

Furness: Opportunities and Challenges 2021

A community needs report



July 2021

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Where is Furness	5
The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic	5
Furness in Profile	6
Opportunities	8
Challenges	9
Furness Voices - High and Low	10
Living Standards	12
Health	16
Furness Voices - The younger generation have spoken	20
Education	22
Housing	26
Furness Voices - Business views	27
Employment	29
Transport & Connectivity	32
Crime	34
Furness Voices - Third Sector Views	37
Strong Communities	40
Summary	45
How people and businesses can get involved	45
About Cumbria Community Foundation	46
Acknowledgements	47

Foreword

This report is long overdue.

The town of Barrow and the wider rural area of Furness face some big challenges. But, until now, we have never had a document which sets out all the issues and can act as a road map towards solutions.

This report is vital, not just as a focus on where funding needs to go but also to support Cumbria Community Foundation in bringing more people and investors on board.

And I believe there has never been a better time to galvanise support for change, after our experiences with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The people of Furness have shown the power of their community spirit and willingness to help each other during this crisis.

I think the £25m town centre funding we have secured can also be pivotal in creating improvement.

There is a feeling of determination to go forward better and stronger.

It is essential that this report reaches a wide audience so that we can begin to attract funding and implement change and wrap our arms around the people that need support.

I was born in Ulverston and have lived in Barrow all my life. My dad Brian was chair of Barrow Association Football Club when it was community owned and I was a director for 12 years.

As a local guy who works in the area for my career, I have seen some of the challenges year on year. It is an area of haves and have nots. We have a lot of people in high paid jobs with good lifestyles, and others who are struggling and need support. We have to unlock both sides.

In Furness there is huge community spirit and passion for the area. The diverse skillsets here are second to none and we have industrial capabilities probably unmatched anywhere else in the UK.



The economic strengths and opportunities, the blue-chip companies and the beautiful natural setting are great assets. The potential of the area is huge. There should be nothing negative to say about Barrow and Furness.

I think we have got to wake up. There are a lot of successful people around the Furness area. The problems faced by many people in our community may seem invisible. But I hope this report will wake up businesses and individuals that there are issues here - and also plenty of potential solutions.

There has to be a pathway for everyone in Furness to live a secure, safe, healthy life.

Now, with this report, we have a document which gives us focus and direction to help make the changes the area needs.

Tony Keen, MD of SN Group engineering based in Barrow and Millom, and chair of Cumbria Community Foundation's Furness Committee

Introduction

This report describes the circumstances in which the people of Furness live, their challenges and their opportunities.

It uses key factual information to provide a summary of social needs, barriers to success and community issues. It brings together comprehensive statistics that describe all aspects of Furness. It also contains 'Furness Voices' - extracts from interviews with local people and also the results of exercises held with children across Furness. Together they describe what they believe is special about life in Furness, what needs to be done to improve the area and what makes them most proud. The report also contains a range of case studies of community projects and organisations that address some of the area's most pressing issues.

The creation of this independent report has been led by Cumbria Community Foundation. Its primary objective is to address disadvantage across Cumbria and it does this by promoting philanthropy and managing a growing portfolio of grant-making funds. It has raised and distributed in excess of £50m across the county since 1999 and is home to more than 100 individual and corporate philanthropic funds.

This report is the third in a series created by the Community Foundation and follows the successful Cumbria Revealed (2017) and West Cumbria Opportunities and Challenges (2019) reports.

In February 2021 the Foundation brought together more than 70 representatives of organisations drawn from across the area to actively engage in contributing to what they wanted the report to highlight and say about Furness.

The report has several roles. It is a resource for local charities to plan their work and help write successful bids for funding. It is a reference document for professionals in the public sector planning services and developing regeneration plans. It provides a focus for charitable funders both local and national that wish to prioritise how they invest in the community and it is a call to action for existing and future philanthropists to give generously and strategically in support of the people of the area.

There is a proud history of giving in Furness, from the thousands who raise money every year through the Keswick to Barrow Walk to the family philanthropy that underlies the Sir John Fisher Foundation. We hope that Furness Opportunities and Challenges will be the catalyst for a new generation of giving in support of this special community.

Special thanks to members of the Steering Group that supported the creation of the report. Membership involved representation from senior figures from the public, private and charitable sectors including Barrow Borough Council, Cumbria County Council, the University of Cumbria, South Lakeland District Council, BAE Systems, Cavendish Estates, Forge Europa, Oxley Developments and SN Engineering."



Andrew Beeforth OBE
Chief Executive
Cumbria Community Foundation

Where is Furness?

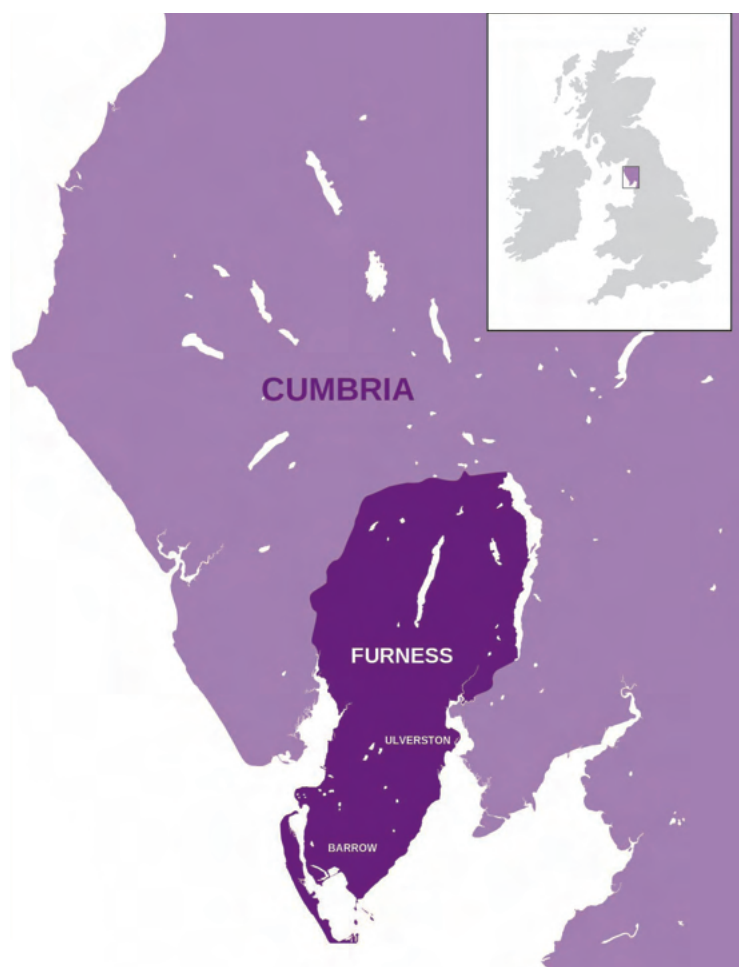
The wards covered in this report make up the area of Furness. They are:

Barrow area wards

- *Walney North*
- *Walney South*
- *Barrow Island*
- *Hindpool*
- *Central*
- *Ormsgill*
- *Parkside*
- *Risedale*
- *Hawcoat*
- *Newbarns*
- *Roosecote*
- *Dalton North*
- *Dalton South*

plus, following wards in South Lakeland

- *Broughton & Coniston*
- *Furness Peninsula*
- *Ulverston East*
- *Ulverston West*



The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

The majority of the statistics in this report are drawn from data sets and information collection that pre-date the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

The economic and health effects have been felt across Furness, the country and the world. There is no aspect of community life that has been unaffected.

We are only just beginning to develop an understanding of what long Covid might mean to people who experienced the disease.

There is a generation of young people whose education has been disrupted and whose future is significantly less certain. Many businesses, particularly in hospitality and tourism, have been adversely affected.

Many families who were living close to financial crisis before the pandemic have found themselves relying on food banks and food projects for survival. The mental health impacts have seen an increase in cases of anxiety, depression, self harm and eating disorders. Incidences of issues such as domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse have all increased.

The long-term impact cannot be accurately predicted. However, what is certain is that all of the major issues highlighted in this report will be exacerbated by the pandemic.

The major positive outcome of the pandemic has been the way people, businesses and communities have come together in support of each other. The challenge going forward is to sustain and harness the positive energy generated across Furness.

Furness in Profile

Furness is a distinct entity separated from the rest of the UK by mountains and water.

Some 250 square miles in size, with 90,521 inhabitants, its borders are defined by the Lake District fells, England's largest lake, Windermere, the tidal estuaries of the Duddon and the Leven, Morecambe Bay and the Irish Sea.

These natural barriers isolate the area. They also reinforce a sense of identity and community. The people of Furness are resilient, cheerful in the face of adversity, determined and generous.

In this report, we refer to '*Low Furness*' and '*High Furness*'.

Low Furness is the Furness Peninsula, plus Walney Island, while High Furness is a more rural area of farms, hills, forests and lakes to the north.

All of Furness was in Lancashire prior to 1974 but is now part of Cumbria. In local government terms, it is made up of Barrow Borough and part of South Lakeland District.





Most lies within the Barrow and Furness parliamentary constituency although much of High Furness is in Westmorland and Lonsdale and is also inside the Lake District National Park.

People have lived in Furness for thousands of years.

Ulverston received its market charter in 1280 and Furness Abbey was a wealthy Cistercian monastery in medieval times.

The Industrial Revolution changed the area out of all recognition.

Barrow was a fishing village in 1841 but the discovery of haematite deposits – iron ore – prompted a period of rapid growth aided by the coming of the railway.

Today, Barrow Borough – which includes Dalton-in-Furness and Askam – is by far the largest town with 67,800 inhabitants. Ulverston, with a population of 17,558, is the second largest.

Although Barrow's iron and steel industry is long gone, it maintains a proud shipbuilding tradition and manufacturing remains a key component of the local economy.

Essentially, Furness is an area of striking contrasts.

A place where industrial decline sits alongside the technologies of the future, where mountains, lakes and the wide horizons of Morecambe Bay sit alongside the scars of industrial decay, where pockets of extreme poverty sit close to areas of prosperity.

There's nowhere like Furness, where even seekers of Paradise¹ will be satisfied.

¹ Paradise is the name of a hamlet on the A595 between Ireleth and Kirkby-in-Furness.

OPPORTUNITIES



The area of Furness encompasses a **world-class natural environment** including Morecambe Bay and a sizeable portion of the Lake District National Park



The RSA (Royal Society for the Arts) lists South Lakeland in the **top 10** for heritage assets in the UK and Barrow as an area developing its **heritage potential**

Business start-ups are well below average but **51.5%** are still trading after five years, compared to **43.2%** nationally

BAE Systems is the **largest** employer
The **work** at the yard sustains a **large** workforce and a **strong** supply chain



The number of charities is **higher** than the national average
The **charity** and community sector work well together

Barrow is the **second** most **affordable** place to live in Britain

People in Furness are substantially **happier** with their **area** than the national average



5 secondary schools are rated 'good' by Ofsted

Furness has **strong sporting** and cultural traditions with **higher-than-average** participation rates



Ulverston is an **eclectic** and **vibrant** town with internationally recognised **festivals**

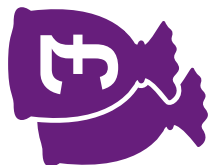


The levels of **all** types of crimes are **lower** than the national average



Barrow contributes **£1.7 billion** in Gross Value Added to the **economy**

Barrow will continue to **improve** its **heritage potential** thanks to major investment



CHALLENGES



Parts of Barrow rank among the **1% most deprived areas** nationally for **health and disability** outcomes



Broadband speeds in **High Furness** are half the national average

Furness' **long-term illness** rate is **23.5%** (17.6% nationally)



Male suicide rate: **26 per 100,000** the UK average is **17.2**



29.3% live in areas classed as among the **20% most deprived** in England



Almost **1 in 4** adults have **NO** qualifications



No Ofsted Outstanding secondary schools in the area



Nearly **one in ten** young people are **unemployed**



14.2% of households live in **fuel poverty**

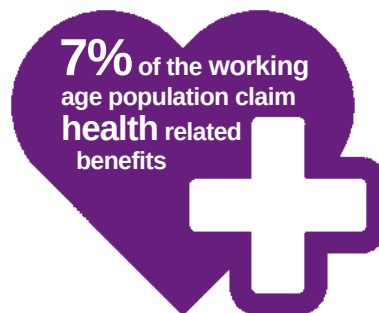


Alcohol related hospital admissions for **under 18** year olds is **three times** the national average



48,233 people in Barrow live in the **worst 20%** of areas for health

Lone-parents make up **26.2%** of all families with children



7% of the working age population claim **health related** benefits

One in four adults are obese



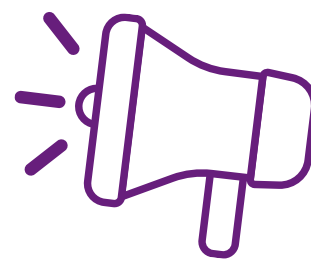
27.1 teen pregnancies per **1,000** (England 17.8)



Child poverty in some Barrow wards is **35%**

Life expectancy varies by **12 years** for men and **8 years** for women between the best and worst performing wards in Furness

Furness Voices



High Furness



Julie Barton knows the area well. Originally from Ulverston, she is HR director at Forge Europa, which specialises in LED lighting, is based in Ulverston and Dalton-in-Furness and trades internationally. During her term as High Sheriff of Cumbria in 2020-21, Julie made her priority tackling social isolation and loneliness – a problem she thinks is significant in High Furness.

