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Natural England Designations Strategy (Natural England, 2012)

Seventy years after the 1949 Act, the production and implementation of revised AONB Management Plans will help to ensure that AONBs are leaders in developing and promoting the intentions of the 1949 Act in a rapidly changing modern context.

Planning and AONBs

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoy the same levels of protection from development as those of UK National Parks. Responsibility for planning policy in AONBs lies with the relevant local authority (in National Parks it lies with the National Park Authority). This means that while AONB Management Plans themselves do not form part of any local development plan they are, nevertheless, vitally important documents in the planning system. They are:

- the basis for identifying the special qualities of the area, those aspects of the AONB which are critical in contributing to its natural beauty and potentially influential in development planning policy
- a ‘material consideration’ in the determination of individual planning applications and at appeal.

These special qualities cannot be seen in isolation from each other and are more than a bullet-point list, but include scenic beauty, a strong sense of relative wildness, remoteness and tranquillity of the Firth, wide-open skies, inland mosses and raised mires, a wealth of breeding wading birds, and the sights and sounds of the sea. All these qualities are amplified throughout this plan and in combination they produce a unique sense of place.

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) states:

- The ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ at paragraph 11. Paragraph 11b(i) states that strategic policies should as a minimum provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and others uses, ... unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area. Footnote 6 states that the policies referred to are those in the NPPF relating to ... an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- NPPF paragraph 172 requires that in any decision great weight should be given to ‘conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty’ in AONBs which (together with National Parks) ‘have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues.’ Paragraph 172 also states that ‘The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas’.

The intention is that the NPPF provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. The NPPF must be taken into account in preparing the local development plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Local Plans provide more detailed policies in relation to the Solway Coast.

North West Marine Plan

Further policy context for the AONB Management Plan can be found in the draft North West Marine Plan (due for publication in mid-2020). Marine Plans inform and guide decision makers in development matters affecting marine and coastal areas; there is an overlap with terrestrial plans which generally extend from the mean low water springs mark. Proposals that may have adverse impacts on the objectives of marine protected areas must demonstrate that they will, in order of preference, avoid, minimise or mitigate such impacts. It is considered that the implementation of this Management Plan will support policies in the forthcoming inshore and offshore marine plans and vice versa. A duty to co-operate with the Marine Management Organisation (the plan-maker of the Marine Plans) is placed on relevant local authorities.

Major development

Government policy (NPPF paragraph 172) states that 'planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of: a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy; b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.'

NPPF paragraph 11 asserts a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'; however, this is limited where 'specific policies (including AONB Policies) indicate development should be restricted'

AONB 'setting'

The term 'setting' is used to refer to areas outside the AONB where development and other activities may affect land within an AONB. Its extent will vary

depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB. Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in an AONB, and Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) emphasises that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside the AONB boundary. Not all activities will be detrimental; conservation practices and economic ties outside the AONB can support the purpose of AONB designation.

The international context

English AONBs are part of the international Protected Area Family. As cultural landscapes, produced through the interaction of humans with nature over time, they have a special significance (together with UK National Parks) as being recognised by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as 'Category V – Protected Landscapes'.

Category V protected landscapes are defined by IUCN as: 'A protected area where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value: and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.' IUCN emphasises their importance as cultural landscapes – in distinction to Category I (Strict Nature Reserves and Wilderness Areas) and Category II National Parks (which for IUCN are large natural or near-natural areas, unlike UK national parks).

Until recently, the AONB designation was regarded (together with that of UK National Parks) as an anomaly in the international protected area system which prioritised 'naturalness' as a criterion of value. In the last quarter-century, however, they have come to be recognised, particularly within Europe, as leaders in the move towards area-based sustainable development. AONBs in particular, as 'working' landscapes, lead the way in pioneering new approaches to integrated countryside management based on voluntary partnerships engaging and working with local communities to secure common goals.

The new, multidisciplinary, multifunctional concept of landscape is encapsulated in the European Landscape Convention (ELC). Adopted by the Council of Europe in 2000 (it is not an EA directive and will remain unaffected by Brexit) it has been applicable to the UK since March 2007. ELC promotes a definition of landscape which usefully underpins the rationale for AONBs: 'An area, as perceived by

people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors', a rich concept that encompasses but goes beyond sectoral (geomorphological, ecological, archaeological, historical or aesthetic) approaches.

ELC makes it clear that people are at the heart of all landscapes (the commonplace and 'degraded' as well as the eminent) each of which has its own distinctive character and meaning to those who inhabit or visit it. The ELC places obligations on signatory states to recognise landscape 'as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity.' Obligations include a requirement to identify the diversity and range of landscapes, the important features of each, and to engage with local communities, private bodies and public authorities in their planning and management. This includes raising awareness and understanding of the character, value and functions of landscape and the way these are changing. There is also a requirement to provide training in landscape-related skills. AONBs and their managing organisations are a very significant contributor to delivering on the UK's obligations under ELC.

The NAAONB and the purpose of the AONB network

The National Association for AONBs (NAAONB) is a charity that provides a strong collective voice for the UK's 46 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Its objectives are to:

- promote the conservation and enhancement of AONBs
- advance the education, understanding and appreciation by the public of AONBs
- promote the efficiency and effectiveness of those promoting or representing AONBs, other protected areas and those areas for which designation might be pursued.

It does this by taking a collaborative and partnership-based approach to working with its membership and other organisations at a national level to achieve shared goals.

Charity members are involved in the planning and management of around 8,000 square miles of outstanding and cherished landscapes in England, Wales and

Northern Ireland. Membership includes most of the AONB partnerships, as well as some of those Local Authorities with statutory responsibility for AONBs, together with a number of voluntary bodies, businesses, and individuals with an interest in the future of these iconic landscapes.

The NAAONB's vision is that the natural beauty of AONBs is valued and secure. The charity's mission is to support and develop a network of ambitious AONB partnerships with a strong collective voice. Through the NAAONB, the following high-level objectives have been adopted as the common national purpose of the AONB network:

- conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, ensuring they can meet the challenges of the future
- support the economic and social well-being of local communities in ways which contribute to the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty
- promote public understanding and enjoyment of the nature and culture of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and encourage people to take action for their conservation
- value, sustain, and promote the benefits that the UK's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty provide for society, including clean air and water, food, carbon storage and other services vital to the nation's health and well-being.



Marsh fritillary



Core principles for this plan



Nature Recovery: The recovery of nature has to start now and it is at the heart of this Plan. Action which restores, enhances, expands and connects habitats and reverses the decline in biodiversity should be prioritised. This activity must take place on a landscape scale, rather than focused on 'sites' in isolation, and through a 'landscape approach' which works within the social and economic context of the area. There should be no decisions taken on the Solway Coast which lead to the net loss of biodiversity. The principle of net gain for biodiversity should be applied to all development decisions. This plan supports delivery of the 25 Year Environment Plan

Climate change: Human-influenced climate change is real. Projects and initiatives arising from this Plan should have as small a carbon footprint as possible and maximise opportunities for carbon storage and sequestration. Projects which seek land management solutions to problems of a changing climate will be encouraged, as will research which helps us better understand our changing climate. Small-scale renewable energy schemes will be

encouraged and local people's effort to reduce the amount of energy and resources they use will be supported.

An ecosystems approach: Nature provides us with 'services' and benefits if we look after it – things which should be recognised in land management and development decisions. Maintaining these services and benefits is another powerful reason, if more were needed, to look after species and habitats and sustain natural processes.

Landscape change: Change in the landscape is inevitable, especially in a dynamic coastal environment, and is often to be welcomed, but that change needs to be managed carefully to ensure that what makes the Solway special and distinctive is not lost.

Supporting sustainable land management together: Strong and meaningful collaborations between farmers, landowners, conservation bodies, local authorities and local people are the only way to ensure that nature has

View over the Solway Firth at Mawbray Banks



Roe deer



Rowing a traditional wooden Solway skiff

another, e.g. new woodlands will not be planted on areas with existing biodiversity importance or historic significance, or wind turbines would not be erected where they would damage the character of the landscape.

Economy and environment: Nature and beauty and a strong sense of place are economic and social assets. In a nationally protected landscape in particular, development must be environmentally sustainable as well as economically and socially sustainable.

Open to everyone: There should be equality of opportunity for everyone to enjoy what this area has to offer – there are barriers to remove to make this possible, from limited public transport, to the need for better information or better infrastructure, and only some of these are within the scope of this Plan.

Community and conservation: Local people should be encouraged and supported to devise projects and initiatives that conserve and celebrate natural beauty, or become involved in those led by others.

Learning and discovering: Opportunities to enhance understanding of natural and cultural heritage should be taken whenever possible and costed into conservation projects; programmes of education and life-long learning are critical to the future well-being of nature – *people will not care about what they cannot enjoy and they cannot enjoy what they cannot experience.*

Costs and benefits: Conserving and enhancing natural beauty, helping people explore, enjoy and understand the Solway Coast and supporting land-based industries, is a public good – appropriate resources need to be found for it.

a bright future. A focus on outcomes, not prescriptions, will deliver more for nature than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Cross-border collaboration: There is always going to be merit in working across the border between England and Scotland on conservation, tourism and recreation activity and every effort should be made to foster this.

Health and well-being: Delivering this Plan should generate new opportunities for first hand experiences in nature, something that is proven to bring health and well-being benefits. Activity which promotes an emotional engagement with nature should be encouraged; this also enhances well-being and increases people's care for the world around them.

Avoiding perverse outcomes: There is an assumption in this Plan that actions will not bring about one environmental benefit at the expense of



Oystercatcher

An ecosystems approach – what does nature do for us?

Nature does not 'owe us a living', yet it provides us with one all the same. So, as well as prioritising the conservation of nature for its own sake, it's vital to understand that our natural assets, properly cared for, provide services and benefits on which society is dependent.

Natural Capital, Services and Benefits

'Natural capital' refers to the stock of physical and natural assets that support services and benefits for society. It includes biodiversity, habitats, landscapes, geological resources and natural processes. So, the Solway Mosses are a natural capital asset, that provide water storage services, that bring the benefit of flood risk mitigation. By conserving and restoring the mosses and other habitats locally, we are doing something intrinsically valuable for nature, but also supporting services and benefits for society. These services and benefits also depend on the wise use of economic and social capital, but at their root is the natural capital that makes their delivery possible.

These services include nutrient cycling, pollination, carbon storage, biomass, erosion protection and water purification; the benefits we derive from them include clean air and water, flood risk reduction, recreation, food, employment opportunities and a source of physical and spiritual well-being. We should never have to ask, 'What has nature ever done for us?'

Our natural capital has been seen as limitless and free, and something which has little or no value to business – and usually as a constraint. However, natural capital is clearly not limitless and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) acknowledged in 2012 that 40% of global gross domestic product (GDP) is dependent on it. We have failed to take account of our impacts on natural capital to the point where we may have depleted it beyond its capability to support us into the future. We are 'overdrawn at the bank of nature' and unless we start reinvesting quickly, significantly and in the right places, the declines will continue and the many services nature provides for us will be all but lost.



Shaggy inkcap



Drumburgh Moss

Taking an ecosystems approach

This Plan highlights some of the services and benefits that flow from our natural assets and identifies desired outcomes and actions to secure their future. The plan takes an ecosystems approach:

- it is place-based, focusing on the whole Solway Coast (and where necessary beyond)
- it combines action for biodiversity and landscape conservation with an understanding of the public benefits this brings
- it is not focused on species, habitats and issues in isolation – rather it promotes an integrated approach to large-scale conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services, seeking to understand the effects of management on nature and people. One can read through from issue to action to outcome and to the ecosystem services and benefits provided.

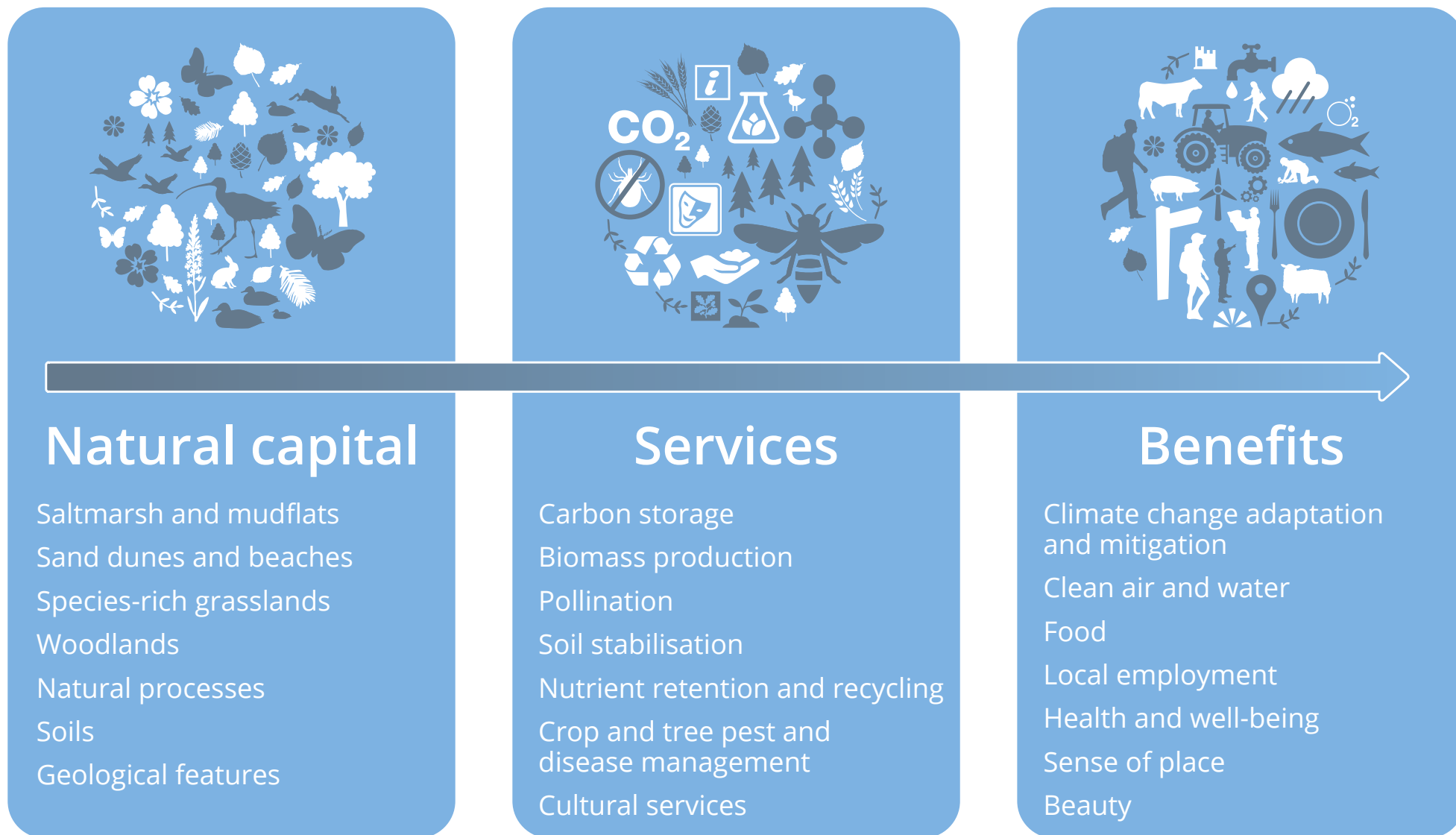
This approach attempts to understand, and work within, the acceptable limits of environmental change, in order to meet community need without compromising the natural assets that will support us in the future. It requires a joined-up commitment to delivering the Plan's Outcomes and Vision, to drive better and more integrated policy and action on the ground across local authorities, agencies, NGOs and the community.



Common spotted orchid

Natural Capital Assets, Services and Benefits on the Solway Coast

This diagram helps to illustrate the flows of services and benefits we get from looking after our natural assets. The matrix on the following page looks at this in a little more detail. It is not an exhaustive list.





Priority Habitats, Services and Benefits

The table below highlights how conserving the area's Priority Habitats will help to sustain our **ecosystem services** and their **benefits** into the future. The greater the number of dots, the greater the contribution to delivering services and benefits. **The numbered ecosystem services are referred to in the action tables.**

	Key Services						
	Benefits						
Priority habitat	1. Carbon storage/ sequestration and air quality management Climate change adaptation/mitigation, clean air, health and well-being	2. Nutrient dispersal and cycling Ecosystem health and stability, including soil health, clean air and water	3. Pollination Food and agricultural products	4. Agricultural and non-agricultural biomass production Habitats, biodiversity, food, energy, raw materials, jobs	5. Water storage and filtration Flood risk management, clean water for people and wildlife	6. Erosion prevention/ hazard protection Soil health, flood risk mitigation, coastal protection, clean water, agriculture	7. Cultural services Tourism, recreation, jobs, mental and physical health and wellbeing, tranquillity
Coastal saltmarsh
Coastal floodplain grazing marsh
Coastal sand dunes
Coastal vegetated shingle	
Maritime cliffs and slope					
Mudflats
Deciduous woods
Lowland meadows
Traditional orchards
Lowland heathland
Lowland dry acid grassland
Lowland raised bog
Lowland fens

Outcomes Framework

The **2030 Vision** for the Solway Coast, expressed on page 3, can be condensed into a concise **goal** for the area's natural and cultural heritage. In order to reach that goal, a series of particular short-term and medium-term **outcomes** are necessary. Any **actions** in support of this plan should lead to the achievement of the outcomes. We can then assess how well we are collectively working to look after and celebrate this special place and help people discover, enjoy and understand all it has to offer. This management plan will be monitored against how well the short-term outcomes are achieved.

Theme	Short-term Outcomes	Medium-term Outcomes	Goal
 Nature Recovery and Landscape Character	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The management of land and water increasingly promotes natural processes, increased connectivity and greater resilience to the challenges of climate change and other pressures 2. Priority habitats and key species are better conserved and enhanced 3. Landscape quality and character is more effectively conserved and enhanced 4. Farmers deliver a wide range of public goods and are appropriately rewarded for doing so 	<p>A landscape richer in wildlife, with declines in biodiversity reversed, delivers more for nature, farmers and the public and is more resilient to climate change and other pressures</p> <p>Our cultural heritage is widely recognised and valued and continues to evolve and grow richer</p>	<p>The Solway Coast is better protected, more resilient to climate change, richer in natural and cultural heritage and increasingly valued by everyone as a place to live, work and visit</p>
 People and Place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Built heritage and cultural assets are better understood, conserved and managed 6. There are greater opportunities for people to increase their understanding of Solway's natural beauty 7. More people, from a wider variety of backgrounds, can more easily and responsibly explore and enjoy the area. 8. Skills and knowledge to conserve our natural beauty are increasing 9. People conserving and enjoying natural beauty has an increasingly positive impact on local services and the economy 	<p>People increasingly value the Solway Coast's natural heritage for its own sake and for all that it provides for us</p> <p>Communities have a strong sense of what's special about where they live, and they celebrate their heritage together</p> <p>Well-managed natural and cultural assets underpin an increasingly environment-led local economy</p>	



Natural Beauty

Port Carlisle

"Natural Beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries."

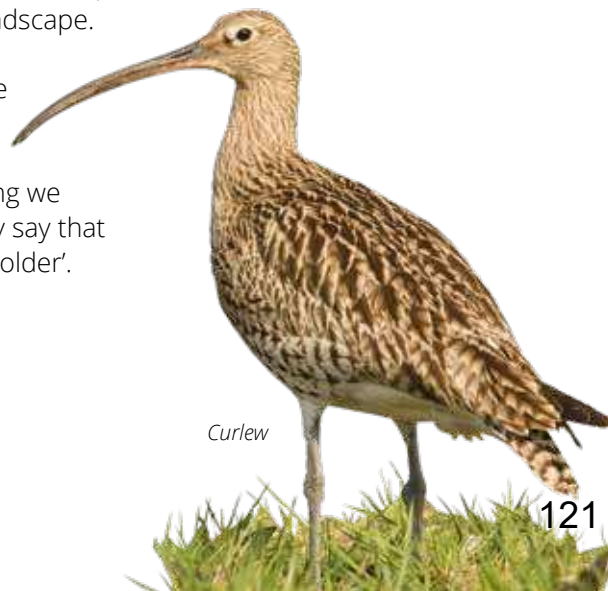
The term 'natural beauty' first gained currency in a legislative context in the 1907 Act, which gave legal status to the National Trust ('for Places of Historic Interest and Natural Beauty'). It has been the basis for the designation of both AONBs and National Parks since the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act in which, however, the term was not defined and it has not really been so since.

Government Guidance on AONBs in 2001 (Countryside Agency publication CA24) offers a useful non-technical definition, stating that "Natural Beauty is not just the look of the landscape, but includes landform and geology, plants and animals, landscape features and the rich history of human settlement over the centuries." So natural beauty goes well beyond scenic or aesthetic value and is to do with the relationship between people and place. It encompasses everything — 'natural' and human — that makes an area distinctive, including its cultural associations, and the people who live in it, past and present.

In the 1949 Act, 'natural beauty' replaced other phrases such as 'landscape beauty' and 'characteristic landscape beauty', providing a clue to the importance of landscape character and beauty as an aesthetic experience. Later the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 clarified that land used for agriculture, woodlands, parkland or with physiographical features partly the product of human intervention in the landscape, is not prevented from being treated as an area of 'natural beauty' too.

For AONBs, their natural beauty should have the potential to be 'outstanding,' both in terms of the quality of the components of character and the human aesthetic experience of the landscape.

Although our perception of landscape and its value may be driven by our background, our culture or the level of engagement and understanding we have, it is not enough to simply say that 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'.



Curlew

The key role of planning authorities in conserving natural beauty

Local Planning Authorities, including Minerals Planning Authorities, should establish robust policies in their development plan documents, which support the purpose of designation and protect the special qualities of the Solway Coast. In particular these policies, and their application in decision making should:

- **support the conservation and enhancement of the special qualities of the Solway Coast – see *Statement of Significance***
- **protect the Solway Coast and its setting from further visually intrusive development, especially large-scale vertical structures**
- **promote best practice in building design and energy efficiency**
- **ensure net gain for biodiversity and increased ecosystem service provision in policy making and development management**
- **promote the retention of traditional buildings styles**
- **respect the historic pattern of settlements along the coast**
- **protect heritage features**
- **reduce light and noise pollution and promote tranquillity**
- **encourage a visitor economy predicated on enjoying natural beauty**
- **Promote sustainable transport options, including improved public transport**
- **promote ease of living and working in the AONB without compromising its environmental qualities**

The above principles should also be followed in the production of any Neighbourhood Development Plans during the life of this management plan.

For the purposes of this plan, natural beauty and the special qualities of the Solway Coast are defined by the Statement of Significance.

In considering the proposed actions, the Top 10 Conservation Priorities on page 49 should also be noted.



Statement of Significance – *what makes the Solway Coast special?*

Description

The Solway Coast AONB is a place of wide-open estuary views across into Scotland and south to the Lakeland Fells. The landscape is enriched by the influence of Britain's second largest tidal range, covering and exposing vast tracts of saltmarshes and mudflats, an internationally important refuge for thousands of waders and wildfowl. These estuarine landscapes can have a profound sense of wildness, remoteness and tranquillity, heavily influenced by the changing sky, and by the sights and sounds of the sea. A long narrow tract of sand dune and dune heath runs along the coast and supports rare species including the natterjack toad.

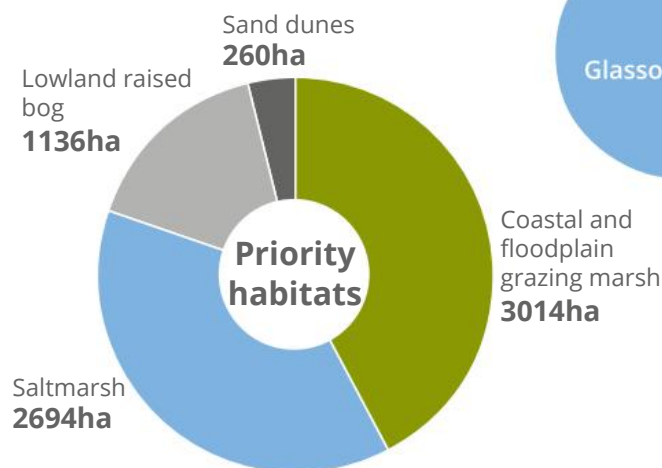
This is also a place of inland raised mires or 'Mosses' and their rich biodiversity; this contrasts with coastal marshy grasslands and with pastoral landscapes of beef, sheep and dairy farming, enclosed by hedges and 'kests'. Threaded through the inland landscape is a network of sunken lanes and narrow roads.

The experience of being in the whole of the Solway Coast AONB is strongly influenced by views out to the surrounding landscapes of the Lake District fells and across the Solway Firth to the hills of Dumfries and Galloway. This is enhanced by long interior views of across a landscape which has few vertical features beyond tree top height.

It is a frontier landscape, with a rich archaeological record, most celebrated in being part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site. Buildings and settlements have risen in response to conflict and trade; vernacular building styles reflect a long history of occupation and include fortified dwellings and churches, longhouses, 'clay dabbins' and cruck-roofed buildings. It is both a living, working rural landscape, and a place to discover, explore, celebrate and enjoy.

Facts and figures supporting the statement of significance

Population:
3,200



Campfield Marsh (RSPB)
Bowness on Solway (Cumbria Wildlife Trust)
Bowness Common (NE)
Glasson Moss (NE)
Drumbrugh Moss (NE)

16
County
Wildlife Sites

The Solway Coast Marine Conservation Zone



Internationally important birdlife

Over 140,000 overwintering wildfowl and waders. The entire global population of Svalbard barnacle geese overwinters.

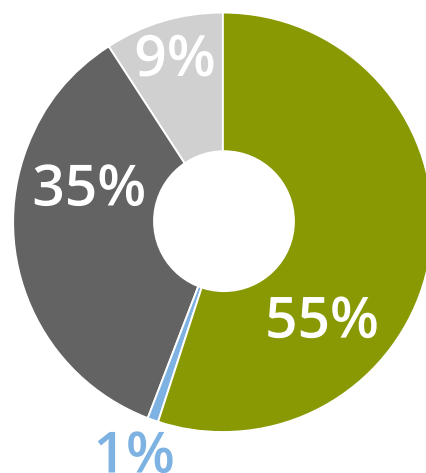


UNESCO World Heritage Sites – Hadrian's Wall

ProW – 86km of public footpaths and bridleways plus 14km of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail

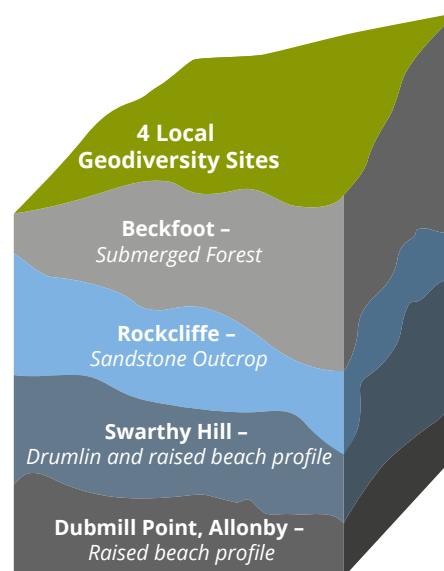
8 Pre-mediaeval churches

28
Scheduled monuments



Rural land cover in the AONB (approx.)

- Farmland 55%
- Mosses 1%
- Saltmarsh, estuary, dunes, rivers and settlement 35%
- Other 9%



123



7 Conservation areas:

1. Allonby
2. Mawbray
3. Bowness-on-Solway
4. Port Carlisle
5. Boustead Hill
6. Dykesfield
7. Burgh by Sands

The natural beauty of the Solway Coast comprises two main defining components, which themselves can be sub-divided into their characteristic elements:



Wolsty Dunes and north across the Solway Firth

Seascapes and Intertidal Landscapes.

The seascapes comprise extensive areas of both the Inner and Outer Solway Firth – *Inner Firth intertidal flats and saltmarsh* and *Outer Firth beaches and dunes*.

The Solway Firth's designation as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) reflects the importance of the AONB's marine environment and coastal habitats. This dynamic and changing coastline includes flats, intertidal creeks, sands and saltmarshes, and is bounded in places by shingle bays, sand dune systems and low earth cliffs.

The Solway Firth Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) is designated to protect European smelt, a fish species of conservation importance. It is also an important nursery ground for bass, pollack and some flatfish species.

The transition between land and sea is marked by beach and dune systems, generally along the west coast, and the mudflats and saltmarshes of the more sheltered northern areas of the Inner Firth.

These saltmarsh and intertidal landscapes have a strong sense of wildness and tranquillity.

The designation of the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA) recognises the international importance of the area's waders and wildfowl population. The Solway Firth as a whole is the 6th most important site for waterbirds in the UK; the mean waders and wildfowl population between winter 2012/'13 and winter 2017/'18 was over 140,000 birds. It is internationally important for Svalbard Barnacle geese – supporting the entire population (43,000) over-winter, of which over 11,300 (itself an internationally important number) winter on the English side of the estuary. The estuary as a whole is nationally (1% UK population) or internationally (1% East Atlantic flyway population) important for 20 species (with the English Solway important for 14).

The few ungrazed marshes tend to support a high diversity of plant species. Collectively the European designations of the Solway Coast form the Solway Firth European Marine Site. The estuary is also a Ramsar site, designated primarily for overwintering birds and its natterjack toad population, which thrives in dune slacks and on some tightly grazed marshes.

The extent of the saltmarsh is generally increasing, most notably around Bowness on Solway, and especially Rockcliffe Marsh, which has risen and extended in response to deposition.

As well as being the most extensive priority habitat in the Solway basin, the intertidal and floodplain grazing marshes are important grazing land, supporting dairy and meat production. Summer livestock grazing provides inland grasslands to be managed for silage making. On the inner Solway saltmarshes, the grazing regime is important for maintaining the grass sward height for wintering wildfowl and breeding waders.

The marshes also perform an important role in providing coastal protection, carbon sequestration and storage, and food provision. Being out on the wilder parts of the marshes is to capture a significant part of the essence of the Solway Coast.



View over Drumburgh Moss

Low-lying inland landscapes

Compared to the rest of lowland England, the Solway is unusual for its remaining and relatively intact lowland raised mires, or peatlands, (the Solway Mosses). This habitat supports a rich diversity of birdlife, invertebrates and flora, recognised in the South Solway Mosses SAC designation. The SAC comprise Bowness Common, Glasson Moss, Drumburgh Moss and Wedholme Flow (the latter being just outside the AONB). The Mosses contrast with a rolling, pastoral landscape of improved and semi-improved grasslands, enclosed by hedges and 'kests' (raised hedge banks).

The open expansive raised mires are often hidden behind a fringe of trees. In an otherwise flat, sea-level landscape, the gentle rises formed from the drumlins and mineral ridges left by the glaciers afford panoramic views over the semi-natural landscape.

There is rich historic and cultural heritage, closely linked to the Solway's position

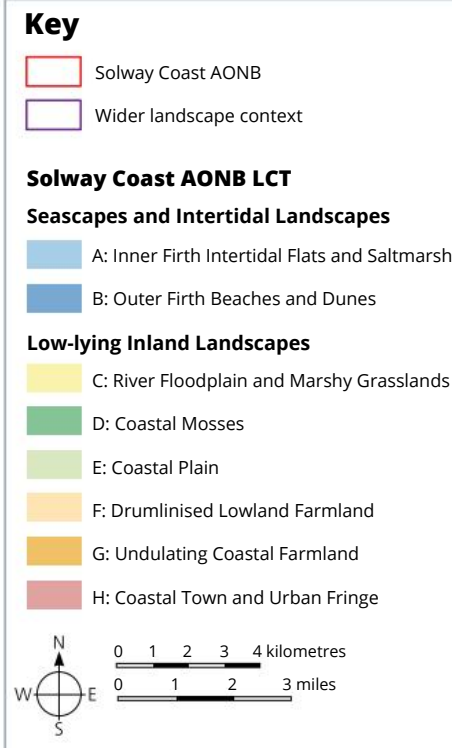
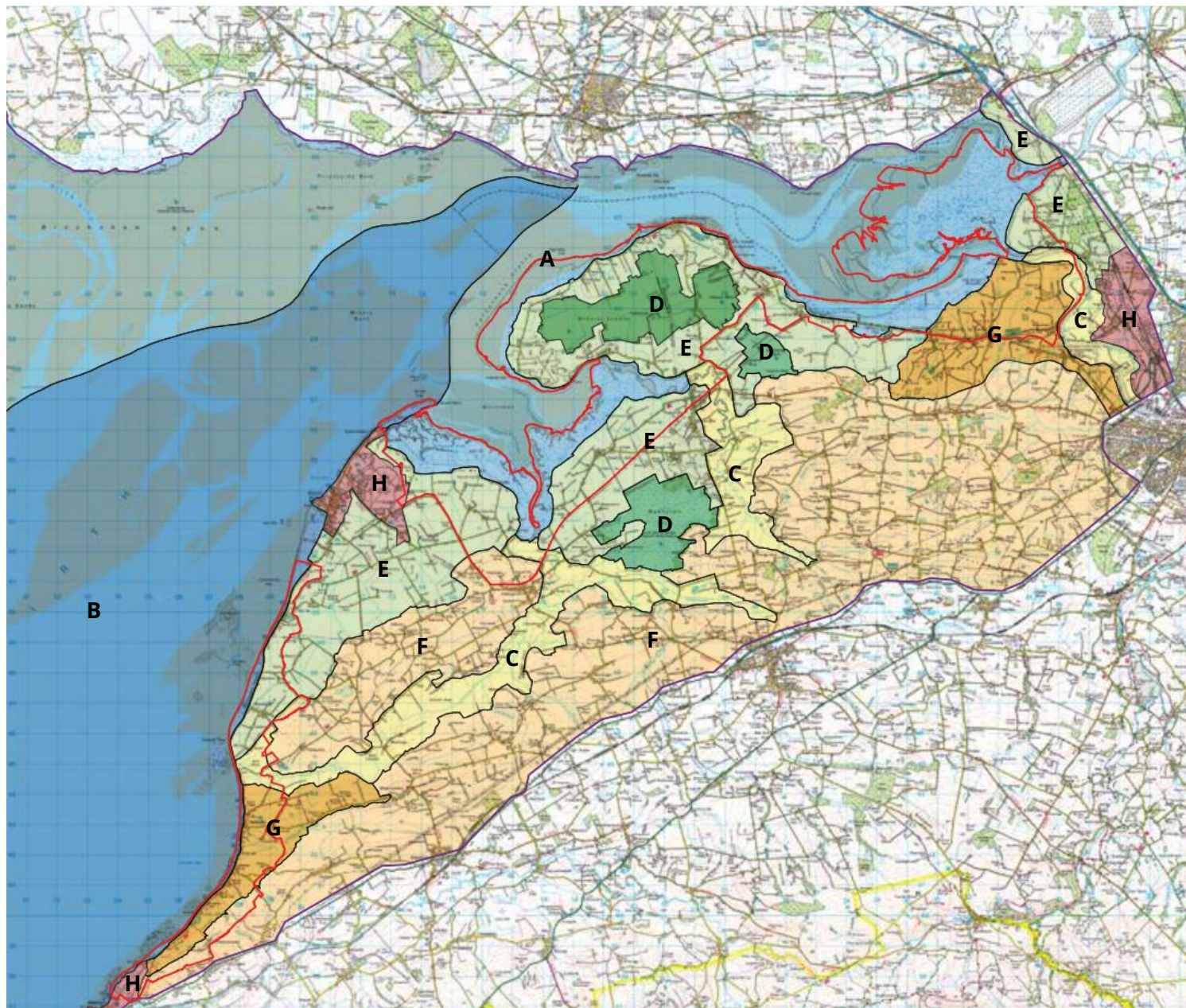
www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk

as a 'frontier' landscape on the border between Scotland and England. Evidence of a long and historic land use is seen in the field patterns, such as ridge and furrow on the grazed marshes, and the medieval pattern of 'infield' and 'outfield' farming linked to the agricultural improvements brought by the Cistercian monks of Holme Cultram Abbey.

Sunken lanes and narrow roads link settlements dotted along the coast. These settlements and the wider landscape have a complex mixture of vernacular buildings. Vernacular building styles reflect a long history of occupation and include fortified dwellings and churches, longhouses, 'clay dabbins' and cruck-roofed buildings.

Settlements on the Solway Coast are small and rural in nature and the character of the area as a whole is partly derived from the lack of development. This contributes to the area's relative sense of wildness and tranquillity.

Solway Coast AONB Landscape Character Types (LCT)



Seascapes and intertidal landscapes

Key components

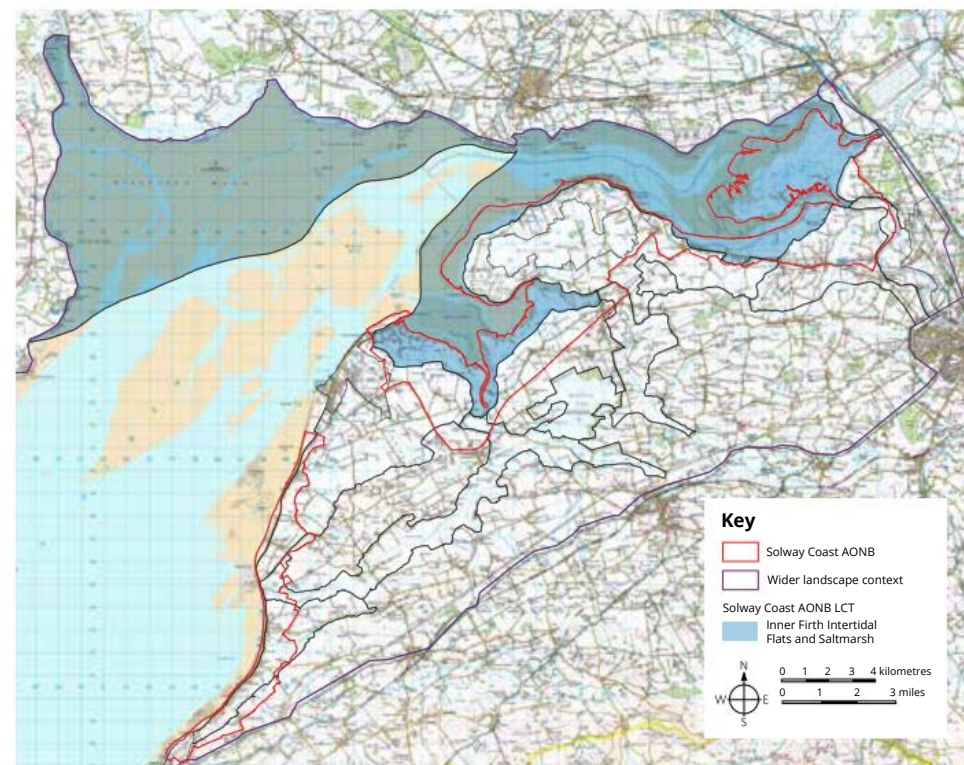
Inner Firth Intertidal Flats and Saltmarsh

These landscapes have a dynamic character, influenced by the state of the tide and changing with the longer-term cycle of erosion and deposition. Large expanses of fine sands and mudflats are dissected by dendritic creeks and channels. Open, flat expanses of saltmarsh, transition to the flat coastal plains, mosses and enclosed farmland of the inland areas. Saline tolerant plant species dominate, often grazed by sheep and cattle. The landscape we see today is largely a product of this grazing management, alongside the regular saltwater flooding from the tides.

Grazing the saltmarsh



© Countryside Agency, photo C. Hadley





It is a large-scale landscape with expanses of tidal flats extending towards open sea and the skylines of Dumfries and Galloway. There is a sense of relative wildness, openness and tranquillity in much of these landscapes, filled with the sights and sounds of large numbers of waders and wildfowl, for which the area has multiple conservation designations and is internationally important. The rare natterjack toad also thrives in saltmarsh pools. The saltmarsh contains a unique mix of salt tolerant plants only found along the coast, such as sea milkwort, scurvy grass and thrift. Saltmarsh is also important as nursery grounds for fish, which utilise small creeks and pools.

The biodiversity of the marine environment is rich. It is important for the passage of migratory fish including lampreys and sea trout. It also provides important nursery areas for skates, shark species and thornback rays and supports salmon, sea bass, pollock, flat fish and especially European smelt, for which the Solway Firth Marine Conservation Zone is designated.

Top 5 issues and forces for change

- **Conserving habitat for wildfowl and waders and reducing disturbance of overwintering birds.**
- **Conserving populations of key breeding and migratory fish species**
- **Preserving long views across and out of the AONB landscape**
- **Managing grazing pressure to support conservation**
- **Climate change and potential sea-level rise and the need for adaptive management / addressing coastal squeeze at intertidal areas**

Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

Inner Firth Intertidal flats and saltmarsh

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Ecosystem services supported
IF1. Use planning policy to protect the seascape and intertidal landscapes from further visually intrusive development	LA	3	7
IF2. Use Environmental Land Management Systems (ELMS) and other mechanisms to ensure grazing and sensitive management of saltmarshes delivers conservation outcomes	NE , F/L, CWT, RSPB	1-4	1-7
IF3. Use ELMS and other mechanisms to promote rewetting of degraded marshlands	NE , F/L, CWT, RSPB, EA	1-4	1-7
IF4. Promote sustainable fisheries and shell fisheries management to support species and habitat conservation	NWIFCA , NE, EA, SFP	1, 2, 9	1, 2, 4, 7
IF5. Act to reduce pollution and nutrient input from farmland and rivers	EA , NE, F/L	1, 2, 4	2, 4, 6
IF6. Develop a strategic approach to potential climate change-driven sea level rise, including identifying potential areas for adaptive coastal management	LA , EA, NE, F/L	1, 2, 4	6, 7
IF7. Restore targeted areas of reclaimed farmland to marshland	NE , F/L	1, 2, 3, 4	6, 7
IF8. Promote messages about reducing public disturbance of wintering birds	RSPB , SCAONB, NE, CWT, SFP	2, 6	7
IF9. Produce a strategy for managing recreational disturbance, to support species and habitat conservation	SCAONB , NE, LA, RSPB	2, 6	7
IF10. Act to encourage natural development and erosion of saltmarsh	NE , CWT, LA, EA, SCAONB	1-4	1-7
IF11. Enhance natural features on the saltmarsh e.g. by increasing the number of pools and blocking drainage ditches	CWT , NE	1-4	1-7
<i>See also actions: OF 3, 6, 8; FL12-14</i>			

Measures of Success

- Area of restored habitat
- Reduced pollution and nutrient input to rivers
- Stable overwinter wildfowl and wader populations and increase in breeding waders
- No visually intrusive development significantly harming views across and out of the AONB

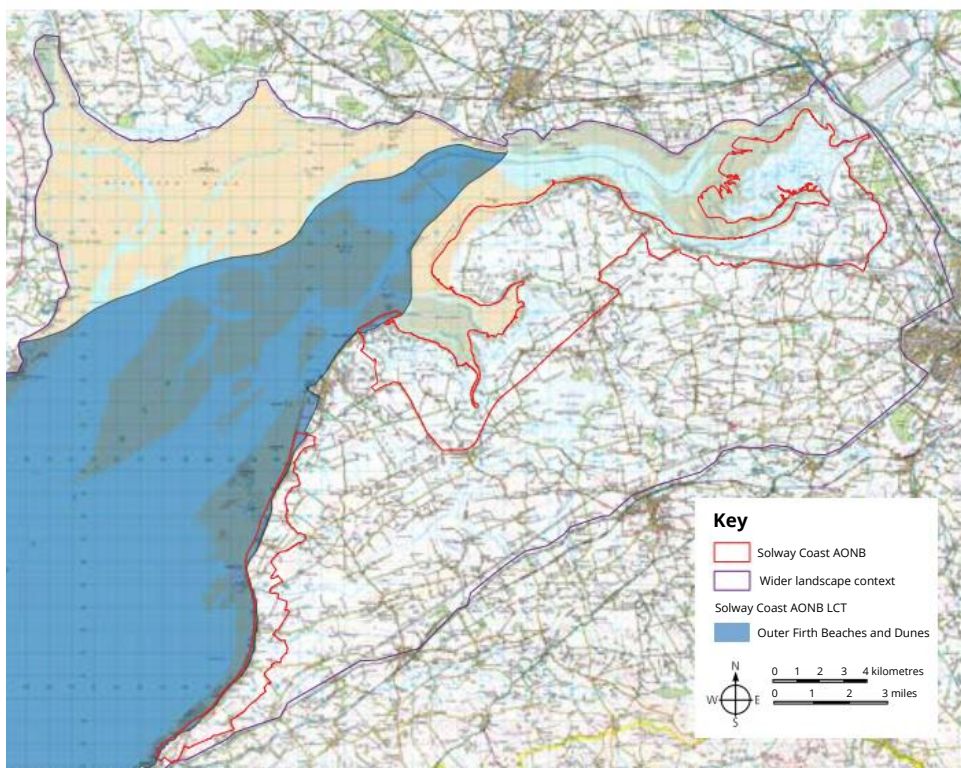
- SSSI condition
- Natterjack toad breeding success
- Deliverable proposals for adaptive coastal management

Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes

These landscapes occur throughout the open coastal area, the eastern section having more channels and finer deposits due to the low energy tidal regime characteristic of the inner estuary. The western section has open sea and is more characteristic of a traditional 'seaside' landscape with high wave and tidal energy providing movement of larger sediments such as gravels.

These are large-scale dramatic landscapes, with undeveloped flats and open water, open skylines and long views over the Solway Firth to the Scottish coastline and Criffel. The dynamic seascape is characterised by the sights and sounds of the sea, lapping water and large numbers of waders and wildfowl that feed on the flats.

Large and open expanses of intertidal sand flats open out to the sea; these are backed by shingle and pebble beaches and dune systems to the south and



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mudflats along more sheltered northern stretches of the coastal fringe. 'Scaurs' (post-glacial rock dumps) are distinctive along the beaches and support mussel beds and honeycomb worm reefs, providing important feeding grounds for wading birds. The biodiversity of the marine environment reflects that of the Inner Firth.

Small linear towns and villages are dotted along the coast, seven of which include designated Conservation Areas.

Much of the extensive coastal dune and heath system that fringes the outer Solway Firth is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and as part of the Solway Firth SAC. Areas of acidic dune grassland and heath support a diversity of dune and maritime heath plant and animal communities. The SSSI and non-designated dune series here form one of only three similar dune systems in north and west Cumbria. In recent times declines or changes in coastal grazing have seen declines in habitat quality in some locations.

The dune system and saltmarsh absorb and dissipate wave energy, together forming an effective coastal defence system.

Coastal squeeze is significant in some locations, with the B5300 road creating an unnatural barrier that inhibits natural dune expansion inland. In places where erosion dominates, dunes are being lost completely and hard engineering has been deployed to protect the road from damage and flooding.

Dune systems are fragile and susceptible to damage from unmanaged access of various kinds.

Top 5 issues and forces for change

- Conserving habitat for wildfowl and waders and reducing disturbance of overwintering birds and on fragile habitats
- Conserving populations of key breeding and migratory fish species
- Preserving long views across and out of the AONB landscape
- Coastal squeeze and its impacts on habitats and species, and how to deliver adaptive management which will protect the integrity of priority habitats
- Conserving vernacular architecture and the character of coastal settlements

Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

Outer Firth Beaches and Dunes

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
OF1. Restore coastal processes, including dynamic dune systems, where these have been lost due to coastal squeeze	NE , EA, LA	1-4	1-4, 6, 7
OF2. Create more dynamic dune systems where grey dunes have developed, e.g. through controlled grazing by selected livestock	EA , NE, F/L	1-4	1-4, 6, 7
OF3. Restore degraded habitat at the interface of transitional zones between land and sea	NE , EA, CWT, RSPB, F/L	1-3	1-7
OF4. Promote the management of land to create space to adapt to sea level rise	EA , LA, NE, CWT, RSPB, F/L, SCAONB	1-3	4-7
OF5. Create pools, ponds and scrapes to support key species conservation	NE , EA, CWT, F/L	1-4	2, 4, 5, 7
OF6. Control invasive non-native plant and animal species	NE , EA, CWT, RSPB, F/L, SCAONB, NWIFCA, SEPA, SNH, SFP	2	6, 7
OF7. Implement fishery orders to effectively manage shell fishing activity from sand dunes and minimise impacts on habitats.	NWIFCA , LA, NE, EA	1, 2, 4, 9	4, 6, 7
OF8. Promote actions to reduce disturbance by people/dogs/vehicles in sensitive areas to protect fragile habitats and vulnerable species	SCAONB , NE, EA, CWT, RSPB, F/L	2, 6	7
OF9. Rationalise car parks to promote better management of disturbance and reduce habitat damage.	LA , SCAONB	2, 6	7
OF10. Provide visitor information to promote access which respects the fragile nature of the dunes and their wildlife	SCAONB , NE, EA, CWT, RSPB	2, 6	7
OF11. Provide wardening, install fencing and undertake education programmes to support breeding little terns	CWT , EA, NE, SCAONB	2	4, 7
<i>See also actions: IF 1, 2, 4, 6, 8; FL12-14</i>			

Measures of Success

- Area of dune restored and under more positive management
- Measures in place to reduce the impacts of coastal squeeze
- Increase in natterjack toad population
- Stable overwinter bird populations and increase in breeding waders
- SSSI Condition



"This is an open, flat landscape, contrasting with the undulating and rolling topography of the farmed lowland hills and drumlins surrounding it."

Low-lying inland landscapes

Key components

- **River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland;**
- **Coastal Mosses;**
- **Coastal lowland farmed landscapes (including Coastal Plain, Drumlinised Lowland Farmland, Undulating Coastal Farmland) and their settlements.**

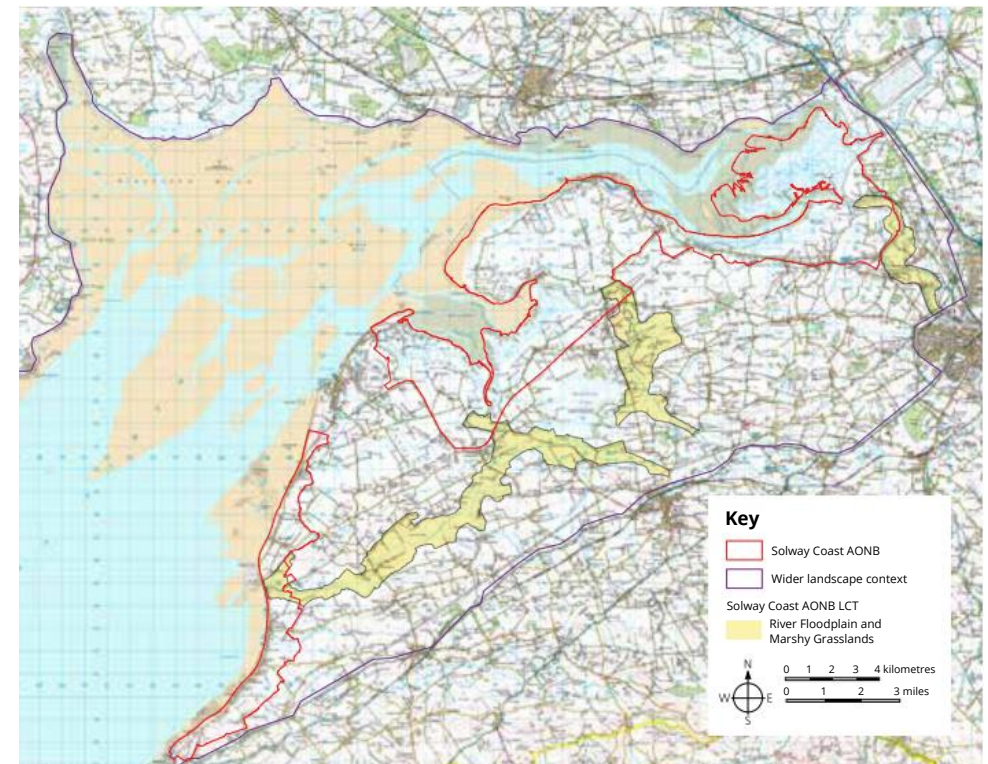
River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland

These landscapes are characterised by areas of low lying, flat floodplain, marshy grassland and improved pasture. They follow the watercourses of the rivers Waver, Wampool and Eden and the glacial basin of Black Dub, Holme Dub and Crummock Beck. These landscapes are dissected by a network of drainage ditches, channels and watercourses which drain into the Solway Firth.

This is an open, flat landscape, contrasting with the undulating and rolling topography of the farmed lowland hills and drumlins surrounding it. Enclosure is partial and irregular, with fencing and occasional, fragmented hedges, creating an open landscape with long views along flat river valleys.

The green marsh grass is grazed by sheep and cattle in some areas, whilst others are characterised by rough grazing, rushes and scrub. Fen peat soils are characteristic in the dubs and upper reaches of the broad and gentle river valleys.

A dense network of streams, ditches and creeks dissect the areas, usually intensively managed and with eroded river banks in places. The rivers themselves are not prominent features of the areas, and are not particularly visible from within the flat expanses of marshes.



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Development is confined to the outer fringes of the areas as the land rises above sea-level, where dispersed farmsteads are scattered.

These grasslands are traditionally grazed in spring and late summer and are cut for hay, a management regime that promotes biodiversity. The primary biodiversity interest of the river floodplains and marshy grasslands is in its birdlife, especially breeding waders such as curlew and lapwing, which rely on damp soils, open pools and muddy hollows for feeding and rearing their young. As well as being a key nesting habitat for curlew, the traditional management of these grasslands promotes wildflowers such as marsh orchids, marsh marigold and ragged robin, specialists of wet meadows.

Top 5 issues and forces for change

- **Intensification of farming and resultant loss of biodiversity, set alongside opportunities for High Nature Value farming, changes to the Common Agricultural Policy and Environmental Land Management Schemes**
- **Eutrophication caused by agricultural run-off and atmospheric Nitrogen**
- **Flooding and its impacts on agriculture, property and conservation**
- **Declines in breeding bird productivity and disturbance to wader roosts**
- **Pumped draining and its potential impacts and opportunities for changes in land management**

Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

River Floodplain and Marshy Grassland

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
RF1. Influence the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) to target grazing regimes which maximise benefit for biodiversity – e.g. light cattle grazing from spring to autumn, or a late summer hay cut – and reward farmers accordingly	NE , F/L	1, 2, 4	1-7
RF2. Negotiate winter inundation on an appropriate scale across the habitat, to provide refuge and feeding grounds for grazing and dabbling wildfowl such as the widgeon and teal	F/L , NE, EA	1, 2, 4	1-7
RF3. Negotiate agri-environment schemes and bespoke projects to create scrapes, ponds and pools to support wading birds.	F/L , NE, RSPB, CWT	1, 2, 4	2-7
RF4. Utilise ELMS and other mechanisms to improve soil condition and organic matter content, reduce atmospheric nitrogen emissions from agriculture, minimise soil and nutrient run-off into watercourses and promote less use of pesticides	F/L , NE	1, 2, 4	1-7
RF5. Restore land formerly under draining to biodiverse wet grassland	NE , F/L, EA, CWT, RSPB, WCRT	1-4	1-7
RF6. Reconnect becks and rivers to their floodplain and naturalise river courses	EA , F/L, NE	1-4	1-7
RF7. Promote and undertake research into causes of declines in bird productivity	RSPB , Uni	2, 6, 7	4, 7
RF8. Promote natural flood management through agri-environment schemes and bespoke projects	EA , NE, F/L, WCRT	1-4, 9	1-7
RF9. Explore options for adaptation to climate change, e.g. through coastal road rollback	LA , EA, NE	1-3	1, 5-7
RF10. Act to raise awareness of disturbance of high tide bird roosts	RSPB , NE, CWT, SCAONB, SFP	2, 6	7
<i>See also actions OF6; FL2, FL7, FL12-14</i>			

Measures of Success

- SSSI condition
- Increase in breeding wader numbers and productivity
- Area of land formerly under drainage and now restored
- Area of new wetland habitat created

Coastal Mosses

The Mosses of the Solway Coast are low lying raised mires with a raised peat 'dome'. Now rare, these habitats have been designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), with parts of the SAC also designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR).

