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Partnership working to improve lives

Both partners have pledged to build on established activity to support inward investment, help small businesses and promote health and well-being in the county.

Professor Andrew Wathey, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University, and Steve Stewart, Chief Executive of Northumberland County Council, signed a Partnership Agreement to cement collaborative working arrangements which aim to maximise the benefits of working together for both parties.

Under the new agreement, knowledge and expertise from both organisations

will be shared, through joint working, for the benefit of business and public sector partners, communities and voluntary organisations.

To meet the current and future needs of employers more opportunities will be offered to Northumberland residents to access Higher Education, lifelong learning and Continuing Professional Development. This will provide a sustainable knowledge base and help drive economic, social, cultural and environmental regeneration.

The two partners will be working together closely to benefit the county's business community with the aim of developing Northumberland as a 'research and development county', recognising that its economic future will be driven by growth in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and microbusinesses in particular. To meet this need, the University and the Council will support more people to start and grow successful businesses in the county.

Leading-edge academic research will be used to inform, evaluate and improve Council policies on health, education and skills, economic and community development in an effort to improve outcomes for local people.

As an integral element in the partnership, the partners have pledged to support regeneration, specifically with a focus on Ashington. The University and the Council will work with other partners to explore programmes that will enable Ashington to become a healthier place, and which bring together education, culture and research on well-being to transform the town.

Professor Wathey said: "Bringing our expertise and capacity in high-quality research to bear in economic development and regeneration is an important component of Northumbria University's mission. In challenging economic times, partnership working is more important than ever. By combining the strengths of the Council and the University, we aim to build an economic resilience in Northumberland that will have a direct, positive impact on communities, individuals, business and other organisations."

Steve Stewart said "The partnership agreement with Northumbria University is a welcome step in helping the council to drive forward its goals of achieving economic, social, cultural and environmental regeneration in the county. The partnership enables us to focus on joint activity which will reap benefits in terms of better outcomes for residents and businesses in the county."

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