“I chose this theme before the pandemic started,” she said. “When the pandemic began communities came together. Ulverston Resilience Group was fantastic with people stepping forward and providing support. Volunteers were amazing and there was tremendous generosity and neighbourliness.”

“It was the same in Grange-over-Sands where I visited their Community Foodshare and other charities like Men in Sheds.

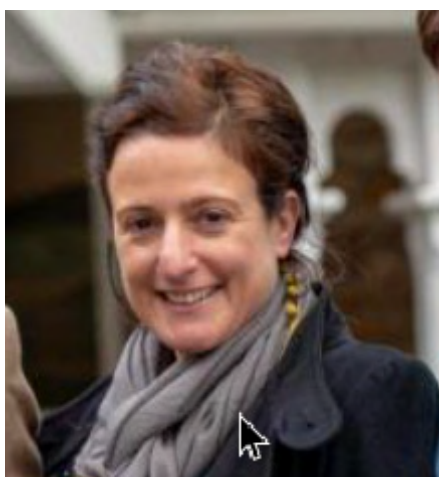
“Some people, especially in the rural areas, remain vulnerable if they are not IT literate.

“Beyond Ulverston, a challenge in the rural areas and towards High Furness and the Coniston Fells, is that there are some people living isolated lives with shrinking communities due to the rise in the number of holiday homes and a reduction in public transport.”

“It has been easier for those who are digitally confident and IT literate to engage with their communities during the pandemic, or gain the right support,”

“But for many residents in rural High Furness poor broadband provision and lack of IT skills has left people more isolated and lonely.”

Lucy Cavendish points out that challenges faced by rural communities can be overlooked in comparison with issues like urban deprivation. Lucy is a trustee of the Community Foundation and runs the Holker Hall estate near Cartmel and said: “The farming life is hard work, round the clock, often for financially little return and this puts great pressure on the family unit.



“Without extended family support, farmers are in danger of becoming increasingly isolated in what is an already lonely and demanding profession.”

Lucy added: “I think the biggest risk is that we lose our skills. People grow up in Cumbria but quite often seek their future elsewhere because they don’t see that there is anything to keep them here.”

Housing also presents a challenge in High Furness.

“It is not plentiful nor cheap,” said Lucy. “I think house prices and availability are a big block to people staying in the area and raising their families here.”

Low Furness



Barrow-in-Furness faces challenges but there is also resilience and energy for change.

The pandemic has generated a wave of determination, innovation and community activity in a borough already known for its collective spirit. Some believe Barrovians may now have a chance to make fundamental improvements for the whole community.

Sam Plum, CEO of Barrow Borough Council, said: When you work and live here you soon recognise there's a real strength of community in the borough.

"One of the things I was struck with is the strong community connection and the amount of community organisations, and just basic neighbourliness. People come together and look out for each other."

Innovative community organisations have long been a feature - for example, ArtGene with its allotments project on Walney Island, and Love Barrow Families which brings local people together to tackle disadvantage.

Early in the first wave of the pandemic Cumbria County Council set up district resilience forums to tackle critical issues such as providing food parcels.

"It came together quickly and has gone from strength to strength," said Sam. "There are about 100 different organisations in the borough area and they are still working together a year later." There's much to be positive about in the town. Barrow successfully bid for £25m from the Government's Towns Fund. The investment plan, named Brilliant Barrow, outlines seven projects including a university-style education campus, business support, housing renewal, events and performance spaces, and new cycle and walkways.

An example of the keenness to make a better future and of people's willingness to embrace innovation is Barrow's New Constellation.

Barrow was the first place to take part in the Lottery-funded project run by 'creative incubator' New Constellations and working with social entrepreneur Hilary Cottam who has written about the welfare state.

Fifteen locals were recruited, including a tyre fitter, police superintendent, GP, shipyard worker and tug skipper, and they spent a week thinking about Barrow and its future.

An array of ideas for improving the town were developed and are now being pursued, such as replacing car parks with playgrounds, turning the town centre into a Covent Garden-style bazaar for independent businesses, and community-run farms to tackle food poverty.

Sam said: "If there was a Furness community investment fund, if people wanted to turn an unused space into a community garden and they need £5,000 - let's do it. There's a real opportunity to do some really different things."

"We have had poverty and deprivation in Barrow for generations. Indeed, the council recently declared a poverty emergency. Whatever we've been doing isn't really working. We want to go forward with something that is better, kinder and more compassionate."

"Barrow is absolutely crammed full of potential, and so many people who have got so many fantastic ideas, and they just need a helping hand to turn their ideas into reality."

Living Standards in Furness

OPPORTUNITIES

- Housing in Low Furness is relatively plentiful and cheap compared with many parts of the UK.
- BAE Systems and its supply chain provide well-paid jobs, secure employment and high-quality training opportunities and career paths.
- High Furness is home to a number of successful engineering and technology businesses.
- A unique natural environment including Morecambe Bay and a sizeable portion of the Lake District National Park.



There are stark inequalities in Furness, not simply between rural and urban areas but even within communities.

BAE Systems in Barrow is the largest employer. There are also other successful businesses in the area. Many who work in them are likely to have secure, well-paid jobs.

Yet often they live cheek by jowl with those on low pay and insecure contracts or struggling to get by on benefits because of illness or unemployment.

Annual household incomes¹ are lower in Furness than the national average by roughly £6,000. Housing costs, particularly in Low Furness, are relatively modest and average household income after housing costs across Furness is £25,592.

Challenges:

- Tackling high levels of youth unemployment.
- Addressing pockets of severe deprivation and child poverty.
- The high numbers claiming illness and disability benefits.
- Fuel poverty.
- Responding to the needs of an ageing population.
- Availability and affordability of housing in High Furness.
- Rural isolation in High Furness.
- Protecting the natural environment to safeguard it for future generations.

Economy

The latest figures¹ for Gross Value Added (GVA), the Government's preferred measure of economic output, show Barrow had a GVA per filled job of £54,010 in 2018. This is the highest in Cumbria and only slightly below the UK average of £56,387, which is inflated by the very strong performance of London.

The largest sector is manufacturing, employing 26.1% of the workforce, followed by health (15.8%) and retail (10.6%). The largest sector in High Furness is agriculture.

The Office for National Statistics classifies the population by sub-groups intended to characterise areas by demographic structure, household composition, socio-economic characteristics and employment patterns.

In Furness, the dominant sub-group is the 'hard-pressed living' making up 43.1% of the population in Low Furness and 16.6% in High Furness.²

This group has less non-white ethnic representation than elsewhere in the UK, a higher-than-average proportion of residents born in the UK and Ireland, and rates of divorce and separation above the national average.

Households are more likely to have non-dependent children and are more likely to live in semi-detached or terraced properties, and to rent. There is a smaller proportion of people with higher level qualifications and above-average unemployment.



Employment and claimant statistics

The proportion of the workforce claiming unemployment benefits³ – Jobseekers' Allowance and Universal Credit – was 4.5% in December 2020, below the national average of 6.4%.

Youth unemployment was much higher, at 9.3%, slightly above the national average.

The proportion of working-age Department for Work and Pensions benefit claimants is 13.2%, compared with the average figure for England of 10.7%.

The number claiming incapacity benefits is strikingly high at 7.0% of the workforce (England average: 4.5%). The proportion claiming housing benefit is below average.

Barrow has the highest proportion of residents providing unpaid care anywhere in Cumbria, a corollary of the high numbers claiming incapacity benefits.

There are far fewer benefit claimants in High Furness where the proportion of claimants is below those in Low Furness and the national average on every measure.

The number of NEETS in Barrow – young people not in education, employment or training – is the second highest in Cumbria but the rate remains below the national average.

Apprenticeship take-up is healthy, reflecting the strength of the manufacturing sector. In the 2019/20 academic year there were more than 700 apprenticeships started in the Barrow district.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Barrow had the fourth-lowest rate of furloughed workers anywhere in England because the area has a relatively low exposure to the hospitality and retail sectors, which were impacted most by lockdown restrictions.

Demographics

Like much of Cumbria, Furness has an ageing population. The proportions aged 0-15, and of working-age (16-64), are below the national average.

This poses a long-term challenge for businesses looking to recruit as those leaving employment on retirement are likely to outnumber young people entering the workforce.

It also has implications for the provision of care for frail older people.

¹ Office for National Statistics

² ONS Output Area Classification 2011

³ Department for Work and Pensions

Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation³ measures the number of people in an area who experience deprivation as a result of:

- *low incomes*
- *exclusion from employment*
- *lack of educational attainment and skills*
- *poor physical or mental health*
- *being a victim of crime*
- *difficulty accessing finance and housing*
- *the quality of their local environment*

The score is expressed as a percentage, showing the proportion of the population living in localities deemed to be among the 20% most deprived in the country.

Furness scores badly overall, with 29.3% of the population living in areas classed as among the 20% most deprived in England.

The only areas where Furness scores relatively well are crime and access to finance and housing. The health deprivation score of 53.3% is particularly shocking and in Barrow this figure is an eye-watering 71.9%.

The Child Wellbeing Index¹ measures similar metrics. Here, Furness is average overall and scores relatively well on crime, education and environment but badly on housing and health.

Across Furness, 14.8% of children are living in poverty (England average: 17%) but there are pockets where the proportion is much higher. In Barrow's Central ward, for example, 35.6% of children are in poverty.

The percentage of lone-parent families with dependent children is slightly above the national average.

Some 14.2% of Furness households are in fuel poverty, where energy costs account for more than 10% of household income. The national average is 10.3%.



Deprivation of all types is less prevalent in rural High Furness and highest in Barrow with Central the most deprived ward followed by Hindpool and Barrow Island.

Where deprivation is found in rural areas, the impacts are exacerbated by the increased distances to access services.

Levels of personal debt are slightly above the national average at £733 per head but levels of mortgage debt are half the national figure reflecting the relative affordability of housing.

¹ Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government

Love Barrow Families



Love Barrow Families works with families who experience multiple issues and problems including poverty, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, and mental health issues. Working together with families to create their own solutions, the not-for-profit organisation delivers services in a way that recognises the strengths all families have.

Alison Tooby, Love Barrow Families' executive director and lead social worker, said: "We work with families to try to understand the whole picture and do the best we can to provide the right sort of help and support to everyone."

Having been founded in 2013, four years later Love Barrow Families became a not-for-profit Community Interest Company. It brought a team of workers from the local authority's children's services, adult social care, and child, adolescent and adult mental health services together into a service for entire families.

