

CARLISLE'S EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

National Headquarters Competition for Great British Railways - March 2022



FOREWORD

Carlisle MP John Stevenson, alongside cross-party Members from Carlisle City Council, business leaders and key stakeholders, are supporting the city's bid to house the new headquarters of Great British Railways.

In this letter of support, John Stevenson said:

“As Member of Parliament for Carlisle, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the West Coast Main Line, and “Champion” for the Borderlands Growth Deal (which includes a commitment to assess the feasibility of an extended Border Railway) I can tell you that Carlisle is not only a city with a proud and distinguished railway history - it is one with a bright and important railway future.

“I believe Carlisle would be the ideal location for the headquarters of this exciting new organisation. I will briefly set out my reasons why:

“Railway City - Carlisle Station (Carlisle Citadel) is a main station on the West Coast Main Line. As well as being a main station on one of the busiest mixed-traffic railway routes in Europe it is also the northern terminus of the historic Settle-Carlisle railway line.

“Carlisle Station has acted as the terminus for visitors to the Lake District and the Scottish Borders for 150 years now - and the building is a classic example of Victorian railway architecture.

“But Carlisle's history is also an industrial one, with the railways playing a key part in the export of raw material, grains, animals, and manufactured goods – which it still does today.

“The station is to receive a £24 million upgrade this year - which will see the station brought right up to date and coincide extremely well with the possibility of the city being made the headquarters for GBR.

“Location - There is a tendency for those in London to think of Manchester, or Leeds, or York as the north. To people in Carlisle this is often puzzling - to people in Scotland it is simply factually wrong.”



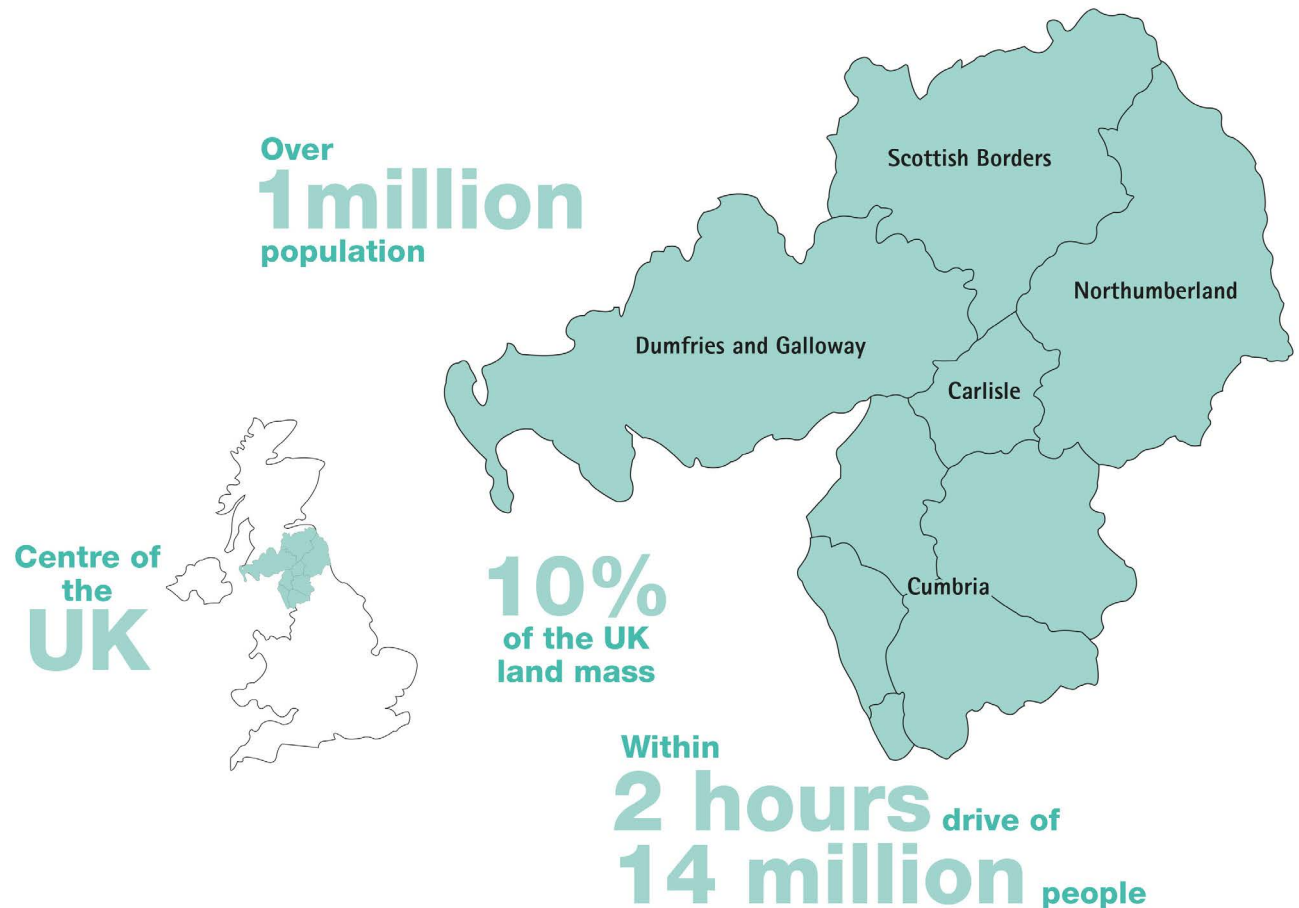
CARLISLE, THE RAILWAY CITY AT THE HEART OF THE UK

