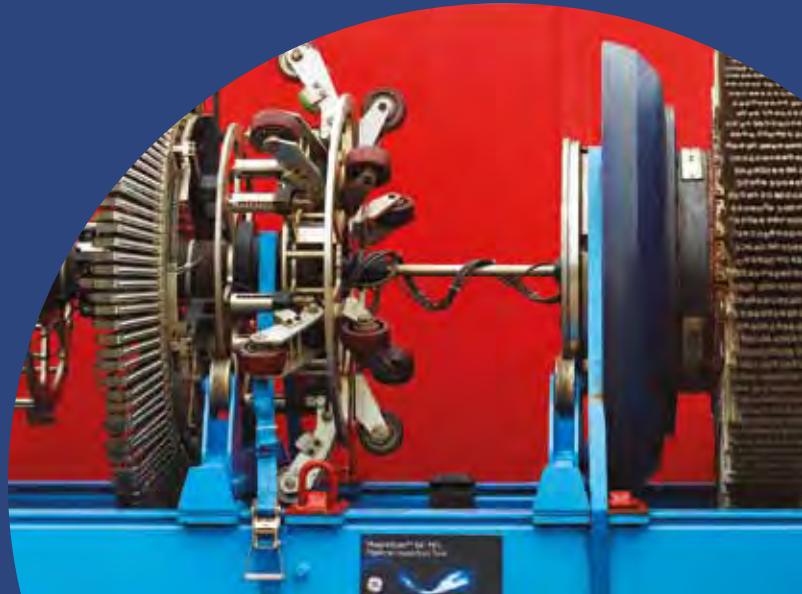




Northumberland Economic Strategy 2015 - 2020

Executive Summary





1. Introduction

This five year strategy establishes our vision to deliver prosperity in Northumberland founded on quality local jobs and connected communities. The ambition is to support the creation of 10,000 new jobs in the county up to 2031. This establishes a joint baseline with the new Northumberland Local Plan which will provide the long term spatial planning framework enabling business, housing and infrastructure development.

Northumberland is a distinct but also deeply interconnected place at the centre of the Northern economy with trading, employment and cultural relationships that expand far beyond its administrative borders. In particular there is our interdependence with the economy of the North East Combined Authority (NECA) and North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) area.

Growth is increasingly being driven through our work with NECA and NELEP and this strategy aims to contribute to the North East Strategic Economic Plan. There is also a shared purpose to pursue on economic issues across the North of England and with our neighbours in the Scottish Borders.

The case we make is that the region's future prosperity can only be realised by Northumberland providing more and better employment locally as well as continuing and expanding our crucial role in providing highly skilled workers across the region.

I look forward to working with all our partners to deliver new jobs and balanced growth in our county and region.

Councillor Grant Davey
Leader, Northumberland County Council



Northumberland's Economic Assets



Enterprising

Leading international and home grown companies and almost 10,000 small businesses. Proportionately high numbers of manufacturers and strong business survival rates.



Investment Ready

Competitive business location, an Enterprise Zone, reliable supply chains and innovation networks and support from ARCH, Northumberland's Development Company.



Connected

Located between Newcastle Upon Tyne and Edinburgh with access to world markets. Talent includes over 1.5 million North East residents and 750,000 workers.



Skilled

Mobile, reliable and flexible labour force featuring above national average proportions of highly skilled professionals, tradespeople and qualification levels.



Diverse

The most tranquil county in England, the second largest area of protected Dark Skies in the world, over 300,000 residents with a total land area of 5000 sq.km including popular towns, beautiful coast and countryside.



Distinct

9 million annual visitors spend over £700m enjoying the county including Hadrian's Wall, Kielder Water and Forest Park, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Northumberland National Park and the Cheviots.

2. Priorities for growth

This strategy proposes significant investment in business and sector development, major infrastructure and housing renewal to enable growth. Our focus is on:

- Strengthening our existing specialisms including oil and gas in the energy sector centred within our new Investment Zone in the most urban part of the county.
- Providing effective support to our diverse business base across what is a large rural economy by establishing a Growth Network to package up deliverable investment opportunities.
- Supporting tourism and culture businesses who are a major part of the Northumberland offer capitalising on our Northumbrian identity. We will be focusing on improving the quality and productivity of the sector and related leisure, arts and heritage activity with integrated support.
- Connecting our economy and that of the region, major investment is needed in transport, mobile and broadband connectivity, in particular completing the dualling of the A1 north of Morpeth and re-opening the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line to passenger services.
- Driving the development and renewal of towns and communities allied with the provision of diverse, good quality housing. We will be focusing on using council assets to deliver modern, efficient and joined up services.
- Enabling growth with our highly skilled workforce. Our plan is to bolster our existing strengths as a supplier of high quality labour across the region and to ensure that our economy is as inclusive as possible targeting support for young people and adults disconnected from the workforce.



