

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

CABINET

11 APRIL 2017

THE BORDERLANDS INITIATIVE

Report of: Geoff Paul, Director of Planning and Economy

Cabinet Member: Councillor Allan Hepple, Economic Growth

Purpose of report

To update Cabinet as to the recent progress made in developing the Borderlands Initiative in collaboration with Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, and Scottish Borders Council.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- **welcome the progress taken to develop the Borderlands Initiative, particularly in raising awareness as to the economic challenges and opportunities of the area with both the UK and Scottish Governments**
- **approve the Framework, prepared by Ekos Consulting on behalf of the Borderlands Initiative Steering Group, as the basis for subsequently unlocking the potential of the area**
- **agree that as part of this commitment, the Council will fully participate in:**
 - **a further political “Summit” of the five participating local authorities to cement the endorsement of the Framework as a collective**
 - **the preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding or similar to formalise the partnership arrangements with the participating authorities**
 - **presenting the Framework to both the UK and Scottish Governments as a basis for negotiating further investment in the area to accelerate the delivery of priority projects**
 - **undertaking a period of pro-active engagement with stakeholders to secure wider buy-in and support for the Initiative**

- **approve as part of its ongoing contribution to the delivery of the Initiative:**
 - **continued participation in the Steering Group and the development of subsequent and proportionate governance arrangements**
 - **an allocation of up to £40,000 as the Council's contribution to support the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager equipped with a working budget for a period of two years to facilitate the delivery of the Initiative - this sum can be met from existing budgets**
- **acknowledge that the activity taken forward through the Borderlands Initiative is complementary and strengthens the ongoing discussions to secure devolution of powers and funding from the UK Government**

Links to Corporate Plan

This report supports the Economic Growth priority included in Council's Corporate Plan 2013-2017.

Key Issues

The Borderland Initiative brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the economic growth and competitiveness of this area which straddles the Scotland-England border.

It was established, in the run-up to the referendum on Scottish independence, as a response to a report commissioned by the North of England which considered how best to maximise the benefits of further devolution to Scotland. Since then:

- the political awareness as to the challenges and opportunities faced by the area have been raised at both a local and national level;
- a robust evidence base has been produced to outline the prevailing economic state of the area; and
- a Framework for taking the Initiative forward around a set of coherent priorities focused on specific themes and strategic transport corridors has been developed.

This Framework identifies a number of next steps associated with governance; engagement (both with the UK and Scottish governments and a wider network of stakeholders); processes associated with investment planning and project prioritisation; and the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager.

The Council's ongoing engagement with the Borderlands Initiative complements the potential for a North of Tyne devolution deal, and indeed further strengthens it by creating the opportunity to progressively expand good practice or test innovative approaches to a wider rural area which spans the national border between England and Scotland.

Cabinet is asked to welcome the work undertaken to date and to agree that the Council commits to fully participating in the the next phase of the Initiative's development as

outlined in the Framework. This includes the approval of a sum of up to £40,000 to help secure the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager for the next two years. This is on the basis that the other participating local authorities will make similar contribution. The subsequent aim would be to seek matching resources from both the UK and Scottish Governments.

BACKGROUND

Context

1. The Borderlands Initiative brings together the five cross-border local authorities of Carlisle City Council, Cumbria Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Northumberland County Council and Scottish Borders Council to promote the economic growth and competitiveness of this area which straddles the Scotland-England border.
2. It was established following the publication of a report commissioned by the Association of North East Councils (ANEC) which explored how the North East and Cumbria could benefit from greater Scottish autonomy. Produced in July 2013 by Northumbria University, it recommended that given the common challenges and opportunities of the area, there was merit in convening a network to facilitate collaborative working across the local authorities which straddled both sides of the border between England and Scotland. The report further recommended that the local authorities could work towards a 'Borderlands deal' to be taken to both the UK and Scottish Governments.
3. As a result of this an officer Steering Group was established and has been meeting regularly over the past couple of years. It includes civil service representation from both the UK and Scottish Governments, as well the chief officer from Northumberland National Park Authority.
4. Over this period, the Steering Group has overseen the the development of the Initiative through a range of forums and processes which had led to the progressive preparation of a unified Framework. This journey is outlined at Appendix 1.