Carlisle occupies a strategic transportation rail position as one of the main junctions on the West Coast Mainline linking England and Scotland, and the island of Ireland.

The new Great British Railways (GBR) headquarters based in Carlisle would strongly reinforce the importance of these national transport relationships.

Located in the north of England, Carlisle lies at the heart of Cumbria and is a key sub-regional service centre acting as a retail, leisure, communications, cultural, educational and civic hub for the wider Borderlands region. The Borderlands region has a population of one million and connects the economies and communities of England and Scotland, and provides onward links to Northern Ireland, through its strategic road, rail and air links.

This strategic location reinforces the city's role as a regional transport hub, boasting excellent rail connectivity via the West Coast Main Line, connecting London to Glasgow. The city is set to benefit from HS2 investment that will bring Carlisle within 2.5 hours of London. It has good strategic road links to the rest of England via the M6 and into Scotland via the M74, while the A69 provides a direct route to Newcastle via Hexham to the east. The recent development of Carlisle Airport is a valuable addition.

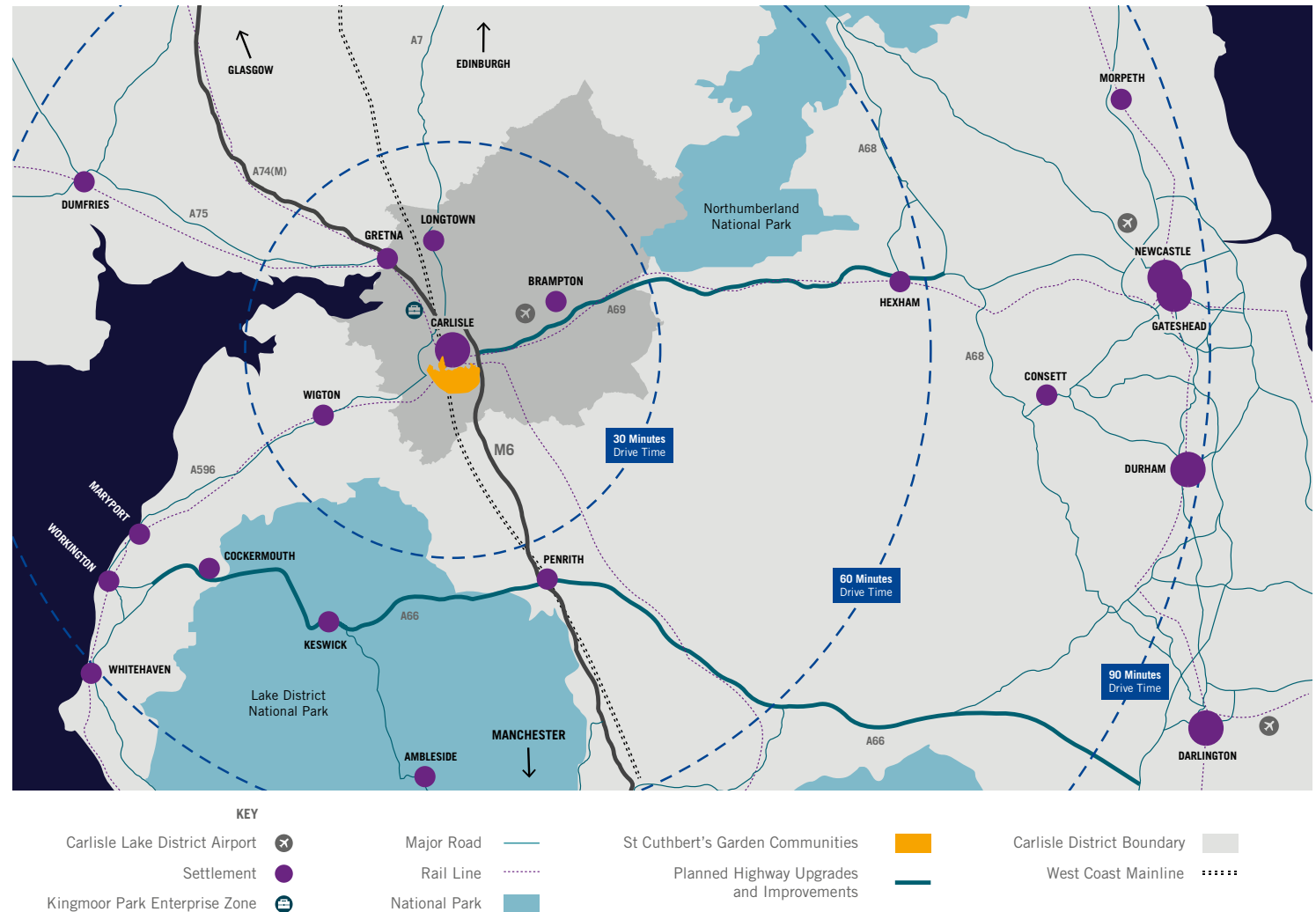


Above: Carlisle in context of the Borderlands region



Dating back 2,000 years, Carlisle is one of 13 Members of England's Historic Cities Network, and its rich heritage is steeped in railway history. Located on the doorstep of the Lake District National Park and Hadrian's Wall, Carlisle benefits from an attractive and varied natural landscape. With its low cost of living, affordable housing, beautiful rural setting and outstanding heritage assets, Carlisle offers a fantastic quality of life.

These factors reinforce Carlisle's status as the regional capital of the Borderlands. It is perfectly placed to lead the way in unleashing the full economic potential of Cumbria and the wider Borderlands, delivering on the Government's levelling up agenda, closing the prosperity gap with other parts of the UK, and leading a clean growth recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.



Above: Carlisle transport links



