

POWERING FUTURES

Our Strategic Plan 2026-2031







POWER FUTURE



LEARNING RESOURCES

Lakes College exists to transform lives through learning, power the workforce of the future, and drive prosperity across West Cumbria and beyond.

As the general Further Education college at the heart of one of the UK's most significant clean energy and nuclear regions, we have a responsibility to do more than educate - we lead.

We connect people to opportunity, industry to talent, and communities to growth.

But our role goes further. As a full-service college, we provide a broad and ambitious curriculum that gives every learner real choice, whether their pathway is academic, technical, or vocational.

From first steps into education to higher-level skills and career progression, we support individuals to achieve their potential and move forward with confidence.

Through high-quality education, strong partnerships, and a relentless focus on outcomes, we enable every learner to progress with purpose, every employer to access the skills they need, and every community we serve to thrive.

FOREWORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL & CEO

It is a privilege to introduce this new strategic plan for Lakes College. We are a college with a strong sense of purpose, rooted in our communities and proud of the role we play across West Cumbria.



Mark Fell

Principal & Chief Executive Officer - Lakes College

Every day, we see the difference that education makes, opening doors, raising aspirations, and creating opportunities that change lives. That belief sits at the heart of everything we do.

But we are also clear-eyed about the challenges that West Cumbria and the Further Education sector face.

As a college serving a dispersed and rural community, geography presents real barriers for many of our learners. National funding pressures continue to test the resilience of the sector. And most importantly, while we have made progress, our achievement rates are not yet where they need to be. If we are to truly deliver on our purpose, we must do better, and we will.

This strategy marks a step change in our ambition.

West Cumbria sits at the centre of one of the most significant economic opportunities in the UK, with the clean energy and nuclear

sectors driving demand for skills at every level. Lakes College has a unique role to play in this landscape, not only as a provider of education, but as a leader of skills, a partner to industry, and a catalyst for growth.

We will be relentless in our focus on quality, outcomes, and learner experience. We will strengthen our partnerships with employers to ensure our curriculum is aligned to the skills needs of the future. And we will create a culture where high expectations, innovation, and a sense of belonging enable both our learners and our staff to thrive.

This is a strategy built on belief - belief in our people, belief in our communities, and belief in what Lakes College can become.

We are not here simply to respond to change.

We are here to lead it.

Ofsted
GOOD

35%
of local 16-19
population

900+
apprenticeships in
West Cumbria

800+
Adult learners

75%
of apprenticeships
in West Cumbria

700+
We work with over
700 Employer
partners

4,000+
learners

**Key Facts about
Lakes College:**

- ▶ Largest Further Education College in Cumbria
- ▶ Home of Lillyhall Sixth Form
- ▶ Home of the National College for Nuclear & Clean Energy
- ▶ Largest provider of apprenticeships in West Cumbria
- ▶ Largest provider of adult learning in West Cumbria
- ▶ Serving learners from across Cumbria
- ▶ Delivery Partner for Clean Energy Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs)
- ▶ Leading provider of clean energy and technical skills

AT A GLANCE: WEST AND WIDER CUMBRIA

Cumbria is one of the most distinctive places in the United Kingdom. Home to world-renowned landscapes, vibrant towns, proud communities and nationally significant industries, it is a county that combines natural beauty with economic importance.

From the shores of the Solway Firth in the north to the communities of Millom in the south, West Cumbria is shaped by its coastline, its rural character and the resilience of its people.

The region is home to communities with deep industrial roots and a proud heritage of innovation, engineering and public service. For generations, people in West Cumbria have helped power the nation, whether through mining, steelmaking, manufacturing, nuclear energy, healthcare, education or the many small businesses that form the backbone of our local economy. Today, that legacy continues as the region plays a critical role in the UK's clean energy future and net zero ambitions.

West Cumbria is also a place of opportunity and aspiration. Situated on the edge of the Lake District National Park, the area benefits from a unique blend of world-class industry, stunning natural environments and strong community identity.

Yet the very geography that makes the region special can also create challenges, with dispersed rural communities, transport barriers and inequalities in access to education, employment and opportunity.

What unites West Cumbria is a strong sense of place and pride. From Millom to Silloth, Whitehaven to Workington, Egremont to Maryport, communities are connected by a shared determination to succeed and create a better future for the next generation.