A Framework for Unlocking the Potential of the Borderlands

5. In March 2016, the Steering Group appointed Ekos Consulting to focus on the following areas:
 - Analysis and objective view of the current work being undertaken by the local authorities and their "Developing the Framework for a Borderlands Strategy".
 - Consider the appropriateness of developing a regional growth model approach for the Borderlands area, given the analysis of No.1 above and governance for such model.
 - Economic appraisal of current position; evidence for the business case for the key projects; demonstrate that these projects are worth doing; their potential impact on GVA uplift.
 - Develop clear recommendations and next steps for a Borderlands proposal; taking into consideration how future actions might play into existing structures.

This work would subsequently be brought together into a Framework that would present and analyse the Economic Baseline Data for the key projects and provide a clear set of actionable recommendations.

6. Ekos Consulting submitted the final Framework to the Steering Group in December 2016. The associated Vision and Proposition is reproduced at Appendix 3.
7. It presents a summary of:
 - the Borderlands vision
 - the objectives of the Borderlands Initiative
 - where the Borderlands is
 - what makes the Borderlands unique
 - what the Initiative will deliver
 - the opportunity and our proposition
 - the next steps
8. More details are presented in the main report, which with the associated Appendices, runs to in excess of 130 pages. This includes a recognition that despite its common characteristics, the Borderlands covers a large and diverse geographic area. Therefore, in addition to the thematic intervention areas, activity has been compartmentalised based on five *Strategic Corridor Locations*, as illustrated at Appendix 4.
9. The Strategic Corridor approach reflects the aspirations for cross regional collaboration based on the existing physical and infrastructure connections. Transport and connectivity will play a pivotal function in linking the opportunities created, and informing the project activity to be delivered through the Initiative.

The Priority Programme

10. From a Northumberland perspective, the projects referred to in the list of priority activity of particular interest include:

Transport and Connectivity

- Dualling of the A69 and the A1
- Upgrading and electrification of rail services on the Tyne Valley Rail Line between Carlisle and Newcastle, including the provision of a new station at Gilsland
- Improving the East Coast Main Line
- Introducing a Borderlands Digital Improvement Scheme to accelerate access to superfast broadband and 4G mobile phone technology

Place Development and Regeneration

- Introducing a Borderlands Town Regeneration Fund, with Berwick and Haltwhistle identified as the initial priorities in Northumberland
- Creating Community Growth Areas that support the regeneration work of development trusts, parish councils and other community organisations
- Establishing a Border Uplands Demonstrator Initiative, as initial pilot within a wider Rural Development Demonstrator Programme to showcase new ways of working in a post-Brexit context (see Appendix 5 for more details)

- Developing a Borderlands Developer and Investor Prospectus
- Securing and applying further Simplified Planning Zones and Enterprise Zones designations to key industrial sites
- Developing a Borderlands Developer and Investor Prospectus

Key Sectors and Skills

- Exploring the scope to develop a Centre of Excellence or Innovation Centre for a key sector - examples could include energy; science and technology; food and drink; hospitality and tourism; or rural development demonstration
- Establishing key sector networks that bring together industry, academia and the public sector to share knowledge, information, identify key issues and opportunities - including addressing skill gaps and shortages
- Expanding the Supplier Development Programme, operational in Scotland, to a pan-Borderlands geography to make businesses procurement-ready and strengthen supply chains
- Securing additional funding to expand and unify enterprise support programmes such as the Rural Growth Network operational in Northumberland
- Introducing a pan-Borderlands Digital Training scheme

