

Driving Growth: from the regional economy to your own profitability.

Business community feedback



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In May 2019, almost 50 businesses from across Eden attended the Driving Growth: from the regional economy to your own profitability breakfast event.

Delegates from a wide range of sectors including retail, catering, tourism, professional services and local government worked in small groups to share their thoughts on the barriers and opportunities to business growth; with insights being used to inform wider local strategies from Eden District Council and Penrith Chamber of Trade & Commerce.

As promised at the end of the event, we have collated all of the feedback into a single document. Broad themes emerged from the discussions, which have been used to group the individual comments given. To remain as open as possible in the document, 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.



Driving Growth: from the regional economy to your own profitability.

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In summary

National & Regional Growth

- Recruitment
- Young people / ageing population
- Connectivity
- Policy/processes
- Communication
- Inclusive growth
- Collaboration
- Marketing/offer
- Housing

Barriers to Growth

- Marketing
- Housing
- Costs/finance/funding
- Policy/processes
- Career progression / Job prospects
- Business Growth Space

My Business Growth

- Growth
- Diversification
- Business Growth Space
- Recruitment
- Marketing
- Quality

Business Support

- Mentoring
- Finance
- Policies
- Marketing
- Growth





National & Regional Growth

What ideas or priorities do you want to see in regional strategies?
Do you have questions about the strategies for regional growth?
Are there any key concerns you have?

Recruitment

- “Workforce.”
- “Low wages (all sectors).”
- “Eden 'careers and opportunities' event.”
- “Plus initiatives at schools and colleges about career routes available to young adults.”

Young People / Ageing Population

- “Retain youth - affordable housing/transport.”
- “Retain youth - graduate opportunities locally so don't migrate to Manchester, etc.”
- “Aging demographic.”
- An ageing sector of 60+ getting the say on future growth.
- “No services for people who need care.”

Connectivity

- “Transport infrastructure.”
- “A66/A69 road needs.”
- “Public transport.”
- “Transport infrastructure - A66 A69.”
- “Digital Infrastructure improvement.”
- “The road network.”

Policy / Processes

- “Brexit - local influence vital.”
- “Local councils - lack of commitment to business.”
- “‘Old boys’ networks on committees in the county. Stifling energy / ideas.”

Communication

- “Lack of understanding or demand for change.”
- “Message about the decline isn't strong enough.”

Inclusive Growth

- “Lack of employment for those with disabilities and additional needs (Huge market). Businesses frightened of the unknown - training?”
- “People being left behind. What is the disruptive patterns for those people. Cash injection close to places with social deprivation. Transportation and infrastructure, low cost, speed.”

Collaboration

- “Chambers of Cumbria - coordinate more and work together.”

Marketing / Offer

- “Eden needs to develop a better USP (not just a supermarket town).”
- “Need more enticing culture / activities.”
- “Be a bit more welcoming to businesses moving to Cumbria.”
- “I wholeheartedly support any cross-Cumbria marketing campaigns about the attractiveness of Cumbria (not districts competing with each other) to move to for a career.”

Housing

- “Self-build land.”
- “Lack of small building plots.”
- “Housing for vulnerable people.”

What priorities would you like to see adopted by Eden District Council?

Young People / Ageing Population

- “Promote involvement with strategy to 20-40 year olds.”
- “Catching young people at right time.”

Connectivity

- “Connectivity - especially internet.”

Skills / Training / Education

- “Apprenticeships and degree level apprenticeships based in area.”
- “Encourage young people and people with skills to want to live here. Pay & well paid jobs required. Is it cheaper to live here?”
- “Encourage more skills based learning.”

Policy / Processes

- “Plans to meet the needs of those who want to move to the area.”
- “Consultation.”
- “Less committees and those there are should work more together.”
- “Be clear of the objectives of each committee.”
- “Talk to people on the ground - creators of jobs.”
- “Need to engage direct with businesses.”

Collaboration

- “For issues within Penrith please speak to Penrith Town Council who have already collected a lot of evidence over 3 public consultations.”
- “I need to know exactly what is planned to ensure the needs and views of local people are fed in. Kept up to date and be involved in decision making.”
- “Needs better connected - silos - looking at the plans.”
- “Create employment / talk to the people who are actually investing and creating - and the difficulties in actually delivering.”

Town Centre Issues

- “Cheap parking essential for long-term commuters.”
- “Public toilets basic facility - condition, signposted.”
- Reduce traffic flow through middle of town with a multi-storey car park.
- “Pedestrian-friendly not necessarily pedestrianised.”
- “Contactless payment car parks etc, use technology more. App for parking/toilet payment / etc.”