As the only general Further Education college serving West Cumbria, Lakes College is proud to be part of that story. We are rooted in our communities, connected to our employers and committed to ensuring that local people can access outstanding education, develop their talents and build successful futures without having to leave the region they call home.

 National College
for Nuclear at
Lakes College



STRONGER TOGETHER

No single organisation can deliver the future West Cumbria needs alone. Our success is built on partnership, collaboration and a shared commitment to creating opportunity.

We work closely with employers, schools, universities, public sector organisations and community partners to develop talent, strengthen communities and support regional growth.

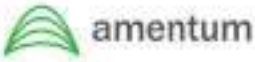
From strategic partnerships with Sellafield Ltd, the NHS and Britain's Energy Coast Business Cluster, to our work with Cumberland Council, Inspira, local schools, the University of Cumbria and The Open University, we are proud to play a leading role in a connected education and skills ecosystem.

Together, we are creating clear pathways into learning, employment and higher education, ensuring that local people can access the opportunities being created across West Cumbria and beyond.

Together, we are powering futures, strengthening communities and shaping the future of our region



OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS

OUR PURPOSE, VISION & VALUES



OUR PURPOSE:

We exist to transform lives through learning, power the workforce of tomorrow, and drive prosperity across West Cumbria and beyond.

OUR VISION:

To be nationally recognised for excellence in technical education, delivering exceptional outcomes and supporting the UK's Industrial Strategy.

OUR VALUES:



BELONG

We create a culture where everyone feels **valued**, **supported**, and **able to succeed**.



CONNECT

We work with a **broad range of stakeholders** and ensure our education solutions meet **local and regional needs**.



PERFORM

We set high standards and deliver **outstanding outcomes**.



INNOVATE

We embrace change, lead thinking, and shape the landscape of skills. We are **curious** and look to **challenge existing processes** and create **future-ready solutions**.



INSPIRE

Everyone is a leader. We **motivate and promote high ambition** in our learners, staff, and communities.

OUR CONTEXT: WHY WE MATTER

West Cumbria is unlike anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Home to approximately 130,000 people, our region plays a nationally significant role in the country's energy security, defence capability and net zero ambitions.

From the world-leading expertise centred around Sellafield Ltd to emerging opportunities in clean energy, hydrogen, advanced manufacturing and low-carbon technologies, West Cumbria sits at the forefront of industries that will shape the future of the UK economy.

Yet alongside these opportunities come significant challenges.

West Cumbria is predominantly rural and coastal, with communities spread across a large geographical area. Transport and connectivity can create barriers to education and employment. Some communities experience higher levels of deprivation, lower educational attainment and poorer health outcomes than national averages. At the same time, an ageing population and increasing workforce replacement demand mean employers are facing growing skills shortages across many sectors.

The coming decade will be transformative for our region. Major investment in clean energy, nuclear, infrastructure, construction, health and advanced manufacturing is expected to create thousands of jobs and generate significant economic growth. These opportunities will require a workforce with the technical skills, professional expertise and adaptability to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Meeting this challenge requires more than education alone. It requires leadership, partnership and a relentless focus on creating opportunity. As the only general Further Education college serving West Cumbria, Lakes College has a unique responsibility and a unique opportunity.

We educate over a third of all young people progressing into post-16 education locally. We are the largest provider of apprenticeships in West Cumbria and the largest provider of adult education in the area. Through our partnerships with employers, schools, universities, local authorities and community organisations, we help shape the future skills landscape of our region.

Our role extends beyond delivering qualifications.

We develop the engineers who will power the UK's clean energy future. We support adults to retrain and progress into new careers. We help employers access the talent they need to grow and innovate. We provide pathways for those facing disadvantage and barriers to opportunity. We create routes into higher-level learning without people needing to leave the region.

We support communities to prosper.



A COLLEGE FOR EVERYONE

While West Cumbria's future will be shaped by major investment in clean energy, engineering and advanced manufacturing, a thriving region requires much more than technical skills alone.

As the only general Further Education college serving West Cumbria, we are committed to providing a broad and inclusive curriculum that reflects both the aspirations of our learners and the needs of our communities. Whether a learner wishes to pursue a career in construction, engineering, healthcare, catering and hospitality, sport, business, education, the creative industries or public services, Lakes College provides high-quality pathways that enable them to succeed.

