

# Feasibility Report for a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria

THIS WORK IS FUNDED BY THE ESMÉE FAIRBAIRN FOUNDATION



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0.

# Executive Summary





# 0. Executive Summary

## Acknowledgements

A scoping study for a Land and Nature Skill Service (LANSS) for Cumbria was conducted during 2022 by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, building on its recommendation for a National Nature Service and funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The membership of a large working group and other stakeholders in Cumbria have lent their support to the scoping study project team and substantially informed the design of the proposed Land and Nature Skills Service.

Outputs from the scoping study include this Feasibility Report and LANSS Blueprint (Annex 1). A prototype website for the LANSS has been developed by A Digital, Kendal.

## Purpose of a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria

To support a skilled, inclusive workforce fit for the future of land- and nature-based work in Cumbria, meeting the needs of communities and our natural environment.

The LANSS would not be a training provider but would develop access to the following core categories of work-related skills:

<b>FARMING AND GROWING</b>	<b>WATER, RIVERS AND CATCHMENTS</b>
<b>NATURE CONSERVATION</b>	<b>FORESTRY AND WOODLANDS</b>
<b>ESTATES, BUILDING AND MACHINERY</b>	<b>VISITOR AND RURAL ECONOMY</b>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING</b>	<b>PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL</b>	<b>PEOPLE, COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION</b>

## Functions of the Service

- To connect people with learning and training opportunities relevant to land- and nature-based work Cumbria, for adults and young people aged 16+.
- To co-ordinate across the sector to enable the most effective array of learning and training opportunities to be offered.
- To promote land- and nature-based work in Cumbria, with realism and inclusivity.

## User Groups

- Learners and their advisors.
- Providers of learning and training opportunities for the land and nature sector in and near Cumbria.
- Employers in the land and nature sector in and near Cumbria.

The LANSS would reach younger people through schools, colleges, careers services and community events as well as online, and would connect with a nature-based curriculum for Cumbria, which is under development separately.

## Inclusivity

The LANSS is intended to support skills for all, for work across the broad land- and nature- related employment sector. By taking an inclusive approach to all its activities and recognising the diversity of individuals in all of its potential user groups, the LANSS can address barriers to accessing skill development and support equality and diversity in the sector.

## Demand

There is a clear need for a hub or coordinating service to maintain a comprehensive directory of learning and training opportunities across the broad 'land and nature' sector in Cumbria and to signpost such opportunities to new entrants and people already in the workforce. Scope for realistic, inclusive, local careers information for the sector is found. Calls for coordinated development of learning and training in sector to address gaps in provision and match learner and employer demand with training provision are identified.

## Opportunities & Risks

The Feasibility Report details opportunities and risks for consideration in implementing a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria in the near future.

## Service Blueprint

The LANSS Blueprint (Annex 1) is a reference resource for implementation of the service. This sets out the recommendations of the scoping study with regards to the activities, structure, governance, resource requirements and marketing considerations for the service. The Blueprint includes an indicative schedule, budget forecast and funding options.

## Key Recommendations

The Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC) support the recommended implementation of the LANSS Blueprint with consideration to the contents of the Feasibility Report and appendices. FFCC anticipate a facilitative role in establishing governance arrangements for the service and developing funding requests.



1.

# Introduction





# 1. Introduction

This feasibility report sets out an assessment of the practicalities of implementation of a Land and Nature Skills Service (LANSS) for Cumbria.

The proposed LANSS would be a coordinating service connecting people in the existing workforce, potential new entrants and relevant employers with learning and training opportunities in the land and nature sector in Cumbria. The service would collate and promote all types of skill development, knowledge exchange and continuing professional development opportunities as well as courses and apprenticeships.

Visible elements of the service would include a website and small team of staff. Key activities of the service would include maintaining a public database of learning and training opportunities, liaising with learning and training providers to ensure comprehensive and up-to-date listings, and promotion of the service to individuals and organisations in the land and nature sector. The service could also conduct ongoing audits of skills needed and provision of learning and training in the sector, attract and channel funding for training, and inform young people and others about the variety of job roles and skills required in the sector.

The core purpose of such a service would be to ‘support a skilled Cumbrian workforce fit for the future’<sup>1</sup> in land- and nature-related employment in the county.

This feasibility report is one output of a Scoping Study for Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria which took place during 2022.

The Scoping Study was undertaken by a project team engaged by the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission<sup>2</sup> (FFCC) and funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, with the support of a large Working Group providing broad representation across the land- and nature-based employment sector in Cumbria and relevant learning and training providers.

The feasibility report is informed by:

- research undertaken by the project team;
- recent data and reports from other organisations; and
- consultation with a working group of interested parties.

This report is accompanied by a Blueprint for the LANSS (Annex 1) which provides a practical reference guide for implementation of the service. The Blueprint has been constructed through an extensive co-design process.



2.

# Context





## 2. Context

Cumbria, England's second largest county with a population of half a million<sup>3</sup>, supports approximately 19,000 jobs in the rural sector, including in land management, farming, water supply and forestry, as identified by Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership<sup>4</sup>. There are also jobs in the visitor economy, professional services and construction sectors which align with the scope of a Land and Nature Skills Service.

Newton Rigg College was previously a significant local learning and training resource for the land-based sector, providing further education in subjects such as agriculture, horticulture and forestry. It closed in 2021 leaving Cumbria without an obvious hub for this type of activity.

The national and global contexts present multiple challenges, including changes to policy and funding for farming and environmental management post-Brexit, the present biodiversity and climate crises, food security concerns, and major inequalities evident in society. Communities and the land and nature workforce face all of these challenges in Cumbria. It can be anticipated that specialist skills, new approaches and effective sharing of knowledge will be in demand as a result. These changes are starting to be reflected in the types of jobs advertised and skills sought in the sector, and the land management partnerships formed.

In 2017–19, the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission undertook an inquiry, resulting in the *Our Future in the Land*<sup>5</sup> report, with the mandate: “to look afresh at the food and farming system, the countryside and rural economies, and to help shape a vision of a more sustainable future” (p.5). The inquiry recommended 15 actions under themes of ‘healthy food is everyone’s business’, ‘farming is a force for change’ and ‘a countryside that works for all’. Specifically, the FFCC’s recommendations for a National Nature Service and for investment in skills to underpin the rural economy inspired the subsequent work in Cumbria on a Land and Nature Skills Service.

