

Appendix 2

Inclusive Economic Strategy Delivery Plan

Annual Review 2024



Better for everyone





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Foreword

I am delighted to be able to present to you this, the annual review of our Inclusive Economic Strategy which we - local businesses, community organisations and residents - are working together to deliver.

During the development of the Strategy, there was a clear and widespread determination shown to work in partnership, so that we can create more opportunities for young people, residents, and businesses to achieve their ambitions.

Our collective vision for 2035 is for more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy; more jobs in all parts of the county so that there is a better range of career opportunities for everyone. We intend to improve the quality of jobs so that wages are higher, and families do not live in poverty. We intend to make sure that everyone can contribute to improvements and benefit from them. We intend to keep responding to the global challenge of climate change by reducing our environmental impacts but also take advantage of new innovation, business, and job opportunities within the green economy.

County Durham has a huge amount to offer - its very size is a key advantage, and we have cutting-edge strengths in advanced manufacturing, life sciences, and satellite technologies. In order to have a more successful economy we need to build on these foundations for growth by helping people to learn and develop new skills, be healthier and happier, have supportive communities, and live in good quality places.

By acting together we can ensure County Durham has a thriving economy that realizes its full potential. There are many challenges that we need to tackle now and no doubt we will face others in the coming years, but by maintaining our focus and collaboration, we will build a stronger economy for generations to come.

Whilst our Inclusive Economic Strategy is long term and ambitious, it is only of any real meaning if it is delivered, and this Annual Review sets out both what we have achieved so far and the challenges we have faced, enabling us to learn from experience and continue, in partnership, to shape and evolve our ongoing delivery plan. It demonstrates, I believe, the real commitment of partners to drive delivery of actions that will help deliver our ambitions, as the highlights that follow demonstrate.

I commend it to you and look forward to continuing to work with you to further strengthen our partnership into the future so that together we can achieve our collective vision of more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy.



Chair of County Durham Economic Partnership

County Durham is the jewel in the North East's crown. It is a place of industrial and technological innovation, economic reinvention, renowned culture, and world class education. Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets our long-term approach for working with partners to harness the county's numerous economic opportunities and untapped potential. We are doing this at the same time as reducing local inequalities, enhancing our natural environments and towns, and reducing the county's impacts on climate change.

This Annual Review highlights what we have achieved so far with our strategy. It is encouraging that our local economy has not only recovered from the last few years of turbulence but seen real growth too, building back after the impacts from Covid-19 and other world events. Working in partnership, we are expanding the region's only science park at NETPark, growing the number and quality of visitor attractions, supporting local businesses to set up, grow and innovate, securing new jobs for our residents, and supporting people into employment and developing their skills.

Since the adoption of the Inclusive Economic Strategy, there have been significant political and economic changes. The new government and establishment of the new North East

Combined Authority mean there are new approaches and new support for the county and region. Having the Inclusive Economic Strategy in place, means that we have the evidence and priorities in place to demonstrate our needs and strengths and are well placed to take advantage of these new opportunities.

This Annual Review highlights the significant progress we've made and key activities that have been delivered to support our economy. Together, this and the proposed review of the IES Delivery Plan in 2025, will help us to continue to work with partners to plan improvements and secure investment over the coming years. The county has huge potential to play a bigger role nationally and regionally, and with local partners and businesses, we will ensure that the benefits are felt throughout the county.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Hopgood". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Councillor Amanda Hopgood
Leader of Durham County Council

Inclusive Economic Strategy & Delivery Plan

This is the first Annual Report which shows progress towards the delivery of our Inclusive Economic Strategy for County Durham. Our strategy aims to generate ‘more and better jobs in an inclusive, green economy’ using a strategic ‘5P’ framework focusing on the themes of People, Productivity, Places, Promotion and Planet which crosscut and overlap one another. The Delivery Plan which accompanies the IES sets out more than 150 actions that partners have identified as being crucial to the delivery of the strategy – progress towards these is set out in this Annual Report.



Governance

The IES is overseen by the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP), which is one of five thematic partnerships under the umbrella of the County Durham Partnership. At the start of 2024, the IES Delivery Group was established with partners from different sectors and different parts of the county to identify activities and actions that needed to be commenced and has met regularly during the year to bring new partners to CDEP, showcase good practice, develop new working relationships, and discuss how to progress new activities. Updates on these activities are given in this Action Plan.

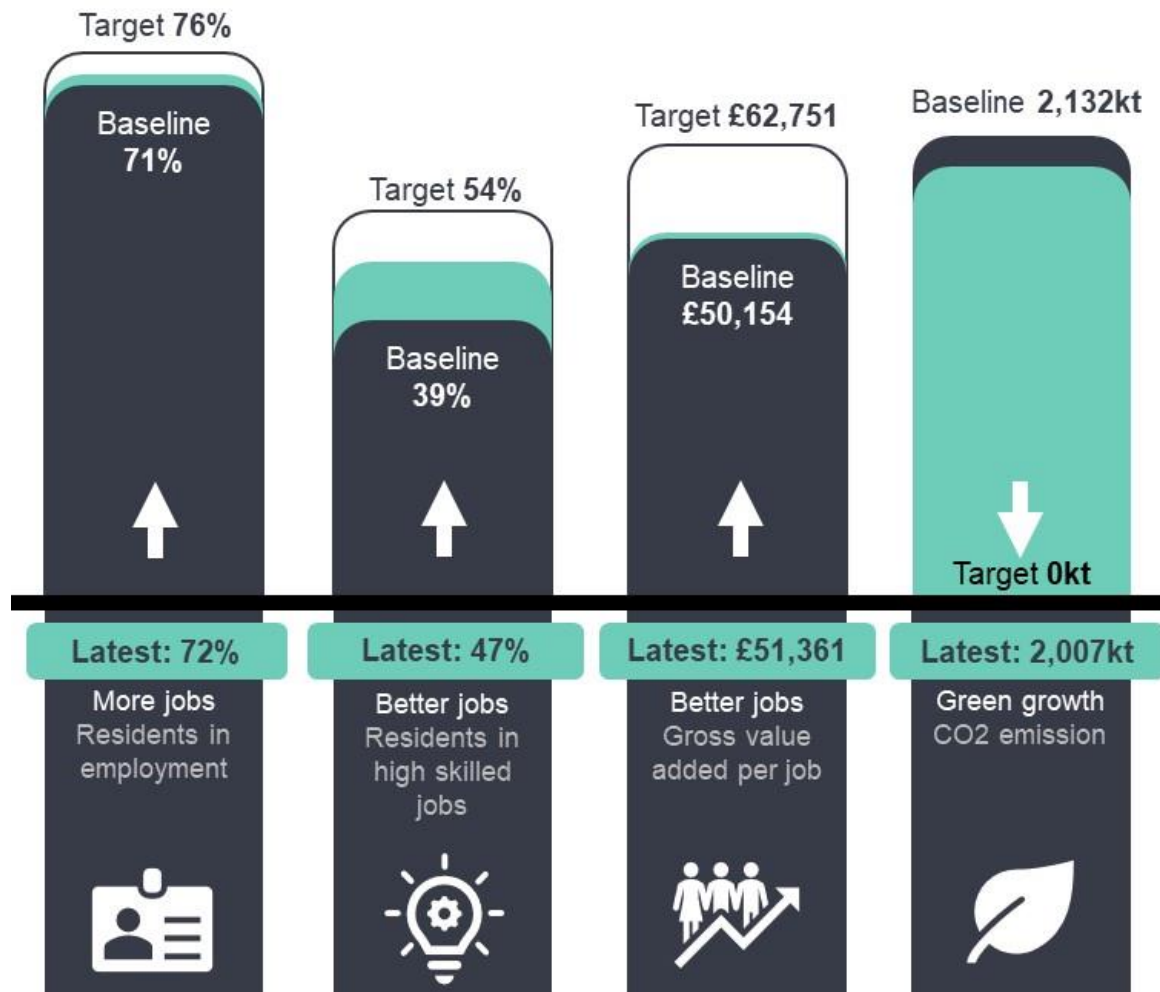
Devolution

In 2024, the new North East Combined Authority (NECA) was launched in May and members of the public voted for a new mayor for the region. Although partners across the North East have a long history of working together, NECA formalised this relationship and put a new emphasis on working in partnership to strengthen the whole region as well as areas within it. It also allows more direct partnership working with the government and the various Members of Parliament and civil servants within it to support the growth of the UK.

Mayor	Members and portfolios	Strategic Commitments
Kim McGuinness	County Durham: Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport Gateshead: Transport Newcastle: Economy North Tyneside: Housing and Land Northumberland: Environment, Coast and Rural South Tyneside: Inclusion and Skills Sunderland: Finance and Investment	A fairer North East A greener North East A connected North East An international North East A successful North East

Following the national general election in July, NECA and the government are working together to formalise strategic plans including a Local Growth Plan, which will underpin growth funding for the region. In the meantime, NECA launched its Adult Skills Fund in August and has consulted on its new Transport Plan as well as working with regional partners to prepare evidence to underpin these and other plans.

Performance Against Targets



The IES set out targets for **more jobs**, **better jobs**, and **green growth** by 2035. The main driver is to bridge the gap with the average performance of England (the 'targets'). The baseline is county's performance in 2021, before the IES was adopted.

In each case, and in a short period of time, the county has made good progress towards the targets, however this needs to be improved and sustained over a longer time period.

There are also hidden challenges, one of the main issues being the high proportion of the workforce who do not work due to long-term sickness. This is also an issue for the region and country as a whole.

A more detailed analysis of these and other trends has been undertaken in the form of an update to the IES Economic Review.

