Supporting Success...
Engaging, responsive and accessible...
...the one stop shop for business support in Cumbria
Foreword

Welcome to this review from Cumbria Business Growth Hub, keeping you up to date with how we’re helping businesses throughout Cumbria seize opportunities and make the most of their potential.

Addressing an emerging gap, the Growth Hub was set up by Cumbria Chamber of Commerce in 2012 as a one-stop-shop for business support, offering a wealth of information and resources, and bringing together in one place the range of support available locally and nationally. Crucially it also directly delivers a valuable range of practical support to businesses.

Since then, we’ve worked directly with more than 6,800 businesses, with around 2,000 benefiting from intensive assistance. This has already created or safeguarded 6,284 jobs and generated an estimated £280m GVA.

Our range of activities includes reviews and diagnostics, action planning, 1-2-1 advice, networks, workshops, training, events, subsidies, online tools and resources, supply chain, start-up support, international trade and specialist programmes such as Cumbria Forum development programme – as well as linkage into other initiatives. Much is free or subsidised, the rest is offered on a commercial basis.

As a social enterprise, any profits generated by the Chamber are invested in supporting the growth and competitiveness of Cumbrian businesses – rather than being paid out to shareholders. So we’re in this for the long haul. We first set up the Growth Hub when there was no public funding available and have developed it drawing on a range of public and private sources to maximize the benefits to Cumbria. Whatever is, or isn’t, available in the future we’ll be sure to find ways to continue delivering!

You can find out more on the following pages.

www.cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk

Over the last 5 years Cumbria Business Growth Hub has worked directly with more than 6,800 businesses, with around 2,000 receiving intensive assistance. This has already created or safeguarded 6,284 jobs and generated an estimated £280m GVA.
Enabling success...

Core Team Skills

With our ability to deliver support and services unmatched by any other organisation, the Growth Hub has grown into a strong, highly focused and successful operation, universally recognised as a key enabler for business growth in Cumbria.
A major contributor to this success is the quality of our **team of skilled professionals**, with considerable commercial and business support knowledge and experience, providing the expertise to win high value contracts, manage complex financial packages and deliver unique solutions to the business community.

This requires a tremendous mix of skills and expertise such as data management and security, CRM development, project implementation and management, bid writing, marketing and communications, quality management, supply chain development and management, financial management, digital communications and service delivery and more. And we’re committed to ongoing continuing professional development, keeping those skills current in a fast changing environment.

With a bid success rate of 85%, in the past five years alone we’ve been responsible for delivering £35 million of projects specifically designed to support business development and growth, while ensuring best value to businesses and funders. This has created an environment that allows Cumbrian businesses to meet the commercial challenges they face to compete successfully in the global marketplace.

“Delivering at this level requires skills and expertise that’s challenging to put together – a mix of commercial nous and innovation with the ability to put together and run complex projects incorporating public funding.”

- Rob Johnston MBE FCIM, Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

With a bid success rate of 85%, in the past five years alone we’ve been responsible for delivering £35 million of projects.
Our Business Start-Up Support Scheme (BSUS) is a £1.4 million project that encourages enterprise and helps new businesses get off the ground, supporting them in their pre-start phase and challenging early years of trading.

It’s open to anyone thinking of starting a business and SME businesses less than 3 years old.

Enterprise events and outreach in local communities encourage more people to think about starting in business – including young people in schools and colleges.

The package of free support includes a three-day course covering the basics of starting a business, plus a range of full and half day workshops, which run throughout the county.

Through 1-2-1 sessions with one or more of our experienced business advisers clients can review and develop their business idea, put together or update their business plan and get practical advice on a range of topics. Advisers also link them into sources of finance and wider support.
The BSUS scheme has helped 1,200 individuals looking to start a business. More than 540 have started so far, with more in the pipeline. It has also assisted 340 young businesses and generated £80m GVA for Cumbria.

Alongside this our partner, the University of Cumbria, works with its students and graduates to encourage entrepreneurship and help them start in business. The package of free support includes a three-day course covering the basics of starting a business, plus a range of full and half day workshops, which run throughout the county.

All BSUS start-ups enjoy a year’s free membership of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, helping link them into Cumbria’s business community. The scheme is part funded by Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, the University of Cumbria, district councils and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Case Study: I Do Cumbria Wedding Hire

I Do Cumbria Wedding Hire provide accessories for the perfect wedding, from chair covers and sashes to bunting, birdcages, centre pieces and wishing trees.

Owner Jane Donaldson says:

“The idea for a ‘one stop shop’ came after my daughter got married. We did research and started looking at what help was available for start-ups, and I got in touch with the Growth Hub and went on BSUS.