From October 2020, FFCC’s Cumbria Inquiry was in communication with dozens of organisations and individuals considering how to address the needs for a highly skilled, localised workforce. It was apparent there were organisations poised to deliver and already delivering on some of these needs, but there were also gaps in skills, knowledge and training to be filled. Through an initial 12-month collaboration, a proposal for a Land and Nature Skills Service (LANSS) for Cumbria was developed.



Some aims and principles for a LANSS were identified as detailed below.

#### **A LANSS would aim to:**

- provide oversight and linking of the opportunities already available (an information hub);
- provide access to lifelong learning, including opportunities for young people, existing businesses, career changers, and retirees;
- support people who are already working in the sector;
- support those new to the land- and nature-based sector: this includes those from non-farming and non-rural backgrounds and underrepresented groups who find it challenging to access the sector;
- create opportunities for in-person training delivery with immediate relevance to practice.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Principles for a LANSS:**

- Supporting communities to work together for change, moving away from siloed approaches.
- Ensuring the needs of the local communities and landscapes are met whilst delivering on national, and even global, priorities including ecological restoration, net zero carbon, green jobs creation and more.
- Delivering and amplifying the skills and work opportunities needed in our landscapes now and for the future, supporting thriving landscapes and resilient local businesses and communities.
- Providing shared-learning opportunities through our networks, delivering a place-centred approach to issues faced nationally and in the UK in terms of skills gaps and worker shortages.

In January 2022 the FFCC was able to launch a detailed Scoping Study for a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria, funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. The FFCC recognises the critical importance of community-based approaches to delivering practical and radical outcomes<sup>7</sup>.

The Scoping Study remit was to convene a formalised working group with cross-sector representation; engage with young leaders, local communities and businesses; accurately assess the feasibility of a LANSS for Cumbria and, if supported, develop a blueprint for delivery.

Informed by the initial co-design phase, the recent Scoping Study has been focused on a service with the following key features.

**The LANSS would be:**

- Centred in Cumbria with user groups likely extending into neighbouring areas.
- Focused on skills for work in land- and nature-related jobs in upland landscapes.
- Intending to connect people with post-16 and adult learning, training and knowledge exchange opportunities.
- Inclusive, and a resource to improve inclusivity and collaboration in the sector
- Able to support current and future skills needs relating to the local economy, community resilience, nature recovery, climate action and sustainable agriculture.

These initial parameters for the LANSS could form the basis for expansion and development in the future. For example, the service could link with pre-16 educational opportunities or provide inspiration for a similar service in another locality.





3.

# Methodology





## 3. Methodology

The Scoping Study drew evidence from a variety of primary and secondary data sources to reach the recommendations presented in this feasibility study. Data referred to in this report includes findings of a bespoke online survey and other consultation undertaken directly by the project team, plus information drawn from recent reports from the sector.

### **Key sources of primary data gathered by the Scoping Study team:**

- LANSS online survey, May 2022 (see Annex 4).
- Outcomes of consultation with LANSS Working Group membership (Annex 5).
- Outcomes of consultation with stakeholder groups such as a focus group of students at University of Cumbria's Ambleside campus; discussion in relevant sector forums.
- Desk review of current skill development opportunities in the Land and Nature Sector in Cumbria (Annex 2).
- Desk review of hub websites for skill development opportunities (Annex 3).

Secondary data sources are referenced in the footnotes.

### **A co-design ethos established in the preliminary work was carried into the Scoping Study, with methods of collaborative working and consultation undertaken. These included:**

- Early establishment of a Working Group, open to all interested parties. The Working Group included over 80 members representing more than 50 organisations at the time of reporting.
- Regular Working Group meetings with advice and feedback from the membership.
- 1:1 and small group consultation with Working Group members and other parties recommended by the Working Group on specific matters, throughout the Scoping Study.





4.

# Demand for the Service





## 4. Demand for the Service

This section presents an evaluation of the local demand for a Land and Nature Skills Service in Cumbria.

This is set within a much wider national, and global, context of need as indicated above (see [Context](#)). A body of recent policy and literature justifies an urgent focus on skill development for land- and nature-based work and a need to put inclusivity and environmental sustainability forefront in rural employment. Detailed analysis of such is beyond the scope of this study as compelling recommendations and policy and legal commitments have already been made at a national level, such as in FFCC's *Our Future in the Land*<sup>8</sup> report, that recommended the establishment of a National Nature Service, the independent *Landscapes Review*<sup>9</sup>; and the Government's 25-year environment plan<sup>10</sup> and commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050<sup>11</sup>.

### **LOSS OF NEWTON RIGG COLLEGE; IDENTIFIED LACK OF INCLUSIVE COORDINATING SERVICE**

Cumbria recently lost its specialist land-based further education college and there is no single physical hub nor coordinating service for skill development for the land- and nature-based employment sector in the county.

A recent desk review (Appendix 3) of online directories for relevant learning and training revealed that:

- Cumbria is lacking a hub website to signpost and collate training opportunities for the land and nature sector in the county.
- National skills development listings platforms generally do not effectively signpost relevant opportunities in the land and nature sector in Cumbria.
- On dedicated apprenticeship listings websites, apprenticeship location is given as that of the training provider. For the land-based sector this is often a college outside of the county, even if the apprentice will carry out their employed role in a workplace within Cumbria. This can make it difficult to discern what apprenticeships are available in the sector in Cumbria.

Existing networks and coordinating services for learning and training in Cumbria each work with part of the community or a portion of the learning and training opportunities which a LANSS would be designed to collate. Examples include the Farmer Network (supporting farmers in Cumbria and the Yorkshire Dales), Skillshub Cumbria (a collaboration of four further education colleges and University of Cumbria). A Land and Nature Skills Service as envisaged would not compete with such services but should amplify their offer and assist learners to navigate the opportunities in the county.



## LANSS SURVEY; DEMAND FROM SECTOR WORKFORCE

The LANSS online survey, May 2022, gathered opinion from individuals and on behalf of organisations. Some relevant findings are summarised below (further detail can be found in Appendix 4).