County Durham Scorecard

County / Parliamentary Constituency	Economically active residents	Employment	Full-time employment	Self-employment	Unemployment	Claimant count	Econ. Inactive: Long-term sick	Highest skilled jobs	Lowest skilled jobs	Level 4+ qualifications	Level 3+ qualifications	No qualifications
County Durham	75%	72%	69%	10%	3%	4%	34%	47%	25%	36%	61%	8%
Bishop Auckland												
Blaydon & Consett												
Durham City												
Easington												
Newton Aycliffe & Spennymoor												
North Durham												

Note: Grey cells highlight where County Durham's performance is poorer than England average and where the performance of parliamentary constituencies is poorer than the County Durham average.

These scorecards have been integrated within [DurhamInsight](#) alongside other economic indicators used for the IES making the data publicly available and enabling users to undertake further analysis of the data

This Scorecard highlights some of the economic challenges facing the county.

- The County Durham row highlights how the county compares to national average.
- The other rows show how areas within the county compare to the county average.

Key messages

- **County Durham** is out-performing England on self-employment, unemployment, and employment support claimants; on all other measures it is behind the England averages.
- **Easington** is behind County Durham on 11 of the 12 measures, suggesting there are a range of economic challenges in the area.
- Most constituencies have a number of economic challenges except for **Durham City** which is behind the county average on just one indicator – economic inactivity due to long-term sickness.
- The **Bishop Auckland, Consett, and Newton Aycliffe & Spennymoor** constituencies have challenges relating to the low number of residents accessing highly skilled jobs.
- **North Durham** has challenges relating to educational attainment and employment.

People

Aim: To support people into education, training, jobs, and to excel in business and their careers.

The Delivery Plan identifies how we will work with training, education, health, and employment providers to ensure that skills and training are aligned with the jobs and areas for growth identified in this strategy. Actions focused on improving the quality of intelligence will allow further education, higher education, and training providers to respond to evidenced local skills needs and target our residents furthest from the labour market.

Support for residents through a range of employment and skills interventions has continued to be developed and delivered, recognising the emerging policy agenda of the new Government and the formation of the North East Combined Authority. Particular emphasis has been given to maintaining and embedding the extensive infrastructure that has been developed across County Durham in recent years, providing a mechanism for employment support, skills development, health and anti-poverty interventions delivered by an extensive network of partners. Work to develop the County Durham all age Careers framework looks to use this infrastructure to ensure residents have good access to high quality support in jobs, training and careers.

Achievements 2024

- Countywide Employment support infrastructure supporting Economically Inactive residents into education, training, and work.
- DurhamEnable commenced to support adults with disabilities and mental health challenges into work.
- Durham Learn delivery extended to work with partners to provide flexible courses, internships, for people of all ages.
- Multiply and Communicate programmes launched to support people to gain basic numeracy, literacy and digital skills.
- £10m secured from UK Shared Prosperity Fund and £2.8m secured from the government's Multiply programme.
- Regional Adult Skills Fund launched to enable delivery partners to provide free courses that help people to gain jobs.
- Regional Local Skills Plans launched to support workforce development in critical industrial sectors.

People focussed activities have ensured that the County wide infrastructure established to connect residents with opportunities is maintained and best utilised while changes to national and regional programmes are scoped and embedded.

Case Study **Communicate**

The UKSPF People and Skills Communicate project aims to enhance the communication and literacy skills in adults that are crucial for overall well-being and community health. Sessions are delivered in the community and in schools with parents/carers and are designed to engage those who have multiple barriers to education and/or have previously not engaged in learning.

The team has worked with a range of partners including Family Hubs, Public Health, schools and Early Years to develop an offer which engages with a diverse demographic catering to various communication needs and skill levels, empowering individuals to communicate more effectively and fostering a more connected community. The school provision involves parents, carers and children in activities and games that enhance skills, cultivate critical thinking and encourage positive family communication. These sessions also help disrupt generational apathy and promote a positive attitude towards learning, alleviating academic anxieties.

Case Study **DurhamEnable**

DurhamEnable supports people with disabilities, neurodiversity, and long-term health conditions into work. In November 2024, the programme was rated as excellent in its Supported Employment Quality Framework assessment. The assessment report highlighted that 100% of jobs that had been secured had been sustained, which the assessment credited the extensive job matching that the service carries out. The report also praised the programme for the support it offers to employers including neurodiversity training to help employers to understand and meet the needs of employees.

Priority	Ambition	Ref.	Action	Lead partner	RAG	Update
1.1 Skills levels	Address skills gaps and raise skills levels	1.1.1	Commission and deliver a new training support programme through County Durham's UKSPF programme, including delivery of short courses, bootcamp programmes and the delivery of employment routeways	Durham County Council	Green	The DurhamLearn programme offers a variety of flexible foundational learning for work (e.g. digital skills, distance learning, English and maths, health and social care, teaching) as well as flexible courses for vulnerable people, families, communities, and leisure. The programme is delivered throughout the county with a number of partner organisations and is in delivery until the end of March 2025.
	Raise skill levels to meet business needs	1.1.2	Ensure residents skills needs are articulated in emerging regional skills strategies and AEB commissioning programmes for devolved skills funding	North East Combined Authority	Green	The Adult Skills Fund programmes went live in August 2024 and will run until July 2025. Framework in place for funding for following years will be informed by the NECA skills strategy which is in development. Also see 1.2.4.
	Improve numeracy, literacy, basic, and digital skills	1.1.3	Deliver the Multiply programme to 19+ year olds to support numeracy and basic digital skills	Durham County Council	Green	The Multiply and Communicate programmes are run in partnership with local schools, employers, voluntary and community sector organisations, charities, colleges and training providers. We also have a team of Multiply Champions based in the community funded. The programmes are funded up to the end of March 2025. In the future some delivery will be mainstreamed as part of the regional Adult Skills Fund programme. The programmes are on target.
		1.1.4	Deliver the Communicate programme to 19+ year olds to support literacy and basic digital skills	Durham County Council	Green	
	Ensure residents are equipped with the skills to access services and	1.1.5	Develop a Digital Inclusion Skills programme for County Durham, to address: parallel issues such as access to ICT equipment, broadband, and training	Durham County Council	Green	The communicate programme (also see 1.1.5) includes digital skills programmes, digital infrastructure programmes being undertaken as part of UKSPF community infrastructure project. DurhamLearn has expanded also the digital offer within local community and digital hubs.

	progress in work: - increase digital literacy - combat digital exclusion	1.1.6	Improve access to online benefits advice	Durham County Council	Green	Links to the government website, which includes benefit calculators, have been added to DCC website to allow residents to calculate whether they are receiving the right benefits or entitled to additional support.
		1.1.7	Link with Community Hubs initiative to provide better access to ICT equipment and upskilling at a local level	Durham County Council	Green	See 1.1.5.
		1.1.8	Link to the digital elements of the Local Skills Improvement Plan	Durham County Council	Amber	There are no specific digital proposals within LSIP, but digital skills activities are integrated as cross-cutting issue for all sectors.
1.2 Barriers to employment	Support people who are economically inactive and long term unemployed overcome barriers to employment and into work	1.2.1	Maximise the delivery of DurhamWorks and Employability Durham , supporting unemployed and economically inactive young people and adults into employment and training	Durham County Council	Green	DurhamWorks has been extended using UKSPF funding to support 16 - 24 year olds into education, training, and employment. Employability Durham supports residents aged 25+ who need support, to prepare for, and find employment. The programmes are funded up to the end of March 2025 and progressing well towards their targets. In mid-November 2024 Employability Durham reached 84% of its target for 400 registrations, DurhamWorks reached 97% of its target for 570 registrations, and DurhamEnable reached 74% of its target of 150 registrations. The ROAD programme ended in
		1.2.2	Deliver the Reaching Out Across Durham (ROADII) scheme supporting unemployed and economically inactive adults to overcome barriers to employment	Groundwork	Green	

		1.2.3	Maximise the delivery of DurhamEnable supported employment service, helping residents with disabilities, learning disabilities, autism and poor mental health into employment	Durham County Council	Green	summer 2023 and all targets including, economically inactive people engaged, volunteering opportunities supported, people gaining qualifications, and the number of people supported with job searches.
	Engage residents with low / no qualifications in learning and provide opportunities to develop their skills to enhance their life chances	1.2.4	Maximise the take up of the Adult Education Budget provision through: - Improved labour market intelligence driving commissioning and curriculum and curriculum development - Ensuring timely referrals to skills provision through employment support programmes - Improving resident access to skills courses through online and community-based provision	Durham County Council and NECA	Green	The Adult Skills Fund (formerly known as the Adult Education Budget) and Free Courses for Jobs Fund were launched in August 2024 to support match skills and training to jobs that are available across the region. NECA is also developing a Skills Strategy which will inform activities from August 2025. Linked to 1.1.2.
	Improve 'soft skills' to enable residents to	1.2.5	Develop a joint approach, similar to 'passport', with accredited learning	Durham Community Action	Green	Durham Community Action aims to build an environment in which volunteers and their communities thrive by encouraging and