CARLISLE AS THE HOME FOR GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS: SITES, BENEFITS AND LOCAL SUPPORT

Carlisle can offer a number of existing buildings and potential new-build sites that are accessible and centrally located that could accommodate the requirements of GBR in the short, medium and longer term and provide potential for expansion as the organisation grows and evolves.

We have an active One Public Estate initiative in Cumbria, and this has identified a number of high quality existing buildings and co-sharing opportunities that may suit GBR in the short term such as Carlisle City Council's head office at the Civic Centre. There is also underused space within the railway station itself, which is currently undergoing a £24 million improvement funded through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

Story Homes, one of the largest housebuilders in the north and based in Carlisle would also make some of their modern purpose-built office space available to GBR. In the medium to longer term, there is development opportunity site located in the city centre, directly adjacent to the railway station that could provide a purposed built HQ for GBR in the future.

Locating the GBRs' national headquarters in Carlisle will contribute to addressing the regional imbalance of public sector roles throughout the UK, providing improved employment opportunities and potentially growing the working age population.



Above: Artist's impression, Court Square



Local communities and businesses have been closely engaged in shaping our vision for the future of Carlisle through the Borderlands, Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal initiatives. A key element of the wider strategy underpinning these programmes is to improve the offer of the city, in terms of infrastructure and premises, to make it a viable location for civil service/government department relocations as part of the levelling up agenda. The opportunity to host the national headquarters of the GBR has generated significant interest and support.

Pursuant to this expression of interest we have been working with a number of our stakeholders and partners to develop our application, who have provided letters of support. Please see endorsements on pages 16 and 17.