**a. Individual perspectives** came from respondents in or near Cumbria who are working in the sector, recently have been, or are aspiring to join the sector.

**A large majority (76%) of respondents felt there are not enough learning/training opportunities in the land-based sector in Cumbria.** Most either felt the level of training was too basic or did not know, only 3% indicated it was too advanced.

**Two-thirds of respondents stated that there is training they would like to complete or skills/knowledge they would like to develop relating to work in the sector.** Anticipated benefits included personal and career benefits, effectiveness in their current role or in the wider sector and a range of environmental and societal benefits.

**Two-thirds of respondents identified difficulty in finding out about learning or training opportunities in the land-based sector in Cumbria as a barrier to accessing these opportunities.**

The most popular way respondents would like to find out about learning and training opportunities in Cumbria in the land-based sector was **through one website**, followed by **on social media**. Less popular channels of information, but still of interest, were individual providers websites, phone or email contact with an advisor, monthly email newsletter and adverts in local papers.



**b. Organisational perspectives** were gained from respondents working in experienced/mid-level and very experienced/senior roles, in organisations operating in the land-based sector in Cumbria.

**The majority of respondents indicated their organisation experiences skill shortages in this sector.** Respondents indicated wide range of skills in shortage including: arboriculture, drystone walling, ecological surveying, horticulture, practical land management, drystone walling, Geographical Information Systems, riparian management and conservation skills. Advisory services, business and people skills were also mentioned, as in: project management, farm business consultancy, environmental consultancy, knowledge of agri-environment schemes, surveying, land agency, working with farmers, office administration, stakeholder liaison and mental health training.

**75% indicated their organisation could benefit from a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria and only 4% that it could not.**



## STRATEGIC DEMAND FROM THE SECTOR AND REPRESENTATIVE BODIES IN CUMBRIA

A review of recent reports from the sector gives an indication of need for a LANSS, as follows.

### a. Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership

The Cumbria Local Skills Report<sup>12</sup> contains an evaluation of skills strengths and needs in the county in 2022. Here, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (CLEP) acknowledges the **issue of 'long term sustainability and suitability of the land-based skills offer** as evidenced by the challenges created by the closure of the Newton Rigg campus in Penrith in 2021' (p.8) and predicts that there will be an **above-average workforce replacement demand** in the 'skilled agricultural and related trades' sector. The report also identifies a **need to increase skills** in relation to 'shifts in environmental land management' (p.8). CLEP advocates **better coordination of skill development opportunities** to meet the needs of long-term unemployed people and young people not in education, employment or training, and employers, stating: 'This will require **innovation and collaboration** across the skills system and with employers and community partners.' (p.14). Finally, the report highlights the need for **'bespoke sector solutions to specific skills needs'** (p.18) with a specific mention of the **land-based sector**. In summary, the Cumbria Local Skills Report identifies and predicts deficits in learning and training for the sector in Cumbria and presents a demand for innovative, collaborative, inclusive and sector-specific solutions.

CLEP's *Restart, Reboot, Rethink: A Plan for Cumbria's Economic Recovery*<sup>13</sup> is a response to the economic challenges of the covid-19 pandemic. Two of the six strategic themes are relevant to land- and nature-based work: 'The Future of Food' and 'Cumbria – The UK's Natural Capital'. The plan details strategic priorities relating to nature recovery including skills development in the workforce, green jobs, nature recovery through farming including accessing agri-environment schemes, and leverage of protected landscape status to attract workers. Strategic priorities in food production include greater diversification into crop production, promoting local food and developing training in the sector. Together these priorities strongly suggest that the skills demanded in the land and nature sector are changing. Therefore, access to suitable learning and training are of economic importance for Cumbria. Across sectors, the report sets out the **need for effective communication of the skills development offer in the county and 'enhancing the offer to meet new and emerging needs'** (p. 34). The strategy pre-dates the closure of Newton Rigg College. CLEP advocates **'innovative approaches to careers education'** (p.35) and **improvements to coordination of apprenticeships and development of traineeships** (p.35). The proposed LANSS would support these strategic demands in the land and nature sector.



### b. Cumbria Chamber of Commerce

Cumbria Chamber of Commerce in its recent *Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer for Cumbria*<sup>14</sup> report acknowledges **significant gaps in Cumbria's land-based further education provision** remaining since closure of Newton Rigg College. The report also picks out the **breadth of skills required in farming** and the **limited suitability of local training in forestry** as employer priorities in the land-based sector. The report then details employer requirements across several sectors in Cumbria, highlighting navigation of the skills development system as a barrier for employers in supporting employee training, and specifying a need for aggregation and coordination of employer demand for work-related training to facilitate efficient delivery. As p.26: 'There is a range of cross cutting, as well as sector specific skills and training that are required but in many cases the supply side is unable to respond to these as this **demand is too intermittent and is not co-ordinated**. There is agreement on the supply side that there is the capacity to respond to these signals if there was **a conduit to draw together this latent demand and create cost effective solutions to delivery**.' This report provides strong evidence of demand from employers for some of the functions of the proposed LANSS, as it is the result of Cumbria Chamber of Commerce's extensive consultations with business, as the county's largest Employer Representative Body. As one of the actions of the *Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer for Cumbria*, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce **recommend: 'Subject to results of the scoping study, develop a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria'** (p. 68).

