

Visioning Workshop Discussion Group: People

Overview

A visioning workshop was held on Wednesday 30th April 10am – 2pm at Castle Green Hotel in Kendal to inform the development of the Westmorland and Furness Inclusive and Green Economic Growth Strategy. A series of thematic discussion groups – covering people, prosperity, place, green growth and inclusive growth - were ran as part of the session. This note captures the feedback gathered at the table focused on 'people'.

Focus of Discussion

All workshop participants were asked to spend 10-15 minutes at each thematic table. At the 'people' table' they were asked to consider the following thematic opportunities and challenges which had been identified to date in the strategy's underpinning evidence base:

Table 1: Defining opportunities and challenges for the 'People' theme

Five Defining Opportunities...	Five Defining Challenges...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of self-containment as shown by relatively short travel to work distances and high job density supporting sustainable travel patterns and ability to capture spend locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sluggish population growth with a below average WAP and a declining 0-15 population, contributing to a tight labour supply and posing a threat to sustainable communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving educational attainment, investing in higher level skills provision, and encouraging upskilling/reskilling to meet business need can support productivity gains and inclusive growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant increase in dependent and aged population (65+) which is projected to continue, putting increased demands on services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong progression to positive and sustained destinations post 16 can support social mobility and life chances of young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification and occupation gaps contribute to skill shortages/gaps which undermines business competitiveness and limits access to higher wages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of labour market participation provide opportunities to capture local spend and support vitality in centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large number of economically inactive residents constrain the available labour pool, with caring, retirement and long-term sickness contributing factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major investment and planned initiatives can support community wealth building and inclusive growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low pay and precarious employment in key sectors impacting on poverty, wellbeing and life chances

Participants were asked if there any key opportunities or challenges which are not currently captured. They were also asked to:

- Use the green sticky dots to identify opportunities and challenges which should be prioritised and captured within the strategic objectives for each theme
- Use the red sticky dots to identify any opportunities and challenges which are less of a priority (or less relevant)

This note captures the findings of the discussions within the 'people' group and begins to identify emerging priorities that should be captured in strategic objectives that will underpin the Strategy's strategic framework.

Table 2: Feedback on the Defining Opportunities for the People Theme

Defining Opportunities	Level of Prioritisation	Notes
High levels of self-containment as shown by relatively short travel to work distances and high job density supporting sustainable travel patterns and ability to capture spend locally	1 x red	<p>There needs to be more focus on the attraction of talent as labour market needs cannot be met within the current TTWA. What are the push and pull factors influencing in and out migration of WAP? What is the offer to WAP and how can this perception/image be enhanced?</p> <p>Remote working is an opportunity presented, encouraged by W&F quality of life, however there was a view that this needs to be at the right stage in a career and there are significant merits in in-person working for those in the formative stages of their career.</p> <p>Mitigating barriers such as housing, transport, provision of social and community infrastructure is required.</p>
Improving educational attainment, investing in higher level skills provision, and encouraging upskilling/reskilling to meet business need can support productivity gains and inclusive growth	9 x green	<p>There needs to be a real focus on early years and attainment if W&F are serious about social mobility. Support is needed to enable individuals and communities to thrive.</p> <p>Investing in technical education and work experience needs to be a priority, including apprenticeships, placements, internships. There needs to be more support for employers to access these opportunities i.e. make it easier to employ and apprentice.</p> <p>Skills for the future requires consideration here, including horizon scanning for future opportunities and drivers of change, and the role of technology/AI in helping to address labour supply issues and drive productivity growth.</p>

Defining Opportunities	Level of Prioritisation	Notes
Strong progression to positive and sustained destinations post 16 can support social mobility and life chances of young people	4 x green	<p>Tackling NEETs and supporting young people to realise their potential was a key area of discussion. There was a view that there needed to be an explicit focus on mental health in young people. The influence of social media was also identified as a significant challenge (as well as an opportunity).</p> <p>The lack of post-16 transport provision / funding is a barrier to participation, particularly for rural communities, influencing choices in education, training and employment.</p> <p>The gap in land-based education was cited as a concern.</p> <p>Connecting young people to opportunities was also considered a focus. Enterprise skills also need to feature.</p>
High levels of labour market participation provide opportunities to capture local spend and support vitality in centres		Supporting sustainable communities with vibrant centres that evoke identity and pride.
Major investment and planned initiatives can support community wealth building and inclusive growth	1 x red 2 x green	<p>[Rationale for red dot not discussed]</p> <p>Anchor institutions such as Council, university, NHS can play an important role in supporting community wealth building and inclusive growth, and demonstrate what a 'good' employer looks like.</p>
Additional Opportunities Identified in discussion		
Stimulating enterprise and innovation can broaden opportunities for employment and drive productivity growth		<p>Self-employment needs to be recognised more explicitly in providing a route to employment, as does the VCFSE sector.</p> <p>The VCFSE sector has the ability to spot a problem and turn it into a solution and needs to be valued as an agent of change that can make a real difference and contribution to the W&F economy and people's lives.</p>