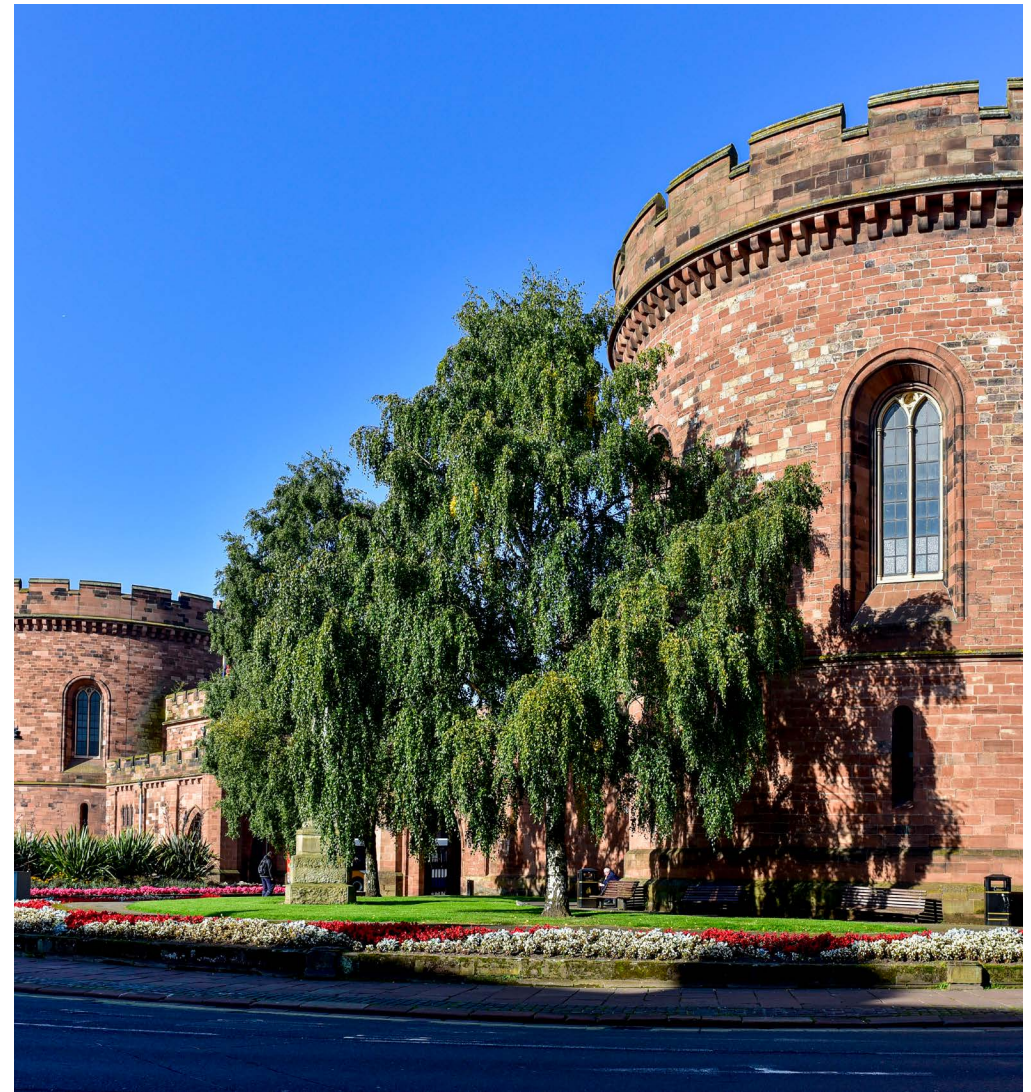
Above: Carlisle Hawker Festival 2021

A CITY WITH A STRONG VISION AND STRATEGY FOR LEVELLING UP

Carlisle has a strong vision and policy framework to drive forward the government's levelling up agenda, which begins at the regional geography and cascades down to the local level.

The £452 million Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal sets out the strategy for Carlisle at the regional level and is focused on supporting business, encouraging innovation and growing the local skills base in order to level up the region. The objective of the Deal is to drive economic growth by tackling the three principal socio-economic challenges: narrowing the productivity gap, increasing the working age population and delivering inclusive growth. Many people and communities in the Borderlands are affected by lack of, or poor, access to services and opportunities and the Deal will contribute to this by addressing digital exclusion, increasing access to quality jobs and closing the earnings gap and improving access to education.