Mainly focusing on the most deprived wards across Barrow, the team also works with those with learning needs and people who are lonely. Alison added: "Our families that we work with may have struggles, but they also have experiences that they can pass on and share with other families. We have an expectation that families will give as well as receive."

"Our philosophy is very much about having all our services under one roof, and providing a comprehensive service that covers from birth to old age. Where we differ from other agencies is that we're not offering a programme, it's about looking at what is a family, and what does that family need - and the idea is what services and support can we offer that family?"

"Many families that come to us have been around the system, so we believe in getting it right first time. What's important is that we listen to them, and it's about a whole family approach."

Salvation Army



Lt Jonny Whitmore took over the running of the Barrow Salvation Army last year with his wife, Lt Kat Whitmore.

He said: "We are first and foremost a Christian organisation, but also a social connection for people. We try to focus on emergency care relief for people in crisis - if they need a shower, some food or some clothing - but then we try to refer them on to agencies for that longer-term support."

"We can offer wider support, volunteering, and helping people back into work, and that message is maybe lost a little."

"The main things that people come to us for are issues with their benefits, whether that's them being sanctioned or their payments delayed, meaning they need help from food banks and things like that."

"Quite often when people have been given housing, they have no furniture, so we've provided a few families with what they need to make the house suitable for them or their children."

"There's been a lot of working with others, avoiding duplicating services and plugging the gaps since we arrived in Barrow, which has been great."

Health

Too many Furness residents have poor health.

Statistically, they are more likely than average to suffer from a limiting long-term illness or mental health problems, to self-harm, to be obese, and to die prematurely.

This is frustrating given that many of the underlying factors that enable good health are present.

The Access to Health Assets and Hazards index¹ is intended to give an indication of how healthy neighbourhoods are. It considers the retail environment – the prevalence of potentially harmful fast-food outlets, pubs, off-licences, tobacconists and bookmakers – the ease of accessing health services, access to leisure centres and green spaces, and air quality.

¹ Consumer Data Research Centre

Low Furness, which has relatively poor health outcomes, scores better than average on all these criteria except the retail environment.

Given such a promising base, there must be scope to improve outcomes.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Good access to health services and leisure facilities to promote healthy living, good air quality and a great natural environment.
- Above-average numbers of people who are physically active and lower-than-average levels of binge drinking.
- Close-knit communities can mitigate against loneliness, particularly for older people, and provide support networks for those needing care.
- Increasing recognition within the 'health system' that how people live their lives and the support they have to live well is vital in changing long-term health outcomes.
- An increasingly 'joined up' charity sector providing a range of services, activities and opportunities.



Challenges:

- Targeting poor-health hotspots, notably high rates of debilitating illness and truncated life expectancy.
- Reducing high rates of obesity – particularly among children – and above-average rates for smoking and teenage pregnancies.
- Combating alcohol abuse – the high rate of hospital admissions for alcohol-specific conditions among under-18s is especially troubling.
- Tackling poor mental health as evidenced by high male suicide rates and incidents of self-harm for both sexes.
- Supporting long term lifestyle changes.
- Resourcing community and charity projects.



Outcomes

Furness scores badly for physical and mental health, as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation².

More than half the population (53.3%) live in health deprivation hotspots where outcomes are particularly poor (England average: 19.6%). Similarly, 23.5% have a life limiting long-term illness³ (England: 17.6%).

The statistics for Low Furness are especially worrying. 71.9% live in health-deprivation hotspots and 24.6% suffer from a limiting long-term illness with the highest concentrations in the Central and Hindpool wards of Barrow. Indeed, parts of Barrow rank among the 1% most deprived areas nationally for health and disability outcomes.⁴

Given all that, it is no surprise that Furness has high numbers of people claiming disability benefits⁵. Some 13.9% claim Attendance Allowance (England average: 12.5%) while 8.5% claim the Personal Independence Payment (England: 6.1%).

Once again, Low Furness fares worse with 14.7% claiming Attendance Allowance and 9.4% the Personal Independence Payment. High Furness fares better with lower-than-average claimant rates for all disability benefits.

The pattern is repeated for mental health. Across Furness, 3.3% of working-age adults claim mental health-related benefits (England: 2.3%).

Sick people need to be cared for and, as might be expected, Furness has a high proportion of people providing unpaid care to family members⁵, 12.1% compared with 10.2% nationally.

For some this is a major commitment. 3.2% are providing unpaid care for more than 50 hours a week (England: 2.4%), while 1.5% of children under 15 spend time caring for a family member (England: 1.1%).

Barrow has a high rate of teenage pregnancies⁶ (conceptions under 18 years) of 27.1 per 100,000, well above the average for England of 17.8.

Life expectancy

It is striking that communities just a few miles apart show wide variations in life expectancy⁷.

A boy born in Broughton and Coniston – a rural and relatively prosperous area of High Furness – can expect to live to be 84, well above the national average for males of 80.

Yet life expectancy for a boy in Central or Hindpool wards in Barrow is only 72.

Likewise, a girl born in Broughton and Coniston can expect to make 85 while life expectancy for a girl in Central or Hindpool is 78. The national average for females is 83.

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

³ Indices of Deprivation, 2015

⁴ 2011 Census

⁵ Department for Work and Pensions

⁶ Public Health England

⁷ Office for National Statistics

Healthy lifestyles

Obesity is a factor in a host of health conditions including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, strokes, and liver disease.

Rising levels of obesity⁸ are a public health issue nationally and Furness is no exception.

Some 24.4% of adults are obese, slightly above the national average of 24.1%, but there are significant local variations. In Barrow's Central ward, 27.7% are obese, compared with 21.9% in Ulverston West and only 16.7% in Furness Peninsula.

Worryingly, childhood obesity is a particular issue. In their reception year, 13.4% of children in Furness are obese (England average: 9.6%) although the gap has narrowed by the time they start secondary school.

Obesity is a product of unhealthy lifestyles. Only 25.8% of Furness residents have a healthy diet⁸ (England: 28.7%) while 22.8% smoke (England: 22.2%). On the other hand, 66% are physically active⁹ – slightly higher than the average for England of 64%.

Alcohol abuse is a major health issue. Only 19.1% are classed as binge drinkers⁸, just below the national average of 20%, but Barrow in particular scores badly on all other indicators.

Rates⁶ of alcohol-related mortality, alcohol-specific mortality, and hospital admissions for alcohol-related and alcohol-specific conditions are all above the average for England.

Most worrying is the rate of hospital admissions for alcohol-specific conditions among under-18s. At 100.9 per 100,000 population, this is more than three times the national average.

High Furness falls within South Lakeland where rates for all these indicators are lower, below the national average in every case except hospital admissions for under-18s.

Curiously, ward data shows that rates⁸ of binge drinking are higher in High Furness, suggesting this is a problem primarily affecting more prosperous areas.

Mental health

Suicide rates⁴⁷ are above the national average, especially for men.

In Barrow, the suicide rate for males is 26.0 per 100,000 population (England: 17.2) and for females 5.5 per 100,000 (England: 5.4).

Figures for incidents of self-harm⁶ are very high. In Barrow, the rate for men is 274.9 per 100,000, way above the national average of 139.0. For women, the rate of 505.9 per 100,000 is more than double the average for England of 233.5.

Loneliness is a growing problem, particularly for older people and younger people living alone, and Furness has relatively high proportions of both. Pensioner households⁴ make up 24.3% of all households (England: 20.7%) while 19.0% are one-person households aged under 65 (England: 17.9%). Lone-parent families make up 26.2% of all families with dependent children (England: 24.5%).

Age UK has produced heat maps showing the risk of loneliness for people aged 65 and above. Within Barrow, parts of Barrow Island, Central, Hindpool, Newbarns, Risedale and Walney North wards are deemed to be "very high risk" as are parts of Ulverston.

Self Harm Awareness for All (SAFA)



Self-Harm Awareness For All (SAFA) provides counselling and support for those who self-harm, and for their families and carers.

The Barrow-based charity's primary goal is to empower individuals to take responsibility for their own lives through non-judgmental counselling and trusting support.

Demand for SAFA's counselling service has risen significantly in recent years, with the majority of referrals being for 11 to 19 year olds.

Chairman Ian Burns said: "I think there is a growing need for this type of service across society in general as public awareness is raised, the stigma of admitting mental wellbeing issues is reduced, family relationships become more complex and the effects of social media exacerbate problems for some people. There is also much greater prevalence of mental wellbeing issues being seen in younger children.

"There are several reasons that might contribute to the area having a particular need for our services.



Chairman Ian Burns

"There is probably a greater than average problem with substance abuse in the town which can correlate highly with mental wellbeing issues.

"I think if we add the unemployment rate plus those unable to work due to ill health or incapacity then this

is likely to be higher than average, again with some level of increased risk due to this.

"And the geographical position of Barrow is maybe an issue too - it is not easy to access larger cities, there are fewer opportunities, and it is easier for issues of conflict to emerge and sustain in smaller places."

SAFA supports people through counselling with the number of sessions entirely dependent on the specific case - it is not an "off the shelf" fixed solution.

As with many other charities, it is reliant on the benevolence of organisations who grant funds to charities as well as volunteer staff members.

The future of the service, as ever, relies on securing a steady income stream and Mr Burns can't stress enough how important the charity is for Furness and Cumbria as a whole.

He said: "The whole system appears sub-optimal with too much fragmentation, too many people chasing too little funding, and no clarity of the overall operating model."

"We are improving our operational excellence progressively and continually getting better at everything we do, but there is little recognition of the growing demographic time bomb we have, nor of the impact of poor mental health on the wider economy and on other Government services."

Furness Voices

The younger generation have spoken



The opinions of children in Furness are an important part of this report.

We surveyed nine primary schools in the Furness area with responses from 263 children aged 9 to 11 in years 5 and 6. The Barrow schools were Victoria Academy, Cambridge Primary, South Walney Juniors, Yarlside Academy, Barrow Island and Parkside Academy. There were two schools from Dalton, Dalton St Mary's and George Romney, and Croftlands School in Ulverston.

The five questions asked were:

What do you think is brilliant about living here?

How would you describe the place you live in five words?

What do you think needs to be here for you to be happier?

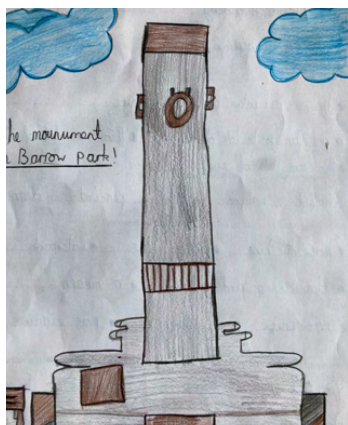
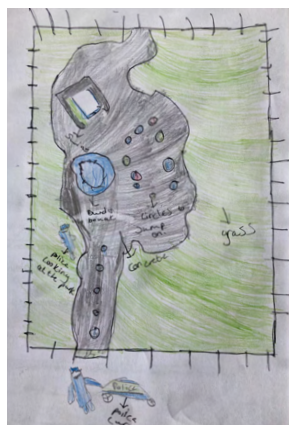
When you get older, do you think you will choose to live here or move to another place?

Why?

The responses to living in the area were very positive, focusing on nature, the sea, walks, family and friends, community and history.

When asked to describe the place they live in five words, the overwhelming majority chose positive terms, including 'beautiful', 'fun', 'peaceful', 'friendly', and 'safe'. Negative responses usually related to litter, rubbish and dog fouling.

There was a range of ideas for improvements, including upgrading parks and playgrounds and more cycle paths and safe spaces. Sport was important, with ideas for trampoline parks, bike trails, and swimming pools. There were also ideas for more entertainment for children aged 10 to 16, including skate parks, arcades and bowling alleys.



There was some mention of crime and policing and a few wrote about housing, care for wildlife and greater tolerance of others. Others wanted more fast food restaurants and cafes, with one child mentioning the need for halal food.

The question about staying or moving away when older produced an almost 50/50 divide, with 128 children saying they would stay and 116 saying they would leave, with 23 unsure. Reasons for staying were family, friends, safety and a beautiful environment. Those who would leave gave their reasons as jobs, travel, higher education and wider experiences.