Defining Opportunities	Level of Prioritisation	Notes
Skills for the future including role of technology/AI and horizon scanning		<p>Skills for the future requires consideration here, including horizon scanning for future opportunities and drivers of change, and the role of technology/AI in helping to address labour supply issues and drive productivity growth. Investing in technical education needs to be a priority.</p> <p>Automation is also recognised as a threat, so mitigating action through upskilling and reskilling is a priority.</p> <p>The potential for green jobs is a key consideration here (see CAfS report ‘The Potential for Green Jobs in Cumbria’)</p>
Attraction of talent can help to address labour supply issues, leveraging W&F offer		This includes activating older residents attracted to W&F through part time roles, mentors, volunteers etc.
Health and wellbeing offer can support quality of life		The role of health and wellbeing in supporting mental and physical health, skills development, access to work, community cohesion etc was highlighted

Table 3: Feedback on the Defining Challenges for the People Theme

Defining Challenges	Level of Prioritisation	Notes
Sluggish population growth with a below average WAP and a declining 0-15 population, contributing to a tight labour supply and posing a threat to sustainable communities		<p>The offer for young people (education, employment, leisure, culture etc) will support retention. However, there was a recognition of the value of the lived experience of moving away. Encouraging people to return should be a focus.</p> <p>There was wide ranging discussion of attracting people to W&F to support economic ambitions, including those with higher level skills.</p>
Significant increase in dependent and aged population (65+) which is projected to continue, putting increased demands on services		<p>Unlocking the skill set of those aged 65+ can mitigate challenges. It needs to be recognised that early retirement is a choice, and W&F is attractive as a destination for early retirement. These people are unlikely to choose to rejoin the labour market, but can provide contributions in other ways i.e. mentoring, volunteering. There is also significant merit in connecting older residents to younger residents to share life experiences, encourage mutual respect and support community cohesion. An example was provided of a multi-generational project in the Netherlands which connected young and older people and made older people part of the solution.</p>
Qualification and occupation gaps contribute to skill shortages/gaps which undermines business competitiveness and limits access to higher wages		<p>Investing in higher level and technical education needs to be a priority.</p> <p>The lack of post-16 transport provision / funding is a barrier to participation, particularly for rural communities, influencing choices in education, training and employment.</p> <p>The gap in land-based education was cited as a concern.</p>
A large number of economically inactive residents constrain the available labour pool, with caring, retirement and long-term sickness contributing factors	4 x green	<p>Reactivating those who are inactive are a real opportunity to close the WAP gap. However, employers need to be supported to support the inactive back into employment, recognising many inactive people have complex needs.</p>

Defining Challenges	Level of Prioritisation	Notes
Low pay and precarious employment in key sectors impacting on poverty, wellbeing and life chances	5 x green	<p>There needs to a focus on 'good' employment and supporting employers to emulate good practice. Social and environmental credentials form part of what 'good' looks like.</p> <p>How can we address precarious employment? i.e. widen the tourism season through the provision of wet weather attractions. It needs to be recognised that part-time and seasonal employment can also be a positive i.e. more flexible, a starter/finisher job for early / late stage careers, contribute towards a broad employment offer etc</p>
Additional Challenges Identified in discussion		
Mental and physical health issues impacting on ability to work and quality of life		Support needs include both physical spaces (leisure, blue/green infrastructure, community spaces) that can enable people to meet and socialise, as well as provision catering for mental health support and encouraging volunteering.
The provision of housing to accommodate labour supply requirements		A lack of affordable housing is a real barrier to retaining WAP in W&F. Second homes were highlighted as a challenge to meeting housing need. Boosting the supply of housing in the right places, aligned to anticipated employment growth and identified shortages, needs to be a focus.
The provision of transport and mobility solutions in connecting people to services, education, training and employment		<p>The affordability and integration of transport needs to be a key area of focus to meet the needs of residents, workers and visitors. Accessibility and modes of transport were cited.</p> <p>Rurality is a key feature of the W&F economy. The discussion ranged from young people limited in their access to driving lessons/tests, to the opportunities presented by the rural economy.</p>

Wider Considerations

- Role of mentorship in supporting people and businesses to realise their potential
- The issues and opportunities presented here need to be tested with the community to understand how they align with their understanding.

Emerging Priorities

- Supporting health and wellbeing as key to enabling quality of life
- Attracting, retaining and utilising talent (to include retention strategies, attraction strategies, and utilisation strategies)
- Reactivating inactive residents through the provision of supporting infrastructure
- Delivering skills for the future