



**Report of Andy Kerr, Head of Economic Development, Durham
County Council**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the report

- 1 This report gives an overview of the health and wellbeing activities that are captured in the county's new Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan.

Executive summary

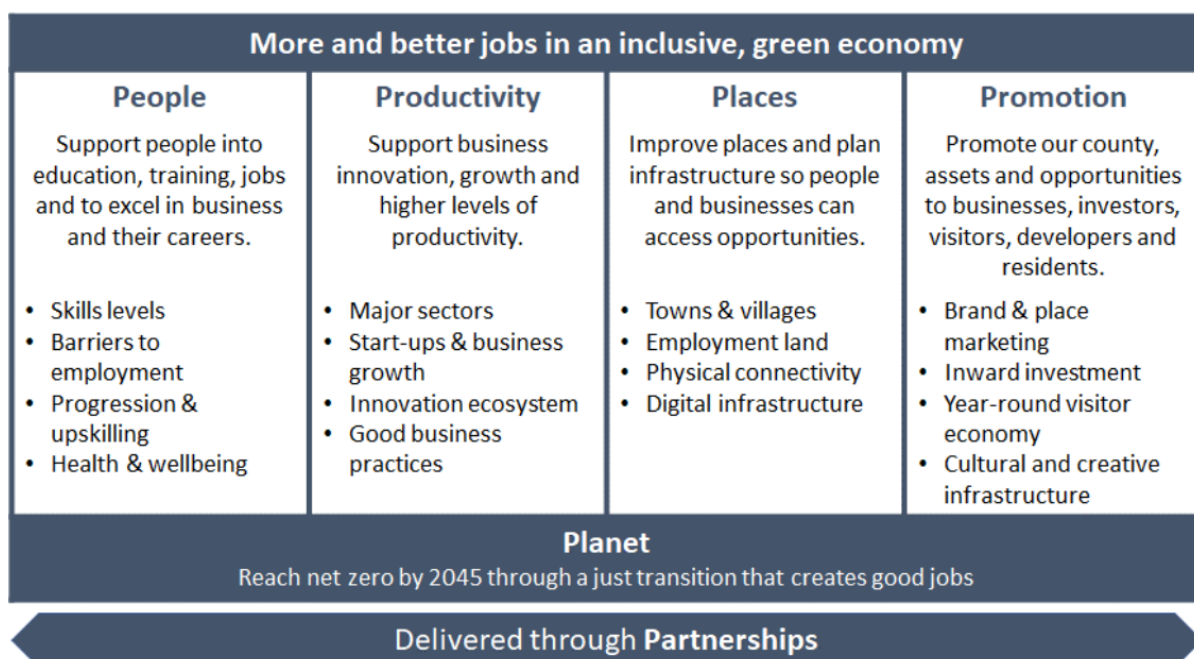
- 2 The Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) Delivery Plan was adopted by County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) and the council in late 2023. This followed the adoption of the IES in December 2022 and the development of the Delivery Plan throughout 2023 with a wide range of partners.
- 3 The IES is a bold, ambitious strategy which focuses on harnessing our strengths and opportunities to make a step-change in our economic performance by 2035. It recognises the challenges and opportunities across the county and aims to ensure that as many people benefit from growth as possible. The strategy provides a long-term focus which will drive strategic projects that aim to make a transformational improvement to the county's underlying economic conditions. The delivery plan, the first in a series of action plans, sets out the actions to be delivered in the first few years of the strategy.
- 4 The health of the county's working age population is crucial to the economy, but the county has a particularly high proportion of the workforce that are held back from achieving their potential by long-term sickness and disabilities. The Delivery Plan incorporates a range of priorities and activities that aim to support people with health issues into work and ensuring communities have facilities that support better health outcomes.

Recommendations

- 5 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the adoption of the Inclusive Economic Strategy and accompanying Delivery Plan.
 - (b) Consider the activities identified in the Delivery Plan and identify activities that have not been captured.
 - (c) Continue to support the implementation and development of the Delivery Plan.

Background

- 6 The County Durham Inclusive Economic Strategy (IES) was adopted by County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) and Durham County Council in late 2022. Since this time, the council has provided the platform for partners to meet in large workshops and smaller thematic working groups to prepare a Delivery Plan. This was adopted by the Economic Partnership in October 2023 and the council in November 2023.
- 7 The vision of the IES is for *'more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy'*, with ambitious targets and an overall aim of bridging the gap with national levels of economic performance by 2035. The county's economy has faced significant challenges over the last few decades and still needs to overcome structural weaknesses such as relatively low levels of educational attainment, low paid jobs, and high levels of poor health amongst the working age population. However, the county also has a growing profile as a place to invest and visit and a diverse range of opportunities. Therefore, the IES has a long-term focus in order to give a realistic chance of catching-up with national levels of performance.
- 8 The Delivery Plan builds on the structure of the IES, and its themes of People, Productivity, Place, Promotion and Planet, as summarised below. 'Health and wellbeing' are explicitly identified as a priority under the 'People' theme, but the intention is that other priorities also contribute to improved levels of health and wellbeing throughout the county.



Links between Health and the Economy

- 9 The County Durham [Director of Public Health Report 2023](#) highlights the interdependencies between health, wealth, work and economic development. Given that our people drive economic growth, good population health is a key determinant of improved productivity and economic prosperity.
- 10 Nationally, poor mental health accounts for around half of all work-related ill health¹, and smoking is associated with lower economic performance due to increases in morbidity and mortality². Recent research³ found that local authorities with the highest rates of obesity have the lowest rates of productivity. The County Durham Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) 2023-28 recognises these three issues as priority areas for action.