Cambridge Primary School's headteacher Jenny Lavery said: "If children had moved house, I asked them to share where they preferred and why. They understood that, in Barrow, moving a very short distance could mean a completely different experience.

"They were 'protective' of where they lived as some saw this as a reflection of their parents' choices.

"They were concerned about drugs, alcohol, crime and recent stabbings.

"They could appreciate the history of Barrow.

"Some of them (mainly with parental connections) were aware of the potential 'good jobs' at BAE."



Yarlside Academy

"We have a local beach, Furness Abbey, walks, local swimming baths and gym." (Cayden)

"I would like to live here when I'm older because I know my surroundings and it is a safe place for all ages." (Ruby)

Croftlands Junior School

"It is the best place in the world. It is spacious, safe, with spectacular walks and beside the sea." (William)

"There should be more football pitches, more park equipment and fewer roads so we can go on more bike rides." (Ollie)

"I would like to move away when I'm older as there will be more opportunities and experience." (Fred)

Victoria Academy

"The brilliant thing about living here is that everyone is always kind, helpful and jolly." (Tai)

"I would move away because I plan my future to be in Oxford University or any of the best universities and it is a small town and I don't feel safe in small towns like this." (Ahmed)

"I think Barrow has a good community - we all work together against homelessness, for the less fortunate and people with disabilities." (Ebony)

"I think the community is brilliant and friendly. We have fresh produce, good job employers, a choice of schools, charity shops and nature walks." (Roisin)

Barrow Island Primary School

"I think people need to take more care of this town." (Caitlyn)

"I would like a boat to Piel Island." (Korban)

George Romney

"There are many Muslims so it would be good to have a halal food shop where we can get meat too." (Hiba)

"I think it is a good place to live because it has beaches, The Lake District, The Hoad, mountains, countryside and forest." (Evan)

Parkside Academy

"I want to stay here when I grow up because my family are here. I want to be by the sea with my family and friends. Being with the people I love makes me happy." (Evie)

"I want to stay here because we live in a beautiful place and I want to live near my mum and dad and I would be able to be a lifeboat man like my dad." (Jack)

Cambridge Primary

"It is brilliant living here because there are good jobs, history and BAE Systems." (Tianna)

"For me to be happier I would like people to pick up after themselves, a clean environment and less drug dealers." (Brayden)

South Walney

"I like the sunsets when I am walking along the beach and the hellos that everyone gives when you walk past." (Isabelle)

"Walney and Barrow are amazing and I couldn't think of a place I'd rather be. The community and nature are so lovely." (Lucie)

Dalton St Mary's CE

"I really love the community spirit and the views and sunsets are really nice. I also love Barrow football." (Alfie)

"I will stay here when I get older because I have grown up here and it is just such a good place to live." (Chloe)



Education

Educational attainment lags behind the national average.

Overall, 23.7%¹ of the working-age population have no qualifications. That is slightly above the average for England, 22.5%, but better than the Cumbrian average of 24.2%.

There are, however, wide variations within Furness. In Barrow's Central ward, for example, more than a third (35.1%) have no qualifications.

Furness has significantly fewer people with degree-level qualifications – 22.8% of the working-age population, compared with 24.6% for Cumbria and 27.4% for England.

A plausible explanation is that the availability of well-paid, skilled jobs in manufacturing make vocational qualifications an attractive alternative to a degree for young people in Furness.

The plans to have a University campus in the town will help raise awareness of the relevance and availability of degree level education.

The area has healthy figures for apprenticeship starts although the number has declined since 2015-16 in line with the national trend.

In 2019-20 there were 870 apprenticeship starts² in the Barrow and Furness parliamentary constituency, of which 640 were at 'advanced' or 'higher' level.

Not all were school leavers by any means – 250 were aged 25 or older.

In December 2020 BAE Systems announced plans to accept another 400 onto its apprenticeship trainee programme.

There are 45 primary schools in Furness, the vast majority assessed as 'good' by Ofsted with three rated 'outstanding'. There are no 'outstanding' secondary schools. Most are 'good' while two 'require improvement'.

Attainment at the early-years stages is close to the national averages.



OPPORTUNITIES

- Capitalising on initiatives to improve outcomes for young people such as the South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust and the University of Cumbria's new Barrow campus.
- Building on the area's strong track record for vocational training.
- Carrying through the benchmark performance of pupils at early-years stages to eliminate under-performance at GCSE level.



Challenges:

- Addressing poor attainment, particularly in the more deprived areas of Barrow.
- Improving the performance of schools – no secondary school in Furness is rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted.
- Retraining older workers to fill skills gaps and so adapt to permanent changes in the economy and work patterns following the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ Census 2011

² Department for Education

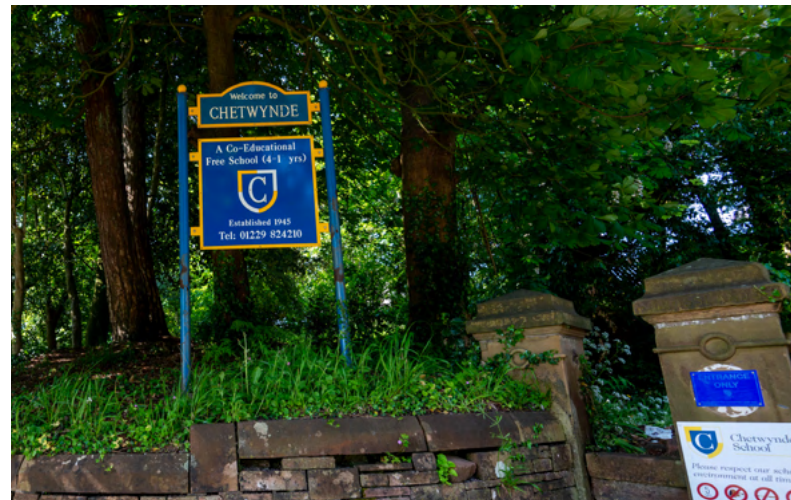
But by the time young people take their GCSEs, Furness has fallen behind. The Key Stage 4 (GCSE) average point score per pupil² is 351.9, below the average for England of 366.3.

Once again, there are wide local variations.

The worst-performing wards are all in Barrow – Central (average score: 209.7 points per pupil), Barrow Island (269.5), and Hindpool (279.8). The best performers are in Barrow too – Roosecote (426.5), Hawcoat (412.7) and Newbarns (383.7). There are initiatives in the pipeline to enhance educational opportunities for young people.

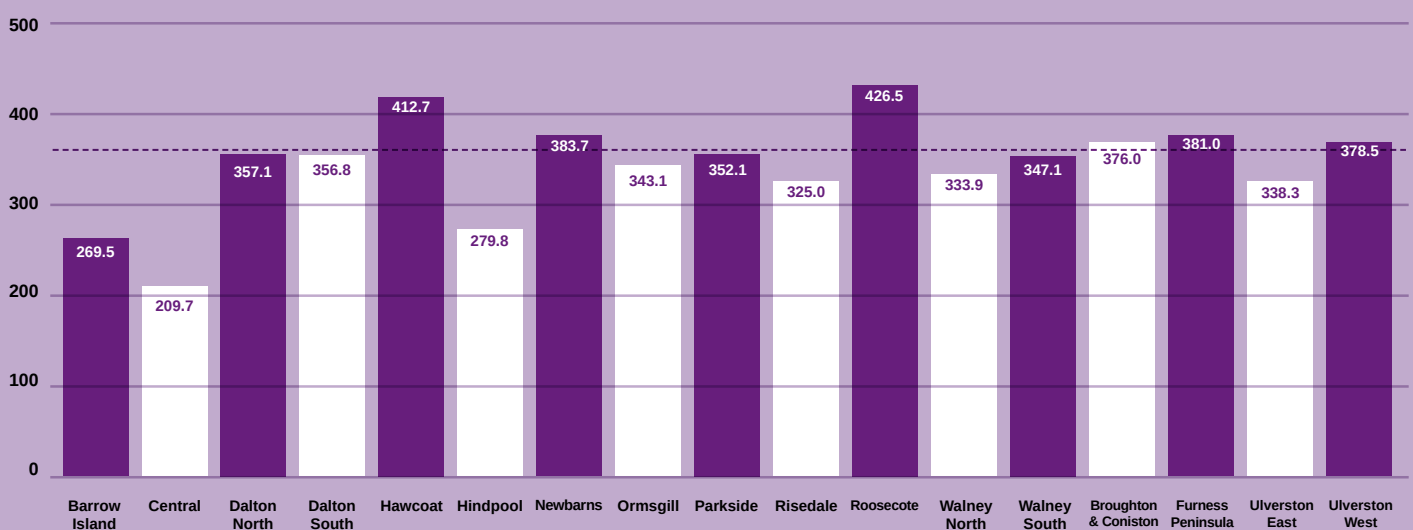
The University of Cumbria plans to open a campus in Barrow by 2024. It has signed a partnership agreement with Lancaster University and is working closely with businesses, including BAE Systems and Furness College.

Meanwhile, Furness College has launched the South Cumbria Multi-Academy Trust and is inviting schools to join. Chetwynde in Barrow is the first to sign up. The trust aims to improve education by sharing staff knowledge and expertise and making available college facilities.



It will stand alongside and complement the success of Furness Education Trust which was formed in September 2019 through the merger of Furness Academies Trust and the Inspired Learning Trust. Currently composed of four academies, one secondary and three primary, it aims to develop best practice in each school across the Trust.

The Key Stage 4 (GCSE) average point score per pupil - 2014 national average is 366.3



GCSE results, by ward

Source- Department for Education (DfE)

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-neighbourhood-absence-and-attainment>)

BAE Apprenticeships



BAE Systems has shown its commitment to recruiting and training young people with a plan to employ a record number of apprentices.

More than 9,000 people across the UK applied for the 800 nationwide apprenticeship roles in spring 2020, while in Barrow, the company is investing £25m in a world-class specialist training facility.

A role with the company is highly coveted in the local area and BAE is pleased that a significant amount of these apprenticeships are taken up by people from Furness.

Phil Athersmith, Head of Early Careers Delivery at BAE Systems in Barrow, said: “The majority of our higher and degree apprenticeship applicants, again, are from the Furness area but we do get a significant number of applicants from across the UK.

“Around 98 per cent of completers are retained. Those not retained tend to decide their future lies elsewhere rather than the company not retaining them.”

BAE offers a range of apprenticeships in Barrow, from intermediate (level 2) to degree (level 6). Each apprenticeship has slightly different academic requirements - some attend college full time in their first year while others attend college or university on a day or block release schedule.

Eligibility is generally factored around qualifications the applicant has or is predicted to achieve.

“The future is really positive. We continue to invest heavily in our Early Careers programmes and our apprenticeship intakes are approximately 40 per cent of BAE Systems UK-wide recruitment.”

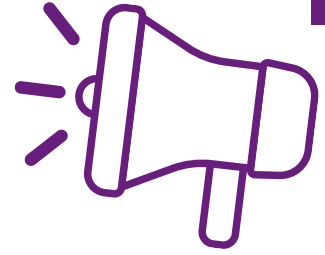
“The training facility is world class and enables BAE Systems to enhance and complement the practical training our apprentices receive from Furness College.”

“The installation of a submarine mock-up will enable apprentices to enhance their skills, knowledge and behaviours in a submarine-simulated environment which will give them first-hand experience before they deploy into ‘shop floor’ placements.”



Furness Voices

Multicultural Communities



There is a varied ethnic community in Furness, even if it only represents a small percentage of the population.

People from Asian countries like India, Pakistan, the Philippines, China, and Thailand, European nations including Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Kosovo, Albania, Greece and from African countries such as Nigeria, Ghana, and Algeria and from the US, have all made the area their home.

Furness Multicultural Community Forum (FMCf) provides services which are tailored to the needs of individuals and groups from different backgrounds, to give them a voice and to help with integration and finding and creating activities that are meaningful to people from diverse backgrounds.

