



**Memorandum of Understanding**  
**For the**  
**Strategic Partnership**  
**Between**  
**Durham University**  
**And**  
**Durham County Council**

A Memorandum of Understanding was originally signed on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

Durham University (DU) and Durham County Council (DCC), together the Key Stakeholders, have been working collaboratively to develop a common understanding of each other's organisations and establish areas where there is mutual benefit in working together and supporting each other's strategic aims and optimally leveraging their combined activities.

Prior to the MOU, whilst DCC and DU have interacted on many levels for a long time, these activities had not previously been fully coordinated to align the respective strategic plans of DU and DCC for the maximum impact on the County. With an increased emphasis on the importance of place and the role of both organisations as civic institutions, the MOU formalised the strategic relationship between DU and DCC.

The Key Stakeholders do not intend this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be legally binding and further do not intend that any agency or partnership relationship be created between the Key Stakeholders by this MoU. The purpose of this MoU is to embody the spirit of co-operation between the Key Stakeholders based on a set of principles to work together to raise the regional, national, and international profile of County Durham and the Key Stakeholders with governments, businesses, and other key stakeholders to attract talent, money, and business and to positively impact the County and benefit its communities. Nothing in this MoU will seek to constrain broader activity which may evolve and expand during implementation

The MOU embodies the overarching principles of inclusivity, diversity, and inclusive growth, particularly in the context of economic recovery post Covid-19 and the Levelling-up agenda, which are further described in this MoU by the following six objectives:

**Objective 1 Economic Development:** Identify opportunities for closer collaboration to encourage the economic development of County Durham.

How we will do this:

- Support the development of NETPark and wider innovation landscape.
  - Work together to catalyse the realisation of key economic development sites, with strategic priority being the development of the Aykley Heads site.
  - Work together to catalyse and support grass roots start-ups and entrepreneurship.
  - Raise an enterprising and entrepreneurial culture supporting the development of incubator space for University student and staff spinouts, through Durham City Incubator (DCI) and the University Enterprise Zone (Orbit).
  - Build sustainable mechanisms to foster stronger relationships between the University and local businesses to improve productivity, through close working of the University Partnerships and Engagement Team and the Business Durham Operations Team.
  - Support inward investment activity through the use of existing strategic partnerships and demonstration of research excellence.
  - Harness the purchasing power of the two organisations to generate social value and local supply chain opportunities to assist with the economic recovery.

**Objective 2 Research:** Leverage research expertise to improve the quality of life for the communities and people of County Durham, through carrying out research that is collaborative, participative and, with a particular focus on:

- Energy
- Anti- poverty
- Educational attainment
- Sports, physical activity and wellbeing
- Inclusive growth
- Economic growth
- Data analysis and modelling to inform policy-making and delivery
- Public health and inequalities

**Objective 3 Culture and Heritage:** Work together to be a focal point in the northeast for culture and heritage, working closely with a wide range of partner organisations to develop our offer and promote the region.

How we will do this:

- Jointly commit to an inclusive cultural offer
- Develop and support a tourism strategy that impacts upon County Durham as a place
- Work together to support a coherent strategic provision of cultural facilities in the County.
- Align cultural and heritage offerings to research themes including, energy, educational attainment, digital and wellbeing

- Jointly develop and support festivals and cultural events aligning to mutual research and collection areas.
- Promotion of sport, wellbeing and physical activity

**Objective 4 Place:** Work together to build sustainable communities for residents and all users within Durham City and maximise the opportunities for the University's activities to bring mutual benefits for our neighbours.

How we will do this:

Place

- To work in partnership to development sustainable communities which are complementary to the city and its capacity.

Community

- Wherever possible local communities will have access to the University.
- We will continue to support and develop Durham volunteering in the wider community.
- Working with communities to support the green environment, creating safe, sustainable, enjoyable spaces.
- Provide greater opportunities for local young people to gain a place at DU.
- Work to build considerate and safe neighbourhoods
- Continue to ensure a safe waterside.

**Objective 5 Education and Skills:** To work in collaboration with regional educational providers ensuring the needs of regional existing and prospective employers are clearly articulated to improve the ability for the learning and skills provision to meet this demand.

How we will do this:

- Work with our communities and education providers to widen participation and diversity in respect to key educational qualifications supporting the regional skills demand and assisting pre-university admission.
- Preparation of highly engaged, work ready and creative thinking graduates, capable of fulfilling the opportunities that exist within regional employers and thereby supporting employment opportunities that retain our graduates in the region.
- Sharing values and accessing knowledge and innovation through partnerships with employers, sector bodies and other educational providers to identify the skills needed in the workforce to realise the development of the economy and society in our region.
- Work collaboratively with partners to create educational offers to support life-long and multi-generational learning needs across our communities

**Objective 6 Public Relations:** We will work together through strategic communications to raise the regional, national and international profile of County Durham, in the interests of and to the benefit of the County.

How we will do this:

- Work collaboratively in the promotion of activities on a regional, national and international footing, with key stakeholders, building on key messages and joint approaches.
- Where appropriate and in the interests of the County, agree a shared approach and key messages; noting that positions will not always be aligned.

**Management of MoU activity:**

This will be coordinated through a strategic management board.

The Key Stakeholders also agree that:

- this MoU will run for a recurring three-year term;
- nothing in this MoU will be interpreted as a commitment of funds from either Key Stakeholder; and
- this MoU does not restrict, in any way, other arrangements that a Key Stakeholder may wish to develop independently.

**Signed by:**

John Hewitt, Chief Executive, Durham County Council

and

Professor Karen O'Brien, Vice-Chancellor and Warden, Durham University

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> April 2022