We believe young people should not have to leave West Cumbria to access opportunity. They should be able to pursue academic, technical or vocational routes locally, supported by excellent teaching, strong progression pathways and meaningful employer engagement.

Our role is not simply to meet workforce demand. It is to help every learner discover their potential, develop their talents and build a future they are proud of.

We are proud to be a broad and inclusive college. While nationally recognised for our work in technical education, engineering

and clean energy skills, we are equally committed to providing high-quality academic, vocational and professional pathways that give learners genuine choice and clear progression routes.

Our success matters because the success of West Cumbria depends upon the success of its people.

This strategy reflects our belief that education is one of the most powerful drivers of social mobility, economic growth and community prosperity. It sets out how Lakes College will lead skills development, raise aspirations, improve outcomes and ensure that the opportunities created by our region's growth are accessible to everyone.

The future of West Cumbria will be built by its people.

Our role is to help power their future.



OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PRIORITY 1

**EXCEPTIONAL
EDUCATION &
OUTCOMES**

PRIORITY 2

**LEADING CLEAN
ENERGY & TECHNICAL
EXCELLENCE**

PRIORITY 3

**SKILLS FOR GROWTH
& EMPLOYERS**

PRIORITY 4

**CULTURE,
PEOPLE & BELONGING**

PRIORITY 5

**SUSTAINABLE, FUTURE-
READY COLLEGE**



PRIORITY 1

EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION & OUTCOMES

Everything starts with the quality of education we provide.

We will deliver exceptional learning experiences that enable every learner to achieve, progress and succeed.

Through outstanding teaching, high expectations, excellent support and a relentless focus on outcomes, we will ensure every learner develops the skills, knowledge and confidence needed for their future.

By 2031 we will:

- Achieve sector-leading outcomes
- Deliver consistently high-quality teaching, learning and assessment
- Improve progression into employment, apprenticeships and higher education
- Close achievement gaps for disadvantaged and underrepresented learners
- Create an outstanding learner experience

We will deliver this through:

- Relentless focus on quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - Clear accountability for outcomes
 - Outstanding learner support and progression
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PRIORITY 2

LEADING CLEAN ENERGY & TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

West Cumbria sits at the heart of the UK's clean energy future.

We will be nationally recognised for our leadership in clean energy, nuclear, engineering and technical education, developing the skilled workforce required to support regional prosperity, national growth and net zero ambitions.

By 2031 we will:

- Be recognised as a leading provider of clean energy and technical education
- Expand higher-level technical and professional pathways
- Further strengthen partnerships with industry leaders
- Develop specialist facilities and expertise
- Support innovation across emerging technologies such as Robotics

We will deliver this through:

- Deep partnerships with the major employers in the region and the stakeholders they work with
 - Specialisation in key technical areas and provide strong experiences in a broad range of subjects
 - Being a key partner in the regional and national centres for technical excellence
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PRIORITY 3

SKILLS FOR GROWTH & EMPLOYERS

We will work alongside employers, schools, universities and community partners to ensure our curriculum responds to current and future workforce needs, creating clear pathways into meaningful employment and supporting businesses to thrive.

By 2031 we will:

- Align curriculum to regional and national skills priorities
- Grow apprenticeships and employer-led provision
- Expand adult learning and workforce development
- Strengthen progression pathways from school to employment
- Support the productivity and competitiveness of local employers
- Consistently develop wider employability and social skills in all learners

We will deliver this through:

- Employer-led curriculum design
 - Aligning our curriculum to government-led reforms and ensuring learners are able to make informed choices through exceptional careers advice and guidance.
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PRIORITY 4

CULTURE, PEOPLE & BELONGING

We will create a high-performing culture where every learner and every member of staff feels valued, respected, supported and inspired to achieve their best.

Through strong leadership, clear expectations and an unwavering commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging, we will build a college where everyone can thrive, contribute and fulfil their potential.

We believe that embracing different backgrounds, perspectives and experiences strengthens our college, enriches learning and enables better outcomes for our learners, staff and communities.