It also plays a vital role in providing information, advice, advocacy, and signposting for a range of issues faced by the multicultural community in the Furness area.

A grassroots community organisation, the FMCf has been in operation since the late 1990s and became a constituted charity in early 2003, working in partnership with other organisations and making sure all the local ethnic groups are being helped and supported, and making local people aware of different cultures.

It provides activities for young people and women in terms of skills-based projects, as well as holding a long-established youth group.

Janine Adams, lead community and youth worker, said: “We support victims of hate crimes and work closely with the local police to ensure these incidents are managed correctly, that victims feel heard and that they understand the process.”

The challenges that people from other cultures face include hate crime, barriers to integration such as learning English, employment, housing, grief (due to loss of home and identity), loneliness, isolation, feeling overwhelmed, asking for/seeking mental healthcare, dealing with the police and immigration paperwork. It is important to note that in many cases there are challenges across more than one area.

“We provide support for people with a myriad of issues around immigration and the right to settle in Furness, welfare benefits, employment, and education.”

Janine continues: “Other challenges are that local people are not showing any interest to learn from the other cultures, but they follow any social media post with myths which have no truth and they try to bully people from other cultures as being here to steal their jobs and claim public funds.

“There is also hatred and racism for the people of other cultures for being successful or for trying to settle in the county.”



Janine Adams

Housing

House prices are barely half the national norm, in part because valuations genuinely are lower and in part because relatively inexpensive terraced homes make up a high proportion of the housing stock.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Housing is affordable across much of Low Furness, certainly in comparison with many other parts of England.
- The plentiful supply of housing means that overcrowding is rare.
- Community-based solutions such as community land trusts provide potential solutions for rural areas where affordability is a greater issue.



Challenges:

- Overcoming difficulties facing first-time buyers and renters in High Furness where demand for second homes, retirement homes and holiday lets has pushed up prices and reduced the supply of homes for rent.
- Improving Barrow's legacy housing stock, much of it dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries and in need of modernisation.
- Tackling homelessness.

The average price of a home across Furness is £164,977¹ (England: £311,439). There is a big variation between Low Furness, where the average is £136,491, and High Furness, £259,473. Prices are highest within the Lake District National Park.

Another way to assess affordability is the savings ratio², the number of months' average earnings required for a 15% deposit. This is 7.4 months for the average home in Furness (England: 10.41). The same ratio for the cheapest homes – as typically bought by first-time buyers – is 5.72 months (England: 6.54) and only 4.12 months in Low Furness.



But for High Furness it is 7.65, well above the national average, highlighting the difficulties faced by first-time buyers in rural areas where they may be competing against purchasers from other parts of the country looking to retire or acquire a second home.

Second homes make up 6.4%³ of the housing stock in High Furness (England: 0.6%). Similarly, the attractive returns to be made from holiday lets in rural areas constrict the supply of homes available to rent.

One organisation which aimed to tackle housing provision in rural areas was Coniston Housing Trust - formerly Coniston and Torver Community Land Trust - which was responsible for the development of affordable houses for rent in both villages. The affordability of housing across much of Furness explains the high proportion of owner-occupiers. 73.8%³ own their homes (England: 64.1%).

Much of Barrow is terraced housing built in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Terraced homes account for 42.3%² of Furness' housing stock (England: 24.5%). Conversely, the proportions of detached homes and flats are below average. Some 42.4%¹ of the housing stock was built before 1918 (England: 20.8%) and only 6.7% since 2000 (England: 14.5%). Where developers are building, they tend to favour larger detached and semi-detached family homes with outdoor space. Examples include Abbey Heights, near Furness General Hospital, which has 142 plots including some of the most expensive homes in Barrow, and Levens View in Ulverston.

The area's relatively elderly housing stock brings its own problems. 7%³ of homes lack central heating with the highest concentration, 25.8%, in Barrow Island ward.

Homelessness is an issue in Barrow. Between October and December 2020, 40⁴ families and individuals were identified as homeless. A further 39 households were eligible for assistance from Barrow Council because they were at risk of homelessness.

¹ Valuation Office Agency

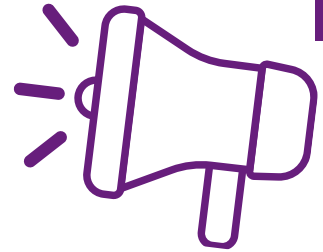
² Office for National Statistics

³ 2011 Census

⁴ Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

Furness Voices

Business Views



Stuart Klosinski is an economic expert and founder of Furness-based Klosinski Economic Development Consultants.

With more than 25 years of experience working in the area, it is his role to help developers and local authorities to design and deliver economic development projects and infrastructure programmes.

He said: “In Furness you’ve got a sharp contrast between the availability of well-paid jobs and all the main concentrations of employment, but some of the wards are the most deprived. In some areas you have 45% of households with no adults in work. “This has been an issue that people have tried to address over a number of years - the lack of aspiration among young people.

“The major employers know the importance of having a local workforce and are investing heavily in apprenticeship schemes and skills programmes. “There’s a lot of talk of young people going away to study and not coming back, but surveys we’ve done of major firms in the area show that they don’t have a problem attracting graduates, they have a problem finding jobs for partners and persuading people to stay here long term.”

Furness’s reliance on the shipyard in Barrow is well-documented, but it is not the sole driver of the local economy. The range of companies operating in the area is vast, and the picture is always changing. Mr Klosinski said: “If you go back to 1990, you had 14,000 people in the shipyard, which was about one in three of the workforce. Compared to 2004, when there were only 3,000, there are now around 9,000. I think the last time I looked at it, we were about 2 per cent less dependent now on the shipyard than we were in 1990.

“The high-end manufacturing research and development is what’s unique about Furness, and when we make things here it is generally for the high value and export markets, and the core industries we rely on are manufacturing, energy and nuclear.”



So what does the future of Furness look like?

“The struggles of high-street retailers are a concern for councils and ministers across the UK, and Furness is no different in that respect. A walk through most towns in the area will take you past numerous empty units and fewer people.

“How urban centres adapt and evolve will also play a key part in attracting new people to the area, and also could be a factor in encouraging them to stay.

“When looking at such a picturesque part of the world, it is fair to ask ‘do we make the most of tourism opportunities in Furness?’

“Furness isn’t viewed as a destination by many people, but this is a realisation that needs to be seen by Furness itself.

“The attractions we need to capitalise on are the festivals in Ulverston, the events that could potentially be in Barrow, the Dock Museum, South Lakes Safari Zoo - which is probably the biggest attraction - and even the destination stores.”



Stuart Klosinski

**Lucy Cavendish, Holker Hall Estate:**

“Building a local market for Cumbrian farm produce through branding and awareness raising might be part of a way forward for farming communities.”

“The advantages of the area are the resilience of Cumbrians and the place where we live – there is the potential for a fantastic lifestyle, a healthy life if you choose, in a place that is beautiful.”

**Jayne Moorby, Marketing Manager, Oxley Group:**

“A key issue is around recruiting people with the right skills. It’s either developing young people in Furness to have the skills that we need to grow the business and/or it’s about making Cumbria an attractive place to live and work to encourage people to relocate to the area.”

“We have a big need in the business here for electronics engineers, software engineers and digital skills to enable us to support innovation and improve productivity through digitalisation but we don’t have a natural feeder university in Cumbria covering these topics so we have to recruit from outside of the area. It’s vital that we align labour market needs with skills provision.”

**Julie Barton, HR Director, Forge Europa, High Sheriff of Cumbria 2020-21:**

“There are a lot of innovative high-tech businesses which compete successfully on a national and international level, based in and around Ulverston.

But we often face problems with recruitment. I think a hurdle to overcome is the brain drain where young people move away to university and don’t come back, as they don’t see the employment opportunities open to them here.”

“Another hurdle is the area’s identification with the Barrow shipyard, the profile of which overshadows our other businesses.”

“There are many other industries in High Furness offering good career progression that need greater visibility. High Furness needs promoting as a great place to live and work, to raise awareness of it being a place of aspiration and ambition where a fantastic life-work balance can be achieved.”

Employment

Manufacturing is central to the Furness economy.

The sector employs 26.1%¹ of the workforce, more than three times the national average.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong manufacturing sector with a highly-skilled workforce.
- Potential to foster dynamic start-ups such as Lakes BioScience.
- Potential to create additional employment in tourism in Low Furness.



Challenges:

- Barrow is heavily dependent on BAE Systems for employment and would be vulnerable if workflow to the shipyard was to reduce substantially.
- Ensuring that schools and colleges continue to supply the skilled workers that employers need, given that the working-age population is shrinking.
- Supporting people to overcome barriers to learning so that they can take advantage of good quality employment.
- Agriculture sector, important in High Furness especially, is facing structural changes to markets and subsidy regime following Brexit.
- Business start up rates are low indicating a lack of innovation and enterprise.
- Creating a diverse economy that supports a range of opportunities including the arts, culture, creative industries and the visitor economy.



BAE Systems is the area's largest employer with a 9,000-strong workforce. It supports many more jobs in its supply chain.

Alongside BAE, the area is also home to a cluster of advanced manufacturing businesses in the electronics, defence and subsea sectors such as Oxley Developments, Marl, Forge Europa, Siemens and Rovtech Solutions.

Other notable manufacturers include Kimberly Clark's paper mill and the candlemaker Wax Lyrical.

Ulverston's biggest employer over seven decades has been its pharmaceutical manufacturing plant, currently operated by GlaxoSmithKline.

In early 2021, it was announced that the business was being sold to German company Sandoz, with the site likely to close by 2025.

Beyond manufacturing, the next biggest employers by sector are health (15.8% of the workforce) and retail (10.6%).¹

The energy sector is significant too with a gas terminal at Rampside and a burgeoning offshore wind industry serviced through the Port of Barrow.

Ørsted's Walney Extension was for a time the largest offshore windfarm in the world and supplies electricity for nearly 600,000 homes.

However, energy is not labour intensive and employs a relatively small number of people.

The international shipping operator James Fisher & Sons is based in Barrow.

Barrow has 1,910 businesses² of which five are classed as large with more than 250 employees, 20 are medium businesses (50-249 staff), 185 are small (10-49 staff) and 1,700 are micro businesses (nine or fewer staff). These proportions are in line with the England average.

However, the number of businesses² per 10,000 working-age residents is below the Cumbrian and national averages, reflecting the dominance of BAE Systems on the local economy.

Likewise, the rate of self-employment² is only 2.8% well below the county average of 13.7% and the England average of 10.1%.

The rate of business² start-ups is also well below average with 55.7 start-ups per 10,000 working-age population, compared with 56.4 for Cumbria and 99.2 for England.

Where businesses do start, they are more likely to survive.² Some 51.5% of Barrow start-ups are still trading after five years, well above the average for England of 43.2%.

20.5% of Barrow's workforce are employed in the public sector² (England: 22.2%) while 79.5% work in the private sector (England: 77.8%).

In High Furness, agriculture is the largest sector.

Farming is facing major changes to the subsidy regime following Brexit.

Coniston, Hawkshead and Grizedale Forest all attract large numbers of visitors.

Tourism and hospitality suffered major disruption during the Covid-19 pandemic and the sector faces challenges going forward. It has come to rely on migrant workers from the EU who make up more than half the workforce at some establishments³ particularly in the Lake District National Park. Many of these migrant workers will no longer be eligible to come under the Government's new points-based immigration policy.

High Furness falls within South Lakeland district, which has a different employment profile² from Barrow. People are more likely to be employed part-time and much more likely to be self-employed. 22.7% of the workforce are self-employed (England: 10.1%).

Only 15.3% of the workforce are employed in the public sector (England: 22.2%), while 84.7% work in the private sector (England: 77.8%).

Business start-up rates² are below average at 72.5 per 10,000 working-age population (England 99.2) but survival rates are very good, with 53% still trading after five years (England: 43.2%).