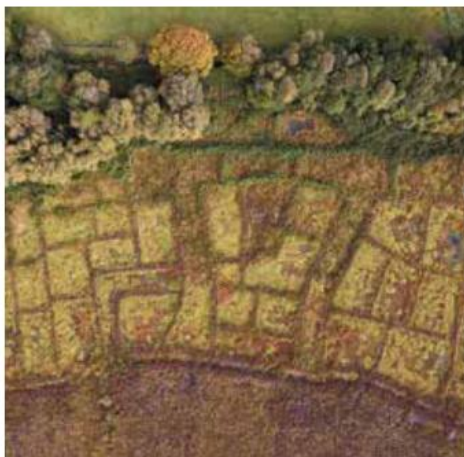
These are visually dynamic landscapes, with considerable seasonal change in colour, and are strongly affected by the state of the light and the weather. There are long views across to the seascape of the Solway Firth and the fells of the Lake District. Though modified by past peat extraction, the landscape has a feeling of naturalness, remoteness and tranquillity, further amplified by a relative absence of human-made structures and visual intrusion.

The Moss landscape comprises flat or slightly undulating hummock-hollow mosaics, including water pools, marsh, moss, reeds and fringing wet woodland; usually stands of birch heather and purple moor grass grow in the slightly drier areas. The characteristic Moss habitat is that of deep peat, over 10 metres in some places, with assemblages of sphagnum, cotton grasses and carnivorous plants, including the uncommon great sundew. These sites also support rare species such as large heath butterfly. Bird species of the mosses include skylark, snipe, marsh tit and willow tit.

Glasson Moss

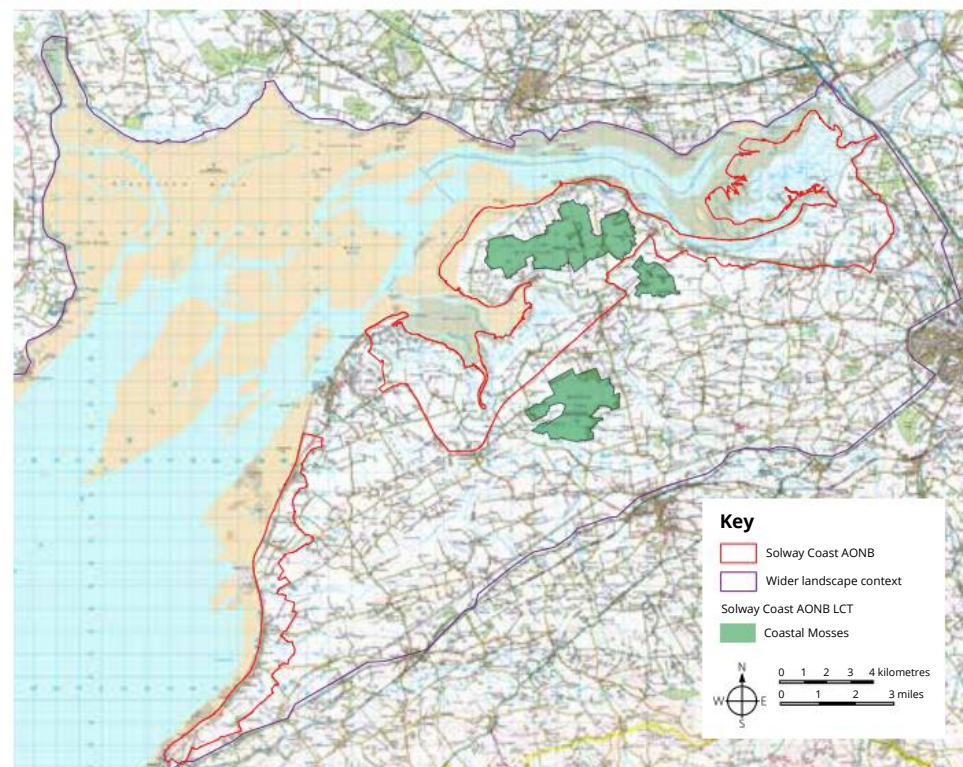


Bog restoration work from above



The Mosses are much less extensive than they were in the past. Draining, to improve them for pastureland, has caused a significant reduction in their extent and condition. Further such losses are through ploughing, landuse and subsequent erosion, and from the impacts of atmospheric nitrogen from local agriculture.

During the life of the last Management Plan, the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme brought together a range of organisations to continue the job of gradually restoring and celebrating the Mosses. This has brought about an improvement in the condition of this distinctive part of the landscape, but more work is still required. The overall condition of the SSSIs is that they are still recovering and this process takes time; there are still missing parts of the hydrological 'jigsaw' of the mosses, notably the transitional 'lagg' zone communities on the shallow peats.





Pond on Bowness Common



Peat is our best natural store of carbon. When in good condition, the Solway Mosses not only store carbon, but also sequester it from the atmosphere. Conversely, if they remain unrestored, with active drains, they continue to release their stored carbon and contribute to CO₂ emissions when exposed peat reacts with the oxygen in the air. Managing our Mosses as functioning wetland ecosystems is the most effective land-management based action to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In the past the Mosses were highly valued as a source of fuel for the home, a growing medium in the horticultural industry, and perhaps for other purposes such as grazing or hemp retting, as well as for recreation. Today their value is less obvious, until we appreciate their importance for society in terms of carbon storage, managing run-off after rainfall, and a record of our past, as well as for the rarity of the wildlife community and the landscape it creates.

Though the Mosses can be perceived as 'wasteland' or as unproductive, generally they are valued by local people as places to walk (often with their dogs) and to enjoy nature. Whilst this use of the Mosses is to be welcomed, access needs careful management and responsible visitor behaviour needs to be encouraged.



Snipe

Top 5 issues and/or forces for change

- **The need for restoration of peatland habitat to promote carbon storage/sequestration, flood risk mitigation and biodiversity**
- **Opportunities provided by new Environmental Land Management Schemes**
- **A need to create buffers between bogs and areas of more intensive land management, and better connectivity of more permeable habitat between bogs**
- **Impacts of nutrient enrichment and nitrogen deposition from air pollution and agriculture (e.g rising ammonia levels exceeding critical limits)**
- **A lack of understanding of how important peatlands are and that they should be managed as wetland ecosystems**

Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

Coastal Mosses

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
M1. Use planning policy and SSSI management agreements to ensure no further loss or degradation of habitat on the Solway Mosses	LA/NE , CWT, F/L	1-4	1-7
M2. Restore and enhance raised bog and lagg fen habitats towards 'favourable condition'	NE , CWT, EA, SCAONB, F/L	1-4	1-7
M3. Create lagg / edge habitat on reclaimed peat around existing Mosses	NE , CWT, EA, SCAONB, F/L	1-4	1-7
M4. Ensure new ELMS prioritises habitats of the Mosses and their restoration	NE , CWT, EA, SCAONB F/L	1-4	1-7
M5. Use ELMS to buffer and expand fringe habitats around bogs	NE , CWT, F/L	1-4	1-7
M6. Advocate for the value and importance of habitats of the Mosses and the need to prioritise their conservation	SCAONB , NE, CWT, EA, F/L	1-4, 6	1-7
M7. Act to avoid erosion of organic matter into watercourses	NE , CWT, EA, F/L	1-4	1-7
M8. Promote sensitive access to the mosses to encourage enjoyment and understanding whilst reducing disturbance to species and habitats	NE , CWT, EA, SCAONB, F/L	2-6	7
M9. Provide support for farmers and land managers in order to facilitate improved management of land around Mosses – e.g. events, training, advocacy, demonstration farms	NE , CWT, EA, F/L	1-4, 6, 8	1-7
<i>See also actions FL12-14; RF4</i>			

Measures of Success

- Extent of restoration
- SSSI condition status (minimum 100% in 'unfavourable recovering' condition)
- Area of new lagg / edge habitat created
- Area of buffering of surrounding landscape
- Increase in key species

Coastal lowland farmed landscapes and their settlements

These landscapes are a combination of individually distinctive character types: coastal plain, drumlinised lowland farmland and undulating lowland farmland.

The **Coastal Plain** is a landscape of flat or slightly undulating, low lying farmland. The field structure is largely based around the medieval enclosures with a pattern of narrow strip fields and larger 'outfields' around the villages, as well as the regular geometric pattern of parliamentary enclosures. Wind sculptured trees line the roadsides, including avenues of beech.

This is a landscape with a long history of occupation, reflected in the remains of Roman fortifications, the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site, and the evidence of medieval cultivation and land use patterns. Later military and industrial heritage is also visible, including World War Two camps and Port Carlisle's canal and railway legacy.

Settlements provide a variety of architectural styles and building materials. Historic villages, such as Newton Arlosh, Kirkbride and Mawbray are clustered within coastal pasture and closely related to the pattern of the fields.

People value the open views across the Firth, intertidal flats and marshes to the north and northwest, with Criffel and the Scottish hills forming key focal points. Views inland across the higher areas of drumlinised farmland accentuate the flat and open character of the plains.



The dominant habitats are coastal pasture, enclosed by ditches and 'kested' hedgerows (planted on raised banks), with a distinctive pattern of small 'inner fields', and larger 'outer fields'. A mixture of winding lanes (often lined with wind-sculpted trees) and straight linear roads cross through the farmland, reflecting the localised pattern of fields and drainage ditches.

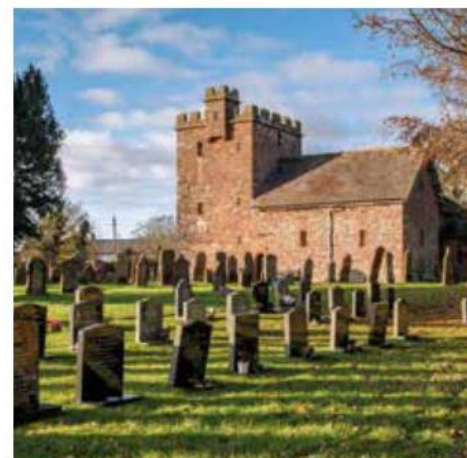
These flat landscapes contrast with the coastal margins of the marshes and dunes as well as the hills and drumlin landscape.

A Roman ceramic head of a female found at Burgh-by-Sands
Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery Trust, Carlisle



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St John's Church, Newton Arlosh



Beckfoot and the Solway Plain



Drumlinised Lowland Farmland extends across much of the Solway Coast, stretching beyond the AONB boundary and playing an important role in defining its setting. The smooth skylines of the rolling green landform and low elongated drumlins are characteristic of views looking inland from many parts of the AONB.

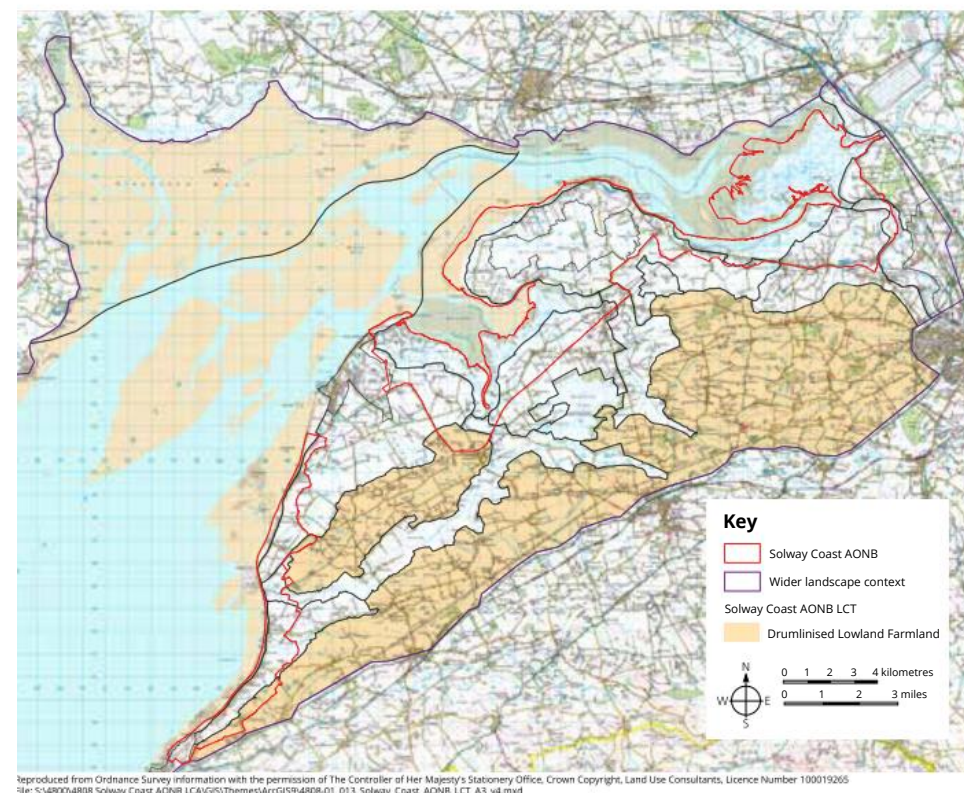
This is a tranquil agricultural landscape, less exposed and influenced by the coastal setting, and more enclosed than the adjacent coastal plains, with an attractive backdrop of upland hills. It is dominated by pasture land and occasional arable crops divided by hedges, draped over the rolling drumlin landforms. Hedgerow trees and small copses are distinctive features in the landscape.

The impact of parliamentary enclosures can be seen in large, regular, geometric fields; these are interspersed with older field enclosure patterns of medium sized irregular fields and long narrow strip fields.

The low relief drumlin landform creates wide views from along the tops of the low hills, and more sheltered and intimate landscapes contained by topography on the lower slopes, providing a sense of enclosure.

Distinctive wide and sunken lanes, that are former drove roads, rise up and down across the farmland, with clear edge profiles of ditches and raised banks topped with hedges, locally known as 'kests'. The pattern of rectilinear roads and winding lanes reflects both a rich mixture of field patterns and the orientation and profiles of the drumlin landform. Traditional finger post road and direction signs are widespread, some of which have been restored.

Scattered linear settlements, villages/small settlements such as Allerby, Westnewton, and Edderside, and farmsteads, comprising clusters of vernacular buildings, follow the orientation of the drumlins. There is a varied mixtures of architectural styles and building materials, with thatched roofs, 'cruck' barns, and long houses built of 'clay dabbin'.



Laying a kested hedgerow



Bowness Village



Immediately inland from the coastal margins of the Solway Firth, along a stretch bounding the Inner Firth and along the western coast of the Outer Firth, is a tranquil landscape of low-lying **Undulating Coastal Farmland**. This landscape shares many of the characteristics of the Drumlinised Lowland Farmland, the principal differences being a lack of narrow strip fields, the winding becks that run through the area and the distinctive linear settlement pattern of villages such as Burgh-by-Sands and Beaumont in the northeast and Allonby and Crosscanonby in the southwest. These settlements comprise clusters of traditional and historic vernacular buildings, strongly influenced by their coastal setting.

Across the country, farmland biodiversity has been declining for decades. This is true of the Solway as much as anywhere else, though there are successes, where sensitive farming is sustaining hares, skylarks and grassland flora. However, the recovery of farmland biodiversity remains one of the biggest challenges for the area.

View over Crosscanonby towards Allonby

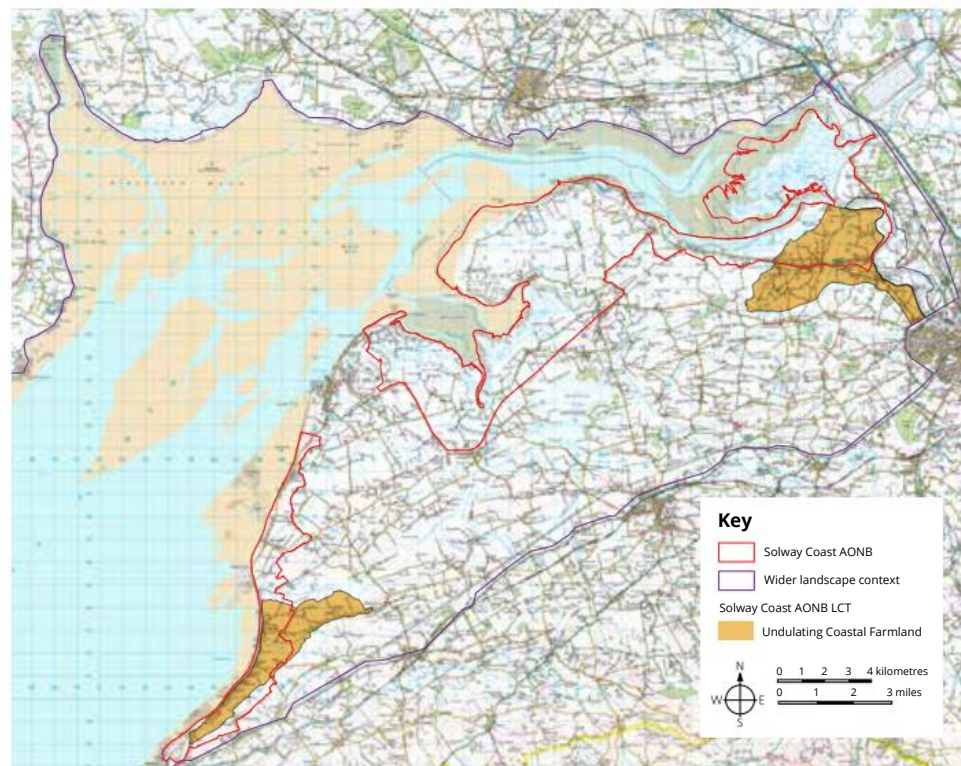


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Bowness-on-Solway



Fields at Mawbray with Criffel behind



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Looking over Raby Cote towards Skiddaw



Farm support over the life of this plan

Farmers know their land better than anyone else and the future of the farmed environment is of course tied to a viable economic future for farming. At the time of writing this plan, Britain is preparing to leave the EU; with that will come a revised method of providing Government support to farming and the farmed landscape. There is an opportunity to create new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS) which are not prescription-led, but which are outcomes-focused, rewarding farmers for the public goods they produce – clean air and water, biodiversity, healthy soils etc.

On the Solway, ELMS need to be specially targeted to supporting the conservation priorities outlined in this plan. There should be encouragement, and reward, for collaboration across farm holdings aimed at maximising benefits for nature at a landscape scale. Experience from elsewhere suggests that this approach brings clear benefits for nature, farmers and the public; it is also clear that farmers need support and training to be able to help plan and monitor the works on their land under new ELMS; in turn conservation organisations need to learn from the experience and knowledge of farmers. Over the five years of this plan, the focus of work in this field will be on collaboration, improving trust and nature recovery, with an acknowledgment that any new financial system will support farmers to actively deliver what the public values and for which other markets do not readily exist.



Top 5 issues and/or forces for change

- Addressing the twin challenges of biodiversity decline and the impacts of climate change on farmland
- Retaining uncluttered views across and out of the landscape
- Conserving traditional building styles and features and ensuring that new development is sympathetic to landscape character
- Developing an outcomes focused approach to agri-environment schemes which is compatible with the national and international designations within the AONB and which delivers more for nature, rewards farmers appropriately and provides goods and services the public value
- Supporting collaboration across farm holdings on a landscape scale, and between conservation bodies and farmers on skills training, ELMS delivery and monitoring

Actions for Nature Recovery and Landscape Character

Coastal lowland farmed landscapes and their settlements

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
FL1. Promote the local development and local delivery of a results-based, outcome-focused approach to agri-environment payments, including the development of a ELMS pilot	Defra , NE, NFU	1-4, 9	1-7
FL2. Use ELMS and bespoke projects to support targeted reversal of old drainage	NE , EA, F/L	1-4	1-7
FL3. Promote cutting for hay rather than silage when the weather allows	NE , F/L	1-4	2-4, 7
FL4. Support sound conservation management of woodlands, kested hedgerows and field trees, connecting habitats across the landscape	FC , NE, F/L, SCAONB, CWT, RSPB	2,4-5	2-4, 7
FL5. Create a bespoke landscape-scale project to support farmland biodiversity over the life of this plan	SCAONB , F/L, CWT, RSPB, NE, FC, EA	1-4	2-4, 7
FL6. Develop targeted projects for key species, such as barn owl and breeding waders	CWT , RSPB, NE, SCAONB, EA, F/L	1-4	2-4, 7
FL7. Use ELMS to promote and reward good soil management, and promote Catchment Sensitive Farming, grants and initiative for soils, air and water quality	NE , F/L	2,4	1, 2, 4-6
FL8. Monitor and act on tree and plant diseases, notably Chalara and Phytophthora	FC , WT, NE, LA	1-3	1-4
FL9. Act to reduce run-off from roads and farmland to help improve the quality of watercourses	EA , F/L, NE	1, 2, 4	5, 6
FL10. Ensure that no sites or features of geological interest are lost to development or inappropriate management	LA , Cumbria RIGS, NE	2	7
FL11. Support and encourage measures which reduce visual intrusion such as re-routing or undergrounding of overhead wires	LPAs , ENW, SCAONB	3	7
FL12. Use planning policy and decision making to maintain undeveloped horizons, minimise the impact of vertical structures and retain views out of and across the landscape	LPAs	3	7
FL13. Use planning policy/decision making, and grant support to conserve traditional buildings and structures	LPAs , SCAONB	4, 5	7
FL14. Ensure net-gain for biodiversity in planning decisions; trial and use the Biodiversity Metric 2.0 or future versions	LPAs , NE, EA, SCAONB	1, 2	1-7
FL15. Act to reduce highway and roadside signage clutter	HA , LA, SCAONB	3	7
FL16. Replace high colour temperature, unshielded street lighting with low colour temperature lighting, and fully shield lighting and ensure it is only on when required.	LA	2, 3, 5	7
<i>See also actions: OF6; RF1, RF4; L7-10</i>			

Measures of Success

- Increase in farmland biodiversity
- Increasing numbers of farmers benefitting from receiving public money for delivering public goods
- No net loss of hedgerows, woodland or field trees / no loss of kests, veteran trees or ancient woodland

- Evidence of net gain for biodiversity in planning decisions
- No development takes place which significantly harms views out of and across the landscape
- Buildings and structures no longer at risk, due to conservation action

Top 10 Priorities for Nature Recovery

The following are the top 10 priorities to aid nature recovery on the Solway Coast between 2020 and 2025. Wherever possible, local communities should have a role in delivering this action and will require support and resources to make this happen. Collaboration between farmers, fishermen and conservation organisations is central to any successful activity in support of these priorities

Priority	Action	Main Partners
Landscape-scale connectivity and nature recovery	Act on a landscape scale to conserve, enhance, expand and connect habitats and communities of species across the whole coast and beyond. Develop an AONB Nature Recovery Plan	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
Understanding / responding to the likely impacts of climate change	Provide the space for the expansion of key habitats such as saltmarsh and marshy grassland.	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, LA, F/L
South Solway Mosses	Restore and conserve peatland habitats through rewetting, buffering and creating lagg zones	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
Saltmarsh	Conserve and extend saltmarsh habitat for its wildlife and carbon storage/sequestration benefits and protect sensitive sites from disturbance and pollution	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, LA
Mudflats	Protect mudflats from development and pollution, and reduce disturbance to species using them as feeding grounds	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, Fishing community
Dunes	Create, restore and conserve dune habitat and protect sensitive sites from disturbance	NE, RSPB, CWT, SCAONB, LA

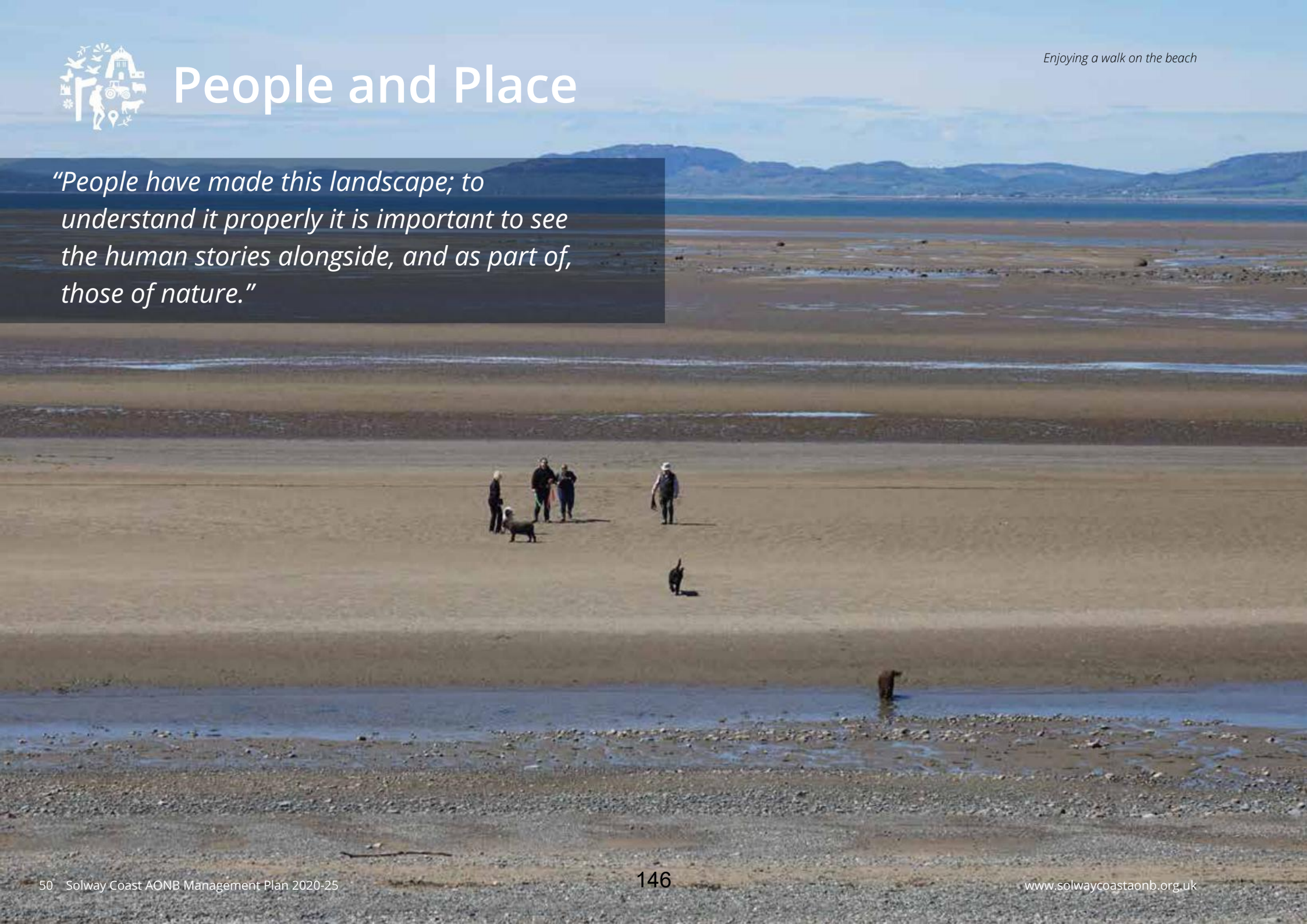
Priority	Action	Main Partners
Species-led conservation	Take action for specific species which may require bespoke effort during the life of the Plan e.g. breeding and over-wintering wildflower and waders, little tern, marsh tit, willow tit, smelt, marsh fritillary, natterjack toad, mud shrimp, wrasse species, smallhound, bass, bell huss, thornback ray, Atlantic salmon, tope dogfish.	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB, Fishing community
Non-native species management	Reduce the impact of non-native species, such as Japanese rose and Himalayan balsam, on native flora and fauna	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
Supporting HNV farming	Promote advice, training, support and collaboration to advance High Nature Value farming; contribute to the development and subsequent delivery of ELMS that properly rewards farmers for delivering public goods	NE, RSPB, CWT, EA, F/L, SCAONB
Evidence and data	Undertake research to improve collective understanding of the issues facing the conservation of the Solway Coast. Support Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre	Universities, NE, RSPB, EA, SCAONB



People and Place

Enjoying a walk on the beach

"People have made this landscape; to understand it properly it is important to see the human stories alongside, and as part of, those of nature."





Introduction

The Solway Coast, like all of the AONBs and National Parks of the UK, is a living, working landscape. This plan does not address issues such as housing provision, transport and broadband provision, which are the proper subject of other strategic documents, e.g. the Allerdale and Carlisle Local Development Plans; instead the focus is on the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and helping people to understand, celebrate and enjoy the area's rich heritage. This section of the plan focuses on finding out more about, and celebrating the landscape and its cultural heritage, promoting community action for the environment, responsible tourism, education, training and skills. Some descriptions and actions which relate to farming and fishing, and to buildings and settlements feature in earlier parts of the plan.

A cultural landscape

We can summarise the definition of 'natural beauty' as the coming together of landscape, wildlife and our built heritage; but landscape ought to be seen as much more than just the view. To see it most clearly we need to understand how the land has been used over time, how it has evolved, and to uncover the stories often hidden within it. Our appreciation of that landscape (and crucially in this context our desire to look after it) can be so much greater than when faced with a beautiful view without the time-depth of stories that may go with it.

The historian Simon Schama captured this well, saying,

"Before it can ever be a repose for the senses, landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock."

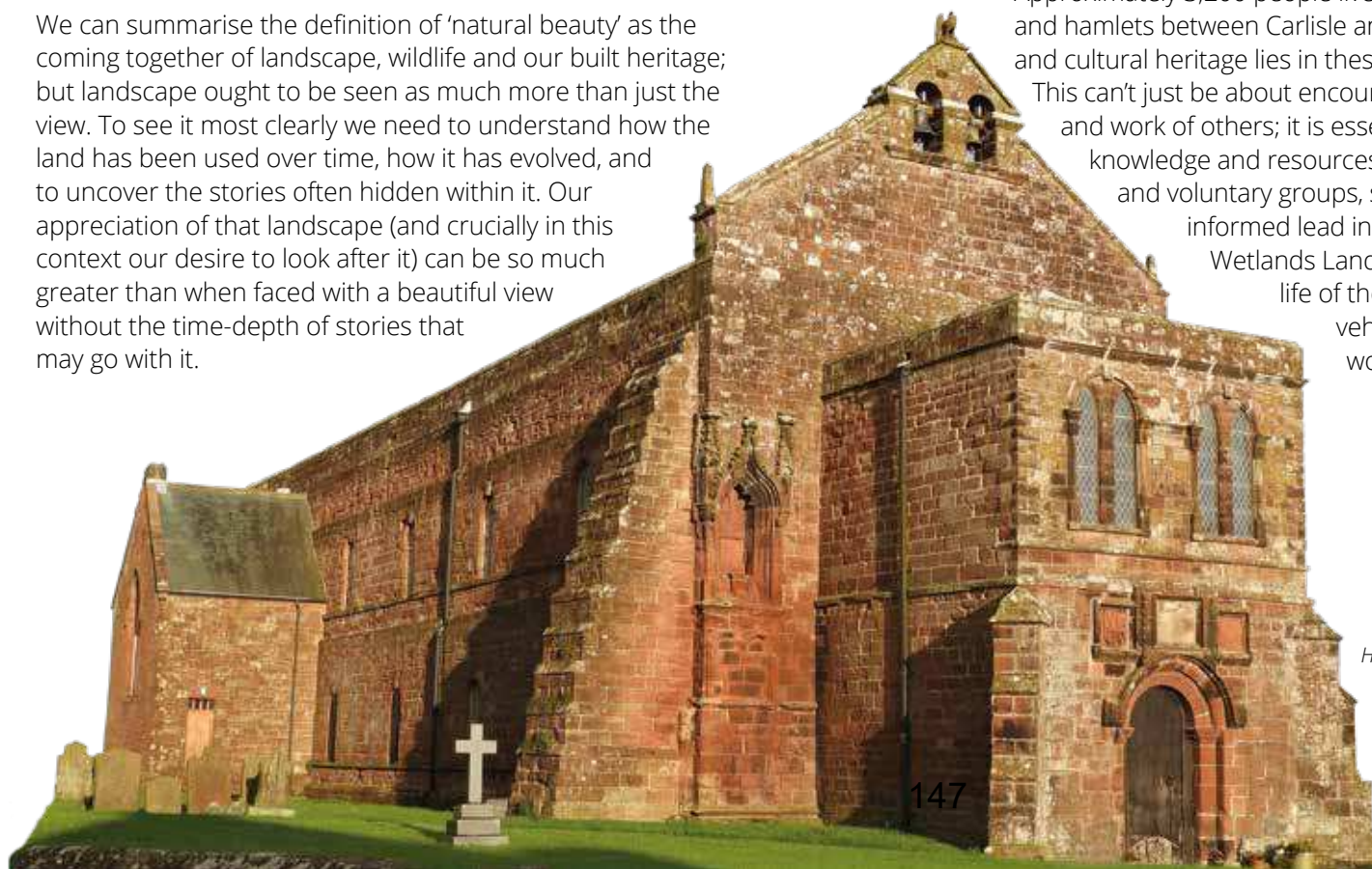
This is a landscape full of memories and stories, and keeping those things alive as well as creating new stories is to many people as much a part of conserving this landscape as looking after our Mosses, mudflats and marshes.

People have made this landscape; to understand it properly it is important to see the human stories alongside, and as part of, those of nature. To conserve it properly, this conservation effort has to be at least in part rooted in the community.

Approximately 3,200 people live on the Solway Coast in the scattered villages and hamlets between Carlisle and Maryport. The long-term future for our natural and cultural heritage lies in these local people caring about it and caring for it.

This can't just be about encouraging local communities to engage in the plans and work of others; it is essential to promote the development of skills, knowledge and resources among community organisations, businesses and voluntary groups, so they can take an increasingly skilled and informed lead in aspects of heritage management. The Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership Scheme, delivered during the life of the last management plan, was an especially good vehicle for developing community capacity and more work of this kind is necessary.

Holme Cultram Abbey





Lamonby Farm, Burgh-by-Sands, an example of 'clay dabbins'

The area's rich historic environment has been referred to elsewhere in this plan in reference to particular landscapes, and the imprints of 5000 years of settlement, from the Bronze Age onwards, can be seen. Perhaps the most notable cultural heritage assets are associated with the Roman period and the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site; this includes Hadrian's Wall itself, and associated forts, milefortlets and earthworks. The Medieval influence is seen in a legacy of abbey ruins, fortified farmsteads, nucleated rural settlements and historic field patterns. More recent historic landscape features include World War Two airfields and the unusual and distinctive 'glider traps' on the marshes. Traditional building materials vary considerably and include red sandstone, limestone, cobbles, clay and slate. The most distinctive local building style is the cruck-roofed, clay-walled buildings known as 'clay dabbins' which can be found across the Solway Plain.

Some cultural practices have survived partly because they have a land management or economic purposes – haaf netting, with its Viking origins, equipment and terminology, is a prime example. However cultural associations with landscape and place are not just about the past; maintaining a living culture is about celebrating life on the Solway today, and in supporting new cultural practices to grow directly from the community.



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Action for cultural landscape and community

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
CC1. Build community capacity to take a lead on conserving their natural and cultural heritage	LIG , SCAONB, NE, LA, CWT, RSPB, SFP	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	7
CC2. Continue and expand the programme of conservation volunteering opportunities, including through the provision of training for volunteers	SCAONB , LIG, ACT, RSPB, NE, CWT	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	7
CC3. Develop opportunities for communities to engage in citizen science projects	SCAONB , LIG, NE, RSPB, CWT, SFP	2, 3, 5, 6, 8	7
CC4. Develop programmes which support local people to uncover and tell their stories about their landscape and heritage	LIG , SCAONB	6, 8	7
CC5. Develop and deliver oral history projects along the coast, with a focus on farming, fishing and conservation	SCAONB , LIG	6, 8	7
CC6. Raise awareness of the cultural heritage of coastal margins, such as waths and haaf netting	SCAONB , LIG, SFP	5, 6, 8	7
CC7. Develop programmes and projects which support the conservation of historic buildings and structures, and tell their stories	SCAONB , HE, LIG, LA, F/L	5, 6, 8	7
CC8. Encourage further archaeological investigation of sites and features of interest, especially through developing new community archaeology projects	SCAONB , LIG, HE	5, 6, 8	7
CC9. Undertake research to increase our understanding of the area's historic buildings, structures, routeways and archaeological features	SCAONB , LIG, HE	5, 6, 8	7
CC10. Use the planning system to avoid the piecemeal erosion of the historic character of buildings and settlements	LPA	5	7
CC11. Use agri-environment schemes to conserve and enhance archaeological features and built heritage on private land and promote opportunities for public access to ad enjoyment of this aspect of our heritage	F/L , NE, HE	5	7
CC12. Promote sensitive new uses for historic buildings and structures	LA , LIG	5, 9	7
CC13. Promote community renewable energy schemes and other local activity on climate change, whilst ensuring the conservation of the area's special qualities	LA , LIG, SCAONB, SFP	1	1, 7
CL14. Act quickly to remove litter and fly-tipping and promote positive messages to encourage prevention and respect for the landscape and communities	LA	2, 3	7
<i>See also actions: L5-9</i>			

Measures of Success

- More historic buildings and structures undergoing conservation and/or research work
- An increase in community-devised and led conservation and heritage projects

- Increased community participation in heritage conservation and celebration



A natural place to explore and enjoy





Visiting Holme Cultram Abbey



Bogsploration on Drumburgh Moss



Investigating trees



The Solway Coast is a stunning landscape, and the area's natural beauty, in all its forms, is attractive to people. Improving people's experiences in exploring, enjoying and understanding the Solway Coast is not just something that benefits visitors; local people are a crucial audience for the many 'things to see and do' linked to nature and culture that can be made more accessible and more engaging.

For visitors to the area, historically the offer was focused around Silloth and Allonby, for a more traditional 'seaside' holiday. Fitting with the context of this plan, the offer today, for visitors and for local people exploring their landscape, is now partly based on the area's natural and cultural assets and the products, attractions and activities that have developed from them; there is a strong focus on walking, cycling, birdwatching and visiting historic places.

Visitors to the Solway Coast come predominantly from relatively close-by: Carlisle and northern Cumbria, and Southern Scotland. The day visitor dominates the market, whilst overnight stays are focused on the more traditional seaside locations, including chalets and the area's nine caravan/ holiday parks. The vast majority of visitor economy activity takes places in the spring and summer months, which can lead to reduced services for local communities in the quieter months. There is a heavy reliance on the use of private transport to explore the Solway Coast.



Signpost on the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site



Regardless of whether one lives on the Solway or is coming to visit, to explore the landscape on foot and by bicycle requires good access infrastructure. 'Access highlights' on the coast include:

- nearly 90km public footpaths and bridleways
- nearly 22km² of open access land (19% of the area)
- part of the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail and the England Coast Path (also due be confirmed as a National Trail)
- numerous promoted day walks including 11km of Easy Access walks
- excellent cycling opportunities, including: road, touring, mountain biking, part of the Hadrian's Wall Cycleway and the Cumbria Cycleway.

As a destination, the area, like the rest of Cumbria, is dominated by the Lake District. Whilst there is certainly scope for making the Solway Coast better known, recent years have seen a decline in resources to support destination management activities and maintenance of the public realm. There is also currently insufficient information and interpretation available to help people discover, explore and enjoy the Solway Coast. Even now, visitor pressure on some important wildlife sites can lead to conflict with conservation objectives.

Top 5 issues and/or forces for change

- **Limited current marketing of the area**
- **The need for improved pre-and post-arrival information**
- **Relatively limited offer of nature and culture-led 'things to see and do'**
- **The need for more/higher quality interpretation of the area's heritage**
- **Difficulty in exploring the area without a private car**



Actions for exploring and enjoying the Solway Coast

Action	Key partners (initial lead in bold)	Outcomes supported	Services supported
EE1. Support the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable visitor economy based on, and sustaining, the special qualities of the Solway Coast. This should be through a positive and carefully applied planning policy framework, which supports tourism whilst protecting the environment, and through investment initiatives (eg. Growth Funds etc)	LA , CT, SCAONB, Businesses	6, 7, 9	7
EE2. Develop/expand shoulder season programming which supports the extension of the spring/summer season, focusing on themes such as winter birds, stargazing, geology and the historic environment	SCAONB , LIG, Businesses, RSPB, CWT, CT, LA	6, 7, 9	7
EE3. Ensure high standards of management of the Public Rights of Way network in the AONB, including an emphasis on promoting ease of access for all responsible and legal use	HA	6, 7	7
EE4. Promote the sustainable development and use of the England Coast Path, Hadrian's Wall National Trail and Hadrian's Cycleway	HA , NE, SCAONB, CT, LA	6, 9	7
EE5. Support the development of new (and enhancement of existing) walking and cycling products linked to public transport hubs and local settlements	SCAONB , LA, LIG	1, 6, 7, 9	7
EE6. Interpret key sites and features of heritage interest, utilising a variety of techniques	SCAONB , LIG, NE, RSPB, HE, CWT, LA, SFP	5, 6	7
EE7. Support activity which encourages a reduction in within-destination car travel e.g. improvements in public transport, car-free days and itineraries	SCAONB , LA	1, 7, 9	7
EE8. Develop opportunities for using the Solway Coast as a place to increase people's physical and mental well-being, including health walks, mindfulness activities and others	SCAONB , LIG, LA	6, 7, 9	7
EE9. Develop a programme to promote the nature and culture offer of the Solway Coast, supported by itineraries and high quality images and copy	SCAONB , CT, LA, SFP	5-7, 9	7
EE10. Explore the development of an ambassador programme with tourism businesses, focused on knowledge-based training on the special qualities of the area	SCAONB , businesses	6-9	7
EE11. Develop a tourism business toolkit, with key messages, images and copy, to help businesses promote themselves as being in the AONB	SCAONB , businesses	6-9	7
EE12. Generate AONB specific data on visitor numbers, motivations and activity	CT , LA	6	7
See also actions: IF8; IF9; OF8-10; M8			

Measures of Success

- An increase in heritage related walking and cycling products / opportunities
- Increase in heritage-led shoulder season activity
- Successful delivery of joint projects between agencies and tourism businesses

- Improvement in condition of the Rights of Way, National/Regional routes
- Increased user satisfaction in surveys

A landscape for learning



If we are to conserve our natural and cultural heritage, then it is essential that people have to the opportunity to understand how our natural systems function, can appreciate how the past has shaped the present and can engage with our living culture today. The Solway Coast has great potential to be a fascinating outdoor classroom, where schools, universities and the wider public can learn formally and informally about how nature works and how it can be better conserved, how farming can provide both food and public goods and how the area's rich culture has developed and will keep evolving.

Formal education

There has never been a greater need to engage children, in particular, with nature than there is now, as even many children in rural areas appear to be losing a connection to the natural world that would have been stronger in the relatively recent past. The nature of the education system means that inspiring children about our natural and cultural heritage needs to meet objectives in the curriculum; thankfully this is usually possible and a wide variety of work has been done by many organisations with the schools in and immediately around the AONB. From the AONB team this has included a wide range of popular and successful activities through the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership; Cumbria Wildlife Trust, the RSPB and Natural England also work with local schools to introduce children to nature, especially at reserves such as Campfield Marsh and Finglandrigg Wood. Partnerships with Tullie House Museum in Carlisle have also proved beneficial to helping school children learn about the Solway Coast.

Barriers to engagement with schools include the pressure of the curriculum, the cost of travel, and lack of awareness of the opportunities, allied to continued pressure on conservation organisation budgets. Despite this, there is considerable potential to build on the current offer and in particular to generate better understanding about where our food comes from and how land is farmed and managed.

*Working in partnership with Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre
and Tullie House Museum to help young people learn about
the landscape*





Lifelong learning

Lifelong learning on the Solway Coast takes many forms including conservation and other heritage skills training of the kind delivered by the Cumbria Wildlife Trust and the AONB team, as well as a variety of community archaeology workshops and courses.

These initiatives create a deeper pool of skills and knowledge in communities, actively supports conservation and serve to connect people and place. The barrier to such provision is usually a lack of resources to make it possible, though bodies such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, community organisations such as Action with Communities in Cumbria and conservation organisations have provided this support.

Skills Training

The future conservation of the Solway will require skills and knowledge in land-based practices as diverse as farming, forestry, ecology and practical field work of all kinds. It is also vital to retain built heritage skills, such as those that will sustain clay dabbins and cruck-roof buildings. Training and skills in this field are well-supported by Askham Bryan College through its Newton Rigg campus and this has been augmented by the work of conservation bodies such as the AONB Partnership, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Natural England. This work actively supports improvements in conservation and increases people's environment sector employability locally. A clear area of need is to enable different sectors to learn from each other, especially farmers and conservation bodies.



Volunteers learning clay dabbin construction skills

Hard working volunteers constructing a new visitor boardwalk at Wolsty Banks





Action for Learning, Training and Skills

Action	Lead	Outcomes supported	Services supported
L1. Support school visits to the Solway Coast, through developing projects and programmes linked to the curriculum	SCAONB , RSPB, NE, CWT, LA, Schools	5-7	7
L2. Provide school travel grants where resources allow and plan for this in project development	All	5-7	7
L3. Provide training and other activities with teachers, focused on delivering aspects of the curriculum on the Solway Coast	SCAONB , RSPB, NE, CWT, Schools	5-8	7
L4. Provide support to universities to encourage and enable fieldwork and research	SCAONB , RSPB, NE, CWT	5-8	7
L5. Support organisations to deliver programmes of lifelong learning on conservation and heritage themes, including practical and knowledge-based activity and outreach events in communities within and beyond the AONB	SCAONB , RSPB, NE, CWT, HE, LIG, SFP	5-8	7
L6. Support the work of youth groups by providing informal learning opportunities on the Solway Coast	SCAONB , NE, RSPB, CWT,	5-8	7
L7. Provide land-based skills training on the Solway Coast	SCAONB , NE, RSPB, CWT, LIG, F/L	5-8	7
L8. Support an increase in professional and volunteer skills in conserving and restoring historic buildings and industrial heritage	HE , SCAONB, LA, LIG	5, 6, 8	7
L9. Identify the skills and knowledge gaps in the land-based sector in the area	SCAONB	8	7
L10. Support and deliver joint training and knowledge exchange between farmers and conservation bodies and encourage and support collaboration between all parties	NE , F/L, NFU, CWT, SCAONB	4, 6, 8	7
<i>See also actions: M9; CC1-5, CC8-9 and EE10, EE12</i>			

Measures of Success

- More school children visiting the Solway Coast for curriculum activity
- More people taking part in nature-related lifelong learning
- Increase in heritage skills training opportunities
- Increase in well-supported collaborative training activity between farmers/land managers/conservationists

Monitoring

The Solway Coast AONB team will be responsible for monitoring implementation of this plan on an annual basis. The AONB Unit will have an implementation plan, updated annually and linked to management plan outcomes, as a companion to the AONB Management Plan and setting out its work, with many partners, to conserve this special place.

Statutory agencies, NGOs, community organisations, farmers' groups and others will all be invited to add their voice to how they have all contributed to making the Solway Coast richer in natural and cultural heritage.

Indicators

A Management Plan needs a set of indicators that can be monitored and that can show whether things are heading in the right direction. Ideally, indicators should:

- be able to tell us about more than just that one factor;
- be reliably measured;
- be monitored as a matter of course or at a modest cost.

They will have a baseline and a target.

Allied to the 'measures of success' highlighted in this plan, indicators are currently being considered and will be developed during 2020.

Abbreviations

ACT	Action for Communities in Cumbria
CRoW	Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
CT	Cumbria Tourism
CWT	Cumbria Wildlife Trust
EA	Environment Agency
ELMS	Environmental Land Management Schemes
ENW	Electricity North West
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
FC	Forestry Commission
F/L	Farmers and landowners
HA	Highway Authority
HE	Historic England
LA	Local Authorities (including Parish Councils where relevant)
LPA	Local Planning Authorities
LIG	Local Interest Groups (covering a wide range of interests and geographies)
MPA	Minerals Planning Authority
NE	Natural England
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWIFCA	North Western Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority
RIGS	Regionally important geological and geomorphological sites
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation (under the European Habitats Directive)
SCAONB	Solway Coast AONB Team
SEPA	Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SFP	Solway Firth Partnership
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Uni	Universities and colleges
WCRT	West Cumbria Rivers Trust
WT	Woodland Trust









Frosty morning on Glasson Moss



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Images courtesy of James Smith, Fiona Smith, Judith Rogers, Charlie Hedley, Anna Gray, Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery Trust and the Solway Coast AONB staff team.



Executive

Agenda
Item:

A.5

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise and Housing
Key Decision: Yes
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes
Public / Private: Public

Title: New *Cumbria Choice* Allocations Policy & Equality Impact Assessment
Report of: Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services
Report Number: GD.28/20

Purpose / Summary:

Executive, on 22 June (report no. GD.22/20) referred the draft Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy review (2020) to Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel for consideration. Report GD.27/20 has been prepared accordingly for presentation at the Scrutiny Panel on 16 July. The draft updated Allocation Policy; supporting Equality Impact Assessment; summary of key changes to the existing policy; and responses to comments and suggestions raised by Members and Officers relating to the policy review are all appended to this report.

Recommendations:

That the Executive:

1. Receive and consider the feedback from the Health & Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel; and, either
2. Recommend the revised Cumbria Choice, Choice Based Lettings Policy to Council for approval and adoption; or
3. As per the consultation process, revert to the Cumbria Choice Partnership ("the Partnership"), specifying which matters they wish to be considered further by the Partnership;
 - a. If the Partnership agree the amendments which the Executive wish to be incorporated then the revised Policy will be recommended directly to Council for approval and adoption; or
 - b. If the Partnership do not agree the suggested changes then the Executive will meet again to consider their response.

Tracking

Executive:	20 July 2020 (and a date to be determined subject to changes to policy recommended)
Scrutiny:	16 July 2020
Council:	8 September 2020

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** *Cumbria Choice* is the adopted social housing allocation policy of all six district councils in Cumbria, as well as the seven largest housing associations operating in the county. The first version was introduced in 2011 and has been in operation ever since. The Allocation Policy is periodically reviewed by the partnership to ensure it remains fit for purpose and is fully compliant with the latest legislation and good practice - notably the *Homelessness Reduction Act 2017* and associated Code of Guidance, as well as further Allocations regulations arising from the UK's exit from the EU, issued in 2019. The Cumbria Choice Policy was most recently updated in 2016.
- 1.2** The timescale for the Policy review is crucial, as any changes or updates to the existing Policy need to be fed into the specification for the procurement of a new IT platform. The contract for the current system expires on 31 March 2021 and in order to ensure that the new system goes live on 1 April 2021, the procurement needs to be concluded as soon as possible. The Project Board appointed Andy Gale (the Housing Consultant who led on the previous Cumbria Choice review) to undertake the 2020 Policy review. Mr Gale has considerable experience in the field of allocations and homelessness, so his input has helped to ensure the new Policy is fully compliant with the latest legislation.
- 1.3** An important distinction between Cumbria Choice (original version and later updates) and previous allocations schemes is that people on the register apply for vacant properties they are interested in, giving them more of a choice in where they live and a greater stake in their local communities. Under earlier policies people were allocated properties as vacancies arose, based on a waiting list scheme, meaning there was much less choice, and priority homeless households were accommodated through separate "nomination agreements" with individual housing associations. This was a significantly more bureaucratic process, as people wishing to register for social housing were required to complete a separate housing application form for each housing provider (all of whom operated different policies) meaning the previous system was less consistent and transparent.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1** As the updated draft policy also relates to homelessness, and not solely allocations, it falls within the ambit of the Council's budget and policy framework, so will need to be considered through the full Committee

process. The vast majority of the Council's homeless clients are housed through Cumbria Choice; whereas under previous allocation policies, the Council had to make homeless "nominations" to individual housing associations. Executive will need to consider the response from Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and refer any changes to South Lakes District Council (who are the lead Local Authority on Cumbria Choice). If there are no proposed amendments the Policy review will be recommended to Council on 8 September for adoption. However, if there are proposed changes as a result of the consultation process, this could be problematic, as pushing this back to Executive on 14 September for potential recommendation to Council on 3 November 2020 would probably be too late for the new IT contract to be implemented by the end of March 2021, so a special Executive might be required.

2.2 The review has undertaken to streamline the Policy so that it is easier to understand and apply for people who need to access social housing and to the Registered Providers who administer the Scheme. Further aims include "making best use of available housing stock" and "ensuring that there is a social housing lettings service that embraces equality and diversity by being open and fully accessible to all individuals". One of the key aims outlined in the current policy is to "improve the means by which local people in Cumbria gain access to social rented housing by providing a modern and easy to understand allocation system which allows choice and is fair, transparent and accountable".

2.3 The full details of the proposed amendments to the Cumbria Choice policy, together with the relevant supporting information are included in the report as follows:-

- The full updated draft Allocation Policy is included as *Appendix 1*;
- The supporting Equality Impact Assessment, approved by the Project Board in June, is provided as *Appendix 2*;
- A list of the proposed amendments since the previous update to the Policy is shown as *Appendix 3*;
- Responses to queries received from Officers and Members to date is included as *Appendix 4*.

2.4 The two major changes to the policy are a reduction from five housing priority bands to three and a reduction in the minimum local connection qualification for allocations in priority bands A & B from three years in the last five to one year, which are explained in more detail in paragraphs 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, below.

2.4.1 Applicants on Cumbria Choice are allocated bands, based on their level of housing need. Under the updated policy, which reduces the number of bands from five to three to make the policy more straightforward and easier to understand, the new bands are:-

Band A – Urgent Housing Need to Move

Band B – Statutory Housing Need to Move

Band C – All Other Applicants in Housing Need.

Band C is awarded where an applicant is not assessed as coming under the criteria adopted by the policy for being in a statutory housing need. Applicants placed in band C can still bid for properties but will not be considered above applicants from Bands A or B who have bid for the same property. A detailed breakdown of the bandings is included in *Appendix 1*. It is anticipated that the proposed changes will simplify the operation of the policy to the benefit of both staff and customers.

2.4.2 Timescales for eligibility to join the scheme and allocations have been amended as follows:-

- i) Eligibility to join the scheme: Cumbria Choice applicants must now demonstrate that they have a minimum local connection of a year before being registered into one of the reasonable preference bands A & B. There was previously not a restriction on people registering for the scheme under the current version of the policy. People can still register under Band C; although they would usually only qualify for lower demand properties with this reduced priority.
- ii) For allocations purposes, people would now need to demonstrate a local connection for at least the last year (or three of the previous five years) to qualify for Bands A & B (which was previously three of the last five years under the current version of the policy). This one-year period would make this commensurate with the eligibility criteria to register for the priority bands, delivering a consistent approach across the Policy.

The partnership agreed this approach, which was also supported through the stakeholder consultation process, would be housing people in the greatest need, as well as affording the housing associations participating in Cumbria Choice greater flexibility in their allocations, reducing the risk of empty properties and resulting loss of rental income streams in lower demand areas. It is also acknowledged that Carlisle needs to attract more working age people just to maintain existing employment levels due to the ageing population. A more flexible Allocations Policy can be of benefit in respect of supporting labour mobility.

Many of the other amendments are of a more technical nature, and the full list of proposed amendments to the previous version of the Cumbria Choice policy is included in *Appendix 3*.

A more detailed explanation of the proposed changes, following a query received through the consultation process, has been provided by the consultant who has written the updated Allocation Policy, and is included in *Appendix 4*.

2.5 The draft Allocation Policy, included in *Appendix 1*, has been updated since the previous report presented to Executive on 22 June to include:-

- i) New statutory guidance introduced on 27 June in respect of Armed Forces personnel and veterans, which: -
 - Strongly encourages local authorities to exempt from their local connection requirements divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence, and
 - Sets out how local authorities can ensure that members of the Armed Forces and veterans suffering from mental ill health and given appropriate priority for social housing.

- ii) New statutory guidance introduced on 2 July in respect of family members of people from Northern Ireland, relating to:-

Eligibility for an Allocation of Social Housing under Part 6 Homelessness Assistance and Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996:

Family Members of a Person of Northern Ireland with Leave under the EU Settlement Scheme and Persons with Stateless Leave.