### c. University of Cumbria, Eden District Council and Cumbria LEP – commissioned report

Considering land-based learning and training, the *Cumbria Strategy for Post-16 Land Based Education, Skills & Knowledge Transfer report*<sup>15</sup> produced by Adrian Banford for the University of Cumbria provides recommendations for Further Education, Higher Education and Continuing Professional Development in the land-based sector in Cumbria, pre-dating the closure of Newton Rigg College. This report informed the initial development of the LANSS concept. Some of Banford's recommendations which the proposed service could implement or support are summarised here:

- Co-ordination of Further Education opportunities for the sector in Cumbria, in the event of Newton Rigg closure
- Support for apprenticeships
- Expansion of provision to cover a wider range of the skills and knowledge required and anticipated
- 'Multi-partner approaches' to further develop land-based learning delivery in Higher Education
- Seeking wider funding sources for Continuing Professional Development delivery,



‘to bring new fields of study to the market and to continue to meet the needs of industry, where no levy or similar scheme exists’ (p. 47)

- ‘Marketing to address ALL ‘customer needs’... course, location, job prospects, and value for money will need extolling.’ (p.48)

#### d. Cumbria Local Nature Partnership

Cumbria Local Nature Partnership’s *Skills Needs Assessment*<sup>16</sup> provides further evidence of demand in relation to nature-related skills. The *Skills Needs Assessment* drew data from online questionnaires and discussion groups with farmers, smallholders, land managers and advisors in Cumbria. 62 practitioners participated in the survey, 85% were NFU members. The report notes the language of ‘recovery’ was contentious and that participants generally were already engaged in nature/biodiversity work on the land they farm or manage. However, a **large majority of respondents wanted to learn more about nature-related skills and topics** such as: species choice for woodland creation (68%), creation of wildlife habitats in river restoration (67%), creation/restoration of small wetland features (78%), managing hedgerows for birds and other wildlife (82%), identifying suitable fields for haymeadow and grassland restoration (71%), how to help/attract bees and other pollinators (86%).

**Over 80% of respondents answered that access to training or specialist advice on nature recovery would be helpful.** In summary, the report suggests a strong demand for learning opportunities relating to ‘nature recovery’ skills, as defined in this assessment, among farmers and land-managers. This supports the rationale for a ‘**Land and Nature Skills Service**’ where the scope of skills supported include those of both ‘productive’ land use (food, timber, drinking water, etc.) and ‘nature recovery’ (habitats, species), interlinked as they are, plus the growing set of cross-sector skills (e.g. project management, environmental funding, public engagement, carbon sequestration).

Learning preferences were also evaluated in Cumbria Local Nature Partnership’s *Skills Needs Assessment*<sup>17</sup>. The most popular options were: on-site training; farm walks; small group/1:1 learning and facilitation/cluster group sessions; reading content on websites; and talks/conferences; each of these were indicated as ‘a great way to learn’ by over 60% of respondents. Most respondents to the *Skills Needs Assessment* questionnaire found time to be the biggest barrier to their preferred learning. Together, this information supports **demand for a large range of learning formats in addition to formal courses of training/study**, which LANSS could be instrumental in promoting.

#### e. Young people and inclusivity

Considering learning and training demand from new entrants, specifically young people, CLEP in *The Futures Framework*<sup>18</sup> strategy document from 2020, states that

Cumbria has a 'large outward migration of young people' (p.7) and forecasts that Cumbria will face difficulty attracting and retaining young people in the workforce 'over the next two decades' (p.3). Although these statements are not sector-specific, the closure of Newton Rigg without a coordinated replacement to date suggests young people and new entrants will be inclined to look outside Cumbria for training, indicating a demand which the LANSS could be involved in addressing within its sector remit. The proposed LANSS would have a significant role in promoting the learning and training offer in the land and nature sector to new entrants and would also be a channel to showcase career information in the sector in Cumbria. It should support CLEP's *Local Industrial Strategy*<sup>19</sup> Objective 1: 'Growing and using our talent pool' (p.8).

Tomorrow's Natural Leaders and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust surveyed representatives of environmental sector organisations for their 2020 report, *Bridging the Gap: barriers and solutions for young people entering the environmental sector*.<sup>20</sup> Barriers to entry identified included study routes not providing the skills required for the roles available, lack of paid internships and training, complexity of running apprenticeships, and employers asking for significant experience which "hampers especially people from less fortunate backgrounds who could not afford the... volunteering abroad or to dedicate all of their free time during studies to a volunteer position because they had to work in a paying job to make ends meet. Solutions suggested include: "Promotion to young people earlier on of the range of opportunities within the environmental sector and the different skills required for different jobs would be hugely beneficial." This is something which the proposed LANSS could support, as a resource hub for land- and nature-based careers information in Cumbria. The *Bridging the Gap* report also highlights the lack of diversity, particularly ethnic diversity, in the environmental sector. Government statistics from 2022 show that ethnicities other than White British and White Irish are all under-represented in the Farming, Forestry and Fishing employment sector in the UK.<sup>21</sup>

The Scoping Study and LANSS service design have inclusivity as a central principle, recognising the potential for greater diversity in the land and nature workforce in the county. The Blueprint (Annex 1) sets out specific activities of the service and means of promotion which can actively support inclusive access to learning and training opportunities in Cumbria and specifically address the information needs of young people and those with limited prior knowledge of/access to learning and training in the sector.

#### **DEMAND IDENTIFIED THROUGH GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS**

Finally, support for the development of a LANSS has been seen in the keen response from a breadth of relevant organisations across Cumbria to participate in the LANSS Working Group (Annex 5) and sustained interest from members



during the scoping study. Recommendations from the Working Group led to consultations with sector groups, representatives and individual stakeholders which have further illustrated demand, informed the Scoping Study and shaped priorities for the service, now reflected in the Blueprint (Annex 1).

### IN SUMMARY

- People encounter difficulties finding relevant learning and training opportunities in the sector in Cumbria, due to factors including limited provision, access to the necessary information and time.
- The needs of the broad 'land and nature' sector are interlinked and changing, with awareness of nature recovery, food security, net zero carbon emission goals, regenerative farming and changing environmental land management funding (in no particular order).
- Many young adults are attracted away from Cumbria and the loss of Newton Rigg college likely affects opportunities in-county for this age group particularly.
- Businesses and employers face skill shortages in the sector, gaps in training provision in Cumbria and barriers to accessing cost-effective, aggregated training delivery.
- It is likely that there are barriers to providers of learning and training reaching their full potential learner audience when promoting their learning and training opportunities.
- Working Group members and LANSS Survey respondents have specifically indicated demand for a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria.

To conclude, there is a clear need for a hub or coordinating service to maintain a comprehensive directory of learning and training opportunities across the broad 'land and nature' sector in Cumbria. This should promote and signpost such opportunities in an inclusive manner, including through a website, and in a way that is attractive and informative to new entrants and people already in the workforce. Careers information, such as case studies of careers in the sector and where training can lead, should also be produced by the service and shared in multi-media formats with inclusive representation. The service should also support the development of learning and training in the sector through ongoing audits of needs, identifying gaps in provision, and communicating employer and learner demand to training providers. In these ways, a Land and Nature Skills Service can then address much of the demand detailed in this section, benefitting potential learners new to the sector and in the existing workforce, employers and businesses, and providers of learning and training for the sector in and near Cumbria.