1 Business Register and Employment Survey

2 ONS

3 Cumbria Chamber of Commerce



Furness Future Leaders Academy



Furness Future Leaders Academy was created to give local youngsters the skills and confidence to pursue their careers and to reverse a trend that sees the majority of leadership posts filled by people from outside the area.

Founded by former Barrow and Furness MP John Woodcock and backed by local businesses, organisations and schools, from 2015 to 2019 the Academy ran a three-week summer school for up to 100 year five pupils each year.

The project aimed to tackle the low attainment and limited aspirations which have held back local youngsters for generations and a total of 508 children from 26 primary schools across Furness benefited from the summer schools.

The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns meant a major adjustment in how it continued to help children.

The Furness Education and Skills Partnership (FESP), which has responsibility for the Future Leaders' Academy, took the decision to repurpose the project last year while everyone got to grips with lockdown restrictions.

Holiday provision was moved to school sites so that pupils from each geographical area could attend. It focused on keeping young people connected, active and engaged in meaningful learning experiences.

The provision was available during each holiday period, apart from one half-term week, during the pandemic. FESP has now secured funding to deliver on five sites, for four weeks of the 2021 summer holiday period and one week at Christmas.

It will continue to apply the collaborative, whole-community spirit of the academy to the even greater and more pressing challenge of helping all young people recover learning time lost during the pandemic.

Improving life chances is the responsibility of the whole community, not just schools, and improving educational outcomes and increasing self-confidence and aspiration is central to breaking the cycle of low attainment and reducing the negative choices many young people make.

It is also critically important for businesses in the Furness area that need a highly skilled workforce to succeed. The challenge is even greater now as the area seeks to bounce back from the pandemic.



Transport and connectivity

Isolation has always been an issue for Furness.

Urban and inter-urban services are good but many rural routes have disappeared leaving some communities with no buses other than school services, isolating those without a car.

The Friends of the X112 group was set up in 2014 to support two bus routes when council subsidies ended. In that time, the charity has raised more than £100,000 to continue operating the services.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Much of Low Furness has access to good public transport and most homes are within easy travelling distance of essential services.
- Promoting community transport initiatives such as Fellrunner and Western Dales, which have been successful in other rural areas of Cumbria.
- Promoting community broadband initiatives such as B4RN, which has provided ultra-fast broadband to rural communities in Lancashire and some parts of Cumbria.



Challenges:

- Improving connectivity – road, rail and digital.
- Overcoming isolation, particularly in rural areas, caused by the withdrawal of bus services and aggravated by high fares where services remain.
- Encouraging the uptake of electric vehicles given the lack of public charging points and the preponderance of terraced housing without off-street parking.



It was also able to reinstate the vital route from Conister through to Barrow as a community-run bus service in 2019.

Funding from the Community Foundation has helped subsidise operator costs.

Barbara Harris, a founding member of the Friends of the X112 group, said: “We need to raise £20,000 a year as a group. The bus route is vital and a lot of elderly people use it so that they can have someone to talk to. For them it’s as important as a health visitor because loneliness is a big issue.”

The A590 - the main link between Furness and the M6 motorway - has been improved with bypasses for Dalton-in-Furness and at High and Low Newton but the road is only partially dualled. Accidents can cause long delays.

The other principal route is the A595, a commuter corridor for Furness workers travelling to the Sellafield nuclear site and for those in Millom employed at BAE Systems in Barrow. This is a slow and dangerous road although funding has been announced to remove a notorious bottleneck near Grizebeck where it passes between farm buildings.

Poor road connectivity is not simply an inconvenience. It is a disincentive to inward business investment and limits travel-to-work and travel-to-learn opportunities as well as access to health services and education opportunities.

Northern Tidal Power Gateways’ proposal for a crossing of Morecambe Bay would shorten journey times to the M6 but the scheme faces objections on environmental grounds and has yet to win government backing.

The main rail link from Barrow to the West Coast Main Line at Lancaster has Furness stations at Roose, Dalton and Ulverston. Trains run hourly and some continue to Manchester Airport.

Another line runs north from Barrow to Carlisle with Furness stations at Askam, Kirkby and Foxfield. The number of trains has been increased – including the reintroduction of Sunday services – but it remains slow. The 85-mile journey to Carlisle takes 2.5 hours.

Bus services are almost exclusively provided by Stagecoach on a commercial basis after Cumbria County Council withdrew subsidies in 2014.

Fares are significantly higher than in metropolitan areas, in particular London, where they are heavily subsidised.

Urban and inter-urban services are good but many rural routes have disappeared leaving some communities – such as Great Urswick and Satterthwaite – with no buses other than school services, isolating those without a car. The decline of rural bus services has led non-car owners to leave rural areas and this is reflected in the statistics for car ownership.²

In mainly urban Low Furness, car ownership is below the national average. 29.9% of households have no car (England: 25.8%). The reverse is true of High Furness where only 14.5% of households are without a car.

An increase in using electric vehicles is a national objective, though this has been slow to roll out in Furness. The numbers of electric cars may be approximated by looking at the presence of charging devices: there are only two public chargers in Barrow, which has a high proportion of terraced homes that lack off-street parking for overnight charging.

This equates to three per 100,000 population and in 2021 there are no rapid chargers at all.³

Across South Lakeland (an area which incorporates a large part of High Furness), however, it appears that electric vehicles are being embraced - there are 72 public chargers, of which 24 are rapid, so there are 68.5 chargers per 100,000 population.

Access to services⁴ is relatively easy in Low Furness but more problematic in much of rural High Furness where travel distances are much greater.

In Low Furness, the typical household is 3.8km from the nearest job centre (England average: 4.6km), 1.9 km from the nearest secondary school (England: 2.1km), 1.0km from the nearest GP (England: 1.2km) 0.6km from the nearest pub (England: 0.7km) and 0.7km from the nearest post office (England 1.0km).

But in High Furness, the typical home is 16.6km from the nearest job centre, 3.6km from the nearest secondary school, 2.6km from a GP, 0.8km from a pub and 1.4km from a post office.

This urban-rural divide is also true of digital connectivity⁵, which is vital for businesses and increasingly for private citizens as more services are delivered online.

In Low Furness, only 0.4% of premises have broadband speeds below the Government's Universal Service Obligation (England 1.8%) but in High Furness the figure is 5.5%.

The average broadband download speed is 29.86 Mb/s in Low Furness and 23.39 Mb/s in High Furness, both well behind the national average of 45.08 Mb/s.



1 AA
2 Census 2011
3 Department for Transport
4 Commission for Rural Communities
5 Ofcom

Crime

The statistics show that Furness is a safe place to live and work.

OPPORTUNITIES

- With relatively low levels of burglary and vehicle crime, the wider Furness area is a safe place to live, work and visit.
- Barrow's success in tackling problems of drug abuse is an opportunity to build on.



Challenges:

- Addressing relatively high levels of violent crime and criminal damage in Low Furness/Barrow.
- Working with local communities to drive down crime rates in Barrow, in particular high levels of anti-social behaviour in town centre wards.
- Supporting victims of crime.

Indeed, the most recent data¹ shows that Furness residents are half as likely to be burgled as residents of England as a whole.

Vehicle crime is notably low with only 1.1 incidents per 1,000 population (England average: 6.0). The same is true of robberies at 0.3 incidents per 1,000 (England: 1.1). Complaints about anti-social behaviour are also below the national average.

Two areas give cause for concern, however. The incidence of violent crime – including sexual crimes – is relatively high at 37.8 per 1,000 (England average: 29.9) as is criminal damage at 9.4 per 1,000 (England: 7.8).

Taken overall, the annual crime rate for Furness of 96.7 incidents per 1,000 population comes in below the national average of 101.9 per 1,000.

Dig a little deeper and, as might be expected, rural areas fare better than urban areas. In rural High Furness, crime rates are below average for every category of offence.



Conversely, Barrow has the highest crime rate in Cumbria² after Carlisle.

Incidences of anti-social behaviour, bicycle theft, criminal damage and arson, drugs offences, possession of weapons, public order offences, robbery and shoplifting are all above the average for Cumbria as a whole.

Within Barrow, the town centre wards of Central and Hindpool are crime hotspots. This is largely due to high levels of anti-social behaviour, which is typically more prevalent in town centres where people congregate to drink and socialise.

Hate crime statistics³ are collated on a force-wide basis and show an upward trajectory from 206 reported cases in 2012-13 to 674 in 2019-20.

Barrow has made good progress in tackling an historical problem of drug abuse.

The latest statistics for drugs offences² show an annual rate of 2.6 per 1,000 population, still above the county average but below the national figure (3.1 per 1,000).

The town came under intense media scrutiny following the deaths of 12 people between December 2017 and April 2018 as a result of taking class-A drugs.

Barrow Drugs Deaths Response Group was set up in the wake of these deaths. It introduced measures such as service referrals and drugs that help reverse opioid overdoses.

A report in 2019 by Lesley Graham, public health manager for Barrow, found the group's work had made a difference and pointed to a "marked slowdown" in the number of deaths.

¹ Police UK data Dec 19 to Nov 20

² Police UK data Feb 20 to Jan 21

³ Home Office

Women's Community Matters



Women's Community Matters, as the name suggests, primarily supports women - but, by extension, it supports children and families too.

The Barrow-based organisation offers a wide range of courses, support groups, activities and appointments, providing support with anything from benefits, housing, domestic or sexual abuse, the police, courts and prison, to mental wellbeing, employment, education and social pastimes.

Weekly drop-in sessions enable women to meet in a friendly women-only environment, and there are groups for women who are pregnant or have recently given birth, as well as activities and initiatives.

A spokesperson for the charity said: "People come to us for a range of things, and while they'll have one thing on their referral forms, we'll meet with them and after 50 minutes we'll get to the real reason. That's standard for this kind of work. "Extreme poverty and domestic violence go hand in hand, and housing is a really big issue at the moment. There's simply a lack of good affordable housing.

"Barrow Council is absolutely brilliant but they obviously have a limit to their housing stock. The problem is that in the private market you have a lot of landlords that are chasing the commercial contractors, and they are pricing the properties out of reach for a lot of locals."

It's a similar story to every charity: Women's Community Matters feels like it could do a lot more work and help more people if the funding was there. Long-term sustainability is the key to

being able to support everyone who needs it.

"We are supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner's office, and we are looking more towards long-term sustainability contracts, but we are like everyone else - the funding isn't there."

While the charity is all about helping women, its remit extends to helping children to stabilise a family as a whole.

Each charity in Furness has its own areas that they specialise in, and Women's Community Matters is no different. They work well together to provide as much support as possible, without creating an overlap.

"There is a high level of communication with the charities we work with and link in with. One, nobody wants to step on anyone's toes, because explaining why you've taken someone else's funding is not a conversation anybody wants to have and, two, we all do all sorts of bits and pieces, but we recognise that each organisation specialises in the area that it works in.

"Yes, we do some work that would be covered by drug and alcohol charities, or housing, or Furness Homeless Support, but when you look at the root of our work, it all comes down to stabilising the mother, and if you stabilise the mother, you stabilise the family."

The Well Communities



Furness, and Barrow in particular, has had the spotlight shone on it in recent years, but not for a good reason.

When 12 people died between December 2017 and April 2018 as a result of taking Class A drugs, the town was labelled “the drug capital of the UK” by tabloid media.

It’s a stigma that the area wants to shake, but the problems can’t just be ignored.

Richard Hancock, senior recovery worker at The Well Communities, which started in Barrow and now covers Kendal and parts of Lancashire, said: “We initially started just doing the drug rehabilitation around eight years ago, because there was a massive need for it.

“We have found that the cohort of people we deal with are switched off to traditional professional services, so this is the way to get them engaged.”

The charity’s flagship project is 30-bed intensive supported housing and a drug and alcohol rehabilitation programme.

“One of the benefits of having all these projects is that if, say, someone comes to our supermarket and they’re struggling with their mental health then we have a programme that they can go on.

“The projects that we run typically lead on to each other, and with our supported housing we encourage all our residents to do voluntary work and give back to the community. Making amends for the past is a big part of what we get people to do as part of their recovery programme.”