- iii) Further amendments to the Policy have been made to accommodate recommendations made by the Council's Information Governance Manager regarding the following sections:-
 - General Data Protection Regulations 2018
 - Assessing Applications.

3. CUMBRIA CHOICE HEADLINE PERFORMANCE FIGURES

3.1 Total Number of Applicants

The table below sets out the total number of applicants registered on Cumbria Choice, including their minimum bedroom requirement, registered up until 31/03/2020.

Local Authority	Minimum bedrooms required					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Allerdale Borough Council (ABC)	1251	522	252	10	1	2036
Barrow Borough Council (BBC)	857	409	249	5	1	1521
Carlisle City Council (CCC)	2909	1300	741	27	2	4979
Copeland Borough Council (CBC)	842	294	179	3	1	1319
Eden District Council (EDC)	585	255	132	2	1	975
South Lakeland District Council (SLDC)	2433	1061	441	12	0	3947
Total	8877	3841	1994	59	6	14777

3.2 Applicants in Priority Need for Housing

The following table identifies the number of households in priority need bands, as at 31 March 2020 under the old policy:-

- A – Urgent Housing Need to Move
- B – Statutory Housing Need to Move
- C – All other Applicants in Housing Need.

Under the old policy bands D & E are non-priority. The new policy reduces the number of bands from five to three to make the policy easier to understand and more transparent.

Local Authority	Band A	Band B	Band C
Allerdale Borough Council	34	98	422
Barrow Borough Council	33	105	366
Carlisle City Council	74	212	1214
Copeland Borough Council	47	100	306
Eden District Council	5	21	188
South Lakeland District Council	91	167	760
Total	284	703	3256

Of the 14,777 households registered for Cumbria Choice, 4243 are identified as being in a priority need group.

3.3 Lettings by Band

The following table sets out the total lettings through Cumbria Choice during 2019-20.

Local Authority	Band					Total
	Anony-mised	A	B	C	D & E (non-priority)	
Allerdale	27	32	43	233	293	628
Barrow	3	20	88	87	41	239
Carlisle	4	25	66	176	190	461
Copeland	8	19	46	98	119	290
Eden	45	5	17	69	129	265
SLDC	12	52	55	102	73	294
Total	99	153	315	765	845	2177

In the last year 1,233 lettings (over 59%) went to people in priority need bands (this has been calculated by subtracting the anonymised figures,

which could be in any band from the total before applying the percentage).

Even in cases where people are allocated a priority banding due to a disability, in some cases there may still be a delay in re-housing them, as they may need to wait for a suitably adapted property to become vacant in a location where they have a support network.

4. RISKS

- 4.1** The Council needs to ensure it is content with the wording of the updated Cumbria Choice policy before approving it; however, there would be risks in not adopting the policy. All local housing authorities are required to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities and procedures for the allocation of social housing in the authority area (regardless of whether the authority has its own housing stock). Should the Cumbria Choice partnership cease to exist, the Council would be required to come up with a new Allocation Policy. The Partnership Approach requires that we have a collectively agreed policy across Cumbria. If Cumbria Choice ceased to operate when the current IT contract ends at the end of March 2021 this would mean all of the partners going back to operating their individual policies with separate waiting lists, which would be a lot more onerous and less transparent for social housing customers.
- 4.2** The partnership approach also has benefits for local residents, as prior to the implementation of Cumbria Choice in 2011, applicants for social housing had to apply separately to each housing provider (all of whom operated different allocation policy) so the old system was less transparent and consistent.
- 4.3** Approval of the updated Policy ensures the Council is meeting statutory requirements around equality and diversity, reducing the risk of any legal challenge. The revisions to the policy address any potential negative impacts on protected characteristics by providing a clearer and more consistent approach to the allocation of social housing.
- 4.4** The current IT contract expires on 31 March 2021, so any delay in approving the new Policy would increase risks regarding the timetable for the procurement of the new IT system, which will be required to accompany the new Policy.

- 4.5** If the Cumbria Choice partnership dissolved, and individual housing associations reverted to running their own individual allocation policies, this would be a less customer-friendly, and less consistent process for local residents, but would also mean the City Council would lose a lot of influence over allocation systems. The Council's Homelessness team would also have to revert to making individual nominations to housing associations on behalf of clients. Officers would consider the current system is a lot more effective.
- 4.6** Alternatively, Members could decide not to recommend approval of the amended policy or request many additional or substantive amendments. This is not recommended, as the suggested updates will provide a clearer policy and one which is responding to legislative changes, including the *Homelessness Reduction Act* and new Armed Forces statutory guidance relating to Armed Forces personnel and veterans. If substantial changes are to be considered by the Project Board then this could significantly delay implementation of the revised policy, which could then risk legal challenge by not responding to the legislative changes.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1** The revised policy and EIA is being considered by Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and relevant Carlisle City Council Officers. The Cumbria Choice Project Board have already consulted a wide range of stakeholders on the updated policy, which is supported by a full EIA, approved by the Project Board. Two specific comments and queries from Council Officers and Members have been received relating to the updated Policy, and responses to these points are included in *Appendix 5*.
- 5.2** An extensive consultation has already been held by the Cumbria Choice Project Board, during April and May 2020, with a wide range of key stakeholders, including charitable and third sector organisations. This includes Adult Social Care and Supporting People (Cumbria County Council), the Citizens Advice Bureau, Law Centre, private landlord groups, Armed Forces personnel representatives, and a range of organisations representing children, young people, disabled people, homeless people, mental health, older people and BAME groups.
- 5.3** Any major change to the policy can only be made after a copy of the proposed amendments have been consulted on by sending to every

Registered Provider Housing Association in Cumbria, regardless of whether an association is a participating member of Cumbria Choice (Section s166A (13) Housing Act 1996). The Policy review has:-

- Taken all the views of partners into account;
- Considered consultation responses from a range of stakeholders.

6. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 The Cumbria Choice partnership has been operating successfully for over nine years. This Choice-Based Lettings system is much more customer-friendly than previous allocation policies, as there is a consistent policy and a single application form operated by all District Councils and the largest Housing Associations across Cumbria. The proposed updates to the existing policy will help to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach amongst housing associations letting homes in Carlisle to assist people in the greatest housing need. Approval of the revised Cumbria Choice allocation Policy, following Scrutiny and consideration by Officers, will ensure greater clarity and consistency for households registering for social housing in Carlisle, while simultaneously complying with legislative changes (including the *Homelessness Reduction Act* and resultant Statutory Guidance).

6.2 As this is a shared Allocations Policy, all thirteen Partners have to seek formal approval from their respective Boards, Committees, Cabinets and/or Council to enable the revised policy to be adopted. This could result in some minor alterations arising after other partners have formally agreed to adopt the new Policy. It is therefore recommended that delegated authority should be given to the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Housing, to approve any minor changes arising from this process. This proposal is outlined under 'Making Changes to the Policy', included in Section 1 Introduction and Background (*Appendix 2*).

7. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

7.1 "Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life."

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Appendices
attached to report:

Appendix 1: Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Allocations Policy (2020 Policy Review)

Appendix 2: Cumbria Choice: Revised Housing Allocations Scheme Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) June 2020

Appendix 3: Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Policy – Summary of Proposed Changes – 2020 Update

Appendix 4: Draft Cumbria Choice Policy Review 2020 - Consultation Responses

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

Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy for Carlisle 2015-20

<https://www.carlisle.gov.uk/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=07JyYfUVyt4%3d&tabid=1888&portalid=0&mid=8408>

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/13/contents/enacted>

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – The Council is required to have an allocations policy by virtue of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Furthermore, the Council has obligations under Part VII of the same Act in relation to Homelessness. The proposed policy is drafted in partnership with the other Cumbrian Councils so as to deal with the legislative requirements and have a consistent approach across Cumbria. Homelessness is one of the reserved matters under Carlisle City's policy framework (Article 4, Constitution) and, therefore, is required to follow the procedure for policy development.

PROPERTY SERVICES – No property implications.

FINANCE – There are no financial implications of adopting this revised allocation policy for social housing.

EQUALITY – The policy has been prepared with due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty. An Equality Impact Assessment is included in the Executive paper.

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – The Project Board have taken on board Information Governance related feedback and agreed to update the Policy accordingly. A further review of the amendments will be made prior to the report being presented at the Executive.



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Section 1 Introduction and Background

Members of the Cumbria Choice Based Letting Partnership

This document is the revised Housing Allocation Policy for the Cumbria Choice Partnership (CCP).

The Allocation Policy is called the 'Cumbria Choice' and is a choice based letting scheme where applicants are able to bid for advertised vacant properties. Cumbria Choice is a sub-regional partnership between the 6 Local Council Districts and 8 Registered Provider Housing Associations that own social housing stock across Cumbria.

The following are members of the Cumbria Choice Partnership:

Allerdale Borough Council
Barrow Borough Council
Carlisle City Council
Copeland Borough Council
Eden District Council
South Lakeland District Council

Plus the following Housing Associations:

Accent Housing
Eden Housing
Home Group
Impact Housing
Riverside Housing
South Lakes Housing
Castles and Coasts Housing Association

Each of these Registered Providers (commonly known as and referred to in this policy as Housing Associations) have voluntarily signed up to the policy to ensure that all applicants applying for social housing in Cumbria are provided with a single route of access to social housing and are assessed using a single policy. Where any individual housing association in Cumbria is not a partner to the policy and continues to let vacant properties owed to the Council under a nominations arrangement, this policy will apply to the nominations owed.

The participating Housing Associations listed above (contact details are set out in appendix 5) have agreed to advertise the majority of their available vacant properties through the scheme and in accordance with this policy.

The 'Cumbria Choice Partnership' is overseen by a 'Sub Regional Project Board', which is governed by a partnership agreement. The membership consists of one senior officer representative from each organisation. Each organisation has one vote within the partnership.

The Project Board will meet at least six times a year to oversee the running of the scheme and to monitor its compliance with local and national policy and guidance. The partnership will continue to monitor, fund, develop and make policy decisions about the scheme as appropriate.

The policy covers the nomination of any applicant under the scheme to be an assured or an assured short hold tenant of housing accommodation held by any participating Housing Association across Cumbria, whether by way of a legally enforceable arrangement or not. This includes a nomination of a 'starter tenancy'. Of the 6 Cumbrian Councils only Barrow still owns Council stock and the policy applies to allocations made for that stock.

This policy sets out who is, and who isn't, eligible for social housing in Cumbria and how the CCP will make this assessment. It details how applications to join the CCP Housing Register can be made, the priority they will be given, and how offers of social housing will be made.

This is a revised 'Housing Allocation Policy' and will take effect in respect of all allocations of housing on or after [insert date here](#). The assessment of need and qualifying criteria set out in this policy will be applied to all new and existing Applicants from this date.

Legal context

This is the 6 Cumbrian Councils Housing Allocation Policy as required by Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996. Applicants are able to apply for housing and all applications will be fully assessed.

When applying an applicant will be asked to choose a local authority or housing association partner to administer their application. Where a housing association partner assesses and administers an application they will, on behalf of the 6 Cumbrian local authorities, be formally discharging the legal responsibility for a local authority to receive applications and apply their adopted allocation policy to assess that application. All applications will be assessed and administered through applying this allocation policy: this being the legally adopted allocation policy for all 6 Cumbrian local authorities.

In developing this policy the Councils have followed and fully considered the following housing legislation, regulations, statutory guidance, and strategies:

- 1) The Housing Act 1996, Part 6 as amended by Localism Act 2011 (England)
- 2) The Housing Act 1996, Part 7 as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- 3) Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local housing Authorities in England (2012, DCLG) "the Code";
- 4) Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (DCLG, December 2013) "Supplementary Code".

- 5) Improving access to social housing for members of the armed forces: Statutory guidance issued by MHCLG June 2020
- 6) Plus the following statutory regulations:
- a) Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997, SI 1997/483;
 - b) Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002, SI 2002/3264;
 - c) Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294 and all subsequent amendments
 - d) Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/1869;
 - e) Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012, SI 2012/2989.
 - f) The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015
 - g) 'The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/861)'
 - h) Right to Move guidance (DCLG, 2015)
 - i) Social Housing for Victims of Domestic Abuse in Refuges or other Types of Temporary Accommodation, guidance (MHCLG, 2018)
 - j) Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities (MHCLG, 2018)

In framing our allocations scheme this policy has had regard to the District Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Housing Strategy, and Tenancy Strategy as well as the Equality Act 2010.

In relation to f) above in accordance with the Right to Move statutory guidance on housing allocations for local housing authorities in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015) the Policy sets a limit of no more than 2% of lettings will be allocated to social housing tenants from outside of Cumbria who need to move for employment purposes.

All references to statutory materials are by way of summary and for convenience only, and are not to be used as substitutes for the details within the original.

Where the Policy refers to the Cumbrian Choice Partnership, or CCP, this is to be taken to mean each of the 6 Cumbrian Councils. Each Council has adopted this Policy as its legal Allocation Policy to meet the statutory duty under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

This Allocation Policy applies when a Cumbrian Council:

- a) Selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing

accommodation (i.e. in practice accommodation owned by Barrow Borough Council as the other 5 Council Partners no longer retain social housing stock).

- b) Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation (i.e. in practice accommodation held by another housing authority).
- c) Nominates a person to be an assured tenant or assured shorthold tenant of housing accommodation held by a Registered Provider (commonly referred to in the Policy as Housing Associations).

The above includes Affordable Rent properties and Flexible (i.e. fixed term) tenancies.

For details of lettings not covered by the policy see appendix 1.1

The key aims and objectives set for the Policy

The key aims and objectives adopted for the Policy are:

1. A Policy that meets the legal requirements placed on each Cumbrian Council, namely to give appropriate priority to applicants who fall within the Housing Act “reasonable preference” categories
2. To ensure there is a social housing lettings service that embraces equality and diversity by being open and fully accessible to all individuals.
3. To improve the means by which local people in Cumbria gain access to social rented housing by providing a modern and easy to understand allocation system which offers realistic choices.
4. A Policy that is simple to understand and use, is transparent and is seen as fair by the general public and applicants
5. To support the objective of making the best use of the social housing stock in Cumbria, and to support mobility across Cumbria especially where residents need to access to employment.
6. A Policy that contributes to creating balanced and sustainable communities, and helps attract new customers to areas of low demand thereby reducing void times on any ‘harder to let’ properties.

Making changes to the Policy

Any major change to the Policy can only be made after a copy of the proposed amendments have been consulted on by sending to every Registered Provider Housing Association in Cumbria, regardless of whether an association is a participating member of the CCP. (Section s166A (13) Housing Act 1996).

All major changes must first, be agreed by the CCP Partnership Board who will make recommendations that will then be considered:

- a) By each of the 6 Cumbrian Councils, and

b) By each participating Partner Housing Association.

Details of how major changes will be considered by each of the 6 Cumbrian Councils are set out in appendix 9.

For minor changes to the policy or the operational procedures, decisions will be delegated to the CCP Board who will consult with the lead officer responsible for housing in each Council, (or their delegated officer), and with the Chief Executive for each CCP Partner Housing Association (or their delegated officer).

All major changes to the policy will be notified to those it may affect within a reasonable period of time.

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

We will ensure for any person on the housing register their information is stored lawfully and we act in a fair and transparent way in processing their data. We will only collect data that is specific, explicit and legitimate for the purpose of the application and lettings processes set out in this policy. The data will be kept up to date and not held unnecessarily or without appropriate security measures in place. Information will only be shared with other organisations or individuals in order to legitimately assess and progress a person's housing, or for the prevention of fraud, or with the person's explicit consent.

Appendix 1.2 sets out the details for how the scheme will apply:

- 1) The General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- 2) The 'Privacy Notice' for the policy, and
- 3) An applicant's right to information

Equality, accessibility and monitoring

The CCP is committed to ensuring that the Policy and the implementation of all associated guidance and procedures are non-discriminatory and that all applicants are able to access the service, especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by the Equality Act 2010; the Human Rights Act 1998; and for Children, Section 11 of the Children Act.

To identify the needs of our applicants the application contains specific questions relating to vulnerability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability and other relevant criteria. The information obtained will be used to monitor the impact of the policy on minority and specific needs groups and to evidence the need for amendments, as may be required.

Under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty under section 149, Councils are required to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, when exercising a public function such as their legal Housing Allocation Policy.

The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The CCP will ensure that the policy complies with the current equality legislation and with all relevant statutory codes and guidance. The new policy has been subject to a full, detailed 'Equality Impact Audit' before it has been adopted (see appendix 10). This EIA will be regularly reviewed as more monitoring information regarding the impact of the policy is obtained.

The outcomes for applicants identified as having specific needs or who meet the definition of a protected characteristic under the Equality Act will be monitored in relation to the outcomes for applications to join the register and offers of social housing.

The CCP will monitor the policy and outcomes to ensure that it is meeting all legal requirements and that the aims and objectives set for the policy are being met. Monitoring will be used to ensure that:

- Those in the 'reasonable preference' categories are given priority for housing
- The Policy is complying with its Equality Act duties
- There is overall customer satisfaction with the scheme

Complaints

Complaints are separate to the circumstances where an applicant wishes to seek a review of a decision made on their application. Such a request should be made under the review procedure set out in section 4 and not through the complaints procedure.

Where an applicant wishes to make a complaint about poor service, or the way they have been treated, this should be made using the complaints procedure for the Cumbrian District Council where they currently live. A copy of the current complaints procedure for each of the 6 Councils is available on their websites.

Complaints regarding the handling of an application by a partner Housing Association should be made through that Association's complaints procedure which will be detailed on the Association's website.

Where a complaint relates to how an applicant has been dealt with under this policy an applicant has the right to continue with their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman Service if they are unhappy with the response to their complaint.

The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent service run by Central Government to make sure that Councils provide the required standard of service to their customers.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how the Council has done something, but they cannot question what has been done simply because someone did not agree with it.

The Ombudsman will normally deal with a complaint if a customer feels they have been treated unfairly as a result of maladministration.

For example, if a Council has:

- Delayed taking action without good reason
- Taken into account facts which are not relevant or ignored facts which are relevant
- Not followed their own rules or complied with the law
- Not taken action that they had promised to
- Given a customer the wrong information
- Not reached a decision in the correct way

The Ombudsman will not normally investigate a complaint:

- ✓ Until a Council has had the opportunity to review its decision (normally by accessing the complaints process), or
- ✓ If it is a matter which has been, are, or could be dealt with by the courts or an internal review procedure
- ✓ If it was a matter which the applicant was aware of more than twelve months before making the complaint

All complaints to the Ombudsman must be in writing. Applicants can request assistance from their local Councilor or ask an advocate to write on their behalf. The contact details for the Local Government Ombudsman are:

Local Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry CV4 0EH

Tel: 0300 061 0614.

You can also text 'call back' to 0762 480 3014.

Fax: 024 7682 0001

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Policy Statement on Choice and Preferences

One of the key objectives of the Policy is to, as far as possible, give choice to applicants who wish to obtain social housing. This is why the CCP has taken the decision to operate the Policy through a 'choice based lettings' system (CBL). The aim being to give applicants the best possible choice over where they wish to live.

For all applicants who are eligible to be registered, they should be able to express a preference over any area that they would like to live in and the type of property they would prefer. However, the ability to satisfy that preference might be limited by the housing pressures faced.

The housing pressures faced limit the degree of choice that can be offered, along with the responsibility the 6 Cumbria District Councils have to offer housing to applicants in urgent housing need, including the need to reduce the financial impact of temporary accommodation on a Council. As a result of housing pressures there is a limit on the degree of choice that can be offered. The district

councils have to offer housing to applicants in urgent housing need, this reduces the financial impact of providing temporary accommodation on that Council.

Expressing a preference over where an applicant would prefer to live does not mean that preference can be met, nor prevent an applicant being offered suitable accommodation outside of their preferred area.

Any applicant will be asked to state any area where they believe they cannot live due to fear of violence, harassment or domestic abuse. The assessment will then consider the facts and decide whether the applicant can be allowed to restrict those areas.

The key policies on choice explained

A) When the CCP may make a direct offer outside of the choice based letting (CBL) system and, in exceptional circumstances, outside of the CBL band and date order system

Not all properties that become available will be advertised and offered through the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system. There may be circumstances where for urgent operational or financial reasons there is a need to make a direct offer of housing outside the CBL and, in exceptional circumstances, outside of the band and date order criteria set out in this policy.

Specifically, this would be where there are urgent operational or financial reasons. Examples include but are not limited to:

- 1) Situations where urgent re-housing is required due to an applicants existing property being uninhabitable, or where there are serious health and safety or personal protection issues that need to be addressed or in discharge of a statutory homelessness duty.
- 2) Urgent housing need situations where it would not be reasonable in the circumstances to wait for the Choice Based Lettings process to produce an offer.
- 3) Where there is an evidenced threat to life in the area in which an applicant currently lives.
- 4) Tenants of a CCP Partner in emergency cases whose homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster
- 5) To facilitate a three way (or greater) mutual exchange. Mutual exchanges are not an allocation, but when it would make best use of its housing stock and support the needs of the tenants involved, the CCP may make available a property for a three-way exchange
- 6) Direct offers to persons who the council has a duty to rehouse under section 39 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.
- 7) Direct offers in order to meet an annual lettings plan in the circumstances where a decision has been taken to adopt an annual lettings plan.

- 8) Where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation and owed a section 189B(2) Relief duty or 193(2) main duty a Partner Council may wish to implement a short term scheme to make direct lettings for a period of time to move applicants out of temporary accommodation, in order to manage any budgetary or legal impact. The CCP Board should be informed so that they can monitor to ensure that any scheme does not undermine the key objective, which is to ensure that direct lets do not form more than 15% of all lettings.
- 9) If an applicant is not being realistic in the areas they are bidding for accommodation, and as a result they may be occupying a temporary accommodation unit that may be needed for another newly presenting homeless applicant.
- 10) Where a vacant adapted property or a property designed to disability standards becomes available and there may be a need to offer that property to an applicant whose disability need best matches that property, regardless of the date they were registered.
- 11) Where the assessment is that it is inappropriate for the applicant to participate in Choice Based Lettings. For example, vulnerable applicants nominated by Adult Social Care where work is on-going with social workers and care managers to decide on the best letting solution for that applicant.
- 12) Other examples include cases where an applicant is subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), or presents a risk to themselves or others

Furthermore, we may decide to restrict the time an applicant is able to bid for accommodation in an area where they would prefer to live. An offer of accommodation may be made in any area that has been assessed as being suitable and safe for the applicant to live in.

We will provide information about the number and types of homes, and current vacancy rates, to help applicants to make informed choices. The more flexible applicants are in their choice of areas and property types, the sooner they are likely to be successful in being offered a property that meets their need.

The number of direct offers will be monitored and should add up to no more than 15% of all lettings annually made under the scheme. This is to preserve Choice Based Lettings as the primary method of letting social housing properties in Cumbria.

B) Penalty for refusing a set number of offers

Any applicant in Bands A or B who refuses 3 reasonable offers within a 12-month period will have their application placed into Band C for up to 12 months. This is to tackle the problem of applicants making unlimited bids that may result in higher refusal rates with resulting extended re-letting periods.

Criteria setting out what will be considered to be, and not be, a reasonable offer is set out in Appendix 4. A refusal of an offer of the correct size and type will normally be considered unreasonable.

C) Offers of accommodation made to any applicant owed any statutory homelessness duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996

Specifically, for applicants owed the section 189B(2) Relief of homelessness duty, or the Main section 193(2) duty under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, or where an applicant has an urgent housing need that must be met immediately, although the Council supports that the ability of applicants to express a preference for where they wish to live, the Council is of the view that what is paramount is the need to offer suitable housing, which may not be possible in the location preferred by the applicant.

If an applicant owed any of the statutory homelessness duties set out below refuses a written offer of suitable social housing accommodation made through this policy, then the duty owed to them will be discharged and they will lose any priority status afforded to them because of that homeless duty owed.

Applicants owed a statutory homeless duty will be identified through the IT system at the shortlisting stage. On identification of a suitable property the RP and LA partners will agree the a process for ensuring the a 'final offer warning letter' will be sent to the homeless applicant owed a statutory homelessness duty set out below. This will normally be to inform the relevant local authority Housing options Team that an offer is to made so they can send out a 'final offer warning letter'

In these circumstances unless they have another reason to be awarded a statutory housing need Band A or B under this policy, they will be placed into Band C. The offer they have refused will count as the first offer out of the 3 offers allowed within the 12 months period. They will no longer be owed any banding award for being owed a statutory homelessness duty, as that duty would have been brought to an end when they refused a suitable offer of social housing.

A statutory homeless duty means:

- a) The prevention of homelessness duty under Section 195(2)
- b) The 'relief of homelessness duty under Section 189B(2)
- c) Where the relief duty has come to an end and an applicant is then owed a section 190 Intentionally homeless temporary accommodation duty to provide them with a reasonable opportunity to secure alternative accommodation for occupation (section 190(2) duty),
- d) The section 193(2) Main Homelessness duty or the section 193C(4) 'reduced' section 193 duty

For operational guidance notes:

Note 1: Where it has been decided to refer the case to another authority at either the 'Relief Stage' or at the 'Main Duty stage' of their homeless application, an applicant will not receive any banding for being owed any homelessness duty as the Council will owe no duty (other than, depending on the circumstances) an interim accommodation duty. Being owed an interim accommodation duty

pending the outcome of a local connection referral does not qualify an applicant to be owed a banding A or B

Note 2: Where a Cumbria District Council has ended any statutory homeless duty and is exercising its power to provide accommodation pending a review decision (section 188(3) power) no statutory duty will be owed by the Council unless the outcome of any review is favourable for the applicant. Therefore where a review has been requested any banding priority for being owed any of the homelessness duties will be removed.

D) Where applicants in Band A have not bid within 3 months of being awarded Band A

Band A is an award of additional preference based on an applicant's very urgent need to be housed. The need to house someone urgently will be undermined if an applicant fails to bid because they may, for example, be waiting for the 'perfect property' to become available.

Therefore an award of Band A will be reviewed after 3 months for any applicant who has not bid, or where the view is that bids have been made but are not realistic.

The review after 3 months could result in a decision that:

- a) The Band A award should continue with further reviews scheduled for every 3 months, or
- b) The Band A award should be removed with the applicant losing additional preference and being placed into Band B, or
- c) That a direct offer should be made as soon as possible due to the urgent need for the applicant to move.

Note: There may be circumstances where no suitable properties have become available for an applicant to bid on within the 3-month period. In these circumstances an applicant will not have Band A removed and will continue to be able to bid. However, in recognition of their urgent need to move it may be agreed with the relevant local authority to make a direct offer for any property that is assessed as suitable to meet their urgent housing need.

Section 2: Who can apply to the Housing Register and the criteria for assessing who is eligible to be included

The CCP Housing Register is a single list of applicants across Cumbria who qualifies to be included on the scheme. It includes new applicants and existing social housing tenants living in Cumbria who are seeking a transfer.

Anyone over the age of 16 is eligible to join the Housing Register if their current address is their only home, or sole residence, and they are not already registered through someone else's housing application.

If an applicant is under 18 years of age they will not normally be offered a tenancy. This does not apply to young people living in a foster home or in residential care provided by Social Services for whom re-housing under the Children Act has been agreed and who are within 6 months of their 18th birthday. There is an agreed protocol between the Housing and Social Services departments covering housing for applicants who are looked after, or were formerly looked after.

Any offer to an applicant who is under the age of 18 will only be made after their ability to manage a tenancy has been fully assessed. This assessment is to make sure that they can cope with being a tenant at a young age and that they do not risk losing that tenancy offered through a lack of support.

If a person who is 16 or 17 is granted a tenancy, this will be held in trust until they reach 18. This means that another suitable person (such as a parent, legal guardian, social worker or relative) will be responsible for the tenancy.

The eligibility persons from abroad qualification rules

Everyone can apply to join the register but there are some groups of people who by law cannot join the register, regardless of their housing need or circumstances. These are people who:

- Come under the Government's 'persons from abroad' eligibility rules and cannot lawfully be given housing help;
- Do not live habitually in the Common Travel Area (UK, Channel Islands, the Isle of Man or the Republic of Ireland);
- Do not have the right to live in the UK;
- Plus other categories of people who the Government may in the future, decide are not eligible for housing assistance.

Under sections 160ZA (1), (2) and (4) of the Housing Act 1996 the CCP cannot allocate a tenancy, or nominate a person for housing, if they are a person who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of being a person subject to immigration control or a person from abroad who is prescribed as ineligible.

The relevant regulations that apply to eligibility are:

- Regulations 3 and 4 Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006, SI 2006/1294
- All subsequent amendments including 'The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (SI 2019/861)
- The Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/667) implemented from the 24 August 2020.

The rules are complicated and anyone who is impacted or believe they may be impacted can approach any CCP Partner for advice, or seek independent legal advice.

The rules will change from 2021 due to the UK's exit from the EU and new regulations regarding eligibility for housing based on the EU settlement scheme. This policy will be amended to take into account any new rules.

The qualification rules adopted under the Policy

In addition to the Government's 'persons from abroad' rules setting out when a person is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation the housing laws allow for the CCP to define in the Policy who will be regarded as 'qualifying persons' (section 160ZA).

What this means is that under section 160ZA(7) is that the Policy can set out classes of people who are, or are not, qualifying persons. A number of qualification rules have been adopted by the CCP. There are also a number of defined exceptions to all, or an individual qualification rule. The qualification rules and exceptions are set out below.

Qualification Rule 1: Local Connection

Only those applicants with a local connection to Cumbria and who also have an assessed statutory housing need, as defined by this policy, are eligible to be included for the statutory reasonable preference housing needs Bands A and B. The local connection rules do not prevent an applicant from being awarded Band C as long as they meet the other qualification rules set, for example – as long as they are not disqualified through the unacceptable behavior rule.

There will be some properties advertised that may be subject to additional local connection requirements however, these will be clearly stated in the advert where this is the case. A local connection is defined as:

- a) Must live in Cumbria and have done so continuously for the past year, or for 3 years in the last 5, and that residence was of their choice.
- b) Have immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister, son, daughter) who are currently living in Cumbria and have done so for at least the last 3 years
- c) Are employed in permanent employment in Cumbria. Employment is defined as paid employment for 16 hours or more per week for a period of one year, or self-employment where an applicant can demonstrate that the self-employed work they perform is in the Cumbria area and is on average 16 hours a week or more. The employment must be based on their actual place of work in the area and not based on a head office or regional office situated in the area but from which the applicant does not work. Where working hours fluctuate i.e. casual or zero hours contract, an average will be taken over the last three months, or
- d) Have close family (normally mother, father, brother, sister, son or daughter) that have lived in Cumbria for a minimum of the past 3 years. We will consider whether there are exceptional circumstances where other family members may be considered as close. For example, the circumstances where an extended family member brought up a person in the absence of their own parents.
- e) Where there is an exceptional need to move to the area as determined for very special circumstances.

For the purposes of determining local connection for residence in Cumbria, this will include:

- 1) Residency in a non-traditional dwelling, such as a mobile home that is placed on a residential site, or an official pitch where it is demonstrated that this their permanent place of residence and can be evidenced through paying council tax.
- 2) People who are forced to sleep rough in Cumbria if they meet the qualification period for residency.

The exemptions to the residency qualification rule for Bands A or B are:

- 1) An applicant is homeless and a Cumbrian Council has accepted the section 189B 'relief of homelessness duty or the main section 193(2) housing duty under the Housing Act 1996, and they are not intending to refer the applicant to another Council under the homelessness local connection rules.
- 2) A Cumbria District Council has placed an applicant into temporary accommodation outside of Cumbria.
- 3) Where there are significant and special circumstances requiring a move into Cumbria. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis following a request from the applicant or from the information submitted on their housing register application. Examples include:
 - a) Reasons of safety; i.e. when an applicant is fleeing domestic abuse or hate crime from another area, or
 - b) Is on a witness protection programme and the CCP have agreed that there is an essential reason why they need to move to Cumbria
- 4) Applicants who are leaving an institution such as a prison or secure unit or a hospital, rehabilitation centre, refuge, hostel or supported accommodation scheme that is not in Cumbria and the applicant was resident in Cumbria for one year one year immediately preceding residency in an institution, or 3 out of the last 5 years immediately before they were accommodated in that institution.
- 5) The CCP will consider any application from a gypsy or traveller household where the applicant may not meet the continuous period of residence rule, as the period may have been broken by travelling. The CCP will consider the facts of each case when deciding whether the rule should be waived.
- 6) Care Leavers below the age of 25 years who are, or were, owed a duty under section 23C of the Children Act 1989 by Cumbria County Council and have been looked after in accommodation outside of Cumbria. This will include care leavers who are still receiving after care support from Children's Service until they are 25, and some care leavers who are in full-time education who wish to move back to Cumbria on completion of their education.
- 7) Applicants that satisfy the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012. These are:
 - a) Applicants who are serving members of the regular armed forces

- b) Applicants who served in the regular armed forces within the 5 years immediately prior to the date of their application
 - c) Applicants who are serving or former serving members of the regular armed forces or reserve forces who suffer from a serious injury, illness or disability sustained as a result of their service
 - d) Applicants who are a bereaved spouse/civil partner of a former serving member of the regular armed forces and have recently ceased (or will soon cease) to be entitled to reside in services accommodation following the death of their spouse/civil partner.
- 8) Spouses and civil partners who are required to leave accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following a breakdown in their relationship with their Service spouse or partner. This exemption is recommended by the MHCLG Statutory guidance issued in June 2020.
- 9) Applicants who satisfy the right to move criteria will be exempt from the Bands A or B qualification rule. The Right to Move qualification regulations 20155 states that Local Connection criteria must not be applied to existing social tenants who seek to move from another Council district in England and who have a need to move for work related reasons to avoid hardship.

To qualify the applicant must:

- Be social housing tenant living in England
- Wish to join the Housing Register in Cumbria due to work related reasons to avoid hardship are able to do so provided that they can provide evidence to that effect that is accepted.
- Satisfy the criteria that the tenant needs, rather than wishes to move for work related reasons and if they were unable to do so would result in hardship.

Qualification rule 2: The requirement to give permission to obtain and share an applicant's personal information

Applicants will be required to sign a declaration, or to give informed consent, to confirm their understanding that:

- a. The information given is correct and that they will notify the CCP of any change in their circumstances.
- b. Enquiries will be made concerning their eligibility for housing and level of priority.
- c. Information will be provided to other partner organisations that are part of the scheme.

This is a condition of being accepted onto the housing register and applies to the applicant, or any member of the applicant's household.

Once an applicant provides information we will process that information under Article 6 GDPR. The processing is necessary under the Public Task purpose and is necessary for the Council to perform a task in the public interest or for its official functions, and that task or function has a clear basis in law.

Qualification rule 3: Homeownership, or legal interest in homeownership

An applicant cannot qualify for Bands A or B of the housing register (see section on exemptions) if they own or have an interest in residential property including freehold, leasehold, joint ownership or shared ownership (applicants who have been the owner of a residential property within the last 5 years will be required to provide proof of the proceeds from the sale and of the disposal of the proceeds). This includes:

- Properties owned and rented out to other persons
- Properties in the UK or other Countries
- Properties owned by a spouse or civil partner

However, applicants will be able to qualify for Band C.

However, if as a result of a divorce settlement a Court has ordered that, for a period likely to exceed 5 years, an applicant may not reside in a former matrimonial or civil partnership home in which they still have an interest the Applicant will be treated as disqualified under this rule.

Qualification rule 4: Financial resources

Applicants who are considered to have sufficient financial resources to buy suitable accommodation in Cumbria will not qualify for Bands A or B but can qualify for Band C. 'Sufficient financial resources' are defined as sufficient capital to buy or rent privately; or sufficient income to raise a mortgage to buy or rent privately; or a combination of both. The income and savings limits are:

- 1) Applicants (both single persons and couples) who have total savings, investments and/or assets of £25,000 or more.
- 2) Applicants whose total gross household income from all sources exceeds an annual income of £45,000 or more (for single persons) or joint income of £60,000 or more (for couples).

'Sufficient financial resources' includes any assets or investments even if they are not immediately available to the applicant, such as any residential or non-residential property that they own or part own anywhere in the UK or abroad.

Any lump sum received by a member of the armed forces as compensation for an injury or disability on active service will be disregarded.

Although this qualification rule will mean an applicant cannot be granted the statutory housing needs bands A or B, it does not prevent them being considered for any low cost home ownership schemes, such as rent to buy, shared ownership/equity, discounted market sale and starter homes or lower demand properties. Information can be given on request regarding which Housing Associations or developers are currently operating any of the above schemes and how applications can be made.

Applicants who do not qualify for Bands A or B under the homeownership, legal interest or financial resources rules may be considered as an exception if:

- a) They own or part own accommodation or have an legal interest in accommodation; and

- b) They are over state pension age or have a substantial disability; and their current home is not suitable for their specific needs and cannot be adapted, and
- c) They have insufficient financial resources to buy accommodation that meets their particular housing needs in the private market despite owning a property, or having income or savings above the 'sufficient resources' thresholds set out in this policy.

The possible exemption is intended to cover situations where a person owns their own home but where it is agreed that they are no longer able to manage in it due to their advancing years, or due to developing a substantial disability that makes living in their home impracticable. This would be the circumstances where selling up would not provide sufficient funds to purchase a more suitable alternative in the area leaving that person in a difficult position.

Qualification rule 5: Failure to Bid

This is a disqualification rule that will be applied to applicants who are included on the Housing Register.

The CCP will monitor the bidding patterns to identify applicants who fail to bid and identify any applicants where their failure to bid could be the result of a vulnerability and not being able to understand the bidding system. In these circumstances the rule will not be applied.

Any applicant who has failed to bid for more than twelve months will be removed from the Housing Register to reduce the administrative burden of maintaining the register. This is based on the assumption that an applicant who has not bid for accommodation in 12 months is unlikely to continue to be in housing need. Any applicant removed from the register can reapply if they have a housing need.

If an applicant has only registered because they are interested in bidding for accommodation for a new section 106 rural developments that may be being built, this will be considered as an exception to the 'no bid in 12 months' rule.

Qualification rule 6: Fraud or giving False Information

Applicants who are found to have withheld or given false information may be removed from the register and will not be able to reapply for a period of 12 months. Decisions to remove the person from the register will be made based on the seriousness of the false information given, or an assessment of why important information was withheld. The rule applies to an application for housing where the applicant has:

- a) Committed fraud, or
- b) Given false information, or
- c) Withheld information

For details on how we will assess the question of alleged fraud or false information see appendix 1.3

Qualification rule 7: Circumstances where an applicant has current or former social housing rent arrears or another relevant recoverable housing related debt.

This section sets out the rules for when an applicant

- a) Will not be allowed to qualify for the Housing Register because of rent arrears or a housing related debt, or
- b) Will be allowed to qualify but will not be allowed to bid for properties advertised until the rent arrears or housing related debt have been resolved to the satisfaction of the CCP using the criteria set out below.

When carrying out an assessment, we will take into consideration all housing related debts, associated with either a current or former tenancy where this relates to any social housing provider in the UK. Note the rules in this section apply only to social housing former or current rent arrears, occupation of temporary accommodation debts, and some other forms of housing related debt. This section does not cover any rent arrears for a private sector tenancy or licence. This is covered under the unacceptable behaviour rules set out in Qualification rule 8 below.

Note: the definition of a housing debt will not include debts that are statute barred. The debt will be considered statute barred where an applicant, or their representative or someone else they held the account with hasn't:

- Made a payment in the last 6 years
- Written to the creditor acknowledging the debt in the last 6 years
- Had a county court judgement (CCJ) relating to the debt in the last 6 years

For the purposes of this qualification rule housing related debts include:

- a) Current or former tenancy rent arrears of a social housing tenancy;
- b) Outstanding re-chargeable repairs;
- c) Current and former housing related service charge arrears;
- d) Bed and breakfast or other temporary accommodation charge arrears for a licence or a tenancy
- e) Housing benefit overpayments for a social housing tenancy;
- f) Failing to adhere to the terms of an agreed payment plan in relation to rent arrears or housing debt for a social housing tenancy or temporary accommodation
- g) Any court costs associated with any of the above debts

Housing related debts apply to both the applicant and to any members of their household that are included in the application.

The purpose of this qualification rule is two fold.

- 1) To ensure any debt to a former landlord is recovered and
- 2) To focus on whether an applicant's history creates a risk of future non-payment, rather than simply on the existence of a current outstanding debt.

The following framework will be used to guide officers to apply this qualification rule. We will consider:

- Whether the applicant still owes that debt, and if they do, the extent of the arrears/debt and whether it is a recoverable debt or a statute barred debt.
- Whether there possible exceptional circumstances that need to be considered.
- Whether the claimant has taken debt advice acted on it, and entered into and begun to implement any arrangement to clear the arrears/debt.
- If an arrangement has been made, the amount of arrears/debt paid off, any amount outstanding, and the regularity of any payments made.

After applying the above procedure it may be decided that the applicant does not qualify for the housing register or that they will be allowed to qualify, but not allowed to bid for advertised properties until the matter has been resolved to the satisfaction of the CCP.

There is no time limit regarding when a person can make a new application following disqualification. Where a new application is made we will assess whether the applicant has taken appropriate action to address the debt. When disqualified the applicant will have been informed of the steps they need to take to resolve the debt in order to qualify.

How decisions for applicants with a social housing debt will be made

a) Applicants with debts of £1,000 or more who have not made any arrangement to address the debt

Applicants with debts of £1000 or more who have not made any arrangement to address the debt should be ineligible to join the register unless the circumstances surrounding the debt are exceptional and the assessment concludes that there is no real risk of future non-payment.

b) Applicants with debts of £1,000 or more who have made any arrangement to address the debt

Applicants will be permitted to join the register and be able to bid for accommodation if they have maintained a payment arrangement for at least 13 weeks and have either:

- Repaid at least £750; or
- Repaid at least 25% of their original debt

Applicants who satisfy the above will be permitted to bid for properties. All partner landlords are encouraged to abide by these guidelines and to accept bids on this basis. It is however, accepted that the housing association to whom the debt is owed may wish to see that a longer period of repayment should be kept to. Where this is the case the period should not be more than a further 13-39 weeks in addition to the 13-week period that the applicant has already paid. Any requirement by the partner to whom the debt is owed for payments to be maintained for more than 13 weeks should not prevent an applicant from bidding for properties advertised by another housing association partner.

All partner landlords are discouraged from requiring a debt of £1000 plus to be paid in full. This disincentives applicants from making any attempt at payment and may result in an applicant having to demonstrate an extended repayment period of several years before they can be considered for accommodation. This would be unfair on applicant's who have demonstrated a commitment to pay off the debt and that the risk of any further debt for a new tenancy is low. It also makes it more likely that the housing association is unable to recover the debt.

c) Applicants with debts of £1-£499

Applicants with debts of £1-£499 should be eligible to join the register and eligible to bid, unless there is clear evidence of a future risk of non-payment.

Clear evidence of a future risk could include factors such as:

- a) A long history of housing debt;
- b) A long history of poor rent payments; and
- c) A long history of breached payment arrangements.

Where such evidence exists the applicant should be unable to bid until there is evidence of rehabilitation. Evidence of rehabilitation could include factors such as:

- a) Maintaining a payment arrangement for 1-8 weeks;
- b) Demonstrating that the causes of the previous problems have been addressed.

d) Applicants with debts of £500-£999

Applicants with debts of £500-£599 should be eligible to join the register but ineligible to bid, unless the applicant can demonstrate there is no real risk of future non-payment.

Evidence there is a no real risk of future non-payment could include factors such as:

- a) A history of not having housing debts;
- b) A history of regular rent payments; and
- c) A history of maintained payment arrangements.

Where no such evidence exists the applicant should be unable to bid until there is evidence of rehabilitation. Evidence of rehabilitation could include factors such as:

- a) Maintaining a payment arrangement for 8-26 weeks;
- b) Reducing the debt to below £500 (in which case the above rules at c would apply)
- c) Demonstrating that the causes of the previous problems have been addressed.

Applicants who are disqualified for a housing related debt of £1,000+ should notify the CCP immediately when they have either repaid at least £750 or repaid at least 25% of their original debt so they can qualify for the register. If it is agreed that the matter has been resolved and they can register, their effective date will be the date they have been assessed as qualifying for the register and will not

be the date of their first application which resulted in the decision that they do not qualify.

The only exceptions to this qualification rule are applicants who can demonstrate that their circumstances are exceptional and that they would face serious hardship or risk through not being allowed to qualify. An exception may be considered where for example an applicant has a good payment history with a debt resulting from a one off incident or problem such as relating to Universal Credit, or benefits reforms, or where a tenant had to flee domestic abuse and a subsequent debt built up for their tenancy.

Additional procedural information on the consideration of exceptional circumstances and how applications where there is a 'Debt Relief Order', 'Bankruptcy Declaration' or 'Individual Voluntary Agreement (IVA)' are set out in appendix 1.4

Qualification rule 8: Serious unacceptable behaviour

This rule will apply where an applicant, or any member of their current or prospective household, has a history of serious unacceptable behaviour that, in the view of the CCP, makes them unsuitable to be a tenant. It is important to note that whether an applicant's behavior means that they are not allowed to register is entirely a matter for the CCP and that the qualification rule is not restricted to whether the unacceptable behavior would entitle the Council to an outright Possession Order if the applicant were to be a tenant. This was the 'threshold test' set by the legislation for Housing Allocation Policies until the Localism Act 2011 was implemented in 2012. Since 2012 the legislation allows qualification for unacceptable behavior to be defined through the rules adopted in any new Housing Allocation Policy.

In applying this qualification rule the CCP will decide on the facts of the case whether:

- a) The applicant should not qualify to be included on the Housing Register due to their (or household member's) serious unacceptable behaviour, or
- b) Will be allowed to qualify but will not be allowed to bid until the applicant (or household member) has demonstrated to the satisfaction of the assessing officer that their behavior has changed.

In the circumstances described by b) the applicant will be placed in the band that reflects their housing need and will continue to accrue 'time' on the register for the band awarded, despite not being able to bid. Once they have resolved their unacceptable behavior their date within the Band will remain the date they were awarded that band for their housing need and will not be the date they resolved the unacceptable behavior to the satisfaction of the CCP.

This rule will apply for example where the CCP is satisfied, having considered all available evidence of any of the following in relation to an applicant (or a member of their current or prospective household)

- 1) A serious failure to adhere to the terms of any current or previous social housing or private rented sector tenancy agreement. This includes failing to

maintain any previous social rented or private sector rented property within the terms of their tenancy agreement, or committing acts causing or likely to cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours or others in the locality of where they live or where they previously have lived. Non-qualification will apply until the applicant (or a member of their prospective household) has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the CCP, that circumstances have changed such that the previous conduct is unlikely to reoccur. In many cases this could include demonstrating cooperation with support agencies leading to a substantial improvement in behaviour.

- 2) Conduct likely to cause nuisance or annoyance if they were to be offered a tenancy. This is conduct or behavior that does not only relate to a previous social housing or private rented sector tenancy agreement but conduct or behaviour that the CCP has assessed is still current. This includes where an applicant or a member of their current or prospective household is the subject of actions being taken by a Council (or some other recognised body) on grounds of alleged Anti Social Behaviour (ASB).
- 3) Rent arrears for their last private rented tenancy where the CCP has been able to obtain information that confirms on the balance of probabilities a debt is owed. If there is a debt owed it will be for the assessing officer to decide on the level and debt and any facts gathered regarding the level of debt and the reasons for it whether the applicant should be classified as a non qualifying case or, should be allowed to qualify but prevented from bidding until the debt is resolved, or should be allowed to qualify with no penalty applied.
- 4) Circumstances where the applicant, or any member of their household, has assaulted a member of staff, whether or not an injunction is being sought or has already been obtained

Additional guidance for assessing officers and the framework to be used to apply the test of unacceptable behaviour are set out in appendix 1.5

Qualification rule 9 – Existing CCP Tenants who are not assessed as Band A or B for having a statutory housing need.

Existing tenants of any Council or Housing Association located in Cumbria or outside of Cumbria will only be allowed to qualify for the Housing Register if they have an assessed housing need that would qualify them for Bands A or B.

This does not prevent a tenant who is not in housing need from seeking a transfer through the 'Mutual Exchange Scheme'.

How exceptional circumstances will be considered for any of the qualification rules

The CCP retains the ability, in exceptional circumstances, to exercise its discretion when applying any of the qualification rules. Note, it is for the applicant to request that discretion should be applied for exceptional circumstances and once requested this will be considered by a senior housing operational manager from the Council normally for the Council area where the applicant has applied from. A request for a review of a decision that an applicant does not meet the qualification rule will be taken as a request for any exceptional circumstances to

be considered. The delegated responsible manager for each assessing organisation will consider:

- 1) Whether the application would result in the applicant being awarded a statutory housing need reasonable preference Band A or B under the Policy, and if so
- 2) Whether the applicant's circumstances (or those of a member of the applicant's household) are so exceptional that the qualification rule should be waived.

They will assess the case for exceptional circumstances and will record all decisions reached along with full reasons for that decision. The applicant will receive a written decision with the reasons set out.

Please note 1: that the CCP cannot waive the eligibility rules for any applicant who is not allowed to access social housing under the 'person from abroad' legal eligibility rules set by Central Government.

Please note 2: In deciding whether an applicant's circumstances are exceptional we will fully consider the Equality Act 2010 and Children Act 2004. For the Equality Act we will specifically consider:

- a) Whether the person, or a member of their household that they wish to be housed with them, meets the definition for one or more of the 9 protected characteristics in listed in the Equality Act 2010
- b) If we agree that the applicant or a member of their household comes under the definition for a protected characteristic the CCP will fully comply with section 149 of 2010 Equality Act and ensure that it has obtained all relevant information relating to the applicant's protected characteristic and will consider that if they were not able to qualify for the scheme, whether this would have an exceptionally detrimental impact on the person with the protected characteristic, and
- c) Ensure that any decision that the applicant's circumstances are not exceptional will be a decision that is a proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aims set out in this policy in section 1.

Section 3: Applying to join the Housing Register

How to apply

Applications should be made online by accessing the housing allocations section of the Cumbria Choice website and completing the on-line application form - <https://www.cumbriachoice.org.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/38.aspx>

An applicant will be asked to choose one housing organisation to administer their application. This can be the local authority for where they are resident or a housing association partner. If the applicant is a tenant of a 'Cumbria Choice' partner their application must be administered by that housing association. If

they are a former tenant of a 'Cumbria Choice' partner, that partner must administer their application.

Applicants can call any of the CCP Council or Housing Association Partners if they need help to make their application on-line. There is also free access to the Internet at libraries, Council offices, Housing Association Offices and at some community facilities. A telephone or office appointment can be offered when an applicant has no access to the Internet or is unable to use the Internet. To mitigate any impact it is agreed that paper forms will still be available in exceptional circumstances where it is agreed an applicant is unable to complete an on-line form.

The Cumbria Choice website contains a list of all of the supporting documents that an applicant must provide in order to progress their application. In most circumstances an applicant will be able to upload their documents.

Where the applicant indicates that they have medical problems they will also be requested to complete an additional medical assessment form on-line.

Once the on-line application has been received there may be a need for additional information. If so applicants will receive a phone call, email or letter setting out the details for any additional information needed.

Prisoners can register in the 6-month period prior to their date of release. They are able to express an interest in a property in the 2-week period prior to release but must be able to accept the tenancy on the date required by the housing provider.

If accepted onto the register, applicants will be informed of:

- 1) The band they have been placed in (this determines priority)
- 2) The date of application (may be used to determine priority within the band allocated)
- 3) The size and type of properties for which they can bid
- 4) Their application reference number (applicants will need this to bid)
- 5) How to appeal against their banding if they think it is wrong.

They will also receive a user guide. This will inform them about how the scheme works and will include such information as:

- Where to look for advertised properties;
- How to bid for a property
- What checks are made before any offer is confirmed?
- Feedback on their bid

Where a band is allocated what date will this be from?

The band start date is the date that the housing register application was received for assessment, unless an applicant's housing need and/or circumstances changes and they are as a result placed in a higher band. In these circumstances they will have their band start date reset as the higher band reflects how long they have had the higher level of housing need.

Note for eligible homeless applicants who meet the qualification rules to join the Housing Register the following will apply with regard to their Band start date:

- a) Owed a section 195(2) Prevention of homelessness duty – Band date is the date the duty was owed and not the date of the homelessness application
- b) Owed a section 189B (2) Relief of homelessness duty – Band date is the date the duty was owed and not the date of the homelessness application
- c) Owed the Main section 193(2) duty – Band date is the date the Relief of homelessness duty was owed and not the date the Main duty was owed. To start the date at the date the Main duty was owed would disadvantage an applicant by 56 days who has been found to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless
- d) Relief duty has ended and the applicant is assessed at this point as not being in priority need - Band date is the date the Relief of homelessness duty was owed and not the date the Relief duty is ended and the non-priority decision confirmed. To start the date at the date the Relief duty was brought to an end would disadvantage an applicant by 56 days who has been found to be homeless but not in priority need

Assessing Applications

In order to assess an applicant's housing need and therefore their place on the Housing Register the scheme uses a needs based banding system detailed in section 4 below.

The Bands are awarded to reflect housing need, whereby the need reflected by the highest Band indicates the greater need for housing.

Applicants will be required to sign a declaration, or to give informed consent, to confirm their understanding that the information given is correct and that they will notify the CCP of any change in their circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide all the information requested to assess their circumstances, and to provide any supporting information or documents that are requested. Incomplete applications will not be made active until such time as the CCP is satisfied that it has in its possession all of the information it requires to complete its assessment.

All incomplete applications will be cancelled after a period of 28 days measured from the date information has been requested and not provided. If canceled this does not prevent the applicant making a subsequent application at a later date, although in such cases the effective date of registration would not be backdated to the earlier application date.

The CCP may request information or a reference from an applicant's current or previous social landlord and, depending on whether the application gives rise to any concern, request a reference from the most recent private sector landlord if the applicant is or has been a private sector tenancy.

Where a landlord does not reply a reminder will be sent, and if still not forthcoming any other information or records available will be checked to try to determine whether there have been any concerns over the way an applicant may have conducted their private rented tenancy. An applicant should not be

disadvantaged if, despite every effort, it is not possible to obtain a reference from their current or previous landlord.

All applications are subject to certain verification checks and may be reassessed:

- At the point of initial application
- Following any change of circumstance notified to the CCP by the applicant
- Following any routine validation audits
- Following an annual review of the application
- At the point of an offer of accommodation
- At the point of letting

Checks into any court cases or unspent criminal convictions

In the interests of community all applicants and members of their prospective household will be requested to disclose any pending court cases or unspent criminal convictions.

The CCP may use any information disclosed (or any other information obtained during the assessment or following registration) to ascertain whether the applicant should be disqualified from joining, or remaining on the register, due to applying the serious unacceptable behaviour rule including whether they may pose a serious risk to a community if they were to be housed.

Spent convictions are not required to be disclosed and will not be taken into account in assessing that person's eligibility to join the register. The assessment will instead reflect whether there is evidence of any current serious unacceptable behavior regardless of whether a person has been convicted in the past for that behavior.

If the CCP decide that, on the information obtained during the assessment process, there is a real pressing need for a 'Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)' check, or a police check, a supplementary request for information and declaration will be sent to the applicant asking for more details and for permission from the applicant for the CCP to make the relevant check. Failure to give permission may result in the application not being made live whilst the CCP consider the information available to it or may result in the application being closed through the applicant failing qualification rule 2 which is to give permission for the CCP to undertake all reasonable enquiries.

Information gained will not automatically exclude an applicant from the register. Information received may also be used to make informed decisions about the suitability of any property that may be offered.

All assessments will be carried out in accordance with the data protection and information sharing policies and legal requirements.

Who can be included in the Application?