	progress towards paid work	1.2.6	Work with North East Youth Alliance to ensure a routeway for young people		Green	nurturing volunteering opportunities. DCA has developed a positive environment in which the value of volunteering is recognised, and that volunteering activity is flourishing. 1.2.5 is central to DCA work as a volunteer centre and an ongoing priority; accredited learning is developed where appropriate and DCA has a joint approach embedded within the VCS led Durham Together project of which we are a partner (led by The Cornforth Partnership). 1.2.6: DCA worked with and alongside NE Youth Alliance to embed good practice volunteering with Youth Organisations. This work is ongoing as a central function of our work as the Volunteer Centre for County Durham.
	Support businesses to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities	1.2.7	Develop an apprenticeship brokerage resource which will assist SMEs to take on new apprentices	NECA	Amber	NECA is likely to commence an apprenticeship brokerage programme in the next 6 months.
		1.2.8	Work with anchor institutions to maximise the utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy	TBA	Amber	The new government is changing the Apprenticeship Levy to the Growth and Skills Levy to delivery foundational and shorter apprenticeships in priority sectors. Skills England will consult on changes and operational details in the coming months before the changes are introduced.
	Inform residents of all ages, of the employment opportunities, progression routeways and skills requirements	1.2.9	Commission a new Careers Framework for County Durham	Durham County Council Commission	Green	Consultants have been commissioned to assess the current careers capacity and demand, and will report this alongside national and regional positions in winter 2024/25
		1.2.10	Develop an effective all age careers resource to allow residents to make informed employment and training choices	Durham County Council	Green	

	for a modern labour market	1.2.11	Deliver The Workplaces Project to Year 10-12 pupils	Durham County Council in partnership with local schools and employers.	Green	The Workplaces Project was launched in 2023 to give older school students insights into the 'world of work' and different career opportunities. The project is in delivery until July 2025.
	Provide specialist support to overcome barriers to residents' labour market participation	1.2.12	Deliver the Durham Help employment support programme, provide advice, guidance and support to job seekers who living with or experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues	Durham County Council and Public Health	Green	<p>231 people accessed DurhamHelp since inception.</p> <p>Practitioners use a health measurement scale for all those accessing the service, measuring levels of self-esteem, depression and anxiety. A baseline assessment is undertaken along with a final assessment following support, allowing reflection on achievements and coping strategies to help enable sustainable outcomes.</p> <p>Greatest impact is how people perceive their anxiety. Over 75% seeing an improvement, with 65% of people seeing an improvement with their depression levels and 50% seeing an improvement in their self-esteem following support.</p> <p>The most prevalent primary need is anxiety, with high numbers of people also disclosing depression and anxiety being their secondary need.</p> <p>57% of those who have accessed support are within the 16 – 24 age category with 100% disclosing their struggles with high anxiety levels.</p>

		1.2.13	Deliver the Local Supported Employment project supporting residents with significant barriers to employment and who have disabilities, learning disabilities, autism and poor mental health into employment	Durham County Council	Green	<p>101 people have accessed LSE. 46 with a diagnosis of Autism, 41 with a learning disability and 14 with dual diagnosis. People have been referred from the local authority including adult social care and/or health teams, Job Centre Plus and community organisations and education.</p> <p>30% of those to have accessed provision have achieved paid employment with 100% sustaining employment.</p> <p>Sectors of employment include beauty & wellbeing, teaching and education, sports and leisure, hospitality, security and retail.</p> <p>The Supported Employment Quality Framework assessment (SEQF) performed by The British Association for Supported Employment in October scored the service at 95%, achieving “excellent” status and quality mark.</p>
1.3 Progression & upskilling	Address skills gaps for key and emerging sectors and improve the skills of the workforce	1.3.1	Commission and deliver a new workplace skills development programme	Durham County Council	Green	<p>New College Durham and East Durham College are the lead providers working with a number of small independent private providers.</p> <p>They provide support for the employed and those at risk of redundancy under the skills strand of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The provision must support the growth and productivity agenda by providing access to agile training/upskilling solutions required by growth sectors and those facing ongoing recruitment difficulties in that particular geographical area. This is being achieved through the offer of flexible workforce skills support programmes to address intermediate (equivalent to Level 2), technical (at any Level) and higher-level (equivalent to Level 3 or above) skills gaps and shortages by creating opportunities for</p>

						<p>employees to upskill and/or retrain. This supports their career progression and/or helps them to adapt to changes resulting from business restructures or redundancy.</p> <p>Key achievements to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63 companies engaged and commenced a training plan • 41 of which were SMEs and several more micro businesses • 607 employees trained • 73% of companies are in the priority sectors • 41 different qualifications delivered • 228 qualifications achieved thus far.
		1.3.2	Shape and support the roll-out of skills for jobs programmes	Durham County Council	Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New College Durham are the lead providers on behalf of a partnership of FE colleges and small independent training providers. Provision supports individuals who are experiencing skills barriers to access employment opportunities in sectors that are identified locally as having skills/recruitment needs. Participants must be unemployed (or economically active working in insecure employment for few hours), reside within the local authority boundaries of County Durham and be aged 19+ at the date of enrolment. 'Pathways to Success' supports County Durham residents with an emphasis on those nearest the labour market or with a verified conditional employment offer and prioritises wards that are experiencing high levels of deprivation and/or rural isolation. <p>Key achievements to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 partners engaged • 302 participants supported

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 215 of which reside in priority wards • 9 different programmes developed • 67% of courses attended are in priority subject areas • 285 qualifications achieved • 115 job outcomes achieved
		1.3.3	Embed the findings of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to support key growth sectors identified in the IES	County Durham Economic Partnership	Green	LSIPs are funded up to the end of March 2025. The NECA skills strategy and Local Growth Plans, which are in development, will align with key growth sectors to support recruitment and in-work progression.
	Provide local people with the technical training needed to secure employment within high demand/growth sectors	1.3.4	Deliver Skills Bootcamps for Green Skills , providing bespoke training solutions to bridge existing skills gaps within high demand sectors	New College Durham	Green	Free skills bootcamps for targeted sector and job roles. The programme is in delivery until March 2025 and it is expected that NECA will commission bootcamps from the 2025/26 financial year onwards.
		1.3.5	Create industry-standard manufacturing cleanroom lab facilities at East Durham College	East Durham College	Green	The clean labs were opened in spring 2024.
1.4 Health & wellbeing	Improve personal incomes, well-being, and life chances	1.4.1	Develop and deliver a new County Durham Employment Support offer which provides key worker support to vulnerable groups, those excluded from the labour market and those in insecure and low paid employment	Durham County Council, VCS partners, Housing Providers, JCP, NCS	Green	See actions under section 1.2.
		1.4.2	Deliver training programmes about financial literacy to frontline practitioners working with Children Young People and Families	Durham County Council	Green	Financial literacy support being provided through Multiply programme and employability programme, but not specifically for frontline practitioners. Additional support provided to employees of companies across County Durham aligned to wellbeing for life and better health at work initiatives.

		1.4.3	Deliver the Durham Help employment support programme, provide advice, guidance and support to job seekers who living with or experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues	Durham County Council and Public Health	Green	See 1.2.12.
	Promote good health and well-being for employees and workplaces	1.4.5	Increase the promotion of the Better Health at Work scheme to enhance the participation of micro and small businesses	Durham County Council	Green	Small and medium sized organisations now comprise 69% of the total workplaces that are active in the Better Health at Work Award. The commissioned provider continues to promote the programme to workplaces that fall within the small and medium sized bracket.
	Improve the wealth of communities	1.4.6	Through a Community Wealth Building approach, work with County Durham Anchor Organisations to develop and deliver pre-employment programmes for those who are unemployed, economically inactive, or otherwise excluded from the labour market	County Durham Anchor Institutions: - Durham County Council - Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust - Durham University - FE Colleges - Housing Associations	Green	The Anchor Organisation / Community Wealth Building (AO/CWB) approach is now gaining momentum across the North East region (North East Combined Authority / North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board). Accordingly, work in County Durham is progressing to ensure that local approaches are aligned to regional progress. Whilst plans to implement CWB demonstrator sites at both Woodhouse Close Leisure Centre and Shotley Bridge Hospital are on hold pending build progress at both sites, local AO's continue to meet to progress plans to engage the target population cohorts into employment within these organisations.

Productivity

Aim: To support business innovation, growth, & higher levels of productivity

The Delivery Plan builds on the extensive work already underway locally and regionally, working with businesses and representative organisations to understand how and where the Partnership can add value, supporting existing businesses to grow and innovate, and creating new opportunities for businesses to start up and move to the county. These opportunities are linked to our residents through the 'People' priorities, ensuring that new jobs are created, and residents and young people are given the best chance of accessing these jobs, and our 'Place' priorities ensure that the infrastructure is ready to support business needs.

Three substantial and complementary programmes of business support have been developed and are well underway in delivery, to enable County Durham businesses to improve their productivity and grow; to support businesses to innovate through taking advantage of university expertise as well as increase the number of spin-out businesses; and to encourage enterprise and business start-ups in the county. Particular emphasis has been given to integrating support in order to make it easier for businesses to navigate, ensuring that support is inclusive of all business sectors, and encouraging greater collaboration between delivery partners, which has been received positively by customers and providers. Work has also been commissioned that is helping to inform new approaches to supporting key opportunity sectors and targeting inward investment.

Achievements 2024

- £14m secured from UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support local businesses.
- Space North East established in 2023 promoting the space industry assets in the region, and based at NETPark.
- Targeted Growth Plans commissioned for the green technology, life-sciences, and semi-conductors sectors.
- Enterprising Durham Partnership established bringing a range of support together to support local start-ups and early-stage businesses.
- Durham Business Growth programme established to support local businesses to achieve their growth ambitions.
- Annual 'Get Set Green' exhibition programme established to promote green economy opportunities and collaboration.
- InTUNE innovation partnership established between North East universities and CPI to support SME innovation and the commercialisation of research.
- Introduction of a new charter to strengthen the County Durham Pound initiative and improve the reporting of outcomes.