The Carlisle Economic Strategy 2021-26 transposes the objectives of Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal at the Carlisle district level. The objective of the strategy is to ensure that Carlisle continues to fulfil its role as the retail, leisure, communications, cultural, educational and civic hub for the wider Borderlands region. Levelling up within the district is also a key strategic priority as there is inequality of opportunity across our communities. The strategy reinforces the commitment of the Council to deliver inclusive growth that benefits all our communities - from creating new jobs, delivering new homes, providing greater training opportunities, promoting health and wellbeing and improving the leisure and cultural offer.



Above: Carlisle Citadel



The strategy identifies a number of strategic interventions including accelerating housing and population growth, increasing the skills base and productivity, driving the regeneration and transformation of the city centre, improving digital and sustainable transport connectivity and growing the visitor economy.

The priorities of the Economic Strategy have provided the framework and informed objectives for Carlisle's £19.7 million Town Deal, articulated in the Carlisle Town Investment Plan (TIP), which sets the future strategy for the city. Reforming the priorities of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and the Economic Strategy at the local level, the key objectives of the TIP are to grow the working-age population of the city, increase vibrancy and activity in Carlisle city centre and make Carlisle a highly accessible and connected city. The strategy also focusses on strengthening Carlisle's economy, to enable businesses, people and communities to be resilient to economic, social and environmental challenges including climate change, economic exclusion and unemployment, digital exclusion, and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The location of the GBR HQ in Carlisle could generate significant levelling up opportunities. Carlisle's economy suffers from low skills and is underrepresented by professional services, an issue that is identified across the regional, district and local economic strategies. The GBR HQ would encourage the development of a stronger services support sector, including financial, accounting, and legal services. This circular process would have the effect of trapping more economic activity in the local economy and catalyse a 'multiplier effect'.

By encouraging the growth of sectors such as professional services, and creating higher value jobs and earnings, the GBR HQ could drive the achievement key strategic objective of retaining and growing the working population, boosting productivity and improving living standards and opportunity at both the Borderlands regional and Carlisle local levels.

Whilst the GBR HQ may only host a limited number of staff in the early stages, it is likely to draw visitors in significant numbers. A key element of the economic growth strategy for Carlisle is to unleash the latent potential of the visitor economy and grow this sector. The one of the principal functions of the HQ will be to host board and team meetings, conferencing functions, as well as internal and public-facing events. This activity will attract attracts business visits, possibly international visits, and increasing the number of international visitors to the area is a key objective of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

HQs are known to play an outsized role in the local economy and their impact does not merely derive from the headcount, but rather having the strategic decision makers located there. In this regard the GBR HQ would contribute immensely to boosting the city's reputation and profile both regionally and nationally - particularly in terms its position as the capital of the Borderland region.

HQs and their employees generate both direct and indirect revenue into local economies. For the location of the GBR HQ in Carlisle, the city would benefit directly through business rates, council tax and personal spend in local shops and service providers.



CARLISLE, A WELL CONNECTED, ACCESSIBLE AND COLLABORATIVE CITY

Carlisle is a highly accessible city by rail both nationally and internationally, benefitting from excellent north-south strategic connectivity via the West Coast Main Line, linking it to Glasgow, Edinburgh, London and Manchester International Airport as well as east-west connectivity via Tyne Valley Line linking it to Newcastle. Once in Carlisle, the small and compact city centre is walkable within fifteen minutes. The distance from the railway station to the centre and the majority of the proposed sites articulated in this Expression of Interest (EOI) are less than 10 minutes apart, making them highly accessible by foot or by cycle.

Under the duties of the Equality Act, organisations must ensure their premises allow people with disabilities to access services and employment in an equal manner and not substantially disadvantaged when compared with non-disabled people. For GBR this means making reasonable provision for people to gain access to its buildings and to use its buildings and their facilities. Key considerations are car parking, physical access into and within the building, toilets, seating, lighting and PA system.