At the first meeting with my adviser, Justine Douglas, we started to make a plan about how the business could grow and what steps I needed to take. We began to look at marketing material and Justine identified that was an area where I needed help, so she referred me to a specialist.

We have 30 weddings this year and we’ve got reservations as far ahead as 2019. We’re now looking to evolve, adding a wedding planning service and co-ordinating on the day.

The Growth Hub has been extremely helpful. It would have taken longer to get where I am without Justine’s help. She’s given me confidence.”

“- Jane Donaldson, I Do Cumbria Wedding Hire
Thinking big...

Cumbria Growth Fund has supported 44 businesses with £3.8m of grant funding, helping to create or safeguard 539 jobs and leverage £24m of private sector investment.

Cumbria Growth Fund

Cumbria Growth Fund does what it says on the tin. It helps businesses grow.

The fund was set up in summer 2015 after Cumbria Chamber of Commerce took part in a national competitive process to secure £4 million from the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy through the Regional Growth Fund (RGF).

Manufacturing businesses – and those in services to manufacturing – have been able to apply for grants of between £10,000 and £1 million to support growth and competitiveness, and access wrap around support to help maximise the benefits of their investment.

This has allowed many more businesses to benefit from the Regional Growth Fund than would otherwise been the case as a £1 million minimum grant threshold for direct applications meant that many projects were simply not big enough to qualify.

The demand for the scheme meant that the funding could have been allocated several times over and demonstrates how this and similar schemes can have a real impact.
One of Carlisle’s oldest businesses has a bright future thanks to a grant obtained through Cumbria Business Growth Hub.

The prospects for Mitchell Dryers appeared bleak when administrators were called in and made 27 of the 32-strong workforce redundant.

The firm in Denton Holme, trading since 1859, made industrial dryers. The administrators blamed a historic pension deficit for its difficulties, compounded by a lack of orders, but they believed in the business and began the search for a buyer.

Up stepped CAD Works, based at Kingmoor Park, which bought Mitchell’s intellectual property rights and some assets, including the test centre and test centre equipment. A grant through Cumbria Growth Fund enabled them to invest £1.2 million in building new premises to accommodate the enlarged business.

Company Secretary John Frankland says:

“The grant is crucial to the whole project. The funds are being used on the first stage to build workshops, followed by second stage offices to accommodate the increase in staffing levels.”

CAD Works, with 15 full time staff, has taken on 10 former Mitchell Dryers’ employees and plans to recruit another 11.

“The Cumbria Growth Fund grant is crucial to the whole project and will underpin our redevelopment plans.” - John Frankland, CAD Works
For many, the idea of running their own business can seem an impossible dream. We’re working to help them make it happen.

The New Enterprise Allowance scheme (NEA) is a national Department for Work & Pensions initiative aimed at moving off benefits by helping jobseekers become their own boss and self-employed people on Universal Credits increase their income.

Cumbria Chamber delivers NEA as the prime contractor for Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside, having beaten significant national players in a tough competitive tendering exercise. We recently won the contract again for a third time!

Ensuring local knowledge and effective linkage into business communities, our supply chain for this contract includes Blue Orchid, East Lancashire Chamber, North & Western Lancashire Chamber and St Helens Chamber.

LinkUp: StartUp workshops enable people on Jobseeker’s Allowance and certain other benefits to explore whether self-employment is for them. If they want to take things forward they can then ask their Jobcentre adviser to refer them onto the scheme. To help them get started they can access 1-2-1 support from a business mentor to help develop their business plan and get started, plus business workshops, financial support for six months and the opportunity to apply for a StartUp Loan of up to £25,000. Follow on support is also available once they start trading.

To help them earn more, the NEA scheme now also offers 1-2-1 advice and workshops to people who are already trading but receive Universal Credit because their income from self-employment is low.

Lesley Robinson, our Start-Up and Enterprise Manager, says “Some people are keen to start up to build on a key skill or a hobby they’re passionate about. For
others it’s about gaining a feeling of control over their future. And for some, self-employment can be a more workable option than being an employee – the flexibility that self-employment brings can suit those with caring commitments, health issues or other constraints."

Case Study: Michael Bonney

Michael Bonney was paralysed from the neck down when he came off his bike while participating in the Eden Valley Epic in 2013.

Now confined to a wheelchair, breathing with the aid of a ventilator, he is by any standards severely disabled. That hasn’t stopped Michael, of Eamont Bridge near Penrith, from starting his own business. His new venture, Michael Bonney Consulting, counts a bike parts distributor in Cambridge and a cycling events company in Fort William among its clients.

“The reality is I can’t do a nine-to-five job but I can manage three or four hours a day. I’d like to work more but you have to accept the limitations of a broken body.” When he started the business two years ago, Michael took advantage of the New Enterprise Allowance scheme.

