



**CUMBRIA
LOCAL
ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP**

Lord Inglewood
Chairman
Cumbria LEP
Business & Conference Centre
Redhill's
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CA11 0DT



Richard Holden, MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Roads and Local Transport)
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

27 April 2023

Dear Richard,

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS A66 NORTHERN TRANS-PENNINE PROJECT

The Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (CLEP), of which I am Chair, provides a strategic lead on all activities relating to Cumbria's economic and business growth. Therefore, the planned £1 billion investment to deliver improvements to the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine (NTP) route was very much welcomed by CLEP, as it is an important strategic priority for Cumbria.

However, I am increasingly conscious of Government's spending constraints and the impact that this is having on the national infrastructure programme and as such I felt it important to re-iterate the importance of this scheme to Cumbria. The A66 NTP scheme alongside addressing important safety issues will also bring considerable economic benefits by easing access to both markets and people thereby supporting Cumbria's ambitious growth proposals.

Cumbria is the most self-contained economic geography in England with over 96% of the population living and working in the county, a position that is unsustainable as the county has a declining working age population. It is therefore essential that Cumbria can reach out into neighbouring geographies to increase its labour and skills supply, with the A66 NTP being an important route to help achieve this. Increasing inward



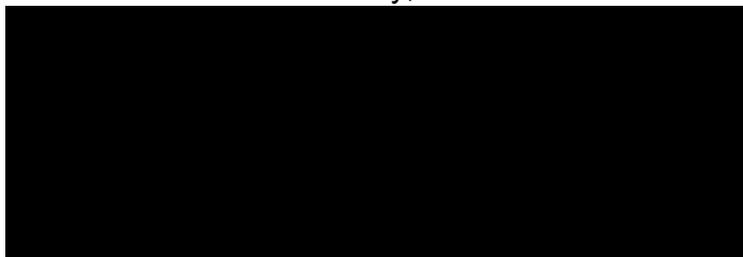
commuting would not only increase labour supply to Cumbria but would also provide employment opportunities for colleagues along the A66 corridor.

Cumbria's visitor economy shrunk by 43% pre and post pandemic economy, with the sector still trading significantly below pre-pandemic levels, as international trade has yet to fully return. This means that local markets are increasingly important with the need to extend both the frequency and length of stays. The improved journey time reliability on the A66 will help facilitate increased visitor activity.

Finally, the congestion experienced at Junction 40 of the M6 and the surrounding areas in Penrith is also acting as a drag on productivity, an area in which Cumbria's performance needs to improve, given that this has declined since 2015.

I would ask that you and the Department for Transport continue to support this important scheme, which will help deliver Cumbria's economic growth aspirations.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Inglewood
Chair, Cumbria LEP



Department
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary
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16 May 2023

Dear *Lord Inglewood,*

Thank you for your letter of 27 April, about spending constraints and concerns about the delivery of the A66 Northern Trans-Pennine project.

The A66 project is a named scheme in the Road Investment Strategy 2 (2020-25) and is a Project Speed pathfinder, which was announced in 2020 by then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP. I understand that the project is a strategic priority for the Cumbria area and indeed the continued development of the north of England.

Its delivery is subject to a number of factors, including National Highways being successful in its application to the Planning Inspectorate for a Development Consent Order (DCO). The application is currently at the examination stage and this is due to close at the end of this month.

The Planning Inspectorate will carefully consider all material submitted and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Transport as to whether the DCO should be granted consent. Should the planning application be successful and subject to approval of the business case, construction of the project is currently scheduled to commence in 2024.

Thank you for your interest in and support for the A66 project. National Highways will continue to make scheme delivery announcements on the project website as soon as new information becomes available. You are also welcome to maintain communication with the National Highways project team and the Department.

Best wishes,

RICHARD HOLDEN MP
MINISTER FOR ROADS AND LOCAL TRANSPORT