11. Given that the Borderlands Initiative is a new concept, the opportunity to undertake branding, marketing and promotion that will raise the profile of, and attract attention to, the region is essential. Such a campaign would emphasise the key locational assets within the region and help to address the question, “Why Borderlands?”. Examples of doing this could include:

- commissioning a promotional film similar to that produced for the Northern Powerhouse
- developing a Borderlands Tourist or Food Trail in conjunction with introducing an associated Borderlands Visitor Travel Pass
- promoting the high quality of life as a key selling point of the area to attract new residents, visitors and businesses
- developing a business/investor website that provides a range of marketing materials, including testimonials from companies already based in the area

Delivering a Borderlands Initiative - the next steps

12. The main report concludes by identifying a number of key actions for taking the Borderlands Initiative forward. These are as follows:

- *Memorandum of Understanding*
Partners should prepare and agree a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), or similar as the first step to establishing a Borderlands partnership and Initiative. This will outline the common ambition of the partners and secure buy-in at the senior level. Based on discussions with potential funders this may develop into a formal agreement or partnership.

- *Engage with UK and Scottish Governments*
The Framework has set out the high level strategic case and rationale for collaboration. The next step is for partners to present it to the UK and Scottish Governments to gather their input/feedback and begin negotiations regarding securing and leveraging public sector funding for delivering the Initiative.
- *Stakeholder Engagement*
There a number of strategic and delivery bodies and organisations that are crucial for the successful implementation and delivery of the Initiative. The partners should now develop an engagement strategy and undertake a period of pro-active engagement with stakeholders to secure wider buy-in and support for the Initiative.
- *Investment model*
The Framework has outlined the two delivery mechanisms for the Initiative – direct intervention through funding and resourcing of activity, and indirect intervention where the Initiative plays a strategic lobbying or advocacy role. Based on discussion with funders and the partnership, there is a need to negotiate and develop a detailed investment model. In particular there are two elements to be addressed – how funding will be allocated and how it should be used.
- *Agree and secure a funding request for the pre-Initiative development works*
It is advised that partners commit or secure additional funding to support a Programme Manager post for a period of two years. The Programme Manager will be responsible for a number of tasks, including programme and project development; managing the day-to-day relationships and coordinating activity between stakeholders and strategic groups; liaising and communicating updates and progress to the Strategic Board; and ensuring a robust governance and management structure is implemented.
- *Project modelling and development*
Partners should discuss and agree an appropriate and robust approach to project modelling to help prioritise project activity. This will include the development of a Borderlands Initiative proposition paper that can be disseminated to wider stakeholders. Future project development work to include:
 - cross partner agreement on the finalised list of project activity;
 - agreement of project modelling – ‘ranking’ project activity;
 - agree the role of the Initiative in project delivery – direct or indirect;
 - prepare outline timetable for project delivery – based on the funding allocation model; and
 - assign internal teams for project development, implantation and delivery.

Links to devolution in England

13. The County Council is currently in discussion, together with Newcastle City Council and North Tyneside Council, with Government as to the potential development of a North of Tyne devolution deal. As with the previous North East devolution

agreement, these discussions will explore the potential for increased devolution of powers and funding in relation to improving and accelerating the promotion of rural growth and stewardship. This will be increasingly important in a post Brexit context and the subsequent approach taken by the Government given that the UK will no longer form part of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

14. The Council's ongoing engagement with the Borderlands Initiative complements the potential of this devolution, and indeed further strengthens it by creating the opportunity to progressively expand good practice or test innovative approaches to a wider rural area which spans the national border between England and Scotland. The Border Uplands Demonstrator Initiative represents an early example of this.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy	Economic growth is one of the Council's priorities as outlined in the current Corporate Plan. Continued participation in this Initiative presents the potential to secure additional funding and powers from both the UK and Scottish governments to further promote economic growth across the county, and particularly in the more rural areas in the west and north.
Finance and value for money	The aim of the Initiative is to unlock additional funding to promote the regeneration and economic development of rural Northumberland. It is anticipated that will significantly outweigh the financial contribution made to the Initiative to secure the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager.
Legal	n/a
Procurement	n/a
Human Resources	The Programme Manager post will, in the first instance, be hosted by one of the participating local authorities. The decision as to which Council performs this role has yet to be determined.
Property	n/a
Equalities	Impact Assessment attached Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Risk Assessment	The operation of the Initiative will be governed by a Memorandum of Understanding or similar with appropriate and proportionate arrangements put in place to manage the subsequent partnership working.
Crime & Disorder	n/a
Customer Consideration	n/a
Carbon reduction	n/a