He says:

“The money enabled us to get me to trade shows. The best way I can demonstrate to potential clients what I can do for them is to meet face to face.

I have to have a hospital bed in my hotel room and two support workers to look after me. So I have to cover their costs too. My life now is mental stimulation. Everything is about what you’re thinking. I enjoy lying in bed at night trying to solve a problem.”

Across the region, New Enterprise Allowance has supported 8,500 individuals looking to start a business, with 5,500 created so far.

“The allowance gives me an income so I don’t have to rely on unemployment benefits.”

- Michael Bonney, Michael Bonney Consulting
With Growth Hub support, more and more businesses are looking to export for the first time or to increase their existing international sales.

Cumbria Business Growth Hub helps both new and existing exporters through our role in the North West Department for International Trade (DIT) support contract and more. Events and online content offer inspiration and information, including stories from successful exporters and videos and workshops on topics such as starting exporting, export finance and protecting IP.

We link businesses into DIT support such as the First Steps to Export programme and 1-2-1 support from advisers to help them get exporting or target new markets and facilitate access to major buyers, governments and supply chains overseas and trade missions. We can signpost businesses to support for insurance policies, bonds, credit and working capital through UK Export Finance.

The Growth Hub also refers businesses to Cumbria Chamber’s export documentation services – ensuring exporters have the correct paperwork every time, so avoiding lengthy delays and saving money. It also links them into export-related workshops offered by Chamber Business Solutions on topics like Export Documentation and Processing, e-Exporting, plus country-specific events such as a Business Opportunities in Latin America Roundtable, and Access to India.

In the last five years alone we’ve helped more than 550 businesses exploit international trade opportunities – including 200 new exporters.
Case Study:
Kendal Nutricare

With help from the Growth Hub Kendal Nutricare has become a major exporter to China.

Its lead product is Kendamil, the only British-made infant formula. Unlike competitors, it incorporates full-cream natural nutrients. Food scientists say a cow’s-milk formula better mimics human breast milk and helps infants to absorb calcium and other essential fatty acids. Ross McMahon founded the business when he bought the Heinz baby food factory in Kendal in 2015, saving the jobs of 88 staff there.

Ross worked with the Growth Hub from the outset to get Kendal Nutricare started and to enable the company recover from the 2015 floods. He also worked with us to devise a 3-year growth plan. This identified key export markets, notably China. He was able to secure a £365,000 Cumbria Growth Fund grant to gear-up for expansion and begin Kendal Nutricare’s export journey. With DIT support the company was able to become established in the Chinese market and achieve vital registration with CNCA, China’s national accreditation board.

In 2016, the business signed a £6m deal to sell to China. Kendamil is now stocked in more than 8,000 mother and baby stores there, making Kendal Nutricare one of Britain’s most successful exporters to China. It has since entered markets in Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East.

A new Kendamil Organic formula has recently been launched and, with a kosher Kendamil Mehadrin on sale in specialist Jewish grocery stores in the US and Canada, Kendal Nutricare’s export strategy remains on target.

“The Growth Hub encouraged us to think global and was always available to help explain the benefits.”

- Ross McMahon, Kendal Nutricare
Opening doors...

Supply Chain Gateway

SMEs in particular often struggle to gain entry to the supply chains of larger organisations, and as a result miss out on key opportunities to develop and grow. To help overcome the challenges the Growth Hub developed the Supply Chain Gateway.

The Supply Chain Gateway helps SMEs understand what procurers in large organisations expect from suppliers and, crucially, how to meet their procurement criteria, enabling them to land lucrative contracts. It also helps large organisations recognise how SME suppliers can contribute to their success.

It offers a growing range of sector and organisation specific information, online tools and resources to help Cumbrian businesses, mainly SMEs, develop their capabilities and engage more effectively in supply chains.

Resources include online forums where businesses can swap tips and exchange experiences, a business directory, interactive tools and an events diary. SMEs get access to professional advisers, sources of funding, networking opportunities, training courses and workshops. We also offer a subsidy scheme which can be used to help gain vital accreditations or access other consultancy. Much of this support is free of charge to the user.
A key strength is the role played by large procurers in Cumbria such as Innovia Films, BAE Systems, Pirelli, Booths, the Box Encapsulation Plant (BEP) project at Sellafield, and Morgan Sindall Construction & Infrastructure.

Modules explain in simple terms what businesses need to do to become suppliers to these organisations, including short video presentations from each of the participating procurers. There are also lists of tender opportunities.

The Growth Hub also highlights and links people with other available support – such as through the Cumbria Manufacturing Service and Fit for Nuclear.

Our role is to help businesses get more opportunities from supply chain activities, whatever sector they are in.”