- North East Better Health at Work Awards expanded to include more County Durham organisations promoting healthy workplaces.

Case study **Durham Business Growth Programme**

The Durham Business Growth Programme is a comprehensive integrated programme to support productivity and foster growth within businesses located in County Durham. The programme is delivered through a partnership model whereby Business Durham provides the engagement and relationship management, RTC North provides business productivity and growth support, and UMi manage business grants.

The programme offers a range of services starting with a business review and action planning, and support is tailored to meet individual company needs including Digital health checks, Energy audits, Productivity improvement plans, Decarbonisation plans, Events and master classes, sector specific advice, and access to revenue and capital grants.

By November 2024, 500 businesses have received non-financial support through the programme against a target of 900. Demand from businesses for this programme has been high, and is oversubscribed by around £2m. One business that has received a grant to support its growth is Inspiral Cycles in Bishop Auckland, as below.

Case study **Inspiral Cycles**

Inspiral Cycles is a small business based in Bishop Auckland which designs, manufactures, sells, and maintains bicycles and components. The business became aware of the Durham Business Growth Programme through its ongoing relationship with Business Durham and engaged with the programme to help clearly define its business objectives, especially in relation to the research the company had been doing into the development of mountain bike suspension. The company accessed support in the form of marketing, filming, digital media and social media workshops, business review and action plan development and a digital health check.

Inspiral Cycles values the support they have received through the Durham Business Growth Programme which has enabled the business to move from just selling bikes, to using Computer Aided Design and precision manufacturing to develop prototype bikes and a new suspension system. The new products use the brand Auckland Cycle Works, which pays homage to a bicycle factory with the same name that was established nearby in the 19th century. After recently attending Europe's largest handmade bicycle

show with their prototypes, the positive feedback has encouraged them to start testing and perfecting the performance of their bikes and new suspension system with experienced riders. This will involve gathering scientific data with support from universities, testing bikes with cycling journalists, and entering the bikes in competitive races.

Priority	Ambition	Ref.	Action	Lead partner	RAG	Update
2.1 Major employment & opportunity sectors	Harness the potential of opportunity sectors	2.1.1	Establish an expert group to develop a granular understanding of national and global sector opportunities	Durham University and RTC North.	Amber	Yet to be commenced.
		2.1.2	Develop targeted Growth Plans for each of the opportunity sectors identified for growth in the IES, the plans will provide a definition of the sector and methodology for tracking growth (aligns with 2.3)	Business Durham	Green	Growth Plans commissioned and are under development for three opportunity sectors – Advanced Material Electronics (semiconductors), Life Sciences, and Green Technology. On target to be completed by 31st March 2025.
		2.1.3	Identify and fill gaps for business support in opportunity sectors , mapping networks linked to opportunity sectors and creating new networks to fill gaps	Business Durham	Green	
	Grow the semi-conductor sector	2.1.4	Develop and implement a semi-conductor action plan that will develop the cluster, establish the North East as a powerhouse in this sector, and benefit from government support in line with the National Semiconductor Strategy	North East Advanced Material Electronics	Green	
	Grow the space sector	2.1.5	Deliver the North East space cluster programme	Business Durham	Green	The Space North East England (SNEE) brand was launched in November 2023. A directory and website (www.spacenortheastengland.com) promoting the region has also been launched. SNEE continues to work with the Yorkshire and North West regions under Space North, and with NECA on region-wide delivery of sector support. In the period from April 2023 - Sept 2024: £57m of additional investment has been catalysed, 237 organisations engaged and the region promoted at 3 national / international events.

		2.1.6	Develop a proposal for a North East Space Hub	Business Durham	Green	Early feasibility design for facility at NETPark, investigating funding through Investment Zone
	Attract Inward Investment in growth sectors	2.1.7	Pilot an approach to better targeting and joined-up support for inward investors	CPI & Business Durham	Green	CPI were commissioned to research potential opportunities for Deep Tech Inward Investment that could be used to pilot a targeted approach. The report was completed in September 2024 and is now being used to shape the county's inward investment strategy for 2025.
2.2 Start-ups & business growth	Create an integrated partnership to support and increase enterprises and start-ups within the county	2.2.1	Establish and grow the Enterprising Durham Partnership model	Business Durham & NEEAL.	Green	Over 500 people engaged in enterprise activities, 184 potential entrepreneurs supported and 94 business start-ups. Delivery of the Enterprising Places strand has identified 25 community venues across County Durham to hold Enterprise Roadshows, to raise awareness and stimulate start-ups, including activities around enterprising mums, food and drink, heritage, and health, wellbeing and fitness. Work is also underway to refresh and further develop the Durham Start-ups Portal, which will include a comprehensive start up online learning package will be available via the portal from November 2024.
		2.2.2	In line with the Enterprising Durham Framework deliver the first phase of enterprise and start-up support	Business Durham	Green	
		2.2.3	Pilot a hub and spoke model to increase the visibility of enterprising opportunities across the county	Business Durham	Green	
	Enable businesses to be more productive and grow	2.2.4	Deliver the integrated Productivity and Growth Programme , which will deliver business engagement, create workable action plans, productivity support, and business grants investing in growth projects and implement productivity improvements	Business Durham & UMI & RTC North.	Green	
		2.2.5	Establish an expert group to investigate and improve access to finance for small and growing businesses	NECA	Green	

						businesses underserved by the mainstream market. NECA has approved £70m to fund a successor to the current North East Investment Fund and a University co-invested early-stage equity commercialisation and spinout fund.
		2.2.6	Establish an annual County Durham business conference programme linked to the key themes in the IES	County Durham Economic Partnership	Green	An annual 'Get Set Green' exhibition has been established; with the next event scheduled for February 2025.
		2.2.7	Deliver the InTUNE programme to support the capacity of SMEs to innovate and develop new products and processes.	Durham University in collaboration with 4 other North East universities and CPI	Green	UKSPF awarded for the InTUNE programme in 2023, to be delivered by a partnership of the North East universities and CPI. The programme is funded until the end of March 2025 and includes the Arrow and Northern Accelerator programmes (see 2.3.5)
2.3 Innovation ecosystem	Change the 'mindset' and behaviours of residents and businesses within the county towards innovation, addressing barriers and capturing opportunities to bring more innovation support to the county	2.3.1	Commission research into the mindset of innovators and local barriers constraining innovation in line with the COM-B model. Aligned with effective communication and delivery strategy to maximise reach and inclusion	Durham University	Green	Durham University commissioned to development a framework which will be implemented from 2025. Stakeholder interviews and workshops have taken place and the report and framework are due to be received in winter 2024/25.
		2.3.2	Establish expert group to investigate and identify barriers to innovation and develop delivery strategy	Business Durham / Durham University	Green	
	Improve 'readiness' to innovation	2.3.3	Investigate opportunities to expand venture capital opportunities in County Durham	Business Durham	Green	Ongoing through discussions with Business Durham, Durham University and investment fund managers including Maven, Foresight Group and the Durham Pension Fund.

		2.3.4	Further develop the County Durham Pound programme, maximising supplier opportunities and the OEM supply chain access to major contractors and priority sectors	County Durham Pound	Green	Ongoing. Introduction of County Durham Pound Charter in 2024, adopted by 32 supporters.
Increasing the 'capability' of our local businesses to innovate and expand the county and region's innovation ecosystem		2.3.5	Deliver the Northern Accelerator Programme and Arrow initiatives as part of InTUNE to increase innovative collaborations between North East universities and CPI	Durham University and CPI	Green	The InTUNE programme is in delivery until the end of March 2025 and comprises two programmes - Arrow which connects local SMEs with university strengths to support innovation and develop new products, and Northern Accelerator which supports the commercialisation of research to create more spinout businesses, e.g. at NETPark.
		2.3.6	Develop targeted Growth Plans for each of the opportunity sectors identified for growth in the IES, the plans will provide a definition of the sector and methodology for tracking growth and changes in sector performance (aligns with 2.1.2)	Durham County Council	Green	See 2.1.2.
		2.3.7	Pilot approach to target inward investment linked to specific growth sectors.	CPI / Business Durham / NECA	Green	See 2.1.7.
		2.3.8	Develop an internship programme for graduates within local businesses supporting enterprise, graduate retention and business innovation	Durham University	Green	Durham University Careers and Enterprise Service is delivering the programme with the aim of supporting 25 businesses in County Durham. At the end of September 2024, 14 internships had been agreed.
		2.3.9	Explore opportunities for a Sector-led Innovation Challenge programme linked to the identified research and	CPI	Amber	Not yet commenced

			development opportunity of an anchor institution			
		2.3.10	Investigate opportunities to expand VentureFest to develop peer-to-peer networks	Business Durham / Innovation Supernetwork	Green	Venture Fest North East is planned for March 2025
	Promote the circular economy approach to businesses in the county	2.3.11	Deliver the Advancing Circular Economy (ACE) Programme	University of Durham & CPI	Green	This is an ongoing area of research interest for Durham University.
2.4: Good business practice	Use the collective strength of partners to maximise social, economic, and environmental value of day-to-day activities	2.4.1	Capitalise on the new opportunities of the Procurement Bill (e.g. training on new procurement rules)	North East Procurement Organisation	Green	Procurement Act to be introduced in February 2025, DCC offering training and coordinating training with external local and regional partners.
	Promote good business practices	2.4.3	Establish an expert group to consider the value of creating a BCorp model	County Durham Economic Partnership	Green	Initial discussions have been held at the IES Delivery Group to explore models that can help to promote good business practices in the county
	Improve good workplace health and wellbeing to support productivity, addressing issues are key determinants of health such as mental health, smoking, drugs and alcohol use	2.4.4	Encourage organisations to engage with County Durham Workplace Health Programme and become signatories to Better Health At Work Awards	Public Health / Business Durham	Green	The commissioned provider continues to promote the BHAWA with organisations across County Durham and currently 83 local organisations as well as 40 health care providers are engaged, representing a diverse range of sectors including education, health, manufacturing and VCS. Local delivery of the award includes close collaboration with stakeholders working to address key Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy objectives of smoking, healthy weight, alcohol and mental health.