Lindisfame Castle

The Northumberland Economic Strategy – Strategic Framework

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Vision</h2> <p style="margin: 0; font-size: 1.2em;">‘A prosperous Northumberland founded on quality local jobs and connected communities’</p>		
Strategy	Challenges	
	Strong Economy	Skilled Workforce
	Themes	
	Business	People
Delivery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting investment Growing key sectors Productivity and innovation Enterprise and business growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning to work transition Workforce skills Employability Skills system
	Place	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business locations Housing quality and choice Infrastructure and connectivity Developing communities 	
	Economic Programmes	
	<p style="text-align: center;">Programme 1: Investment Zone:</p> <p>Deliver growth including significant urban industrial and housing development integrated with measures that increase connectivity with Tyneside</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Programme 2: Growth Network</p> <p>Support and facilitate the growth of Northumberland’s network of market towns and ensure the rural economy is an accessible and distinctive place to live, work and visit.</p>
Area Focus		
South East and Central Northumberland	Central, North and West Northumberland	
Performance Framework and targets to 2020		



National Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult Centre, Blyth

Theme 1: Business

As the North East Strategic Economic Plan makes clear, the challenge for the whole region is to boost private sector employment. In Northumberland, that means revitalising established industries and growing under-represented sectors to become part of a balanced regional economy including the following priority activities:

- Focused development of the energy, advanced manufacturing, knowledge based services, tourism and culture, and forestry sectors
- Targeting small business growth through start up and existing business development, securing inward investment, buying local and being a business friendly place



Above - Hardy and Greys, Alnwick
Left - Hexham Town Centre

Theme 2: People

Northumberland is a place of contrasts with regard to the labour market. One of our greatest strengths is our highly skilled workforce, particularly as a supplier of labour to the regional economy. However, economic performance variations across the county reveal incidences of low skills and low paid employment which pose a significant risk to achieving balanced and equitable growth.

To address this imbalance and enable a more inclusive economy we are seeking to develop a competitive labour force by:

- Introducing the living wage and delivering targeted employability programmes for those residents disconnected from opportunities
- Supporting skills development, providing opportunities for young people including apprenticeships and ensuring the future workforce matches businesses requirements



Theme 3: Place

The focus is on getting the infrastructure right – roads, public transport, broadband, mobile coverage and property – which is essential to attract investment and enable existing businesses to grow.

The popularity of Northumberland is also founded on its outstanding quality of life and its natural beauty. We need to nurture and celebrate the qualities that people most value and that make Northumberland special.

We must build more homes and provide amenities for viable communities, invest in the fabric of our historic towns and protect the natural environment.

To deliver infrastructure and connectivity and support successful towns and communities we propose to unlock growth by:

- Attracting investment to the North East Enterprise Zone and delivering a countywide network of excellent employment sites and strategic infrastructure
- Dualling the A1 and re-opening the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line to passenger services alongside excellent countywide connectivity through road, rail, mobile and broadband coverage
- Enabling development of economic hubs in towns and communities across the county including the delivery of the Ashington Investment Plan
- Facilitating countywide housing development including strategic housing areas in Cramlington and Morpeth

3. Delivery

Growing the economy is this Council's number one corporate priority. The delivery of the strategy will depend on a range of stakeholders and we are committed to working in partnership using our assets and services including Arch, the Northumberland Development Company to achieve our ambitions for growth.

Our future is also dependent on change and progress regionally where we are working with our partners to argue the collective case for investment and deliver change through NELEP and NECA. We are focused on working together to demonstrate our joint ambition for growth and to achieve devolution which supports our ambitions in partnership with the Government.

New developments to support delivery of the strategy include development of a delivery plan including two economic delivery programmes based on the spatial assets in the County and an integrated project pipeline of activity to support growth. The council will be establishing a new Economic Forum to bring stakeholders together regularly to support the delivery of the Economic Strategy.



Delivery Programme 1: Investment Zone

The purpose of the Investment Zone is to deliver regionally significant growth including urban industrial and housing development integrated with measures that increase connectivity with Tyneside

The Investment Zone Delivery Programme will seek to capitalise on both the resident population and economic assets which are concentrated in the south east and central area of Northumberland including the towns of Morpeth, Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth and Cramlington. This area is closely integrated with the Newcastle city-region, and our aim is to ensure it is served by a good public transport system, with new business locations and inward investment.