- Eva Foran, Supply Chain Development Manager, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

Rob Johnston, Chief Executive of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, says:

“When people in Cumbria talk about ‘supply chain’ they often think of the nuclear industry or BAE Systems, but the techniques and processes needed to get into their supply chains can be applied to open doors in other sectors.

Procurement isn’t all about price – it’s also about whether your business meets the criteria such as having the right systems, processes and accreditations. We can help businesses find out what those criteria are and then assist them to meet them.

Essentially, what we’re doing through the Growth Hub is helping businesses to do more business with other businesses.”

Our supply chain work is funded by the European Regional Development Fund, Allerdale Borough Council/Sellafield’s Social Impact Investment Fund, Barrow Borough Council/Coastal Communities Fund, Carlisle City Council, Eden District Council, South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership.
Businesses have recognised its worth and embraced it. The portal now has an impressive 120,000 unique users.

Resource rich...

Growth Hub Portal

To date 120,000 unique users are benefiting from the Growth Hub’s interactive web portal, a doorway to a huge range of information and business support.

The Knowledge Centre offers a great range of information on starting up, marketing, sales, productivity, product development, exporting, acquisitions, finance, sustainability, employing staff and more. Written content and downloads are supplemented by tools, video content and online seminars and training.

Specialist sections include the Supply Chain Gateway, Business Start-Up and Exporting, plus a Skills section which provides information on apprenticeships and how to upskill your workforce, including access to free training.

There are listings of the range of support and funding available – delivered directly by the Growth Hub and by others – highlighting what it offers and how to access it.

www.cumbriagrowthhub.co.uk
Online forums offer opportunities to interact and exchange ideas. And anyone offering business events can promote them through the events calendar, which lists workshops, seminars and networking events.

Hundreds of business owners have already benefited from training online webinars. The pilot alone delivered 1,000 hours of training over four evenings on topics such as Facebook and Twitter for business, email marketing and Wordpress.

Paul Teague, the Chamber’s Digital Development Manager says “With webinars, we cut through all the geographical problems Cumbrian businesses encounter, and the technology enables us to deliver great quality training at a time and place of attendees’ choosing.”

“Webinars are a really good way of delivering training in a county like Cumbria, where people often have to travel a long way to get to workshops and seminars.”

-Karen Morley-Chesworth, Chesworth Communications
Learning from the best...

Cumbria Forum

Bringing the best out of the people running businesses in Cumbria is key to helping those businesses flourish and grow. That’s why Growth Hub partner Lancaster University Management School (LUMS) is running Cumbria Forum to enhance the capabilities of our SMEs.

This is a six-month programme aimed at owner-managers, MDs, and senior decision makers from ERDF eligible SMEs. As it’s fully funded by the University and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) there’s no cost to participating businesses.

The idea is to help them develop strategic thought processes and provide the skills and tools they need to evolve their business model. Delegates are taken out of their comfort zone and encouraged to think about their business differently and reflectively, perhaps for the first time.

Participants benefit from master classes from world-class speakers, business workshops, and an “access all areas” company visit, and can interact with each other constantly through an online forum.

Speakers so far have included Jonathan Warburton, Edwin Booth, Lloyd Grossman, John Timpson, Mark Adlestone (Beaverbrooks) and Peter Cowgill (JD Sports).

There’s also an opportunity for participants to have a group of MBA or undergraduate students work on a specific area of their business.

Programme Manager Helen Wilkinson says: “This is a fantastic opportunity for growth-orientated small and mid-sized companies in Cumbria. We have significant experience in delivering business growth through a combination of challenge, business tools, speakers, peer groups and world class university support which grow skills and confidence in equal measure.”

Funded by:

Lancaster University Management School

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

“This is a fantastic opportunity for growth-oriented small and medium-sized companies in Cumbria.”

- Helen Wilkinson, Programme Manager, Lancaster University Management School
Case Study: Chimney Sheep

Chimney Sheep makes draught excluders for fireplaces from Cumbrian Herdwick wool. Started in 2012 by Sally Phillips, an ecologist, this Maryport business has sold more than 40,000 so far.

She came up with the concept after she moved into a Victorian terraced house and realised that heat was escaping up its chimneys.

Sally, who completed the Cumbria Forum programme in January 2017, says:

“I felt that I needed some structure and ideas of how to grow the business. Cumbria Forum was just what I was looking for.”

- Sally Phillips, Chimney Sheep

Cumbria Forum is designed to help business owners develop strategic thought processes and provide the skills and tools they need to evolve their business model.

“The business had grown organically but I felt that I needed some structure and ideas of how to grow it in a more organised way. Cumbria Forum was just what I was looking for.