Delivery Plan Development

- 11 The development of the IES began as a plan for economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic when the close links between health and the economy were very evident. The 2021 Economic Review, which is the main evidence base for the strategy, recognised the close links between health, educational attainment, income, and employment. Similarly, issues relating to the ageing population, housing quality, active travel, people with caring responsibilities, and economic inactivity due to sickness and disability were identified. The health and life sciences sectors are also recognised as opportunities for innovation (e.g. photonics), manufacturing (e.g. pharmaceuticals) and wider economic growth (e.g. health and social care jobs). These findings and issues underpinned discussions with partners and the development of activities as part of the Delivery Plan.
- 12 The development of the Delivery Plan provided an opportunity to bring partners together to review activities and identify gaps and new transformative and strategic actions, aligned to the IES. Throughout the development of the Delivery Plan we encouraged external partners to drive the process and identify opportunities that they - rather than the council - could lead. Partners agreed that the Economic Partnership should continue to be the lead organisation for overseeing the implementation of the Delivery Plan and identifying new activities.
- 13 The initial Delivery Plan covers the period 2023 to 2025, whereas the IES is designed to provide direction up to 2035. Therefore we anticipate that the implementation of the Delivery Plan will be closely managed,

¹ HSE 'Work related ill health' 2023

² DHSC 2017

³ Future Health 'Turning point: The case for new action in tackling obesity in England' (2023)

with major updates every 2 to 3 years. There are significant events on the near horizon including the launch of a new Mayoral Combined Authority for the North East, a general election and government Spending Round, and changes to external funding programmes such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Therefore, at this point, we expect to reflect on these changes and new opportunities in the 2025/26 financial year and update the Delivery Plan accordingly.

Health and Wellbeing Activities

- 14 Throughout the IES, the close links between health and the economy are recognised, with several priorities reflecting this, including:
 - **Priority 1.2:** *Overcome barriers to employment, including work readiness, skills, improved careers advice and guidance, and addressing poor health.*
 - **Priority 1.4:** *Ensure good health and wellbeing leads to economic inclusion.*
 - **Priority 2.4:** *Drive good business practices, including health in the workplace.*
- 15 There are 160 activities identified in the Delivery Plan which are linked to the IES priorities, including numerous activities relating to health. The People theme includes the delivery of Durham Enable, Durham Help, the Local Supported Employment project, and the Community Wealth Building partnership. Specifically aligned to the priorities of the JLHWS, the Delivery Plan also has an action to improve good workplace health and wellbeing as a means of improving business productivity. This will be achieved by addressing key determinants of health such as mental health, smoking, drugs, and alcohol use.
- 16 Other themes in the Delivery Plan include activities that encourage businesses to support the wellbeing of their staff, healthier high streets, active travel schemes, strengthening foundational economies (including local health services), and a proposal to recognise the North East as a 'Region of Sport'.
- 17 The Delivery Plan includes a performance management framework (aka scorecard) for the IES which compares the economic performance of our six local parliamentary constituencies, with the county's overall performance. The scorecards help to indicate where places are underperforming and will be used to target local support. The scorecard includes 19 measures which will be used to track inclusive growth, such as unemployment, education, pay, and levels of long-term sickness amongst people of working age. The county's performance is also compared to that of England as a whole, to help to track where we are

bridging the performance gaps. The intention is to integrate this system within the Durham Insight website.

Next Steps

- 18 The development of the IES has provided an opportunity to align the work of economic development and public health teams and the Delivery Plan will be used to capture new activities as they emerge. The intention is to set-up a new working group under the County Durham Economic Partnership to oversee the implementation of the Delivery Plan as well as animating new activities. With these arrangements in place we will maintain the Delivery Plan as a live document and bring partners together for focused discussions, such as health and the economy. Oversight will be maintained by Economic Partnership Board and colleagues and partners will be engaged as and when relevant issues and opportunities are discussed.

Background papers

- [Cabinet papers](#) for the Adoption of the Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan, November 2023.
- [Cabinet Papers](#) for the Adoption of the Inclusive Economic Strategy, December 2022.
- [Inclusive Economic Strategy](#)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The IES Delivery Plan will aid negotiations for the devolution of powers from the Government

Finance

The IES Delivery Plan will be used to inform decisions on how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other national and regional funding is spent. It will also be used to attract private investment to the county

Consultation

The IES Delivery Plan has been developed in partnership with CDEP partners and DCC colleagues using evidence from the Economic Review and Our Big Econ-versation. The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee has provided a local voice during the development of the Delivery Plan. The Delivery Plan identifies the need for further partnership working to develop ideas into projects and consultation with local residents and businesses will help us to evaluate successes and needs.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

A full Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the IES.

There are existing inequalities across our county, for example in health, education, connectivity, skills and employment. This Strategy will focus on removing the barriers that residents face to employment, from skills to transport to health, addressing the inequality experienced between and within some of our places and ensuring that the benefits of growth are shared fairly amongst our people and places.

The IES aims to attract investment, create new and better jobs, and support new enterprise and innovation opportunities across the county whilst having a positive impact on local environments. The impacts of the Delivery Plan will be regularly assessed and reported, and we will have a performance framework in place to identify the economic performance of different areas of the county in order to design suitable projects and actions.

Climate Change

The green economy is a key element of the IES and actions which have impacts on the Planet are identified throughout the Delivery Plan. The Performance Framework mirrors the headline objective in the County Durham Climate Emergency Response Plan to substantially reduce carbon emissions by 2035.

Human Rights

None

Crime and Disorder

None

Staffing

Monitoring the implementation of projects, identifying and starting new projects, monitoring and reporting performance, managing consultations, and managing the CDEP requires significant staff time and resources. To drive forward and implement the Delivery and achieve the IES internal resources within the council are being reviewed

Accommodation

None

Risk

None

Procurement

None