

Accountability Statement 2025-26

Our Purpose

Delivering excellent technical and professional skills to enhance the prosperity of our people and communities

We achieve this by delivering:

- Local, regional and national skills priorities which focus upon vocational and technical education, training and skills
- by working in collaboration and partnership with employers and key stakeholders
- Innovative and responsive solutions to meet changing priorities and needs

During 2025/26, we will produce a revised curriculum plan and budget which will continue to focus upon:

1. Continuing to meet the skills needs of the communities we serve, using *inter alia*: RCU and LMI data analysis, employer planning panels, and regional skills and economic growth plans in addition to intelligence drawn from our employer work and relations
2. Achieving consistently high-quality standards across all provision – swiftly becoming an exceptional college
3. Assuring ongoing financial strength and sustainability – meeting financial plan KPIs and national benchmarks to be fully self-sustaining
4. Attracting, retaining and developing key delivery staff by successful differentiation and deployment of a marketing strategy for staff
5. Continuing to maintain and enhance where necessary our industry standard estate and facilities – reinvesting into planned and manageable capital programmes and continued co-investment with partners who value our independence and responsiveness
6. Supporting deliverable growth over the longer term – directly in line with Enterprise Cumbria's Growth Plan, Cumbria's LSIP, and employer demand

Our Vision

Lakes College – an exceptional institution providing the skills and opportunities to power Cumbria's economy

Our Vision For The Future

As a team we will deliver
this vision over the next 3
years and beyond

1.

**Financial Resilience,
Strength and
Operational Efficiency**

2.

**Exceptional
Quality and
Standards**

3.

**Responsive provision
supporting Cumbria's
Economic Growth**

Underpinning Principles



Continuous Improvement

We are relentless in seeking
improvements to our offer and
operations to exceptional standards
for sector norms and best practice



Investing in People

We attract, retain and develop
outstanding people by
differentiating ourselves



Partnerships

We add value by working
collaboratively with key partners,
co-investing in our future



Our Values

Be Ready
Show Respect
Develop to your Potential

Our vision combines consistently high-quality standards with delivering the skills and employment needs of Cumbria and the wider NW's economy, underpinned by sustainable finances.

Following consultation, college staff agreed that this ambition serves stakeholders' best interests. It focuses on the standard of being exceptional in the delivery of all provision, with an offer that directly supports economic growth and increased productivity.

Our vision continues to focus on our strengths in technical and vocational education and training, which are directly linked to employment and career progression, and the benefits of being a well-regarded, prominent partner that stakeholders respect and value.

This vision combines the key features encapsulated in the statement of ambition below:

£ An exceptional college of £20M+ turnover per annum operating efficiently with outstanding finances, using its autonomy and responsiveness to meet regional needs with strong stakeholder engagement

Context and Place

Lakes College exited FEC Intervention during June 2025, following a Financial Notice to Improve driven by unanticipated cash flow challenges during 2023/24. The college is currently in Post Intervention Monitoring Support.

Related to the FNTI, a Structure and Prospects Appraisal (SPA) was initiated, concluding on 11th June 2025. Lakes College Board resolved to continue as a stand-alone Corporation at the conclusion of the process at their meeting of 11th June 2025.

Cumbria is progressing an application to be granted Devolved Mayoral Authority status. Should this be established, anticipated for May 2026, then the newly established Authority will be assigned the Adult Skills Budget, presenting a range of opportunities for Lakes to deploy to positive effect for skills needs in Cumberland.

Meet the needs of local employers

Our continued independence, as widely supported by stakeholders, ensures we can focus entirely on regional employer needs and respond with agility. This includes:

- Meeting specific needs of Sellafield Ltd and its value chain, with apprenticeship provision from Level 2 Level 6, career development and CPD, and wider social-value mutual interests
- BAE Systems and chain – explore the transferability of our NCfN model to defence nuclear

- EDF – support EDF Energy needs for training capacity for MOET apprenticeship standard provision
- Civils and Construction in Cumbria, supporting infrastructure development, house building, and retrofitting existing housing stock
- Health and Social Care – nurse cadets in partnership with the NHS, development of social work pathways with local authorities and the University of Cumbria and residential youth care workers at all levels
- NCfN Higher Technician Class approach applied to other sectors, e.g. Space, SMRs, civil engineering, expanding our interests and reach beyond our region
- Expanding the potential employee base and sub-regional coverage via our excellent routes to employment activity with DWP and others

Capacity

Independence and co-investment are key to our plans, supported by our increasing financial strength and resilience. We know from experience that supporting the needs of substantial employers such as Sellafield Limited, BAE Systems, EDF and Rolls Royce Submarines and SMRs enables us to direct investment into smaller-scale industries and micro-employers, and invaluable social-value work, for example, placement of high needs interns in meaningful work placements incorporating valuable certified training opportunities.