The Application can include the following household members:

- a) Spouses or Civil Partners where the applicant lives with and/or intends to live with their Spouse or Civil Partner.
- b) Partners where the applicant is currently cohabiting with a member of the same or opposite sex.
- c) Children who reside with and are dependent upon the applicant. Children are defined as under 18 for these purposes. Where there is any dispute as to whether children reside with and are dependent upon the applicant, the CCP will apply the test in Section 189(1)(b) of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to decide (see below).
- d) A Carer where the assessing officer has agreed that on the evidence there is a need for a live in Carer. The Carer is a person who provides or intends to provide care for another adult. It is either a relative or friend who assists another person in their day-to-day life. This is different from someone who offers care professionally or through a voluntary organisation. Even if a carer is in receipt of Carer's Allowance this does not necessarily mean that it is necessary for them to reside with the person who is being cared for. An application to include a carer in a housing application will be considered by the assessing officer's Manager to determine if the carer has been assessed by Social Care and Health as needing to provide overnight support. In these circumstances the applicant must provide supporting evidence from other agencies e.g. Social Care or a Health professional.
- e) Any other household member at the discretion of a manager delegated by the assessing body to make such decisions.
- f) Note: Individuals can only be on 1 application. Where someone has an application in their own name (or with a partner) they cannot also be included as a household member on another application unless they are a victim of domestic abuse. If this is the case they should remove themselves from their previous application.

How joint applications will be considered and when will a joint tenancy normally be granted?

Joint applications will be accepted and will be treated as one application. The housing need of the full household will be considered in assessing housing need.

Joint tenancies are normally granted where applicants have a long-term commitment e.g. married and unmarried couples, civil partners but this decision is down to the individual housing association who will decide whether to allow a joint tenancy depending on the rules adopted by that association.

Households with access to children/shared residency order or Child Arrangement Orders

As part of the assessment process the CCP will record whether the applicant claims to have children that live with them part of the week whether or not this arrangement is set by the court or not. The CCP will apply the test in Section 189(1)(b) of Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 to decide whether any child both

lives with and is dependent on the applicant. Unless this test is passed an applicant will only be able to be considered for the size of accommodation relevant to their circumstances.

There will be cases where after the section 189(1)(b) assessment it is agreed that children live with the applicant on a 'shared arrangement' even though they do not exclusively live with the applicant.

In these cases, and in cases where an applicant has contact with children who stay over but do not live with the applicant, the applicant will be advised as to what size of property the applicant they are likely to be able to access and the rules applied by each partner housing association for allocating accommodation to households where children do not exclusively live with an applicant. The decision in this respect of each partner Housing Association is likely to vary and will depend on a number of factors including:

- a) The ability of the applicant to afford the rent with or without help from benefits
- b) The availability and popularity of family housing in any area that an applicant expresses a preference to live in. For example a Housing Association may be willing to be more flexible where a vacancy relates to a flat than a house as long as the rent is assessed as being affordable.

The requirement to inform the CCP of any change of circumstances

Applicants are required to inform the CCP of any changes in their circumstances, which affect their housing application.

Examples of a change in circumstances include but are not limited to:

- a. A change of address or contact details, for either themselves or members of their prospective household;
- b. A change in their medical condition or disability (either existing or newly acquired);
- c. Additional family members or other people they wish to add to their application (It will be for the CCP to decide whether they will allow additional people to join the application);
- d. Any family member or any other person on the application who has left the accommodation; and
- e. Any significant changes in income, savings or assets, which may require a reassessment under the income and savings qualification rule.

Where there is any change in an applicant's circumstances, an on-line change of circumstances form must be completed, and supporting documents must be provided. If there is any change to the banding, applicants will be informed in writing. The onus is on applicants to inform the CCP when there is a relevant change in their circumstances.

If the change in circumstances results in a higher banding award the effective date will be the date they moved into the higher band. If the applicant moves to a lower band there will be no change to their effective date.

Note, a failure to notify the CCP of changes in circumstances may lead to the offer of any housing being withdrawn and the application suspended whilst the changes are verified.

Applications from members of the Council, Board Members, and staff

Elected Councillors, or Housing Association Board Members, cannot be involved in assessing housing applications or the allocation of housing. However, this does not prevent Councillors seeking or providing information on behalf of applicants.

In order to ensure that the Council is treating all applicants fairly, any application for housing from a Councillor, Board Member, or employee of any Cumbrian Council's Housing Department or Partner Housing Association will be assessed in the normal way, but an offer of housing must be approved by the Lead Officer for the social housing partner advertising the vacant home. Canvassing is not allowed in any circumstances by or on behalf of members of staff.

Reviewing the Register

Every applicant on the Register will have their application reviewed annually, or more frequently as decided by the CCP in order to manage the administration of the register. A letter will be sent to all applicants requesting confirmation of their current circumstances, and asking if they wish to remain on the register. If a reply is not received within 28 days of the date the letter is sent the application will be cancelled.

Cancelling Applications

An application will be cancelled in the following circumstances:

- At the request of an applicant
- Where an applicant does not respond to an application review, within the specified time limit set out in any correspondence sent to them
- Where a CCP Partner, or any other Council, or Housing Association has housed the applicant (unless it is assessed that the applicants' housing circumstances still qualify for an award of Band A or B based on their housing need, but this is unlikely to be the case). An applicant that has been rehoused and does not have an assessed housing need could of course apply again and would be included in Band C with a new Band date, which would be the date of their application.
- When a tenant on the housing register completes a mutual exchange
- Where the applicant moves and does not provide a contact address
- Where the applicant has died
- Where the applicant has not supplied information requested within 28 days at the application stage or the annual review stage.

Where the information known is that an applicant is vulnerable, the assessing officer may contact the applicant, or any agency supporting them, to check their current circumstances before cancelling the application.

If an applicant has moved into private rented accommodation rather than social housing the application will not be cancelled but if the result of a reassessment at this stage is that as a result of their changed housing circumstances they no longer qualify for an award of Band A or B, then they will be allocated Band C.

Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of that decision.

Deliberate worsening of circumstances

Where there is evidence that an applicant has knowingly and deliberately made their housing situation worse in order to gain a higher priority on the register, the assessment of their needs will be based on the circumstances before their situation changed through their actions to deliberately worsen their circumstances.

Examples are:

- Applicants who have allowed family members or others to move into their property, who previously had suitable accommodation or the financial means to secure their own accommodation, and this has resulted in the property being overcrowded.
- Applicants who have moved from previously suitable or more suitable accommodation which it were reasonable for them to continue to occupy, into a less suitable property.
- Homeowners who have transferred their property to another family member within the last 5 years from the date they make their application to the Register.
- Applicants who have given up affordable and suitable private rented accommodation which they are able to maintain, to move in with other relatives or friends, creating a situation of overcrowding and/or sharing of bathroom/kitchen and/or a split household;
- Requesting or colluding with a landlord or family member to issue them with a Notice to Quit

These are examples only. There may be other circumstances where the CCP decide that an applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances

The Review Procedure

The CCP is committed to making the correct decisions on all applications. Notification letters by post or email notifying an applicant of ineligibility or non-qualification for joining the Housing Register, or about the band that they have been awarded, or about any other decision concerning the facts of an applicant's case, will state that the applicant has a legal right to request a review of the decision made.

Under the housing legislation that applies to Allocation Policies there is a legal right to request a review of a decision in the following circumstances:

- a) A decision that an applicant is ineligible, or not a qualifying person to join the Housing Register.
- b) A decision regarding which band an applicant has been awarded.
- c) The priority date granted for the band awarded.
- d) To remove an applicant from the Housing Register.
- e) Any decision about the facts of the case that has been used to assess their application.
- f) Where an applicant considers that a decision has been reached based on incorrect information.

The procedure for how a request for a review will be administered is set out in appendix 1.6

Section 4: How an applicant's housing needs and circumstances are assessed

The Banding system

The demand for social housing exceeds supply in many areas of Cumbria and therefore this Allocation Policy intends to prioritise the housing of those applicants who are assessed as being in the greatest need. Once registered this does not mean that an applicant has a right to be offered social housing. They can be considered for housing based on their housing need but many applicants will unfortunately not have sufficient housing need to be offered a property.

The banding system will normally be used to decide priority between applicants for an offer of accommodation. Additionally, the CCP may apply the 'direct offer' procedure in particular cases as set out in this policy.

Where the bidding process applies, priority is generally awarded in descending order between Band A, Band B, Band C. Within bands, priority is generally awarded according to the band date. The sub-categories within each band do not affect relative priority within that band.

The law, as it applies to local housing authorities, requires that the scheme be framed so as to secure that Reasonable Preference for housing is given to those in the categories set out in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The statutory Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- a) People who are homeless within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- b) People who are owed certain homelessness duties by any local housing authority.
- c) People occupying unsanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing.
- d) People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability).
- e) People who need to move to a particular locality within the district to avoid hardship to themselves or others.

Reasonable preference is defined on the policy as a statutory housing need. There are two statutory housing need bands (A and B) and one non-statutory housing need band (Band C). The purpose of reducing the number of bands from 5 under the old policy to 3 is to ensure that the policy is more transparent and simple to use. Once a band has been allocated based on the applicant's housing need, that band would (with the exception of where a direct offer is made under the policy) operate as a 'waiting list' so that applicants can see progression and be given more accurate information on how long they are likely to wait for an offer of accommodation depending on the area and type of property they wish to consider. This system is fairer and aims to build confidence in applicants regarding the allocations process.

The following section provides details of the 3 bands an applicant may be awarded. The band in which an application is placed, will be determined by their housing need. How the policy defines and assesses housing need is described in the table below. Where there are further details (beyond that contained in the table) of how the housing need criteria will be assessed, these are set out in appendix 1, for example, how officers will assess medical housing need claims (appendix 1.8).

It is important to note that applicants will be placed in the appropriate band when it is assessed their housing need meets the set threshold. An applicant who qualifies under more than one housing need criteria will be awarded the highest priority that any one of their assessed needs is entitled to. For example, an applicant with a need that is awarded band A and another need that would be awarded band B will be awarded band A. An applicant who meets 2 Housing Need criteria for Band B will still only be awarded band B. This new housing allocation policy no longer reflects cumulative housing need to ensure that the policy is seen as being fair and less complicated to understand and administer. This will also ensure decisions reached are consistent.

The Bands are:

Band A - Urgent housing need to move: These are applicants that are owed a statutory award of what the 'Housing Allocation Legislation' calls '*reasonable preference*' but whom the CCP believes should also be awarded '*additional priority preference*' based on their urgent and exceptional housing need.

Band B – Statutory housing need to move: These are applicants that are owed a statutory award of *reasonable preference* under the policy and have been awarded Band B priority based on their statutory housing need. It also includes certain key workers granted B priority.

Band C – All other applicants in housing need: This is the housing need band awarded where an applicant is not assessed as coming under the criteria adopted by the policy for being in a statutory housing need. Applicants placed in band C can still bid for properties but will not be considered above applicants from Bands A or B who have bid for the same property.

The CCP wish, over time, to increase the Options available to applicants in all 3 Bands including Band C. We aim to use technology to send direct texts and emails to inform applicants of available housing options and this may include information on:

- 1) Social rented low demand properties available now in any area of Cumbria
- 2) Older person housing opportunities
- 3) Affordable homes with specific rural local connection criteria or section 106 agreement
- 4) Affordable rent
- 5) Rent to buy
- 6) Shared ownership/equity
- 7) Discounted market sale / starter homes
- 8) Market rented
- 9) Help to buy opportunities.

The reasonable preference criteria and the Band allocated for that housing need criteria

Band A: Additional preference for certain homelessness duties (This is assessed and verified by the Partner Council's Housing Options Team)
This banding applies where a Cumbrian Council have accepted:
1) People owed the Section 193(2) main homelessness duty or the Section 193C(4) 'reduced' Section 193 duty, or
2) People owed a section 189B (2) Relief duty and the applicant is, at the point of that 189B duty being accepted, considered likely to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless, whether a decision to that effect has been made or not, and the applicant is in temporary accommodation provided by the Council to meet a section 188 interim accommodation duty.
In these circumstances where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation and owed a Section 189B(2) relief duty, or 193(2) main duty or a section 193C(4) reduced main duty the Council will need to move applicants out of temporary accommodation to manage the budgetary or legal impact on the Council. The applicant may still bid for properties advertised but due to the budgetary pressures faced by the Council and the need to maintain a supply of available temporary accommodation for new cases presenting as homeless, the Council is likely to make a direct offer of suitable accommodation into the private rented sector or social housing regardless of the preferences expressed by the applicant.
Band A: Additional preference for medical or disability (See appendix 1.8 for full details of the medical need assessment process)
Where an applicant (or a member of their household) is unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation due to high medical need or disability. Examples of when Band A may be awarded include:
Applicants ready to be discharged from hospital who: have somewhere to live but their accommodation is unsuitable due to their medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations because of cost effectiveness or structural difficulties or the property cannot be adapted within a reasonable amount of time.
Applicants who have urgent need to move due to them having medical problems or disabilities that are being exacerbated by their current housing situation. This includes applicants:
a) Whose life is at risk due to their current housing conditions or who are housebound, effectively housebound or cannot access the essential facilities in their home and there are critical concerns about their safety, for example through falls due to difficulties with access.
b) Whose condition is terminal and rehousing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care

c) Whose condition is life threatening and their existing accommodation is a major contributory factor
d) Whose health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening for example, where an applicant has significant mental health problems which are exacerbated by their accommodation
e) With disabilities, who have restricted mobility and are limited by their accommodation such that they are unable to carry out day-to-day activities or have difficulties accessing facilities inside and outside of their accommodation and require rehousing into accommodation suitable for their use.
f) In overcrowded accommodation which puts the applicant at risk of infection, for example, where an applicant is suffering from late-stage or advanced HIV infection
Band A: Additional preference where there is a need to move on welfare grounds due to exceptional impact on the applicant or a member of their households well being
Not every circumstance that may present can be captured by the policy so below are examples of welfare ground cases that will be considered. The list is not exhaustive:
a) Suffering extreme violence, harassment or discrimination, whether a hate crime or otherwise, and that it is not safe for them to remain in their present home/locality.
b) Applicants who need to move due to domestic abuse threats from an ex partner or family member they do not live with, extreme threats of violence, extreme harassment, or other extreme circumstances deemed to significantly affect a household's welfare and wellbeing.
c) Exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with the tenant's occupation of a dwelling in the social or private rented sector and there is high risk to the tenant or their family's safety if they remain in the dwelling/area.
d) For applications in circumstances where there is a serious threat to the well being of a child and their accommodation is a major contributory factor to that risk. This will be in circumstances where the relevant manager in Children's Services or equivalent assesses the level of risk exposure in relation to the child or children remaining in the current property as being so critical that no other reasonable options in relation to accommodation are available to protect the child.
Band A: Additional preference Armed Forces
Applicants with urgent housing who:
a) Are serving (and will soon leave) the regular forces, or are a former member of the armed forces and is suffering from serious injury, illness, mental ill health, or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service

b) Have recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the MOD following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service or
c) Are serving or have served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the persons service
Band A: Additional preference for unfit or unsatisfactory housing
There are 3 circumstances where Band A may be awarded:
1: Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities:
No access to:
a) A bath or shower
b) A toilet
c) Cooking facilities
d) Running hot water supplies
e) Electric/gas needed for essential activities
Applicants who have access to shared facilities re cooking; bathroom and toilet will not qualify under these criteria.
2: Exceptional impact cases.
Applicants who currently occupy a private sector property which has at least one Category 1 Hazard (excluding overcrowding) under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and where a Prohibition Order has been served or is intended to be served under the Housing Act 2004 and the effect of the Prohibition Order is likely to mean that the applicant(s) will lose the use of their home on a permanent basis. The relevant conditions at the property must be life-threatening or present an immediate threat of serious injury to the occupant(s)
This includes a property that has severe damp, major structural defects including subsidence, flooding, collapse of roof, or have living conditions which are a statutory nuisance, <u>and</u> there is no prospect of the problems being remedied within a period considered to be reasonable by the Council and the household are not able to afford to resolve their own housing problem by moving to alternative private sector accommodation.
Note - this does not include Council or Housing Association homes as there is a legal requirement on social landlords to urgently remedy defects that pose a risk to their tenants
3: Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) cases.
Where the applicant's property is subject to demolition or subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order for redevelopment
Band A: Additional preference for severe overcrowding as defined as 2 bedrooms or more overcrowded <i>Note: the measurement of overcrowding is based on the "bedroom standard" (with some exceptions adopted see below).</i>

<i>This is the non-statutory standard set out in the government's allocation of accommodation guidance.</i>
Where an applicant household is severely overcrowded defined as requiring 2 or more additional bedrooms to reach the bedroom standard. In calculating the overcrowding the following circumstances will be disregarded unless there are exceptional circumstances:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children over the age of 16 will be excluded from the calculation ➤ Cases where extended family had moved into accommodation causing the 2 bedroom plus level of overcrowding ➤ Where the household contains non-dependent adults as there is more chance of non dependents being able to resolve their housing ➤ The CCP will take account of the space and layout of rooms and bedrooms in deciding whether the 2 bedroom plus priority will be awarded
Band A: Additional preference for applicants nominated by Cumbria Adult Social Services/Children's Services in the following circumstances:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is an essential need to move due to child protection issues • Fostering carers for Cumbria County Council where there is a need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child (this would not apply where the home required would be 4 bedrooms or more) • Adoption arrangements where there is a need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child (this would not apply where the home required would be 4 bedrooms or more) • Applicants owed a duty by Adult Social Services under the Care Act 2014 / Mental Health Act 1983/2007 who have been assessed by the housing team as being ready to move onto independent living and have an appropriate support package in place
Band A: Additional preference for Cumbria County Council Care Leavers (Former Relevant children) as defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and need to move on
Applicants must be a former "Relevant Child" as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 and be a young person at risk of homelessness. The evidence to support this award will be provided by the council's leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:
a) All referrals by Children's Services will be made following the provision of Cumbria's Joint Protocol for young people
b) The care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living
c) The care leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
d) The care leaver has either long term or medium term tenancy support arranged, as required.
e) Ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan is in place and

f) The CCP's assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of their vulnerability, accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on their well-being
<i>Note: Care leavers will be awarded Band A on proof of their status. If an application for housing is made before it has been determined by the CCP assessing officer that the individual is ready for independent living, taking into account information from the applicant's support worker and other agencies, the application will not have any bid considered until the support worker presents the evidence to the CCP that the individual is ready to move on and the CCP agree with that evidence.</i>
Band A: Additional preference for applicants who are part of a multi-agency public protection agreement (MAPPA).
Band A would apply only where:
a) On the recommendation of the MAPPA partnership the applicant requires and is suitable for independent housing and qualify for the Housing Register, and
b) The CCP assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of the circumstances of the MAPPA case accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on the multi agency planning for that individual
Band A: Additional preference for certain MARAC assessed cases
Applicants fleeing domestic violence and abuse that have been assessed by MARAC (or any subsequent multi agency arrangement) as needing to move urgently for the safety and security of themselves and or any dependent children and are assessed as being in immediate danger, and
a) The MARAC partnership has referred the case and provided evidence as to why the applicant requires social housing, and
b) The CCP assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of the circumstances of the MARAC case accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a substantial detrimental effect on individual or household
Band B – Reasonable preference for certain homelessness duties owed <i>(This is assessed and verified by the Partner Council's Housing Options Team)</i>
Any of the following statutory homeless duties owed by a Cumbrian Council:
a) People where it has been verified that they are rough sleeping in a Cumbrian Council area regardless of whether they have made a homeless application
b) People owed the prevention of homelessness duty under Section 195(2) by any Cumbria local authority
c) People owed the 'relief of homelessness duty under Section 189B(2) (Note: applicants owed a relief duty and are likely to be in priority need,

unintentionally homeless and are in temporary accommodation will be placed in Band A)
d) People where the relief duty has been brought to an end and an applicant has been assessed at that point as not being in priority need. Note this priority banding is dependent on the applicant remaining homeless. If their circumstances change and they are no longer homeless the band B priority award will be removed. If an offer of accommodation were to be made and upon verification the assessment was that the applicant was no longer homeless the offer would be withdrawn.
Band B: Reasonable preference for insecure accommodation arrangements
“A pregnant woman or applicant with a child or children who are sharing a home with family and where:
a) They have no ownership or tenancy rights and the arrangement is short term and very insecure and only available whilst the applicant is actively seeking an offer of social housing or alternative accommodation with friends or in the private rented sector, and
b) They were owed a prevention of homelessness duty as they were assessed as likely to become homeless within 56 days, and that duty has ended because they have been allowed to remain at home whilst they bid for social housing with their Band B priority and it is likely that they can remain for at least 6 months to a year.
c) The family member with the interest in the home has agreed to allow the applicant to remain for at least 6 months to a year.
Band B: Reasonable preference for medical or disability housing need (See appendix 1.8 for full details of the medical need assessment process)
Applicants who have need to move due to them having medical problems or disabilities where their housing conditions exacerbates a serious medical condition or disability but do not qualify for an award of Band A. This includes (the examples are to illustrate the level of housing need to be awarded Band B and is not an exhaustive list).
a) The applicant's current accommodation to a significant extent directly exacerbates an existing medical condition, is the direct cause of a medical condition or impacts on the ease of use of the facilities within their home for a disabled person.
b) Applicants who have mobility issues and it has been assessed need to move to ground floor or level access accommodation
c) Applicants who have mobility issues and need to move to accommodation that has level access showering facilities
d) Applicants who have a significant physical or mental health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve their condition
e) Applicants who have a medical need for an additional bedroom (e.g. because they need an overnight carer or need to accommodate a substantial amount of medical equipment)

Band B: Reasonable preference under the Government's 'Right to move' regulations
Existing social tenants of accommodation in England who the CCP have assessed as qualifying for the housing register and additionally meet the Government's Right to Move regulations will be placed into Band B
Allocation to those Applicants who qualify is limited to a maximum of 2% of all lettings.
Band B: Reasonable preference for 'move on' from supported housing
Where the CCP assessing officer after considering evidence from the applicant's support officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of their vulnerability, accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on their well being.
The requirements are that before the award is made, ongoing support needs will need to have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan put in place to increase the chances of the tenancy succeeding and the person must have been assessed as ready to move on from supported to independent housing.
Band B: Reasonable preference where it is agreed there is a need to move on welfare or hardship ground:
1) Applicants who need to move closer to a specialist organisation, agency or institution located in a specific area of Cumbria, where moving would prevent significant physical, psychological or financial hardship. (The assessment will include the availability and ability to use public transport)
2) Hardship on support grounds: Applicants that have demonstrable evidence that they provide or receive substantial and on-going support to or from relatives or friends and where moving would prevent significant physical, psychological or financial hardship. This award will only be considered where there are significant medical or welfare issues including grounds relating to disability. This award for applicants who give or require support from relatives or friends will only be considered where there is a severe disability or mental ill health, medical or welfare issue (relating to the applicant or their household or the relatives or friends) and there are reasons why this support cannot be made available through reliance on public transport or the persons own transport. (The assessment will include the availability and ability to use public transport).
3) Employment Hardship - Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and applicants will need to show that they need to move to take up or continue an employment opportunity not available elsewhere. They will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable commuting distance and will be required to provide confirmation of employment details from the employer. Employment purposes are defined as: applicants including people needing to move

from outside Cumbria and between Cumbrian Districts, taking up or continuing permanent employment for a minimum of 16 hours per week. Under this clause applicants will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable commuting distance and will be required to provide confirmation of employment details from the employer. (The assessment will include the availability and ability to use public transport)
Band B: Reasonable preference for being overcrowded by 1 bedroom <i>Note: the measurement of overcrowding is based on the "bedroom standard" (with some exceptions adopted see below). This is the non-statutory standard set out in the government's allocation of accommodation guidance.</i>
Applicant's living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being 1 bedroom short of what they need as measured by the bedroom standard.
Or alternative wording
Where an applicant household is overcrowded by one bedroom as measured by the bedroom standard. In calculating the overcrowding the following circumstances will be disregarded unless there are exceptional circumstances:
➤ Children over the age of 16 will be excluded from the calculation
➤ Cases where extended family had moved into accommodation causing the 1 bedroom level of overcrowding
➤ Where the household contain non-dependent adults as there is more chance of non dependents being able to resolve their housing
The CCP will take account of the space and layout of rooms and bedrooms in deciding whether the 1 bedroom priority will be awarded
Band B: Reasonable preference for unsatisfactory housing conditions or issues of property fitness
Private sector tenants that the relevant Council has determined that the property poses a category 1 hazard under the Health and Safety fitness rating and the CCP assessing officer is satisfied that the problem cannot be resolved by the landlord within 6 months and as a result continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health. This includes a property that has severe damp, major structural defects including subsidence, flooding, collapse of roof, or have living conditions which are a statutory nuisance, <u>and</u> there is no prospect of the problems being remedied within a 6 month time period, and the household are not able to resolve their own housing problem by moving to alternative private sector accommodation
Band B: Reasonable preference for under-occupation
Applicants who have a social housing tenancy with a Cumbrian CCP Partner and are under-occupying social rented accommodation by two or more bedrooms. The exception to the 2 or more bedroom under occupation rule will be:

a) Where a tenant occupies a house that they are under occupying by 1 bedroom and a move to a flat would free up that house
b) Where it is agreed that under-occupancy by 1 bedroom will cause significant financial hardship for tenants. This is where there is clear evidence that tenants on lower incomes are forced to spend significant percentages of their incomes on servicing 1 bedroom under-occupancy deductions
Band B: Local preference for recent ex armed forces applicants
Members of the Armed Forces persons who are serving in the regular forces who will be discharged within three months and have served for five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation as long as this has not been a dishonorable discharge.
Band B: Local preference for identified 'Key Workers'
The following key workers whose total gross household income from all sources does not exceed an annual income of £45,000 or more (for single persons) or joint income of £60,000 or more (for couples).
1) National Health Service Staff and Social Care staff
2) Community Support Officers
3) Members of the Territorial Army
4) Volunteer Fire Officers
Band C – All other applicants in housing need: This is the housing need band awarded where an applicant is not assessed as coming under the criteria adopted by the policy for being in a statutory housing need. Applicants placed in band C can still bid for properties but will not be considered above applicants from Bands A or B who have bid for the same property.
Band C will include applicants who have been assessed as being intentionally homeless by any Council and since that award has not had settled accommodation (defined by the CCP assessing officer)

Note applicants who only want to register for a section 106 village or rural development and have no other statutory housing need will be allocated Band C.

Advertising Properties

All CCP Partners with social housing stock have agreed to advertise the majority of their properties through Cumbria Choice. Properties will be advertised on a weekly basis on the website.

Choice based lettings are about the applicants being given choice about where they want to live. Properties will be advertised and applicants will be able to indicate the properties for which they want to be considered by 'bidding'. Once the bidding process closes a shortlist will be compiled and the property allocated will be based on the banding priority of the applications and the time they have waited as long as they meet the criteria set out in the advertisement.

If a bid is received from an applicant on Cumbria Choice who does not have a local connection with the Council area where the advertised property is located then the local connection criteria set out in 'Section 2 Qualification rule 1' will be used to produce the shortlist, unless the property is advertised with no preference for applicants with a local connection to the area where the property is located. For properties advertised under a local letting policy the criteria for that LLP will be used to produce a shortlist.

So far as is possible the CCP will use the CBL letting process, banding priority system, and waiting time within the band to allocate accommodation. However, there may be times when a direct letting will need to be made to a property using the criteria set out in 'Policy on Choice' detailed in Section 1. In these circumstances a property will not be advertised. The aim is that no more than 15% of properties available to let should be allocated through a direct letting in order to preserve the integrity of the choice based letting process. However, in the circumstances of a national emergency such as the Covid-19 pandemic choice based lettings may be suspended, or a much higher percentage of lettings may be made directly.

Further operational and procedural details are set out in appendix 1.7 covering:

- a) Advertising properties
- b) The bidding and selection process
- c) Offers of accommodation
- d) Feedback on lettings

Sheltered Housing

Sheltered accommodation is included within the scheme. It is generally for people of 60 years and older and offers independent living with the added security and support of a warden service. In certain circumstances it may be advertised for people aged below 60 years. Property advertisements will clearly state the age requirements of applicants able to 'bid' for a property.

Section 106 developments

Under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 some developments are subject to Section 106 planning obligations which usually requires properties to be let to applicants with a local connection to stated Parishes. Where this applies only those applicants meeting the requirements of the Section 106 agreement will be eligible for an offer of a property.

Advert details will state when the letting of a property is governed by a Section 106 agreement.

Local Lettings Policies

Local lettings initiatives may be applied to meet the particular needs of a local ward or area or to address sustainability and community issues to ensure that the housing allocation scheme is able to contribute to building sustainable communities. Appendix 3 gives full details for how local lettings policies will be assessed and applied.

The following are examples of local lettings policies that may be deployed under this policy. The list is for illustrative purposes and is not exhaustive.

- 1) Age restrictions.
- 2) Specific local lettings policies for a village or rural parish (see below)
- 3) Prioritising applicants who are key workers, as defined by the CCP.
- 4) Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents in a street or block.
- 5) Lettings to childless households where there are high concentrations of children and young people living on a specific estate, street or block.
- 6) Disregarding household type or property matching rules to allow, for example, under-occupation to reduce child density or to account for future family growth.
- 7) Ensuring that there is a balance of working and non-working households allocated to a scheme.
- 8) Enhanced local connection restrictions relating to a specific parish.

New developments will normally have local lettings policies (usually only applies to first lettings) regardless of whether the new development is subject to a Section 106 agreement or affordable housing statement. Where a new development is subject to a Section 106 planning agreement the criteria set will be followed.

Specific Local Lettings Policies for Rural Villages and Parishes

For some villages and rural parishes where there is a high demand for housing additional priority may be given to applicants who have a local connection to the particular village or rural parish. Advert details will state where an applicant having a local connection to the specific village or rural parish may be given priority. Those villages and rural parishes subject to a local lettings policy will be identified for each Cumbria Council. For some villages or rural parishes the definition of local connection may be based on locally agreed criteria through the Parish Council and will not necessarily be the definition set out below. In these circumstances the property advert will fully set out the local connection criteria.

Section 5 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Operational and Procedural Instructions, Guidance and detail for how the Policy will be applied.

Appendix 1.1: Lettings not covered by the Policy

- a) Introductory or probationary tenancies – Where an introductory/probationary tenancy becomes a secure or assured tenancy
- b) Family Intervention Tenancies – Introduced by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Family Intervention Tenancies are a form of residential tenancy without security of tenure. They may be offered by either a local housing authority or a housing association to anyone who is a tenant of a secure (or assured) tenancy subject to a possession order on the grounds of anti-social behaviour or domestic abuse or anyone who (if they had a secure or assured tenancy) could have had such a possession order made against them.
- c) Succession under S89 of the Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies), under S133 (2) of the Housing Act 1996 (introductory tenancies) or under S90 of the Housing Act 1985 (fixed term tenancies).
- d) Non-Secure tenancies or ‘temporary accommodation’ – Any accommodation that is provided to meet an interim duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- e) Temporary decants – Secure or introductory tenants of a local authority or assured or assured shorthold tenants of Registered Providers who need to be moved temporarily whilst major work is carried out on their home.
- f) Demoted tenancies - Following a successful application for a demotion order under sections 14 and 15 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- g) Mutual exchanges between existing tenants under S92 of the Housing Act 1985 or under S158 of the Localism Act 2011.
- h) Assignment to a person who would be qualified to succeed the tenant under S92 of the Housing Act 1985 (secure tenancies) or S134 Housing Act 1996 (introductory tenancies).
- i) Conversion of an introductory tenancy to a secure tenancy under S125 Housing Act 1996).
- j) Transfers of secure or introductory tenancies by a court order made under certain provisions contained within matrimonial, family, children and partnership legislation.
- k) Allocation to a person entitled to rehousing under section 39 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.

- l) Allocation to a person whose home is repurchased under sections 554 or 555 of the Housing Act 1985 (defective dwellings).
- m) The Allocation Scheme does not apply to an allocation to anyone who is already a secure or introductory tenant or an assured tenant of a private registered provider of social housing or registered social landlord unless the person has applied to the CCP for a transfer and the CCP is satisfied that the person is to be granted reasonable preference under one of the reasonable preference categories in S166A (3) of the Housing Act 1996

Appendix 1.2: The details for how the scheme will apply:

- 1) The General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- 2) The 'Privacy Notice' for the policy, and
- 3) An applicant's right to information

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be undertaken for any proposed changes to the policy or procedures where those changes are likely to result in a high risk to individuals' interests in order to comply with the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) and Data Protection Act 2018.

Personal information will only be used in ways that the applicant reasonably expects in order to process their application. This will include the sharing of information with the Housing Association Partners to this scheme or any other Housing Association that is not a member of the scheme.

Where it is necessary for personal information to be shared with third parties, it will be transferred in a secure way to ensure it is not compromised or accessed by anyone who is not entitled to it.

On a case by case basis, where the law requires or permits, and the disclosure is necessary and proportionate, information about an applicant may be shared in the absence of consent without breaching data protection, human rights or the common law obligation of confidence.

Usually this will involve striking a balance between the rights of the applicant and other legitimate interests, which may justify the information sharing. An obligation of confidentiality/privacy may be set aside where the interference is in accordance with the law, necessary and proportionate to the legitimate aim being pursued to meet one or more of the following interests:

- a) National security
- b) Public safety
- c) The detection or prevention of disorder or crime
- d) Protection of health or morals
- e) The protection of the rights or freedoms of others (e.g. safeguarding public funds, protecting those at work)

Privacy Notice

All CCP Partners have a responsibility to protect public funds. For Local authorities this is a legal duty. The CCP partnership may obtain and share information about the applicant to:

- Prevent or detect crime or fraud
- Protect public funds
- To make sure information is correct

Third parties include government departments, other Councils, private sector companies, including companies that assist us in fraud detection and prevention, such as '*Credit Reference Agencies*'. Information may also be obtained from social media.

Any use of personal data will be in full accordance with 'The Data Protection Act 2018', which incorporates the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). A full copy of each CCP Privacy Notice is available on request via emailing Cumbria Choice *@add cumbria choice general query email address*

Right to information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 makes it a requirement for every public authority to produce a 'Publication Scheme' which sets out all the information it makes available to the public, and whether copies of that information are available free of charge. The 'Publication Scheme' includes information that a Council is legally obliged to publish. The Scheme is also intended to assist in developing a culture in which openness and transparency is encouraged as per the requirements of the Local Government Act 2000.

Appendix 1.3 Details of how alleged fraud or providing false information will be assessed

Section 171(1) of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence for anyone, in connection with the exercise by a local housing authority of their functions under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (and therefore in seeking an allocation of accommodation) to:

- a) Knowingly or recklessly make a materially false statement or
- b) Knowingly withhold information that the CCP has reasonably required him/her to give in connection with the exercise of those functions.
- c) A person guilty of this offence is liable on summary conviction to a fine at the date of this scheme document of up to £5,000.

The circumstances in which an offence is committed could include:

- d) Any false information given on an application form for housing/accommodation (including transfer applications);
- e) Any false information given in response to subsequent correspondence;

In addition making a fraudulent application for housing may constitute an offence under the Theft Act 1968 and/or the Fraud Act 2006.

If an applicant has given materially incorrect information at the time of the application or that subsequently comes to light, amounting to deliberate concealment of for example a debt, or an eviction, their application will ordinarily be cancelled and a letter will be sent to the applicant to notify him/her of the decision and reasons.

Determination of deliberate intent

In many cases, applicants will have provided incorrect or inadequate information on their application form, but the assessment concludes that there was no deliberate intention.

It will be for the assessing officer in the first instance to decide if any errors contained in an application were deliberately made or not. If the officer is satisfied that the errors were not deliberate, or that it had no impact on the application, then no action will be taken though the applicant may be warned about the need to provide accurate information and the consequences for not doing so.

However, if the assessing officer has concerns, these will be discussed with their Manager who will decide if they:

- 1) Are satisfied that there is insufficient evidence to disqualify the application on these grounds;
- 2) Requires more information to be gathered before a decision can be made;

- 3) Are satisfied that the applicant has provided fraudulent information, or withheld important information.

The Manager will notify the CCP Board and, in serious cases the Police, in all cases where serious or systematic fraud is suspected.

If the decision is that applicant has given false information or withheld information they will not qualify for the register, or where information emerges after they have been placed on the register, they will be disqualified. In these circumstances a letter will be sent to the applicant to notify them of the decision and they will have a right to seek a review of that decision.

Appendix 1.4: Additional procedural information on the consideration of exceptional circumstances and how applications where there is a 'Debt Relief Order', 'Bankruptcy Declaration' or 'Individual Voluntary Agreement (IVA)'

Note: it is the responsibility of the applicant to make the case as to why their circumstances are exceptional. Once a request has been made for exceptional circumstances to be applied the assessing officer will consider that request under the statutory review procedure. Each request to be considered an exemption will be assessed on the facts presented. The CCP will also consider cases where it has assessed that a tenant accrued rent arrears due to the bedroom tax resulting in the tenant being unable to pay the full rent, or through having a reduced income as a result of a National Emergency for example the Covid19 emergency.

Note 1: This qualification rule also applies to applicants currently on the register. An applicant's eligibility to remain on the register will be kept under review. An applicant may be rendered ineligible (or allowed to remain on the register but not be allowed to bid) at anytime should the CCP become satisfied that there is new evidence, or a change of circumstances, that mean the rule relating to former rent arrears or a housing related debt should be applied to their case.

Note 2: For applicants who have had their rent arrears included in a 'Debt Relief Order', bankruptcy declaration or individual voluntary agreement (IVA) a period of at least 12 months has to pass from the declaration of insolvency to the point a debt is cleared. Should an applicant maintain their finances for this period, this will be considered as strong evidence that their previous problem has been resolved. Should an applicant fail to maintain their finances during this period, any new social housing debt can be taken into account as normal. Therefore, we see no benefit of taking into account such debts at a later point.

Appendix 1.5: Additional guidance for assessing officers and the framework to be used to apply the test of unacceptable behaviour

Specific examples of serious unacceptable behavior are:

- a) Being subject to a court order (including an interim order) for breach of tenancy conditions
- b) Conviction for illegal or immoral use of their current or former home
- c) Causing nuisance and annoyance to neighbours or visitors
- d) Committing criminal offences in or near the home and still posing a threat to neighbours or the community
- e) Being violent towards a partner or members of the family
- f) Allowing the condition of the property to deteriorate
- g) Paying money illegally to obtain a tenancy for example a corrupt payment
- h) Unlawfully subletting their tenancy
- i) Applicants that have been convicted of housing or welfare benefit related fraud, where that conviction is unspent under the Rehabilitation Offenders Act 1974.
- j) Having unspent convictions where the assessment concludes that the applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant due to a significant risk to potential neighbours and/or communities.
- k) An applicant or any member of their household has been responsible for any racial harassment or other hate crime. Racial harassment and Hate Crimes is defined as racist, religiously aggravated, faith, gender, age, disability, and trans phobic or homophobic or gender re-assignment harassment or hate crime. A hate crime or racist incident is defined as any incident which is perceived to be racist or hate crime related by the complainant or any other person.

Note: This rule applies to applicants currently on the register as well as new applicants. An applicant's qualification to remain on the Housing Register will be kept under review during their time on the register. An applicant may be disqualified (or allowed to remain on the register but not be allowed to bid until the behaviour is resolved) at anytime during the process should the CCP become satisfied that the rule relating to unacceptable behaviour should be applied to their case.

As a guideline any new application will normally only be reconsidered at the request of the applicant, and as a guideline the CCP will consider whether there has been no reasonable cause for complaint or concern against the applicant (or members of their prospective household) for a period of 12 months.

Note: Where an applicant has resolved their behaviour to the satisfaction of the CCP it may still be the case that a CCP Housing Association Partner where the behaviour occurred might decide they do not want to consider rehousing their former tenant. However, this will not prevent an applicant from being considered for housing by another Housing Association.

The assessing officer will be guided by the following considerations:

- 1) The behaviour need not have led to possession, prosecution or other enforcement action by a statutory agency, provided that, on the balance of probability, the household is responsible
- 2) In normal circumstances the behaviour concerned should have occurred within the last two years. In cases of a more serious nature, for example, those involving criminal prosecution, a longer time-scale may be appropriate.
- 3) There must be reasonable grounds for believing that the behaviour could continue or be repeated. For example, the applicant may have issued threats, or there might be a history of repeat offending.

The assessing officer will specifically consider:

- a) The seriousness of the applicant's behaviour
- b) The duration of the behaviour and/or the number and frequency of incidents
- c) The length of time that has elapsed since the behaviour took place
- d) Any facts that indicate that there has been no further cause for concern in the last 6 to 12 months
- e) Any relevant vulnerability or support needs that may explain the behaviour
- f) Whether there is meaningful engagement with support agencies
- g) Critically, whether there has been a significant and sustained change in the applicant's behavior, and
- h) Whether they believe on the evidence that the behavior is likely to still reoccur now or at the point a tenancy was offered or commenced

Applicants to whom the rule is applied will be written to and informed that:

- a) That the unacceptable behavior rule has been applied to their case and either they do not qualify, or that they qualify but cannot bid until the behavior has been resolved
- b) What they must do to resolve the problem
- c) That for either decision i.e. disqualification or qualification but not allowed to bid, it is the applicant's responsibility to notify the CCP when they have, in their view, resolved the issue and that they will need to present evidence to back up their view.
- d) Where an applicant is disqualified for unacceptable behaviour they will have a right to ask for a review of the decision made to disqualify them.

Note where an applicant is disqualified, any new application will normally only be reconsidered at the request of the applicant and only where there has been no reasonable cause for complaint or concern against the applicant (or members of their prospective household) for a continuous period of 12 months.

Appendix 1.6: How a request for a review will be administered

1. How a request for a review will be dealt with

2. A review must be requested within twenty-eight days of the date of the letter advising the applicant of the decision on their application. The CCP has discretion to extend this time limit, or consider a request made out of time, if it considers this would be reasonable. Any request for a review out of time should therefore state why the applicant considers that the 28-day time limit should be extended.
3. The request for review should be made by email or letter to a Cumbria Choice Review Requests email account or PO Box address.
4. As a first stage the Housing Association or Partner who has assessed the applicants case will consider the applicants concerns and provide a response to the applicant. If the applicant is still unhappy their concerns will then be treated under the formal review procedure set out below.
5. Once the informal consideration process has been completed and after receiving a response the applicant has indicated in writing or verbally that they wish the review to proceed the relevant Cumbrian Council's Housing Options Service covering the area where the applicant has applied will conduct the review or may delegate this task to the CCP Partnership Manager to undertake the review on behalf of the relevant Council. Please note these reviews do not form part of the separate homelessness review process contained within section 202 of the 1996 Housing Act and they will not be subject to an appeal process pursuant to section 204 of the Housing Act 1996.
6. The applicant, or their representative, must give reasons why they wish to have the decision reviewed so that the CCP can ensure that the request falls under the statutory review request criteria.
7. Upon receipt of a request for a review the CCP will send an acknowledgement letter explaining the review process and procedure to be followed.
8. The officer undertaking the review will not normally have been involved in an original decision.
9. An applicant may be asked to attend an interview and, if so, can be accompanied by an advisor or friend.
10. Where it appears that the applicant needs an interpreter this can be arranged.
11. The review will be carried out and the decision and the reasons for it will be given to the applicant in writing within 56 days of the request being received. There is no right to request a review of this review decision.

Appendix 1.7: Further operational and procedural details covering:

- a) Advertising properties
- b) The bidding and selection process
- c) Offers of accommodation
- d) Feedback on lettings

Advertising properties

It should be noted that in certain circumstances a participating Housing Association might apply their own rules regarding the allocation of accommodation, for example an association may wish to apply its own test of affordability. The aim of all CCP partners is to keep these individual association rules to a minimum. Where there are rules set by an individual Housing Association that differ from the common policy, the intention is to set these out in a link to the on-line policy.

Properties will be advertised in an easy to read format. They will usually include a picture of the property or scheme in which it is located. Property adverts will include details of the property and will indicate suitable household size as well as giving information about the local area. The properties will clearly indicate which housing organisation is the Landlord.

Properties may be advertised during the 4-week notice period given by an outgoing tenant. If the notice is subsequently withdrawn by the tenant, the property will unfortunately be unavailable to let.

Direct offers will be made in accordance with the criteria set out in section 1 plus lettings to extra care housing and some sheltered schemes. Otherwise all categories of properties will be advertised. General needs properties; properties that have been adapted for those with disabilities; properties that are specifically for the elderly and which may have a warden and/or an emergency call system. Adverts will clearly indicate any restrictions on bidding (e.g. where properties have been adapted and/or are specifically for people with disabilities) and will detail any particular criteria that apply (e.g. where full occupancy is required, affordability criteria etc.)

Bids from applicants will only be accepted if they meet all of the eligibility criteria for the property. However if their situation is changing imminently, once evidence has been provided, they will also be accepted.

The bidding and selection process

Properties are advertised on a weekly cycle. Applicants may express an interest through bidding on any advertised property that meets their needs. For applicants in bands A or B they are able to place up to 3 bids each week. For applicants in band C they are able to place unlimited bids in order to improve their prospects of obtaining an offer of a lower demand property in the circumstances where there may be several lower demand properties advertised in that cycle.

Bids can be made in a number of ways: on the website using the username and password; by telephoning or visiting the office of a partner organisation; by mail; by proxy bidding.

Applicants are able to check their position on the list at the time of the bid, together with the total number of bids already placed. This allows applicants to make decisions about their choice of property and the likelihood of being successful. Within the bidding period, applicants may withdraw bids and make further bids.

Only the applicant whose bid is successful will be contacted unless they refuse the offer made or are ineligible to be offered the property.

So far as is possible the CCP will use the banding system, and waiting time within the band to allocate accommodation. However, there may be times when a direct letting will need to be made to a property using the criteria set out in 'Policy on Choice' detailed in Section 1. In these circumstances a property will not be advertised. The aim is that no more than 15% of properties available to let should be allocated through a direct letting in order to preserve the integrity of the choice based letting process. However, in the circumstances of a national emergency such as the Covid-19 pandemic choice based lettings may be suspended, or a much higher percentage of lettings may be made directly.

The highest bidder is awarded priority in descending order between Band A, Band B, and Band C.

Within bands, priority is awarded according to an applicant's waiting time within that band and this is based on their registration date. However, there may be other reasons why it would be necessary or advisable to reject a bid that would otherwise have been successful: for example where there was restrictive labelling for the property advertised or where the property would not be suitable for that particular applicant. In the circumstances where the landlord who has advertised the property has decided that it would not be suitable, despite the applicant meeting the bidding criteria, there should be a discussion with the local authority's Housing Options Team before the bid is rejected.

Unless a property is advertised with restrictions, applicants who are members of the scheme can bid for any property in Cumbria regardless of where they live in Cumbria. However, when drawing up the shortlist applicants will be ranked first by local connection to the Council area where the property is advertised (using the local connection criteria set out in Qualification rule 1 Section 2 of the Policy) then by band and date order. There are 3 examples set out below. The exception to this rule will be where a bid is made by a victim of domestic abuse where it has been assessed and agreed that they cannot remain in the local authority area where they are at risk.

Example 1 - Applicant X has a local connection to Eden and this is the area where the advertised vacant property is located. Applicant X is in Band B. An applicant living in Allerdale (applicant Y) bids for the property and is in Band A but has no local connection to Eden. Applicant X will be shortlisted above applicant Y as they have a local connection with the area where the property is located.

Example 2 - Applicant T has a local connection to Eden and this is the area where the advertised vacant property is located. Applicant T is in Band C. An applicant living in Allerdale (applicant U) bids for the property and is in Band B but has no local connection to Eden. Applicant T will be shortlisted above applicant U as they have a local connection with the area where the property is located.

Example 3 – Applicant C is from Carlisle and has been assessed as being at risk in Carlisle due to fleeing domestic abuse. She is staying temporarily with friends outside of Carlisle. Applicant C has no local connection to Eden and this is the area where the advertised vacant property is located. Applicant C is in Band B with an effective date of 1/3/20. She bids for an advertised property in Eden. Applicant D is from Eden and is also in Band B with an effective date of the 1/4/20 and bids for the same property. This case would be the exception to the rule that priority would always be given to the applicant with a local connection to the local authority where the property is located. Applicant C would be the successful bidder based on her band and effective date.

In the circumstances where there are two households with the same Band and registration date that bid for a property a decision to offer the property will be based on the household who is assessed as being most suitable for that property.

Where the property advert has indicated specific requirements such as age or accessibility, only those applicants meeting those requirements will be eligible for an offer.

Offers of accommodation

This section sets out the procedure that will apply to making an offer of accommodation once an applicant has been selected from a shortlist of successful applicants bidding for that property.

All bids for a property are checked. Ineligible bids for a property will be excluded from consideration. Once selected and, prior to an offer being made, the Council or Housing Association landlord for that property will carry out a further verification of their eligibility and priority. In certain situations the offer will not be made, or if made may be withdrawn if:

- Since joining the scheme an applicant has become ineligible.
- On verification of the applicants' details, the priority band has been incorrectly awarded due to the information received by the applicant, or due to mistakes in the assessment of the application itself.
- The applicants' circumstances have changed since the priority band was awarded and the applicant is no longer entitled to the same level of priority.
- The landlord has evidenced housing management reason not to offer the property.

If an applicant does not reply to an invitation in writing, by letter or email or text, to view a property within 2 working days of receiving an offer then the offer will be deemed to have been refused and the property will be offered to the next applicant on the shortlist who qualifies for that offer.

A suitable and reasonable offer of accommodation is defined in appendix 4 of the policy.

There may, unfortunately, be exceptional circumstances where following a viewing or notification of offer an offer may still be withdrawn. This can be done up to the point when a tenancy agreement is signed. Examples of reasons when a property offer may be withdrawn are:

- The property is not suitable for the households needs
- The property fails to become available
- There is an issue and concern for community safety
- It comes to light that information has been withheld
- It comes to light that the household or member of the household has a property related debt
- The offer has been made in error
- The households circumstances changed
- The property is required for an emergency
- It transpires that the rent would not be affordable

There must be clear grounds recorded by the Council or a Partner Housing Association on the IT operating system if a decision is taken to refuse or bypass an applicant who is top of any shortlist. Where an applicant has been refused or bypassed because they have failed a verification check or that their circumstances have changed they should be informed of the reason and how it now affects their application.

For all other reasons for example, issues of public safety, risk, or sustainability of the tenancy, an applicant, upon request, will be informed of the reason behind the decision to refuse or bypass them.

Feedback on Lettings

A main aim of the Cumbria Choice scheme is to operate an open and transparent lettings system.

The result of lettings made through the scheme will be published on the Cumbria Choice web site and at the end of the property advert newssheet.

Appendix 1.8: Assessing whether an applicant qualifies for a priority band A or B on the basis of medical priority

The assessment: Awarding Medical Priority for significant Medical Conditions that are being made worse by an applicant's housing circumstances

The framework that will be applied to assess medical impact cases

This appendix provides detailed operational guidance to help officers to make their decisions on whether medical or welfare impact priority should be awarded.

Applicants will be asked for information and any supporting documentary evidence, regarding how their health or welfare are affected by their current home, or why the applicant's health cannot be managed in their current accommodation. They will be asked to complete medical information questions set out in the on-line application form and may, depending on their answers, be asked to complete a follow up form to allow the assessing officer to obtain more information.

On receipt, the assessing officer will consider whether any supplementary information is needed from any other relevant professional, who may be able to explain the impact the applicant's current accommodation is having on their medical condition or disability.

While this information is being provided, and pending the assessment of medical priority, eligible and qualifying applicants who have another statutory housing need will be registered and placed in a band according to that need. Where no other housing need exists, the application will remain as pending until any medical priority is determined

The assessing officer supported, where necessary, by a senior officer, will normally make a decision whether or not to award a priority based upon the information provided. They will use the guidance notes and assessment framework in this appendix to help them make a decision.

If the assessing officer is of the view that it would be beneficial to obtain an opinion from an independent Medical Advisor, or Occupational Therapist they will make a referral. A Medical Advisor will not normally be asked to carry out a medical examination and their opinion will be based on the information provided by the applicant and any supporting information from a medical professional and any information submitted by any organization supporting the applicant.

Applicants are not required to provide any supporting medical evidence in support of their application before an assessment is made although where this is available they should provide it in support of their case.

Where the assessing officer believes that further medical information is required before they can make an assessment they may request it from a relevant medical professional dealing with the applicant.

It is important to note that the assessing officer is not making a medical opinion. The role of the officer is to consider evidence re the impact of an applicant's current housing circumstances on any medical condition or disability.

Medical priority will not normally be awarded in the following circumstances:

- a) Where the applicant has a health issue, however severe, that is not impacted by the accommodation occupied
- b) Health problems that are not affected by housing or cannot be improved by moving
- c) Where a move would only make a marginal improvement to the applicant's condition
- d) Medical impacts caused by housing defects that are likely to be rectified in a reasonable time frame.
- e) Where another reasonable course of action is available to the applicant to resolve their difficulties.
- f) Time-related medical problems (e.g. pregnancy-related problems or a broken leg)
- g) Disrepair problems not impacting significantly on the applicant's medical condition. (Note under the policy an applicant may receive priority separately for living in unfit or unsatisfactory housing depending on the assessment made of their circumstances and impact).
- h) Overcrowding not impacting significantly on the applicant's medical condition. (Note under the policy an applicant may receive priority separately for being overcrowded).
- i) If the situation can be resolved by equipment or minor adaptations which can be implemented in a reasonable period of time.

Applicants who require support to live independently with their medical condition will be placed in a priority band for their medical need but will be suspended from bidding until an appropriate package of support has been agreed. If no appropriate support package has been agreed the applicant will not be offered accommodation whilst a support plan/package is pursued.

Each individual on the application with a health or welfare problem will be assessed. If there is more than 1 member of the household whose health and/or welfare is being affected by their housing, their application will be awarded the need relating to the severest problem.

Where an applicant has been placed in bands A or B as a result of a medical need this may be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the award is still relevant.

The review will determine whether the level of priority is still appropriate. The review may involve a phone-call to the applicant and/ or support agency, an email, or a home visit.

Once the assessment has been completed the applicant will receive a letter or email advising them of the outcome, and if a priority band is awarded what that band is.

Where an applicant already registered notifies a change of medical circumstances that are impacted by their current housing the applicant's priority will be re-assessed using the same process.

This section below quotes examples of when Bands A or B could be awarded. These are just examples and an assessment will be made on the facts of the case.

Band A: Covers urgent and immediate medical impact problem

This top category band A will be reserved for exceptional cases where an applicant's health is seriously at risk (including a risk to life) due to the associated medical and housing difficulties that are inherent in their existing accommodation.

Band B: Covers serious medical impact problem

A band B award also reflects urgent medical impact cases that have a clear relationship with the applicant's existing housing circumstances.

The detail for the operational guidance that used to assess medical cases

1. The applicant will be asked to indicate on their on-line application form whether they or anyone in their household has an illness or disability that is affected by their current accommodation.
2. If the information returned on the on-line form does not clearly address the impact of the applicant's current housing on their condition, the assessing officer will contact the applicant to ask them specifically to describe how the current housing is impacting on the condition described (a standard letter/form will be used).
3. The email/letter will explain that where supporting information from a health professional is available, the applicant should provide this information to support their application, but that we do not, as a matter of course, require an applicant to submit a medical report, or obtain letters from their GP before an assessment will be progressed. We do not wish to create further work or costs for doctors or applicants by insisting that medical reports are produced before an application can be considered.
4. It is expected that the majority of cases can be assessed by the assessing officer by using this guidance and where necessary taking advice from a senior officer. Only where relevant and appropriate will advice from an independent medical advisor or OTT be sought.
5. Depending on the seriousness of the circumstances claimed the case might be referred to an independent medical advisor or OTT to provide advice on the possible impact of any medical or disability condition to help address the impact of the applicant's current accommodation on that condition.
6. In the circumstances where the assessing officer believes there may be an urgent and immediate need, due to the severity of the impact of their current housing on an applicant's disability, the case can (with a senior officer's approval) be submitted to Cumbria County Council's Occupational Therapy Team (OTT) for a more detailed assessment. In order to do this the OTT may visit the home of the applicant and consider any supporting information and may recommend whether Band A or B priority should be awarded, based upon the severity of the case and the urgency of the need for re-housing.
7. The OT may also make recommendations re the type of housing that the applicant may need.