Marketing

- “Cumbria promotion.”
- “Marketing strategy to those we need in the area.”
- “Collective promotion of "place" as place to live, work and play.”
- “Highlighting depth and diversity of our great businesses and clients.”
- “Change perception of nothing much happens.”
- “Encourage business to relocate to here.”
- “Continued push for Penrith to be a great place to live and work.”
- “Helping attract skilled people to the area.”
- “Promotion of the need for highly skilled individuals, as there seems to be a real lack of those here.”

Housing

- “Affordable housing and house types need consideration.”

Growth

- “Growth but with what we have more than environmentally damaging.”
- “Land / jobs.”
- “What works for us? Working with what we have? Helping businesses grow.”
- “Businesses and economy has to be a priority in general as they enable everything else to happen.”

Barriers to Growth

Describe the barriers to growth your business faces right now.

Marketing

- “People do want to go to cities, how do we pull them back?”
- “Incentivise businesses/companies to come in.”
- “People - perception of the area.”
- “Skilled employees - how do we attract them to the area?”
- “Area - Eden needs much more promotional (marketing) activity to ourselves and the rest of the UK.”
- “We could take on apprentices but would have to be able to drive...”
- “Skills & development doesn't affect us, we can employ people from rural areas as we work out in those area - 18+ yrs age group.”

Housing

- “New builds with help to buy drags young people to these areas, so village with no 'help to buy' lose young folk.”
- “Expense of land rising cost of houses in honey pots.”
- “Housing.”
- “Affordable housing in the area I work.”
- “Housing (affordable) for young people - we are based in Penrith, staff live in Carlisle as Penrith too expensive - this puts staff under threat from Carlisle businesses.”

Costs / Finance / Funding

- “Need funding for marketing and equipment.”
- “Funding for culture always difficult and time consuming to achieve - need long term commitment.”
- “Business rates and rents (work from home).”
- “Pressures on fees (remote firms - instruct via web).”

Policy / Processes

- “Law.”
- “Slow planning approval process. How can this be improved? Co-working with EDC to the benefit of both parties.”

Career Progression / Job Prospects

- “More scope to change jobs in bigger cities.”
- “Less career progression here than bigger cities.”
- “Where do you get experience?”

Business Growth Space

- “Difficulties w Industrial properties, offices, etc.”
- “Business growth space.”
- “Self-employed, work from home.”

Miscellaneous

- “Recycling - no facilities for composting 'compostable' packaging.”
- “Lots of businesses in area are niche.”
- “I have tried expanding my business over the last few years, and took on up to 5 people. But it wasn't sustainable, so I have gone back to a one-man-band. The aim now is to stay profitable in this model. The barriers are always funding potential clients willing to spend (invest) and fuelling these locally (Cumbria)/ Virtually all my clients are out of county.”
- “Supporting Ambition.”
- “Consultants - range of skills / prepared to step out of Cumbria -> clients in London.”
- “Pace! Other areas work at faster pace.”



My Business Growth

Describe your business' growth ambitions.

Growth

- “Work with more clients.”
- “Investigating costs of expansion.”
- “Growth.”

Diversification

- Developing an additional arm to the business.
- Create workshops for businesses and potential customers.
- Managing unused / limited use properties.

Business Growth Space

- “Look at expanding existing site or finding new sites.”

Recruitment

- To recruit mid-level specialists and support staff in next 2 years.
- “We are a new business and want to grow our business to sustainable team of 4-6 people with a network of outsourcing.”

Marketing

- “Getting ourselves noticed as a local available company.”
- “We need to advertise to create more opportunities, which means we could recruit. Skills isn't an issue as we train on job, we need the work first, employees will be available.”

Quality

- “To develop a high-quality business, offering value for money.”

Business Support

Where might business support / skills development be valuable to you?

Mentoring

- “Mentorship - how to grow my business.”
- “Mentoring from similar businesses.”

Finance

- “Finance for growth / expansion.”
- “Finances - difficult to actually get the money.”

Policies

- “Keep a charity on the straight, keeping in line with business needs - TUPE, corporate taxes, etc.”

Marketing

- “I don't think we need business support other than reaching out to future customers.”

Growth

- “To help develop and expand trading areas to aid sustainability.”
- “Business development / planning.”
- “How to grow - structures/change, bits of high level stuff but doesn't often translate.”

General Comments

- “A lot out there - knowing where to find it is important.”
- “As an HR Consultant, I am happy to support the provision of skills development.”
- “High level training rather than low level stuff of The Edge, etc.”