I learned that there isn’t a magic bullet or formula. It’s about developing as a business person, having a clear understanding of your business, a clear strategy, and confidence in your own skills as a manager. A lot of the things they were talking about I was doing, and that was good for my confidence because I don’t have a business background.

Talking to other business owners was useful, discussing issues we had in common. When you work in isolation you don’t get an opportunity to do that.”

Sally praises a master class delivered by food entrepreneur Helen Colley and was enthused by a visit to Playdale, the playground equipment manufacturer which has become a hugely successful exporter.

“Helen was inspirational in the way that she developed her business in a phenomenal way. And I learned a lot from Playdale. I’d definitely recommend Cumbria Forum to other businesses.”
The Growth Hub is working with local authorities across Cumbria to boost economic activity in their areas.

Each local authority has the opportunity to influence how the Growth Hub targets the support they provide, while also ensuring support is available to eligible businesses more widely.

In Barrow funding comes from the Coastal Communities Fund, under the auspices of the Furness Economic Development Forum, with a particular focus on supply chain.

Allerdale is drawing on funding from Sellafield Ltd, through their Social Impact Investment Fund, to address inequalities and support local growth and competitiveness, entrepreneurship and diversification.

In Eden the focus is on helping to support the development more high-value, higher wage jobs and backing the food sector, supporting its Food Enterprise Zone.

South Lakeland is keen to support the hospitality sector and agriculture, as well as its vibrant manufacturing sector.

Carlisle’s focus includes working to reap the benefits flowing from the award of Enterprise Zone status to Kingmoor Park last year.

Some funding is matched into the ERDF BSUS and Growth Hub projects, effectively doubling the impact local authorities can achieve by working directly with Cumbria Chamber of Commerce. Most have set aside other funding to support businesses in sectors not eligible for ERDF support - such as the nuclear supply chain, hospitality, agriculture and retail.
Case Study: Nixor Solutions

Barrow based Nixor Solutions is developing a software and statistical analysis package that can be used by the nuclear, defence and engineering sectors, among others.

It aims to cut the time projects take to complete by taking account of issues such as scheduling, recording, analysing and making predictions on tasks.

Support through Barrow Borough Council contributed towards Growth Hub Adviser Alan Smithson’s help in setting up Nixor and applying for a grant from Innovus, which supports Cumbrian SMEs looking to commercialise innovative technologies.

Director David Herington says:

“Alan’s help was invaluable. He helped us draw up a business and marketing plan, and was a sounding board for our ideas. We put together what we thought was a great presentation for the funding pitch, which is a bit like the TV programme ‘Dragons Den’.

We did a dry run with Alan and he came up with some great refinements, which I think were decisive in us being awarded the funding.

The Growth Hub continues to work with us to ensure we can build a profitable and sustainable business.”

“The support given to us by the Growth Hub and the Innovus grant enabled us to take on our first employee to work on software development. It also opened doors for us within Sellafield Ltd.”

- David Herrington, Nixor Solutions
When the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) decided to launch the Growth Hub model – originally developed by Cumbria – nationally, they provided seed corn funding for three years through local enterprise partnerships.

As Cumbria’s Growth Hub was already well-established, it was decided that the funding available through Cumbria LEP should be channelled into providing targeted support for Cumbrian businesses.

With so much support focussed on ERDF eligible sectors the decision was made to help those businesses excluded from this, enabling support to some key sectors for Cumbria – the visitor economy, agriculture and nuclear – and others.

The emphasis this year is on 1-2-1 adviser support to SMEs in ERDF excluded sectors, and as part of this supporting scale ups – defined as businesses with at least five employees and a turnover of £250,000 or more in the last financial year - with an aspiration to grow turnover or profit by a minimum of 50% over a three-year period.
Case Study: Cumberland Windows

Cumberland Windows, in Egremont, is a family firm founded by Dominic Farrer in 1989. It supplies windows, doors and conservatories.

Two years ago Dominic and his son Michael sat down to draw up a strategy to grow the business.

Michael said: "We were looking at ways to modernise and grow organically, without taking on too much risk. Our plan was to target housing developers and local builders. Previously, most customers had been private households."

Through the Growth Hub, he found that he was eligible for 1-2-1 advice, funded by Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership.

As part of this adviser Adrian Luckham prompted a change of strategy. Rather than target builders, he identified that the business should improve its marketing, prioritising its web site.

The change of tack meant the business was eligible for funding through the Growth Hub’s Subsidy Scheme which enabled Cumberland Windows to develop a new website. It’s now concentrating on search engine optimisation and a social media campaign to drive web traffic.

Michael says:

“Orders were coming almost entirely through word-of-mouth recommendation. The website was generating only 5% of sales.

This has been a step change for the business. We are building a brand. The website showcases our expertise, experience and reputation, and allows us to demonstrate to customers that we are knowledgeable about our products, energy efficiency and security.”