Wards	ALL
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Appendices:

1. The Development of the Borderlands Initiative
2. Developing the Framework for a Borderlands Strategy: Collaborative Opportunities
3. The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Initiative: A Framework for Unleashing our Potential - Vision and Proposition Statement
4. The Borderlands Strategic Corridors

Background papers:

Borderlands: Can the North East and Cumbria benefit from greater Scottish autonomy?, Northumbria University/St Chad's College, Durham/IPPR North, July 2013

Our Borderlands - Our Future: Final Report, House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee, March 2015

Developing the Framework for a Borderlands Strategy, Northumbria University/University of Cumbria, November 2015

Enterprise & Skills Review: Report on Phase 1, Scottish Government, October 2016

The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Initiative: A Framework for Unleashing our Potential, Ekos Consulting, December 2016

Report sign off

	initials
Finance Officer	AM
Monitoring Officer/Legal	LH
Human Resources	KA
Procurement	TP
I.T.	NA
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**APPENDIX 1:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BORDERLANDS INITIATIVE**

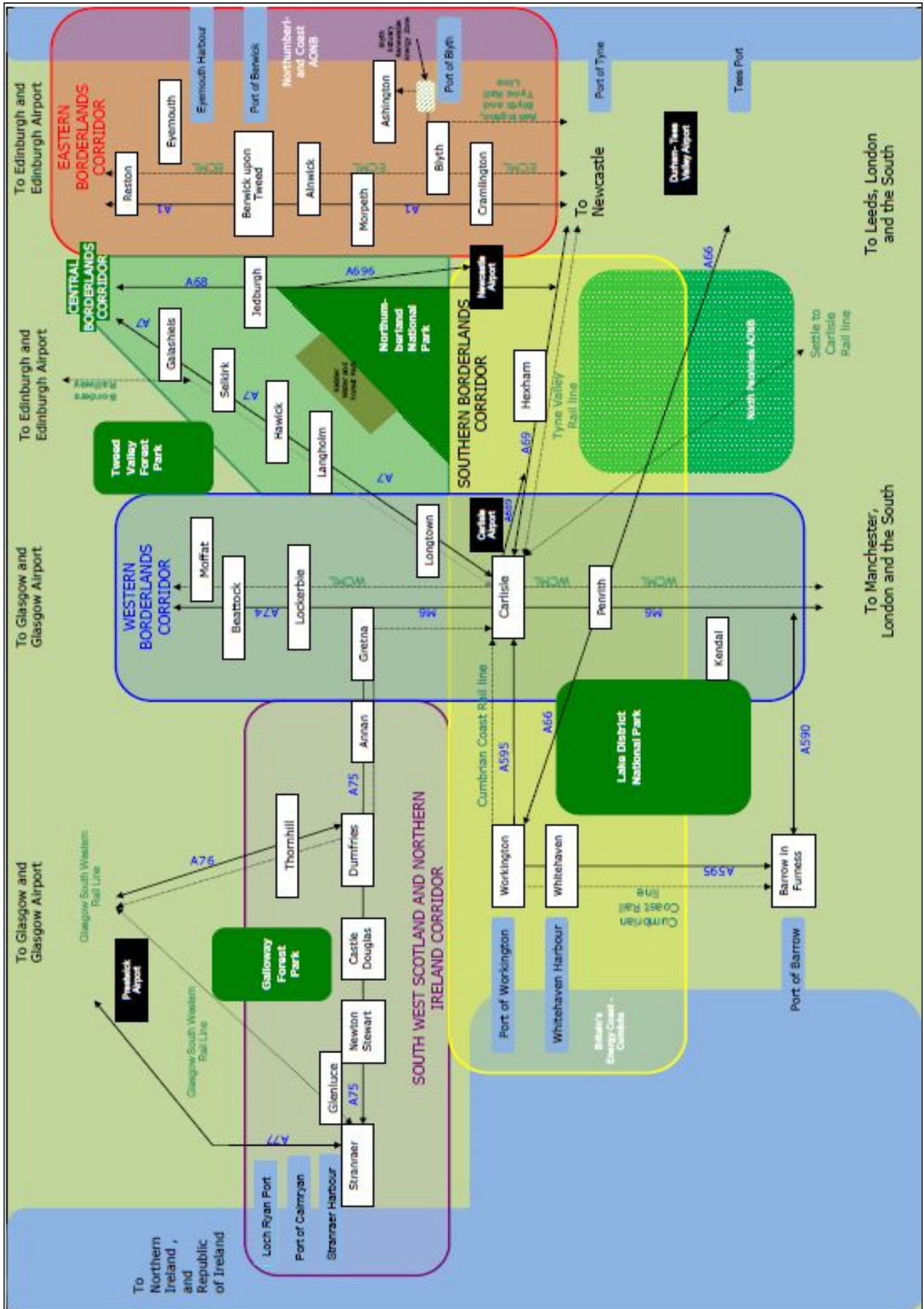
April 2014	<p>The first political summit of the constituent local authorities is held with the five Council leaders signing a declaration outlining their shared commitment to improving the economic prosperity of their areas. Within this, the Councils recognised that there are significant opportunities in collaborating on areas of common interest relating to economic development; connectivity; transportation and communication infrastructure; rural development; employment and training; energy investments; tourism; culture and the arts. On this basis, they agreed that the collaboration provided a strong platform for lobbying the UK and Scottish Governments on common economic, connectivity, and infrastructure matters and for developing joint projects and programmes involving a wider range of partners across the Borderlands area.</p>