8. Where priority is awarded applicants will only be considered for the type of accommodation assessed as being required. For example, if it is assessed that an applicant needs to move to a bungalow because due to their condition they need to use a wheelchair, they will only be considered for suitable properties that meet this need.
9. There will be occasions when advice, or clarification, from a GP or hospital consultant may need to be sought. For example, where it is claimed that an applicant's housing circumstances is severely affecting their mental health.
10. Where the information indicates that the applicants condition is not so urgent and immediate that they are unable to live in their current home, or that there is insufficient evidence that the medical condition would be significantly improved by alternative housing no award of priority band A or B will be made.
11. The following list sets out some of the circumstances that may qualify for an award of priority banding:
 - a) An applicant's inability to manage stairs, control temperature, etc.
 - b) Where an applicant is confined to their existing accommodation due to the physical nature of that accommodation
 - c) Where an applicant's accommodation is having a significant or exceptional impact or is causing an applicant's mental or physical health.
 - d) An applicant's restricted ability to fend for him/herself in the accommodation which may put them at significant risk due to the physical nature of the accommodation
 - e) The need for adapted housing and/or extra facilities
 - f) The need for sheltered or supported housing due to the impact of their current housing on a medical condition.
 - g) The need for alternative housing as part of a care plan

When assessing whether to award band A or B or no band, the assessing officer will follow the 5-stage process set out below:

1. Is the medical/disability issue serious enough for a priority banding to be considered?
2. If the medical condition is serious enough for a priority banding to be considered the assessing officer should then decide if there is a direct link between the identified medical problem and the applicant's current housing accommodation/situation, i.e. on the facts obtained (from the applicant and any medical information or reports submitted including any advice from an independent medical advisor or OTT) is the officer accept that the applicant's current housing accommodation/circumstances is making their medical condition substantially worse, or will make it worse.
3. In practical terms the officer should consider the adverse effect this has on the applicant's ability to manage day-to-day tasks in their current home. The applicant's current housing accommodation/circumstances may be impacting on their medical condition or disability but not to the extent that an award of band A or band B priority should be granted under the criteria adopted for the policy. The examples listed for an award of band A or band B should be used to guide the officer when making their decision.
4. Before making an award the assessing officer needs to be satisfied that there is a realistic expectation that the impact on the identified medical condition/disability would be removed or significantly improved through the provision of alternative accommodation.

5. If the officer is satisfied that the impact on the identified medical condition/disability would be removed or significantly improved they would then decide whether to award Band A or B depending on the severity of the impact and using the examples below to guide them.

More extensive examples to help the assessing officer to decide if band A should be awarded on medical or disability grounds

These examples are intended to guide the assessing officer on the threshold set for a band A or band B priority award, or whether no award should be made. They will also serve to help an applicant understand the threshold for a priority award to be given.

The following are examples of cases that may qualify for Band A award. It may apply to the applicant or a member of their household:

1. Applicants who have a progressive, chronic or life threatening medical condition and cannot be discharged from hospital because they do not have any accommodation, or their accommodation is unsuitable for example, because they cannot access toilet and/or bathing facilities in the property. This will include cases that cannot be discharged from hospital due to their accommodation being unsuitable.
2. Applicants who have a progressive, chronic or life threatening medical condition and urgently need to move to accommodation with significant disabled adaptations, such as accommodation suitable for a wheelchair user.
3. An immediate life threatening condition which is seriously affected by the current housing and where re-housing would make that condition significantly easier to manage
4. A serious illness, where an applicant is receiving palliative care and urgently requires rehousing to facilitate the on-going provision of that care
5. A life limiting condition and their current accommodation is affecting their ability to retain independence or enable adequate care
6. The applicant's health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening, e.g. applicant has severe mental health problems that are significantly exacerbated by their accommodation;
7. A new and life-changing condition that severely impairs their mobility, meaning they are unable to carry out day-to-day activities, or have difficulty accessing facilities inside and outside of their accommodation and require housing into suitable accommodation
8. Where their current property leaves a person at risk of infection, e.g. where an applicant is suffering from late-stage or advanced AIDs
9. Due to limited mobility a person is unable to access essential parts of the property e.g. bathroom/toilet.
10. A member of the household is elderly or disabled or has a progressive illness and is likely to require admission to hospital or residential/nursing care in the immediate future and re-housing would enable the person to remain at home.
11. Armed forces personnel who need to move to suitable adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability that he or she has sustained as a result of service.
12. Veterans who have actively served in the armed forces and are suffering from severe post traumatic stress disorder or serious illness directly related to service in the forces

13. People who have a severe mental health or learning disability which significantly affects their ability to lead a normal life and which puts them at risk of admission to hospital or residential care.
14. People living in a mobile home, caravan or converted vehicle which, due to medical conditions, the vehicle cannot meet their essential needs
15. Where remaining in the current accommodation poses a significant risk of serious and permanent injury and/or permanent severe disability
16. Where the applicant is prevented from having access to kidney dialysis, respiratory, or other similar essential equipment. This will normally apply where these circumstances are likely to prevent someone from remaining in their home for all or most of the time. Such a condition would be likely to be ongoing, rather than a temporary condition
17. Someone with a medical or disability who's housing has rendered them housebound
18. Where a move would avoid the need for another service (e.g. Social Services) from having to provide a significant level of support. This might include for example residential care; overnight care provision, or other support with similar resource implications
19. Where someone suffers with epilepsy or other conditions that cause frequent and unpredictable falls and all medical interventions to prevent them have been investigated. This will involve an assessment of the layout of their current accommodation, for example the number and nature of steps, stairs or other hazards that may increase the risk of serious injury
20. Where it is impossible for the person to use essential facilities within the home and no adaptation is possible
21. The applicant or household member requires significant disabled adaptations to meet their needs and this is not possible in their current accommodation or would not be cost effective.

More extensive examples to help the assessing officer to decide if band B should be awarded on medical or disability grounds

1. Applicants who have significant mobility issues and would benefit from a move to ground floor or level access accommodation
2. Applicants who have significant mobility issues and would benefit from a move to accommodation that has level access showering facilities
3. Applicants who have a significant physical or mental health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve their condition
4. Applicants who have a medical need for an additional bedroom for example, because they have been assessed as requiring an 'overnight carer', or they need more space to accommodate a substantial amount of medical equipment.
5. Applicants whose housing is unsuitable for severe medical reasons, or due to a disability, but who are not housebound, or whose health, or safety is not at such a risk level to require immediate urgent housing may be awarded band B
6. Children with severe conditions such as autism, or cerebral palsy where their long term needs cannot be met without long term settled accommodation.
7. A person whose disability means that re-housing would help them to overcome physical barriers created by their current accommodation that they struggle with e.g. stairs and steps.

8. A person with a severe disability requiring some adaptations to their property that cannot be provided for in their current accommodation.
9. Where an applicant can access their home, but struggles to access normal day-to-day facilities within it (e.g. bath/shower/toilet) without experiencing significant difficulty, pain or other discomfort. This would include cases where an adaptation is possible but cannot be undertaken in a reasonable period of time. (Note: any priority would be removed if an adaptation is completed, or work started)
10. An applicant is suffering from a long-term mental illness that is being exacerbated by their accommodation. There will normally not only be GP involvement, but other specific mental health support already provided.
11. Where an applicant is only not housebound due to significant support that is available to enable them to get out of their accommodation
12. An applicant or member of their household with a terminal illness, or long term medical debilitating condition, whose current accommodation is not necessarily having a significant impact on their condition but where it is agreed by the council that their quality of life would be significantly improved by moving to alternative more suitable accommodation, or accommodation that is nearer to support that is essential for their well being.

Appendix 2 – Definition of Terms

Accessibility – Used here the term refers to how ‘user friendly’ the service is to all people who may want to use it.

Adapted Property – Property that is suitable for those with a physical disability i.e. where a stair lift has been fitted.

Automatic Bidding – Within the ICT system a means of expressing an interest in a property for someone, without making the bid themselves.

Banding Scheme – The method by which customers are prioritised for social housing (previously ‘points schemes’).

Bidding – The term used to describe people who register an interest in a property (no money is involved in making the bid).

Choice Based Lettings (CBL) – The system of letting property that gives customers choice in where they live through advertising property.

Housing Register – One list for all of Cumbria of people applying for social housing (previously ‘housing waiting lists’).

Applicants – Those people applying to the scheme for housing.

Effective Date – The date used to decide between customers in the same Band to establish who has waited longest.

Fully Occupied – Bedrooms in the property that are being fully used in terms of the household occupying the property in accordance with the table in Appendix 6. When they are not fully used the property could be considered under occupied.

Hard to Let – Low demand property where it takes longer to find a tenant.

Housing Options – A term used to describe a service that advises customers of all their choices and includes mutual exchanges, low cost home ownership and renting in the private sector.

Letting Policy – The means by which it is decided how property will be offered to customers.

Local Lettings – Policy made in local areas (to tackle specific, identified housing management issues) on how property will be offered that differs in some part from the overall scheme policy.

Management Discretion – Property that is offered directly to an identified person without being advertised.

Partnership – The name for the District Councils and housing associations that have funded, developed and continues to operate the scheme.

Proxy Bidding – a Local Authority or Registered Provider places bids on the customer's behalf.

Social Housing Providers – The term for a variety of housing organisations that provides not for profit housing and included local authorities, housing associations.

Appendix 3: How any local lettings policy will be applied and reviewed

Local lettings initiatives may be applied to meet the particular needs of a local ward or area or to address sustainability and community issues to ensure that the housing allocation scheme is able to contribute to building sustainable communities.

They will be tailored to fit local situations in well-defined communities (such as a particular block of flats, an individual street, or new housing development, or may be applied to a parish or a village in a rural area). Each local lettings policy will be based on a detailed analysis of relevant information gathered from a variety of sources and may include, for example, evidence from internal departments, partner Housing Associations, local Councillors, and the community itself. (Evidence may include information such as tenant profiling, the incidence of anti-social behaviour, and stock turnover in a particular block, street or area, a neighbourhood plan or the need to provide housing for local people in rural villages and parishes, or evidence from the Local Housing Authority internal departments i.e. environmental health).

The following are examples of local lettings policies that may be deployed under this policy. The list is for illustrative purposes and is not exhaustive.

- 1) Age restrictions.
- 2) Prioritising applicants who are key workers, as defined by the CCP.
- 3) Restrictions on lettings to vulnerable households where there are already a concentration of supported tenants/residents in a street or block.
- 4) Lettings to childless households where there are high concentrations of children and young people living on a specific estate, street or block.
- 5) Disregarding household type or property matching rules to allow, for example, under-occupation to reduce child density or to account for future family growth.
- 6) Ensuring that there is a balance of working and non-working households allocated to a scheme.
- 7) Enhanced local connection restrictions relating to a specific parish.

New developments will normally have local lettings policies (depending on the planning permission or agreement reached these may apply to first lettings only or be ongoing) regardless of whether the new development is subject to a Section 106 agreement or affordable housing statement. Where a new development is subject to a Section 106 planning agreement the criteria set will be followed.

In order to ensure a reasonable mix of household sizes and types, and families with children of different ages, a local lettings policy will normally be used for new developments larger than four properties. The local authority may set restrictions on the number of lettings, which can be made to families with young children, for example, or the number of families who are not working.

How will a local lettings policy be assessed and agreed?

The process for agreeing local letting policies may differ across the Cumbrian region. In some districts the decision is made by the Council and in other districts the decision is for the stock holding CCP partner in consultation with the Council.

There must be a clear evidence base for adopting a local lettings policy. The following framework will be used to decide whether a local lettings policy is appropriate:

- 1) That there is a clear definition of the objective to be achieved by that particular local lettings policy.
- 2) That there is a clear evidence base to back up the need for a local lettings policy.
- 3) That any potential equality impact has been considered.
- 4) How long the local lettings policy is intended to operate.
- 5) When the local lettings policy should be reviewed.

A written record of each policy adopted or rejected should be kept.

It is the intention that local lettings policies will be fluid with new policies being added as are required and existing policies being deleted once the objective for that policy has been met. Local lettings policies must be approved by the exceptions panel before they are applied.

All local letting policies will be reported to the CCP Board who will discuss any policies where there is any dispute over the wish to apply a local letting policy.

The intention is for all current local lettings policies to be listed as a link to the on-line version of this policy so the public can see which policies are in operation at any point in time. In addition any property advert will state whether there are any local lettings restrictions or criteria.

Appendix 4: Definition of a reasonable offer

A refusal of an offer of the correct size and type will normally be considered unreasonable.

Guidance on reasonable and unreasonable refusals:

1) Property size

The property must be the appropriate size for the household's needs at the time of making the offer. Where the family composition has changed, so that the property offered is too small or large for the applicant's needs, the refusal will be recorded as reasonable.

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that they register any change in their circumstances that will affect the number of bedrooms to which they are entitled.

Where the applicant refuses a property because it is too small on grounds of the need for an additional or larger bedroom(s) due to medical/mobility factors, but it meets the lettings standard, this will normally be considered to be an unreasonable refusal unless the applicant provides new medical information at the offer stage that is accepted by the CCP.

2) Property type

It will not be considered to be a reasonable refusal due to a dislike of the property type. Therefore an applicant cannot reasonably refuse an offer because for example, it is in a tower block, it does not have a garden or a particular heating system, it is on a wrong floor, or does not have a lift. If the applicant states medical grounds for refusing the property, these should already have been disclosed and considered as part of the assessment of their application, unless new information is submitted that is accepted by the CCP.

Where specialist accommodation is offered to a household inappropriately, this is considered to be a reasonable refusal. This may be for example:

- a) Offers of wheelchair standard housing to households which do not have wheelchair users
- b) Offers made to disabled applicants which are unsuitable for their needs, for example where they are unable to open a door entry system because the doors are too heavy
- c) Offers of sheltered housing where the applicant is not of the appropriate age.

3) Property condition

Where a property is refused on grounds of repair/decoration, this will be considered an unreasonable refusal unless the voids team decides to withdraw the property from letting for further works to be carried out.

4) Area of choice

Where the offer is not within one of the applicant's specified areas, the refusal will not be considered to be reasonable. It should also be noted that where an applicant is made a direct offer such as: where the applicant has been assessed as being statutory homeless and are owed a statutory homeless duty, area of choice will not apply.

5) Racial harassment

Where an applicant from a black or ethnic minority household refuses the property prior to viewing because the previous tenant was rehoused as a result of racial harassment, or there is a known problem of racial harassment in the vicinity of the property, the refusal is considered reasonable.

6) Choice of landlord

An applicant receiving a direct offer cannot choose whether they are rehoused by the Council or by a Housing Association or a specific Housing Association. Therefore, any refusal of Housing Association property because, for example, there is no Right to Buy, or Right to Acquire, or the rent is higher than another social landlord will not be considered to be reasonable (unless in the example of the rent level the assessment is that the offer is unaffordable for the applicant in question).

7) Pets

One of the conditions of the tenancy agreement is that a tenant must obtain the written consent of the landlord before keeping domestic pets.

Any intention to keep a pet must comply with the Council's or partner Housing Association's tenancy terms and conditions, which means that permission must be sought and agreed prior to signing the tenancy agreement for the property. Therefore any refusal on the basis that permission has not been granted to keep a pet is not reasonable.

Appendix 5: Contact Details for all Partner Organisations

Accent Housing Association
Charlestown House
Acorn Park
Industrial Estate
Charlestown
Shipley
West Yorkshire
BD17 7SW
Tel: 0345 6780555

Allerdale Borough Council
Allerdale House
New Bridge Road
Workington
CA14 3YJ
Tel: 03031 231702

Barrow Housing Department
Town Hall
Duke Street
Barrow-in-Furness
LA14 2LD
Tel: 01229 876550

Carlisle City Council
Civic Centre
Rickergate
Carlisle
CA3 8QG
Tel: 01228 817200

Copeland Borough Council
The Market Hall
Market Place
Whitehaven
CA28 7JG
Tel: 01946 598300

Eden District Council
Mansion House
Friar Gate
Penrith
CA11 7YG
Tel: 01768 817817

Eden Housing Association
Blain House
Bridge Lane
Penrith
CA11 8QU

Tel: 01768 861400

Home Group
PO Box 115
Duke Street
Whitehaven
CA28 0BT
Tel: 0345 1414663

Impact Housing
Nook Street
Workington
CA14 4EH
Tel: 0344 8736290

Riverside Housing Association
English Gate Plaza
Botchergate
Carlisle
CA1 1RP
Tel: 0345 111 0000

















South Lakeland District Council
South Lakeland House
Lowther Street
Kendal
LA9 4DQ
Tel: 01539 733333

South Lakes Housing
Bridge Mills Business Centre
Stramongate
Kendal
LA9 4BD
Tel: 0300 303 8540

Castles and Coasts Housing Association
3 Castle Street
Carlisle
CA3 8SY
Tel: 0800 0851171

Appendix 6 - Household Type and Property Size – *This will need to be amended according to the overcrowding rules that the CCP want to adopt as discussed in overcrowding section of the section 4 banding table*

This table provides guidance on the size of home that different types of household can bid for on Cumbria Choice. This is supplemented by the more detailed information which each housing provider places in individual advertisements and in guidance published on the Cumbria Choice website.

Household	Bedsit	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5+bed
Single person			D	D		
2 Adults (couple including same sex couples)			D	D		
2 Adults (non couple)			 *	D		
Single 1 child				D		
Single 2 child						
Single 3 Child						
Single 4 or more children						
Couple 1 child				D		
Couple 2 child						
Couple 3 child						
Couple 4 or more children						

NB *Households with access to children will not be able to include them as part of the household when looking at eligibility for property size. See section 2.1 Households with access to children/joint custody.*

Key



Number of bedrooms allowed for this household type



Number of bedrooms allowed for this household type, subject to the ages of the children.

Two children under the age of 10 are usually expected to share a bedroom.

Two children of the same sex are usually expected to share a bedroom until they are 16.

Once a child is 16 a separate bedroom is allowed.

D

Allowed by discretion only when stated in the advertisement.

This is most likely to apply in one of the following circumstances:

- There is low demand for the type of property in the location
- There is lack of supply of smaller homes in the location
- A local lettings or s106 policy applies

*

Some providers may only allow households with children to bid on houses

Appendix 7 - Right to Move Qualifying Criteria

To meet the Allocation of Housing (qualification criteria for the Right to Move - England) Regulations 2015, a local connection may not be applied to existing social tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who: -

- Have reasonable preference under Section 166(3)(e) because of a need to move to the Local Authority's district to avoid hardship, and
- Need to move because the tenant works in the district, or
- Need to move to take up an offer of work

QUALIFYING CRITERIA

This applies to existing social housing tenants: -

- Who need to move within a Local Authority area or to another local authority area to avoid hardship, and
- Who need to move because the tenant works in the district, or
- Who need to move to take up an offer of work?

What the Local Authority should take into account: -

Need to Move:

Tenants must need to move, not simply want to move. Factors to consider in determining `need` are: -

- The distance and/or time taken to travel between home and work.
- Availability and affordability of transport as against earnings.
- Nature of the work and whether similar opportunities are available nearer home.
- Other personal factors, for instance medical conditions, child care
- Length of work contract.
- Would failure to move mean a lost opportunity to improve employment circumstances or prospects?

Work:

`Work` only qualifies as `work` if it is not: -

Short term:

- Consider whether the work is regular or intermittent (particularly relevant for the self-employed).
- Consider the period of employment – a contract of less than 12 months could be considered short-term.

Marginal:

- Less than 16 hours per week could be considered marginal
- Consider the level of earnings.

Voluntary:

- Unpaid, or expenses only.

Ancillary:

- That is, if the person works occasionally in another local authority area, but main place of work is a different area, the work is excluded.

Verification and Evidence

The tenant must be able demonstrate that he/she has a genuine job offer and that he/she has a genuine intention to take it up.

Appropriate evidence could include: -

- A formal offer letter.
- A contract of employment.
- Wage/salary slips covering a certain period, or bank statements (zero hour contracts).
- Tax and benefits information, for example proof of receipt of working tax credit.

Appendix 8: Person(s) Who Will Take Specific Decisions *this will be added to the final policy*

Appendix 9: How major changes will be considered by each of the 6 Cumbrian Councils

Will be added to the final policy

Appendix 10: The revised Equality Impact Assessment June 2020

This is attached to the policy as a separate document given its length. A copy can be emailed on request.

Appendix 2: CUMBRIA CHOICE: REVISED HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EQIA) JUNE 2020

Date approved	June 2020
Approved by:	
Next Review Date:	

Background

Under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996, every local authority is required to adopt a 'Social Housing Allocation Policy', the purpose of which is to determine priorities in allocating housing and to set out the procedures to be followed. The Allocation Scheme determines individual priority for housing. In June 2020 the 'Cumbria Choice' Allocation Policy was reviewed and a number of changes made. Cumbrian Choice is the adopted social housing allocation policy for all 6 Cumbrian local authorities.

Cumbria Choice is a sub regional partnership between the 6 local authority districts and 8 'Registered Provider' housing associations that own social housing stock across Cumbria.

The revised policy was subject to a public consultation from 23rd April 2020 ending on 21st May. The consultation involved:

- Sending out a detailed consultation survey (attached at appendix 1 with a summary of the consultation responses). This was sent out with a copy of the draft policy.
- The survey and draft policy was sent to all relevant stakeholders including specialist organisations working with groups and individuals owed a protected characteristic including organisations working with disability, mental health, domestic abuse, older persons and race. In total over 350 stakeholders and individuals were sent the survey
- The survey was also sent to a group of service users who had previously indicated that they would like to be involved in the consultation exercise.
- The survey was also posted on the Cumbria Choice Website so that anyone registered could make comments.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and has been finalised in the light of the consultation responses.

Comments received were logged and considered against the policy proposals. Some minor changes have been made as a result of the consultation. The changes were strongly supported by stakeholders who responded to the survey.

Under the Equality Act 2010, when adopting a new Allocation Policy a local authority is required to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by, or under the Act
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between those with a protected characteristic and those without
- c) Promote good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those without

The 'protected characteristics' in law are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnership with regard to eliminating discrimination. The equalities impact assessment set out below, has considered the impact of the changes to the Allocation Policy on the protected groups and, where there is an impact, set out the justification for continuing with the policy change along with the actions that will be taken to reduce any impact that has been identified.

The key objectives for reviewing the social housing allocation policy are:

- a) To continue to support local people most in need of housing in Cumbria
- b) To simplify the policy so that it is easier for customers to use, is transparent, and is accepted by customers as a fair way to allocate social housing when it is often in short supply.
- c) To ensure the policy contributes towards creating mixed and sustainable communities where people of different backgrounds and socio economic groups live side by side including the need to the problem in some areas where there is not as high a demand for social housing as there is in other parts of Cumbria.

Details of the changes to the 'Cumbria Choice' policy

There were a number of important changes proposed and these are explained below using the explanation set out in the consultation survey.

1) We want to reduce the number of Bands from 5 to 3

The Cumbria Choice Partnership has received regular feedback from users and stakeholders that the allocation policy is too complicated and confusing. One of the main concerns expressed is that customers do not understand why there needs to be 5 Bands and inevitably this encourages 'higher band chasing' which, in turn, increases the officer time needed to administer the scheme.

The proposed solution is to move to a simple 3-band system with the time a person joined the register determining their place in the queue for the band they have been allocated.

Band A will be for the most urgent housing need cases that need to move quickly.

Band B will be everyone else that the legislation states has a statutory housing need.

Band C will be everyone else.

This aim of this simple change is to build trust in the system as it will become more of a 'waiting list' queuing system recognised by everyone using it as a fair way to allocate a limited resource where there is often over demand for certain property types or areas.

2) We intend to keep an 'Open Register'

Many local authorities restrict their Housing Registers so that only customers who are assessed as having what is called by the allocations legislation 'a statutory housing need' can join the register

We intend to continue to operate an open register in Cumbria. Everyone will still be able to register regardless of whether they meet the definition for a statutory housing need (unless there is evidence of serious unacceptable behaviour or significant former rent arrears). Those customers who are not assessed as having a statutory housing need will be placed in the Band C. This still means they have a chance of being housed but when they bid for accommodation they will be 'shortlisted' below customers from the higher statutory housing need bands A and B. We think this is a fair system that gives everyone some chance of being considered for social housing.

3) We are adding to, and amending the qualification rules for when a customer is able to join the Housing Register

The current policy has a number of qualification rules that decide whether an applicant will be allowed to join the Housing Register in Cumbria. We are amending some of the rules regarding when a customer can qualify to be included on the Housing Register, and in addition creating a rules for when a customer can qualify for Band C but not for the higher needs Bands A and B. We want to know what you think of each of these qualification rules. They are set out in the table below with an explanation for what we are trying to achieve.

Two of the key rule changes relate to customers where there is evidence of former social housing rent arrears or unacceptable behaviour. The objective is to be much clearer with customers what they have to do to resolve the issue in question but to discourage some previous practices whereby they may be 'arbitrary blocked' from being considered for social housing. The new rules mean fewer will be disqualified but they will not be offered social housing until they have demonstrated the changed behaviour required to be considered to be a good tenant.

<p>Qualification rule 1 – Local Connection</p>	<p>It is proposed that the Policy will restrict access to the high housing need Bands A and B to customers who can evidence a local connection with Cumbria. This would prioritise Cumbrian households for the higher 2 bands but there would be exceptions for people without a local connection if they were homeless or victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>Therefore to qualify for Bands A or B the customer must have a local connection with Cumbria. This could be set as:</p> <p>Option A:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Living in Cumbria for the last year, or 3 years in the last 5 b) Having close family living in Cumbria c) Working in Cumbria as long as this isn't casual work. <p>Option B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Living in Cumbria for the last year, or 3 years in the last 5 b) Having close family living in Cumbria that provide essential support c) Working in Cumbria - defined as Employment is defined as paid employment for 16 hours or more per week for a period of one year, or self-employment where an applicant can demonstrate that the self-employed work they perform is in the Cumbria area and is on average 16 hours a week or more.
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	If the customer doesn't meet one of the above they can still register but will be placed in band C
Qualification rule 2: The requirement to give permission to obtain and share an applicant's personal information	Unless the customer gives permission to enable enquires to be made to assess their application and circumstances, they will not be able to qualify for the housing register. This is to combat possible fraudulent applications.
Qualification rule 3: Homeownership or legal interest in home ownership	If the customer owns their home they will either a) not be able to qualify to be included on the register, or b) will not be able to qualify for Bands A or B but would still be allowed to be placed into Band C. We would like your views on this rule and if you support it which should it be a) or b)?
Qualification rule 4: Financial resources	<p>If the customer earns above a set net income or has savings above a set threshold they will either not be able to qualify for the register or will not be able to qualify for Bands A or B but would still be allowed to be placed in Band C despite their income or savings.</p> <p>We would like your views on which option should be included and if you support income or savings thresholds what these should be?</p>
Qualification rule 5: Failure to Bid	Many customers once they register don't bid for the properties advertised. We think that if someone hasn't made one bid in 12 months that they should be removed from the register. This will cut down on the time and costs in administering the housing register. This rule would not stop a customer from reapplying at a later date.
Qualification rule 6: Fraud or giving False Information	If someone has lied or withheld information in an attempt to get social housing we think they should not be able to register, or if they are already registered and we discover they have led or withheld information they will be removed from the register. This would be serious cases of lies or withholding information that were intended to obtain social housing by deceit.

<p>Qualification rule 7: Circumstances where an applicant has current or former social housing rent arrears or another relevant recoverable housing related debt</p>	<p>This rule in the current policy is being amended to help customers who have former social housing rent arrears or housing related debt to be able to obtain social housing.</p> <p>For customers with serious rent arrears it will continue to be the case that they cannot qualify for the housing register until they have reduced the debt to a level we agree is reasonable.</p> <p>However, for customers who owe less than £1000 they will be able to qualify and be banded for their assessed housing need but they will not be offered a property until they have resolved the debt to a level we think is reasonable in the circumstances. There will be clear criteria for what they have to do to resolve the issue and they will continue to 'move up the queue for their band' so they have not 'lost out' whilst resolving the debt.</p>
<p>Qualification rule 8: Serious unacceptable behaviour</p>	<p>This rule in the current policy is being amended to encourage customers to tackle any unacceptable behavior issues, or ASB issues before they will be able to be considered for an offer of social housing.</p> <p>For customers with a history of serious unacceptable behavior that has not been resolved when they apply to join the housing register it will continue to be the case that they cannot qualify for the register until they have resolved the problem to the satisfaction of Cumbria Choice. That is not a change from the current policy.</p> <p>However, it is proposed that customers presenting with more minor issues that are assessed as needing to be resolved will be allowed to qualify and will be banded for their assessed housing need. However, they will not be offered a property until they have resolved their behavior to a level that will give us confidence that they will be good tenants in the future.</p> <p>There will be clear criteria for what they have to do to resolve their behavior and they will continue to 'move up the queue for their band' so they have not 'lost out' whilst they resolve the problem.</p>

Qualification rule 9: CCP Tenants not assessed as Band A or Band B Housing Need	Existing Housing Association and Barrow Council tenants who have a housing need will be able to join the Housing Register. However, there is a problem in existing tenants who do not have a housing need wishing to transfer to another social housing property. Each transfer costs the social housing landlord thousands of pounds in costs to re-let the property. We think that tenants who do not have a housing need should still be able to seek a transfer through the Mutual Exchange Scheme but not through the housing register.
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4) We are making the rules clearer regarding when a direct letting outside of the choice based letting system will be allowed.

The current policy on making a 'direct letting' will be made clearer regarding when a direct let will be allowed. The Policy intention is that direct lets should account for no more than 10%-15% of all lettings to preserve the integrity of the choice based letting system.

The main examples of when a direct offer will be considered due to exceptional reasons are:

- a) Urgent housing need situations where it would not be reasonable in the circumstances to wait for the Choice Based Lettings process to produce an offer such as a threat to life in the area in which an applicant currently lives.
- b) Tenants of a Cumbria Choice Partner in emergency cases whose homes are damaged by fire, flood or other disaster
- c) Where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation and owed a section 189B(2) Relief duty or 193(2) main duty and the Cumbria Choice Board agree with a request from a Partner Council to allow direct lettings to move applicants out of temporary accommodation in order to manage any budgetary or legal impact.
- d) Where a vacant adapted property or a property designed to disability standards becomes available and there may be a need to offer that property to an applicant whose disability need best matches that property, regardless of the date they were registered.
- e) Other examples include cases where an applicant is subject to 'Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements' (MAPPA), or may present a risk to themselves or others

5) We are proposing a penalty for applicants who refuse 3 reasonable offers in a 12-month period.

All applicants will continue to qualify for 3 reasonable offers in a 12-month period. If an applicant in the high need Bands A or B refuses 3 reasonable offers in that 12 months they will be 'downgraded' to Band C for 12 months. This is to stop applicants bidding for properties they are not committed to taking which has the consequence that properties take longer to let and cost the social housing landlord money in lost rent. The definition of a reasonable offer is clearly set out in the new policy.

6) We are proposing to remove the 'Cumulative Need' rule from the Policy

We propose to remove the 'cumulative housing need' rule from the scheme to make the scheme more transparent for customers and easier to understand and to administer. Under the current policy customers who have two or more of the housing needs as listed in Band C are 'promoted' into Band B. This is called the cumulative need rule.

Under the new policy we propose that an applicant who meets 2 of the housing need criteria for band B will still only be awarded band B and not promoted to Band A. The old policy of cumulative need has been extremely hard for officers to assess and results in people constantly requesting that their circumstances reassessed in the hope of qualifying for the higher band.

7) We are setting out how we propose to give choice to registered customers who have a local connection with the local authority area where a vacant property is advertised whilst at the same time encouraging mobility across Cumbria

We want to encourage mobility by allowing everyone registered to be able to bid for most of the properties advertised regardless of whether they have a local connection with the local authority area where the property is vacant. There will be exceptions, for example where there is a new development under a section 106 Planning Agreement that requires tenants to have a close local connection.

However, to ensure that properties are prioritised for customers who have a local connection to the area where the property is advertised we intend in the first instance to shortlist customers who have bid and have a local connection to the Council area where the property is advertised. We think this is a fair process and protects areas of higher demand for residents who have a connection to an area, but at the same time encourages customers to be more mobile in contemplating moving across Cumbria as if no one with a local connection bids then the customer who has a connection to Cumbria but not to the particular Council area will then be considered for that property based on their band and date in band.

8) We intend to expanded criteria for when a customer will qualify for the statutory housing need bands A and B and have set out clearer criteria for when a band will be awarded to ensure assessments are always consistently applied.

The criteria for when a customer will qualify for the Housing Need Bands A and B will be expanded and made far clearer. This will make it easier for applicants and their representatives to understand if they qualify, and far easier for officers assessing their case to made consistent and timely decisions regarding whether a customer qualifies for a high needs the Band A or B.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

This EQIA considers the changes to the Allocations Policy and assesses their impact on those applicants/households within the protected characteristic groups. The assessment considers whether an impact that is identified is considered to be a positive, negative or neutral impact. Where negative the EQIA sets out what steps have or will be taken to reduce that impact.

Data, guidance and evidence used to assess the EQIA

This assessment has been drawn up using a broad range of data available to officers about applicants on the Housing Register. In addition to the legislation and case law governing allocations, regard has been had to the government guidance on the allocation of housing, the Equality Act 2010 and recent case law on the operation of Section 149 of that act.

It is recognised that the current 'Cumbria Choice' scheme does not have a comprehensive set of data for the households on the housing register and for those rehoused. This is, in part, due to the limitations of the current operating system to develop comprehensive monitoring and performance reports. Raw data can be captured but has not been configured into reports based on the protected groups. This is a critical task for the project plan implementing a new IT operating system. A further problem with the data is that a large number of applicants fail to complete the personal data section of the application form.

Moving forward Cumbria Choice needs to be able to monitor those on the register who are bidding for properties as well as those applicants who are housed under the policy. This will allow the local authorities and partners to analyse if those housed by each protected group is proportional to the proportion from each group registered.

A new IT operating system is being purchased. To ensure that Cumbria Choice has better information to review the EQIA in the future the following actions will be taken:

- 1) The on-line applicant form will be amended to encourage more applicants to fully complete the relevant sections,
- 2) Officers will, on contact with an applicant, request any applicant who has not completed the personal information section to do so.
- 3) Changes will be made to the home page for the applicant's on-line account to show a message explaining the importance of providing the information.
- 4) At the point all applicants are written to asking them if they wish to remain on the Housing Register they will be prompted to complete the personal data section

The data that does exist indicate that the following groups are over-represented in the high priority groups on the Housing Register:

- Families with children
- BME households
- Households with disabled or long-term health problems.
- Female headed households

Research shows that this is common for all local authority allocation schemes and is explained by socio economic factors and poverty.

The new EQIA assessment is set out in the table below and has been structured to consider:

- a) Part A - Firstly, each Individual protected group in the context of the changes, and then
- b) Part B - The changes in the context of their impact on all of the protected groups

The consultation responses summarised

All 8 changes proposed were strongly supported including each of the 9 qualification rules set out in change 3. A number of changes have been made as a result of the consultation feedback. These amendments include:

- a) Allowing applicants where it is agreed need to move from one Cumbrian Council district to another due to domestic abuse, the same priority in any shortlist as an applicant who has an established local connection to the area where a property is advertised.
- b) Making the criteria clearer for an applicant with housing debt as to when they may qualify for the housing register with no penalty, and where a penalty is applied more clarity on the criteria to be applied for the actions needed to resolve the debt so that they may be considered for an offer of social housing
- c) Helping to define which keyworkers should be given band B priority under the scheme.

Part A – Consideration of each Individual protected group in the context of the changes

Protected characteristic	Potential issue where there may be a positive or negative impact	Impact Judgement + / -	Observations and Recommendations	Relevant comments or Action/s to reduce any impact
Age				
	<p>The scheme will require applications to be made on-line as opposed to submitting a paper form.</p> <p>The impact could be that older people are less able to use an on-line application form and the system of bidding for properties through choice based lettings</p>	Negative	<p>On-line applications have been the preferred method for the vast majority of residents in Cumbria to make their applications, but in some areas applications are still made by way of a paper form.</p> <p>To mitigate any impact it is agreed that each partner will assist older and vulnerable people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fill out their on-line application and ➤ To make bids under CBL ➤ Plus paper forms will still be available in exceptional circumstances where it is agreed an applicant is unable to complete an on-line form <p>On-line applications and CBL bidding on-line has been operating for several years. There is no evidence reported from applicants or stakeholders that customers are experiencing difficulty in applying for accommodation, or using the CBL system</p>	<p>The new website FAQs section will be amended to inform applicants that help is available if they are having difficulty in using any of the online application and bidding processes.</p> <p>The intention is to add a web chat option on the website to</p>

				further help applicants
	There is evidence nationally that younger people find it easier to access services online rather by filling out forms. Young people may be disadvantaged by a system where access is by paper form	Positive	It is reported by partners re the age profile of the Housing Register, that the majority of applicants are under 40. Delivering the application and bidding system on line is an advantage to younger people	No additional comments
	Seeking to deliver more of the application process on-line could disadvantage those applicants without internet access and these tend to be older applicants, or applicants most impacted by poverty	Negative	<p>Libraries have free public PC's. There are also free computer training sessions available across Cumbria.</p> <p>Information is available from any CCP partner on the availability of free local public internet access.</p> <p>There are numerous PCs in Council and Housing Association partner offices and the offices of other public authorities.</p> <p>Currently CCP partners report that the vast majority of bids are placed electronically. There are however alternative ways to bid.</p> <p>The office of National Statistics reported that In 2018, 90% of adults in the UK were recent internet users, up from 89% in 2017. 8.4% of adults had never used the internet in 2018, down from 9.2% in 2017. Virtually all adults aged 16 to 34 years were recent internet users (99%) in 2018, compared with 44% of adults aged 75 years and</p>	There is sufficient internet access points and support available in Cumbria to help people without access to the internet.

			over. The majority of the users of the CBL scheme are likely therefore to be confident in using on-line facilities and the scheme has ensured that there are sufficient protections in place for those applicants who are not confident of accessing the service online.	
	Young People - Care Leavers	Positive	Care leavers and young people ready to move on from supported accommodation benefit from the proposals as they are placed in Band A the highest priority Band. This should mean that they are provided with an offer of social housing in a relatively short time period Band A priority is also granted for children assessed as needing an urgent move for child protection concerns, and for residents who need larger accommodation to foster or adopt.	No additional comments
Disability				
	What is the impact of the changes on the housing prospects of applicants with a disability	Positive	The revised policy actively promotes the needs of disabled groups by ensuring that applicants with mobility problems are prioritised for accommodation that is suitable for them. On the limited statistical information available it is estimated that for the Housing Register as a whole up to 25% of applicants have some level of disability. Many applicants with a physical disability where their current housing circumstances impact on their disability will be prioritised for housing under the Policy. Disability is recognised in both of the 2 priority bands A and B. Many applicants with a severe mental health condition and are homeless will be prioritised under the policy through being awarded reasonable preference for being owed a statutory homelessness duty	No additional comments

			The Council is also committed to capturing better information about social housing void properties to classify those that have or can be adapted.	
	How accessible are the application and bidding processes for applicants with a disability?	Positive	<p>The intention is to move to a new IT operating framework. The new website will be developed to ensure that it is fully compliant with all accessibility requirements. Actions that will be explored include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To ensure that the website is W3C 1.0 compliant b) That information is available on how to adjust type, font size, colour contrast and how to make the applicant's computer speak text aloud. c) To implement a drop down menu for people who need to read information in a language other than English. d) The ability to receive a letter in audio. 	The Council will seek in the future, where the IT allows, to monitor data on the frequency of applicants accessing their account to check whether some applicants are being disadvantaged
Transgender/ Gender reassignment				
	Is there an impact of the policy, or the changes, on transgender/gender	Neutral	Applicants who have undergone gender reassignment – can, as with any other applicant, apply to join the housing register and will qualify as long as they meet the eligibility and qualification criteria.	The scheme will more proactively collect monitoring

	reassignment applicants		The revised policy provides band A priority for applicants who have been subject to extreme harassment. Nationally statistically many people who have undergone gender reassignment report higher levels of harassment.	information for this group but has insufficient data at present
Pregnancy and maternity				
	No further impact identified	Positive	<p>The majority of the Register is made up of applicants that are female-headed households with up to 10% being pregnant (based on national estimates). Pregnant women are more likely to have become homeless due to being excluded from a family home, or homeless due to domestic abuse, or homeless due to being unable to continue to afford the rent on a private rented property once they have given birth given the cost of childcare.</p> <p>The homeless and survivors of domestic abuse are given a high priority for housing under the Policy and therefore pregnant women as a groups are likely to be advantaged and not disadvantaged by the Policy</p>	No additional comments
Race				
	The changes to the residency requirement for banding priority under the Housing Register may	Negative	<p>A residency requirement of 1 year or 3 years in the last 5 to qualify for the higher needs bands A or B will have some impact on, refugees, non-UK nationals and Irish Travellers. The revised scheme has attempted to:</p> <p>Strike the right balance between disadvantage to some groups of a residency requirement and the policy aims of the residence</p>	No additional comments

	impact on refugees, non British nationals and Irish Travellers		<p>requirement, which is to prioritise applicants who can demonstrate a positive commitment to Cumbria through being settled in the area. That is why:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A 1 year qualification has been chosen instead of 2 or 3 years which is the norm for the vast majority of local authorities (based on the national statistical local authority returns to MHCLG) b) The policy still allows applicants without the required residency period to qualify for the register (unlike most local authority schemes), awards them band C and means they may be still be successful in bidding for properties. c) To mitigate any impact the policy is careful to build in exemptions and consideration of exceptional circumstances for applicants who do not meet the residency rules. <p>This impact and mitigation is considered more fully below in the section on the impact of the Policy changes across all of the protected groups</p>	
	On-line access for making an application and bidding will impact on applicants whose first language is not English		<p>The new Cumbria Choice website will have information for people who need to contact or talk to a partner in language other than English and there is a translation option for the on-line form and accompanying information.</p> <p>This is considered to be a low risk because if a person's command of English is particularly poor they are likely to have access to someone with interpretation skills.</p> <p>The new Policy has been designed to be more 'straightforward' and easier to understand reducing the potential impact on applicants who do not have English as their first language. As is currently the</p>	

			case, Officers can provide advice and assistance for people who may have difficulty understanding the policy	
Religion / belief				
	Is there an impact of the Policy or the Policy changes on applicants with a religion or belief?	Neutral	It can be difficult to distinguish what are factors to do with a person's religion as opposed to their ethnic or cultural origins. At present there is only generalised information for the Housing Register.	There will be more effort on collecting more accurate information in order to be able to assess any impact as the policy and the EQIA is reviewed
Sexual orientation				
	Is there an impact of the policy changes on applicants re their sexual orientation?	Neutral	The revised policy provides band A priority for applicants who have been subject to extreme harassment. Nationally, statistically many people report higher levels of harassment due to their sexual orientation.	More effort will be made on collecting the information in order to be able to assess any impact as the policy and the EQIA is reviewed

Sex				
	Is there any potential gender bias in the changes proposed?	Negative	<p>Females make up the majority of the housing register. This is because women are likely to be the main carers and are more likely as a result to come under one of the reasonable preference categories for a statutory housing need. This is likely to continue.</p> <p>A large proportion of the register is made up of 'female headed' households. The changes will not impact on the proportions of female headed households owed a statutory housing need</p> <p>Married, civil partners and co-habiting couples, same sex couples, brothers and sisters who wish to live together, can make applications.</p>	No additional comments
General comments on impact and safeguards			<p>Overall the changes proposed will have a positive impact for many of the protected groups identified under the Equality Act. Where there could be a negative impact the policy changes have been carefully constructed to keep any negative impact on any group to a minimum.</p> <p>Although it can always be argued that any change that positively impacts on the chances of social housing for one or more protected groups may have a negative impact on another protected group any impact is not considered to be substantial.</p> <p>There is a further protection in that all applicants have a statutory right to seek a review of their housing application if they are dissatisfied with the Council's decision regarding how they have been assessed and the band they have been awarded.</p>	

			The policy has been amended to provide all applicants with the opportunity to submit reasons why they believe their case should be considered for exceptional circumstances and where requested this will now be considered under the statutory review process ensuring senior officer scrutiny of their request and improved consistency in decision making.	
Part B Consideration of the changes in the context of their impact on all or several of the protected groups	All Groups/Several Groups			
	The impact of moving to a simple 3-band system with the time a person joined the register determining their place in the queue for the band they have been allocated	Neutral	<p>This aim of this simple change is to build trust in the system as it will become more of a 'waiting list' queuing system recognised by everyone using it as a fair way to allocate a limited resource where there is often over demand for certain property types or areas.</p> <p>This is assessed as having a neutral impact, as the 2 high need bands A and B are retained and applicants with a protected characteristic dominate these bands.</p>	
	The policy makes changes to the local connection rules impacting on whether an applicant may be awarded a priority band A or B.	Negative	<p>To qualify for the higher priority bands A or B an applicant must have a local connection with Cumbria. This is defined under the new policy as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Living in Cumbria for the last year, or for 3 years in the last 5 b) Having close family living in Cumbria c) Be working in Cumbria as long as this isn't casual work. 	The scheme will analyse the equality profile of households who will potentially be affected by

			<p>Statutory guidance from the Government's MHCLG Department strongly encourages all local authorities to adopt a minimum 2 - year residency test as part of their qualification criteria.</p> <p>In accordance with Government Guidance there is the intention to embrace the idea of giving greater priority to applicants in housing need with a local connection to Cumbria based on residency, employment, or close family. However, the changes have sought to strike the right balance between the potential disadvantages for some groups of a residency requirement set against the policy aims of adopting a residency requirement, which is to prioritise applicants who can demonstrate a positive commitment to Cumbria through being settled in the area.</p> <p>The compromise chosen therefore is a 1 year residency rule to qualify for the higher priority bands A or B instead of 2 or 3 years residency rule to qualify for the register at all, which is the norm for the vast majority of local authorities (based on the data for local authority statistical returns to MHCLG 18/19).</p> <p>A key safeguard is that the policy will still allow applicants unable to meet a 1 year residency period to qualify for the register (unlike most local authority schemes) and they will be placed into Band C. This means they may still be successful in bidding for properties that are in less popular areas</p> <p>Local connection rules including length of residency were overwhelmingly supported in the consultation feedback.</p> <p>Adopting a residency rule is considered as particularly necessary given that the rental market in some parts of Cumbria is an affordable option for those seeking to rent privately in the region. It means that without a rule any applicant can apply for social housing, and their</p>	the proposed changes to local connection rules
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			<p>housing need may attract band A or B priority regardless of the fact that they may have only just moved into Cumbria. This is important for local authorities that have limited access to social housing in areas of high demand and seeks to prioritise limited social housing resources for applicants who have an established connection to the area.</p> <p>The partnership is mindful of any potential impact of introducing local connection rules on applicants who are classified as a protected group under the Equality Act.</p> <p>We are satisfied that the 1 year residency rule, employment and close family connection rules, are a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim which is to prioritise people with a local connection without preventing any access to housing for those in housing need without a local connection.</p> <p>The Council is satisfied that it has brought in changes that achieve an appropriate balance and namely that any indirect discrimination of the local connection rules on applicants from a protected group will be minimised through the actions set out below and that any impact is proportionate.</p> <p>The new policy has been careful to build in safeguards and exemptions to the local connection rules and the residency rule in particular. The safeguards include the ability for an applicant to retain their local connection where they have left the area due to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Being in hospital, or 2) Having to move out of the area for care, or 3) Being accommodated in supported accommodation outside the district, or 	
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			<p>4) Having been placed into temporary accommodation outside of their 'home' district Cumbrian Council, or</p> <p>5) Applicants who are leaving an institution such as a prison or secure unit or a hospital, rehabilitation centre, refuge, hostel or supported accommodation scheme and were resident for 1 year or 3 out of the previous 5 years immediately before they moved into their current accommodation.</p> <p>Exemptions from the local connection rules for exceptional circumstances will also be considered for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Any application from a Gypsy or Traveller household that does not meet the continuous period of residence rule, as the period may have been broken by periods of travelling. 2) Care leavers below the age of 21 years who are owed a duty under Section 23C of the Children Act 1989 by any local authority Children Services Department and have been accommodated within Cumbria for a continuous period of at least two years 3) Reasons of safety; i.e. when an applicant is fleeing domestic abuse or hate crime from another area, or <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Is on a witness protection program, or b) Where by not moving to the area this would be detrimental to their wellbeing or cause significant hardship. <p>Going forward there is a commitment to monitor and analyse the equality profile of households who will potentially be affected by the local connection rules and in particular the 1 year residency rule.</p> <p>A residency requirement of 1 year will impact to some extent on, refugees and non-UK nationals, Irish Travellers (though safeguards have been built in for travellers). The Council has sought to strike the right balance between disadvantage to some groups of a</p>	
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			<p>residency requirement and the policy aims of the residence requirement, which is to prioritise applicants who can demonstrate a positive commitment to Cumbria Choice and are settled in the area as defined by 1years residence, employment or close family associations.</p> <p>It is likely that for residents who have not resided in Cumbria for more than a year the rule will impact to some extent on BME residents, former asylum seekers and Irish travellers who will not be able to access the higher priority bands A or B until they meet the 1 year residency criteria, or other local connection rule such as employment. It should be noted however, that this will not stop them from bidding with their band C status and they may still be successful in obtaining an offer of social housing.</p> <p>It is also the case that levels of 'inward migration' into Cumbria is relatively low compared to other local authority areas of England.</p> <p>The Statutory Guidance issued by the Government expressly highlights the need for local authorities to take account of special circumstances. The changes on residence achieve this, for example, by protecting people who are moving into the district to escape violence</p> <p>Furthermore, it should be noted that all applicants to the housing register would be equally disadvantaged through the 1-year residency rule.</p> <p>To summarise the impact of the residency criteria is not considered to be substantial and the 6 local authorities have been careful to reduce the impact through the following actions:</p>	
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			<p>1 - The residency criteria is set at 1 year which is the number of years suggested in the Government's own guidance. We have been careful not to adopt a '2 or 3 years or more' residency rule which would have a greater negative impact.</p> <p>2 - The proposed allocations policy recommends that exceptions to the 1-year local connection requirement be made in appropriate cases, such as applicants who have been subjected to domestic violence.</p> <p>3 - By permitting exemptions to avoid hardship, the circumstances of all applicants can be fully considered and the possibility of an applicant suffering any disadvantage avoided.</p> <p>4 - There is an exemption for applicants where there are additional health, welfare or care/support needs that is reliant on the relative being within the area</p> <p>5 - All applicants have a statutory right to seek a review of their housing application if they are dissatisfied with the decision re the band they have been awarded. This provides an applicant with the opportunity to submit reasons why they believe their case should be considered under the exceptional circumstances part of the policy.</p> <p>6 - The Policy includes other ways an applicant can obtain the higher A or B banding for their housing need other than being resident for 1 year. The alternatives are where an applicant is employed in Cumbria for as little as 16 hours a week, or has close relatives living in Cumbria.</p> <p>7- Any disadvantage is only for a relatively short time period until the applicant can evidence residency for 1 year after which an applicant will be allocated the band that fully reflects their housing need.</p>	
	The specific change to include the ability to qualify for households who	Negative or neutral and positive in the longer term	<p>One of the policy aims is to reduce inequality and poverty over the long term by encouraging employment</p> <p>A key aim of this policy change is to encourage those who work in Cumbria to be able to work, live and settle in Cumbria. This is</p>	The scheme will analyse the equality profile of households

	are employed in the area		<p>especially relevant where they are unable to afford to rent or buy and have a housing need.</p> <p>The criteria has been deliberately set as paid employment for 16 hours or more per week for a period of one year, or self-employment where an applicant can demonstrate that the self-employed work they perform is in Cumbria. This recognizes that many women with childcare challenges may only be able to work part time.</p> <p>The policy aim is to make a contribution to rebalancing communities on social housing estates seeking a balance of households that are dependent on benefits and are economically active.</p> <p>There will be little impact on other households who don't work and live in Cumbria Choice and have a protected characteristic, as most of these applicants will qualify for a priority band under the 1-year residency rule.</p> <p>Unlike many other local authorities we have been careful not to build into the shortlisting rules work as a determining factor for prioritising applicants, as this could have a disproportionate impact on applicant's who are not able to work and come under the definition of one or more of the protected characteristics.</p> <p>Many of the mitigating actions and considerations set out in the section on the residency rule above apply equally here</p>	who will potentially be affected by the proposed changes to local connection rules for employment
	The specific change to include under the local connection rules family (normally mother, father,	Neutral or positive	This rule allows an applicant who is not resident or employed in Cumbria Choice to qualify under the local connection rules if they have close family living in Cumbria.	

	brother, sister, son or daughter) that have lived in the area for a minimum of the past five years.		This rule is likely to be positive for those applicants from a relevant protected group who live outside of Cumbria but have close family living in Cumbria and would be unable to qualify for another reason	
	What is the assessed impact of the revised income, savings/assets thresholds on applicants with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act?	Neutral or negative	<p>There were income and savings qualification thresholds under the previous Policy. These have been revised and are:</p> <p>Applicants who are considered to have sufficient financial resources to buy suitable accommodation in Cumbria will not qualify for Bands A or B but can qualify for Band C. 'Sufficient financial resources' are defined as sufficient capital to buy or rent privately; or sufficient income to raise a mortgage to buy or rent privately; or a combination of both. The income and savings limits are:</p> <p>Applicants (both single persons and couples) who have total savings, investments and/or assets of £25,000 or more.</p> <p>Applicants whose total gross household income from all sources exceeds an annual income of £45,000 or more (for single persons) or joint income of £60,000 or more (for couples).</p> <p>Those applicants with savings or income above the thresholds will be able to join the register and will be placed in band C and will also be advised on homeownership options and market and intermediate rent options.</p> <p>Although some applicants from a protected group will be impacted by this policy many other protected group applicants are on low incomes or have no savings and will benefit, because there will be fewer applicants on the register in bands A or B competing for housing.</p>	The Council will monitor the number of applications rejected for an award of the higher bands A or B due to high income levels or savings

			<p>The Council is satisfied that:</p> <p>The new policy contains a wide range of exemptions to the Income and savings thresholds compared to the previous policy and that these exemptions are targeted at applicants likely to be from a protected group based on age or disability.</p> <p>Furthermore, any negative impact on protected groups is reduced by the fact that they will have the income level or savings to obtain an alternative housing solution and by the fact that there is a process in the policy to consider exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>A key safeguard is that the policy will still allow applicants whose income or savings are above the thresholds to still qualify for the register (unlike most local authority schemes) and they will be placed into Band C. This means they may still be successful in bidding for properties that are in less popular areas</p>	
All groups				
	We will continue to operate an open register in Cumbria. Everyone will still be able to register regardless of whether they meet the definition for a statutory housing need (unless there is evidence of	Positive	<p>Although not a change to the policy the continuation of an open register will not impact on the objective that social housing should continue to be prioritized for those applicants assessed as being in the greatest housing need (bands A and B) and that these households are overrepresented by applicants who meet the protected groups criteria.</p>	

	serious unacceptable behaviour or significant former rent arrears). How might this impact on the protected groups?		However, many applicants without an assessed statutory housing need still meet the protected groups criteria. The continuation of an open register is therefore likely to benefit these applicants because they may be successful in bidding for lower demand properties.	
	The new Policy includes the ability to apply local lettings policies	Neutral at this stage. Each local lettings policy will need to consider any equalities impacts before being adopted.	<p>Although this isn't a change to the new policy as local letting policies were always allowable under the current policy, the new policy sets out a clear framework for how these policies will be agreed and requires an evidence base and a strict timetable for reviewing the impact. The equalities impact of local lettings policies had not been assessed fully under the current policy. There will now be a clear equalities consideration as part of the process for agreeing any LLP policy and a clear equalities monitoring on the impact of any policy.</p> <p>Local lettings policies have the potential to have an impact on the housing prospects of a number of disadvantaged groups. Such a policy restricts allocations within a small geographical area in order to achieve certain policy and good management outcomes. An example might be lower child densities in certain block or road, or to restrict the number of vulnerable people allocated accommodation in a block where there are already a number of people housed with complex needs and there is evidence that the number is causing</p>	We will fully consider the equalities impact of any local letting policy in deciding whether to approve any LLP and will then monitor the on-going impact