By 2031 we will:

- Be an employer of choice in Cumbria
 - Develop confident and inclusive leaders at every level
 - Strengthen staff engagement, wellbeing and belonging
 - Foster a culture where equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in everything we do
 - Reduce barriers to participation, achievement and progression for all learners and staff
 - Embed our values across every aspect of college life
 - Create a culture of high performance, accountability and continuous improvement
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We will deliver this through:

- Investing in leadership development, professional learning and clear accountability
 - Creating an inclusive culture where everyone feels safe, respected, heard and empowered to contribute
 - Promoting equality of opportunity and actively addressing barriers to participation, achievement and progression
 - Continually improving staff wellbeing, facilities and the overall employee experience
 - Embedding inclusive practices across our curriculum, recruitment, leadership and decision-making
 - Regularly monitoring culture, engagement and inclusion to ensure every member of our college community can succeed
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PRIORITY 5

SUSTAINABLE, FUTURE-READY COLLEGE

We will invest in our estate, technology, systems and partnerships to ensure Lakes College remains financially strong, environmentally responsible and ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

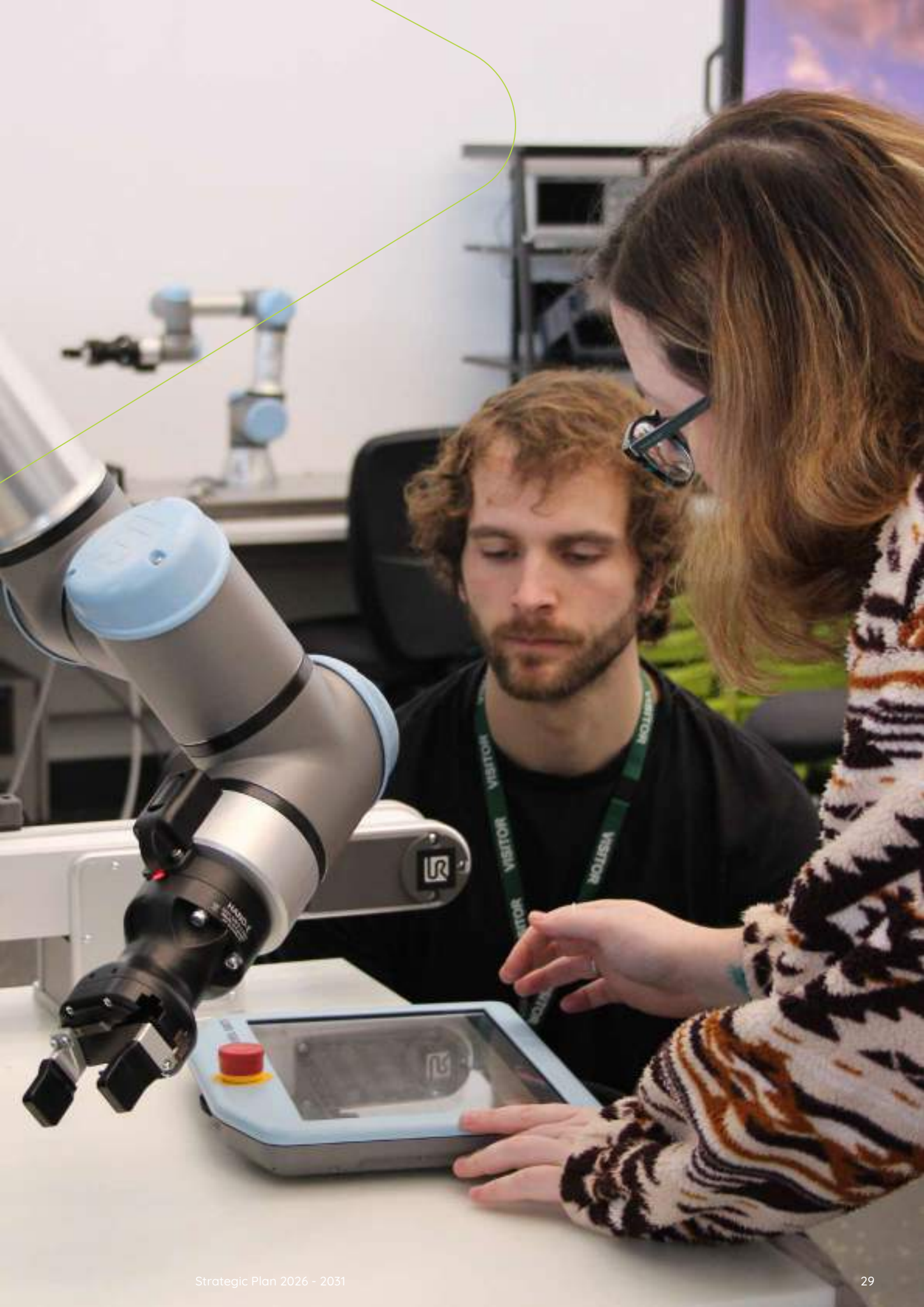
Our ability to deliver a financially sustainable curriculum will ensure the College is able to appropriately balance financial resilience with strong, targeted investment.