Within this area, the reinstatement of passenger transport on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne railway line will make south-east and central Northumberland a more attractive and accessible place to live and work. The Morpeth Northern Bypass opening in 2016 will provide a northern link joining the A1 together with the A189, this investment alongside the new rail link will form the spine of the Investment Zone expanding the connectivity of the area into the region for businesses and residents.



In summary, the zone comprises of a long term investment programme including:

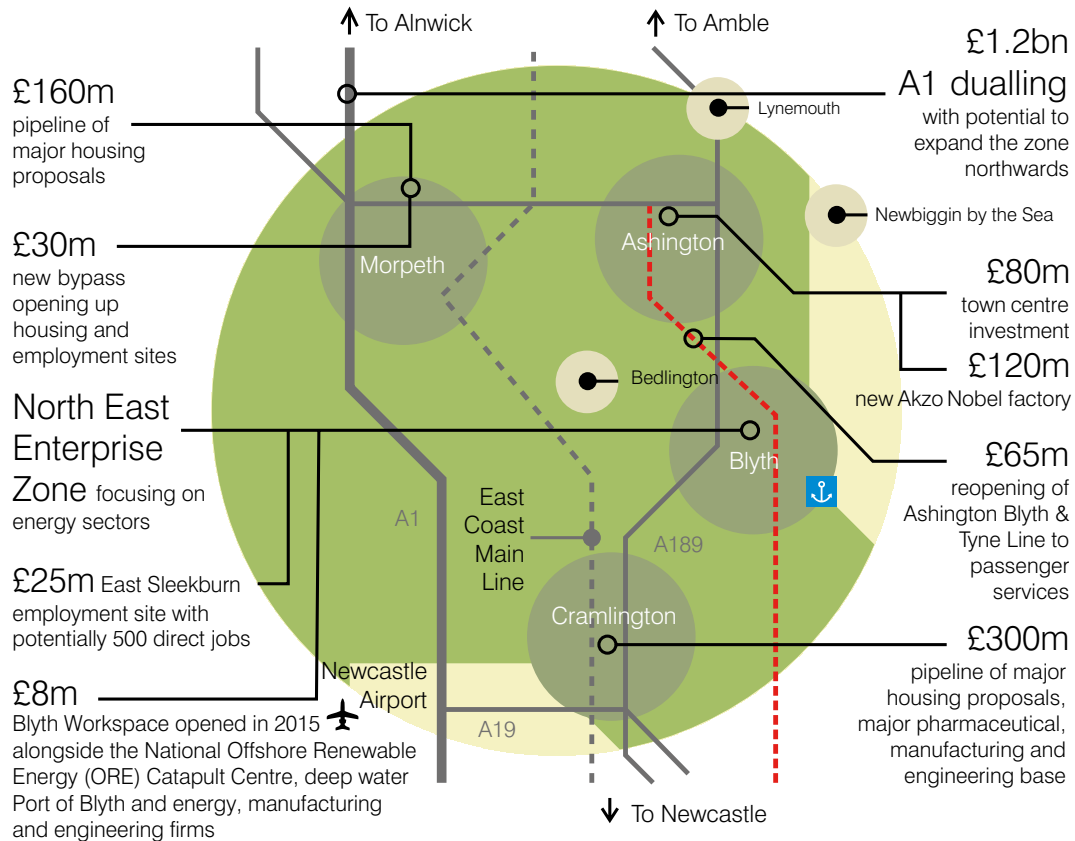
- dualling of the A1 strategic road network to Scotland,
- re-opening of the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Line to passengers,
- significant new employment and housing including major growth plans in Morpeth and Cramlington,
- the new Morpeth Northern Bypass completing and enhancing the road network between the A1 and A189 corridors,
- civic investment in the renewal of Ashington Town Centre,
- delivery of major energy focused investment into the Blyth Estuary Strategic Employment Area including the North East Enterprise Zone
- Strengthening of Cramlington's successful industrial and retail offer.
- Bespoke activity in other communities such as the renewal of Bedlington High Street.

The zone will enable development of new jobs and business, new quality and diverse housing and excellent transport routes linked to the urban core of Tyne and Wear.



14 Left - Cobalt Clipper Bus Service
Right - Ashington Community
and Leisure Centre

Northumberland Investment Zone



Delivery Programme 2: Growth Network

The purpose of the Growth Network is to support and facilitate the growth of Northumberland's network of market towns, and ensure the rural economy is an accessible and distinctive place to live, work and visit.