			<p>housing management issues for a landlord and impacting on other residents.</p> <p>The Allocations Policy is framed to allow for individual lettings plans to be developed and approved on a case-by-case basis. Each local letting plan will have to have an evidence base and be approved through a clear transparent process. Any equalities impact must be considered as part of the assessment process when deciding whether on not to approve a local lettings plan.</p>	
	<p>Applicants with former/current rent arrears or serious unacceptable behaviour who are assessed as being in housing need will be assessed as either non qualifying or allowed to qualify but not allowed to bid until the issue has been resolved.</p>	<p>The changes will have positive implications</p>	<p>Applicants with former/current rent arrears or serious unacceptable behaviour that are in housing need will be assessed as either non qualifying or allowed to qualify but not allowed to bid until the issue has been resolved.</p> <p>This isn't a change to the Policy but a clarification of how these rules will be applied. Under the previous policy section an applicant could be disqualified for former rent arrears or unacceptable serious behaviour. The previous policy lacked clarity resulting in some applicants being 'stuck' and unable to access social housing due to previous rent arrears or behaviour but a lack of clarity for how the policy would be applied and what an applicant needed to do to resolve a problem led to inconsistency in the application of the policy. Many applicants where the policy was applied would be in a protected group.</p> <p>Changes have been made that will benefit these applicants. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Much clearer criteria for when an applicant will or will not qualify b) Exemptions and exceptional circumstances consideration built into the Policy. c) Agreement with the Registered Provider housing associations on the approach to take regarding when an applicant should be 	<p>The number of households impacted by policy will be carefully monitored</p>

			<p>considered for an offer accommodation in respect of what 'resolving their arrears or unacceptable behaviour means. This will mean fewer applicants are 'stuck' with no solution.</p> <p>d) Where applicants qualify but are unable to bid until the matter has been resolved they will be allocated the correct band for their housing need and will continue to accrue 'time in band' priority which will be an advantage to them when they have resolved the issue.</p> <p>Although the housing related debt and unacceptable behaviour rules will impact negatively on some applicants from a protected group we are satisfied that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The rules are a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim which is to ensure that new tenants pay the rent and resolve previous housing debt owed to a social landlord, or resolve unacceptable behaviour, and ➤ The changes that achieve an appropriate balance with safeguards and exemptions so that any indirect discrimination on applicants from a protected group has been minimised through the safeguards introduced in the new Policy and are proportionate. 	
	Making direct lets /sensitive lettings outside of the CBL system in certain circumstances	Positive for the protected groups of sex, disability	The revised Policy allows more flexibility in certain circumstances to make the best use of the housing stock. The vast majority of general needs properties will continue to be allocated via choice based lettings but there will be times when a housing association or Council needs to directly match a property to an applicant.	A target figure of no more than 15% has been set to ensure that the integrity

		<p>and sexual orientation</p> <p>Neutral for the other groups</p>	<p>The policy lists the circumstances when a direct letting may be applied and includes MAPPA, MARAC or other sensitive lets or where there is a need to move due to extreme risk of domestic violence or harassment or witness protection.</p> <p>Where direct lets are made in sensitive circumstances this is often where an applicant may be a victim of domestic abuse or is being harassed or has complex needs. A direct sensitive let will allow the best match to be made depending on the circumstances and needs of a particular applicant. This is an advantage to a number of protected groups for disability, sex (women are more likely to be victims of domestic abuse)</p> <p>For the other protected groups making direct lets outside of the policy band and date order will have a minimal negative impact as these will only be made in limited circumstances</p>	<p>of the CBL system is retained. The percentage of direct lets will be carefully monitored</p>
	<p>If an applicant in the high need Bands A or B refuses 3 reasonable offers in that 12 months they will be 'downgraded' to Band C for 12 months</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Applicants in Bands A or B who refuse 3 offers following a successful bid or direct allocation will be downgraded to Band C for a period of 12 months.</p> <p>We will implement clear operational procedures for the assessing officers to take into account people with mental health or support needs where their condition may impact on their behaviour and their ability to keep appointments in the normal way. Officers will look at the individual circumstances for all applicants before applying the rule.</p> <p>An additional safeguard is that the new Policy clearly defines what a reasonable offer is. This will ensure consistency in the application of the refusal policy.</p>	<p>Regular analysis of the number and needs of applicants downgraded to Band C because they refused 3 reasonable offers will be needed to ensure that specific groups are not being</p>

			<p>The view is that allowing an applicant to refuse 3 reasonable offers before being downgraded to Band C is a reasonable compromise between allowing choice and managing re-letting times for the partners. It is not expected that many applicants will have the rule applied, as having the rule in place will focus applicants on seriously considering any property they bid for.</p> <p>It is also likely to be positive in that some applicants in a high band who are in a protected group refuse offers of accommodation waiting for what they perceive to be the 'perfect' offer. This leaves them in unsuitable housing for a longer period of time. This policy will help tackle this problem</p> <p>Where an applicant is owed a homeless duty 1 suitable offer will end the homeless duty (this is required by the homelessness legislation) but they would still be able to receive 2 more offers if their housing need means they would still qualify for a Band A or B.</p> <p>Even if they have no other statutory housing need they would still qualify for the Housing Options Band C and be able to access lower demand properties and be entitled to 2 more offers in a 12 month period.</p>	adversely affected
	Removal of 'cumulative housing need' rule from the scheme to make the scheme more transparent for customers and easier to	Neutral or negative	<p>The change is to remove the 'cumulative housing need' rule from the scheme to make the scheme more transparent for customers and easier to understand and to administer. Under the current policy customers who have two or more of the housing needs as listed in Band C are 'promoted' into Band B and meeting 2 band B criteria would be promoted to band A. This is called the cumulative need rule. There may be some impact on applicants who meet the protected group criteria and have more than one assessed housing need.</p>	

	understand and to administer		<p>Under the new policy an applicant who meets 2 of the housing need criteria for band B will still only be awarded band B and not promoted to Band A. The old policy of cumulative need has been extremely hard for officers to assess resulting in inconsistency in applying the rule and applicants constantly requesting that their circumstances reassessed in the hope of qualifying for the higher band.</p> <p>There is mitigation built into the decision to remove the cumulative need rule in that band A criteria has been clarified to include applicants with an exceptional or urgent housing need therefore reducing the need for a cumulative need rule.</p> <p>There is also a positive impact in that applicants in the current band C are less likely to have a protected characteristic. By being able to meet 2 band C criteria they would be placed on an equal footing with applicants with a band B need and band B contains more applicants that have a protected characteristic.</p>	
	Applicants who have a local connection with the Cumbrian local authority where a vacant property is advertised will be given priority in any shortlist	Neutral	<p>This is not a direct change to the policy but an amendment to provide greater clarity.</p> <p>For any shortlist an applicant that has a local connection with the Cumbrian local authority where a vacant property is advertised will be given priority over applicants who bid without that local connection. This could impact on victims of domestic abuse but the policy has safeguards built in so that any DA cases where it is agreed that they need to move as they cannot stay in their local authority district due to risk, will be treated equally on any shortlist.</p>	
	The impact of the expanded criteria for when a customer will qualify for the statutory housing need bands A and	Positive	<p>The criteria for when a customer will qualify for the Housing Need Bands A and B will be expanded and made far clearer. This will make it easier for applicants and their representatives to understand if they qualify, and far easier for officers assessing their case to made consistent and timely decisions regarding whether a customer qualifies for a high needs the Band A or B.</p>	

	B and have set out clearer criteria for when a band will be awarded to ensure assessments are always consistently applied		This decision has a positive impact in that the criteria for being granted a band A or B award has been expanded for medical, disability, hardship, risk and move on meaning that more applicants from a protected group will qualify for a higher band award.	
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Date EQIA approved

Any subsequent amendments – date and detail

Appendix 3: Cumbria Choice Based Lettings Policy – Summary of Proposed Changes – 2020 Update

Changes to Policy	Details	Impact of Changes	Initial Board Consultation Responses	Change made to Policy in line with recommendation
Statutory Guidance	Policy updated in line with legislative changes since the last review of policy.	Low.	None identified	Yes updated in line with latest Homelessness legislation.
Equality Act 2010	An equality impact assessment has been undertaken as a result of which changes to syntax have been made throughout.	High. A significant number of customers are classed as vulnerable.	None	None
Reduction in number of Bands from 5 to 3	It is proposed that the number of bands reduce from 5 to 3 to make the Policy easier to understand and administer. The first two bands would cover the 'reasonable preference' categories as identified in relevant legislation with the remaining Band for any other applicants. Determination of priority would then be based on date of application.	Medium.	13 = yes agree 3 = no	Yes draft Policy updated.
Keep an 'open Register'.	This means that anyone can apply to join the Housing Register. This does not change the current position.	Low.	15 = yes agree 1 = no	None required.
Proposed changes to qualification rules	1 – Local Connection changes to allow those with local connection to Cumbria for the past year, or for 3 years in the last 5 years by way of immediate family in the area, permanent employment, or exceptional need (includes but not limited to: fleeing violence; armed forces, care leavers)	Medium.	15 = yes agree there should be a local connection rule	Some changes made to cover the local connection criteria.

Proposed changes to qualification rules	2 = requirement to give permission to obtain and share an applicant's personal information.	Low.	15 = yes agree	Yes draft Policy updated.
Proposed changes to qualification rules	3 = Homeownership or legal interest in home ownership. Should people who own their own home not qualify for higher bands A and B.	Low as applicants who own their own home have a low need for social housing.	10 = yes agree 5 = no	Yes draft Policy updated. However, if as a result of divorce settlement a Court has ordered that an applicant may not reside in the home in which they have a legal interest for a period likely to exceed 5 years then this will not be taken into account.
Proposed changes to qualification rules	4 = financial resources. People with a certain level of income/savings will not qualify for higher bands A and B.	Low as applicants can satisfy their housing need on the open market.	12 = yes agree 3 = no	Yes draft Policy updated. Applicants (single persons and couples) with total savings, investments and/or assets of £25,000 or more can qualify for Band C. Applicants with gross income exceeding £45,000 or more (single) or joint income of £60,000 (couple) can qualify for Band C.
Proposed changes to qualification rules	5 = failure to bid for a period of 12 months.	Medium to ensure that applicants who are vulnerable are not discriminated against.	13 = yes agree 2 = no	Yes draft Policy updated.
Proposed changes to qualification rules	6 = Fraud or giving false information will result in removal from the Register for a period of 12 months.	Medium depending on reasons why important information was upheld and whether any vulnerability identified.	15 = yes agree 1 = no	Yes draft Policy updated.
Proposed changes to qualification rules	7 = circumstances where an applicant has current or former social housing rent	Medium depending on reasons why debt has	11 = yes agree 4 = no	Yes draft Policy updated:

	<p>arrears or another relevant recoverable housing related debt.</p> <p>Debts £1000+ who have made no arrangement to address the debt will be ineligible.</p> <p>Debts £1000+ who have made an arrangement to address can join but will need to maintain a payment arrangement for 13 weeks and have either: repaid at least £750 or at least 25% of the original debt.</p> <p>Debts £1-£499 – eligible to join and bid unless evidence of risk of future non-payment such as history of housing debt/poor rent payments or breached payment arrangements.</p> <p>Debts £500-£999 – eligible to join but not to bid unless no real risk of future non-payment such as history of not having housing debts, history of regular rent payments, maintained payment arrangements. Alternatively, evidence of rehabilitation such as maintaining a payment arrangement 8-26 weeks, reducing debt to below £500, demonstrating cause of previous problems addressed.</p>	accrued in the first place and vulnerability issues.		
Proposed changes to qualification rules	<p>8 - serious unacceptable behaviour updated.</p> <p>Applicants guilty of serious unacceptable behaviour may not be admitted to the register or where there is evidence of rent arrears from the last private rented</p>	Medium. This will need to be monitored to ensure that vulnerabilities are taken account of.	Yes agree= 13	Policy updated.

	tenancy. The non-qualification will apply unless the applicant can demonstrate that the previous conduct is unlikely to reoccur. This could include demonstrating cooperation with support agencies leading to a substantial improvement in behaviour.			
Proposed changes to qualification rules	9 - CCP Tenants not assessed as Band A or Band B Housing Need and wanting to transfer should seek to do so through the Mutual Exchange Scheme.	Low Applicants can seek a transfer through mutual exchange or if assessed as Band A or B will qualify.	Yes agree = 14 No = 1	Policy updated.
Proposed changes to make the rules clearer regarding when a direct letting outside of the choice based letting system will be allowed.	Clarity provided on when direct lettings are allowed for example, urgent re-housing due to property being uninhabitable or where there are serious health and safety issues, or discharge of a statutory homeless duty; urgent housing need where it would be unreasonable to wait for the bidding process, threat to life, natural disaster, facilitate a three way (or greater) mutual exchange to make best use of housing stock; persons where the Council has a duty to rehouse due to the Land Compensation Act 1973, lettings due to annual lettings plans, adapted property, cases where Adult Social Care work is ongoing, cases of high risk such as Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA).	Medium. Cases will need monitoring by the Board where direct lets are permitted.	Yes agree = 15	Policy updated.
Proposal to introduce a penalty for applicants who refuse 3	Applicants in reasonable preference Bands A and B who refuse 3 reasonable offers in a	Medium. Cases of vulnerable applicants	Yes agree = 14 No = 1	Policy updated and 'reasonable' is defined in the draft Policy.

reasonable offers in a 12 month period.	12 month period will be 'downgraded' to Band C for 12 months.	will need to be monitored.		
Proposal to remove the 'Cumulative Need' rule from the Policy	The 'Cumulative Need' rule was difficult to understand and administer and often resulted in 'band chasing' where applicants seek to move bands if they could demonstrate more than one need.	Low. The bandings allow for prioritisation of applicants based on need.	Yes agree = 14 No = 1	Policy updated.
Proposal for expanded criteria for when a customer will qualify for the statutory housing need bands A and B and a clearer criteria for when a band will be awarded to ensure assessments are always consistently applied.	Ensure bandings are applied consistently.	Low. Clarity in awarding Bands. Less likely to be challenged.	Yes agree = 8	Policy updated (Bands table outlined below).
A number of changes are proposed to the banding system and these are out in the summary table below.	Changes are detailed in the Table below.	Low. Changes will make the application of the Policy clearer.	Yes agree = 8	Policy updated.

Revised Bands

Band A: Additional preference for certain homelessness duties <i>(This is assessed and verified by the Partner Council's Housing Options Team)</i>
This banding applies where a Cumbrian Council have accepted:
3) The Section 193(2) main homelessness duty or the Section 193C(4) 'reduced' Section 193 duty, or
4) A section 189B (2) Relief duty and the applicant is, at the point of that 189B duty being accepted, considered likely to be in priority need and unintentionally homeless, whether a decision to that effect has been made or not, and the applicant is in temporary accommodation provided by the Council to meet a section 188 interim accommodation duty.
In these circumstances where an applicant is homeless and in temporary accommodation and owed a Section 189B(2) relief duty, or 193(2) main duty or a section 193C(4) reduced main duty the Council will need to move applicants out of temporary accommodation to manage the budgetary or legal impact on the Council. The applicant may still bid for properties advertised but due to the budgetary pressures faced by the Council and the need to maintain a supply of available temporary accommodation for new cases presenting as homeless, the Council is likely to make a direct offer of suitable accommodation into the private rented sector or social housing regardless of the preferences expressed by the applicant.
Band A: Additional preference for medical or disability (See appendix 1.8 for full details of the medical need assessment process)
Where an applicant (or a member of their household) is unable to continue to occupy their current accommodation due to high medical need or disability. Examples of when Band A may be awarded include:
Applicants ready to be discharged from hospital who: have somewhere to live but their accommodation is unsuitable due to their medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations because of cost effectiveness or structural difficulties or the property cannot be adapted within a reasonable amount of time.
Applicants who have urgent need to move due to them having medical problems or disabilities that are being exacerbated by their current housing situation. This includes applicants:
g) Whose life is at risk due to their current housing conditions or who are housebound, effectively housebound or cannot access the essential facilities in their home and there are critical concerns about their safety, for example through falls due to difficulties with access.
h) Whose condition is terminal and rehousing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care

i) Whose condition is life threatening and their existing accommodation is a major contributory factor
j) Whose health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening for example, where an applicant has significant mental health problems which are exacerbated by their accommodation
k) With disabilities, who have restricted mobility and are limited by their accommodation such that they are unable to carry out day-to-day activities or have difficulties accessing facilities inside and outside of their accommodation and require rehousing into accommodation suitable for their use.
l) In overcrowded accommodation which puts the applicant at risk of infection, for example, where an applicant is suffering from late-stage or advanced HIV infection
Band A: Additional preference where there is a need to move on welfare grounds due to exceptional impact on the applicant or a member of their households well being
Not every circumstance that may present can be captured by the policy so below are examples of welfare ground cases that will be considered. The list is not exhaustive:
e) Suffering extreme violence, harassment or discrimination, whether a hate crime or otherwise, and that it is not safe for them to remain in their present home/locality.
f) Applicants who need to move due to domestic abuse threats from an ex partner or family member they do not live with, extreme threats of violence, extreme harassment, or other extreme circumstances deemed to significantly affect a household's welfare and wellbeing.
g) Exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with the tenant's occupation of a dwelling in the social or private rented sector and there is high risk to the tenant or their family's safety if they remain in the dwelling/area.
h) For applications in circumstances where there is a serious threat to the well being of a child and their accommodation is a major contributory factor to that risk. This will be in circumstances where the relevant manager in Children's Services or equivalent assesses the level of risk exposure in relation to the child or children remaining in the current property as being so critical that no other reasonable options in relation to accommodation are available to protect the child.
Band A: Additional preference Armed Forces
Applicants with urgent housing who:

d) Is serving (and will soon leave) the regular forces and is suffering from serious injury, illness, mental ill health, or disability which is attributable to the person's service
e) Has recently ceased, or will ceased to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the MOD following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service or
f) Is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the persons service
Band A: Additional preference for unfit or unsatisfactory housing
There are 3 circumstances where Band A may be awarded:
1: Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities:
No access to:
f) A bath or shower
g) A toilet
h) Cooking facilities
i) Running hot water supplies
j) Electric/gas needed for essential activities
Applicants who have access to shared facilities re cooking; bathroom and toilet will not qualify under these criteria.
2: Exceptional impact cases.
Applicants who currently occupy a private sector property which has at least one Category 1 Hazard (excluding overcrowding) under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and where a Prohibition Order has been served or is intended to be served under the Housing Act 2004 and the effect of the Prohibition Order is likely to mean that the applicant(s) will lose the use of their home on a permanent basis. The relevant conditions at the property must be life-threatening or present an immediate threat of serious injury to the occupant(s)
This includes a property that has severe damp, major structural defects including subsidence, flooding, collapse of roof, or have living conditions which are a statutory nuisance, <u>and</u> there is no prospect of the problems being remedied within a period considered to be reasonable by the Council and the household are not able to afford to resolve their own housing problem by moving to alternative private sector accommodation.
Note - this does not include Council or Housing Association homes as there is a legal requirement on social landlords to urgently remedy defects that pose a risk to their tenants

3: Demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) cases.
Where the applicant's property is subject to demolition or subject to a Compulsory Purchase Order for redevelopment
Band A: Additional preference for severe overcrowding as defined as 2 bedrooms or more overcrowded <i>Note: the measurement of overcrowding is based on the "bedroom standard" (with some exceptions adopted see below). This is the non-statutory standard set out in the government's allocation of accommodation guidance.</i>
Where an applicant household is severely overcrowded defined as requiring 2 or more additional bedrooms to reach the bedroom standard. In calculating the overcrowding the following circumstances will be disregarded unless there are exceptional circumstances:
➤ Children over the age of 16 will be excluded from the calculation
➤ Cases where extended family had moved into accommodation causing the 2 bedroom plus level of overcrowding
➤ Where the household contains non-dependent adults as there is more chance of non dependents being able to resolve their housing
➤ The CCP will take account of the space and layout of rooms and bedrooms in deciding whether the 2 bedroom plus priority will be awarded
Band A: Additional preference for applicants nominated by Cumbria Adult Social Services/Children's Services in the following circumstances:
• Where there is an essential need to move due to child protection issues
• Fostering carers for Cumbria County Council where there is a need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child (this would not apply where the home required would be 4 bedrooms or more)
• Adoption arrangements where there is a need to move to a larger home in order to accommodate a looked after child (this would not apply where the home required would be 4 bedrooms or more)
• Applicants owed a duty by Adult Social Services under the Care Act 2014 / Mental Health Act 1983/2007 who have been assessed by the housing team as being ready to move onto independent living and have an appropriate support package in place
Band A: Additional preference for Cumbria County Council Care Leavers (Former Relevant children) as defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 and need to move on
Applicants must be a former "Relevant Child" as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 and be a young person at risk of homelessness. The evidence to support this award will be provided by the council's leaving care service and will consist of confirmation that:
g) All referrals by Children's Services will be made following the provision of Cumbria's Joint Protocol for young people

h) The care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living
i) The care leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
j) The care leaver has either long term or medium term tenancy support arranged, as required.
k) Ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan is in place and
l) The CCP's assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of their vulnerability, accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on their well-being
<i>Note: Care leavers will be awarded Band A on proof of their status. If an application for housing is made before it has been determined by the CCP assessing officer that the individual is ready for independent living, taking into account information from the applicant's support worker and other agencies, the application will not have any bid considered until the support worker presents the evidence to the CCP that the individual is ready to move on and the CCP agree with that evidence.</i>
Band A: Additional preference for applicants who are part of a multi-agency public protection agreement (MAPPA).
Band A would apply only where:
a) On the recommendation of the MAPPA partnership the applicant requires and is suitable for independent housing and qualify for the Housing Register, and
b) The CCP assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of the circumstances of the MAPPA case accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on the multi agency planning for that individual
Band A: Additional preference for certain MARAC assessed cases
Applicants fleeing domestic violence and abuse that have been assessed by
MARAC (or any subsequent multi agency arrangement) as needing to move urgently for the safety and security of themselves and or any dependent children and are assessed as being in immediate danger, and
a) The MARAC partnership has referred the case and provided evidence as to why the applicant requires social housing, and
b) The CCP assessing officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of the circumstances of the MARAC case accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a substantial detrimental effect on individual or household
Band B – Reasonable preference for certain homelessness duties owed <i>(This is assessed and verified by the Partner Council's Housing Options Team)</i>
Any of the following statutory homeless duties owed by a Cumbrian Council:

e) People where it has been verified that they are rough sleeping in a Cumbrian Council area regardless of whether they have made a homeless application
f) Applicants owed the prevention of homelessness duty under Section 195(2) by any Cumbria local authority
g) Applicants owed the 'relief of homelessness duty under Section 189B(2) (Note: applicants owed a relief duty and are likely to be in priority need, unintentionally homeless and are in temporary accommodation will be placed in Band A)
h) Where the relief duty has been brought to an end and an applicant has been assessed at that point as not being in priority need
Band B: Reasonable preference for insecure accommodation arrangements
"A pregnant woman or applicant with a child or children who are sharing a home with family who are not part of their household and where:
a) They have no ownership or tenancy rights and the arrangement is short term and very insecure and only available whilst the applicant is actively seeking an offer of social housing or alternative accommodation with friends or in the private rented sector, and
b) They were owed a prevention of homelessness duty as they were assessed as likely to become homeless within 56 days, and that duty has ended because they have been allowed to remain at home whilst they bid for social housing with their Band B priority and it is likely that they can remain for at least 6 months to a year.
c) The family member with the interest in the home has agreed to allow the applicant to remain for at least 6 months to a year.
Band B: Reasonable preference for medical or disability housing need (See appendix 1.8 for full details of the medical need assessment process)
Applicants who have need to move due to them having medical problems or disabilities where their housing conditions exacerbates a serious medical condition or disability but do not qualify for an award of Band A. This includes (the examples are to illustrate the level of housing need to be awarded Band B and is not an exhaustive list).
f) The applicant's current accommodation to a significant extent directly exacerbates an existing medical condition, is the direct cause of a medical condition or impacts on the ease of use of the facilities within their home for a disabled person.
g) Applicants who have mobility issues and it has been assess need to move to ground floor or level access accommodation
h) Applicants who have mobility issues and need to move to accommodation that has level access showering facilities
i) Applicants who have a significant physical or mental health condition that is directly affected by their accommodation and where a move to alternative accommodation would help to ease or resolve their condition
j) Applicants who have a medical need for an additional bedroom (e.g. because they need an overnight carer or need to accommodate a substantial amount of medical equipment)

Band B: Reasonable preference under the Government's 'Right to move' regulations
Existing social tenants of accommodation in England who the CCP have assessed as qualifying under the Government's Right to Move regulations will be placed into Band B
Allocation to those Applicants who qualify is limited to a maximum of 2% of all lettings.
Band B: Reasonable preference for 'move on' from supported housing
Where the CCP assessing officer after considering evidence from the applicant's support officer agrees that due to the nature and extent of their vulnerability, accommodation in the private rented sector would, through its short-term nature, have a detrimental effect on their well being.
Before the award is made, ongoing support needs will need to have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan put in place to increase the chances of the tenancy succeeding and the person must have been assessed as ready to move on from supported to independent housing.
Band B: Reasonable preference where it is agreed there is a need to move on welfare or hardship ground:
4) Applicants who need to move closer to a specialist organisation, agency or institution located in a specific area of Cumbria, where moving would prevent significant physical, psychological or financial hardship. (The assessment will include the availability and ability to use public transport)
5) Hardship on support grounds: Applicants that have demonstrable evidence that they provide or receive substantial and on-going support to or from relatives or friends and where moving would prevent significant physical, psychological or financial hardship. This award will only be considered where there are significant medical or welfare issues including grounds relating to disability. This award for applicants who give or require support from relatives or friends will only be considered where there is a severe disability or mental ill health, medical or welfare issue (relating to the applicant or their household or the relatives or friends) and there are reasons why this support cannot be made available through reliance on public transport or the persons own transport. (The assessment will include the availability and ability to use public transport).
6) Employment Hardship - Priority will only be given in exceptional circumstances and applicants will need to show that they need to move to take up or continue an employment opportunity not available elsewhere. They will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable commuting distance and will be required to provide confirmation of employment details from the employer. Employment purposes are defined as: applicants including people needing to move from outside Cumbria and between Cumbrian Districts, taking up or continuing permanent employment for a minimum of 16 hours per week. Under this clause applicants will only be considered where they do not live within a reasonable

commuting distance and will be required to provide confirmation of employment details from the employer. (The assessment will include the availability and ability to use public transport)
Band B: Reasonable preference for being overcrowded by 1 bedroom <i>Note: the measurement of overcrowding is based on the "bedroom standard" (with some exceptions adopted see below). This is the non-statutory standard set out in the government's allocation of accommodation guidance.</i>
Applicant's living in overcrowded conditions and whose housing circumstances have been assessed as being 1 bedroom short of what they need as measured by the bedroom standard.
Or alternative wording
Where an applicant household is overcrowded by one bedroom as measured by the bedroom standard. In calculating the overcrowding the following circumstances will be disregarded unless there are exceptional circumstances:
➤ Children over the age of 16 will be excluded from the calculation
➤ Cases where extended family had moved into accommodation causing the 1 bedroom level of overcrowding
➤ Where the household contain non-dependent adults as there is more chance of non dependents being able to resolve their housing
The CCP will take account of the space and layout of rooms and bedrooms in deciding whether the 1 bedroom priority will be awarded
Band B: Reasonable preference for unsatisfactory housing conditions or issues of property fitness
Private sector tenants that the relevant Council has determined that the property poses a category 1 hazard under the Health and Safety fitness rating and the CCP assessing officer is satisfied that the problem cannot be resolved by the landlord within 6 months and as a result continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health. This includes a property that has severe damp, major structural defects including subsidence, flooding, collapse of roof, or have living conditions which are a statutory nuisance, <u>and</u> there is no prospect of the problems being remedied within a 6 month time period, and the household are not able to resolve their own housing problem by moving to alternative private sector accommodation
Band B: Reasonable preference for under-occupation
Applicants who have a social housing tenancy with a Cumbrian CCP Partner and are under-occupying social rented accommodation by two or more bedrooms. The exception to the 2 or more bedroom under occupation rule will be:
c) Where a tenant occupies a house that they are under occupying by 1 bedroom and a move to a flat would free up that house

d) Where it is agreed that under-occupancy by 1 bedroom will cause significant financial hardship for tenants. This is where there is clear evidence that tenants on lower incomes are forced to spend significant percentages of their incomes on servicing 1 bedroom under-occupancy deductions
Band B: Local preference for recent ex armed forces applicants
Members of the Armed Forces persons who are serving in the regular forces who will be discharged within three months and have served for five years preceding their application for an allocation of housing accommodation as long as this has not been a dishonorable discharge.
Band B: Local preference for identified 'Key Workers'
The following key workers whose total gross household income from all sources does not exceed an annual income of £45,000 or more (for single persons) or joint income of £60,000 or more (for couples).
5) National Health Service Staff and Social Care staff
6) Community Support Officers
7) Members of the Territorial Army
8) Volunteer Fire Officers
Band C – All other applicants in housing need: This is the housing need band awarded where an applicant is not assessed as coming under the criteria adopted by the policy for being in a statutory housing need. Applicants placed in band C can still bid for properties but will not be considered above applicants from Bands A or B who have bid for the same property.
Band C will include applicants who have been assessed as being intentionally homeless by any Council and since that award has not had settled accommodation (defined by the CCP assessing officer)

Appendix 4 - Draft Cumbria Choice Policy Review 2020 - Consultation Responses

Ref no.	001	Aaron Linden (Information Governance Manager, Carlisle City Council)	Project Board Response
		<p>Comments: As part of the review, the data protection sections require updating as there are some out of date and some inaccurate points of information included within the Policy as it stands. In addition, the Privacy Notice on the Cumbria Choice website should also be reviewed in accordance with the eventual Policy amendments.</p> <p>The section highlighted in bold and underlined; permission/ consent must be freely given and cannot be a condition of service. The lawful basis for processing their personal information will be public task and the agreements lists relevant legislation. Individuals have a choice whether to progress with the CCP housing register however, if they decide to progress, they do not have a full control regarding the processing of their personal information. It is proposed that this section be removed completely. Please note, whilst specific sections have been highlighted for review, all sections should be reviewed as part of this process.</p> <p>General Data Protection Regulations 2018</p> <p>We will ensure for any person on the housing register their information is stored lawfully and we act in a fair and transparent way in processing their data. We will only collect data that is specific, explicit and legitimate for the purpose of the application and lettings processes set out in this policy. The data will be kept up to date and not held unnecessarily or without appropriate security measures in place. Information will only be shared with</p>	<p>All of the comments and suggestions provided by the Council's Information Governance Manager been approved by the Cumbria Choice Project Board and are now reflected in the final draft Allocation Policy, included in <i>Appendix 1</i>.</p>

other organisations or individuals in order to legitimately assess and progress a person's housing, for the prevention of fraud or with the person's explicit consent.

An applicant's permission to share their personal information is a qualification condition of being accepted onto the CCP housing register.

Appendix 1.2 sets out the details for how the scheme will apply:

- 1) The General Data Protection Regulations 2018
- 2) The 'Privacy Notice' for the policy, and
- 3) An applicant's right to information

Similar issue with this section below headed Assessing Applications as it refers to consent. What if a person consents to i.e. enquiries being made concerning their eligibility but not to allowing information to be provided to other partner organisations? If they have no choice, the wording should be changed to:

Applicants will be required to sign a declaration to confirm their understanding that:

- a) the information given is correct and that they will notify the CCP of any change in their circumstances.
- b) Enquiries will be made concerning their eligibility for housing and level of priority.
- c) Information will be provided to other partner organisations that are part of the scheme.

Ref no.	002	Councillor Gareth Ellis – Ward Member for Belah and Kingmoor & Deputy Leader of Carlisle City Council	Project Board Response
		<p>Comments: Having read through some of the detail on this. I'm not sure I agree with reducing the amount of time that Cumbrians have to be resident to be eligible for the scheme...</p> <p>“ A residency requirement of 1 year or 3 years in the last 5 to qualify for the higher needs bands A or B will have some impact on, refugees, non-UK nationals and Irish Travellers. The revised scheme has attempted to: Strike the right balance between disadvantage to some groups of a residency requirement and the policy aims of the residence requirement, which is to prioritise applicants who can demonstrate a positive commitment to Cumbria through being settled in the area. That is why:</p> <p>a) A 1-year qualification has been chosen instead of 2 or 3 years which is the norm for the vast majority of local authorities (based on the national statistical local authority returns to MHCLG)</p> <p>b) The policy still allows applicants without the required residency period to qualify for the register (unlike most local authority schemes), awards them band C and means they may be still be successful in bidding for properties.</p> <p>c) To mitigate any impact the policy is careful to build in exemptions and consideration of exceptional circumstances for applicants who do not meet the residency rules.</p> <p>This impact and mitigation is considered more fully below in the section on the impact of the Policy changes across all of the protected groups”</p> <p>Why one when others are two to three?</p>	<p>The following response has been provided by Andy Gale, the housing consultant who has written the new Allocation Policy, in collaboration with the Project Board:-</p> <p><i>“Firstly, there wasn't any qualification rule for the register under the old policy and we have added one for the new policy requiring the applicant to have been resident in Cumbria for 1 year or 3 years in the last 5.</i></p> <p><i>Then for shortlisting and prioritising bidders we have strengthened the requirement to have a local connection with the local authority where the property was located which was set out in 5.8 of the old Cumbria choice policy which required residence of 6 months in the last 12, or 3 years in the last 5. We strengthened this to needing to have been resident in that local authority area for the last year (not 6 months), or 3 years in the last 5.</i></p> <p><i>The Councillors may be referring to the Government guidance for setting qualification rules for local connection (not shortlisting) where the guidance is to go is 2 years (it does not recommend 3 years btw). Many councils in higher demand areas do set a 2 year or 3 year qualification rule for the register, but the trend in the north is not to set a 2 year rule, or many keep it to 6 months out of 12. In the discussions we had on the options for local connection the project group did not feel there was a need to set a longer period for qualification as the were not that many 'incomers'</i></p>

	<p><i>and there was a need to have enough applicants on the register to fill some of the harder to let properties</i></p> <p><i>I've set out the details below from the old and new policies to demonstrate that we have tightened the rules on local connection and not reduced them</i></p> <p><i>If Carlisle wanted to have a 2 or 3 year qualification rule just for Carlisle they could, but their stock housing association Riverside made clear they do not want restrictions as it would reduce the number of applicants that could fill their harder to let properties</i></p> <p>Old Policy: <i>No rule on local connection to qualify for the housing register</i></p> <p>New policy: <i>Must have lived within any area of Cumbria for the past year, or for 3 years in the last 5 and that residence was of their choice.</i></p> <p><i>Local connection for residence when shortlisting</i></p> <p>Old Policy</p> <p>5.8 Local Connection</p> <p><i>In situations where priority is to be given to applicants with a local connection the process will be:</i></p> <p><i>Banding priority will apply</i></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Within each Band those with a local connection to the Local Authority in which the property is located will be given a higher priority than those whose local connection is with other Cumbrian Authorities.</i> <p><i>A local connection means that a customer:</i></p> <p><i>Currently resides in the area in either temporary or permanent accommodation and has been resident in the Local Authority area or specified town/village for at least 6 out of the past 12 months or 3 out of the past 5 years.</i></p> <p><i>New Policy for shortlisting</i></p> <p><i>Have lived within any area of Cumbria for the past year, or for 3 years in the last 5 and that residence was of their choice.”</i></p> <p>The partnership agreed this approach would afford the housing associations participating in Cumbria Choice greater flexibility in their allocations. Through the consultation feedback received there was no objection from stakeholders to this amendment to the policy - all were in agreement.</p> <p>On a more general point - it is acknowledged that Carlisle needs to attract more working age people just to maintain existing employment levels due to the ageing population. A more flexible Allocations Policy can be of benefit in this respect.</p>
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EXECUTIVE

**Agenda
Item:**

A.6

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Leaders
Key Decision: Yes KD19/20
Policy and Budget Framework: No
Public / Private: Public

Title: Borderlands Place Programme
Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Report Number: ED29/20

Purpose / Summary:

This report outlines the Borderlands Place Programme purpose and process and asks the Executive to approve Longtown as the town to be included for the Carlisle District.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Member of the Executive:

- Note the contents of this report and the assessment of the shortlist of eligible towns within the Carlisle District provided in Appendix 1
- Approve Longtown as the town to be included in the Borderlands Place Programme

Tracking

Executive:	20 July 2020
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Borderlands Partnership was established in 2014, bringing together the five cross-border Local Authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the economic growth of the area that straddles the Scotland - England border.
- 1.2 Following the submission of a Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal proposal to the UK and Scottish Governments in September 2018, a Heads of Terms was signed with the UK and Scottish Governments on Monday 1 July 2019.
- 1.3 A core element of the Deal is the Place Programme. Our towns and their town centres are vital to the economic success, resilience and social sustainability of the Borderlands. They are also critically important centres for social and community services and facilities, economic well-being and social engagement
- 1.4 Many of our towns face significant challenges that require a sustained and coordinated response to ensure their long-term resilience and maintain their status at the heart of our communities. Many towns have long-standing needs for new investment.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The Place Programme will provide a new framework for investment in towns, underpinned by a 'whole-town' approach, with co-ordinated Place Plans led by town partnerships.
- 2.2 The objectives of the Programme are to:
 - Attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.
 - Increase and retain our working age population.
 - Raise the standard of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.
 - Increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.
 - Deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.
 - Increase the number of visitors who spend time and money in our towns and town centres, smaller conurbations and rural communities.
- 2.3 The towns to be included in the Place Programme and benefit from Borderlands Growth Deal investment will be selected by each of the five Borderlands local authorities, using a consistent methodology. This is based on the Borderlands Towns

Index, which will be used to assess the relative level of need and opportunity in each town, based on the following criteria:

- **Quantitative measures** - comparing the relative positions of towns using measures that point to challenges, needs and overall resilience, as well as growth performance and potential. This includes socioeconomic data on demographics, deprivation, economic activity and inactivity, health, crime, housing, access to services, travel to work, car ownership, qualification levels, earnings, employment by sector and occupation, business start-ups, and business numbers by sector.
- **Qualitative criteria** - capturing both opportunities and challenges, providing further insight into the issues faced by each Borderlands town. This includes recent incidences of flooding, large scale business closure / redundancies; potential for businesses and communities to drive regeneration; potential for new housing developments; the range and value of key economic assets in the town; potential to leverage private sector investment from significant local businesses.
- **Added value criteria** taking account of opportunities to add value at the local authority area level to other place-based investment programmes. For example, some towns facing significant challenges are not eligible to bid for other place-based funding such as Future High Streets Fund or Heritage Action Zones. The Place Programme will add value to these national programmes by funding activity in some towns that would otherwise miss out on investment. The potential to deliver this type of added value will be an important aspect of the town selection process.

- 2.4 Each local authority will create a long list of towns in its area with potential to benefit from Borderlands investment. Each town on the long list will be assessed against the criteria above and will be prioritised and ranked according to their ratings. By working through this process, local authorities will prioritise and select the towns to be put forward for Borderlands Growth Deal Investment.

3. Town Selection for Carlisle

- 3.1 In the District of Carlisle, two towns would be eligible for selection on the Place Programme, Brampton and Longtown.
- 3.2 The Selection Report attached at Appendix 1 has been compiled following the methodology set out in paragraph 2.3 and assesses the towns against the criteria set. The highlights of the Report are:

Quantitative Criteria

- Both Brampton and Longtown have the relevant quantitative indicators to make them suitable for intervention via the Borderlands Place Programme. Generally, however, Longtown displays a clearer need following the criteria.
- The high town centre vacancy rate for Longtown, where 17% of units are vacant, suggests relatively low town centre vitality and viability.
- Arthuret Parish (which Longtown is the most significant settlement) again has a relatively low Labour Market Profile, with only 20.5% of those over 16 in the higher Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups, compared to an English national average of 41.1%. Brampton Parish is also below the English average, however at 33.8%, the proportion is considerably higher than Longtown.

Qualitative and valued-added criteria

- Both towns have active Parish Councils, who have the potential to drive the regeneration of the areas.
- Brampton has a strong town centre, with 67 active businesses in the town centre, regular Farmers Markets and activities at the Moot Hall, of which indicate further potential for business led regeneration.
- Longtown has numerous large industrial sites and logistics base nearby. Alongside this Longtown Auction Mart supports the town as a local agricultural hub. Again, this indicates opportunities for certain business sectors to drive regeneration and an opportunity to grow Longtown's role as a hub for rural communities.
- In Brampton Carlisle City Council holds approximately 8.4Ha of land, and Cumbria County Council approximately 3Ha (developed and undeveloped sites). In Longtown Carlisle City Council holds approximately 6.5Ha, with 7.6Ha held by Cumbria County Council (developed and undeveloped sites).
- There is 62Ha of employment land, a former Ministry of Defence site, available outside the urban area of Longtown. This land presents a strong opportunity for redevelopment and could support the regeneration of the town. The site has direct rail links to the West Coast Mainline, making it a strong intermodal site for a large-scale business operation. The site is also a priority project for Cumbria LEP.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Previous consideration of the two eligible towns for Carlisle and their performance against the selection criteria has been considered by both the City Council's Joint Management Team and the County Council's Local Area Committee.

5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 In summary, there is a strong case for the selection of either Brampton and Longtown, with both towns satisfying the quantitative criteria, as well as much of the qualitative and added value criteria.
- 5.2 However, the quantitative indicators for deprivation and market failure are generally higher in Longtown, therefore suggesting greater need for investment and intervention. The qualitative and value-added indicators provide a persuasive case for its selection for the Place Programme.
- 5.3 On this basis it is recommended that Member of the Executive:
- Note the contents of this report and the assessment of the shortlist of eligible towns within the Carlisle District provided in Appendix 1
 - Approve Longtown as the town to be included in the Borderlands Place Programme

6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the key projects contribute to all five of the Carlisle Plan priorities:
- P1: Supporting business growth and skills development to improve opportunities and economic prospects for the people of Carlisle.
- P2: Further develop sports, arts and cultural facilities to support the health and well-being of our residents.
- P3: Improving the quality of our local environment and green spaces so that everyone can enjoy living, working and visiting Carlisle.
- P4: Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life.
- P5: Promoting Carlisle regionally, nationally and internationally as a place with much to offer - full of opportunities and potential.

Contact Officer: Steven Robinson

Ext: 7535

Appendices **Appendix 1 - Borderlands Place Programme Selection Report attached to report:**

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 – When making the decision as to which town to nominate for the Programme, the Council must follow the procedure set down in the Heads of Terms of the Growth Deal and take into account all relevant considerations. By applying the criteria outlined in the report the Council should be able to demonstrate that the decision is a reasonable one which has been arrived at in a fair manner.

PROPERTY SERVICES – No property implications

FINANCE – The Place Programme forms part of the Borderlands Growth Deal, for which both the UK and Scottish Governments have provided financial resources. The Council, along with other Borderland partners, is continuing to contribute financial resources to support the development of business cases for projects and programmes. A total allocation of £30million has been earmarked in the Borderlands Growth Deal for the Place Programme and will be distributed across the five partner authorities for investment in the approved towns.

EQUALITY –

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE –

Borderlands Place Programme Selection

1. Introduction:

1.1 The Borderlands Place Programme is a framework for investing in rural towns across the Borderlands region, it aims to:

- Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in, firmly in partnership with local, regional and national government.
- Attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.
- Increase and retain our working age population.
- Raise the standard of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.
- Increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.
- Deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.
- Increasing the number of visitors who spend time and money in our towns and town centres, smaller conurbations and rural communities.

1.2 Each District in Cumbria is responsible for selecting one town for inclusion in the Programme. Each selected town will work towards the production of a Place Plan to support the regeneration of the town. In the District of Carlisle, two towns would be eligible for selection on the Place Programme, Brampton and Longtown.

1.3 The following data has been compiled following the Borderlands Place Programme Town Selection methodology, which comprises a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators/criteria for identifying towns to be selected for the programme.

2. Quantitative Indicators:

Table 1: Quantitative indicators

	Brampton	Longtown	Source	Notes
Population	4,761	4,166	ONS SOA estimates 2012	
Population change	1.7	1.3	ONS SOA estimates 2012	
Indices of deprivation			Data for Brampton and Arthuret Parish	
Most deprived 20% areas of England	No	Yes		
Working age DWP out of work benefits claimants (%)	8.6	9.1		8.2% England average DWP 2018
Town Centre footfall count	NO DATA	NO DATA		

Commercial Property Vacancy Rates			2019 town centre health check	
Town centre	8%	17%		
Industrial Sites	11%	9%		
Combined total	9%	12%		
Housing Tenure			Data for Brampton and Arthuret Parish	
Owner Occupied	61.70%	62.70%		64.1% England average
Housing that is socially rented	21.30%	20.10%		17.7% England average
Private rented	12.90%	12.80%		15.4% England average
Labour Market Profile (2011 Census)			Data for Brampton and Arthuret Parish	
higher SOC groups	33.80%	20.50%		41.1% England average
Lowest SOC groups	16.70%	12.80%		11.1% England average
Level 4+ qualifications	25.70%	12.10%		27.4% England average
No qualifications	23.70%	35.40%		22.5% England average

Table key:

	Indicators above national average
	Indicators equal to or slightly below national average
	Indicators significantly below national average

- 2.1** Both Brampton and Longtown have the relevant quantitative indicators to make them suitable for intervention via the Borderlands Place Programme. Generally, however, Longtown displays a clearer need following the criteria.
- 2.2** The high town centre vacancy rate for Longtown, where 17% of units are vacant, suggests relatively low town centre vitality and viability.

- 2.3** Moreover Arthuret Parish (which Longtown is the most significant settlement by population in) again has a relatively low Labour Market Profile, with only 20.5% of those over 16 in the higher Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) groups, compared to an English national average of 41.1%. Brampton Parish is also significantly below the English average, however at 33.8%, it is also considerably higher than Longtown.
- 2.4** Alongside this, Arthuret has a significantly higher group of adults with no qualifications (35.4%) than both Brampton (23.7%)- and the English average (22.5%), while only 12.1% of adults have level 4 or higher qualifications in Longtown (against a 27.4% English average).
- 2.5** Housing tenure in Arthuret and Brampton reveals more private renters, social housing tenants and less owner-occupiers in both towns than the English averages, with a greater difference in Brampton against the English national average, however in both towns this is marginal.

3. Qualitative and Added Value Criteria

- 3.1** Both towns have active Parish Councils, who have the potential to drive the regeneration of the areas. Arthuret Parish Council are in the final stages of development of their Community Action Plan, which could support the creation of a Place Plan for Longtown which would drive the investment from the Place Programme.
- 3.2** Both Longtown and Brampton have active Community Centres. Brampton has the Brampton and Beyond Community Trust, a registered charity running both Brampton Community Centre and the Brampton and Beyond Energy Company Ltd. This has the longterm ambition of creating a community led energy project to provide energy for the supply of heat and power locally. Their current project is the development of a 500-kW anaerobic digester at Middle Farm, Brampton.
- 3.3** Brampton has a strong town centre, with 67 active businesses in the town centre, regular Farmers Markets and activities at the Moot Hall, of which indicate further potential for business led regeneration. Longtown has numerous large industrial sites and logistics base nearby. Alongside this Longtown Auction Mart supports the town as a local agricultural hub. Again, this indicates opportunities for certain business sectors to drive regeneration and an opportunity to grow Longtown's role as a hub for rural communities.
- 3.4** In Brampton Carlisle City Council holds approximately 8.4Ha of land, and Cumbria County Council approximately 3Ha (developed and undeveloped sites). In Longtown Carlisle City Council holds approximately 6.5Ha, with 7.6Ha held by Cumbria County Council (developed and undeveloped sites).
- 3.5** There is 62Ha of employment land, a former Ministry of Defence site, available outside the urban area of Longtown. This land presents a strong opportunity for redevelopment and could support the regeneration of the town. The site has direct rail links to the West Coast Mainline, making it a strong intermodal site for a large-scale business operation. The site is also a priority project for Cumbria LEP.

- 3.6** Both towns have opportunities for growth due to close proximity to the new opened Carlisle Lake District Airport, with flights to London, Belfast and Dublin. This also presents opportunities to grow visitor numbers to the district, of which both towns could benefit from.
- 3.7** A feasibility study for the extension of the Borders Railway from Tweedbank to Carlisle is being undertaken as part of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. With this there is potential for Longtown to be connected to both Carlisle and Edinburgh by rail.

4. Recommendations and Considerations:

- 4.1** In deciding which of the two towns should be selected for the Borderlands Place Programme, Members may wish to take the following into consideration:
- There is a strong case for the selection of both Brampton and Longtown, with both towns satisfying the quantitative criteria, as well as much of the qualitative and added value criteria.
 - Quantitative indicators for deprivation and market failure are generally higher in Longtown, therefore suggesting greater need for investment and intervention.
 - Solway 45 offers a significant opportunity for investment and growth for Longtown, which is aided by the connection to the national rail network
 - The Borders Railway Feasibility study, being undertaken as part of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, may open a future opportunity for a Railway Station in or near Longtown which would connect the town to Carlisle, the Scottish Borders and Edinburgh by rail, improving connectivity and supporting Longtown's growth as a rural service hub.
- 4.6** Cumulatively the opportunities at Longtown provide a persuasive case for its selection for the Place Programme and would provide significant added value to any strategic investment to support a wide programme of regeneration in the town.
- 4.7** Notwithstanding this, the opportunities for growth and private sector leverage due to its proximity to Carlisle Lake District Airport also make Brampton a viable candidate. In addition, Brampton is strategically located, close to the North Pennines and Hadrian's Wall, to benefit from increased visitor numbers as a result of the Airport opening.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Table of Qualitative and Added Value Criteria

	Brampton	Longtown
Potential for communities and businesses to drive regeneration	<p>Active Parish Council</p> <p>Brampton and Beyond Community Trust a registered charity who run the Brampton Community Centre and the Brampton and Beyond Energy Company Ltd.</p> <p>Strong town centre, with 67 active businesses in the town centre.</p> <p>Townfoot Business Park</p> <p>Moot Hall</p> <p>Farmers Markets</p> <p>Tourism offer – location close to WHO site, Hadrian's Wall there is scope to provide more of connection to this tourism offer</p> <p>Act as hub for wider rural community- opportunity to grow this role.</p>	<p>Active Parish Council</p> <p>Longtown Community Centre.</p> <p>Numerous large industrial sites in and around Longtown, with scope for businesses to drive regeneration.</p> <p>Longtown Auction Mart supports the town as a local agricultural hub</p> <p>Tourism Offer – cycling - Rievers Routes, 7 Staines etc</p> <p>Act as hub for wider rural community- opportunity to grow this role.</p>

Range and value of public sector estates and community assets	<p>Carlisle City Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 8.4 Ha of land <p>Cumbria County Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 3 Ha of land 	<p>Carlisle City Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 6.5 Ha of land <p>Cumbria County Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 7.6 Ha of land <p>Ministry of Defence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solway 45: 62 Ha employment land available on former MoD site
Scope for Private sector leverage	<p>Strong town centre business community.</p> <p>Opportunity with Carlisle Lake District Airport.</p> <p>Townfoot Industrial Park with 11% vacancy rate requires investment.</p>	<p>Rail sidings Ltd. Interest in Solway 45 site.</p> <p>Opportunity with Carlisle Lake District Airport.</p> <p>Numerous industrial sites with a range of sectors and larger employers nearby.</p> <p>Hub for logistics operations</p>
Scope for transformation to be catalysed by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National interventions Local interventions Other Borderlands interventions 	<p>Brampton and Beyond Energy Ltd- aim for Anaerobic Digester to generate power for the town and generate an income of which a portion will be invested back into the community.</p>	<p>Solway 45 identified by Cumbria LEP as a priority project.</p> <p>Borders Rail feasibility study- potential for Longtown to become a railway town with rail links to Carlisle and Edinburgh.</p>

**Appendix 2: Boundaries for quantitative data Place selection (Arthuret and
Brampton Parishes)**



NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE KEY DECISIONS

19 June 2020

Notice of Key Decisions

This document provides information on the 'key decisions' to be taken by the Executive within the next 28 days. The Notice will be updated on a monthly basis and sets out:

- Details of the key decisions which are to be taken;
- Dates of the Executive meetings at which decisions will be taken;
- Details of who will be consulted and dates for consultation;
- Reports and background papers which will be considered during the decision making process;
- Details of who to contact if further information is required
- Details of where the document can be inspected
- Details of items which the public may be excluded from the meeting under regulation 4(2) and the reason why
- Details of documents relating to the decision which need not, because of regulation 20(3) be disclosed to the public and the reason why.

The dates on which each new Notice will be published are set below:

Publication Dates

6 March 2020	14 August 2020
24 April 2020	11 September 2020
22 May 2020	9 October 2020
19 June 2020	13 November 2020
17 July 2020	14 December 2020

Key decisions are taken by the City Council's Executive and these are usually open to the public. Agendas and reports and any other documents relevant to the decision which may be submitted can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre at the Civic Centre, Carlisle or on the City Council's website (www.carlisle.gov.uk). Agendas and reports are published one week ahead of the meeting.

A Key Decision is an Executive decision which is likely –

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant* having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates;
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority.

*significant expenditure or savings to the authority in excess of £70,000

The City Council's Executive Members are:

- Councillor J Mallinson (Leader / Chairman)
- Councillor G Ellis (Deputy Leader, and Finance, Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder)
- Councillor N Christian (Environment and Transport Portfolio Holder)
- Councillor S Higgs (Culture, Heritage and Leisure Portfolio Holder)
- Councillor Mrs Mallinson (Communities, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder)
- Councillor P Nedved (Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder)

Should you wish to make any representations in relation to the items being held in private or If you require further information regarding this notice please contact Democratic Services on 01228 817039 or committeeservices@carlisle.gov.uk.