	Ensure that residents can access secure work that pays a living wage	2.4.5	Explore opportunities to promote the Durham Living Wage or alternative scheme to businesses and partner organisations across the county.	County Durham Economic Partnership	Green	Initial discussions have been held at IES Delivery Group to understand the NECA good work pledge and consider opportunities for County Durham
	Support businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and other environmental impacts	2.4.6	Aligned with the Productivity and Growth programme, deliver an integrated service which aligns business support with support for businesses to save energy , reduce their carbon emissions, and other environmental impacts.	Business Durham	Green	As part of the Durham Business Growth Programme, 110 business have been referred for energy audits, with 41 audits completed to identify energy efficiency measures and work towards the reduction of carbon emissions and other environmental impacts.

Places

Aim: To improve places and plan infrastructure so people and businesses can access opportunities

The Delivery Plan focuses on how we will unlock the economic potential of all our places, working alongside the County Durham Plan, which sets out future employment and housing land requirements and locations. There has been significant investment in the strategic business parks in the county including the commencement of phase 3a at NETPark (Sedgefield), new business space at Integra 61 (Bowburn), and the recent announcement of a new logistics park at Forrest Park (Newton Aycliffe). There has also been major private and public sector investment in the regeneration and improvement of Bishop Auckland town centre. Seaham Garden Village is under development with 1,500 new homes and new community facilities.

Sitting alongside the IES Delivery Plan, an Investment Framework for County Durham has also been produced. This provides an overarching narrative of current and future investment opportunities across the county and private and public sectors. This includes an external facing investment 'pitch book' which highlights flagship projects and articulates a clear pathway to attracting investment.

In the last 5 years more than 100 hectares of employment land has been developed. Since the adoption of the IES, there has been investment in the strategic business parks in the county including the commencement of phase 3a at NETPark (Sedgefield), new business space at Integra 61 (Bowburn), and the recent announcement of a new logistics park at Forrest Park (Newton Aycliffe). There has also been major private and public sector investment in the regeneration and improvement of Bishop Auckland town centre and long-term government investment committed to Spennymoor.

The IES aligns with the County Durham Plan and Housing Strategy. We are facilitating the development of homes close to current and future major employment areas. For example, Seaham Garden Village, close to Jade Business Park, is under development with 1,500 new homes and new community facilities. More than 1,900 new homes will be developed at Sniperley Park to support jobs growth in Durham City. And more than 1,400 new homes are planned for Low Copelaw, close to Aycliffe Business Park and Forrest Park which together form the largest business park in the North East.

Achievements

- Implementation of £25m Towns and Villages Programme.
- Securing £53m of government investment and £100m+ of private investment for Bishop Auckland and the surrounding parliamentary constituency.

- Development of NETPark Phase 3a commenced and support committed by the North East Combined Authority for an Investment Zone.
- £100m development secured for new logistics hub at Forrest Park.
- Junction improvements undertaken on A19 to secure further phases of Jade Business Park.
- Preferred development partner secured for Durham City Innovation District.
- Business Durham relocated Business School to city centre site in Durham City.
- New business space developed by private sector at Integra 61, Peterlee, Consett, and Newton Aycliffe.
- Securing £20m of government funding for the improvement of Spennymoor town centre.
- Securing £10m+ to replace homes in Horden and to kick-start broader regeneration.
- Commencement of Seaham Garden Village development with 1,500 homes and new community facilities.
- An Investment Pitchbook for County Durham launched in May 2024
- £7m+ of UK Shared Prosperity Fund committed to communities and places across the county and £3.5m secured from the Rural England Prosperity Fund to support the rural economy.

Case study **Towns and Villages Programme**

The Towns and Villages programme was developed out of a desire to help manage the transformation of our main centres and beyond, recognising the pressures seen from successive rounds of retail closures, changing shopping habits and a rise in the number of leisure and hospitality operations opening in our towns. Through rounds of consultations involving local members, Area Action Partnerships and key stakeholders, clear themes for the programme emerged and a wide-ranging suite of project opportunities which formed part of the Towns and Villages investment plan which has been implemented since 2021.

The Towns and villages programme provided a new way of working in shaping the place agenda, with initial funding providing the flexibility to bring together different strands of project activity to provide bespoke solutions to the needs and opportunities being identified. The county-wide scale of delivery, the matched funding attracted and the other regeneration funds that have been aligned to the programme demonstrate the benefits of the co-designed place based approach. The initial £25 million committed by Durham County Council has led to the alignment of £82 million of further funding for place based regeneration across the county.

Case Study **Targeted Business Improvements**

The Targeted Business Improvement scheme has targeted support in areas that were identified as needing support including West Auckland, Seaham, Durham City, Tow Law, Shildon, Consett, Coxhoe, Chester le Street, Bishop Auckland, Wingate, Ferryhill, Crook, Stanley, Croxdale, Horden, Spennymoor, Wheatley Hill, Peterlee, Blackhill, Stanhope, Rookhope, Stanley, Leadgate, Fencehouses, Langley Moor, Great Lumley, Framwellgate Moor and Barnard Castle. Fifty businesses have been supported with more than £400,000 of grants, resulting in £2.1m of private investment.

In addition, the broader support offered to retailers across the county has resulted in more than 260 retail business receiving support with £1.8m of grants. As a result, £9.8m of private investment has been secured and more than one hundred vacant properties have been brought back into use.

The programme has had a broad impact including enhancing the design and maintenance of towns and villages across the county, improving parking and traffic issues, community facilities, cycling and walking routes, housing, allotments, vulnerable buildings, digital connectivity, and skills. New annual food festivals have been successfully introduced in Bishop Auckland and Seaham and a variety of festivals and events are now regularly programmed to promote and bring visitors to towns and villages across the county, promoting County Durham as a visitor destination.

Case Study **NETPark Phase 3**

2024 saw a major milestone for the development of NETPark, one of the UK's premier science parks, with the construction of a £62 million Phase 3 expansion. This expansion, which will be complete in early 2025, will provide 11 new units and an initial seven hectares of space - rising to 16 - for laboratories, offices, production, and storage. It builds on the success already achieved by the park, which is home to 40 companies and 700 employees.

The expansion has the potential to create another 1,250 skilled jobs, plus 2,200 in the supply chain, and to be worth £625million to the local economy over the next 10 years.

A further 44 hectares around the site have been designated as development land, paving the way for a fourth and potential further phases of NETPark and the site ultimately hosting 3,000 to 4,000 high-value jobs. This alongside the development of new and expanded employment sites across County Durham ensure the supply of infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses and enabling them to grow and locate in the county underpinning its economic growth.

Filtronic, a leading tech firm which supplies components and subsystems to space, aerospace, defence and telecoms is the first tenant to sign up for a new unit the NETPark's Phase 3 extension. It will move into custom-built headquarters and more than double its operational footprint. This comes at a time when the firm's growth has been boosted by deals struck with Elon Musk's company, SpaceX, for the supply of critical RF subsystems for low Earth orbit satellites.

Priority	Ambition	Ref.	Action	Lead partner	RAG	Update
3.1 Towns & villages	Support business, retail, community resilience, and enhance the environment in our most disadvantaged settlements	3.1.1	Deliver established Towns and Villages programme across the county	Durham County Council	Green	Final stages of delivery being planned for 2025/26. NECA planning to establish a Town Centre Commission and investment programme. Also see 3.1.3.
		3.1.2	Pilot home working initiatives	Housing Associations	Green	Housing associations provide broadband and modifications to homes to enable people to access work, including support for home working. There are also examples of housing associations (e.g. Believe Housing) allowing and supporting tenants to operate home-based businesses.
	Create and implement visions for towns and villages across the county	3.1.3	Strategic Place Plans development programme and delivery frameworks	Durham County Council and Housing Associations	Green	Commenced pilot plans for Durham City, Shildon / Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor. To report in winter 2025 on plan for developing vision statements for remaining towns. Co-design work for Durham City Vision underway.
		3.1.4	Explore opportunities for health on the high street / One Public Estate interventions with local communities and delivery partners	Lead to be identified	Green	
		3.1.5	Develop a new Durham City Vision and Delivery Strategy / Framework	Durham County Council	Green	
		3.1.6	Develop a programme to strengthen local foundational economies (e.g. food, housing, health services, transport) as part of place shaping / regeneration schemes	Housing Providers	Green	
	Deliver Levelling Up priorities and	3.1.7	Deliver Levelling Up Fund Round 1 Rural Connectivity and Cultural Programme in	Durham County Council 2025	Green	New Hall completed and opened and Coal Drops works completed at Locomotion, Shildon.