A White Paper on sustainable addiction services quoted Well Communities in a parliamentary debate, and it is seen as a successful programme and an example to follow.

The charity signposts people onto the HAWCs (Cumbria County Council’s Health and Wellbeing Coaches), to Mind in Furness and to other agencies, and uses programmes such as its food club to help and engage people.

Applications for a recent hardship fund saw well over half the people that received support come from one postcode [LA14, Barrow Island]. Around a quarter of the money went on white goods, but the other three quarters was food. People just needed food.

“It’s not just poverty though, there are a lot of comorbidities around with mental, physical or substance issues going on. So having somewhere linked in to all those different areas can be really helpful.”

“I know that the NHS runs multi-disciplinary teams, but one thing I’ve always found is that you don’t seem to have one central person and everyone uses different systems and nobody really knows what each other is doing.

“We have a very personal approach though, so we’ll call people up and ask how they are getting on with Mind or other organisations. We’re open to doing whatever is useful for people.

“For lived-experience organisations, national funding isn’t up to the levels we would hope for because there just isn’t enough money out there to do what’s needed.”

Furness Voices

Third Sector Voices – voluntary, charitable, non-governmental and non-profit organisations in Barrow and Furness.

Voluntary and charitable work plays a crucial role in the Barrow and Furness area.

But Third Sector organisations are facing a struggle for funding.

Ali Greenhalgh (pictured right) knows the sector inside out.

She is Cumbria CVS district manager south, based in Barrow. Cumbria CVS is a charity which provides help, advice and training to the sector.

“The Third Sector is really crucial in Barrow and Furness,” says Ali. “The relationship between voluntary organisations and residents and local communities is very strong.

“Organisations are often run by residents who know what the issues are. They are at the heart of the community.

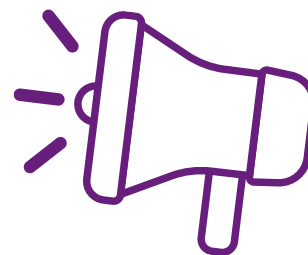
“With cuts, and where councils and public sector organisations can’t meet need, it is the voluntary sector which often responds.”

The sector has shouldered increasing demand as a result of the Covid pandemic, with a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing.

Ali says, “People always think of health in terms of issues like cancer or heart disease, but there is an increasingly crucial role played by voluntary sector organisations that deal with healthy lifestyle, healthy cooking or services like sign-posting people to good quality housing or providing help to get a job. This kind of support improves people’s health and wellbeing.”

Local voluntary organisations have been at the forefront of developing a collaborative model of working.

“It is about achieving great things by working together with other groups and sectors. In Barrow they are particularly good at that,”



She points to the food distribution hubs set up at the start of the pandemic, on Walney and on Barrow Island.

“They have worked closely together and brought in other organisations and are now playing a wider role helping people with issues such as loss of jobs,” she says.

The Drop Zone youth club in Barrow is another example, bringing in partners including the police, health services and council officers.

Although the local communities are very active and innovative in responding to need, their organisations face a battle for survival.

“One of the biggest challenges is securing funding,” says Ali. “It can be especially hard for ongoing projects which are successful, but not new, when they are competing with many others and when funding is tight, and many funds are over-subscribed.”

Ali says small-scale community endeavours can also be overlooked due to grant givers prioritising crisis support rather than initiatives which seem less pressing but have preventative value.

“An example is sports clubs with old facilities,” says Ali. “They work with so many young people as well as adults. They can have a massive impact on young people’s mental health and are often a lifeline. But they often have facilities which are not fit for purpose.



“They can find it difficult to get funding compared with drug and alcohol services for example, or those working with survivors of domestic abuse and rape.” Ali says: “The quality of Third Sector work here is really, really high. We need to be supporting those Third Sector groups more than ever. They were stretched before the pandemic and are even more so now. They want to respond to the residents and communities and need the capacity to do so.”

David Dawson is executive officer with the Ulverston based Sir John Fisher Foundation which distributes around £2m per year to Third Sector groups in the area.

“In a place that’s quite disconnected in terms of geography, people could not get by without the community spirit and engagement,” says David.

“The area is full of talented people. Some of the people that run the charities I know would easily be capable of running large businesses.”

He says that the sector is expanding in response to the pandemic, but funding may not be as readily available.

“Our own Foundation has struggled during the pandemic just in terms of our finances, so we have not been able to support as well as in years gone by,” says David.

Areas of need going forward include linking people to employment opportunities, support for pupils with complex needs, broadening the horizons of young people, supporting mental health, and helping the elderly and isolated.

Improved transport will be key, he says, so locals can access opportunities and work – from visiting Furness Abbey which has lost its train station, to reaching jobs in hospitality and tourism across the

wider county.

Child sexual exploitation is another area of need which is only just beginning to be understood in Barrow and Furness, he says.

He says that successful Third Sector organisations are seeing a huge rise in demand including referrals from public services.

“I think for a period of at least five years they will need increased resource, and that’s going to be tough because finances will be less as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic.” David believes it is crucial that more funders step forward to give.

“There are quite a number of organisations in the Furness peninsula that guide other national charities, give government advice and support, and have won the Queen’s Award. It just points to the excellent quality of the work being done here,” he says.

“The Furness peninsula is an incredible area full of community champions, that just needs a little more support to do a massive amount of future work.

“No penny would be wasted in the area. Every penny would be spent wisely.”

The Third Sector in Barrow and Furness spans a huge range of service from St Mary’s Hospice in Ulverston to Churches Together, from Ulverston Food Waste Project which collects unsold food from shops to be offered to the community on a ‘pay as you feel’ basis to Coniston Mountain Rescue Team which relies on public donations and grants to be able to save lives.

Ford Park



Community Park give opportunities for all.

In the heart of Ulverston, you will find Ford Park – eight acres of beautiful green space - used by a wide diversity of people, and the result of an incredible level of effort and dedication from the Ford Park Community Group and volunteers.

Ford Park demonstrates what local people can do for themselves and provides an incredible example of community enterprise. The courage and commitment of the original volunteers in taking over such a daunting project has been justified by the considerable community benefits offered by Ford Park today.

Ford Park is situated adjacent to Ulverston East Ward, one of the more deprived in Cumbria. Much of the housing in Ulverston is older, many homes are terraced, with small yards and families without their own gardens. The green space of Ford Park Green is important for these families, providing a safe space to exercise, relax and play. Ford Park is a valued community resource, important to local people as well as an important part of Ulverston's heritage, accessible to the community and visitors alike. In addition to hosting major events such as the Lantern Festival, Ulverston Carnival and the Candlelit Walk, the community group provides a wide range of community-based activities and inclusive volunteering opportunities.

Around 24 volunteers participate in the 'Inclusive Volunteering Programme' where vulnerable adults and those with additional needs work alongside fully independent members of the community. They benefit from education and learning opportunities. They learn new skills related to horticulture, gardening and park management as

well as developing confidence and making new friends in a safe and welcoming environment. The volunteering provides an important and valued opportunity for people to come together regardless of their personal circumstances to learn, socialise, give something back to the community and move on personally.

Funding through the Community Foundation helped convert part of the walled Victorian kitchen garden into a nursery so that the charity could grow and sell range of perennials, vegetable plants, herbs and produce. Fruit and vegetables from the garden are also used in the restaurant promoting a field to fork ethos.

Jill Salmon, Chief Executive Officer, said: "The grant enabled the initial development, purchase of stock and training for volunteers and also provided a paid position for an apprentice, which then led to a permanent gardening position. The outlook is for a long-term, sustainable addition to the park that provides an income stream to the organisation and further opportunities for volunteers within the community."

The dedicated team of volunteers play a huge role in helping to maintain and care for Ford Park and in 2019 they were honoured with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – the highest award a voluntary group can receive in the UK.



Strong Communities

Furness is made up of tightly-knit communities valued by residents who are, on the whole, happy with their local area.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Close-knit communities where people are satisfied with their locality and are well disposed towards volunteering and charitable work.
- A dynamic and rich range of community organisations and charities that are increasingly working together.
- New ways of working and initiatives such as New Constellations which are providing people with a voice in shaping their communities.
- Strong sporting and cultural traditions with higher-than-average participation rates.



An impressive 81%¹ agree with the statement: “People from different backgrounds get along well together” (England average: 76%).

68% feel they belong to their neighbourhood (England: 58%), 84% are satisfied with their local area as a place to live (England: 79%) and, for those aged 65 and above, 89% are satisfied with their home and neighbourhood (England: 83%).

This sense of community encourages participation in charity and voluntary work. 24% have given unpaid help at least once per month in the previous year (England: 23%) while Furness has 3.0 active charities per 1,000 population (England: 2.6%).

Furness scores marginally below the national average, however, when it comes to influencing decision-making, perhaps reflecting its remoteness from the seat of local government for Cumbria in Carlisle, which is 85 miles from Barrow.

Only 27% of people feel they can influence local decisions (England: 29%) while 13% have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the last year (England: 14%).

Arguably, this sense of disengagement from the political process is reflected at elections. In the 2019 General Election², the turnout for the Barrow and Furness constituency was 65.6%, below the UK average of 67.3%. Turnout in neighbouring Westmorland and Lonsdale was 77.8%.

Challenges:

- Limited local sources of funding and low levels of recognition of the value and importance of charities and community organisations in the wider community.
- Silo working by public agencies and limited capacity in relation to need.
- Overcoming a perception that people have little influence over decisions that affect them.

¹ Census 2011
² UK Parliament

The Charity and Community Sector

Charity Commission data shows there are 244 registered charities within the Barrow and Furness constituency area which broadly equates to the report's area of interest. There are 99 based in Barrow, with 93 in Ulverston and a further 25 in Dalton.

Most of these organisations can be viewed as small, with the majority's income between £100,000 and £1m, with a further six reporting annual income of £1m-plus.

The Barrow and Furness constituency area has the second lowest number of charities in the county (above only Carlisle). Barrow and Furness has one charity for every 355 people. In comparison, Westmorland and Lonsdale has 593 registered charities which equates to one per 143 people.

As noted throughout the case studies and interviews with charity representatives, Furness benefits from the work of vibrant and dynamic non-profit organisations which are serving the community and their beneficiaries well.

Ulverston has a particularly strong community sector with a remarkable programme of festivals, and ownership and management of the Coronation Hall vested with the community.

This value of the community and charity sector was highlighted in the community response to the pandemic. The formation of the Barrow Borough Community Resilience Forum involved a partnership of public sector bodies, 30 charities and more than 100 people. County and district councils chaired the meetings which also involved representatives from health, police and the fire service as well as BAE, Citizens Advice Bureau and other organisations.

At the heart of this were six charities funded by the Community Foundation: The Well, Love Barrow Families, Women's Community Matters, Drop Zone Youth Project, Age UK Barrow, and self-harm awareness charity SAFA.

The group's main aim was to provide support for shielding individuals, in addition to vulnerable members of the community e.g. disadvantaged families, older adults, individuals suffering substance misuse etc. The Resilience Forum received Covid-19 Response Fund grants of £157,643 and supported some 3,000 residents.

Partnership working between charities, community groups and the public sector has been a major positive outcome from the pandemic.

This is not always the case and charities have reported 'silo working' with individual agencies addressing single issues with individuals and families when often needs are complex and require a joined-up, multi-agency approach.

An underlying concern for many groups is insufficient funding for their activities and services.