Of the potential suitable sites in Carlisle for the GBR HQ set out in this EOI, the majority of existing buildings identified are modern, equally accessible premises – the City Council's Civic Centre, the County Council's Cumbria House and Story Homes. The space within the railway station, although suitable, would likely need investment in order to be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. The Central Plaza site, which has been identified as a possible location for a future purpose-built HQ could be developed to provide an equally accessible building.

Carlisle has successfully collaborated across the public, private and third sectors to progress its social, economic and transport objectives.

From a public sector perspective both the City Council and County Council have worked closely together, within the two-tier system, in developing the successful bids for the Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal. The two councils have also collaborated with the local authorities within the Borderlands area - Northumberland County Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council and Scottish Borders Council - to develop and secure the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

From private sector perspective Carlisle City Council has developed the Carlisle Ambassadors initiative, a scheme that brings together more than 200 businesses, organisations and individuals from across the area to create a network to change perceptions of the city and area and raise its profile and attract investment.

The City Council also hosts the Carlisle Partnership, which is made up of over 80 organisations from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Carlisle Partnership aims to improve the general quality of life, environment and opportunity for people across the district, focussing on driving economic growth and creating safe, healthy and prosperous local communities.



Carlisle offers a great location at the centre of the UK for the GBR HQ, that is well connected by rail and road and therefore would be highly accessible to GBR family, customers, private sector partners and wider transport industry organisations. In addition to the favourable location and transport links, Carlisle is digitally enabled with significant future planned investment via the Borderland Inclusive Growth Deal to provide hyper fast connectivity.

Carlisle offers significant opportunities to work with rail, transport and logistics supply chains. Several logistics companies are located in Carlisle including the Stobart Distribution Group, DHL, DPD and Yodel. Story Construction, who have delivered significant projects nationally for Network Rail are also based in the city. Rail Sidings Ltd are also based in the area at Longtown, providing secure and accessible storage for rolling rail stock.

Carlisle is a key manufacturing hub reflecting the city's industrial heritage, which would provide GBR with a fantastic platform to engage with specialist manufacturing companies. Manufacturing expertise and world-leading companies are located in within the local area, including Pirelli Tyres, Nestle and McVitie's and Northern Foods.

The coastline of Cumbria is home to one of the world's largest offshore wind farms and one of the world's largest nuclear energy clusters. Locating to Carlisle would give GBR access to industry connections and supply chains across the clean energy sector via the Britain's Energy Coast Business Cluster. Supported by Sellafield Ltd and the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Cluster includes Tier 1 multinationals and major supply chain businesses.



Above: McVitie's, Carlisle

The Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, particularly through its Economic Forum would provide GBR with an excellent opportunity to collaborate with the economic and environmental sectors within the region. The remit of the Economic Forum is to provide an opportunity for wider stakeholders, with a particular focus on the economic development agencies and the business community to contribute towards maximising the impact of the Growth Deal in stimulating inclusive economic growth.

The Carlisle Ambassadors initiative, hosted by Carlisle City Council, also provides GBR with an opportunity to engage with businesses, organisations and individuals from across the area working across a range of sectors including economy, environment, retail and professional services.

As a new organisation, GBR has the opportunity to create and develop both its role and identity. Part of this identity will be to stimulate and drive the regeneration and levelling up of its host location. Carlisle recognises the benefits and profile that the GBR would bring to the local area and therefore, would put the GBR HQ at the heart of the city centre regeneration programme - along with other key planned investment in the city. The city can offer a number of existing buildings and potential new-build centrally located sites that could accommodate the requirements of GBR as the organisation grows and evolves.



Above: Carlisle Ambassadors event

CARLISLE, A CITY WITH A STRONG RAILWAY HERITAGE

Carlisle is an established railway city, forming the focus for a number of routes because of the geography of the area.

The Newcastle and Carlisle Railway company was established in 1825 and the full railway line between Newcastle and Carlisle was officially opened on the 18th of June 1838. Carlisle's first John-Dobson designed terminus at London Road was replaced in 1847 with the much grander Citadel Station - a gothic design by Sir William Tite, architect of London's Royal Exchange. The 400m façade of Tite's masterpiece looks across Court Square to Telford and Smirke's Carlisle Court buildings - the two Citadels - soon to house the University of Cumbria in a new £78 million campus scheme.