- Dominic Farrer, Cumberland Windows
Exhibitions, Networking and Advice

Cumbria is a huge county, so it isn’t always easy for businesses to meet each other and build relationships. Part of our role is to help that happen.

Our GrowthTwenty events bring thousands of business people together, providing the opportunity to meet and sell to potential customers, source high quality suppliers, and explore ideas.

They run in rotation for a full day at venues across the county, offering exhibition space, networking and a varied programme of business workshops lead by experts in their field. Topics range from cost management and dispelling HR myths to developing talented leaders, building corporate identity, and how to grow your business.

We started GrowthTwenty with support from the European Regional Development Fund but the initiative has proved so successful that the events now run commercially without subsidy. All costs are covered by sponsorship plus fees from exhibitors.

“GrowthTwenty exhibitions are invaluable in helping to raise our profile. Enquiries have enabled us to establish relationships and secure orders as a direct result of contacts we’ve made at the events.”

- Stuart Edgar, Carlisle Business Supplies

Profile raising...
That’s a model the Growth Hub follows elsewhere. Where possible, we move activities away from dependency on funding into the commercial arena. We’re keen that businesses value and pay for the support they receive – and this in turn benefits commercial providers.

So, for example, much of the training and networking activity fully funded through earlier schemes such as Defra’s Rural Growth Network pilot has now moved to a commercial footing. Another success story is the Growth Hub’s Family Business Network, now thriving without public funding and being delivered on our behalf by Sue Howorth through The Family Business Network Ltd.

A core element of the offer is InSight events where family businesses share insights and talk candidly about family business challenges. They’re a great opportunity to network outside the family business environment. InSight events to date have included Lakeland, Warburtons, Holker Group, McLures and SN Group.

“Family business is absolutely vital to the health of the Cumbrian economy. In setting up the Family Business Network our aim was to nurture and develop family businesses, and help them realise their potential.”

- Suzanne Caldwell FCIM, Deputy Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

“The workshop sessions at these events has shown me how Growth Hub support could really help my business grow.”

- Nicola Jackson, Arista Associates
The award of £8.5 million last year to support workforce development and apprenticeship take up in Cumbria was great news, but engaging enough businesses was always going to be challenging, particularly given the tight timescale.

This European Social Fund (ESF) and Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) backed funding scheme is a consortium made up of the Cumbrian FE Colleges, the University of Cumbria and number of training providers, plus other strategic partners, including Cumbria Chamber of Commerce. The project is led by Carlisle College.

With our communications expertise and proven track record of successful business engagement, plus a database of 16,000 active business contacts, it was agreed that the Growth Hub was ideally placed to lead on business engagement, as part of this implementing a major awareness raising campaign to promote the opportunities and benefits to Cumbrian employers and engage them in the support available.

The Growth Hub was also the obvious choice to undertake independent Training Needs Analyses with businesses and provide an impartial brokerage service. A key benefit of the Growth Hub’s involvement is our ability to ensure training is linked into wider growth plans and that businesses benefit from the full range of business support available to them, whoever delivers it.

Rob Johnston, Chief Executive of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, says “Over the course of the project we’ll be delivering 2,800 business engagements and, with partners, approaching 2,700 Training Needs Analyses to businesses throughout Cumbria in every sector. This will not only help those businesses get the training they need to grow, it will also provide the evidence base to help us shape the skills delivery service of the future.”

Because the Growth Hub is underpinned by the Chamber, it is the organisation with the credibility and capability to get the level of business engagement that projects like these need to deliver their objectives.”

- Zoe Makepeace, Assistant Director Carlisle College and Project Manager for The Edge
Case Study:

The coordinated and engaging promotional campaign was structured to take full advantage of popular media channels to maximise impact. It included TV and Radio advertising, a high profile B2B magazine, a dedicated website and focused social media advertising and engagement activities, supported by business development activity on the ground.

The central campaign slogan, Profiting through Skills, was adopted to convey the core message to businesses in a distinct and unambiguous way – reflecting the straightforward tone of the campaign.

It was rolled-out during September, with business engagement activities, via the Profiting through Skills website, social media and advisers continuing through to the project’s completion in July 2018.

The success of this campaign demonstrates our capability to target and engage Cumbrian businesses effectively, drawing on our multimedia communications expertise, 16,000 opted in business contacts and ability to hit the inboxes of key players in businesses of all sizes and sectors throughout the county – and get those emails opened.

Delivered in partnership with The Edge

European Union
European Social Fund
Education & Skills Funding Agency
Professional expertise...

We have 60 experienced advisers, with between them 1,400 years of business experience, offering one-to-one support to businesses.