Developing the Statement

During the intervention and SPA process we have been in constant contact with our key stakeholders, therein developing an enhanced, detailed assessment of how we are perceived in our region, and cross-reference and check the priorities for skills and training in our service areas.

This has combined separate detailed discussion for particular sectors, e.g. EDF Apprenticeship Training in Nuclear and Renewables, and Social Workers needed in West Cumbria, with extensive input into the further development of Cumbria's ongoing LSIP, and new Economic Growth Plan.

Employer Liaison

Noting the extensive work undertaken by the college in developing a comprehensive stand alone business case with the SPA, there has been considerable dialogue and consultation with key stakeholders, employers and representative groups, focusing upon clarifying regional skills, education and training needs and how best Lakes should meet them.

This included direct input from:

- Cumbria Chambers of Commerce (ERB)

- The Nuclear Sectors in Cumbria; civil and defence, including Sellafield Ltd and the NDA
- The construction, engineering and civils sectors
- Cumberland Local Authority
- Health and Social Care sectors
- The Hospitality Industry and Cumbria Tourism

This enhanced the outcomes of the review of local needs undertaken in 2023, published on Lakes website, which will be repeated next year in line with statutory expectations.

FE4 Collaboration

The longstanding positive federated interest group “FE4” between the four FE colleges of Cumbria continues, providing an ongoing framework for consultation, co-ordination and collaboration. This federation has enabled the successful delivery of two SDF rounds, and most recently the LSIF deployment to meet Cumbria’s LSIP.

Data

The college continues to use a combination of DfE and commercial LMI data sources, including RMU and MiDES, complementing that with contracted specifics for Lakes e.g. Bob Hill Associates, with regional sources e.g. Cumbria Observatory, and intelligence drawn directly from our extensive employer and business engagement work.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

Lakes continues with its focus on meeting employment and vocational training and skills needs, and meeting the post-16, non A-Level demands from a broad, sparsely populated region. This mandate concentrates plans for a deep and broad to include:

- Study Programmes between Levels 1 to 3 in most curriculum areas, with the majority of learners on STEM, Construction and Health, Social Care and Early Years programmes
- A well-received, growing and performing T Level offer
- Apprenticeships at all levels, including Higher and Degree, across a broad range of standards with an emphasis on Engineering and STEM disciplines
- Routes into employment, partnering with DWP and other related agencies
- A distinctive, award winning HE offer

Cumbria’s LSIP and Economic Growth Plan

Our curriculum plan utilises Cumbria’s LSIP, developed by the Chamber of Commerce. Key sectors include:

- Construction
- Energy
- Land-Based

- Manufacturing/Engineering
- Social Care
- Visitor Economy

The LSIP intersects with the government's new industrial strategy, prioritising growth sectors based on existing and emerging strengths in:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Clean-energy industries
- Creative industries
- Defence nuclear
- Digital and technologies
- Health

In addition to using this information directly, we also base our curriculum plan on: Cumbria's emergent Economic Growth Plan, RCU Socio-economic data; purchase of Bob Hill Associates analysis of census data; commercial Job Vacancy Data; and the monthly LMI reports we receive from Cumbria Observatory.

Our key offerings will continue to be based upon:

- **Vocational and Technical Qualifications:** Emphasis on engineering, the nuclear sector, advanced manufacturing, health and social care, low carbon and green energy, and digital skills reflecting the national curriculum changes to Levels 2 and 3, supporting routes into full and part-time HE, apprenticeships, and careers with training.
- **Apprenticeships:** Partnerships with local employers in nuclear, low carbon energy, engineering, construction and healthcare at all levels, including degree
- **T Levels:** Technical pathways with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics), Construction, Civils, Health and Social Care, and Digital
- **Specialist Programmes:** Unique courses in renewable energy and environmental conservation, leveraging the college's location and ties to the Lake District's sustainability initiatives. Routes into training and employment via reengagement and our very well received Routes to Work Programme in partnership with the DWP and Cumberland Council
- **Higher Education:** clear and accessible routes to full and part time HE in sustainable in-demand areas, including Apprenticeships and HTQs

- **Adult Education** – access to well-planned and resourced Adult Learning offer with agreed-upon targets for delivery areas e.g. digital, Social Worker, Residential Youth Workers.