November 2014	<p>The second political summit explored the immediate priorities for the Initiative and identified a suite of next steps. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● defining a core list of infrastructure projects based on their potential to stimulate economic growth; ● formulating a Borderlands narrative, to help aid understanding of both the Borderlands area, and the Initiative; ● further exploring the scope take forward tourism cooperation and seek to bring together the tourism bodies on both sides of the border to consider the potential Borderlands tourism product; and ● developing a lobbying strategy for briefing MPs and MSPs as to the economic potential of the Borderlands and thereby seeking support for the Initiative
January 2015	<p>A tourism workshop of cross-Border interests and stakeholders is held to explore the opportunities and role for the sector in contributing to help generate economic additionality within the Borderlands. The session identified a number of potential areas for joint working might flow from and support the wider Initiative in its potential approach to Government for a 'Borderlands Deal'.</p>
March 2015	<p>Within the context of the referendum on Scottish independence, the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee published its report <i>Borderlands - Our Future</i> having received oral and written submissions from a number of participants, including officers from the Steering Group. It explored four key areas: cross-border working and the Borderlands Initiative; economic development and enterprise in the south of Scotland; unemployment and the low-wage economy; and EU regional and structural funds. In so doing, it examined two central questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are the current structures working as effectively as they could for the benefit of the people of the south of Scotland? ● How can the UK and Scottish Governments work together with local authorities to deliver appropriate and effective policies to support economic development and growth in the south of Scotland? <p>It made, among others, the following recommendations:</p>