5.

# Service Users





## 5. Services Users

This section identifies the anticipated LANSS user groups and key inclusivity considerations.



### LEARNERS

- People of any age employed in the land and nature sector and volunteers
- Sole traders in the sector seeking learning/training
- Young people 16+ making career choices and taking next steps in learning
- New entrants and people interested in changing career to the sector



### PROVIDERS of learning/training for the land and nature sector in Cumbria

- Educational institutions (colleges, Universities)
- Training companies and sole-traders offering training
- A wide range of organisations in the sector offering some learning/training e.g. farmer groups, conservation charities, NGOs.



### EMPLOYERS

- includes microbusinesses, SMEs and large organisations in the land and nature sector operating in Cumbria (e.g., farms, environmental NGOs, governmental bodies).

The service should engage the three intended user groups above and recognise the diversity of individuals in these groups. Inclusivity and accessibility should be central to the work of the service, for example it is essential that the LANSS website and its wider operations serve people with disabilities and learning differences and people of any educational background. Further detail on the anticipated service user groups and inclusivity considerations are provided in the Blueprint (Annex 1).



6.

# Requirements





## 6. Requirements

This section provides an analysis of the requirements for a successful service.

Firstly, the main requirements of a successful service are:

- A body to host the LANSS.
- A defined legal status and governance structure.
- Trust and support across the sector in Cumbria, community integration and inclusivity.
- Gather and share a continuous supply of relevant information – current learning and training opportunities, success stories, employer/business needs, user feedback.
- A functional and attractive web presence including:
  - a website centred on signposting and promoting training opportunities for the sector in Cumbria,
  - email and social media communications.
- Offline and in-person promotion and signposting services e.g. advice by telephone, presence at events such as careers fairs, agricultural shows, sector conferences in Cumbria.
- Funding for, or commitments to provide in-kind, all of the above.
- Suitably skilled staff to deliver and further develop all of the above.



### KEY SERVICE FEATURES FOR LEARNERS:

- Website with comprehensive, searchable listings of learning/training opportunities for the sector in Cumbria;
- Real life stories (e.g. 'a day in the life of' different roles in the sector; case studies of routes into the sector); online library of documents, videos for self-guided learning.
- These opportunities and resources communicated via other means in addition to website e.g. social media, phone and in-person advice, local newspaper adverts, email newsletters.



### KEY SERVICE FEATURES FOR PROVIDERS:

- A single webform for providers to supply information on training/learning opportunities which would translate to new learning/training listings on the website.
- Being listed on the website and promoted as a provider.
- Being supplied with ongoing information on sector and learner demand for specific learning/training opportunities.





**KEY SERVICE FEATURES FOR EMPLOYERS AND BUSINESSES:**

- Course/opportunity listings on website - ability to find and book training provision for employees and contact training providers directly.
- Increasing the supply of a suitably skilled local workforce.





7.

# Opportunities & Resources





# 7. Opportunities & Resources

This section outlines current opportunities and resources which may support implementation of a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria.

## **DEMAND**

An analysis of the demand for the service from individuals, employers and strategic groups is reported in [Section 4: Demand for the Service](#). There is a significant opportunity to address the information gap for potential learners regarding existent learning and training provision, to improve inclusivity in training for the sector in Cumbria, and to support coordination of providers in Cumbria to help fill gaps in delivery. Several organisations operating in Cumbria have informally indicated a strong interest in contributing to the governance and hosting of the service.

## **LANSS SCOPING STUDY WORKING GROUP**

The members of this group are an informed community providing cross-sector representation and are generally supportive of development of the LANSS with substantial knowledge of the needs of the three identified user groups of LANSS: learners, employers and providers. Members of the Working Group should be kept informed of updates concerning LANSS implementation after conclusion of the Scoping Study.

## **SCHOOL CURRICULUM LINKS AND PLACE-BASED LEARNING**

The proposed LANSS could expand to include a resource signposting service for educators. Cumbria County Council have indicated a demand from teachers for a database of land- and nature-based learning opportunities to enrich the formal curriculum. Potentially, this could be accessed via the LANSS website or even compiled by the Land and Nature Skills Service.

Place-based education uses the local community and environment as the starting points for teaching a range of concepts and topics. A scoping study is currently underway by Cumbria Development Education Centre, Cumbria Action for Sustainability and the University of Cumbria, for Cumbria County Council, regarding ways to embed place-based learning about the environment and sustainability across the curriculum for children and young people in Cumbria. If implemented, a nature-based curriculum could present many opportunities to link with LANSS.

## CAREERS GUIDANCE STRUCTURES IN CUMBRIA

Cumbria Careers Hub, run by the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, is a coordinating service for careers education across Cumbria and works with colleges, schools and local employers. The LANSS, if implemented, should collaborate with the Cumbria Careers Hub to support careers education for land and nature-based work.

The services LANSS would offer for promoting and connecting people with post-16 learning and training opportunities for work in the land-based sector will be most effective if children and young people have experiences of learning about land- and nature-based jobs through their whole education and see these as positive futures. This could be supported by entitlement to place-based learning detailed above.

## CUMBRIA LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP

Cumbria Local Nature Partnership (CLNP), established 2012, is hosted by Cumbria Wildlife Trust, with several key sector organisations participating in the partnership, which is: 'taking a lead on 'Nature Recovery' in Cumbria; ensuring nature is fully considered in local decisions for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.'<sup>22</sup> Consultation with CLNP's manager and the CLNP's recent Nature Recovery Knowledge and Skills Gap Survey<sup>23</sup> indicate the partnership's interest in supporting skills development for the sector. There may be opportunities to link a Land and Nature Skills Service to Cumbria's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which is under development, supported by CLNP, as one of five LNRS pilots nationwide.