Access to levels

Our return to financial stability and improved position mean that we can continue to provide universal access for 16-18-year-olds to a starting level appropriate to them, including some bespoke programmes promoting inclusivity. For example, some learners will access King's Trust Programmes and Modular Construction Skills Programmes at E/L1.; some may start Engineering, Beauty, or Catering at L2; others will access a two-year L3 T Level in Digital. Wherever appropriate, we will offer HE, invariably part-time and/or within a Higher Apprenticeship. We have a strategic interest in an HE offer that is well designed for our region, avoiding out-of-region attendance so that skilled employees are not lost to Cumbria.

Specialist provision maintained

Our relatively broad base and growth in 16-18 and Apprenticeships, coupled with now sound finances, enable us to offer in-demand specialisms that others cannot. For example, we continue to develop and deliver:

- IoT courses: FD in Low Carbon Energy Technology / FD Manufacturing for Nuclear / BEng (Hons) Decommissioning and Waste Management / Health Physics Monitor apprenticeship standard.
- Low Carbon Heating technician apprenticeship standard and, from Sept 2025, a L3 study programme
- Air source and ground source heat-pump installation (commercial courses)
- Solar PV System Design and Installation (commercial courses)
- Steel fixer apprenticeship standard (specifically co-designed and delivered with one employer)
- 18th Edition Wiring Regulations Course
- BPEC Gas Fitting Operatives ACS – Domestic, Commercial, LPG, ESP
- Strategically extended HE partnerships to include the Open University to offer specialist provision in a wider range of curriculum, i.e. digital, showing our capacity to grow while maintaining our current offer.
- Health and Safety training
- **HNL**

We will continue to offer our comprehensive Pathways Programmes for learners with High Needs(HNLs) and Special Educational Needs (SEN), providing excellent support that focuses on specific care needs, routes for progression, independent

living skills, supported internships, and progression towards economic independence where possible.

This excellent provision is very well regarded. It received praise during the recent Ofsted inspection with commendation for target-setting. We fully support our HNLs with a well-resourced learning package tailored to specific needs, delivered in conjunction with the LEA and partners.

Remove, rationalise

- AAT
- Level 3 Joinery
- Underperforming Apprenticeship Standards e.g. Health and Social Care
- Any provision that does not meet a combination of requisite standard of quality and/or financial returns

Opportunities to expand and new provision (see also Impact on Employers below)

We plan to continue careful growth in selective sectors with the right offer, including full-time 16-18 within T Levels, Apprenticeships (particularly in STEM and HE), and a repurposed adult offer. Our innovative packages to engage and upskill unemployed and low-skilled employees are well received, with a 45-50% success in job outcomes across various contracts. This work builds on our success as a G4S Restart sub-contractor, where our Job Centre Plus and local authority colleagues have asked us to extend provision from West Cumbria and Carlisle to the Furness area.

Growth is expected in sectors such as Engineering, Construction and Health and Social Care, in addition to emergent areas in Digital, Green Technologies, and Low Carbon Energy.

Critically, growth plans are underpinned by sound business cases and finances, meeting agreed returns-on-investment targets and prescribed contribution levels, including:

- Low Carbon Heat Pump and Solar PV Installation and Servicing
- Modular training for retrofitting domestic housing stock
- Sustainable and low carbon construction techniques
- Civil Engineering and infrastructure development
- Coding and software development
- House-building expansion
- HTQ offer backed by OU and within IoT

We anticipate that devolution in Cumbria will bring enhanced discretion and flexibility regarding our Adult offer, linked directly to county needs e.g. defence nuclear. The college Principal is leading a Cumbria-wide development group to support this.

Governing Body Statement

The Governing Body undertook a full in-depth review of how Lakes College meets local needs and published their report in May 2023. Significant stakeholder engagement has continued over the past two years, including third-party engagement with stakeholders by the Deputy Further Education Commissioner, which endorsed our position and included input from key stakeholders such as the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce. Refined curriculum planning in discussion with key employers gives confidence that the offer is fit for purpose. We continue to be an Ofsted 'Good' College (2024). The Board is happy to confirm that this document fulfils the statutory local needs duty.



Mr Nigel Holliday
Chairman



Mr Chris Nattress
Principal

Governance - Lakes College

Summary

All Provision Types	2024/25 Learner Numbers	2025/26 Planned Learner Numbers
Catering	33	101
Construction & Building Services	487	698
Creative	72	92
Business	260	347
Digital	54	42
Engineering and Motor Vehicle	1262	1375
Hair and Beauty	107	128
Health and Social Care	317	186
Early Years	168	114
Maths and English	116	155
Sport and Public Services	75	74
Teaching	4	4
Foundation Learning	65	54
Adult Employability	552	553
Total	3572	3923