



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Strategic Road and Rail Prospectus 2024





“By investing in strategic transport infrastructure, we will enhance connectivity, foster economic growth, and establish Westmorland and Furness as a great place to live, work, and thrive”



Foreword

Efficient transport and connectivity lie at the heart of our future growth and prosperity here in Westmorland and Furness. This shapes how we access jobs, education, essential services, and leisure activities, whilst playing a crucial role in how communities interact and support one another.

Reliable and resilient connections will support us in driving innovation and maintaining our role as a leader in clean energy, nuclear decommissioning, advanced manufacturing, agri-food, and tourism.

Our transport network faces growing demands and challenges, as it strives to meet the needs of our businesses, residents, visitors, and those passing through our region. From our rural areas to urban centres, we must ensure that our road and rail links are equipped to handle the diverse and increasing requirements placed upon them.

We have a clear and ambitious vision of how to address these demands and challenges and unlock the considerable opportunities here in the north, for the benefit of the UK. By investing in strategic transport infrastructure, we will enhance connectivity, foster economic growth, and establish Westmorland and Furness as a great place to live, work, and thrive.

Councillor Jonathan Brook

Leader of Westmorland and Furness

Introduction

Westmorland and Furness is unique; internationally recognised for its dramatic and protected landscape, environmental assets and extensive natural capital, it is a world-class visitor destination that welcomes millions of visitors each year.

As a recognised leader in nuclear and energy excellence, it is home to high-value manufacturing capability supported by a highly skilled workforce and leading research and development facilities.

It is a place of huge opportunity, which includes the significant growth planned at BAE Systems in Barrow-in-Furness, supported by a trilateral partnership between central government, BAE Systems and Westmorland and Furness Council.

Westmorland and Furness is a large geographic area with dispersed communities and a polycentric economy. Our location, geography and topography mean our communities and businesses travel further to access to jobs and services, and road travel remains important to link our rural communities to facilities in towns and villages. This means that reliability and resilience of our transport network is vital and ensuring continued and improved connectivity that addresses our social, economic, and environmental needs is essential.



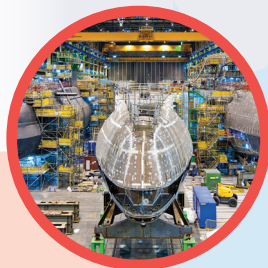
Strategic Corridors

Manufacturing Coast

The 'Manufacturing Coast' corridor links the Furness peninsula to Cumberland and the wider UK. It includes the Furness Line, Cumbrian Coast Line and the A590 and A595.

Barrow-in-Furness is at the heart of this corridor, with BAE Systems providing significant employment, as well as the town providing, retail, leisure, health, and education services for the wider area. Nationally significant growth is planned at BAE Systems to support the building of the UK's next generation of submarines. This is recognised in the formation of Team Barrow, which has brought together BAE Systems with national and local government to drive forward the changes needed to provide the foundations for growth.

This growth in Barrow-in-Furness is expected to increase passenger and freight trips by road and rail, and it is vital that the Cumbrian Coast Line, Furness Line, A590 and A595 can provide fast, reliable journeys.



UK Gateway

The 'UK Gateway' forms the main north-south link through Westmorland and Furness. It includes the West Coast Main Line and the M6.

Both Penrith and Kendal lie within this corridor, which forms part of the nationally significant UK transport network. However, there is a need to ensure the West Coast Main Line has sufficient capacity to support services and the ambition for more rail freight. It is also vital that rail services continue to serve Oxenholme and Penrith stations.

The emergency diversion route for the M6 between Junction 36 (Kendal) and Junction 39 (Shap) runs through Kendal town centre. When the M6 is closed, the diverted traffic causes significant congestion and disruption to people moving around Kendal.



KEY

- Westmorland and Furness boundary
- Transport Corridors
 - The Energy Coast
 - The Manufacturing Coast
 - Connecting Cities
 - The UK Gateway
 - The Heart of the Lakes
 - The East-West Link

Heart of the Lakes

The 'Heart of the Lakes' corridor provides the main route into the Lake District via Kendal. It includes the Lakes Line and the A591.

Kendal sits at the south-eastern end of this corridor, hosting important creative and manufacturing businesses as well as being a service centre for rural communities in the Lake District.

The Lake District National Park, a World Heritage Site, attracts around 18 million visitors per year, and tourism is a vital part of our economy. Seasonal visitor demand places pressure on the transport network, including traffic congestion and parking problems within the Lake District.

The Lakes Line provides a great opportunity for people to visit the Lake District by sustainable transport. This reduces the traffic impact of congestion on the A591 in the summer and improves connectivity to Kendal for residents of Windermere and the Lakes



East-West Link

The 'East-West Link' provides access to the North Lakes and West Cumberland, as well as the North East via the A66.

Penrith is at the centre of this corridor, where the A66 meets the M6, and is a key gateway to the Northern Lake District, as well as a service centre for rural communities and a connecting route to the North East. Penrith is also a multi-modal hub providing access to the West Coast Main Line and bus services to the Lake District.