Carlisle station was built for seven railway companies - the London and North Western, London North Eastern, Midland, Caledonian, North British, Glasgow & South Western and Maryport & Carlisle - reflecting its historic and current role as a key junction point for the network. The Grade II* Collegiate Gothic building has recently been subject to a range of major investments - reroofed in 2018 as part of a £14.5 million project and with £6.5 million platform renewal works recently completed.

A further major transformational scheme is imminent, with the creation of a new southern entrance to the Station and a reimagined public realm scheme at Court Square to the value of £24 million. This Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal scheme interfaces with further public realm investment at English Street, the site straddled by the new University campus.



Above: Interior of Carlisle Railway Station

The Victorian Railway network served Carlisle well, allowing it to bring its C19 specialisms of woven goods to new markets. With Newcastle just 60 miles to the east, the areas mineral wealth was also exploited, with spurs from the line running into the mineral rich North Pennines near Brampton. The Brampton spur - this being the Lord Carlisle Railway - also played host to Stephenson's Rocket from 1836 until it was acquired by the Patent Office Museum in 1862. Therefore, one of the key icons of the early Railway Age was preserved for posterity before finding a resting place in what became the Science Museum in 1909.

In terms of existing rail employment, services and innovation, Carlisle has a number of organisations with a presence and operation in the city, reflecting its importance a rail transport hub. Direct Rail Services (DRS) was established in 1995 as a supplier of transport and associated services to the nuclear industry and is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority. Over the last 25 years it has expanded to become one of the UK's leading national rail freight operators, offering packages of tailor-made rail transport and related services. DRS' operations are delivered from a national network of fully equipped depots and facilities one of which is based in Carlisle.

Colas Rail are a national railway track contractor and a leading provider of infrastructure services, specialising in the installation, renewal and maintenance of track work for light rail, metro, mainline and high-speed markets. Colas, which has a facility at Kingmoor Park in Carlisle, also specialise in the design, construction, and testing and commissioning of signalling and telecoms works - including new and relocated signals, point operating and signal box refurbishment and renewal.

Carlisle considers the opportunity to host the GBR headquarters as a mechanism to preserve and enhance the railway heritage of the city. Renewed interest and recognition of its rail history has arisen as a result of the Borderlands-funded station improvement project and the public consultations that have been undertaken to inform its development. The hosting of the GBR HQ would constitute national recognition of the city's railway heritage, which would enable it profile to be raised further and fully embedded into the wider strategy for developing the visitor economy.



Above: Direct Rail Services facility based in Carlisle

CARLISLE, AN AFFORDABLE CITY WITH A COMMITMENT TO CLEAN, GREEN GROWTH

Carlisle as a potential location for the GBR could make a significant contribution to the financial efficiency for the development and operation of its HQ function.

In terms of accommodation, rental land values are lower in the city than nationally and are likely to remain so, meaning that overheads will be lower in the short, medium and long-term. Some of the potential locations for the HQ identified form part of the local public sector estate and therefore, there is the opportunity for potential cost savings. With regards to employment and staff costs Carlisle is an affordable location for housing in terms of both property prices and rent, which could have a bearing of the level of salaries offered, which in turn, could keep revenue costs down.

The potential location for the HQ within the newly redeveloped Carlisle railway station itself, presents an exciting opportunity for both GBR and the city. A £24 million project to improve the station, funded by the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, is currently in the advanced design stage. Benefitting from committed public funding, this could offer an efficient route to incorporate the HQ within the station complex.

The proposed locations have been shortlisted to maximise the environmental value of the headquarters. All locations have a city centre location and are served by sustainable transports including rail, bus, and active travel. It should be noted that currently developing local cycling and walking plans highlight new segregated cycle routes that would serve all shortlisted locations.

The location of the HQ to Carlisle would create significant public value through the benefits of moving a skilled workforce into Carlisle. Overall, the city has a relatively low-skill, low-productivity economy. The relocation of a skilled workforce to Carlisle would help reverse this picture. Locating the GBR HQ in Carlisle would have significant multiplier benefits on the economy of Carlisle. There is strong evidence that locating head offices and HQ to a new host city can have significant effects on local economies. KMPG estimate that the relocation of the BBC studios to Salford Media City resulted in 2,000 additional jobs. In the long term, the presence of GBR in Carlisle could have a similar albeit proportional effect for Carlisle.