## NEW LEARNING/TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

A variety of relevant learning and training opportunities for the sector in Cumbria have recently launched or are under development. One example is land management apprenticeships under development associated with the Endangered Landscapes Programme; another is the Development Woodland Officer programme offered by University of Cumbria with the Forestry Commission and the Institute of Chartered Foresters, launched this year. Cumbria Wildlife Trust has recently re-started its conservation student placements and expanded its training and apprenticeships provision. Myerscough College (Lancashire) has partnerships with Ullswater Community College and Furness College (Cumbria), offering more capacity for learners in Cumbria for land-based FE courses in agriculture, animal studies and arboriculture. These are just a few examples illustrating the vibrancy of the learning and training provision in Cumbria which the LANSS would communicate.



### PROTOTYPE WEBSITE; AND PHASE 2 WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

- The prototype developed during this Scoping Study indicates feasibility of the full website.
- The local contractor engaged to develop the prototype website has indicated capacity to deliver the full website.
- A brief for the full website has been created and detailed stakeholder feedback on the prototype has been gathered.





8.

# Risk Analysis





## 8. Risk Analysis

This section sets out an evaluation of the intrinsic vulnerabilities and external threats to effective implementation of the service, grouped under some category headings. Recommendations for mitigating the associated risks are included in italics.

### Momentum to implement LANSS

**RISK:** Losing support by loss of awareness and relevance

**DETAIL:** The Cumbrian land and nature training and employment sector remains in a period of change following the closure of Newton Rigg College and the wider context set out in Section 2. There are many stakeholders and partnerships established and forming and the challenge of communicating timely information to them about LANSS is significant.

**MITIGATION:** *Maintain contact with the LANSS Working Group by agreement. Audit representation in the Working Group and seek to expand the membership to maintain inclusive representation across the land and nature sector in Cumbria and relevant learning training provision, plus ensure representatives of new relevant partnerships are invited. Take opportunities to present about the LANSS at the various partnerships' and panels' meetings as appropriate.*

**RISK:** Local Government Reorganisation

**DETAIL:** From 1 April 2023 two new unitary authorities, Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council, will replace the current Cumbria County Council and local district councils. The processes of staffing the two new authorities are not complete which has limited the opportunities for communication between the LANSS project team and local government during the LANSS Scoping Study.

**MITIGATION:** *Highlight funding requirements of LANSS to the two forthcoming unitary authorities for consideration in their budgets ahead of taking responsibility on 1 April 2023. Maintain communication with the Education Team and Environment and Sustainability Team at Cumbria County Council and subsequently with their equivalents in the new unitary authorities.*

- RISK:** Land and nature work not seen as key 'green jobs' for Cumbria.
- DETAIL:** Definition of 'green jobs' is variable. Could lead to side-lining of the LANSS offer, difficulty attracting funding. In public policy and funding for a 'green economy', net zero and energy concerns can dominate, with apparently less attention to sustainable farming and growing; biodiversity; water and soil quality. A local example is the Cumbria Action for Sustainability (CAfS) report *The Potential for Green Jobs in Cumbria*<sup>24</sup> which excludes agriculture and land management jobs from its scope, noting that the agriculture sector would "require comprehensive treatment beyond the resources of this project" due to complexity.
- MITIGATION:** *LANSS from the outset can contribute to promoting 'green jobs' in the land and nature sector. This should be made clear in grant funding applications for implementation of LANSS. Much land management work substantially contributes to net zero, nature recovery and/or soil and water quality (such as jobs in peatland restoration, regenerative agriculture, conservation, catchment management, woodland management) and this should be communicated by LANSS.*

## Hosting, Governance and Legal

- RISK:** Unsuitable host organisation
- DETAIL:** The positioning of a host organisation in the sector and its dominant interests could present difficulties in implementing the proposed service, particularly with regards to scope, competition and trust. Hosting by a single training provider could be problematic. The host organisation must be able to sustain the scope of the LANSS and its interests must not be in competition with those of training providers for the sector in Cumbria.
- MITIGATION:** *The Blueprint (Annex 1) sets out the recommended hosting and governance structure. A transparent process for establishing hosting and governance is recommended.*
- RISK:** Governing Partnership and Steering Group Representation Bias
- DETAIL:** Any steering group for the LANSS will need to be broad and representative across the land- and nature-based sector in the Cumbria. A criticism of some local partnerships has been insufficient representation of sector groups e.g. farmers.
- MITIGATION:** *The Governing Partnership/Board and Steering Group should include broad representation across the Sector. See Annex 1: Blueprint, Section 2.5 Governance.*



# Inclusivity

- RISK:** LANSS lacking effectiveness in inclusivity, fails to serve potential service users equitably.
- DETAIL:** Barriers to access and underrepresentation in the sector have been considered throughout the Scoping Study and are referred to in the 'Demand' section of this report and Annex 4: LANSS Survey Report. The core purpose of the proposed Land and Nature Skills Service includes supporting 'inclusivity in the workforce' and 'meeting the needs of communities' (see Annex 1: Blueprint, Section 1.3). The LANSS should contribute to improving access, equality, diversity and inclusion in learning and training for work in the sector.
- MITIGATION:** *In convening a governing partnership and agreeing a host organisation, consideration should be given to the inclusivity policies of host and governance partnership organisations, e.g. to support diverse representation on board, steering group and in core staff team. Promotion of the service should have equality, diversity and inclusion as a guiding principles. Accessibility of the service should be achieved through the website design, alternatives to online access, and LANSS role in signposting support to access training e.g. bursaries. A portion of the project budget should be allocated for consultancy on equality, diversity and inclusion and for staff training. LANSS in its coordinating role should facilitate sharing of best practice in inclusivity awareness, policies and actions among the network of providers.*

## Clarity of LANSS 'brand' and scope

- RISK:** LANSS perceived as a competing training provider
- DETAIL:** Risk of perception that LANSS is a new training provider poses a threat to inclusive engagement of learning and training providers with the service. Their involvement is crucial to providing the service, particularly in listing opportunities via the LANSS website as a single point of information for learners.
- MITIGATION:** *LANSS is not intended to be a training provider itself; make this clear in promoting the service.*
- RISK:** Lack of 'brand' recognition
- DETAIL:** Risk of confusion about the offer (for learners, employers and training providers) due to other initiatives which potentially partially coincide with the intended remit or brand of the service, but are different in scope, e.g. Skillshub Cumbria, Rural Skills Hub. Could hamper the effectiveness of the LANSS as a coordinating service.
- MITIGATION:** *Consultation on name and branding, and engage a branding consultant in Phase 1 (see Annex 1: Blueprint, 3.1 Outline Schedule).*