Growth Hub Advisers

One of the Growth Hub’s great strengths is our network of professional advisers, who sit at the very centre of our offer.

Between them our 60 advisers bring 1,400 years of business experience. They offer generic support and advice as well as specialisms such as ICT/digital, marketing, human resources and finance, plus a range of sector expertise. All are committed to ongoing professional development and keeping up to speed with the changing business landscape and support available.

Advisers can work with a business to review its individual needs and aspirations, develop a personalised action plan setting out a co-ordinated package of support and provide 1-2-1 advice specific to that business – as well as undertaking detailed training needs analyses.

As part of their advice they can help with grant or other funding applications, as well as link clients into other support, available from us or elsewhere. To facilitate these coordinated packages of support we work really closely with other providers and initiatives, such as Cumbria Manufacturing Service, the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund, Lancaster University, InnovateUK, the Intellectual Property Office and Fit for Nuclear.
“All our advisers are highly experienced and knowledgeable professionals, who complement each other with their areas of expertise. “

- Suzanne Caldwell FCIM, Deputy Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

Suzanne Caldwell, Deputy Chief Executive of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, says

“All our advisers are highly experienced and knowledgeable professionals, who complement each other with their areas of expertise. And they really understand the challenges of being in business.

Businesses really like the fact that they’re getting support from someone who is running a business themselves, and who has experienced what they are going through.

We aim to be there for as long as we’re needed. Often a business initially approaches us for advice on one particular issue. But once they get to know the adviser it becomes a long term relationship, supporting their developing challenges and opportunities.”
Funding success...

Subsidy Scheme

Many businesses would benefit from professional consultancy services to take forward their growth plans, but there are barriers. The cost can be prohibitive, and even where a business could afford the investment they can be reluctant to take the step if they’re not confident of the value it will deliver. Knowing that you’d be buying off someone who knows a lot more about what they’re selling than you do can also, understandably, put SMEs off.

That’s where our Subsidy Scheme comes in. It’s aimed at encouraging eligible SMEs to take advantage of the great commercial consultancy services available to them.

And, if they’d like us to, we can also help them specify a brief, select with confidence and manage the project.

Businesses can use the scheme to access marketing advice, web development, accountancy and finance, social media consultancy, quality assurance, public relations, vital accreditations such as ISO and SALSA, and more.

Not only does the scheme help and encourage SMEs to pay for consultancy support, directly benefiting their businesses, it also helps to build the market and capacity in the county for the future.

The Growth Hub scheme for established ERDF eligible businesses provides 40% subsidies of up to £2,000 while a BSUS scheme for business start-ups, offers up to £1,000.

Not only does the scheme help and encourage SMEs to pay for consultancy support, directly benefiting their businesses, it also helps to build the market and capacity in the county for the future.
Case Study: Cleanroom Supplies

Cleanroom Supplies specialise in supplying disposable and protective clothing to hospitals and laboratories. From humble beginnings, in a small self-store unit, the family-owned business now occupies a 1,000sq metre warehouse at Cumrew in the Eden Valley. It ships products daily all over the UK and beyond. Customers include the NHS and large multi-national companies.

Reputation only gets you so far, however, prompting Cleanroom Supplies to pursue a quality assurance accreditation. It opted for ISO9001, which covers a range of quality management principles including a strong customer focus, the motivation and implication of top management, the process approach and continual improvement.

It was a logical step because the business was already operating an internal quality system based on ISO9001.

It was clear that the business would need to buy-in expertise to guide it through accreditation. Alice explored what help might be available to defray the cost and found out about the Subsidy Scheme through the Growth Hub website.

She says:

“Applying was straightforward. The funding was to pay towards a consultant who would audit the quality management system and tell us what we need to do before we applied for accreditation.

Our adviser, Peter Fleming, guided us through the whole process and I’m delighted to say that we attained ISO9001 in June.”

“We wanted to get ISO accreditation because it gives customers more confidence in our business. That’s particularly important when you’re supplying the NHS.”

- Alice Hill, Cleanroom Supplies
Effective partnership working is essential to delivering an initiative of the scope and scale of Cumbria Business Growth Hub.

Cumbria Chamber of Commerce sits at the heart of this initiative, responsible for developing and taking forward the Growth Hub concept – including the web portal, branding, central marketing and coordination, as well as supply chain development and management. The Chamber is the lead partner and accountable body for the key ERDF supported Growth Hub and BSUS projects, and prime contractor for NEA, responsible for overall management and co-ordination, audit, the CRM and all related systems and processes.

To deliver these and other initiatives the Chamber works with a long list of other organisations, each contributing funding and expertise and drawing on the key strengths of each partner. By working together we make the Growth Hub the success it undoubtedly is.
So successful has the Growth Hub been that it was identified by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy as a national exemplar in the delivery of business support, effective implementation and management, and making the best use of service delivery systems and technologies.