maximise the access to funding to support regeneration in some of our most disadvantaged communities		Bishop Auckland Constituency			
	3.1.8	Deliver the Stronger Towns and Future High Streets programmes in Bishop Auckland	Durham County Council/Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership £53m.	Green	Future High Streets Fund projects to be concluded by March 2025. Stronger Towns Fund projects progressing to delivery with completion by March 2026.
	3.1.9	Deliver the Long-Term Plan for Towns programme in Spennymoor	Durham County Council £20m	Green	Co-design phase completed and informed development of draft investment plan for years 1 to 3. Government committed to a retained and reformed regeneration programme and further guidance is expected soon.
	3.1.10	Consider outcome of Levelling Up Fund Round 2 bids and develop proposals to access Round 3 funding	Durham County Council	Green	5 bids submitted to government but unsuccessful in securing further funding. New opportunities arising from new NECA and new government to be explored.
Regenerate Horden to create greater diversity of housing and higher quality of built and natural environment	3.1.11	Horden Masterplan Delivery	Durham County Council	Green	Horden regeneration plan approved by DCC Cabinet in January 2024 and in implementation to replace housing and start to regenerate the community. NECA has also pledged funding to Horden and entered into a Strategic Place Partnership with Homes England to regenerate communities in the region.
	3.1.12	Support Horden Together to champion community-led public sector collaboration	Horden Together Partnership	Green	
Regenerate Stanley town centre to tackle problem buildings such as the former Board School and support	3.1.13	Undertake stakeholder engagement and asset mapping. Deliver the Board School scheme and roll-out a Place Lab	Karbon Homes / Durham County Council	Green	Place Lab to be established in Stanley. Plans for Stanley Board School being developed by Karbon Homes with support from DCC and as part of the regeneration of the town.

	diversification within the town centre					
	Support community resilience and engagement, development and ownership of places through culture-led regeneration	3.1.14	Pilot Place Labs Programme in Peterlee, Teesdale and Durham City	Durham County Council	Green	Place Lab pilots established in Peterlee, Weardale and Durham City as community cultural hubs. Place Labs are to be rolled-out across the rest of the county
	Establish a collaborative approach between social housing providers to support local place making	3.1.16	Engage County Durham Housing Associations in the Northern Housing Consortium Foundational Economy Place Network and consider opportunities for integration with the North East Mayoral Combined Authority	Housing Associations	Green	Initial discussions held at IES Delivery Group. Housing providers actively engaged in foundational economy projects to support tenants.
	Sufficient and suitable housing land to support economic growth and provide quality	3.1.17	Approve and implement the updated County Durham Housing Strategy	Durham County Council	Green	The Housing Strategy is currently being refreshed
		3.1.18	Support the delivery of strategic housing sites within the County Durham Plan	Durham County Council, Housing Associations, private sector	Green	Sherburn Road (aka Old Durham Gate / Bent House Lane) under construction. Planning permission granted for the development of Sniperley Park with development expected to commence in late 2024.

	housing for the residents of the county	3.1.19	Identification and management of brownfield sites programme. Including bids into NECA Brownfield Housing Fund	Durham County Council / Housing Associations	Green	£4.5m of NECA investment secured for Horden. NECA has signed a Strategic Place Partnership agreement with Homes England to delivery housing and regeneration on brownfield sites across the region. Pipeline developed, funding secured
3.2 Employment land	Nationally and regionally recognised strategic sites that have high quality infrastructure and premises to support science and technology innovation, opportunity sectors, advanced manufacturing and capitalise inward investment – developing allocated land within the County Durham Plan	3.2.1	Complete NETPark Phase 3 , Sedgefield	Business Durham	Green	Interest in the new units remains encouraging and we continue to engage with companies looking to locate to Phase 3. The project remains on budget and is due to reach practical completion in March 2025.
		3.2.2	Develop Durham City Innovation District Masterplan and secure a development partner	Durham County Council / Durham University	Green	Masterplan developed and negotiations are ongoing with a development partner
		3.2.3	Deliver Devolution Regeneration Funding programme at Aykley Heads, Durham - creation of a connectivity corridor through the site	Durham County Council	Green	Funding secured from NECA. Connectivity improvements being undertaken across the site.
		3.2.4	Develop Jade Business Park Phase 2 , Murton	Business Durham	Green	Junction improvements almost complete, additional power to the site has been secured to support phase 2 delivery.
		3.2.5	Promote, secure investment and develop phases at Forrest Park , Newton Aycliffe	Business Durham	Green	DPD to invest £100m in 8 new properties to provide a new logistics hub at Forrest Park
		3.2.6	Explore infrastructure and funding options to unlock phase 2 of Integra 61	Durham County Council	Red	Levelling Up Fund bid unsuccessful and government and NECA transport strategy / commitments are yet to be agreed.
		3.2.7	Work with the private sector to redevelop or bring back into use under utilised premises and land at Peterlee Business Parks (including North West, South West, Whitehouse	Business Durham / East Durham Business Forum	Green	Ongoing support is being provided to the private sector which has resulted in increased occupancy at both South West and Whitehouse. Support has also been provided to bring forward the initial phase of industrial development at Merchant Park.

			and Bracken Hill and Newton Aycliffe Business Park			
Supporting sustainable growth and development of natural assets that enables infrastructure development across the county	3.2.8	Develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy that supports appropriate mitigation measures and offsetting to enable inclusive growth	DEFRA and Durham County Council	Green	The LNRS is in development. The first stage of stakeholder consultation to inform the LNRS has been completed and a second stage will be undertaken on a draft LNRS prior to formal sign-off in 2025. An indicative financial allocation of £7.25m for the Environment and Nature investment priority has been approved by NECA, which will support a local nature recovery programme to catalyse delivery of the LNR strategies.	
	3.2.9	Assess the potential to use council land assets for renewable energy generation, biodiversity net gain, and nutrient neutrality	Durham County Council	Green	DCC has a programme for improving building and asset (e.g. vehicles) efficiency and generating energy. DCC is working with partners to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy and meeting conditions of the Environment Act.	
Ensure there is sufficient and suitable employment land to capture new investments and business growth	3.2.10	Employment Land Review to assess the demand, need, and opportunities for new employment land allocations and business space	Durham County Council	Amber	Work likely to commence in 2025 subject to agreeing to review the County Durham Plan.	
	3.2.11	Investigate the potential for a new low carbon business park	Durham County Council	Green	Proposals are in development for a district heat network at Drum Industrial Estate, Chester-le-Street. Initial work has been undertaken to demonstrate the costs and savings to local businesses. DCC is working with stakeholders to secure initial funding to start the programme and secure further investment and commitments from local businesses to implement the necessary works.	

	Development of the North East Mayoral Combined Authority Investment Zone – Clean Energy and Green Manufacturing that harnesses investment and business growth opportunities	3.2.12	Pursue the opportunity to include NETPark as part of the North East Investment Zone including promoting supply chain benefits and inward investment opportunities for the county	Durham County Council	Green	NETPark designated as a North East Investment Zone with interest from a major inward investor
		3.2.13	Seek capital investment through NECA Investment Fund to grow the county's business space and infrastructure	Business Durham	Amber	DCC working with NECA to develop a Local Growth Plan which will underpin devolved funding to the region and future investment plans
	Understand the electricity demand and capacity of key employment sites to ensure there is the capability to support new developments	3.2.14	Undertake an assessment of power connections and capacity requirements for major employment sites including opportunities to provide renewable energy and secure further investment	Durham County Council, Northern Powergrid	Green	The National Energy System Operator (NESO) and Regional Energy Systems Planners (RESPs) established with responsibility for future energy planning (electricity and gas, etc). DCC contributed to NECA's response to consultation on the new RESP and will continue to actively participate in its development.
		3.2.15	Influence and inform the development of a regional approach to understanding energy supply needs that are impeding or constraining development	NECA, Northern Powergrid	Green	
3.3 Physical connectivity	Champion and understand County Durham connectivity needs – to enhance	3.3.1	Develop a baseline of evidence of travel patterns to employment sites	Durham County Council	Red	No plans to take this activity forward. Some business parks have sustainable transport plans.
		3.3.2	Undertake an assessment of sustainable travel routes and public transport connectivity between the	Durham County Council	Green	Data collected annually for public transport access to 18 employment sites across the county.

	connectivity for residents, business and visitors		county's main settlements and employment sites			
		3.3.3	Undertake a feasibility study for a park and pedal scheme in the county	Durham County Council	Amber	Funding being sought for a pilot scheme.
		3.3.4	Consider opportunities and secure investment for a new and enhanced transport hubs in Newton Aycliffe and Stanley to support levelling up / connectivity	Durham County Council and major town centre land and property owners	Amber	Demand-responsive transport service being procured.
	To improve connectivity and accessibility across the county and integration across the North East	3.3.5	Develop a connectivity statement / strategy for county to shape the refresh of the Transport Plan for the North East and development of the region's broadband networks	Durham County Council	Amber	Not being progressed by DCC. A new regional transport plan is being finalised and a new Digital Strategy was adopted by DCC in 2023.
		3.3.6	Assess the suitability of current bus fares for younger people accessing work	Transport North East / NECA	Green	21 and under £1 single fares launched 07/05/2023. 21 and under region-wide multi-modal day ticket launched 05/11/2023.
		3.3.7	Secure investment to develop business cases for transport capital investment pipeline	Durham County Council, Transport North East	Amber	Regional priorities and funding yet to be agreed for 2025/26 onwards.
		3.3.8	Establish a new North East and National Highways Collaboration Board to influence National Highways investment in major road infrastructure including A1(M), A66, and A19	Durham County Council, Transport North East	Green	Transport for the North are coordinating northern priorities with Mayors and Combined Authorities

		3.3.9	Inform development of the regional Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to support access to employment and improving connectivity across the county	Durham County Council, Transport North East	Green	DCC officers participated and informed BSIP proposals.
		3.3.10	Pilot an 'on-demand' bus service to Newton Aycliffe Business Park	Durham County Council	Green	Link2Work on-demand bus services launched to Aycliffe and other business parks.
		3.3.11	Promote real time services and integrated ticketing for bus travel across the county and region	Durham County Council, Transport North East	Green	Ongoing promotion of all BSIP workstreams
	Enhance the county's electric vehicle charging infrastructure	3.3.12	Implement the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Programme	Durham County Council	Green	Investment secured from LEVI pilot scheme to deliver 250 charge points.
	Enhance active travel and road infrastructure to improve connectivity and support employment growth	3.3.13	Secure Active Travel funds and deliver new programmes to provide new connectivity	Durham County Council	Green	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans have been completed for 11 towns and a physical activity strategy and Rights of Way Improvement Plan have been adopted by the council.
3.3.14		Secure funds and deliver schemes to expand the Durham City Park and Ride network	Durham County Council	Green	Sniperley currently being expanded.	
3.3.15		Secure funding and deliver improved road infrastructure to enable phase 3 of Integra 61 as a strategic employment site.	Durham County Council	Amber	See 2.3.6.	