There is recurring traffic congestion at the M6/A66 junction on a Friday, which significantly impacts the ability for people to move around Penrith. Work is underway to improve the A66 route to the Scotch Corner, including M6 Junction 40 and Kemplay Bank, through the Northern TransPennine project that is set to dual sections of single carriageway.

Issues & Opportunities

Improving connectivity is critical to achieving sustainable, inclusive growth in Westmorland and Furness. It helps communities access services and opportunities, and businesses to access wider markets.

People and freight need to travel further in Westmorland and Furness, and it is important that journeys are not only as quick as possible, but reliable. To this end, it is vital that we have a resilient transport network providing reliable journeys for residents and businesses.

Rail

The rail network in Westmorland and Furness is strongly positioned to support a decarbonised transport network and inclusive, sustainable growth ambitions. However, capacity constraints, slow line speeds and limited services with poor frequency create an unreliable provision.

It is therefore vital that investment in the Cumbrian Coast and Furness Lines continues to be prioritised through the Energy Coast Rail Upgrade. This investment will improve capacity, allowing for service frequency improvements and enabling the line to support the transport of more freight.

Rail will also play a vital role in supporting sustainable travel into the Lake District, to reduce the environmental impact of traffic congestion in the national park, and to contribute to transport decarbonisation. Proposals have been developed to improve capacity and frequency on the Lakes Line, which would provide more frequent services to Windermere, at the heart of the Lake District, and complement plans to improve Windermere station as the gateway to the Lakes. We also support proposals to develop plans for reopening the Penrith to Keswick line.

Investment in the West Coast Main Line is also needed to support plans for improved passenger services, and significantly increased rail freight.



Road

The road network is used for most trips in Westmorland and Furness, supporting travel by car, bus and active modes. The road network is vital, but key routes suffer from a lack of resilience; incidents which close the highway can mean long diversion routes. This creates barriers for travel, preventing people and businesses accessing opportunities and markets respectively. These challenges are especially significant on the A590, A595 and A66, all of which are part of the Major Road Network.

The A590 provides the only long-distance highway route to Barrow-in-Furness. Improving connectivity and resilience of the A590 is therefore a critical part of ensuring the success of Team Barrow. We are promoting a pipeline of strategic improvements on the route, ranging from junction upgrades and safety interventions to new sections of dual carriageway.

The A595 provides important links to Cumberland. We have secured £23.3 million of government funding to deliver improvements at Grizebeck to boost economic growth in the area by creating a route that will support the safe and reliable movement of goods and people into, around, and out of Barrow-in-Furness. However, further improvements are required to ensure the route is resilient.

We recognise the importance of the A66 and welcome investment through the Northern TransPennine project. We support delivery of the dualling of this route through the next road investment period.



In addition to these priorities on strategic routes, we also need to ensure our local transport is fit for purpose. This includes improving last-mile connectivity from the Port of Barrow, which can contribute to decarbonising freight transport; improved maintenance funding to ensure our roads are resilient; and support for delivering active travel and bus improvements.

Opportunity - Supporting significant job growth at BAE Systems in Barrow



Proposals

- Energy Coast Rail Upgrade (Cumbrian Coast Line and Furness Line improvements)
- A590 pipeline of improvements
- Barrow masterplan

Outcomes

- Ensuring the UK's national defence security and the Team Barrow priorities
- Regeneration of Barrow-in-Furness
- Supporting economic growth

Opportunity - Improving highway reliability and resilience issues to support inclusive growth



Proposals

- A590 pipeline of improvements
- A66 improvements
- A595 improvements
- Kendal Northern Access Route

Outcomes

- Supporting sustainable economic growth
- Increasing the wellbeing of our rural communities

Opportunity - Leading on rural transport decarbonisation



Proposals

- West Coast Main Line freight capacity improvements
- Railway electrification
- Increased Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure
- Bus improvements (BSIP)
- Active travel improvements (LCWIPs)

Outcomes

- Reducing in carbon emissions
- Improving social inclusion
- Encouraging a healthier, happier resident population

Opportunity - Resolving traffic congestion and parking issues in the Lake District



Proposals

- Lakes Line passing loop
- Windermere Gateway
- Penrith-Keswick line study

Outcomes

- Protecting our world-class natural environment
- Supporting sustainable economic growth of the visitor economy

Making it Happen

Our vision is for Westmorland and Furness to be a great place to live, work and thrive, as set out in our Council Plan. We need to improve our transport infrastructure to achieve this vision. We are committed to enabling access to the places and services that meet needs in an environmentally sustainable way, but we cannot do this alone.

Success depends on effective partnership working, alignment of efforts, and funding availability to support transport projects from inception, through design and delivery and in ongoing maintenance.

New and innovative ways of securing investment, including the role of developer contributions and new initiatives that may emerge in the future are important. However, long-term certainty around funding to deliver priorities is critical in pipeline development and delivery.

Competitive funding bids using standard appraisal techniques fail to capture the specific challenges and needs in a rural area such as ours. We need the government to allow for local decision-making so we can take account of the wider social benefit of improved connectivity to our rural communities and ensure sustainable, inclusive growth.

We also need clear prioritisation and commitment to strategic transport investment that will improve our transport links, address issues of reliability and resilience and unlock the significant growth potential of the Westmorland and Furness area.





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Translation Services

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