By 2031 we will:

- Maintain financial resilience and sustainability
- Deliver a modern, industry-standard learning environment
- Accelerate digital transformation and innovation
- Reduce our environmental impact
- Use data and insight to drive decision-making and improvement

We will deliver this through:

- Financial resilience and strong planning of our curriculum and wider business operations
 - Digital transformation
 - Net zero commitment
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OUR IMPACT

By 2031, the success of this strategy will not be measured solely by the courses we deliver or the qualifications we award. It will be measured by the impact we create for our learners, employers, communities and region.

For Our Learners

By 2031, more people than ever will be able to access high-quality education and training through Lakes College. Despite a static state regarding the number of 16-19's within the area, Lakes will grow its market share through a specialist, high quality offer.

Our learners will achieve exceptional outcomes, develop the skills and confidence to succeed, and progress into meaningful employment, apprenticeships, higher education and rewarding careers. Regardless of their background or starting point, every learner will be supported to realise their potential and achieve their ambitions.

We will be recognised for delivering outstanding learner experiences, creating an environment where every learner feels challenged, supported and inspired to succeed.

For Employers

We will be the partner of choice for employers across West Cumbria and beyond.

Through deep collaboration with industry, we will help businesses address skills shortages, improve productivity and develop the workforce they need to grow. Our curriculum will continue to evolve alongside employer demand, ensuring learners develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for current and future careers.

We will play a leading role in supporting workforce development across clean energy, nuclear, engineering, construction, health and other priority sectors critical to the future prosperity of our region.

For Our Communities

We will create opportunity for individuals and communities across West Cumbria.

By widening participation, reducing barriers to learning and supporting progression into employment and further study, we will help improve social mobility and life chances throughout the region.

As a civic institution, we will work in partnership with local authorities, schools, universities, employers and community organisations to tackle shared challenges and strengthen the communities we serve.



For West Cumbria

West Cumbria is entering a period of unprecedented opportunity.

As the region responds to the demands of clean energy, net zero, infrastructure investment and workforce replacement, Lakes College will play a central role in developing the talent required to support economic growth and regional prosperity.

We will help ensure local people are equipped to access the opportunities being created on their doorstep and that employers can access the skilled workforce they need to succeed.

For Our Staff

Our people will be proud to work at Lakes College.

We will foster a culture of excellence, innovation, aspiration and belonging where staff feel valued, empowered and supported

to perform at their best. Through investment in leadership, professional development and wellbeing, we will create an environment where talented people can build rewarding careers and make a lasting difference.

Our Legacy

By 2031, Lakes College will be recognised not only for what it teaches, but for the difference it makes.

We will be a college that transforms lives, powers industry, strengthens communities and creates opportunity. A college that delivers exceptional outcomes for learners, meaningful value for employers and lasting prosperity for West Cumbria.

We will be a college that powers futures.

TURNING AMBITION INTO ACTION

This strategy sets out our ambitions for Lakes College and the difference we want to make for our learners, employers, communities and region by 2031.

Delivering these ambitions requires more than a clear vision. It requires strong leadership, effective governance, financial resilience, partnership working and a relentless focus on continuous improvement.

We recognise that the world around us will continue to change. Economic conditions, government policy, skills priorities and employer needs will evolve throughout the lifetime of this strategy.

Whilst our long-term direction remains clear, our approach must remain agile and responsive.

For this reason, the Strategic Plan provides the framework for decision-making, investment and improvement across the College. It establishes our priorities and ambitions, whilst allowing flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

From Strategy to Delivery

Each year, the Board of Governors will approve a set of annual strategic priorities aligned to this plan.

These priorities will identify the key projects, initiatives and areas of focus required to deliver our long-term ambitions and respond to current local, regional and national priorities.

Annual priorities will be supported by:

- College operational plans
- Departmental improvement plans
- Curriculum planning processes
- Accountability Statement commitments
- Performance targets and key performance indicators

This ensures that every part of the College contributes to the delivery of our strategic priorities and long-term vision.