Sport and Leisure

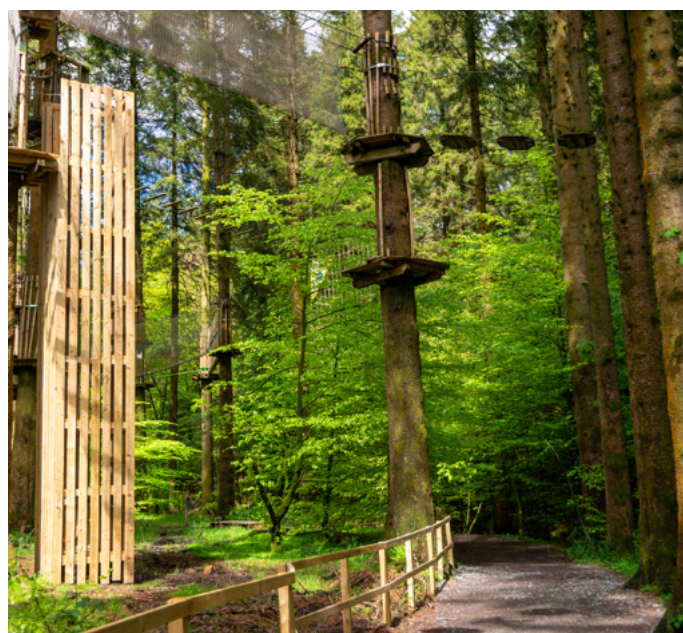
Much of High Furness falls within the Lake District National Park. The Cumbria Way starts in Ulverston while the Walney section of the England Coast Path, a new National Trail, is now open.

Grizedale Forest, managed by the Forestry Commission, hosts international mountain biking competitions and features dozens of cycling and walking routes as well as a zipwire and an education centre.

Furness has a rich sporting history. 66% of residents participate in physical activity³, slightly above the national average.

Barrow AFC returned to the English Football League in 2020-21 after a 48-year absence, and has retained its League Two status for 2021-22.

The town's professional rugby league club, Barrow Raiders, dates from 1875 and competes in League One, the third tier of the RL pyramid system.



Furness has long-established amateur leagues in football and rugby league. There is one football team competing in the Cumbria Women's League: Vickerstown Ladies.

Furness Cricket Club competes in the Cumbria Cricket League. Barrow also has a basketball centre, Hoops, home to Barrow Thorns competing in the National Basketball League. Ulverston has Cumbria's largest indoor and outdoor tennis venue.

The 50-mile Tour de Furness charity cycling race takes place in September while the professional Tour of Britain has visited Barrow and Ulverston in recent years.



Picture provided by Cumbria Tourism

Culture and Heritage

Furness has a rich cultural heritage from Coniston's copper-mining industry to Ulverston's role in the Quaker movement, Furness Abbey's past as a powerful Cistercian monastery and Barrow's shipbuilding legacy.

Much of High Furness lies within the Lake District National Park, which was designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2017.

The Royal Society of Arts ranks South Lakeland – which includes much of Furness – sixth in its national rankings based on data on heritage from more than 120 measures.

Ulverston hosts the late-summer Lantern Procession, an annual fixture for almost 40 years. It also hosts an anchor festival, a flag festival, one of the country's most important printmaking events,

international Buddhist festivals and a festival that celebrates Laurel and Hardy – Stan Laurel was born there.

Coniston Water stages an annual Festival of Speed where racing boats attempt to break water speed records on the lake where Bluebird set a world record and its pilot Donald Campbell lost his life in 1967.

Barrow's festivals include a Medieval Fair at Furness Abbey, a Festival of Transport and a Soapbox Car Race in the town centre.

Signal Film and Media provides workshops and film-making opportunities for young people with the British Film Institute, Art Gene has projects that focus on community engagement, and The Ashton Theatre Group has launched its Theatre Factory initiative to develop local talent.

Barrow Raiders



ADVANTAGE!
BARROW RAIDERS
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

In 2019, Barrow Raiders set up its community arm Advantage!, designed to support people who suffer disadvantage within the town.

Now a sustained but still developing programme, its focus is on improving the physical and mental wellbeing of children, young people and adults, through rugby league and healthy lifestyle initiatives.

Siona Hartley, Barrow Raiders' schools and community manager, said: "Organisations like Advantage! are vital as they step up to the mark to fill in the gaps left by a lack of statutory funding.

"A particular example is the provision we have offered to adults with learning disabilities, as that group has been deprived of flexible and stimulating healthy activity, it could be argued pre-Covid and obviously during the pandemic."

The staff that operate Advantage! aim to make exercise fun and go that extra mile to make their service users feel welcome and important. The message is that sport need not just be something that is watched from the sidelines or on TV.

"This has given them something to look forward to each week and they have definitely made new friends.



"Sporting opportunities and exercise groups for adults with learning disabilities are few and far between, especially in this area. The adults we support were limited to joining the gym and going at times when staff were available to support.

"Exercise was usually limited to a dance at the weekly disco or a walk when staffing allowed.

"Anyone can participate in sport and it should be available for all, regardless of ability."

"The group have told me how much the sessions mean to them. To be able to participate in something so enjoyable, especially in such dark times, has been a lifeline for them."

Advantage! developed through discussions between Raiders chairman Steve Neale and Denis Fay, former National Leader of Education and ex-headteacher of Ulverston Victoria High School, who both saw the potential of the club in serving its historic community.

The title Advantage! is significant because a referee shouts it in rugby when indicating that a team is making progress and should not be held back.



Signal Films And Media



Signal Film and Media, in Barrow, has been a driving force for creatives and artists in the area since 2008 and is committed to providing opportunities for people in line with what they would expect in larger cities.

From its town centre Cooke's Studios base, it runs programmes for youths and adults, and provides courses and workshops for people who want to work in the industry, professionalising their practice and helping them to take steps into a career in the arts and film industries.

Their films have been featured in festivals around the world, and picked up numerous awards and accolades, while a tie-in with the British Film Institute has given young people access to experts and leading names from across the industry.

Co-director Kerry Kolbe said:

"A lot of elements of our work are grassroots, using creativity as a tool to help people develop confidence. They might not necessarily go on to become a film director, but they might get transferable skills and extra benefits of being part of a project."

"On the other side, we've got things that are very much about the work side: the BFI film academy for 16 to 19-year-olds, for example, which is very much about getting a qualification and working out the path to working in the film and TV sector."

A driving factor for Kerry and fellow co-founder Loren Slater has been providing a route for young people in Furness that wasn't there when they were growing up.

"Myself and Loren graduated and came back to the area, and we wanted to do filmmaking but didn't know where to go," said Kerry.

"We started applying for money from the UK Film Council to make films and to put on training courses of our own.

"Growing up in Barrow or Ulverston, working in the media didn't seem like a path you could take. Everyone I grew up with moved away, and the perception is that opportunities in the cities are much better, but I think we have an opportunity with digital technologies, where there are all kinds of skills that can be used from home.

"It's the best chance that Furness has got, in terms of diversifying - jobs that people can do from here but sell to people all over the world. Lockdown has opened our eyes a bit more to what's possible and you don't have to be in the office.

"Everyone these days uses video and has a website, and it doesn't matter where you are in the world to be able to do this kind of thing."



Co Director Kerry Kolbe



Co Founder Loren Slater

Summary

How can people and businesses get involved

Furness is an area of contrasts, where a high wage, technology-based economy is contrasted with some very low incomes, pockets of high unemployment and shockingly poor levels of health and wellbeing.

The Furness peninsula is home to vibrant communities with people who care for each other and who actively volunteer. It enjoys some of the most beautiful mountain and coastal landscapes in the UK and is home to award-winning and innovative businesses that exist separate from the association with the shipyard and submarine building. The shipyard provides a vital economic anchor for the area that supports a significant supply chain and an engineering capability rarely seen elsewhere.

High Furness lacks the stark poverty of central Barrow. However, issues of isolation, distance to services, low incomes in agriculture and tourism, high house prices and poor access to broadband all combine to make life particularly hard for the elderly and challenge the sustainability of the more rural communities.

The charity and community sector has some standout organisations working hard to support local people. These organisations are increasingly working together, sharing resources and maximising their reach into communities. Current regeneration plans are built on the potential shown within communities to help themselves through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Despite this positivity and assets, too many people in Furness live in poverty and too few achieve their full potential. This is a personal tragedy for those it affects and an issue for communities and businesses. This report highlights the most pressing needs and provides an opportunity for people and organisations to convene and work together to make lasting change.

A major issue running through the report is the lack of long-term resources to fund the work of

local charities and community groups. Cumbria Community Foundation is committed to promoting philanthropy and encouraging joint working between charities and the public sector. If we work better and smarter and harness the talents, energy and resources within our communities we will make a measurable difference to the harsh statistics highlighted in this report.



Andrew Beeforth OBE
Chief Executive

Cumbria Community Foundation

How Can People and Businesses Get Involved?

This report is the result of shared commitment across Furness to improve the lives of the people of the area. People and businesses are encouraged to engage actively in their communities, as good neighbours, as volunteers, as participants in local regeneration groups, community organisations and in local civic life.

Cumbria Community Foundation is committed to the long-term support of Furness and, alongside our partners in the public sector and Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service, is able to help direct people towards groups and initiatives that allow talents and energies to be best used.

The Community Foundation provides a range of ways that people and businesses can provide financial support ranging from modest regular donations through to the creation of grant-making funds either now or through a legacy gift. To find out more please contact the office and ask to speak with a member of the Development team or visit www.cumbriafoundation.org

Cumbria Community Foundation

Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) is an independent grant maker that provides philanthropic services to businesses, individuals, public bodies and charitable trusts.

In 2021, the Community Foundation passed the landmark of distributing more than £50 million in grants to community organisations and individuals in Cumbria since 1999.

CCF exists to tackle poverty and disadvantage and to strengthen Cumbria's communities by inspiring philanthropic giving and by connecting people who care to causes that matter.

Its fundholders and supporters benefit from in-depth knowledge of Cumbrian communities and organisations built up over more than two decades of grant-making and investment in the county.

It has responded five times to emerging need in times of crisis by launching successful disaster and emergency appeals. Raising £10m in response to the flooding in December 2015 and distributing £3m in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

CCF is currently Cumbria's largest grant-making charity with annual grant distribution of £3m and endowed assets in excess of £25m. Since 1999 more than £50m has been awarded in grant aid through more than 100 grant-making funds. This has supported more than 4,000 organisations and 8,000 individuals.

CCF distributes grants in Furness through a locally constituted grants committee. It also manages grant-making funds on behalf of a range of businesses,

individuals and charitable trusts that choose to have Furness as their focus.

An independent organisation, its trustees and committee members are drawn from across the county, with expertise in community life, businesses and the public sector.

CCF is part of a global network of 1,400 Community Foundations, which together encourage philanthropy and strengthen the voluntary sectors and communities in the countries, regions and towns in which they operate. Community Foundations are part of the fastest growing philanthropic movement in the UK with 48 member foundations and more than £0.65 billion in assets, and each Foundation is independently accredited by the umbrella body UK Community Foundations.

Winner of the Grantmaking and Funding Award: UK Charity Awards 2015 and shortlisted for the 2017 Awards, CCF has gained local and national recognition for delivering a range of innovative grant-making programmes that target the root cause of social issues, and engage local community groups in developing solutions and funding effective partnerships.

For further information call 01900 825760 or see www.cumbriafoundation.org

Email: enquiries@cumbriafoundation.org



Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the many contributors who enabled the writing of the report, in particular Nick Turner and all at Intro including researcher Catriona Roberts and writers Karl Steel, Julian Whittle, Kath Smart and Mark Walton.

Also the members of the Steering Group including Julie Barton, Neil Doherty, Janet Garner, Jayne Moorby and members of the Community Foundation team. Finally, thanks to all who were interviewed and participated enthusiastically in the launch and creation of the report.

The creation of this report has been made possible by funding from a wide range of contributors including BAE Systems Marine, Barrow Borough Council, CGP Books, Holker Estate Co, Oxley Developments, SN Group and anonymous support from a number of the Community Foundation's individual donors.





CUMBRIA

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Cumbria Community Foundation, Dovenby Hall, Dovenby,
Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0PN

Tel: 01900 825760

Email: enquiries@cumbriafoundation.org

Web: www.cumbriafoundation.org

Cumbria Community Foundation is a charitable company limited by guarantee.
Company No 3713328. Registered in England and Wales. Registered Charity No 1075120.
Cumbria Community Foundation is quality accredited by the Community Foundation Network
to standards endorsed by the Charity Commission



UK COMMUNITY
FOUNDATIONS
GIVING FOR LOCAL GOOD