<p>Deliver on our carbon emission targets by reducing the volume of freight on the road by expanding the rail infrastructure within the county and access to new stations</p>	3.3.16	Develop Full Business Cases and secure funding for new railway stations at Sedgefield and Ferryhill on the Stillington Line to connect more towns together	Durham County Council	Amber	Restoring Your Railways programme cancelled by new government. NECA to agree transport projects as part of new transport plan.
	3.3.17	Develop a business case for the re-opening of the Leamside Line	Durham County Council / NECA / Transport North East	Green	Business case in development by NECA. In Transport North plan
	3.3.18	Develop local area energy masterplans to support investment in local energy networks	Durham County Council	Green	Soft market testing undertaken to explore options for delivering the necessary investment to create local energy networks to help achieve Net Zero. Work ongoing with strategic partners to ensure the grid is aware of planned upgrades and discussions are taking place to establish a strategic energy decarbonisation partnership. A heat master planning study has been completed in anticipation of heat network zoning regulation expected in 2025
<p>Improve the resilience and capacity of local energy networks</p>	3.3.19	Identify opportunities for community owned and developed energy networks	Durham County Council	Green	Work is continuing in Horden, in collaboration with East Durham Trust, to identify opportunities to develop a community based district heat network. Opportunities in other parts of the county are being investigated, supported with £130k from the government. Work is also ongoing with Weardale Renewables to promote community energy opportunities and with Northern Powergrid to explore the development of community-owned Distribution System Operations.

		3.3.20	Develop renewable energy infrastructure across the county for energy generation and vehicle charging	Durham County Council	Green	150 Council funded EV charge points now installed across the County. A further 250 charging points will be installed over the next 3 years through the recently approved ZEST partnership. Also see 3.3.12.
3.4 Digital infrastructure	Supporting hard to reach communities gain access to gigabit capable broadband. Government UK targets are: - Min. 85% coverage by 2025 (currently 57% coverage in the county) - As close to 100% of properties to have gigabit capable coverage by end of 2030	3.4.1	Deliver the Digital Durham Programme including Project Gigabit and identify opportunities to secure commercial investment in fast and resilient networks	Digital Durham, Project Gigabit BDUK Team, Providers		See 3.4.6 to 3.4.7 below.
		3.4.2	Develop a digital and data collaboration model with social housing providers – connect suppliers, share understanding of needs, improve delivery, and deliver social tariffs, social value	Digital Durham, social housing providers	Amber	There is insufficient capacity to set up a formal model. Work is continuing under as usual to share information. Action to be closed.
	3.4.3	Establish Digital Inclusion Steering Group to develop	County Durham Together	Green	A regional Digital Inclusion working group has recently been created as part of NECA. The group is exploring a minimum digital living	

			a digital inclusion action plan			standard, and work to contribute towards it. A key development from Digital Durham is the implementation of up to 26 digital community Hubs in the county as part of the UKSPF funded programme of work. These community organisations will be provided with up to 18 months broadband connectivity, up to 12 devices, furniture and funding for a digital support and maintenance contract. Once up and running, which is expected post April 2025, a range of partners will utilise the space to provide a variety of digital related support. Digital Durham will also work with each centre to develop a communication plan to promote the availability to communities.
		3.4.4	Identify infrastructure improvements and negotiating rates/agreements with providers to enable more residents to work from home	Housing providers	Green	See 3.1.2.
		3.4.5	Identify relevant assets, sites, and hubs, and consider the potential to integrate a microgrid pilot	Northern Powergrid / Durham County Council	Red	Northern Powergrid are unable to include further sites into their microgrid pilot.
	Improve digital connectivity for communities and businesses across the county	3.4.6	Deliver the Digital Strategy and investment pipeline	Durham County Council	Green	The Digital Strategy has now been adopted and is in delivery. A progress review is planned for 2025/26.
		3.4.6b	Engage with commercial providers and Government on Project Gigabit to secure investment in fast and resilient networks	Digital Durham, BDUK/DSIT, Providers	Green	Digital Durham continues to work with commercial providers and government department Building Digital UK (BDUK) to encourage and facilitate investment into the county. This work has contributed to current gigabit coverage levels reaching 71% (rising c.1% per month) and Superfast 98%. For comparison, Superfast broadband speeds are 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) and gigabit

						1,000 Mbps. Importantly, we're also seeing a reduction in properties with speeds of less than 10 Mbps, indicating interventions are reaching areas with the poorest levels of service. In terms of the latest Project Gigabit developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further Teesdale properties are due to be brought into government's contract with GoFibre for the delivery of full fibre broadband. • BDUK are currently progressing a cross-regional single supplier procurement with Openreach to supply gigabit capable broadband to harder-to-reach properties outside of future plans. The procurement outcome is anticipated early 2025, and County Durham is expected to be a key beneficiary.
		3.4.7	Develop a concept of smart places for County Durham and communications / marketing campaign	Durham County Council	Green	Continuing engagement with the digital sector Catapult
	Maximise the impact of Service Direct NEWCO Ltd Telco to improve digital infrastructure	3.4.8	Provision of telecommunication services to public sector organisations including employment sites – consider options for Durham City Innovation District	Service Direct NEWCO Ltd Telco	Red	After review, this action is not appropriate.
	Improved 5G coverage across the county – 5G Innovation Regions	3.4.9	Collaboration with Department for Science Innovation and Technology to drive forward innovation and unlock opportunities for	DSIT, Durham County Council	Green	The Digital Durham programme works with DSIT and BDUK to deliver project gigabit to deliver improved fast and reliable broadband to hard-to-reach parts of the county.

			digital infrastructure with the county			
		3.4.10	Inform and influence the development of 5G ambitions for the North East as part of the emerging NE Devolution Deal and 5G Innovation Regions	NECA, Northern Powergrid, Durham County Council	Green	Engagement on regional funding bids and new innovations is continuing under the NECA Digital Leads steering group.
		3.4.11	Develop project proposals for the county and 5G innovation proposition for NETPark (2023) and deliver future project (2024-25)	Durham County Council	Red	Due to alternative commitments made by Vodafone, this project has been closed. Future opportunities will be sought as part of 3.4.10.

Promotion

Aim: To promote our county, assets and opportunities to businesses, investors, visitors, developers, and residents

The Delivery Plan builds on the wide range of work ongoing around culture and visitor economy. We know that we have excellent tourism assets and economic opportunities in the county. The Delivery plan focuses on a number of actions that aim to showcase this to the world, ensuring that we capitalise on the work underway through the Productivity and Place priorities.

Our visitor economy is now valued at more than £1bn per year, and this year has seen the opening of The Story, and the completion of improvements to Locomotion, Raby Estates, and Beamish. The IES has also led to the development of an investment pitchbook to help us to speak to external investors, showcasing the breadth of opportunities across the county through events such as UKREIIF and MIPIM. We have also completed a perceptions study for the county which will inform the development of a compelling and joined-up narrative to promote the county in the coming years.

Achievements 2024

- The Story opened as a regional visitor asset near Durham City.
- Remaking Beamish programme completed.
- Enhanced visitor attractions and events programmes completed at Raby Estates.
- Perceptions study completed for the county to underpin enhanced place branding.
- Place Labs launched in Peterlee, Weardale and Durham City as creative and cultural hubs for local communities.
- County Durham leading the culture, creative, tourism and sport portfolio for the North East Combined Authority.
- Preparations are in place for the 2025 year of culture including the S&DR200 railway festival.

Case Study The Rising at Raby Castle

After six years of planning, in June 2024 Raby Castle opened its doors to welcome visitors to The Rising, a 24-acre site featuring the remodelled Walled Garden along with old and new buildings. The Rising is an ambitious development at Raby Castle, Park and Gardens. This supports the Estate's ambition to share its rich and varied history with a wider audience. Think acres of unexpected elegance, complete with heritage buildings, remodelled gardens, stylish shopping and local food that's as fresh as it gets – against a backdrop of unspoilt rural landscapes and one of the finest medieval castles in England.

The Rising comprises three heritage buildings, two thoughtful new constructions and a visionary walled garden comprising three striking sections: East, formal and West. Visitors can expect a brand-new 200-seater restaurant, stylish shopping, the remodelled 18th century Walled Garden and a new exhibition alongside renovated heritage buildings.

The 18th century Walled Garden has been remodelled by renowned garden designer Luciano Giubbilei, creating a stunning 5-acre vision, including the estate's well-known yew hedges and the iconic Raby fig. Situated in the heart of The Rising, the newly constructed Round House is a visitors' reception and features bespoke hand painted illustrations by Edinburgh-based artist Lucy Roscoe.