Measuring Success

We will regularly review our progress against this strategy through a range of performance measures and indicators.

These will include:

- Learner achievement and progress
- Learner destinations and progression
- Quality of education and learner experience
- Employer engagement and satisfaction
- Apprenticeship performance against the government accountability framework
- Financial health and sustainability
- Staff engagement and development
- Growth and participation
- Environmental sustainability
- Strategic partnership impact

Progress will be reported regularly to the Board of Governors, ensuring transparency, accountability and effective challenge.

Working in Partnership

The success of this strategy will depend upon collaboration.

We will continue to work closely with employers, schools, universities, local authorities, community organisations and regional partners to ensure our provision remains relevant, responsive and impactful.

Through these partnerships we will help shape the future skills landscape of West Cumbria, ensuring that education and training continue to support economic growth, social mobility and community prosperity.

Our Commitment

This strategy represents our commitment to the people and communities we serve.

We will be ambitious in our aspirations, courageous in our decision-making and accountable for our performance.

We will focus relentlessly on delivering exceptional outcomes, creating opportunity and supporting regional growth.

Most importantly, we will remain true to our purpose: transforming lives through learning, powering the workforce of tomorrow and driving prosperity across West Cumbria and beyond.

MEASURING SUCCESS

By 2031, Lakes College will be recognised as one of the UK's leading Further Education colleges, known for exceptional outcomes, technical excellence and a deep commitment to the communities we serve.

We are the college of choice for learners across West Cumbria, providing outstanding academic, technical and vocational pathways that enable people of all ages to achieve their ambitions and progress into successful careers.

Our learners achieve exceptional outcomes and progress successfully into positive destinations. Whether their ambition is employment, an apprenticeship, higher education or professional development, every learner benefits from clear progression pathways and the support needed to achieve their goals. They leave Lakes College with the skills, knowledge, confidence and ambition to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

We are recognised for creating seamless progression routes from entry level through to higher education and professional careers. More learners than ever progress into apprenticeships, skilled employment and higher-level study, with many choosing to continue their educational journey in West Cumbria through our growing higher education and higher technical offer. We are proud to retain talent within the region, ensuring local people can access outstanding opportunities without having to leave their communities but also attracting specialist talent to the area as required.

We are nationally recognised for our leadership in clean energy, nuclear, engineering and technical education, supporting some of the UK's most strategically important industries and helping to deliver the workforce required for a net zero future.

Our employer partnerships are stronger than ever. Businesses trust us as their skills partner of choice, working collaboratively to address workforce challenges, improve productivity and develop future talent.

Our apprenticeship and workforce development programmes are recognised for their quality, impact and innovation.

As a broad and inclusive college, we continue to provide genuine choice for learners. Whether pursuing academic study, technical training, professional qualifications, higher education or lifelong learning, individuals can access high-quality opportunities close to home without compromising on ambition.

Learners and staff feel valued, supported and empowered to achieve their best. We are recognised as an employer of choice, attracting and retaining talented people who share our commitment to transforming lives through learning.

Our estate, facilities and technology reflect the future-facing industries we serve. We have invested in sustainable, industry-standard environments that inspire learning, support innovation and minimise our environmental impact.

We are financially resilient, environmentally responsible and strategically influential. We play a leading role in shaping skills policy and economic development across Cumbria and beyond, working in partnership with employers, local authorities, universities and government to create opportunity and drive prosperity.

More people are progressing into skilled employment, apprenticeships, higher education and professional careers than ever before. Employers have access to the talent they need to grow and innovate, and learners have access to clear, ambitious pathways that enable them to achieve their full potential.

By 2031, Lakes College is more than a college. It is a catalyst for aspiration, a driver of economic growth and a source of pride for West Cumbria.



What Success Looks Like by 2031

95%

Employer
satisfaction

**TOP
QUARTILE**

Achievement rates
in the top quartile
nationally

**GOOD OR
OUTSTANDING**

Financial health
rated Good or
Outstanding

GROWING

Growth in higher
education and
higher technical
learners

LEADING

The leading college for clean energy
skills in the North of England

POSITIVE

Ensure every
learner achieves a
positive destination

LARGEST

Apprenticeship
provider in Cumbria

90%

Staff
satisfaction

RECOGNISED

as a key driver of
West Cumbria's
economic growth



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