- The network seeks to build on the success of the existing North East Rural Growth Network which has already attracted a long term funding package from Government for business development.
- The Northumberland Growth Network broadens this approach encompassing investment in infrastructure, connectivity, key sectors and cultural and heritage assets. The network aims to support growth across the mainly rural North, West and Central areas of Northumberland. This includes the populous commuter towns and rural service centres of Berwick, Alnwick, Amble, Morpeth, Ponteland, Prudhoe, Hexham and Haltwhistle. The strength of this area also lies in the range of smaller towns and villages across the county and distinct locational assets including the National Park and two AONBs where appropriate investment can also occur.
- Much of this network is dispersed across a large land mass meaning the delivery of effective mobile and broadband coverage is essential. The strength of the network is in its diversity but also in common opportunities. For instance there is potential to see further niche business development projects, expanded enterprise hubs with targeted support and a strengthened tourism offer focusing on the key towns, their hinterlands and the world class cultural and heritage assets we have at our disposal.
- The potential impact of dualling the A1 North of Morpeth, a project of wider regional and national significance is central to realising growth in the area by providing greater access to external markets. The expansion of the commuter area of Tyneside northwards will combine with greater opportunities for local growth in jobs, housing and commercial activity.



Hexham Enterprise Hub
National Park Offices

Hexham Enterprise Hub @ Eastburn
National Park Offices



Making the case for improvements to the A69, other routes in the county and town centre functionality are all important as is safeguarding and improving national rail services that connect the county externally.

There are distinct opportunities in certain areas, for instance the central corridor locations of Hexham, Prudhoe and Ponteland are popular commuter towns with highly skilled populations and thriving, high demand housing markets. As such the investment appetite is higher and is something to capitalise upon.

The network therefore includes bespoke and place specific growth projects that use each community's assets sensitive to the need to protect localities for future generations.



Northumberland Growth Network

World class coastal and cultural assets

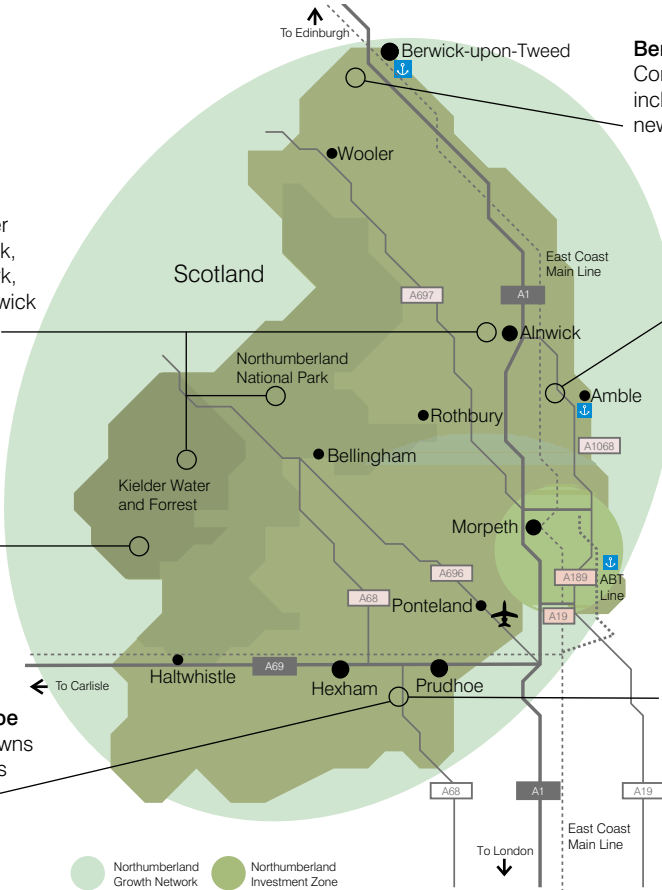
Hadrians Wall, Kielder Water and Forest Park, AONB's, National Park, the Cheviots and Alnwick Garden and Castle

Tourism investment

The Sill, the new £12m National Landscape Discovery Centre

Hexham and Prudhoe

Accessible market towns with major companies including Egger and SCA Hygiene



Berwick

Commercial and cultural offer including £6m investment in new premises

Rural growth programmes

£25m North East Rural Growth Network, £4m Leader and £2m Amble the Seafood Town Project

Rural transport and broadband infrastructure

£1.2bn A1 dualling, £19m Superfast Broadband rollout and proposed Tyne Valley A69 road improvement and rail electrification schemes

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

www.northumberland.gov.uk/economicstrategy

Front cover photos clockwise from top left: Hadrians Wall, PII Pipeline Solutions Ltd, Cramlington, Glendale Gateway Trust Smart Work Hub, and Blyth Education and Community Hub.

Photographs used with the kind permission of ARCH, Visit Britain, BEACH Project, North East Rural Growth Network and Go Smarter Northumberland