Index of Active Key Decisions

		Date Decision to be considered:	Date Decision to be taken:
KD.01/20	Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy	10 February 2020 (under General Exception) consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate (EX.18/20)	12 October 2020
KD.07/20	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026	12 October 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate	14 December 2020
KD.13/20	The Asset Management Plan 2021 - 2026	20 July 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate	17 August 2020
KD.15/20	The Medium Term Financial Plan (including the Corporate Charging Policy) & the Capital Investment Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26	20 July 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate	17 August 2020
KD.16/20	Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-2025	22 June 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate	20 July 2020

Index of Active Key Decisions

		Date Decision to be considered:	Date Decision to be taken:
KD.18/20	Approval of updated Cumbria Choice Allocation Policy	22 June 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate	20 July 2020
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KD.19/20	Borderlands Place Programme		20 July 2020
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Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.01/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to recommend the adoption of the strategy to Council
Date Decision to be considered:	10 February 2020 (under General Exception) consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate (EX.18/20)
Date Decision to be taken:	12 October 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public.
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	Report PC.02/20 - Local Environment (Climate Change) Strategy on 10 February 2020
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Economic Development, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Environment and Transport (Councillor Christian)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.07/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2021-2026
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to support the strategic priorities identified as part of a statutory review and consultation process; targeting Homelessness and Rough Sleeping in Carlisle from 2021 to 2026.
Date Decision to be considered:	12 October 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate
Date Decision to be taken:	14 December 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Economy, Enterprise and and Housing (Councillor Nedved)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.13/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	The Asset Management Plan 2021 - 2026
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to consider the Council's Asset Management Plan and make recommendations to Council.
Date Decision to be considered:	20 July 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate
Date Decision to be taken:	17 August 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Finance, Governance and Resources (Councillor Ellis)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.15/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	The Medium Term Financial Plan (including the Corporate Charging Policy) & the Capital Investment Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to consider the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and Corporate Charging Policy, and the Council's Capital Investment Strategy and make recommendations to Council.
Date Decision to be considered:	20 July 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate
Date Decision to be taken:	17 August 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public.
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Corporate Director Finance and Resources will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Finance, Governance and Resources (Councillor Ellis)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.16/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-2025
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to adopt the Solway Coast AONB Management Plan 2020-2025
Date Decision to be considered:	22 June 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate
Date Decision to be taken:	20 July 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Director of Economic Development will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Economic Development, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Economy, Enterprise and and Housing (Councillor Nedved)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.18/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	Approval of updated Cumbria Choice Allocation Policy
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to approve the updated Cumbria Choice allocations policy for social housing, subject to Scrutiny and consideration by Officers. Endorsing the updated policy will ensure greater clarity and consistency for households registering for social housing in Carlisle, while simultaneously complying with legislative changes and good practice.
Date Decision to be considered:	22 June 2020 consultation period to include Overview and Scrutiny as appropriate
Date Decision to be taken:	20 July 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public.
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Economy, Enterprise and Housing (Councillor Nedved)
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by the Executive

The following key decision is to be made on behalf of Carlisle City Council:

Key Decision Reference:	KD.19/20
Type of Decision:	Executive
Decision Title:	Borderlands Place Programme
Decision to be taken:	The Executive will be asked to confirm the selection of the town within the Carlisle District to be included in the Borderlands Place Programme.
Date Decision to be considered:	
Date Decision to be taken:	20 July 2020
Is the Decision Public or Private?:	The decision will be taken in public.
Documents submitted for consideration in relation to the Decision:	The report of the Corporate Director of Economic Development will be available five working days before the meeting
Contact Officer for this Decision:	Corporate Director of Economic Development, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG
Relevant Portfolio Area:	Leader
Relevant or Lead Overview and Scrutiny Panel:	Economic Growth Scrutiny Panel

All public reports can be viewed in the Customer Contact Centre of the Civic Centre, Carlisle, the Public Library and on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk.

Other documents relevant to the matter may be submitted to the decision maker. These, if available, may be obtained by contacting the named contact officer.

Notice prepared by Councillor John Mallinson,
Leader of Carlisle City Council

Date: 19 June 2020

Below is a list of decisions taken by Individual Portfolio Holders acting under delegated powers, full details can be viewed on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk:

PF.5/20

Free After Three and Parking Charges

Portfolio Holder who made the Decision:

Councillor Mr Nigel Edward Christian

Portfolio Area:

Subject Matter:

The 'Free After Three' initiative was intended to support our high street businesses given the current challenging conditions through the offer of free parking to attract residents and visitors to Carlisle City Centre. The trial is due to end on the 31st August 2020.

Alternative support is being offered to commuters to Carlisle as follows -

It is proposed that we extend the early bird tariff from 9.30am to 10.30am Monday to Friday, this will support businesses returning to work on a phased basis.

The reinstatement of car park charges from 1st June, has now allowed us to look at options to assist business on their return to work, one of these options is the extension of the early bird scheme. The early bird scheme currently ends at 9.30am Monday to Friday and is available in

- West Walls
- Sands Car Park
- Swifts Car Park
- Viaduct

It is proposed to extend the early bird scheme until 10.30am.

To support the local economy, it is proposed that we offer a check in/check out system on our pay and display machines, this will be used initially in West Walls Car Park before being rolled out to other car parks.

This scheme will allow visitors to check in using their card and not worry about having to rush back and be limited to the time spent in the City. The system means they will only pay for the time they are in the car park. Once they return to the car park they can then check out.

As well as considering the above we are also looking at further support including but not limited to additional free parking on the run up to Christmas and free targeted parking to support events within the City.

The Council currently offers a pay by phone service in conjunction with MiPermit. There is a 10p service charge to users of this app: to encourage contactless payments and to assist commuters the Council will pay this charge.

Summary of Options rejected:

Continuing with the free after three limits the scope to offer more flexible support going forward.

DECISION

To formally consult on the phasing out of the Free After Three initiative by 31st August 2020 and its replacement thereafter by the parking support options outlined above.

Reasons for Decision

It is widely recognised that this is a difficult time for business, residents and visitors, and to help support recovery, and to offer alternative options to parking, we are proposing as follows.

- The proposal to end the free after three scheme is to allow other options being given to businesses and visitors to Carlisle.
- There have been a number of obstacles which has prevented an adequate understanding of whether the free after three has been beneficial, closure of the Victoria Viaduct and COVID19.
- The early bird scheme is a very successful, and due to the potential phased return of business by extending the scheme it will allow key workers the ability to park at a cheaper rate for longer. It will also encourage visitors to the area by extending the early bird hour to encourage people to stay all day in certain car parks.
- The check in/check out system will allow visitors to the car park to arrive at West Walls car park, they can then check in at the pay and display machine and go into the City Centre to shop, drink, eat and not be concerned that they have a limited time to do this. This system will allow the customer to stay longer and they can check out on their return to the car park.
- The Council will remove the 10p service charge on the MiPermit pay to park service that the customer pays, this will allow the customer to pay for parking without facing an additional cost.

Background Papers considered:

Report will be considered by the Executive in July

Date Decision Made: 18 June 2020

**Implementation
Date:**

Officer Decisions

A.9

Below is a list of decisions taken by Officers which they have classed as significant, full details and supporting background documents can be viewed on the Council's website www.carlisle.gov.uk/CMIS/

Decision Ref No	Title: Subject and Decision Taken:	Reports and Background Papers considered:	Date Decision Taken:	Decision Maker:
OD.79/20	<p>Temporary Car Park closures to support priority improvements to Carlisle's flood defences.</p> <p>The Environment Agency (EA) need to carry out essential flood defence work in and around Swifts Bank and Bitts Park. The scheme is due to start on the 4th August 2020 and end on 31st March 2021. It is proposed by the Environment Agency that access to both Swifts and Bitts Car Park is needed to ensure the works can be carried out safely with minimal disruption and efficiency.</p> <p>Swifts Bank Car Park – approximately 58 parking spaces will be used by the EA to set up a compound so works in and around The Sands can be carried out as well as works in The Swifts.</p> <p>Bitts Car Park – due to the number of works to be carried out and in the interest of public health and safety, this car park will be closed temporarily to customers. Alternative parking is available at Castle Car Park and The Sands that have easy access to Bitts Park.</p>	None	19 June 2020	Neighbourhood Services Manager
OD.77/20	<p>Health & Wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>A Health & Wellbeing Strategy has been developed in order to support and promote the Council's activities which contribute towards the health and wellbeing of its employees. The Council has attained the Silver Better Health at Work award and is currently working towards the Gold award, and this strategy will help support that process. The Strategy is appended to this decision notice and has been discussed and agreed by SMT on 9th June 2020.</p>	None	10 June 2020	Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
OD.78/20	<p>Standards Arrangements: Continuation of Independent Person Appointment</p> <p>Pursuant to the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, the Annual Council Meeting scheduled to be held on 18 May 2020 be</p>	GD.16/16 – Appointment of Independent Person Standards Committee 10 March 2016	18 May 2020	Corporate Director of Governance and Regulatory Services

	cancelled. Appointments which would have been made at the said Annual Meeting continue with the current appointed persons until the next Annual Meeting. That Ms Jane Elliott continue as the City Council's Independent Person until May 2021 when a replacement appointment can be made.			
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JOINT MANAGEMENT TEAM

MINUTES – 22nd June 2020

Attendees	Leader; Deputy Leader; PH Economy, Enterprise & Housing; PH Environment & Transport; PH Culture, Heritage & Leisure; PH Communities, Health & Wellbeing; Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive; Corporate Director of Governance & Regulatory Services; Corporate Director of Finance & Resources; Corporate Director of Economic Development
Apologies	

Agenda Item 1 – Minutes of Meeting 26th May 2020	Action
Noted and agreed	
Agenda Item 2 – Carlisle Plan	
The Deputy Chief Executive referred to the papers previous circulated and following a full discussion, Executive and Members agreed the way forward	
Agenda Item 3 – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan	
The Deputy Chief Executive led the discussion on the Action Plan prepared by SMT. Each action was fully reviewed, and agreement made on taking this forward	

Agenda Item 4 – Options for Increasing the Delivery of Affordable Housing	
The Corporate Director of Economic Development led the discussion on the Report circulated which provided a comprehensive update on the current position following the Motion to Council in November 2019. Executive asked their thanks be conveyed to the Officer who had prepared this	
Agenda Item 5 – Covid Updates	
The Chief Executive provided a full update on the current position and advised the importance of following Government Guidelines	
Agenda Item 6 - Updates on Borderlands; The Sands; Civic Centre; St Cuthbert's Garden Village; Central Plaza; J44	
Members of SMT provided the Executive with their update on the current position regarding each area	
Agenda Item 7 – Future Items for Notice of Executive Key Decisions	
Noted and agreed	
Agenda Item 8 - JMT Forward Plan	
Reviewed and updated	

Executive

Agenda
Item:

A.11

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Transport and Environment
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes
Public / Private: Public

Title: REVIEW OF CAR PARKING INITIATIVES
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive
Report Number: CS16/20

Purpose / Summary:

The report outlines initiatives to encourage use of the Council's car parks across the year and targeted towards key dates of the year to replace the Free After Three initiative at the end of the trial period on 31 August 2020.

Recommendations:

Subject to the outcome of consultation, Executive is recommended to approve the following initiatives as the Free After Three trial comes to an end on 31 August 2020:

- Introduction of a 'Check-in, check-out' payment option
- Introduction of reduced or free parking targeted at key dates / events / car parks across the year
- Extension of the 'early-bird' offer by one hour
- Encouraging wider use of non-cash payment options

Tracking

Executive:	20 July 2020
Scrutiny:	N/A
Council:	N/A

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Free After Three trial started on 01 August 2019 offering free parking in three car parks with the aim of supporting local retailers and businesses and to encourage use of the city after 3.00pm. Originally due to end in March 2020, Executive subsequently agreed to extend the trial to 31 August 2020, as participation in the scheme was low despite wide marketing and promotion. The first phase of the trial was affected by the closure of the Victoria Viaduct as works to make safe and demolish the Central Plaza building were carried out. Take-up during the extension period has also been significantly affected by the lockdown since March 2020 when occupancy levels across all car parks dropped to very low levels and are only gradually starting to recover as restrictions are eased. This has significantly impacted on the council's income levels from car parking with a drop of over £300,000 for the first three months since April 2020.
- 1.2 Free After Three was originally forecast to 'cost' the Council £36,000pa adding to the pressure on income budgets. With limited evidence to confirm any positive impact on increased visitor numbers or spend in the city centre after 3.00pm, questions need to be asked about the future viability of this trial and if developing other initiatives would be better support the high street through these challenging times and be more cost effective.
- 1.3 This report highlights the options available to replace the Free After Three trial when it ends on 31 August 2020, including:
- the introduction of a 'Check-in, check-out' payment option
 - the introduction of reduced or free parking targeted at key dates / events / car parks across the year
 - the extension of the 'early-bird' cut-off time by one hour
 - encouraging wider use of non-cash payment options

2.0 CHECK-IN / CHECK-OUT OPTION

- 2.1 Customers using the pay and display option, will pre-pay for their parking space for a set time which potentially restricts their time in the city centre for fear of returning late to find a penalty charge notice (fine) on their windscreen, leaving little room for spontaneity. Likewise, those just popping to the shop or bank for 15 minutes may feel they are being penalised when they need to pay for a minimum of one hour's parking.

- 2.2 Whilst paying for parking via the mobile app provides more flexibility to extend the parking time without the inconvenience of returning to the car park, it does not address the second point above which may be a barrier to some people using our car parks.
- 2.3 Check-in / check-out provides customers with the ability to pay for parking per minute by using a debit/credit card on arrival to 'check-in' and again on departure, to 'check out'. The system will then automatically charge for the time used, per minute, illustrated as follows with the example of a customer parking for 90 minutes at the West Walls car park:

	Customer pays for two hours parking	Customer selects Check-in Check-out option
First hour:	£1.20	£1.20
Second hour:	£0.90	£0.45
Total paid:	£2.10	£1.65

- 2.4 It is recognised that this has the potential to impact on income levels, hence the need to trial this in West Walls car park, before rolling it out to other car parks. This is, however, ultimately about increasing flexibility for customers who may want to stay longer in the city centre without the need to rush back when their parking ticket expires.
- 2.5 There are costs for initial set-up approximately £700 per car park, plus a monthly charge of £17.50 per ticket machine, but it should lead to efficiencies over time as more people move to cashless transactions. For example, a single ticket machine with the check-in / check-out facility at the entrance to a car park would cost £4,425 (excl. installation) compared to say four pay and display ticket machines located across the car park at a cost of $4 \times £4,425 = £17,700$ (excl. installation). There are also potential additional costs for back office service and connectivity at £220 per machine.
- 2.6 Should the customer, intentionally or otherwise, forget to check-out when leaving the car park, the system will automatically charge the full cost of parking for the remaining period up to the end of the charging period, currently 6.00pm. Whilst this control is in place to reduce the risk of abuse of the scheme, it may be a positive feature for many customers who park all day and / or depart after 6.00pm as there will be no need for them to check-out when leaving; they will simply get in to their car and drive away.

3.0 REDUCED OR FREE PARKING TARGETED AT KEY DATES OR EVENTS ACROSS THE YEAR

- 3.1 Across the year, the city centre will be host to various high-profile events where it may be considered desirable to support through the offer of free or reduced / fixed rate parking to increase visitor numbers and encourage those attending the events to stay longer and support local business etc. The offer may also be targeted to key times of the year where free or reduced / fixed rate parking may encourage use of our car parks and spend in the city centre.
- 3.2 Through discussion and agreement with the Portfolio Holder, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, will hold delegated responsibility to agree to one-off, parking offers in designated council car parks to support local events across the year or targeted offers to support key dates.

4.0 THE EXTENSION OF THE 'EARLY-BIRD' OFFER BY ONE HOUR

- 4.1 To encourage use of our car parks, the Council introduced the early-bird offer, to provide reduced cost parking for those arriving before 09:30 and parking all day. This is a very popular offer with commuters and students.
- 4.2 It is now proposed to extend the cut-off time for the early-bird offer to 10:30 as people's travel patterns change to reduce congestion on the road at peak-time and to allow greater flexibility for businesses to offer staggered start times for staff to support social distancing requirements.

5.0 ENCOURAGING WIDER USE OF NON-CASH PAYMENT OPTIONS

- 5.1 To encourage payment by mobile app the council has the option of paying the 10p transaction fee directly to the provider. Currently this is paid by the customer. On current numbers this would cost the Council approximately £4,000 per year but would save regular customers up to 50p per week if they used the app every weekday. This small fee may be a barrier to some for accessing the app, perhaps out of principle for some as opposed to affordability. Removing this charge will encourage more customers to migrate across and therefore increase the cost to the Council. However, we would be confident that the wider benefits would cover this cost over time as it would allow us to reduce the

number of parking machines needed in future, reduce maintenance, cleaning and cash collection costs etc

Note: this concerns the 10p admin fee per transaction. Charges for the text reminder service would still be met by the customer for this optional service.

6.0 CONSULTATION / TIMESCALE

- 6.1 As some of the changes above impact on the charging arrangements for our car parks, the Council is required to consult with key stakeholders before confirming its intentions through the publication of a formal notice. This period of consultation ran from 26 June to 13 July 2020. Feedback from the consultation will be available prior to the meeting of Executive on 20 July 2020.
- 6.2 Subject to the outcome of consultation, and approval by Executive, the formal notice will be published on 31 July 2020. This will confirm the:
- Reinstatement of standard charges for parking after 3.00pm from 01 September 2020 as the Free After Three trial ends on 31 August 2020.
 - Check-in / check-out to start from 01 September 2020 in West Walls with the aim of extending this to other car parks after an initial review period.
 - The extension of the early-bird cut-off time from 09:30 to 10:30
- 6.3 The other initiatives sit outside of the formal process and will not feature in the notice to be published.
- 6.4 The annual review of fees and charges provides the mechanism for agreeing these offers from April 2021 and beyond.

7.0 RISKS

- 7.1 Whilst it is expected that the Council will fall significantly short this year of its income target from car parking due to low occupancy rates during the lockdown and over the gradual recovery period, it is clear that any additional measures will simply add to the existing pressures this year and potentially into future years. It is recommended therefore that such measures are considered as an alternative to, not in addition to, the Free After Three trial. Failure to hit the income targets places an increasing pressure on budgets impacting on the ability of the Council to deliver on its priorities.

- 7.2 Inevitably when a 'free offer' is withdrawn there may be some negative publicity, however, there should be confidence that the new measures will be positively received, supporting more customers and businesses and given the current context, residents and businesses of Carlisle will understand the reasons behind such decisions.
- 7.3 Communicating the key messages will be important across all media and in our car parks. This will be followed by a period of 'soft enforcement' in the former trial car parks should anyone park without paying for a ticket after 3.00pm for the first week in September 2020.

8.0 CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 The parking initiatives proposed in this report re-confirm the ongoing support of the Council to support local businesses and retailers to help meet the challenging conditions of the high street. They also encourage the move to cashless transactions at the same time as increasing flexibility and convenience for customers. The new flexible approach will support visitors, shoppers and local businesses through free or discounted parking offers targeted to key events or times of the year.
- 8.2 In considering the proposals, it is important to recognise the potential impact that each of the different parking offers / initiatives may have on the Council's budget this year and going forward. The targeted offer provides more scope across the year to review the financial position in a timely way and consider / adjust the options available at the time also taking into account local circumstances.
- 8.3 Subject to the outcome of consultation, Executive is recommended to approve the introduction of the measures below for implementation after the Free After Three trial ends on 31 August 2020:
- development of a Check-in / Check-out option from 01 September 2020 in West Walls car park with the aim of extending this to other car parks after an initial review period.
 - extension of the early-bird cut-off time from 09:30 to 10:30
 - introduction of reduced or free parking targeted at key dates / events / car parks across the year
 - introduction of measures to encourage greater use of non-cash payment alternatives such as removing the 10pence fee to the customer for payment by app.

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

9.1 The proposals cut across two priorities:

- **Economic prospects:** Support business growth and skills development to improve opportunities and economic prospects for the people of Carlisle
- **Promote Carlisle:** Promote Carlisle regionally, nationally and internationally as a place with much to offer – full of opportunities and potential.

Contact Officer: Darren Crossley

Ext: 7120

**Appendices
attached to report:** None

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 – The formal procedure governing changes to parking charges is set out in Section 35C of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended) and Regulation 25 of the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure)(England and Wales) Regulations 1996. This procedure stipulates that any proposed changes to such charges should be consulted on prior to formal approval and subsequently if approved publicly advertised prior to implementation. The consultation period opened on 26th June 2020 and the specified deadline for receipt of consultation responses by the Council was 5 p m on 13th July 2020.

The Council's Financial Procedure Rules (Section 4 Appendix D31) prescribe that any new charge or change to existing charges requires the approval of the Executive in order to be implemented subsequently.

PROPERTY SERVICES – N/A

FINANCE – The report considers options to make changes to the off-street parking regime to encourage more visitors and shoppers to the City. Each option discussed in the report will carry additional costs, either ongoing or initial set-up costs as outlined in the

report. These costs will have to be met from existing budgets using the existing virement rules. Any shortfall in income as a result of these initiatives will also have to be met from existing budgets. Any future year impact may wish to be considered as part of the 2021/22 budget process. The report does not quantify the potential impact on income from these initiatives as it will be dependent upon overall usage of car parks.

The Check-in/Check-Out option could see parking machines rationalised and could lead to longer-term savings/efficiencies that can be used to offset any losses of these initiatives.

Offering and encouraging greater use of cash-free payment methods may also provide an opportunity to reduce cash collection charges and reduce the risks and fees around banking, including losses from the use of fake coins.

As outlined in the report, the Council is likely to see a major shortfall in parking income in 2020/21 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These initiatives are to be seen as a way to encourage visitors and car park users back to the City and this in turn will help support local businesses. Consideration of the options should also take into account the fact that the Council has expectations of funding from business rates and any parking initiatives that help sustain City Centre usage could be seen as potentially protecting this funding stream longer-term so that it can then be used to support overall Council services.

EQUALITY – This report raises no explicit issues relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – N/A

Executive

Agenda
Item:

A.12

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Economy, Enterprise and Housing
Key Decision: No
Within Policy and Budget Framework: Yes
Public / Private: Public

Title: Self and Custom Build Housing Grants
Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Report Number: ED 25.20

Purpose / Summary:

This report sets out proposals for the introduction of a grant funding programme to assist applicants on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Housing Register with a contribution of up to £2,000 towards the set-up costs of building their own homes, using '*New Burdens*' funding already held by the Council.

Recommendations:

Executive is asked to:-

- i) approve making £40,000 of *Self and Custom Build New Burdens* funding available to provide grants, up to a maximum of £2,000 each, to applicants on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Housing register, as a contribution towards Planning, Building Control and architect's fees associated with developing their own self/custom build house within the District of Carlisle, in accordance with the principles set out;
- ii) provide delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Economic Development to authorise, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Council's S151 Officer, the release of additional *New Burdens* funding for further grants, if the scheme proves successful and the initial allocation is all spent.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Government is keen to encourage higher levels of custom and self-build development, which it is acknowledged is significantly lower in the UK than most other developed countries. Building or commissioning your own home provides an opportunity to people, or community groups, wishing to design and build their own homes as an alternative to the product offered by volume housebuilders.
- 1.2** Section 14 of The Council's Affordable and Specialist Housing Supplementary Planning Document confirms the Council's support for individuals (or self-build groups) who wish to develop their own home, through either:-
- Self-build housing – where someone directly organises the design and construction of their new home; or
 - Custom housebuilding – where someone works with a specialist developer to deliver their home.
- 1.3** The Council was required to establish a register of people interested in building their own home through the provisions of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015). The Housing and Planning Act (2016) places an additional duty on Local Planning Authorities to grant adequate permissions of serviced plots to meet the needs of demand on their Self and Custom Build Register. A serviced plot of land has access to a public highway and connections for electricity, water and wastewater.
- There are currently 18 applicants on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Register. However, despite the Council publicising the Register on our Website and social media pages, it is likely that a lot of people who may be interested in building their own home still won't know about the register, so it is anticipated the demand is significantly greater. Work is currently being progressed through a study by *Custom Build Homes* to establish a more detailed demand profile for this type of housing in Carlisle.
- 1.4** The Council was also a partner in setting up the Cumbria and Lancaster Community-Led Housing Hub (managed by ACT – Action with Communities in Cumbria) in early 2019, providing support to local groups interested in developing their own homes. The Hub has since secured additional funding from Central Government to continue running under its own auspices.
- 1.5** The City Council hosted a self-build event at Carlisle College in March 2018 to raise awareness and bring interested parties together, with about 40 people in attendance (including self-builders; architects; smaller (SME) builders; local lenders; and Housing and Planning Officers) and more recent events hosted by Allerdale, Eden and Lancaster District Councils have all been very well attended.

- 1.6** Two planning applications have recently been received for custom or self-build housing sites – one for 26 units and another for 9 units. A smaller application for 4 units has been approved, subject to agreeing the wording of the Section 106 Agreement. This appears to indicate an increasing level of interest and awareness in custom and self-build from local developers and landowners.

2. PROPOSALS

- 2.1** This report recommends using some of the £90,000 *New Burdens* funding made available to Local Authorities between 2016/17 and 2019/20 to make grants available for people on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Register. This funding was made available to Council's to take account of additional dedicated resources required to identify land to satisfy the demand on the Custom and Self-Build register, following the introduction of the new legislation. This is a non-ring-fenced budget; however, the funding assessment is based on a full-time equivalent planning officer post.

Expenditure so far has been just over £11,000 spent or committed to the *NaCSBA* (National Custom and Self Build Association) who have provided support and training for planning officers, including in respect of the potential for this type of housing at St Cuthbert's Garden Village and *Custom Build Homes*, who are currently providing a more detailed demand study for self-build housing in Carlisle. This leaves almost £79,000 of *New Burdens* funding – some of which, it is suggested, could be used towards facilitating and enabling the delivery of custom and self-build housing through establishing a grants programme towards set-up costs.

- 2.2** Some local authorities have employed a dedicated officer to help deliver additional custom and self-build housing; however, the number of people on the register, together with the fact we have only recently started to receive planning applications for dedicated custom or self-build schemes, did not justify a full-time role in Carlisle, and the register has been managed within existing staffing resources.

An alternative mechanism to encourage increased development of custom and self-build plots would be using the *New Burdens* funding to make grants available to people on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Register; providing a contribution towards planning and building control fees. Some local authorities, including Allerdale, have already adopted the grants programme approach, designed to help address the up-front costs involved in getting a self-build project off the ground.

- 2.3** It is recommended that individual grants are awarded up to £2,000 per plot (this is similar to the arrangement in Allerdale) as a contribution towards planning, building control and architect's fees. Applicants would (as a minimum) need to meet the following criteria:-

- Be on Carlisle City Council's Custom and Self-build Register;
- Meet the statutory requirements set out in the relevant legislation;

- Demonstrate to the Council that they have sufficient funds to purchase a plot in Carlisle District and complete a custom or self-build project.

Applicants would need to provide evidence to justify these expenses, and grants would not be available retrospectively to people who had already acquired a plot prior to joining the Council's Custom and Self-Build Register

- 2.4** Subject to Executive approval, a more detailed grant scheme will be worked up with colleagues in Finance. It is recommended that £40,000 of the New Burdens funding is initially made available for grants up to a maximum of £2,000 each (which would be enough to meet the requirements of all of the applicants currently on the Council's Custom and Self-Build Register) as a contribution towards the cost of getting their building project off the ground. It is also recommended that delegated authority is given to the Corporate Director of Economic Development, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Council's S151 Officer, to approve the release of additional monies from the New Burdens funding to provide further grants if the scheme proves successful and all of the initial allocation of £40,000 is spent.

3. RISKS

- 3.1** It is not considered that providing Custom and Self-Build grants would pose any significant risk to the Council, as the proposal can be managed within existing staffing resources and the programme would be funded using a fixed amount of the New Burdens monies already held by the Council. A formal grant agreement process will be drawn up with colleagues in Legal and Financial Services.
- 3.2** Checks would need to be put in place to ensure applicants did not owe any money to the Council (e.g. unpaid Council Tax). If people did owe the Council any money, the amount owed would need to be deducted from the Custom and Self-Build grant.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1** Officers have consulted other local authorities across Cumbria and North Lancashire to assess how they are managing and administering Custom and Self-Build New Burdens funding, leading to more detailed discussions with Allerdale's Housing team, as they have already recently introduced a similar grants programme.

5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1** Increasing the delivery of Custom and Self-Build housing is another mechanism to deliver more houses - providing sustainable homeownership, while simultaneously bringing benefits to the local economy (including providing additional work for local contractors and spending money on building materials). The recent increased in

the number of planning applications for Custom and Self-Build serviced plots received in Carlisle would seem to make this an opportune time to introduce the grants programme initiative.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

6.1 *Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life.*

Contact Officer: **Jeremy Hewitson**

Ext: **7519**

Appendices **None**
attached to report:

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

- **Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015)**
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/17/contents/enacted>
- **Housing and Planning Act (2016) – Part 1, Chapter 2**
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/22/contents/enacted>

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL – The Self Build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 places obligations on local authorities to maintain a register and apply planning policies, and to ensure that sufficient serviced permissioned plots are available for self-build and custom housebuilding. The report explains that New Burdens funding has been made available by Central Government to support these obligations. The Council has a fiduciary duty to spend this money reasonably and prudently for the intended purpose.

PROPERTY SERVICES – No Property implications.

FINANCE – New Burdens grant funding has been received and is currently held within the Revenue Grants Reserve. Approval to release funds from this reserve is delegated to the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and the release of an initial £40,000 has been approved to support the Self Build Grants scheme as detailed in this report. Any future releases will also need to be approved by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources in consultation with the Corporate Director of Economic Development. A grant register will be required to record and monitor applications and payments.

EQUALITY – None.

INFORMATION GOVERNANCE – As there is an eligibility-criteria for the grants which requires the Council to receive information in the form of evidence, the Information Governance Manager should be consulted to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation.

Executive

**Agenda
Item:**

A.13

Meeting Date: 20th July 2020

Portfolio: Cross Cutting

Key Decision: No

Within Policy and
Budget Framework Yes

Public / Private Public

Title: Carlisle City Council's Organisational Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

Report of: The Chief Executive

Report Number: CE 04 20

Purpose / Summary:

The purpose of this report is to provide members with an update and overview of the work that the City Council has been doing throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic. The overall response has of course been a partnership effort of which Cumbria can be rightly proud. As well as meeting its responsibilities as a Category 1 responder, the City Council council has successfully met a number of additional requirements while maintaining service delivery across key areas.

Recommendations:

Members of the Executive are asked to note the contents of this report.

Tracking

Executive:	20 th July 2020
Scrutiny:	Not applicable
Council:	Not applicable

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The emergency response

After a period of active monitoring, Cumbria's Local Resilience Forum activated its Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) on the 4th March 2020. The UK Government declared a pandemic on 11th March. In response to this the SCG declared a major incident on the same day and since then has been coordinating the county's response to the pandemic.

- 1.2 The Recovery Advisory Group (RAG) was activated on 16th April with the purpose of developing the approach to recovery and ensuring decisions made by the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) do not adversely affect medium to long term recovery.
- 1.3 The Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG), which delivered the tactical response to the SCG strategy underwent a review on the 27th May, prior to becoming 'dormant'. The TCG identified one of the following three statuses for each of the sub groups, Business as Usual (BAU), Recovery or 'existing governance mechanisms already in place'. On the 4th June the SCG and TCG merged to form a single Strategic Coordination Group.
- 1.4 RAG agreed that a Strategic Recovery Coordinating Group should be activated by the third week in June. It is recognised that this will mean managing the stabilisation of the major incident. This group is now meeting and is chaired by the Chief Executive of Cumbria County Council.

1.5 Carlisle Community Resilience Group (CaCRG)

CaCRG was established at the start of the Covid pandemic and brings together a range of community partners, organisations and groups. It is jointly chaired by Cumbria County Council and Carlisle City Council and has facilitated exceptional partnership working across the area. The group membership grew quickly reflecting the diverse and growing needs of our communities. To support this pace of change and multiple sector communications a shared online platform and local agency situation report was developed. This enabled effective communication and has been used to support the development of a newsletter, partner email circulars, funding newsletter and social media content.

1.6 Although unprecedented, and testing for all involved, the crisis has established new and effective ways of working across sectors. The virtual SharePoint and sitrep has enabled problem solving amongst agencies, swift support to local emergency response groups, ensured the gap between shielding food parcels being delivered has been supported by local support networks and the directing of local funds to the heart of programmes and those in need.

2. The following section of this report sets out the individual response from key service areas across the Council.

2.1 Revenues & Benefits

The rapid decision for Councils to provide Small Business Grants and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants, meant payment information had to be obtained, details verified and over 2,250 grant payments, amounting to over £26 million have been made in 10 weeks. Software testing and implementation has been required and is ongoing to support the service to meet these additional demands. Council Tax Hardship funding is to be awarded to eligible CTRS recipients and applications for additional support is to be introduced for other customers experiencing hardship due to the Pandemic

2.1.1 Revenues and Benefits services have continued to maintain back office processing, amendment of awards and the collection of revenues. We have so far seen a 2.3% increase in benefit caseload in 2020/21 and have processed over 6,000 claims and changes circumstances, which is consistent with the first 2 months of the previous financial year. Volumes of universal credit notifications are continuing to increase and at some stage, a corresponding rise in caseload, especially for Council Tax Reduction Support (CTRS) applications is anticipated. For business rates, revised bills have been sent to almost 850 businesses (18% of the database) now eligible to receive 100% rate relief.

2.2 Neighbourhood Services

In April, staffing levels across Neighbourhood Services were down by 50% through a mix of existing long-term sickness absence, new cases of staff isolating, and the numbers of frontline staff identified as vulnerable and sent home unable to work. Where staff could work from home, for example the Civic Centre based Technical Services Team, all staff were set up with the necessary IT equipment to support this.

- 2.2.1 To prioritise operational delivery, swift decisions were taken to suspend garden waste and bulky collections to divert staff, with the support of agency and casual workers, to support refuse and recycling collections. At the same time introducing a range of Covid-safe working practices such as staggering the start times, providing additional sanitisation and PPE, regular cleaning of the workplaces and vehicles, and ensuring that staff were able to maintain safe social distancing. This was done through the use of minibus shuttle transport and pool vehicles to ferry staff around with the service always operating in line with, and often ahead of, national industry best practice and guidance. As staff returned from isolation, action was taken to fully reinstate bulky waste collections from the end of April. Garden waste collections were also phased in at 50% levels with a view to reinstating full service from 22 June 2020. As staffing levels recovered, it was also possible to release staff back to their core roles, for example supporting street cleaning operations, driving sweepers etc.
- 2.2.2 The response of the staff at this time has been impressive, with their efforts and commitment recognised with support and praise from residents and elected members. Our services have featured positively in the local press and TV reports. Council vehicles carried the high profile 'stay at home' messages into every street across Carlisle, later being updated to the revised 'stay alert' message a visible sign of support for the NHS.
- 2.2.3 As occupancy across car parks fell due to lockdown, parking charges were withdrawn across all council car parks with free parking available to all. As the lockdown measures were eased, parking charges were reintroduced from 01 June 2020 but with the free parking offer continuing for key NHS and care sector staff eligible under the Government scheme. A reduced enforcement team continued to work investigating reports of fly-tipping which saw an increase in May reflecting trends nationally as local Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) were closed by the County Council.
- 2.2.4 The fleet and garage team have also worked very hard behind the scenes to keep our fleet moving during this time in support of the priority services. MOTs and taxi tests were suspended for customers with the team working towards their reinstatement from July.
- 2.2.5 Staff have also supported the mobile testing site operated by the Army working out of the Swifts car park across many weekends.

- 2.2.6 Neighbourhood Services is now supporting the city centre recovery from 15 June 2020, with the development of enhanced cleaning regime and the planned installation of hand sanitisers at key points in the city (including Longtown and Brampton) and in car parks supported by other measures to support social distancing and contact etc.

2.3 ICT Services

Following the requirement for staff to start working from home, ICT staff responded to get all staff working at home within 2 weeks including 165 staff who didn't have the facility to work from home including Wi-Fi capability for Revenues & Benefits' computers due to laptop supply constraints. Additional Security tokens and licenses for virtual private network (VPN) access, an additional 38 mobile phones and SIMs and 6 mobile Wi-Fi hotspots were purchased through our suppliers who could meet the demand period at the start of COVID-19.

- 2.3.1 The use of Microsoft Teams has increased from the handful of pilot areas to allow staff to carry out meetings, keep in touch with staff and collaborate with external agencies. Microsoft SharePoint has been used to host collaboration sites for responder groups with external agencies where required.
- 2.3.2 Microsoft Teams Live Events was setup and configured in a few days to allow the Council to be the first local authority in Cumbria to carry out a 'Virtual' committee meeting and keep to the committed schedule of public meetings. This also included providing equipment to councillors that would allow them to participate in the 'Live' event meetings.
- 2.3.3 Working with customer services, ICT have setup, through a local supplier, a cloud hosted telephony solution that has allowed staff to work from home and provide their contact centre solution to support the people of Carlisle.
- 2.3.4 With Revenues and Benefits (RBS) we have ensured that all system changes have been implemented to allow Business Grants and other benefits/support to be paid/offered to the businesses and people of Carlisle. These RBS system changes have also been implemented for Allerdale BC and Copeland BC as we currently host their systems and provide the shared service ICT Support.
- 2.3.5 ICT have supported development of the Discover Carlisle website to create a community sharing hub called 'Show and Tell' and configured the main website to provide a more focussed information and contact point. New and existing online

forms have been configured to ensure we have responded to the business demands and the needs of the people of Carlisle.

- 2.3.6 ICT staff have delivered equipment and connectivity to staff and councillors who have been unable to leave their homes so that they can continue to work. All ICT systems have remained operational to allow staff to carry out their normal duties and also provide the additional response required during the crisis.
- 2.3.7 The ICT response has also included our support for Cumbria CVS and Community Centres to allow them to provide their service response to the crisis and support the local community.

2.4 Homelessness

- 2.4.1 At the beginning of the emergency, a Tactical Coordination Group (TCG) subgroup was implemented to oversee and coordinate the Cumbrian homelessness response as a result of COVID 19; as such the subgroup (chaired by the City Council's Principal Housing Officer) was established and reported directly to the TCG, three times a week; this group has now stepped down and has handed over the key recovery actions (outlined below) to the Housing, Homeless and Wellbeing Group; Strategic Homelessness remains a district responsibility and local partnership task groups are in place to oversee this.

2.4.2 Action taken:

- Early decision taken to reduce service risks by closing down 22 units within the men's scheme and reprofiling / prioritising staffing the women and family scheme 24 hours with a new rota to include daily outreach in pairs
- Changes in how support is delivered to comply with social distancing guidance, H&S requirements and safe working practices – implementation of a new rota 24 hours a day to minimise staff and clients contact
- Managing risks associated with residents shielding and self-isolating, including increased cleaning regimes and clean zones
- Triaging and screening cases in line with homeless / rough sleeping guidance and COVID 19 health vulnerabilities
- Working closely and innovatively with key statutory partners to ensure that all known rough sleepers and potential homeless cases are flagged at the earliest opportunity
- Negotiating and incentivising direct lettings with registered providers and private landlords to create move on options and enable throughput to be sustained for example via payments of arrears to lift suspensions, rent in advance / deposits, purchasing of essential furniture packages, assistance with practical moves, ongoing support through the transitional periods and in some cases throughout the start tenancy, assisting moves from other providers longer term supported

accommodation to create voids to move people in to from our emergency accommodation etc.

- Fast tracking in to substance / treatment services, access to lockable medication storage units for each client that requires this
- Review of all serious incidents
- Safeguarding adults referrals submitted as appropriate, risk assessments, safety and move on plans in place for all clients
- £5000 financial contribution from the county council to offset support costs for those rough sleepers placed as a result of COVID 19

2.5 Customer Services

2.5.1 Customer Services have been available by telephone, email, web access and social media throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. They have been working from home since 1 April and have handled up to 200 calls per day in additional volume. Ongoing business continuity planning has made this relatively seamless as they were already operating on MS Teams, MS SharePoint and Salesforce using laptops to ensure portability. We have ensured the most vulnerable still have appropriate support by running a telephone appointment system for people who struggle to use online applications for homelessness services, housing benefit and council tax reductions. Our Supervisors call vulnerable people and walk them through any application. We have been working with the foodbank to ensure our vulnerable customers have access to their services by automating referrals over email and have helped 63 people access food since 23 March. They have been the first point of contact for businesses who have benefitted from the Small Business Grants, Retail and Hospitality Grants and the ongoing Discretionary Business Grants. Customer Services continue to support other areas of the council who need telephone functionality from home as we begin recovery.

2.6 Health & Wellbeing

2.6.1 The four services within the Health and Wellbeing Team have faced a variety of challenges due to the Covid 19 Pandemic. It was notable how flexible and committed the team has been in responding to the challenges. The managers of each service area have been outstanding in leading each team and the staff have shown grit and determination in continuing to deliver high quality despite working under extreme pressure. For example many people within the team have, and continue to work, in completely different service areas in order that we could deliver on the priority service areas.

2.6.2 The team, along with our partners at GLL, supported the NHS in setting up the Recovery Centre at the Sands Centre which fortunately wasn't required. We have

been also been supporting GLL to ensure that our Leisure and Events programme can return as soon as guidance allows.

2.7 Bereavement Services

- 2.7.1 Bereavement Services has continued to operate throughout the Covid-19 outbreak providing the opportunity for a meaningful funeral for all. Measures were brought in following Government and Industry guidance that protected the staff, all of our service users and guaranteed the continual provision of this vital service.
- 2.7.2 Measures that were communicated and implemented included:
- Increasing service capacity.
 - Reducing numbers of mourners.
 - Reducing service times.
- 2.7.3 These core changes enabled the service to continue safely alongside other measures thus ensuring that funerals remained our top priority, the team have proved as ever to be committed and professional and we have received full support from Funeral Directors/Celebrants and Clergy and the general public at large.
- 2.7.4 During the peak (April) we were carrying out over 60 funerals at the crematorium per week, also our burial service was under pressure at this time, now we are looking forward and planning for any future easing of restrictions and returning to some kind of normality.
- 2.7.5 The crematorium grounds and all our cemeteries in the city remained open throughout.

2.8 Healthy City Team

- 2.8.1 The numbers of people using our parks and greenspaces has increased significantly during Lockdown. We followed government guidance and closed play areas to minimise risk of onward infection, but continue to undertake fortnightly play area inspections to manage risk. Metal signs were erected as soon as possible to inform the public that play areas, skate park and outdoor gyms were closed due to the pandemic. Car parks were closed in liaison with the Police to deter travel during the peak and signage installed at all sites to promote social distancing etc. Car Parks were reopened as soon as Government guidelines allowed, including at Talkin Tarn.

- 2.8.2 We have continued the capital improvement projects at St. James' Park; have refurbished play equipment and installed new outdoor gym equipment at Carlol Drive; and have been using social media to consult locally about planned improvements for the play area at Tribune Drive, Houghton.
- 2.8.3 We have supported Community Centres by supplying information, paying 20/21 Annual Grant up-front and assisting colleagues to issue Government business grants as speedily as possible. Petteril Bank and Botcherby Community Centres have been playing a particularly central role on local community response in Lockdown, providing hubs for food distribution through Meals on Wheels and the Food Bank.
- 2.8.4 Lockdown forced closure of the Old Fire Station, but we have been supporting local cultural activity by contributing to the Cumbria Arts and Culture Network and setting up virtual performances/acts streaming on-line through a newly established 'Show and Tell' section on the Discover Carlisle website.
- 2.8.5 To maintain some health activity, we have been running virtual health walks at Talkin Tarn and more recently at Bitts Park as well, for both health walk participants and members of the general public. All of our staff remain committed to delivering the highest possible standards of service to the communities of Carlisle and are proud that our services are playing such an important role in helping to ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of residents during this difficult time.

2.9 Grounds Maintenance

- 2.9.1 The Grounds Maintenance team has been working throughout the Covid-19 outbreak, helping to provide clean and safe spaces for people to exercise and support their mental wellbeing. With a reduced workforce we had to prioritise the work that will benefit the most people. Our grave digging team has also been reduced during this time but as a team we have managed to deliver a full service throughout. All the grounds team have been working extremely hard and have had a flexible approach to the work, changing the usual routines in order to respond to new priorities. We have followed government guidelines from the start and the staff have been exemplary in adapting to the challenges.
- 2.9.2 The Covid-19 outbreak has opened up some new ideas for how we work in the future which may actually benefit how the staff work and the service delivery. These will be explored in more detail during the recovery phase.

2.10 Destination Management

- 2.10.1 The work of the Discover Carlisle team has continued throughout lockdown. The team has been instrumental in making sure that our partners in the visitor economy have access to all the information they require to protect their business, and protect jobs. During lockdown Discover Carlisle has finalised new printed publications and promotional videos to form the basis of a recovery marketing campaign. The team is supporting the reopening of the high street by providing a liaison service between the Council and retailers, and are supporting the provision of facilities for shoppers to return safely.
- 2.10.2 The Discover Carlisle team has worked closely with the other Cumbrian district councils and Cumbria Tourism on understanding the impact of Coronavirus on the visitor economy. The team have assisted in lobbying government and Visit Britain on providing support and guidance to businesses. Discover Carlisle has also contributed to the work of 'England's Historic Cities' by providing intelligence and using this as an opportunity to learn from colleagues across the country. A campaign to support the high street will commence to encourage shoppers to return, and promote consumer confidence.
- 2.10.3 The Discover Carlisle events programme is under review. We are looking forward to welcoming the return of the Farmers' Market on 4 July, and we hope to be able to hold our Summer International Market on August Bank Holiday Weekend. Plans are also being made for City of Lights 2021.

2.11 Democratic Services

- 2.11.1 The onset of social distancing and subsequent lockdown meant that the Council was no longer able to operate Council and committee meetings. Initially, all services were continued to be delivered by maximising the use of schemes of delegation and Leader's decisions. However, on 4 April 2020 the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force which enables the Council to operate 'virtual' meetings whereby participants did not have to be physically present in the same location and are able to take part in meetings via the use of information technology.
- 2.11.2 The minimum requirement was that participants in meetings had to be able to hear others in the meeting and also be able to be heard. Members of the public also have the right to listen to proceedings of they so wished. As referred to elsewhere in this Report, Democratic Services worked closely with colleagues in

InformationTechnology and we were the first Council in Cumbria and one of the first in the country to deliver virtual meetings but to the extent that the meetings were live streamed and could be both watched and listened to and all participants could see one another. The Council has held a full virtual meeting involving all Members and committee meetings of Development Control and Overview & Scrutiny have taken place. Council is due to consider and determine a new civic calendar at its next meeting which will deliver all of the Council's meetings.

2.11.3 The other Cumbrian Councils have indicated our experiences have been helpful, including the standing orders we produced to facilitate the meetings. Several Councils from elsewhere in the country have also made contact to learn from our experiences. Many thanks go to the Members who participated in practice sessions before the official meetings.

2.11.4 The Council did not hold a 2020 Annual Council as the regulations allowed us to agree that all appointments made at the 2019 Annual Meeting continue until the Annual Meeting in 2021. Regulations also provided that there would not be any elections this year and any councillors due to retire would remain as elected members until the elections in May 2021. Seats so extended, when subject to re-election next year, will have their term reduced by twelve months.

2.12 Regulatory Services

2.12.1 Most of Regulatory Services have been fully operational during the lock down. Although the programmed food and pollution inspection work was stopped that was replaced by the enforcement of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020. Licensing and Environmental Health have worked closely with the Police to follow up alleged offences with 99 business engagements between the 23rd March 2020 and the 12th March 2020. In line with the national enforcement protocols we have adopted an engage, educate and encourage approach to enforcing the new regulations with only 2 premises requiring enforcement Prohibition Notices. The total number of service requests between 23rd March and the 12th March was 351, which include noise and bonfire complaints along with the business restriction activities.

2.12.2 In recent weeks the local track and trace system has been put into operation with the Environmental Health teams playing a key role in following potential outbreak cases in schools and local businesses. This work is very much partnership work requiring intelligence and assistances from the County Council's public health teams, local health providers and Public Health England. It is likely that this work will grow in recent weeks with mutual assistance provided between the various County authorities depending on where outbreaks occur.

- 2.12.3 Both the Regulatory Panel and the Licensing Committee have met for Licensing. DFG work has continued, although at a slower pace both because of our restrictions on only essential adaptations but also because many contractors were not fully operational. Many are now back, and it is likely that adaptations will increase once more. The only area not fully operational has been pest control which has been limited by staff absence and our restriction on only outdoor socially distanced work.
- 2.12.4 Going forward the Food Standards Agency, along with other national regulatory authorities, have accepted that we are unlikely to return to how we previously operated. Actual inspections are likely to be more targeted and take longer in the future, there will be a greater reliance on remote inspections. As Regulatory Services are also responsible for enforcing the Health and Safety at Work Act in retail and leisure business many changes to these businesses, such as the screens, hygiene and crowd management, will need to be monitored to ensure they operate both safely and within the law.

2.13 Property Services

- 2.13.1 Property Services have been continuing to operate from home during the pandemic. The maintenance team, despite severely depleted numbers, reduced contractor availability and supply chain issues have continued to provide an emergency repair service ensuring that vital Council buildings have been able to function normally. The estates team have been liaising with tenants to minimise income losses and ensure businesses can remain operational during the crisis. The major projects team have managed to keep the Sands redevelopment project running whilst also facilitating the creation of the NHS recovery centre in the Sands. Newman school refurbishment has been completed despite contractor and supply chain issues. The Gateway 44 development is one of a few development projects that managed to continue operation throughout the lockdown and progress has continued at pace.

2.14 Finance & Resources

2.14.1 Financial Services

In addition to undertaking their core work remotely, the Financial Services team have been instrumental in ensuring that the grants payable to eligible business under the Government's support schemes have been processed and accounts credited, with approximately £26million being paid out to date. Subsequently, financial analysis of the considerable evidence provided to support the separate Discretionary Grant scheme has been/continues to be undertaken.

2.14.2 Early decisions were made in terms of the creditors and debtors:

- ceasing any debt recovery procedures on sundry debts (similar to Council Tax and Business Rates) but to continue invoicing for supplies and services as and when they were due for payment;
- to ensure that all supplier invoices were paid immediately (usually 30-day payment terms) to help with suppliers and customers cash flow.

2.14.3 The MHCLG quickly decided to delay the publication and audit of the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts; from May to August for the preparation of the accounts; and from July to November for the completion of the external audit process. Discussions have taken place with Grant Thornton, our External Auditors, and a draft timeline has been agreed whereby we will endeavour to provide a draft set of accounts by the end of June thus enabling the audit to be completed by the end of October (provisional date). This work is currently on target, as a result of the hard work of the finance team.

2.14.4 A weekly Finance & Legal Sub-Group was initially set up between all the Cumbrian Local Authorities, the PCC, the CCGs, and Lake District National Park, to respond to COVID-19 issues and to ensure, as far as possible, a consistent approach across Cumbria. The output from this sub-group fed into LRF.

2.14.5 £500,000 was released from Revenue Reserves to support any additional costs incurred by the Council as a direct result of COVID-19. Government emergency funding has been allocated totalling £1.1million; however, a further report detailing the financial implications of COVID-19 on the Council is considered elsewhere on this agenda.

2.14.6 **Organisational Development/Human Resources**

Both teams have continued to provide remote support for managers, staff and Members through email correspondence, FAQs and weekly newsletters covering a wide range of topics such as mental health, health and well-being, shielding, homeworking etc. Both teams are now supporting the Health & Safety Manager to ensure that staff return to the workplace safely, when it is safe to do so, whilst complying with Government guidance.

Contact Officer: Jason Gooding

Ext: 7001

**Appendices
attached to report:**

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

- **None**

Report to Executive

**Agenda
Item:**

A.14

Meeting Date: 20 July 2020
Portfolio: Finance, Governance and Resources
Key Decision: NO
Within Policy and Budget Framework YES
Public / Private Public

Title: FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19
Report of: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES
Report Number: RD10/20

Purpose / Summary:

This report provides a summary of the financial implications arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, for Members information.

Recommendations:

The Executive is asked to note the contents of the report.

Tracking

Executive:	20 July 2020
Overview & Scrutiny:	Not applicable
Council:	Not applicable

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has introduced a series of financial support and grant schemes to provide funding to those individuals, businesses and public bodies affected by the pandemic.
- 1.2 This report covers the support schemes which the Council either had to administer for the individuals, communities and businesses, or those which the Council was a direct beneficiary.

2. Emergency Funding

- 2.1 £3.2bn of emergency funding has been provided to local authorities to:
 - Provide additional support for the homeless and rough sleepers, including where self-isolation is needed. This is on top of the £3.2m emergency fund announced on 17 March to help rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, to self-isolate.
 - Meet pressures across other services, as a result of reduced income, rising costs or increased demand.
- 2.2 The Council received £58,738 on 27th March from tranche 1 (£1.6bn) and £1,073,081 on 14th May from tranche 2 (£1.6bn), so £1,131,819 in total, which will be allocated across affected services.
- 2.3 A new comprehensive funding package for Councils has also just been announced (2nd July 2020) to help address coronavirus pressures and to cover lost income during the pandemic; although detailed guidance is still awaited, the support package covers:
 - A further £500 million of funding to cover local authority spending pressures;
 - A co-payment mechanism for irrecoverable Sales, Fees and Charges income, with the Government covering 75% of losses beyond 5% of planned income;
 - Phased repayment of Collection Fund deficits over the next 3 years;
 - A commitment to determine what support is needed to help councils meet the pressures of irrecoverable tax income at the Spending Review.

This guidance only refers to lost fees and charges income and is currently silent on the reimbursement for any loss of commercial income which could also have a significant impact on our budget position.

- 2.4 Monthly returns are provided through DELTA to the MHCLG, with the latest return being submitted on 15th June 2020. An assessment of the annual impact is very difficult to predict but as more data is collected each month, the position will become clearer and therefore the estimates of lost income and additional costs incurred may change.

2.5 Revenue: Additional Expenditure

The table below summaries the additional expenditure incurred to date, that we are currently aware of:

	March 2020 £	April 2020 £	May 2020 £
Laptops/PPE/staffing etc.	14,747	47,412	83,158
Homelessness	32,133	8,356	3,652
Leisure Services	38,810	26,137	71,967
Total	85,690	81,905	158,777

An estimate for the full year impact has also been provided but as mentioned above, annual assumptions are very difficult to estimate.

2.6 Revenue: Income shortfalls

	March 2020 £	April 2020 £	May 2020 £
Car Parking	45,608	91,217	103,861
Garden Waste	27,646	67,499	0
Bulky Waste	3,000	5,010	0
Land Charges income	1,981	4,243	6,202
Planning fee	12,560	10,380	7,572
Building Control fee	7,267	15,052	19,085
Old Fire Station	7,258	8,695	6,949
Talkin Tarn	20,758	30,690	15,835
TIC	12,192	3,412	928
Hammonds Pond	3,650	0	0
Hostels	0	29,773	27,433
Commercial rent	34,717	79,539	51,565
Total	176,637	345,510	239,430

The Council is continuing to invoice as usual for any supplies and services provided; however, debt recovery is currently on hold, but this decision will shortly be revisited so that perhaps, a soft recovery approach for any unpaid debts can be undertaken.

The overall position for the three months March, April and May shows a total potential cost to the Council of £1,087,949; however, the full year impact for 2020/21 is still has to be assessed (and recent government announcements to be reviewed (once received)), with initial estimates indicating an annual cost of up to £3.8million. This excludes the impact on the Collection Fund.

2.7 Council Reserves

Unearmarked General Fund Revenue reserves, adjusted for the 2019/20 outturn position, are as follows:

	31/03/20	31/03/21	31/03/22	31/03/23	31/03/24	31/03/25
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
General Fund	3,100	2,431	2,180	2,241	2,362	2,542
Projects Reserve	836	0	0	0	0	0
Carry Forward reserve	654	632	632	632	632	632
TOTAL	4,590	3,063	2,812	2,873	2,994	3,174

£500,000 was released from General Fund Reserves as a budgetary provision for any COVID-19 related costs (pre any government funding announcements), and this is reflected in the table above. Members are reminded that the General Fund reserve is a general working capital/contingency to cushion the Council against unexpected events and emergencies, with £1million earmarked within the reserve for emergency situations/unexpected events such as COVID-19.

2.8 Other Issues

2.8.1 Cash flow

The Council remains in a healthy cash flow position as funding has been provided upfront to cover income shortfalls and expenditure incurred; however, it is the medium to longer term position which will require careful monitoring to ensure that all reserves continue to be cash backed.

2.8.2 **S114 notice**

S114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 places a duty on the S151 Officer to report if it appears that the Council has made or is about to make a decision which would involve unlawful expenditure and is likely to cause a loss or deficiency; and where an unlawful item of account is about to be entered. In effect, if there is, or is likely to be, an unbalanced budget i.e. resources do not meet expenditure in a particular year. There are specific reporting requirements if such a notice has to be issued, with CIPFA recently proposing a modification for the S151 Officer to make informal confidential contact with the MHCLG to advise them of any such financial concerns, and to communicate any unbalanced budget position due to COVID-19 to the MHCLG at the same time as providing a potential S114 report to the Executive and to the External Auditor. Based upon current estimates of expenditure and income shortfalls, the level of government assistance received and the level of Council reserves, I, as the Council's S151 Officer, do not believe that a S114 notice is required; however this decision will be revisited periodically once more financial information on budgetary pressures becomes available.