There are also a number of other industries that would gain from locating of the GBR HQ to Carlisle, including the leisure and visitor economy sectors. Recent trends have indicated that these sectors were underperforming, with declining visitor numbers. The presence of the HQ would undoubtedly revitalise these sectors and lead to a substantial increase in the number of visitors to the city.

Based on the long list of potential sites and locations for the location of the GBR in Carlisle, the majority of which are located within the central area, the HQ would have a significant impact on the city centre and high street. The likely level of additional footfall generated by the HQ would contribute to the overall vibrancy and vitality of the city centre. This would make a significant contribution to the objectives for transforming the city centre, underpinned by the successful Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal programmes of encouraging the diversification of the city centre in terms of uses and lowering vacancy rates.



CARLISLE, A CITY WITH AMBITION AND PUBLIC SUPPORT TO RAISE ITS PROFILE

There has been considerable support from the general public and wider stakeholders for an EOI from Carlisle, with a general recognition of the benefits that the GBR HQ would bring to the city in terms of economic development and perhaps more importantly, boosting the regional and national profile of Carlisle.

Edinburgh Woollen Mill relocated their HQ to Carlisle in 2018, which was a major source of pride for the city, welcomed by residents, politician and businesses alike. It was recognised that the investment and associated footfall was a significant boost to the city centre and will support our local economy. The investment by EWM was predicated on Carlisle's growing role as the capital of the Borderlands region, creating new high quality employment in the city and delivering a refurbished city centre building in a key location.

Local residents are immensely proud of their heritage and part of this is associated with the railway industry, which has shaped the development and growth of the city for over 200 years. There are a number of railway heritage groups active in the city, who have worked immensely hard over the years to ensure that the history of the city is understood and celebrated by the local community. These groups wish to see the profile of Carlisle as a railway city raised even further, a platform that could be provided by the GBR HQ.

Our EOI for the GBR HQ forms part of the overall strategy to grow Carlisle and raise the profile of city as the capital of the Borderlands region that encompasses northern England and southern Scotland. The strategy, starting with the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and cascading down through local economic plans is to drive the government's levelling up agenda by addressing the inequality that affects our city and wider region and unleashing its latent potential.

The culture in Carlisle is ambitious, with a 'can do' attitude. We are clear, confident and committed to our levelling up and growth agenda and have pursued and succeeded in securing major government investment through the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, the St Cuthbert's Garden Village initiative and the Future High Streets Fund and Town Deal programmes to drive this forward. The next step in the progress is to begin to build market confidence in the city as a place for development and investment and address market failure. Attracting large organisations to locate the HQs and front-of-house activity helps to raise the profile of the city and build that confidence and ensure the Carlisle become a viable and sustainable location for growth and investment now and in the future.



ENDORSEMENTS:

Mark Rowley, Leader of Scottish Borders Council

“As part of work on the Borderlands Inclusive Deal we recognise the vital strategic transportation rail position of Carlisle as one of the main junction on the West Coast Mainline linking England and Scotland, and the island of Ireland. The new headquarters based in Carlisle would strongly reinforce the importance of these national transport relationships. It would serve to strengthen the economy of the Carlisle and the wider Borderlands area through the provision of much needed quality jobs and other economic benefits. It would also raise the profile of Carlisle within the UK and the Borderlands area.”

Andrew Mackay, Director, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery

“Carlisle has unparalleled railway heritage but, like a great deal of industrial history in our wonderful city, the scale and significance of this nationally important story has been diluted and is certainly under exploited. How many people are aware that:

- Waggonways, the forerunners of railways, had been in use in Carlisle from 1730s.
- The iconic Stephenson’s Rocket, designed in 1829, was used by Lord Carlisle to move minerals in Carlisle.
- There were seven railway companies based in the city.
- There were five passenger stations.
- In the 1930s, one in nine men worked ‘on the railways’.
- In their day, the marshalling yards in Kingstown were the largest in Europe.

“The list goes on...

“The strategic importance of Carlisle was fundamental to the development of the railways with the city’s relationship to Scotland and the North East paramount in that regard. Should Carlisle succeed in attracting Great British Railways to open their headquarters in the city the intrinsic association between England and Scotland, as so compellingly expressed in the Borderlands Growth Deal, would not only be strengthened, it would flourish once again and send a significant message in support of the UK Government’s Levelling Up agenda.”

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