

21st Century Workforce Development For Northumberland

INTRODUCTION TO THE PILOT

There is an emergent opportunity for Northumberland to enjoy a new Net Zero driven industrial age, using existing brown field assets. This has united employers, regardless of size or sector, in sharing concerns about the scalability of the County's workforce.

Whilst other agencies have a role to play in policy, funding and skills provision, existing and prospective employers recognise that they must take the lead and work together to avoid a Tragedy of the Commons in workforce availability.

The 21st Century Workforce Development Initiative is a collaborative place-based Employer Alliance formed to harness this common purpose. It is informed by the County's small number of medium and large employers, its large geographic area (and dispersed employer community), and a shared passion for 'place'. This has led to the co-design of a series of interventions to create a workforce development agenda for Northumberland to be used as a blueprint in this and other Counties.

Press articles on the pilot thus far have been featured by [Bdaily](#), [Northumbria University](#), [Port of Blyth](#) & [Northumberland County Council](#).

Formed in November 2022, the 21st Century Workforce Development Initiative has secured funding from the Royal Academy of Engineering and Northumberland County Council and has a pilot programme commencing in February 2023. It is now seeking to formalise a governance structure to ensure accountability and enable it to build on this early success.

Formal governance of this innovative place-based Employer Alliance will energise workforce development in Northumberland, showcasing a model which could then be used more widely.

21st Century Workforce Development gives employers the steering wheel and focuses on their own workforce growth and development rather than sector specific skills.

It has been catalysed by the entrepreneurial leader of one of Northumberland's largest businesses who has demonstrated best practice in strategic workforce development at the Tharsus Group.

The Royal Academy of Engineering sponsored pilot is over-subscribed with an impressive cohort of private and public sector organisations. Its co-design and ownership by a multi-sector Employer Alliance is highly innovative.

The initiative will also include both education and inclusive workforce recruitment from the economically inactive and disadvantaged, where a pilot programme is being run by the Prince's Trust, Akzo-Nobel and Bernicia.

Training delivery (focusing on leadership development and digital capability) features cohorts drawn from up to 15 different employers with learning rotating between host employer sites. This will actively break down silos and address some of the challenges inherent in Northumberland's dispersed geography.

The organisation will provide a single point of contact to simplify the map of provision and engagement, signposting to training providers and sector-specific initiatives, and sharing employer best practice.

Research is being commissioned to provide a clear view of Northumberland’s current and future employment landscape, which does not currently exist.

Focus of initial delivery starting at the end of February 2023 has been co-designed with Northumberland’s major employers:

- 1) Essential digital capability for the workforce (Essential digital)
This is intended to equip participants with the fundamental levels of confidence and competence to utilise digital skills in the workplace. This should cover both Entry Level and Level 1 in the Department for Education’s National Standards for Essential Digital Skills & delivered by Northumberland college.
- 2) Advanced data capability for the workforce (Advanced digital)
This is intended to increase participants’ capability to gather, analyse and communicate data, using a range of industry tools including SQL, Excel and Power BI and is delivered by Baltic Training.
- 3) Management essentials (Essential Management)
This is intended for individuals either recently promoted into first-line team leadership roles or ready for such promotions. It should equip them with the basic tools needed to be effective in these roles in today’s business environment and delivered by John D Leighton professional training services.
- 4) Leadership and people centric management (Mini Exec-MBA)
This is intended for individuals either recently promoted into senior leadership roles or ready for such promotions, and should cover, at a high level, material typically found in an executive MBA & delivered by Northumbria University.

THE TEAM

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