

# Business Ecosystems in Eden, Cumbria & Beyond.

Business Community Feedback



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In June 2019, over 30 businesses attended the **Business Ecosystems in Eden, Cumbria & Beyond** breakfast event.

The event drew parallels between business ecosystems and those which occur naturally in the world around us: whether it is through the 'keystone actors' which have the most significant impact, or the interdependent connections between all within the ecosystem.

Delegates from a wide range of sectors including professional services, digital, tourism and local government worked in small teams to share their thoughts on the district's business ecosystems, the impact of business on the environment and the economic benefits of Eden's culture and world-class natural areas.

Feedback from the event has been collated and broad themes have been identified to help group the comments given. To remain as open as possible, all comments have been included (some details have been generalised in the interest of anonymity).

Thank you to the businesses which took the time to attend and share their thoughts: these insights will all go into shaping the future of our District.



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# Environmental benefits

## How does the natural environment benefit your business?

### Attracting customers

- Cumbria / Lake District bring customers.
- Environment has positive effect for some businesses (hospitality / tourism).
- Eden Arts - use natural environment for events, inspire people to go there.

### Recruitment

- "Room to think".
- Green spaces are a reason why people choose to live and work here.
- Good to attract people to area to live/work.

### Economy

- Dualling of A66 - can make the area more desirable to logistics.
- Existence value of environment being here.
- Our environmental offer can help differentiate us from competitors.

### Strategic Location

- Location - heart of Cumbria.
- Slightly out of National Park - advantage.



## Other comments

# How does the natural environment affect your business?

### Natural environment

- How would re-wilding affect the area? Change business e.g. farming and food production.
- Dualling of A66 - may affect eco-systems.

### Miscellaneous

- Gateway community.
- EDC = keystone.

### Reducing impact

- [Our business is] trying to reduce impact on the environment in terms of reducing single use plastic and encouraging suppliers to do the same.
- Encouraging more people to engage with the local environment ... means that we must review people's existing impact on the environment.



# Environmental issues

## What environmental issues impact on your business?

### Climate Disasters

- Crisis/emergency/disaster - Storm Desmond.
- All business affected by extreme weather - flooding, snow in terms of business continuity.

### Economy

- Dualling of A66 - concern that perhaps people won't stop and just pass through Eden.

### Housing

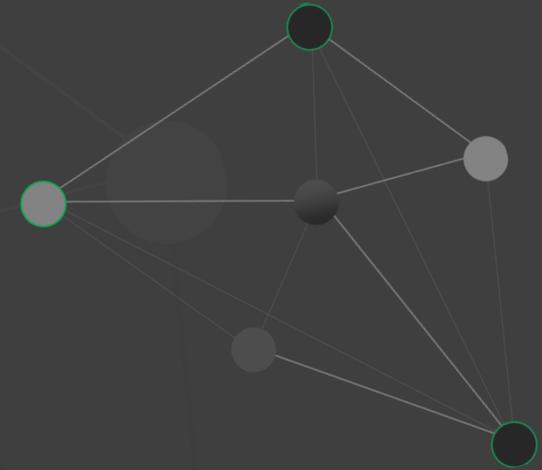
- Environment causes high property price - slow down property sales due to high cost compared to wage levels.
- Not enough new builds to help people start/downsize.

### 'Tunnel vision'

- Sometimes the focus in the Lakes can be too much on the natural environment and not enough on the cultural offer.
- Challenges with attracting staff - people may see Eden as 'environmental culture' rather than 'business culture'.

### Other

- The make-up of businesses in Eden is heavily weighted towards those which use the outdoors environment— therefore a lack of diversity and infrastructure for other types of business.
- Constant tension about encouraging people into that outdoors and their effect e.g. letting dogs loose on land where grouse are nesting.



- Some people in Eden working 2 low paid jobs - need for high value jobs.
- Gap between environment and business. Eden's economy is driven by environment.
- Infrastructure



## What environmental changes could help your business?

### Infrastructure

- Better public transport.
- Ecosystem - buses, parking, bikes, walking, train - all integrated.

### Brand / marketing

- Brand of Eden and geographical area.
- Use brand to drive growth and inform priorities: environmental beauty vs growth.
- If this area was the sustainable 'centre of excellence' in the UK - would that attract young people to live here and/or future thinking businesses to come here.

### Building connections

- Look towards uniting environmentalism with tech looking at good practice elsewhere.
- Business focus on sustainable / green specialisms e.g. architect firms develop a clear focus on career developments so this attracts other similar businesses to locate and set up business here.

### Resilience

- Resilience (effects on costs) and business planning for environmental disasters (e.g. Storm Desmond)



**Image:** Dr Ian Convery of University of Cumbria shares his experiences of ecosystem management with the businesses in attendance.



# Culture

## How does culture affect your business?

### Benefits

- Culture is a key driver of visitors - tourists and business.
- Arts and culture - can make people happier - give people a sense of place - people can be more productive workers.
- Culture is a reason why young people would choose to live here. Keep young people - help future workforce.
- Working with creative people can help businesses be more creative: e.g. The Idol using Eden Arts for 'The Hackathon'. Can't put a £ number on the value but know it will be valuable.
- Winter Droving - brings different people together.
- Culture a driver of lifestyle and attracting/retaining staff.

### Other comments

- Events barometer of local vitality - need to get events right - high quality e.g. Penrith Show.
- Issues over focussing on what the area was - not what it could be - going forward we still need to respect what makes us special though.
- Cinema - an example of existence value - wasn't used but when it was going to close down people campaigned for it to stay. Now used.
- How can we link access areas to benefit e.g. lack of young people in Cumbria, lots in Teesside. How can we link up through A66 route 66 project.
- Penrith Town Council's neighbourhood plan, policies and supporting actions (non planning issues) evolved from 3 consultations

with the public - and the issues come from the 'bottom up'.

- If this area was the sustainable 'centre of excellence' in the UK - would that attract young people to live here and/or future thinking businesses to come here.
- Unfulfilled opportunities for local businesses to use high-quality local produce.

### Negative impacts

- The perceived and actual lack of cultural ecosystem puts people off possibly locating here.
- Some local businesses report negative effects for large events.



# Innovation

## What cultural changes could help your business?

### Brand / marketing

- "Put the fun in" - so we ramp up what the offer is

### Local business

- Each business needs to identify its niche in each event and develop and push it. (Penrith Opshop - we've done this)
- Pop up shops on railway station
- Local existing trade pitches should be respected [during large events]
- As much sourcing of possible needs to be from local businesses

### Other

- EDC = keystone again - need to play bigger role
- Investment
- Skills



**Image:** One of the area's most iconic events, Eden Arts' Winter Droving contributes an estimated £2.4m to the local economy.



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