Rob Johnston, Chief Executive of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce says “The Growth Hub was invented in Cumbria and now it has been rolled as the national model for business support. We’re very proud of that.”

That success is down in large part to the support of our partners and the rigour and attention to detail in the Chamber’s management of the initiative – and our commitment to ongoing innovation and improvement. For example, the Chamber holds the ISO27001 accreditation for information security management systems, the ISO9001 quality management accreditation, as well as British Chambers of Commerce accreditation. And we are the smallest business ever to be awarded the Merlin Standard, which assesses and promotes excellence in supply chain development and management. The team has worked hard to develop and implement the robust systems and processes needed to underpin these accreditations and our wider activities. And to continuously improve them.

“In our 2017 re-accreditation we scored a perfect 100% for supply chain design, with assessors reporting absolute excellence in the way we put together our supply chains and design contract delivery – working proactively and constructively with current and potential partners to design supply chains which deliver effectively for both funders and end users, including drawing on wider networks to enable a truly holistic offer.”

To ensure equality of opportunity for all – whether through the support and services we offer or as an employee or contractor – we implement equality and diversity plans across all our activities, and as part of this we’re accredited by DWP as a Disability Confident employer.

“Our team has a wealth of experience in project management, marketing and engagement to ensure we can deliver effective business support.”

- Suzanne Caldwell FCIM, Deputy Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

- Rob Johnston MBE FCIM, Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

“We manage and deliver the quality and value of these projects to the standards of data protection we set ourselves requires a huge investment in back office systems and cloud-based technologies across our entire supply chain.”

- Rob Johnston MBE FCIM, Chief Executive, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce
The funding that supports the Growth Hub comes from a continuously evolving range of sources, currently including:

- Cumbria Chamber of Commerce
- European Regional Development Fund
- Lancaster University Management School
- University of Cumbria
- Allerdale Borough Council/Sellafield Ltd’s Social Impact Investment Fund
- Barrow Borough Council/Furness Economic Development Forum/Coastal Communities Fund
- Carlisle City Council
- Eden District Council
- South Lakeland District Council
- Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership
- European Social Fund
- Employment & Skills Funding Agency
- Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy
- Regional Growth Fund
- Department for Work & Pensions
- Plus a range of commercial sponsors

The Growth Hub is receiving up to £2,528,767 and BSUS up to £1,112,686 of funding from the England European Regional Development Fund as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014-2020.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is the Managing Authority for the European Regional Development Fund in England.

Established by the European Union, the European Regional Development Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support innovation, businesses, create jobs and local community regenerations. For more information visit: www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding.

The New Enterprise Allowance project is funded by the Department of Work and Pensions and allocated as match funding against the European Social Fund as part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme in England.

The Department for Work and Pensions is the Managing Authority for the England European Social Fund programme. Established by the European Union, the European Social Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support skills development, employment and job creation, social inclusion and local community regenerations. For more information visit: www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding.

Cumbria Growth Fund is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy through the Regional Growth Fund.

The Coastal Communities Fund is funded by the Government with income from the Crown Estates marine assets; it is delivered by the Big Lottery Fund on behalf of UK Government.

Acknowledging our partners

The Employees Support in Skills project is receiving up to £8.5 million funding from the European Social Fund as part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme in England.
To date, Cumbria Business Growth Hub has worked directly with more than 6,800 businesses, with around 2,000 benefiting from intensive assistance. This has already created or safeguarded 6,285 jobs and generated an estimated £280m GVA.

If we’ve missed you – our sincere apologies!

Cumbria Business Growth Hub

...would like to thank our partners past and present for their support including:

- ACTion with Communities in Cumbria
- Allerdale Borough Council
- Barrow Borough Council
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
- Blue Orchid
- British Business Bank
- Carlisle City Council
- Carlisle College
- Chamber of Commerce
- Coastal Communities Fund
- Cumbria County Council
- Cumbria Manufacturing Service
- Cumbria LEP
- Cumbria Social Enterprise Partnership
- Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
- Department for International Trade
- Department for Work & Pensions
- East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
- Eden District Council
- European Regional Development Fund
- European Structural & Investment Funds
- European Social Fund
- Family Business Network
- Furness College
- Furness Economic Development Forum
- Gen2
- Growth Company
- Kendal College
- InnovateUK
- Intellectual Property Office
- Lakes College
- Lancaster University Management School
- NAMRC/Fit for Nuclear
- Newton Rigg College
- Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund
- North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
- Sellafield Ltd’s Social Impact Investment Fund
- South Lakes District Council
- SP Training
- St Helens Chamber
- University of Central Lancashire
- University of Cumbria