	<p><i>We welcome the creation of the Borderlands Initiative as a first step in effective cross border and collaborative working, and recognise its role in delivering major benefits for this economic region. However, this potential will only be delivered if both the UK and Scottish Governments provide the vital political support and leadership required to deliver tangible benefits. We recommend that an inter-ministerial forum is setup to work alongside the Borderlands Initiative.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, to avoid duplication of effort and the spreading of resources too thinly, community-level involvement and decision making should be underpinned by a regional framework of the type offered by the Borderlands Initiative. We recommend that the Borderlands Initiative work closely with community councils to develop a clear strategy in relation to how all levels of government should work together to deliver for the benefit of the people of the south of Scotland.</i></p> <p><i>We believe that the restructuring of Scottish Enterprise, and the centralising impetus behind that restructuring, has had a negative impact on the economic development and enterprise culture in the south of Scotland - not least because of the subsequent decline in both the visibility of the region and of services tailored to the specific economic challenges it faces. We therefore urge the UK Government to work closely with the Scottish Government to identify how the negative consequences of the initial restructuring for the south of Scotland should be remedied, and to identify how a refocusing of existing resources may best address the specific needs of the south of Scotland.</i></p>
July 2015	<p>David Mundell, the Secretary of State for Scotland (and MP for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) hosted a briefing of all those MPs within the UK Government with a constituency in the Borderlands area. It was evident from this session that there was strong cross-party support for the development of the Borderlands Initiative with the Steering Group encouraged to develop a coherent proposition of asks. David Mundell offered to champion any such proposition across the UK Government.</p>
November 2015	<p>The Universities of Cumbria and Northumbria published their report <i>Developing the Framework for a Borderlands Strategy</i>. The Steering Group had commissioned its production to help underpin the development of a collaborative approach to economic development in the Borderlands. On this basis, it provides a comparative economic and social data which serves as an in-depth and independent evidence base on which a collaborative approach for the Borderlands can be developed and promoted by the combined efforts of the five councils and their partners. The study also reviewed the wide range of existing economic strategies operating across the Borderlands, identifying: priorities; key sectors; assets; challenges, and opportunities for collaboration particularly in relation to Energy, Forestry, Tourism, and Connectivity. These are reproduced at Appendix 2.</p>
October 2016	<p>The Scottish Government published its report on phase 1 of the Review of Enterprise and Skills in Scotland. This includes the following recommendation: <i>Recognising the unique challenges faced in the region, we will create a new vehicle to meet the enterprise and skills needs of the South of Scotland. This will be accountable to the new Scotland-wide statutory board alongside our other enterprise and skills bodies.</i></p>

**APPENDIX 2:
DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK FOR A BORDERLANDS STRATEGY:
COLLABORATIVE OPPORTUNITIES**

<p>Macro-Higher Intensity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a Borderlands ‘Voice’ to EU and National Governments ● Promote the Borderlands as an exemplar of an innovative approach to rural development ● Develop a Borderland ‘Brand’ for Marketing and Promotion ● Develop a Borderlands Forestry Compact ● Develop a Borderlands Strategy for Community-Based Renewable Energy Projects ● Develop a Borderlands approach to Green (Sustainable) Tourism ● Develop a Borderlands approach to developing new low carbon technologies and products 	<p>Macro-Lower Intensity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share good practice on planning approaches to onshore wind power ● Discuss and share approaches to using smartcard technology to reduce barriers for people using passenger transport ● Explore opportunities to increase linkages between manufacturing firms across the Borderlands ● Develop a joint-seminar series on the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population ● Establish a Borderlands Skills Network ● Establish a Borderlands Farmers Forum ● Identify opportunities for cross-border rural business development e.g. amongst artisan and small scale food companies
<p>Micro-Higher Intensity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a new approach to the Solway as both an Energy Gateway and area of marine tourism ● Develop a strategy for energy capture and storage across Cumbria and Dumfries and Galloway ● Create an international strategy for Dark Skies tourism that draws upon both Kielder and Galloway Forest ● Develop a more coordinated approach to coastal paths and cycle routes on the east and west coasts ● Use the Borderlands approach to lobby for the extension of the ‘Waverley’ line to Carlisle. ● Explore how the recent designation of a North East Combined Authority, (NECA), can provide greater opportunities for promoting cross-border collaboration 	<p>Micro-Lower Intensity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a network of the free-standing market towns across Northumberland and the Scottish Borders to encourage the sharing of ideas on economic development ● Bring together interested parties to consider how to make the most of the key resource that is the River Tweed ● Bring together interested parties to consider how the existing EU LEADER programmes across Northumberland and Cumbria can be effectively integrated with other EU Programmes. ● Explore how particular areas of the Borderlands approach (such as rural development) can also incorporate and involve Durham County Council.