The insights above will be fed into the Lancaster University and University of Cumbria business support programmes. Businesses who have provided their contact details for this will be contacted directly.

Any Questions for Eden District Council?

Skills / Apprenticeships / Jobs

How does funding work for apprenticeships?

How expensive is the apprenticeship route?

Lack of youth retention - but encouraging older people to work longer = less jobs for younger people.

Infrastructure

Need plans for J40 as well as A66 upgrade.

Needs road to J41 from Gillwilly to open up possible development land.

Infrastructure needs given serious priority before grown.

Development

Any steps to create land for private development?

Housing / Masterplan

Affordable housing especially in villages.

What will happen to strategic masterplan to ensure local involvement + the needs of local people and businesses?

The right housing in the right location.

Local, affordable housing. Perception that Eden is expensive.

Attitudes

Carlisle is more proactive than Penrith (Eden) and South Lakeland.

Endemic - people issues - lack of innovation / drive / ambition.

Is it the members/influences in power that is effecting the directions, decisions and messages in the area or leaving the area?

Communications / Marketing

Is there opportunity to train those sharing the messages (from local businesses or people actually living here)?



Responses from Eden District Council

How does funding work for apprenticeships?

Funding for apprenticeships depends on the size of business you run.

There is significant support from the government to help pay for apprenticeship training and assessment. The amount you get depends on whether you pay the **apprenticeship levy** or not.

Levy paying employers - You will pay the apprenticeship levy if you're an employer with a pay bill more than £3 million each year. For more information about taking on an apprentice whilst paying the levy, visit [the Government website here](#).

Non-levy employers - If you are an employer which doesn't pay the apprenticeship levy, you pay 5% towards the cost of training your apprentice and the government will pay the rest, up to the [funding band maximum](#).

There is often bonuses for businesses which employ fewer than 50 people, [subject to certain criteria](#). This could mean your apprentice can be trained at no cost to your business, or you could receive a £1000 bonus.

More information about how funding works for apprenticeships, including example costs, can be found at: <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employer/how-much-is-it-going-to-cost>

How expensive is the apprenticeship route?

Employing an apprentice can be very affordable for businesses. As a non-levy payer, the government covers at least 95% of the cost of training an apprentice, and the minimum wage for apprentices is from £3.90 per hour. If you are a levy payer, you can often train apprentices at no extra cost to your business (other than the levy payment).

Apprentices' wages costs can also be partially subsidised by the Council, which is offering support in the form of the [Eden Apprenticeship Scheme](#). More information can be found on the [Invest in Eden website here](#).

More information on taking on an apprentice, and the costs involved, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/employing-an-apprentice-technical-guide-for-employers>.



Responses from Eden District Council

Any steps to create land for private development?

Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership and the Local Authorities have commissioned a review of employment land throughout Cumbria, including Eden. This will set out what is currently available for development and analyse demand for new employment land.

This study is anticipated to be completed by October 2019. It is intended that the Council would use this information to feed into an early review of the local plan to look at more ambitious employment land allocations for the future.

What will happen to strategic masterplan to ensure local involvement + the needs of local people and businesses?

The data from the Penrith Masterplan engagement process has been analysed by Lancaster University and compiled into a report. This report will be shared publically and will be presented to the newly elected Councillors with options for taking the Masterplan forward.

The aim of the Masterplan is to meet the needs of local people and businesses in Penrith and the wider Eden District in the future.

Is it the members/influences in power that is effecting the directions, decisions and messages in the area or leaving the area?

Eden District Council's members will be responsible for agreeing the Council Plan which sets out the Council's direction for the next four years. Members are also responsible for making key Council decisions.

In terms of messages in the area and leaving the area, this work is undertaken using a communications plan to ensure regular and consistent messages out from the Council, to reach all key audiences, from residents to businesses and visitors.

Is there opportunity to train those sharing the messages (from local businesses or people actually living here)?

Marketing is a theme which has emerged throughout many of the discussions at the event, particularly the need to have a joined up marketing strategy for Cumbria as a place to live, work and do business. This need has already been recognised by Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership who have coordinated a group of public and private sector individuals to progress this work. It will be really important for local businesses and residents to help share the messages from this strategy once it is finalised.



Want to be the first to hear about Eden District Council's initiatives for business?

Sign up to our mailing list [here](#).

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Learn more about how Lancaster University can support your business.

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Find out more about how Penrith Chamber of Trade & Commerce can help your organisation.

Visit

penrithchamberoftrade.org.uk

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