Many of Raby's heritage buildings, which were previously hidden from view, are now accessible by the public and free to enter. The 18th century Coach House provides an extensive new retail space with inspirational merchandise for the home and gifting, plus a free-to-enter exhibition featuring an audio-visual projection onto a bespoke carved oak eight-metre table made of estate oak, giving visitors a taste of the wildlife in Teesdale.

The Riding School and Dutch Barn have also been thoughtfully restored to provide magnificent new event spaces at Raby Castle. A newly designed glasshouse, The Vinery, on the footprint of the original structure from where it takes its name, seats over 200 people, offering delicious food made with locally sourced ingredients from across the estate.

This £14 million investment at Raby Castle has created a world-class tourism and leisure facility, where visitors of every generation can discover County Durham's thrilling past and promising future, supporting the county's growth in tourism numbers and boosting its visitor economy.

Priority	Ambition	Ref.	Action	Lead partner	RAG	Update
4.1 Brand & place marketing	Develop a place brand to promote a compelling and authentic narrative about County Durham to engage and attract investors, businesses, and visitors and increase civic pride amongst residents	4.1.1	Use findings from regional and countywide perceptions research to develop a place brand for County Durham.	Durham County Council, Visit County Durham and sector partners	Green	Perceptions survey completed to underpin new place branding approaches and designs, which are in development. Continuing to engage with NECA on regional approaches and alignment. Extensive stakeholder consultation and engagement undertaken. A Place Advisory Board comprising senior business leaders has been established to drive forward the development of the narrative and visual expression. Consultations have taken place with representatives across the place spectrum of live, work, study, invest and visit, a mix of engagement mediums including: - Advisory board - 121 consultations - 12 consultations with selected boards/forums - focus groups - survey Place brand narrative and creative expression have been developed and shared with stakeholders. Phase 3 of the brand (4.1.3, 4.1.4, and 4.1.5) on target to be delivered by March 2025.
		4.1.2	Develop a stakeholder engagement plan to engage, young people, residents, public, private and third sectors to inform and feedback on brand development proposals and act as brand ambassadors		Green	
		4.1.3	Develop and deliver an activation strategy targeted at external audiences		Green	
		4.1.4	Develop and deliver an ambassador programme to support activation of the brand and amplify messaging with audiences internal and external to the county at a local, regional, national and international level		Green	
		4.1.5	Align brand messaging and activity with North East place branding messaging and activity		Green	
4.2 Inward investment	Increase foreign direct investment through the creation of an International Strategy	4.2.1	Develop an FDI International Strategy to maximise engagement with national and internal networks and trade propositions including MIPIM, UKREIFF and Host City	Business Durham	Green	A soft-landing package has been developed for new inward investors and sector propositions are currently under development. Re-engagement with existing foreign direct investors is underway.
		4.2.2	Develop place marketing campaigns targeted at agreed sectors for inward investment (live, work, invest, do business)	Business Durham	Green	

	Attract more events and conferences to County Durham	4.2.3	In partnership with the with North East Destination Management Organisations develop a 10-year regional Business Events Strategy incorporating an approach to rural conferencing	NECA, Durham County Council	Green	A Business Events Strategy has been developed as is awaiting adoption by NECA. Visitor Economy Strategy is in development.
		4.2.4	Support the feasibility of a North East Events and Festival Unit and proposition for the North East designation as the first UK Region of Sport	NECA and Durham County Council	Green	In development, through the Destination Development Partnership
		4.2.5	Use County Durham's annual events programme as a hook to attract more inward investment	Business Durham	Green	Business Durham and its partners promote the high quality of life and cultural attraction in the county and region as an integral part of the offer to inward investors.
		4.2.6	Develop a conferencing offer in Durham City.	Visit County Durham, Durham County Council	Green	Meet in Durham website launched and being promoted to highlight meeting and conference venues available in the county
		4.2.7	Raise the national profile of Durham's existing events and festivals programme	Durham County Council	Green	Work is ongoing to amplify the City of Culture 2025 programme with support from the Arts Council. The County has a strong presence on the Visit England website and continues to work closely with them.
	Develop, expand and secure investment in the creative industries sector	4.2.8	Shape and influence the NE Creative Industries Plan and promotion of the UK Create Growth Programme to maximise investment opportunities for Durham businesses	North of Tyne CA, NECA, Create UK	Green	County Durham leads the NECA portfolio for 'culture, creative, tourism, and sport'. The creative industries plan is in development.
4.3 Year-round visitor economy	Increase the tourism offer of County Durham	4.3.1	Support the delivery of strategic plans for the North East Destination Development Partnership three-year pilot programme	Durham County Council and NECA	Green	The North East Destination Development Partnership (aka Destination North East England) is in its final year of delivery and the programme evaluation is underway. Waiting for government to set out the next steps.

		4.3.2	Undertake a feasibility study for a new family visitor attraction in Durham City	Durham County Council	Green	Feasibility study commissioned work started in September consultations underway with internal and external stakeholders. Due to report in early December.
		4.3.3	Develop products and experiences that drive visits in the shoulder months (Oct – Mar) to level out the season, creating a year-round offer	Visit County Durham	Green	Visit County Durham working with partners to arrange more autumn and winter events including dark skies events and Halloween, fireworks, and Christmas themed events.
		4.3.4	Establish a biannual Sci-Art Festival which links our space science, history and innovation ambitions and take advantage of a gap in the national market	Partnership between University of Durham and DCC	Amber	Yet to be commenced.
		4.3.5	Enhance tourism offer, visitor attractions, and visitor economy infrastructure	Rural England Prosperity Fund	Green	Several rural visitor economy projects receiving REPF funding including Beamish, Ushaw College, Adventure Valley, and the North Pennines Aare of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
	Reduce carbon emissions associated with the visitor economy	4.3.6	Commission a report for transport services within the county, highlighting infrastructure and connectivity (final mile) challenges for visitors to the county and considering improvements and solutions	Durham County Council	Green	Report commissioned and delivered.
		4.3.7	Deliver carbon exchange pilot project for Lumiere	Durham County Council, Artichoke	Green	Artichoke, the producers or Lumiere, actively procure suppliers with sustainable credentials, undertake carbon impact assessments with the aim of decarbonising events, invest in carbon removal technologies, work with Durham University's Energy Institute to minimise power usage, and encourage visitors to minimise their environmental impacts.

		4.3.8	Develop a plan for regenerative tourism to bring transformational experiences to visitors, whilst making sure that communities, the environment and local cultural heritage and traditions are conserved from one generation to the next	Durham County Council	Green	Regenerative Visitor Economy Framework launched in September. The Framework will be used to shape and influence local and regional strategies and plans with a visitor economy related element.
		4.3.9	Participate in the Global Destinations Sustainability Index , establishing a benchmark in 2023	Visit County Durham, Durham County Council	Green	County Durham and Newcastle participated in the Global Destination Sustainability Index 2023 with Sunderland and Northumberland joining in 2024. Improvements in sustainability to be measured over coming years.
4.4 Cultural & creative infrastructure	Harness the potential of the cultural and creative sector with improved direction and infrastructure development	4.4.1	Lead the NECA Devolution Portfolio for Culture, Creative, Tourism and Sport	Durham County Council	Green	DCC and its partners are the established lead for this portfolio within NECA.
		4.4.2	Work with NECA to develop an ambitious cultural development framework and partnership to enhance infrastructure and access to investment for the whole region	Durham County Council, NECA	Green	NECA's early priorities agreed including the development of a 10-year regional events strategy, supporting events, building on Destination Development Partnership pilots, testing the region of sport concept, and embedding priorities in the emerging Local Growth Plan.
	Support and develop cultural and creative industries sector	4.4.3	Support the development of the NE Screen Industries Partnership - working with emerging creative industries focusing on screen industry development on locations, location services and screen writing	NE Screen Industries Partnership	Green	
		4.4.4	Identify and undertake feasibility for a new Culture and Creative Zone within County Durham – to form part of a network of Zones across NECA	Durham County Council	Amber	

	Increase and enhance the cultural infrastructure and offer in County Durham	4.4.5	Complete major visitor infrastructure , such as: - The Light (DLIMAG) - The Story - Stockton to Darlington 2025 - Faith Museum and Bishop Auckland tourist attractions - Locomotion New Hall - Raby Castle - Remaking Beamish - Durham County Cricket Club - World Heritage Site	DCC. Raby Estates, Durham County Cricket Club, Beamish Museum, The Auckland Project	Green	The Story, The Faith Museum (Bishop Auckland), Raby Castle and Remaking Beamish projects are now complete and open for visitors.
		4.4.6	Develop and deliver the Heritage X project – feasibility and explore investment/location requirements	Durham University and NE Universities	Green	Universities collaborating to use cultural assets to support regional economic growth
	Increase access to creative careers and creative business start-ups	4.4.7	Create a network of Place Labs and establish a programme that supports creative business start-ups for residents from all backgrounds (aligns with 3.1.14)	Durham County Council	Green	Place Lab pilots established in Peterlee, Weardale and Durham City as community cultural hubs. Place Labs are to be rolled-out across the rest of the county
		4.4.8	Inform and influence the development of the North East as an international hub for creative tech innovation – specialism in e-sports, light art and immersive technologies	NECA	Green	Work ongoing to establish a regional programme
		4.4.9	Deliver sector growth and skills bootcamps and establish work based learning opportunities (e.g. screen industries, CCI, Tourism and sport)	Lead to be identified	Green	Skills Bootcamps launched by NECA in October 2024
		4.4.10	Inform the development of a regional Cultural Observatory - evaluate, measure and understand culture and creative	Durham University and NECA	Green	Cultural Observatory set-up as part of Culture North East

			values through an inclusive economy lens			
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