- RISK:** Repetition: LANSS promoting some of the same opportunities as national organisations
- DETAIL:** The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH) is developing its role in coordination of skills for agriculture and horticulture, and developing a national framework for skills on farms. Eventually this could lead to some of the same CPD opportunities being listed via both LANSS and TIAH. Other national websites listing training etc will sometimes list opportunities also listed by LANSS.
- MITIGATION:** *Scoping Study identified lack of suitable hub website for learning and training in the sector in Cumbria (see Annex 3). Maintain communication between LANSS and TIAH (represented in LANSS Working Group) aiming for complementary work to promote skills development; clarity that LANSS proposed scope includes skills for all land and nature-based work roles (so, wider than agriculture and horticulture) but has a focused regional geographical scope addressing an identified need for Cumbria, so any overlap is likely to be small as a proportion of TIAH's geographical scope. LANSS will be embedded within the land and nature sector in Cumbria in a variety of ways beyond offering a listing service (see Annex 1: Blueprint, 2.1 Functions of the Service).*

## Nature and environment

- RISK:** Failing to meet the needs of our natural environment
- DETAIL:** The LANSS concept has within its core purpose to 'meet the needs of our natural environment' (see Annex 1: Blueprint, Section 1.3). This could be seen to include responsibilities on biodiversity/nature recovery; waste and pollution; climate change. Environmental responsibility could be neglected with a singular focus on learning and training.
- MITIGATION:** *The service as proposed will support a skilled workforce fit for the future of land and nature-based work in Cumbria, which includes much environmentally beneficial work in nature recovery, agroecology, peatlands, woodlands and water quality. In convening a governing partnership and agreeing a host organisation, consideration should be given to the environmental policies of host and governance partnership organisations. Organisations and representatives trusted on environmental responsibility should have strong representation in the governing partnership and steering group. Governing partnership should consider environmental responsibility in the suitability of funding for the service. Core staff should consider environmental responsibility in all service activities, e.g. procurement of materials, digital content and other promotional activity.*



## Listings and Website

- RISK:** Maintenance of comprehensive and up-to-date listings for learning and training opportunities.
- DETAIL:** Primarily via the website, LANSS must maintain and promote a full and up-to-date database of forthcoming learning and training opportunities for the sector in Cumbria. This requires active support of providers of learning and training. Providers may not engage if they are not informed about LANSS, if the listings process is too onerous or participation does not provide benefits.
- MITIGATION:** *LANSS website design to support an efficient listing process for providers. Act upon the prototype website feedback gathered including ways to provide benefits, e.g. website analytics, to providers.*

## User engagement

- RISK:** Engagement of providers.
- DETAIL:** The effectiveness of the signposting function of the LANSS relies upon broad engagement of existing and new providers of learning and training for the sector.
- MITIGATION:** *Many providers already engaged via LANSS Working Group and co-design process. Seek to expand this stakeholder group to more providers early in the set-up of the service and well before launch. (See Annex 1: Blueprint, Section 3.1 Outline Schedule). Also see 'Listings and Website' above.*
- RISK:** Engagement of potential learners
- DETAIL:** The potential learner audience is large, given the sector scope of LANSS (see Annex 1: Blueprint, 1.3 Purpose and Scope); however, as a new service, significant promotional activity will be required. To be inclusive and attractive to all those who could benefit, the needs of all potential learners must be considered. Young people are likely to benefit from supporting information from a trusted source, e.g. parents, educators, careers advisors to raise awareness of how to use LANSS.
- MITIGATION:** *Commission a marketing and communication plan, as indicated in Blueprint (Annex 1). Engage learner focus groups, including young people, during iterative development of the full website, and in the service steering group. On an ongoing basis, the LANSS core staff team should review promotional activity and service activities through e.g., focus groups, feedback surveys (including online), website and social media analytics. See also 'Inclusivity' above.*

- RISK:** Engagement of employers
- DETAIL:** Employer needs analysed in the 'Demand' section of this report and the LANSS Survey Report (Annex 4) will need to be addressed.
- MITIGATION:** *Ensure employer engagement is included in the marketing and communication plan. Maintain contact with employer representative bodies such as Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, Cumbria Chamber of Commerce and employers via the Working Group (Annex 5) and ensure employer representation on the LANSS Steering Group (see Annex 1: Blueprint, Section 2.5 - Governance). Ensure employer services are clearly signposted through the website and that core staff time is allocated to development of the coordinating role of the LANSS, including how LANSS can act to link up employer demand for employee training with provider capacity.*

## Staffing

- RISK:** Inadequate staffing of core staff team.
- DETAIL:** Poor recruitment and retention of core staff would significantly affect the performance of the service.
- MITIGATION:** *Host organisation should have proven capability for effective recruitment and personnel management. Sufficient budget should be allocated for suitable salaries. A 3-year initial tenure is recommended to build expertise and aid recruitment and retention in comparison to shorter contracts. A team of three core staff is recommended to support collaborative working and flexibility to deliver all activities of the service across the three job roles. See also 'Inclusivity' above.*

## Funding

- RISK:** Lack of funding for implementation
- DETAIL:** Insufficient funding for 3-year initial implementation and delivery period, as set out in the Blueprint (Annex 1).
- MITIGATION:** *A log of potential suitable grant funding sources has been kept during the Scoping Study and is included in the Blueprint (Annex 1). Recommendations for cash and in-kind funding from key stakeholders, e.g. governing partnership members, are outlined. Informally, some interest in contributing to funding the service has been expressed during the Scoping Study.*



**RISK:** Longer-term sustainability of the Service

**DETAIL:** Substantial new funding will be required to sustain the service beyond the initial 3 years. Risk of limiting the inclusive 'community service' concept of LANSS if it becomes more commercial.

**MITIGATION:** *Governing partnership role should include developing sustainable funding strategy, practical steps to which should be enacted by the core staff team. This should include careful assessment of benefits to service users, e.g. providers and employers, to inform a fair membership funding model and exploration of sponsorship model including benefits to sponsors and risks of compromising inclusivity. Explore how LANSS may be able to operate on a reduced level of cash funding in the long term once efficiencies are gained through established systems and automation, and with increased in-kind support from stakeholder organisations. See recommendations in Annex 1: Blueprint, 3.3 Funding the Service.*







9.