2.8.3 **Procurement notices PPN02/20 & PPN04/20**

These notices provide guidance on how local authorities can support contractors on an open book approach, and through making payments in advance where there is a continuing service provision.

2.8.4 **The Q3 budget monitoring position** will be fundamental in identifying and assessing the overall picture of the impact of COVID-19; along with a clear strategy for addressing any budget shortfalls.

3. Extended Business Rate Support

3.1 100% business rate relief was provided to occupied retail, leisure and hospitality properties, with no rateable value limit for businesses such as:

- shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues;
- assembly and leisure;
- hotels, guest & boarding premises and self-catering accommodation.

3.2 This scheme was administered by Revenues & Benefits, with nil business rates bills now being issued. New Burdens funding will be provided to cover the cost of re-billing and other administrative cost, but as yet this has not been received.

Financial Impact

3.3 Net business Rates payable for 2020/21 has reduced by approximately £21million from £44million to £23million. This will be reimbursed by MHCLG on a monthly

basis (schedule still to be provided). An upfront payment of £1,986,378 was received on 27th March based upon the NNDR1 which was based upon the 50% relief scheme provided following the Spring budget.

- 3.4 The Council will be recompensed during the year for the 100% relief so there will no cash flow or budget issues; however, the main risk relates to the receipt of the £23million from businesses and how these are affected by COVID-19 and economic recovery following lockdown.

- 3.5 Current business rates collection rates (and comparisons):

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
April	11.68%	11.98%	8.16%
May	22.29%	23.04%	21.35%
June	31.21%	31.54%	28.27%
Full year	98.42%	97.38%	

- 3.6 There is a county wide call scheduled for July/August to discuss collection rates and financial impact, as this will affect all the district councils and the County Council.

4. 500million Hardship Fund

- 4.1 A grant of £989,736 was received on 3rd April to support economically vulnerable people and households by providing relief to council taxpayers. The minimum requirement was to reduce the council tax liability of working age recipients of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) by a further £150 and/or use the funding to deliver increased financial assistance outside the council tax system through Local Welfare or similar schemes. There is a county wide CTRS scheme currently in place so for consistency all authorities agreed to increase the sum to £300 per working age CTRS recipients and develop individual hardship schemes. The Hardship Fund, agreed by JMT and subject to an Officer Decision Notice, will consider applications for further council tax support on a case by case basis.

Financial Impact

- 4.2 The cost of providing the £300 relief will be approximately £250,000 - £300,000. An element of funding must be retained to provide the £300 for new working age CTRS recipients during the course of 2020/21, with the balance off funding being allocated in line with our Hardship policy.

- 4.3 The Hardship Fund will be administered by Revenues & Benefits, with revised council tax bills being issued. New Burdens to be provided to cover the cost of re-billing and other administrative costs but as yet this has not been received.
- 4.4 The main risk relates to how the expected overall increase in CTRS claimants, and the associated cost of CTRS relief, will be funded and be provided to the Council. An increase in claimants directly impacts on the council tax base and ultimately the yield from council tax. The cost of the current CTRS scheme is shared between the main preceptors but there has been no government support announced as yet to provide funding for any increase in additional claimants.

Current council tax collection rates (and comparisons):

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
April	10.92%	10.89%	10.56%
May	20.06%	20.10%	19.35%
June	29.07%	29.07%	28.22%
Full year	97.36%	97.12%	

The main risk for both business rates and council tax is the potential loss of income with the resulting impact on cash flow for the main precepts on the Collection Fund. The technical nature of this fund means that any 2020/21 deficit will be reflected in the following years budget; however, the recent Government announcement means that any deficit can be recovered over a three-year period – this will be considered as part of the 2020/21 budget process.

5. Rough Sleeping Contingency Fund

- 5.1 Direct funding available to local authorities as a reimbursement for the cost of providing accommodation and services to those sleeping on the streets to help them successfully self-isolate. £3.2m allocated of which the Council was allocated £1,650. This now forms part of the emergency grant funding (paragraph 2).

6. Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF)

- 6.1 All businesses in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief and Rural Rate Relief have been eligible for a £10,000 payment (subject to eligibility criteria).

7. Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant (RHLGF)

- 7.1 Businesses in receipt of the extended retail discount with a rateable value of less than £51,000 will be eligible for either a £10,000 or £25,000 payment (subject to other eligibility criteria).

Both schemes have been administered by Revenue and Benefits. A ring-fenced grant of £30million was received on 1st April and to date £26.145m has been paid out covering 98.13% of eligible businesses. The balance of unspent funds will be repaid (but see section 8 below)

8. Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF)

- 8.1 Discretionary grants to small and micro business not covered by SBGF and RHLGF, with relatively high fixed property related costs; significant reductions in income; whose RV is less than £51,000; not in receipt of other government grant funds; and other eligibility criteria. Although discretionary, MHCLG have requested for certain types of business to be prioritised.
- 8.2 Allocation of £1.3m (based upon 5% of the businesses eligible for SBGF/RHLGF) and funded from any underspend from the £30million allocation. The scheme has been administered by the Economic Development team.

There will be post event assurances and regular data collection exercises for all grants paid out under these three schemes.

9. £50million Reopening the High Streets Safely Fund

- 9.1 ERDF funding of £95,875 allocated to Carlisle but subject to a funding agreement which will hopefully be agreed with all local authorities by the end of June, and subject to claims for reimbursement. To cover all eligible costs incurred from 1st June 2020 to 31st March 2021. Activities the funding is expected to cover include:

- Development of an action plan for how the local authority may begin to safely open their local economies;
- Communications and public information activity;
- Business facing awareness raising activities;
- Temporary public realm activities

- 9.2 Administrative costs are permitted of up to 4% of the total grant value but to be taken from the grant itself.

10. £300million Test and Trace Service

- 10.1 On 22 May the Government announced £300m additional funding for local authorities to support them to develop and action their plans to reduce the spread of the virus in their area as part of the launch of the wider NHS Test and Trace Service. This funding will enable local authorities to develop and implement tailored local COVID-19 outbreak plans through for example funding the recruitment of additional staff where required. £1,717,862 has been allocated to Cumbria County Council
- 10.2 In two tier areas, this grant is conditional on upper tier authorities working closely with their lower tier partners and ensuring those partners are given opportunities to deliver the outcomes this grant is meant to support where delivery by those partners would be the most efficient and cost-effective means of delivery. In those cases, it is essential that upper tier authorities provide sufficient resources to lower tier authorities within the former's allocated funding so that the latter can carry out any responsibilities that they are asked to undertake.

11. Other support schemes

There are other schemes which still require further investigation to assess the implications on both the Council and our communities, and there may be others:

- £63million hardship fund
- £105million Rough Sleeper fund
- £900million Getting Building Fund

12. RISKS

- 12.1 The government has issued a post event assurance framework to ensure that only eligible businesses/individuals are in receipt of government support; and will work with the Council to address any incorrect payments or fraudulent claims.
- 12.2 The main risk to the Council is the overall cost of COVID-19 in terms of additional costs and shortfalls of income and how this compares to the level of emergency funded provided to date, and any future funding package. The economic recovery of the city and surrounding areas is part of the Recovery Strategy and any financial impact will need to be closely monitored.

13. CONSULTATION

None

14. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 The Executive is asked to note the contents of the report.

15. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

15.1 The financial impact will form part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Contact Officer: Alison Taylor

Ext: 7290

Appendices None
attached to report:

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS:

Legal – A S114 notice is a requirement of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 if the S151 Officer (Corporate Director of Finance & Resources) deems there is, or is likely to be, an unbalanced budget. This is addressed within the report at paragraph 2.8.2.

Finance – contained within the report

Equality – There are no explicit equality issues

Information Governance – There are no explicit information governance issues

Property Services – There are no explicit property services issues

Report to Executive

**Agenda
Item:**

A.15

Meeting Date: 20th July 2020
Portfolio: Economic Development
Key Decision: No
Policy and Budget Framework: Yes/No
Public / Private: Public

Title: Carlisle's Economic Recovery and Renewal Post COVID-19
Report of: Corporate Director of Economic Development
Report Number: ED.28/20

Purpose / Summary:

This Report outlines key work streams that will contribute towards Carlisle's recovery from the challenges presented as we move out of the COVID-19 lockdown as we move towards economic recovery and renewal.

Recommendations:

To consider the contents of the report and contribute to emerging thinking regarding economic recovery and renewal of Carlisle District.

Tracking

Executive:	
Scrutiny:	
Council:	

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 COVID-19's Impact on Carlisle's Economy – Macro Economic Paper

1.1.1 COVID-19 is set to have unprecedented social and economic impacts for the UK, impacting the plans and priorities for national and local government for many years to come. As such, plans will need to have a solid understanding of the potential impacts on Carlisle and how economic strategy can help with the restart, recovery and renewal of the local economy.

1.1.2 Carlisle City Council in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the short, medium and longer term. COVID-19 is set to have unprecedented social and economic impacts for the UK. Mott MacDonald have been tasked with setting out a plausible scenario for the progress of the disease and its effects on the UK economy. Initial findings will raise some questions that the Council may wish to consider, rather than seeking to offer definitive analysis or solutions. To inform the Council's COVID-19 response stakeholder engagement with Carlisle's major employers, industry representative groups and community stakeholders is underway. The full report is due by the end of September 2020.

1.1.3 Based on the national scenarios for recovery an initial report (Appendix 1) outlines the challenges across several areas of economic activity, infrastructure, 'net zero', and the labour market as a whole. It identifies those factors that will mitigate towards a favourable economic recovery for Carlisle. These considerations will inform and provide direction Council priority and resource setting in order to optimise on the opportunities that will arise during the renewal of the local, regional and national economy.

1.2 COVID-19 Recovery Framework

1.2.1 Developed by the Institute of Place Management, the COVID-19 Recovery Framework is being adapted for use at national, regional and local levels and has been adopted by the High Streets Task Force to deliver support to local authorities and communities who want to transform their high streets.

1.2.2 The Framework consists of four stages designed to help towns and cities to recover after the pandemic:

- Crisis: Immediate actions to be done now and in the foreseeable future
- Pre-recovery: As well as dealing with the current crisis, place managers and leaders start planning for recovery
- Recovery: How the IPM will support high streets and town centres in attracting visitors back

- Transformation: The conscious attempt to improve high streets, towns, cities and commercial areas – to do more than recover but to innovate and address new challenges

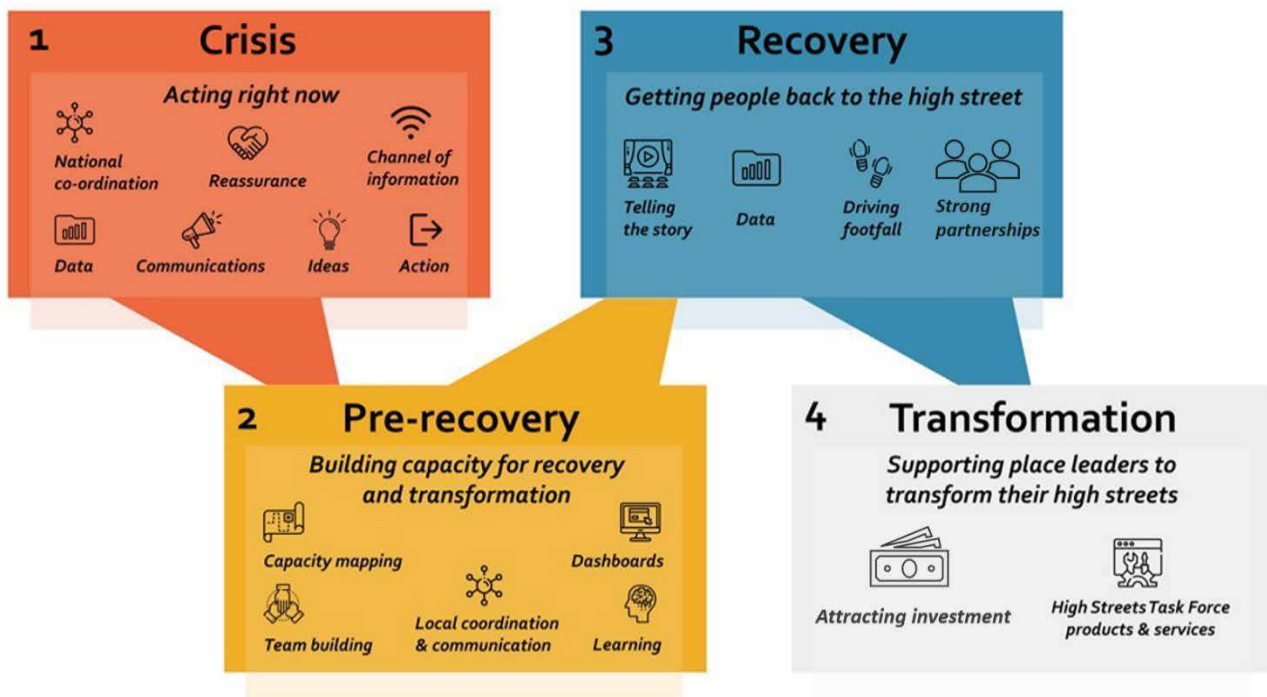


Figure 1: Post Covid-10 Framework for Recovery

1.2.3 Carlisle is moving from (2) pre-recovery stage: which is a crucial step towards building collective capacity and moving towards place governance and coordinated leadership; to the (3) the recovery stage with tasks undertaken once the lockdown measures start to be lifted in order to get businesses and people back to places. Finally, in the (4) transformation stage, the lessons learnt from the three previous stages will contribute to assisting place managers in leading the long-term transformation and evolution of their places. The ‘transformation’ stage will involve a conscious attempt to improve the Carlisle.

2. RECOVERY

2.1 Action Plan/Business Reopening

2.1.1 To prepare for the re-opening of the non-essential retail businesses on the 15th June 2020 in Carlisle’s city centre, a cross sector working group was convened including Businesses, County Highways Officers and City Council Officers with the task of preparing an action plan (Appendix 2). The Recovery Group has coordinated action and preparedness for the 15th June re-opening and continues to meet on a weekly basis to monitor and review this recovery stage. Alongside the action plan are city centre maps indicating key areas of concern and resources information packs for businesses and the public.

2.2 Business Support

- 2.2.1 The government has made additional funding available to support small businesses through the Local Authority Small Business Discretionary Grant which is aimed at small businesses who are not eligible for other government coronavirus grants. Local Authorities have the discretion to award grants at the following level: £25,000, £10,000 and under £10,000. Carlisle has been allocated just over £1.3 million for the scheme. The deadline for applications to the scheme was Midday on Monday 15 June and nearly 500 applications were received in total.
- 2.2.2 The government guidance prioritises the following businesses: Businesses with a rateable value/ongoing property costs of under £51,000; Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces; regular market traders with fixed building costs; Bed & Breakfasts which pay Council Tax instead of business rates; charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief.
- 2.2.3 Work is underway to process and make decisions on all applications as quickly as possible.

3. TRANSFORMATION / RENEWAL

- 3.1 Carlisle has accessed and continues to apply for considerable levels of funding to put in place transformative projects through significant opportunities for investment including:
- 3.2 St Cuthbert's Garden Village**
- 3.2.1 An ambitious proposal that could include the development of around 10,000 new quality homes, new employment opportunities, community facilities and a new Southern Link Road for which £102 Million has been secured.
- 3.2.2 The preferred final option, informed by the outcomes of consultation, is now being worked up as a full masterplan framework to show the illustrative detail of such matters as interface of new development parcels with existing villages, how important views can be protected, location of schools and other community facilities and rights of way and their wider connectivity. This illustrative masterplan will be accompanied by a report and is due to be received shortly.
- 3.2.3 Moving forward further engagement on the draft Masterplan Framework will be undertaken. Initially we will consult on the preferred option with technical stakeholders. We have recently reconvened the Members' Advisory Group which includes two parish council representatives.

3.2.4 Work on the St Cuthbert's Local Plan, which will be used in tandem with the masterplan to guide development in the area, is also continuing. A progress report has been produced which sets out feedback from the previous round of consultation, and how policies and objectives could be updated in response. The next stage of work on the Local Plan will be to fully draft the text of the strategic policies required to implement the spatial elements of the masterplan.

3.3 Towns Fund

3.3.1 The City of Carlisle was selected with 100 other towns and cities in September 2019 for the £3.6 billion Towns Fund and invited by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to create proposals for Town Deal with the opportunity to bid for transformative projects of up to £25 Million

3.3.2 Progress continues to be made despite the challenges of COVID-19. A series of virtual workshops were held during May 2020 where the vision, strategy and objectives for the Town Investment Plan were agreed and the drafting of the Plan has now commenced. A virtual Board meeting was held on 18 June 2020 where details of a forthcoming public consultation were agreed.

3.3.3 The detailed guidance for the Towns Fund was published on 15 June 2020. This sets out the timescales for submission of Town Investment Plans. Carlisle will be submitting their Town Investment Plan in October 2020.

3.4 Future High Street Fund

3.4.1 Carlisle high street was also selected along with 101 other towns and cities in August 2019 for the £1 billion Future High Street Fund (FHSF) and invited by MHCLG to develop a strategy for the city centre and a business case for investment. Currently an outline business case is being developed for circa £16 Million;

3.4.2 Funding is being sought for a package of support to modernise and repurpose key buildings, giving them a future purpose, improve event space and public realm to support economic activity and widening the opportunities to have more people living and working in the centre. The proposed scheme comprises six distinct but inter-related elements:

- Securing redevelopment for Hooper's Department Store
- Repurposing 6-24 Castle Street
- Preparing Central Plaza site for redevelopment
- Reimagining Market Square as Carlisle's events space and gateway to the Historic Quarter
- Pedestrian enhancement of Devonshire Street
- Caldew Riverside remediation of urban living development site

3.4.3 This proposal seeks to deliver a distinctive, coherent and inclusive city centre that will improve the perception of the city, increase social value, and ultimately improve economic performance through greater resident and visitor footfall and demand. The strength of the historic and cultural offer already embedded within the city will be enhanced securing a vibrant legacy from the investment.

3.5 Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal

3.5.1 Preparation of the business cases for the wider Borderlands programmes (e.g. place, energy, digital business infrastructure) continues. COVID-19 has had an impact on the timetable but the Programme Management Office is now in place, funded by the Borderlands partner authorities, that will provide additional capacity and support this process.

More specifically for Carlisle:

Place Programme - forms a key element of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and will provide an investment package for rural towns across the Borderlands area. The funding ask of the Borderlands Partnership is currently £50 million, one rural town/village will be selected from Carlisle District to benefit from this fund;

Carlisle Citadel and Station Gateway Project – A strategic outline business case that aims is to create a new high-profile gateway development for Carlisle has been approved by MHCLG – the three phased programme includes: Station re-development improving access to the station and refurbishment of the internal space with a £15 Million Borderlands ask; Citadel redevelopment with the University of Cumbria as anchor occupier and with complementary leisure and cultural elements to increase vitality into the city centre, £50 Million ask from Borderlands; and Caldew Riverside development site that requires remediation in order to bring it to the development market, funding being sought from Homes England and the Cumbria Local Economic Partnership.

3.5.2 Good progress continues to be made on the two key projects in Carlisle:

- Carlisle Station - The detailed business case for the Station project is close to being finalised; and
- Citadels Project - Work on the detailed business case for the Citadels has commenced, with a recent issues and options consultation undertaken between 14 May – 4 June 2020.

3.5.3 The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal was constructed in the pre-Covid19 period. It now needs amended, updated and supplemented in order to form the firm foundations of a longer-term response to the economic crisis that dealing with the Coronavirus has created. Work is underway to support the case for fast tracking investment and delivery

of the Deal to support the local recovery response to the economic impacts of COVID-19.

4. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Whilst each of these transformative work streams are separate and distinct, they each share a similar purpose; to support regeneration across the district and drive Carlisle forward, supporting the growth agenda set out in the Local Plan. The delivery of these investments will: encourage people to stay and move to the District to live, work and visit; diversify the offer of the city centre; support business growth; and improve economic prospects for the people of Carlisle; improve the quality of our local environment; whilst further developing cultural facilities and promoting Carlisle as a place full of opportunities and potential.
- 4.2 Progress on the developing the Council's Economic Strategy continues to be made. The COVID-19 work, detailed above, will form an integral part of its development and ensure that activity is focussed on supporting economic recovery across future years. Members will be engaged over the coming weeks to help influence the strategy and emerging actions.
- 4.3 Members to note the activity under each of the phases of the recovery framework and work streams currently being progressed to address each of the elements.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES

5.1 Contributions to Carlisle Plan priorities 2015-18:

- Support business growth and skills development to improve opportunities and economic prospects for the people of Carlisle
- Address current and future housing needs to protect and improve residents' quality of life
- Promote Carlisle regionally, nationally and internationally as a place with much to offer - full of opportunities and potential

Contact Officer: **Zoe Sutton**

Ext:

**Appendices
attached to report:**

Appendix 1: Mott Mac Donald -Technical Report

Appendix 2: Action Plan and Maps

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

- None

COVID-19 and the Economy of Carlisle

This note identifies certain short-term and medium-term economic issues for the City of Carlisle arising from COVID-19, set against two plausible scenarios for the progress of the disease and their respective effects on the UK economy. The scenarios are broadly central in character (rather than ‘outliers’) and the out-turn may be better or worse than in the scenarios.

Mott MacDonald is committed to working with Carlisle in the interests of local people, and to employing our expertise in infrastructure and economics to help Carlisle to overcome the grave difficulties posed by COVID-19. This note is starting point: it raises questions for Carlisle to consider, rather than seeking to offer detailed analysis or solutions.

Two Scenarios for the Macro Environment

Introduction

This section sets out two plausible scenarios for the UK economy in the short to medium term. The scenarios have much in common, but the first is relatively optimistic and the second less so – they correspond to the widely discussed V-shaped and U-shaped recoveries from COVID-19. In the early stages (March/April) of the crisis, government, private and OBR analysts appeared to think a V-shaped recovery more likely, but sentiment now tends to favour a U-shaped recovery¹.

Features Common to both Scenarios

The effects of UK COVID-19 peak in summer 2020 without causing collapse in wider society or in the NHS, social care, food distribution or utilities. By late autumn, the number of cases is at levels regularly associated with flu, and remaining COVID-19 restrictions, though irksome and perhaps of long duration, have more limited economic effects than at present².

In Spring 2020, the government ‘threw away the fiscal rulebook’, resulting in additional expenditure and lost tax revenue of up to £1trn³ by March 2021, though much is in loans repayable by the private sector, and much is effectively financed by the Bank of England through Quantitative Easing.

The crisis leaves the fundamental productive capacity of the UK unimpaired, though certain industries, notably tourism, consumer durables (especially cars), financial services and high street retailing, recover more slowly than the economy as a whole. As a partial offset, some industries expand, especially healthcare, pharmaceuticals, online retailing, logistics, and perhaps the ‘green economy’.

In the short term, unemployment rises, and GDP falls sharply, though the measured extent of the fall is influenced by statistical treatment⁴.

¹ The U-shape, with no full recovery of GDP in 2021, appears also to be the consensus view for the EU, see: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/business/eurozone-boost-after-ecb-puts-another-600bn-into-economy-89hfz7lg>

² The potential implications of a possible “second wave” of COVID-19 infections in Autumn 2020 is not considered in the scenarios modelled in this note.

³ Commitments at the time of writing appeared to be around £400bn - £1trn is a plausible maximum once lost tax revenue is included. It should be noted that the current (4 June 2020) OBR expenditure estimate of £132.5bn excludes business loan schemes, which are the largest single element of cost, put by the Chancellor at over £300bn.

⁴ eg the output of the education industry is greatly reduced by COVID-19, but measurement of its output focuses on staff wages, which are maintained.

In the wider world, the impact of COVID-19 varies greatly. By late autumn 2020 most countries are in recovery, though some countries with elderly populations or weak administrative and healthcare systems remain in difficulty. The net adverse effect on the UK economy is moderate.

In the EU and UK specifically, there are continuing economic difficulties. The EU and the UK have a strong, shared interest in avoiding additional economic disruption, and although the BREXIT transition is not extended beyond 2020 *ad hoc* and formal arrangements ensure a smooth continuation of economic relationships.

Scenario A (more likely): U-Shaped Recovery

The continuing global effects of COVID-19 and the damage to particular UK industries reduce medium term growth in the UK compared with the levels anticipated before COVID-19. Employment and GDP recover rapidly, but not fully, from the crisis, and unemployment remains substantially higher than before. The scenarios and forecasts tabulated below present a broadly consistent picture of unemployment peaking in late 2020 before declining during 2021 but remaining substantially higher than in 2019.

Recent ⁵ scenarios and forecasts for LFS unemployment		
<i>Pre-COVID-19 Actual</i>	<i>Dec 2019 – Feb 2020</i>	4.0%
OBR Scenario	Q4 2020	8.5%
Bank of England Scenario	Spring 2021	7.0%
Average from HM Treasury's May 2020 compilation of 'recent' independent forecasts	Q4 2021	6.3%

Unemployment on this scale is consistent with GDP in 2021 being slightly below its 2019 level, occasioning a material reduction in tax revenue compared with pre-COVID-19 forecasts of economic growth. Increased government debt interest, and step-change increases in NHS, Adult Social Care, and benefits spending, add further to pre-existing fiscal pressures⁶. The restoration of fiscal discipline ushers in a multi-year period of fiscal retrenchment, focused on the relatively few areas of government spending – such as defence, transport, and higher education – that are not 'protected'; although it is assumed that the government remains committed to pursuing its central manifesto commitments such as regional "levelling-up".

Scenario B (less likely): V-Shaped Recovery

GDP recovers fully in 2021 to equal (in real terms) its 2019 level. Unemployment, however, does not recover fully, in part because growth between 2019 and 2021 is zero on average and in part because dislocation in the labour market, with some skills in strong demand and others in surplus, raises the equilibrium level of unemployment. In April 2020, the OBR published a reference scenario (not a forecast) that explicitly assumed full recovery in GDP and a consequent unemployment rate of 6.0% in Spring 2021; and HM Treasury's April compilation of independent forecasts then suggested 5.5%. These figures indicate the approximate rate of unemployment in the event of a V-shaped recovery.

The fiscal constraints imposed on government by reduced tax revenues and increased spending operate in the same adverse direction as in the U-shaped recovery, but are less severe and make it easier for government to maintain its commitments to levelling-up and infrastructure investment.

⁵ The most recent from the three organisations at the time of writing in early-June 2020.

⁶ Occasioned (1) by "Baumol's Law", that the share of public expenditure in national income will rise over time because of the lower potential for productivity growth in industries such as health and education than in, say manufacturing or private sector services, and (2) by UK demographics.

Carlisle

Carlisle comprises the city itself and extensive rural areas studded with villages and small towns. Before COVID-19, Carlisle, like Cumbria as a whole, displayed a moderate level of economic success and prosperity; indeed labour shortages appeared to present a greater challenge than unemployment⁷, which at 2.9% was about one percentage point below the historically low national average of about 4%. There were, of course, economic problems, such as disappointingly low average productivity.

This short note cannot offer a full economic analysis of Carlisle, such as those produced by the local authorities, the Local Enterprise Partnership, or the Cumbria Observatory. It aims only to draw attention to some of the economic issues posed by the current epidemic and set against our two scenarios.

Short and Medium-Term Prospects: issues for consideration

This section considers just some of the issues relevant to Carlisle. It covers, first, several areas of economic activity, and then infrastructure, 'net zero', and the labour market as a whole.

Education

State school education will resume as restrictions are lifted, though its contribution to the economy may be reduced by fiscal stringency – for instance through reduced budgets for areas of recent growth such as Teaching Assistants.

UK universities are likely to face considerable difficulties. Student loan arrangements may tighten, placing indirect pressure on fee income; inflows of overseas students are certain to fall at least in the short term; and even UK recruitment prospects seem poor.

The well-respected University of Cumbria is central to plans for Carlisle city centre and for the local and wider Cumbrian labour markets. It is, however, within an HE group (the Million+ group) that may be particularly vulnerable to competition for students from institutions such as Russell Group universities. And the University's financial position, though stable⁸, lacks substantial reserves. Across the sector, investment by universities and in student accommodation is likely to fall sharply, though any economic effects on Carlisle may be mitigated, in relative terms, by the city having a lower share of employment in Higher Education than comparably sized cities such as Lincoln.

The prospects for Further Education seem ambiguous. The sector has often been a target for austerity induced cutbacks, but its appeal to government and students as an efficient provider of post-16 education may offer some protection. The NCG Colleges Group, owners of Carlisle College, are committed to continuing development of provision in the city and this will be vital in overcoming the skills mismatches arising from COVID-19.

Although school education will largely be protected, a U-shaped recovery will, in our judgment, place funding for Higher Education, and to a lesser extent for Further Education, under severe threat.

Healthcare

Healthcare, viewed as an industry, is expanding rapidly to meet the epidemic. Expansion will slow as COVID-19 comes under control, but the sector is likely to remain substantially larger than before to

⁷ Cumbria LEP, Annual Report 2019

⁸ Based on a review of the most recent published accounts (2018/19)

cope with continuing effects (eg recurrent outbreaks of COVID-19) and a greater national awareness of the need to prepare for the next emergency.

Much healthcare, for instance GP surgeries, is spread widely throughout the district but the economic opportunities associated with expansion may be greatest in the City of Carlisle itself, close to Cumberland Infirmary. Moreover, and unlike in the education sector, Carlisle has an above average share of employment in healthcare and related activities. This is a positive feature of the post-COVID-19 economy, that will obtain under both our scenarios.

High Street Retail and City Development

Many towns and cities faced secular decline in high street retailing, pre-COVID-19, because of the growth of online and out-of-town shopping. The immediate difficulties associated with the epidemic are obvious, but the secular trend is likely to be reinforced as many people – perhaps especially older people – who previously relied on the high street become more accustomed to ‘online’.

Carlisle will face the same trends, though its role as the administrative and commercial centre for Cumbria, and even for parts of southern Scotland will offer some protection.

It may, however, be necessary to rethink plans for the city centre and to move away from retail and traditional office space, and towards leisure, residential, green space, and flexible workspaces. City of Carlisle Council, in conjunction with Cumbria County Council, may need to intervene in land and property markets to facilitate the changes required.

The changes will depend partly on central government funding. In the event of a U-shaped recovery, there is a risk that planned expenditure that is not committed will not proceed. It will, at least, need to be firmly grounded in *Green Book* compliant cost-benefit analysis

Tourism, Leisure and Travel

At the time of writing, these industries had effectively been shut down by government. They will rebound as COVID-19 restrictions ease from 4 July, as announced on 24 June.

The tourism industry, including accommodation, restaurants, bars etc, is an important part of Carlisle’s economy, though less so than in the heart of the Lake District. The prospects for the industry during the epidemic and in what may be an extended process of relaxing restrictions on trading are poor. It will be important to prevent ‘scarring’ – the permanent loss of capacity⁹ during the epidemic – so far as possible.

The medium-term prospects are better. The UK is a net importer of tourism services and, in future, fewer overseas visitors may be more than offset by more domestic visitors, providing that capacity is not too damaged by scarring. There may be a need to consider how a move away from international tourism and towards domestic tourism can be managed effectively.

Although a U-shaped recovery will be somewhat worse for tourism than a V-shaped recovery, the industry depends on consumer expenditure, which will be less affected by the type of recovery than, for instance, public sector capital investment.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing industry is rather more important in Carlisle than the national average as a source of employment and economic activity. As in other districts of Cumbria (though to a lesser degree),

⁹ The recently announced permanent closure of the Derwentwater Hotel and the Windermere Hotel is one example in Cumbria.

manufacturing is anchored by a fairly small number of large plants, such as the Pirelli tyre works and the 2 Sisters (Cavaghan and Gray) food production and distribution facility.

In a rather different way, the Kingmoor Park Enterprise Zone is vital to the city's future. Focused in part on nuclear engineering, energy, and advanced manufacturing, it also accommodates other manufacturing firms, as well as distribution firms, and has some 2,500 employees on site.

The critical point is that manufacturing recovery from COVID-19 will depend on the performance of specific plants and of the Kingmoor estate rather than on 'manufacturing' in a general way. Public agencies will doubtless seek to enhance their existing support for those plants and their work to promote and expand nuclear engineering and other high productivity activities at Kingmoor.

Transport and Other Infrastructure

Current national plans for large-scale transport infrastructure spending may be reviewed: first, because post-COVID-19 fiscal challenges may place particular pressure on the transport capital budget, which is one of the few areas of government spending that is relatively easy to cut; second, because projections for growth in user numbers may be reduced. On the other hand, infrastructure spending is a means of stimulating a weak economy and a central feature of the government's 'levelling up' agenda, factors that may offer some protection to the capital budget.

Although investment is sorely needed to underpin economic growth, it would seem reasonable to make contingency plans for optimal use of reduced transport budgets should this become necessary, whilst recognising that government may maintain the budgets as a means of economic stimulus. 'Optimal use' is likely to require a sophisticated approach, with many smaller projects, often related to modal shift away from car use, and away from travel generally, in favour of internet-based working. This in turn will reinforce the case for improved resilience and much greater capacity in the broadband infrastructure.

Carlisle Lake District Airport was closed at the time of writing, but before the epidemic had just commenced passenger flights to London Southend, Dublin, and Belfast. Although the population catchment for the airport is too small for extensive operations, a resumption of these flights and would promote business recovery.

The infrastructure budget is likely to be especially sensitive to differences in our two scenarios. Government is likely to make every effort to maintain investment, but its ability to do so in the event of a U-shaped recovery may be more limited.

Logistics and Distribution

Carlisle enjoys good communications and a good supply of land, albeit at a peripheral location within the UK. As a result, land transport and logistics are major employers, notably on the Kingmoor site and at the airport. This is an industry with good growth prospects, especially with the further advance of online purchasing during the COVID epidemic, and Carlisle, unlike many other locations, has the potential to offer the space the industry requires.

Net Zero

The government commitment to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 will, presumably, remain intact. COVID-19¹⁰ may, indirectly, favour its achievement, for instance if remote working increases, so reducing transport emissions. On the other hand, fiscal stringency, especially in the event of a U-shaped recovery, may limit scope for the large expenditures needed to achieve net zero; and in the

¹⁰ The drop in emissions during the epidemic has limited long-term significance.

short term, as employment and work travel recover, capacity limitations on the public transport network may raise car usage and emissions.

The plans already set out by central and local government will need to be re-worked in the light of these changes. It also appears likely¹¹ that in July the government will announce measures to raise employment in green industries to absorb job losses in, for instance, food and beverage service.

Knowledge Intensive Business Services

A relatively low share of Carlisle's employment is in the Knowledge Intensive Business Services sectors, with 8.2% of jobs in these sectors vs. 16.4% for Great Britain as a whole¹². The largest impact of COVID-19 on these sectors is likely to be from any long-term behavioural changes that arise from the extended home working in these sectors during the lockdown period of the pandemic. It has been suggested that employers in these sectors (and potentially other sectors where home working is possible) may be more willing to support employees working from home on a permanent basis post-lockdown. This offers potential benefit to employers (reduced overhead costs) as well as employees (greater flexibility of locational choices), but this will need to be balanced against the long-standing identified benefits of predominantly urban office working (agglomeration economies via spatial clustering).

Towns and cities such as Carlisle – with a strong “lifestyle” offer and established long-distance transport connections – may benefit from increased activity by workers in the KIBS sectors where homeworking is possible. Evidence from sectors with pre-COVID-19 established patterns of homeworking, such as in information technology, suggests that home workers balance amenity factors with (for families) local education provision, property costs and accessibility (many home workers still need to travel periodically) in determining their locational choices. There may be a higher proportion of some age groups to home work than others, although there is limited evidence on this at present.

The Labour Market

The short-term impact of COVID-19 on the labour market is severe. Even allowing for gigantic expenditure on mitigation, national unemployment will remain high throughout the epidemic. Employment will recover, and unemployment will fall, as the crisis passes. Both our scenarios suggest, however, that the equilibrium level of unemployment will be higher than before, in part because of skills mismatches as serious shortages in industries such as health, adult social care, and logistics, and new opportunities in the green economy, contrast with surplus skills in industries such as catering.

Carlisle seems certain to experience a rise in unemployment as redundant workers from severely affected industries find it hard to obtain work in expanding sectors. The City Council and its partners may wish to review the likely overall pattern and what lessons can be learned from past periods, such as the early 1980s, when (for different reasons) similar challenges occurred, and to maximise the opportunities for workers to move from contracting to expanding sectors of the economy.

¹¹ See for instance <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/coronavirus-rishi-sunak-wants-green-new-jobs-for-laid-off-workers-8520zlsnx>

¹² ONS Business Register and Employee Survey, 2018

DRAFT Carlisle Recovery Action Plan for Public Places - APPENDIX 2

Consideration	Interventions	Action	Lead Officer	Date completed	RAG rating
1. Common plan for public space					
Bring together all of those responsible for the management of publicly accessible space to work on a common plan for managing social distancing and movement through the area following government guidance. This will include the local authority, shopping centre management, commercial area management, park management, and public transport operators. This will be vital for the safety of those using the town and avoid conflicting advice.	1.1. Coordinated approach to development of a Carlisle District Recovery Action Plan	a. Convene a multi-sectoral group of private and public sector representatives to advise on needs / actions on a regular basis.	Jane Meek	Continual Activity	
		b. Work with parish councils to determine needs for Longtown and Brampton.	Jane Meek		
		c. Produce and update visual representation of Action Plan/ City Centre Plan or Map.	Jane Meek	Continual Activity	
		d. Monitor and review of Action Plan.	Jane Meek	Continual Activity	
		e. Add the Lanes Covid related management actions to the Action Plan and the City Centre Plan.	David Jackson / Paul Walker		
	1.2 Develop the support /resource to local resilience group and local economy stakeholders	a. Produce a support / resource pack with updates from key agencies, guidance and advice cascaded through SMAC.	Sarah Irving / Cumbria County Council / CLEP		
	1.3 Draw down on the 'Reopening the High Street Safely' Fund	a. Identify a scope of works	Zoe Sutton		
		b. Set baseline monitoring and evaluation data including footfall in line with guidance.	Zoe Sutton		
2. Enhanced cleaning and sanitising					
Plan for enhanced cleaning and sanitising to ensure the risks of the virus spreading are reduced. This may include the provision of hand sanitiser stations, accessible for all.	2.1. Neighbourhood team deployed implement actions	a. Allocate a supervisor to be 'on site' to ensure efficient response to any emerging issues in terms of street cleanliness.	Colin Bowley	Key contact list provided	
		b. Provide Team with distinctive branded tabard and brief on public facing role.	Colin Bowley	Items ordered awaiting delivery - 01/06/2020	
	2.2. Enhanced cleaning at hotspots (linked to item 4)	a. Identify places / touch points that need more frequent cleaning, incorporate into the cleaning programme.	Colin Bowley	Completed	
		b. Review and update cleaning routine for car parking ticket machines.	Colin Bowley	Completed	
	2.3. Set up sanitisation stations / hand wash facilities	a. Resource suitable sanitisation stations / hand wash facility products and suppliers.	Colin Bowley	05/06/2020	

		b. Identify the need, locations and delivery of public hand sanitiser station(s).	Colin Bowley	x4 dispensers fitted 15 June. Additional to be fitted from 19 June	
		c. Provide advice to businesses on sanitisers at entrances to business premises, toilet / sink access.	Scott Burns	Continual Activity	
	2.4. Increase the use of contactless payments	a. Encourage car park users to make payment using cashless payment methods.	Helen Graham	Completed	
	2.5. Ensure adequate public toilet provision	a. Assess need for public toilet provision and update the cleaning rotas and procedures	Mark Walshe		
		b. Assess options for temporary toilet facilities	Zoe Sutton	Completed	
		c. Audit businesses that have toilet facilities to identify those that are open.	Zoe Sutton	05/06/2020	
		d. Provide disabled toilet facility in the Lanes.	David Jackson	Completed	
		e. Signpost people to public toilet facilities available	Sarah Irving		
	2.6. Cathedral Ground / Precinct enhanced cleaning	a. Identify places / touch points that need more frequent cleaning, incorporate into the cleaning programme as necessary.	Cathedral / Colin Bowley		
	2.7. Bus and Railway Stations enhanced cleaning	a. Identify places / touch points that need more frequent cleaning, incorporate into the cleaning programme.	Rob Jones / Colin Bowley/ Railway Station Management - contact TBC		
3. Signage					
As is already required for supermarkets, it is likely that government guidance on public areas will require signage to remind people with symptoms not to enter areas, to maintain social distancing, to offer opportunities for hand washing or sanitising. Consistency of messaging on this will be important.	3.1. Work with County officers to create consistent signage strategy	a. Feed issues and possible mitigation to Comms and Resilience Group (CuCC led).	CuCC - Comms/Resilience Gp	On-going	
		b. Explore options for electronic signage and messages to be relayed.	Gareth Scott	Under review	
	3.2. Consider pop-up information points on routes into city centre	a. Determine need and deliverability of information points	Paul Walker	Not considered necessary	
	3.3. Car park - improved signage	a. Display social distancing signs and guidance in car parks.	Helen Graham	Completed	
	3.4. 'Plan Your Journey' Key Message for City Centre users	a. Disseminate information through various media to be identified.	Sarah Irving/ Paul Walker	On-going	
		b. Explore potential for city centre webcam so public can assess how busy the centre is prior to visiting.	Zoe Sutton / Paul Walker / Police / David Jackson		

		c. Explore need for provision information on business opening times - outside the norm.	Paul Walker / David Jackson	On-going	
		d. Provide information about bus travel and quiet times	Rob Jones		
		e. Provide information about train travel quiet times	Station Manager		
4. Identify hotspots					
Audit the centre to identify activity 'hotspots' – these may have changed since lockdown. Look at the popular routes people take through the town and identify potential problem areas. Many towns will need to introduce restrictions in movement through their centres to maintain social distancing, or have to close roads to traffic to widen pavements, or introduce one way walking routes as in supermarkets. These restrictions will have to be introduced quickly so check whether they are covered by the General Permitted Development Orders or require approval before installation	4.1. Identify hot spots	a. Identify and keep under review actions relating to hot spots.	Andrew Allison / Heather Graham / ALL	Continual Activity	
		b. Audit the hotspots to identify necessary actions.	Andrew Allison / Helen Graham / Colin Bowley	Completed	
		c. Communicate the actions to the relevant lead officer.	Andrew Allison / Helen Graham	Continual Activity	
	4.2. Queuing management	a. Provide businesses advice on queue management.	Gareth Scott / Andrew Allison	Continual Activity	
		b. Identify areas of concern and potential mitigation measures and inform Highways	Gareth Scott / ALL	Continual Activity	
		d. County Highways to implement mitigation and prepare Traffic Orders where deemed necessary.	Gareth Scott	Continual Activity	
		e. Plan, implement and review as necessary a queuing system for the city centre.	Gareth Scott / Andrew Allison	Continual Activity	
5. Inclusive social distancing					
In designing new walking routes and managing social distancing pay attention to the challenges this may present for people with disabilities.	5.1. Identify actions with the Carlisle Access Group / Shopmobility	a. Reopen Shop Mobility	Karen Scrivener		
	5.2. Actions identified must consider impact of any interventions on people with disability	a. Consider access to all when implementing measures.	ALL		
	5.3. Shop Mobility Access	a. Consider temporarily moving Shop Mobility to ground floor of the Lanes	David Jackson / Karen Scrivener / Rob Doran	Location to remain as normal	
6. Walking and cycling					
Plan for more people to access your town by walking and cycling.	6.1. Temporary Highways and public realm modifications	a. Identify highways measures to mitigate issues.	Gareth Scott	Completed	
		b. Implement measures	Gareth Scott	Awaiting funding outcome	
	6.2. Additional facilities for bike parking	a. Approach being adopted in districts is being reviewed by County.	Mark Brierley	Completed	
		b. Provide additional bike parking facilities where need identified.	Andy Allison / Mark Brierley		

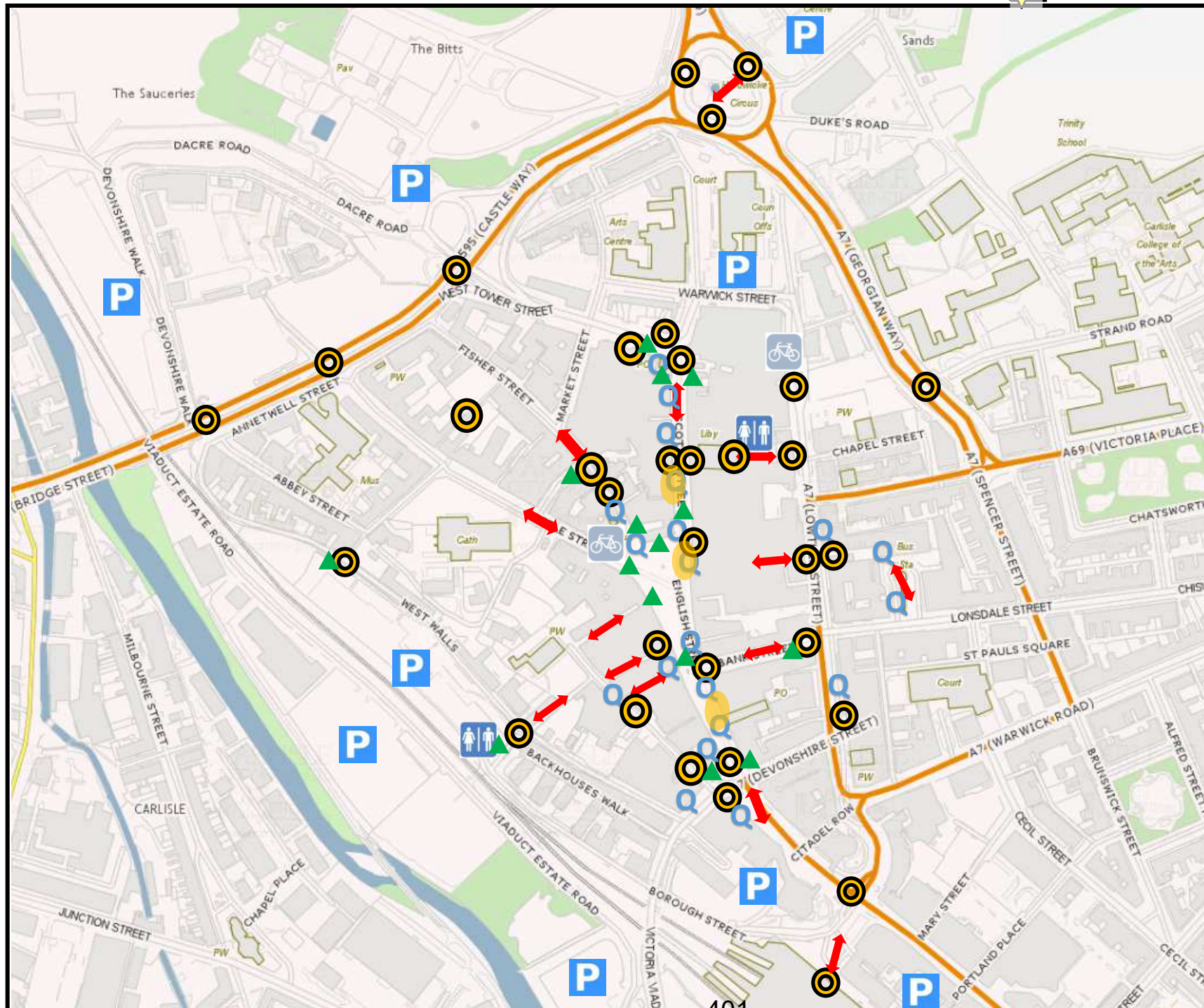
7. Access and egress					
Access and egress from a town/city centre and to parts of it will be a critical challenge for social distancing. Make sure you consider all arrival points, how will you make people safe in waiting for or using public transport? Are there narrow walkways from car parks? What action might you have to take to close certain routes to maintain safety or at peak capacity? Do bus stops need to move to locations where queues can be better accommodated?	7.1. Arrival / departure point: car parks / station/ bus station in city centre and key service centres	a. Indicate on the plan for city centre.	Andrew Allison / Paul Walker	Completed	
		b. Work with parish councils to determine needs for Longtown and Brampton.	Zoe Sutton		
	7.2. Identify key access routes and hot spots to city centre and key service centres	a. Indicate on the plan for city centre.	Andrew Allison / Paul Walker		
		b. Work with parish councils to determine needs for Longtown and Brampton.	Zoe Sutton		
	7.3. Pedestrian / cycle access, cycle parks	a. Indicate on the plan.	Andrew Allison / Paul Walker		
	7.4. Undertake an audit to identify actions for temporary modifications in the highway and public realm	a. Implement mitigation measure - coordinated by Highways / Local Area Committee.	Gareth Scott		
8. Communication					
Communicate with all town/city centre businesses. The re-opening of many businesses is likely to be delayed by government. Place leaders should work to keep in touch with these businesses to understand their plans and challenges.	8.1. Identify appropriate means of communications with the business community of Carlisle District	a. Video interviews with retailers - 'Open for Business'	Paul Walker/ Debbie Kavanagh / Sarah Irving		
	8.2. Disseminate the support /resource to local resilience group and local economy stakeholder	a. Actions to be identified.	Sarah Irving / CuCC	Continual Activity	
	8.3. Trade waste collection	a. Actions to be identified.	Colin Bowley		
	8.4. Assist business in getting ready to open for business	a. Signpost businesses to the Regulations in place governing opening on request.	Scott Burns	Continual Activity	
		b. Assist business in understanding the risk assessment requirements on request.	Scott Burns	Continual Activity	
	8.5. Information sharing - two way communication	a. Promote two way communication between businesses and Group to ensure rapid response	David Jackson/ Sarah Irving / Paul Walker		
		b. Businesses to share information with each other	Private sector members.		
	8.6. Pro-active dissemination of key messages to business	a. Message: Take away only from food outlets / cafes / restaurants - use of outdoor tables not allowed at present	Scott Burns	Continual Activity	
		b. Survey Monkey questionnaire to determine retail business need for information	Zoe Sutton	Completed	
	8.7. Preparation for hospitality business open	a. Survey Monkey questionnaire to determine hospitality business need for information	Paul Walker / Debbie Kavanagh		
	8.8. Communicaitons with the public	a. City Centre map - facilities available / Lanes one way system etc	Paul Walker / Janet Waiwright		
		b. Develop a proposal that can be funded by the RHSS Grant	TBC		
		c. Cycling and parking messages	TBC		

9. Stewarding					
To ensure public places are safe to visit may require a greater physical presence on the streets for cleaning and stewarding. Coordinate between existing management organisations to identify how this best can be done.	9.1. Events Stewards	a. Need for stewards to be confirmed and resourced.	Paul Walker / Colin Bowley		
		b. Review of Regulations to ensure markets operate within the law	Scott Burns / Paul Walker		
		c. Provide branded tabards to stewards.	Paul Walker / Colin Bowley		
		d. Open TIC to assist in the coordination of events and stewarding.	Paul Walker	Completed	
	9.2. Proactive response to issues relating to congregating	a. Deal with breaches in Covid related legislation in public areas through Police operational order - scalable operation.	Diane Bradbury	Continual Activity	
		b. PCSO's to assist Lanes staff and other businesses in awareness of increased level of retail theft that is predicted.	Diane Bradbury	Continual Activity	
		c. Include Police actions to this Action Plan	Diane Bradbury / Zoe Sutton		
10. Markets					
Well-planned markets support footfall in towns and should be considered anchors. The market location and operating hours may also be revised where new footfall patterns have developed during crisis stage. Markets will also need to conform with social distancing, and there is more	10.1. City centre market in Carlisle	a. Work with market managers to identify measures that need to be put in place.	Paul Walker		
		b. Promote a welcome back message to market and customers.	Paul Walker		
	10.2. Consideration of how to deal with street traders / buskers etc	a. Agree and disseminate guiding principles.	Paul Walker / Andrew Allison	Continual Activity	

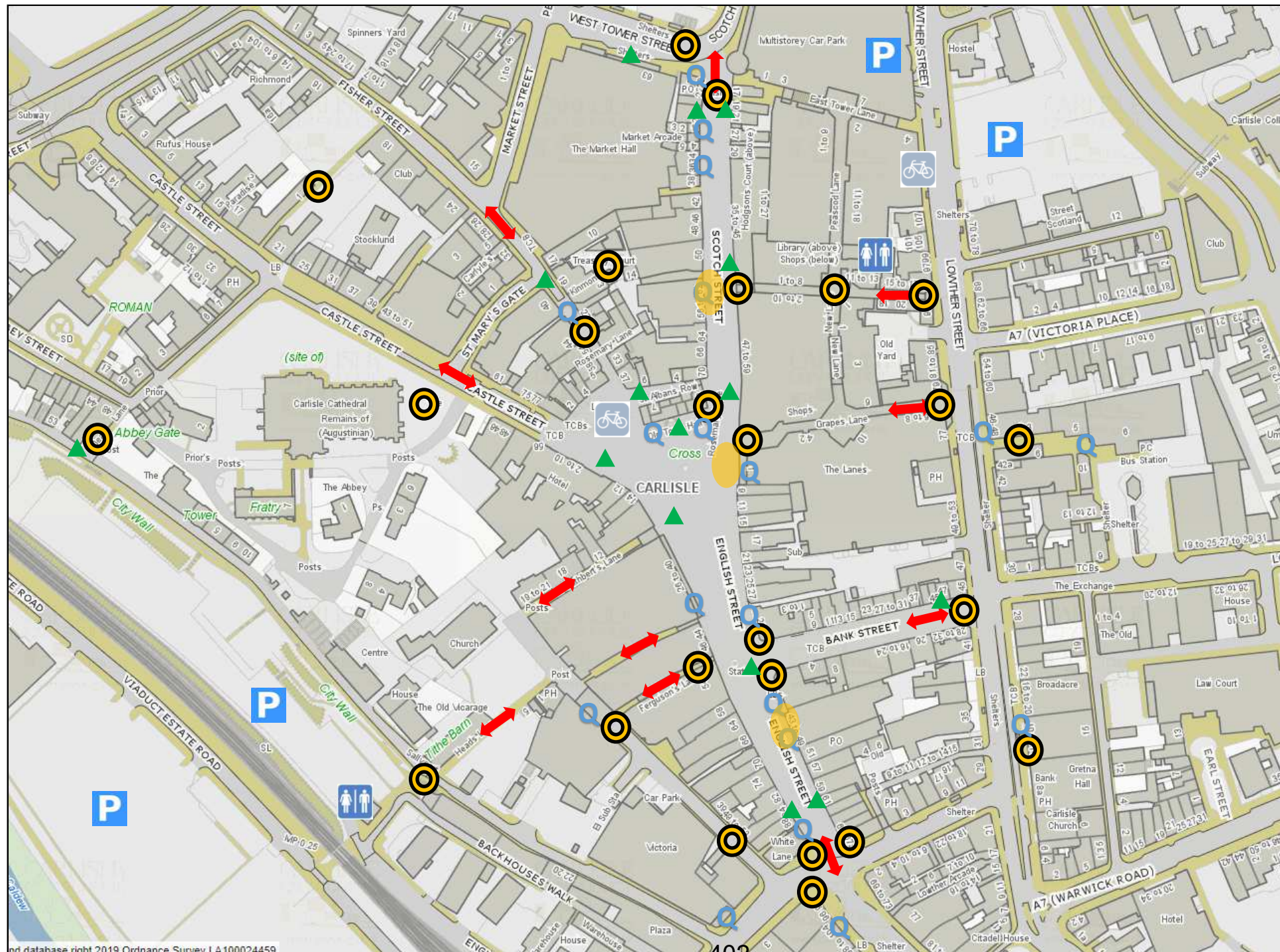
Last Updated 19/06/20



Carlisle city centre
high traffic 'pinch
points', access and
egress and areas lia-
ble to queueing.



- Queue likely
- Pinch point
- Access and Egress
- Public toilet
- Car parking
- Cycle parking
- Hand sanitiser station
- Critical queue point



-  Queue likely
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