APPENDIX 4 THE BORDERLANDS STRATEGIC CORRIDORS



APPENDIX 5: BORDER UPLANDS DEMONSTRATOR INITIATIVE (BUDI)

The BUDI is a collaborative initiative to develop a programme of new innovative approaches and pilot demonstrator projects. These can be used to build knowledge and find ways to achieve a more sustainable and resilient future for the remote upland communities of the cross border area of Northern England and Southern Scotland based on the natural and cultural assets of the area. Uncovering innovative and genuinely sustainable approaches to tackling the long term issues faced by upland communities will be more important post-Brexit in a non-CAP economy than ever.

It will seek to demonstrate if a new joined up, enabling approach could deliver more holistic and sustainable outcomes, utilising, sustaining and enhancing the natural and cultural capital of the area to develop a genuinely environment-based economy. It will also seek to identify how we can develop integrated outcomes for landscape management and rural development with a shared vision that is not constrained by borders, demonstrating how clarity of purpose and joined up action across all sectors of society can deliver positive long term outcomes over a broad number of agendas.

Where appropriate it will build on existing initiatives, funding streams, structures and partnerships; but it will also seek to identify policy shortfalls and new ways of doing things or using funds to enable better outcomes in the long term.

Fundamentally, the aim of the BUDI is to test approaches with the overall ambition of developing:

- A genuinely environment-based economy where the management of a high quality, healthy, resilient natural environment and a rich cultural heritage underpin the area's sustainable development and are at the heart of what people value about the places they live, work and visit.
- Resilient communities that can attract new generations into an economically and environmentally sustainable area, that has access to communications, services and a thriving visitor economy.

The BUDI extends over the cross border upland areas of Northern England and Southern Scotland - essentially covering the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), the Northumberland National Park, the Kielder Water and Forest Park, and the Southern Uplands/Cheviots hill range.

This area faces all of the challenges that typify remote upland communities and encompasses a huge wealth of natural capital and cultural assets; in that it has:

- a largely land-based local economy built on farming, land management, forestry and tourism, allied to an important cultural sector and a proliferation of micro-enterprises
- communities which demonstrate high indices of need and that have great commonality in terms of their economic circumstances and their access to facilities and services
- a common suite of important upland species, habitats and ecosystem goods and services (environmental cohesion)
- a common set of upland agricultural and land management issues

To date, two separate cross border partner working groups (Natural Environment and Socio-Economic) have been meeting to consider the potential scope of the initiative. Following open discussion around key issues, they have identified a series of themes with a view to developing a number of potential projects, underpinned by the guiding principles of doing things differently.

This work has identified a rich range of inter-related opportunities. However, as the BUDI only has an initial 12 months of funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), there is a need to focus on a realistic number of potential projects.

Given this, the next steps are to:

- develop an overarching report on the area to set the context and give us a baseline, identifying the current assets, challenges and opportunities based on existing evidence.
- scope a small number of the key places that have begun to emerge, building on the work done on themes to date, regional and national strategies and local need, working with local communities to understand places, develop shared visions and solutions and explore how holistic place-based approaches could work
- work toward developing 2-3 exemplar projects

This work will be taken forward by a small team hosted by Northumberland National Park Authority.