# Conclusion & Recommendations





# 9. Conclusion & Recommendations

The LANSS Scoping Study has carefully considered the context, demand, requirements, opportunities and risks for a Land and Nature Skills Service for Cumbria.

Strengths of the scoping approach included: the engagement of a large Working Group providing broad representation across the sector and much expertise; an iterative service design process to develop the LANSS Blueprint building upon previous co-design work; the combination of new research and consultation with analysis of recent reports from the sector, avoiding over-consultation; and the development of a strong prototype website to help illustrate the LANSS concept.

Weaknesses of the scoping process include limited consultation directly with young people and lack of quantitative data on user demand (learners, providers, employers). Young people's needs have been considered throughout the service design but largely drawing from expertise of organisations working with young people rather than direct input from young people. The implementation phases of the service provide opportunity for the service to consult directly with young people and ensure their view and experiences further shape the service: e.g. through school visits, focus groups, user feedback during an iterative process of website design.

**Food, Farming and Countryside Commission recommend the implementation of the LANSS Blueprint (Annex 1) with consideration to the contents of this Feasibility Report and its further appendices.**

It is anticipated that the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission (FFCC), which has delivered this Scoping Study, will continue to take a facilitative role in Phase 0: Transition, working with partners in Cumbria to establish effective governance arrangements for the service and develop funding requests. The FFCC will continue to share lessons from the implementation of the service with other areas of the UK.

Next steps fall into four main categories;



## GOVERNANCE

Coordinate an inclusive and transparent process to establish the governance of the service including governing partnership, accountable body and steering group.





### FUNDRAISING

Prepare funding bids and coordinate gaining match funding commitments to secure sufficient funding for the 3-year initial period of service set up and delivery.



### STAFF ROLES

Prepare job descriptions for core staff roles, allocating the service activities detailed in the LANSS Blueprint to the core staff roles in preparedness for recruitment.



### LOCAL COMMUNICATION

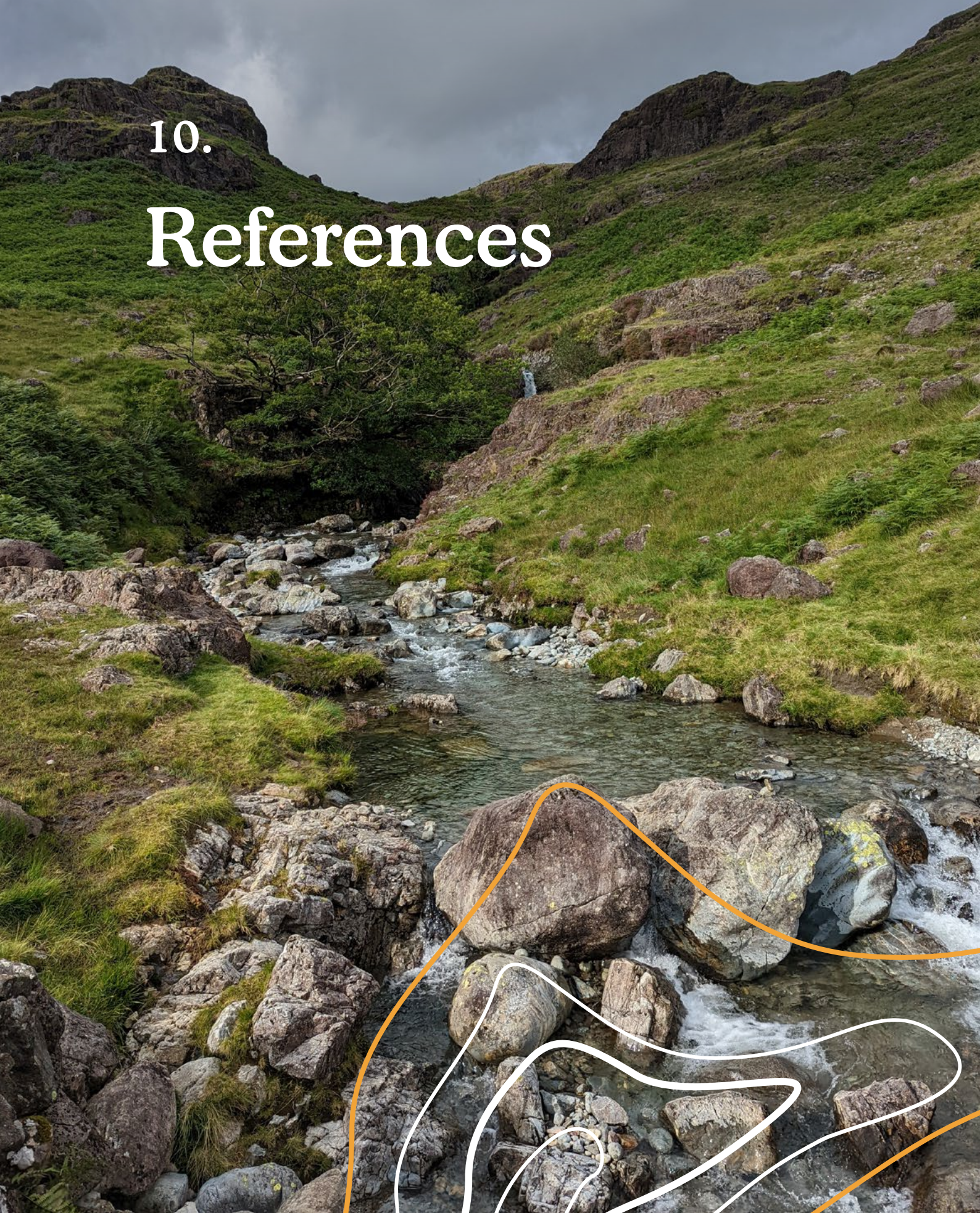
Maintain contact with the practice community, maintaining and expanding upon the legacy contact group from the Scoping Study, to ensure the service implemented reflects the ongoing needs across the local community of employers, providers and potential learners.





10.

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