

Our Lancaster story

“LAN-kast-ər”: pronounced with wide open vowels. Just the sound conjures a place that’s expansive, broad and extensive. A vast city region.

We’re part of the Northern Powerhouse and boast a portfolio of assets stretching out across the Forest of Bowland with historic landmarks still in the possession of the British Crown as the Duchy of Lancaster. A major destination on the West Coast mainline between Glasgow, London and Manchester and in the strategically important M6 corridor.

A city region crossed by canals and the River Lune, perfectly situated between two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: .within minutes of spectacular coastline, the open countryside of North Yorkshire and the mountains of the Lake District.

Lancaster is a place of quality, scale and magnitude. Characterised by fine Georgian architecture: the Queen’s Priory, Lancaster Castle, and the Ashton Memorial sitting proudly in the centre of Williamson Park. Elevated by academic excellence by not one but two universities, Lancaster and Cumbria.

One of England’s thirteen heritage cities, history has been made here. We have a pedigree of makers and creators, fine food and drink.

Lancaster is Lancashire’s ‘hero and Red Rose crown ’

Setting the scene

With over 2,000 years of history behind it, the City is putting in place infrastructure to raise the profile of Lancaster as a place to live, work and visit.

By identifying relevant audiences, and through appropriate communication and marketing, Lancaster city is articulating its vision to secure major investment.

Plans are evolving for transformational developments such as Lancaster Castle and The Canal Quarter, alongside a range of significant transport improvements.

Lancaster University is embedded in a range of sectors in the city, actively participating in key initiatives, economic and cultural activities and student housing. We are taking back our museums in an exciting plan to reposition its importance as a city centre attraction. Our early Roman history is being unveiled via a series of archaeological investigations which are going to continue for many years and are likely to be of international significance.

Linking with the University to develop Lancaster's digital economy has been identified as a key force in elevating the City's status as a place for innovation and economic prosperity.

Our story

Lancaster's 2000-year-old story has many rich chapters:

myths and music,
coastline and countryside,
cleverness and creativity,
festivals and food,
performance and pageantry,
architecture and artisan,
learning and leisure,
canals and craftsmanship,
shopping and shipping.

This patchwork quilt will be transformed into an expertly woven, finely crafted tapestry which will reflect these chapters.

In musical terms, this creative cacophony will be transformed by dynamic leadership into a well conducted, swirling, orchestral overture which will become the soundtrack of the city.

Lancaster's mosaic takes a drone's eye view from the top of the Memorial in Williamson Park. Scooping up the coastline and the Lune Valley, soaring around the Trough of Bowland, flying out to the Lakes and across the Yorkshire Dales.

Our new story reflects where we have come from, but more importantly where and how Lancaster can grow and develop in the future. This is highlighted in the themes that follow which represent how we are special.

Connecting and Celebrating Culture and Heritage

Lancashire's finest and longest standing cultural events, festivals and activities have always been synonymous with the Lancaster City region: from the Dukes Theatre's annual promenade productions in Williamson Park to Morecambe's Vintage by the Sea and Light Up Lancaster. These are unique, home-grown crowd pleasers with a sense of scale and ambition that grab headlines in weekend broadsheet supplements. Lancaster and South Cumbria's cultural pedigree is acclaimed by Arts Council England as having the biggest critical mass of culture, outside of Manchester and Liverpool, in the North West.

We will continue to excel and grow Lancaster's international reputation as a destination for heritage and artistic quality, attracting significant numbers of visitors and families.

We will create a year-round portfolio and become Lancashire's Festival City where young and old can enjoy the benefits of student culture in its broadest sense.

We aspire to develop the Lancaster City Region as a magnet for artists of international standing, a creative playground for Lancaster artists and arts organisations and a place for collaborations: between art and business, international and local, professional and community.

The region has a wealth of big stories relating to its buildings, from the Romans to maritime shipping and associated wealth providing the Georgian legacy, through to the manufacturing era of the Victorian period when Williamsons and Storeys were world renowned.

The Ashton Memorial has long provided a beacon for Lancaster, whilst the Castle, recently handed back to the city as a heritage site, is synonymous with the region's Lancashire Witch trials.

These and other buildings like the Storey Institute and The Grand Theatre will provide inspiration for a new era of creative storytelling and animation. We will use these tales to create visitor trails of animation and discovery. We will link Lancaster's hidden treasures, from the baroque inspired Music Room on Sun Street to the 12 tiny Almshouse cottages of Penny's Hospital on King Street and Morecambe's iconic Art Deco Midland Hotel.

Lancaster's businesses will not be bystanders, they will play their part, reflecting the vibrancy and the buzz of a calendar of creative programming in venues and on the streets. Morecambe and the Bay is a cultural destination in its own right with many festivals and events including the free, award winning Vintage by the Sea festival.

Energising Entrepreneurial Excellence

Lancashire's reputation as a place of making and creativity is showcased in Lancaster. We are a city of diverse entrepreneurship which ranges from brewing and book publishing at one end of the scale to our nuclear energy facilities at Heysham.

Through the power station visitor centre, community partnerships, science festivals and exhibitions we will celebrate the industry's status as the only place in the UK to have 2 nuclear reactors. Providing jobs and skills, apprentices and employment we will celebrate Heysham's work with around 40 local companies, and contributions of £80m into the district's economy every year.

Through outreach and research and development, we will draw the best from our graduates. Our focus will be on working with business to sow and grow expertise, embedding our academic culture into Lancaster life.

We will invest in offices and build industrial spaces, and through imaginative creative redevelopment of heritage buildings we will encourage digital and creative start-ups to thrive. We will provide opportunities for business growth and relocation which will bring well paid jobs to attract and retain talent from our universities.

Our students will want to remain in the region, to invest and contribute to our economy.

Digital Lancaster underpins Lancaster University as a globally significant leader in higher education and digital innovation. Through research and development, teaching and engagement the University will be central to our mission to become pioneers in digital enterprise. We will lead the way in sciences such as artificial intelligence, augmented reality and information apps. These will be developed and tested close to home, upgrading our commerce and industry, developing new digital businesses. Applied

technology in our everyday lives will enhance the experiences of our visitors and students. We are also playing a leading role in health, energy and environmental innovation all linked to activity within the University.

Location of Choice

An escape from the mundane, the moors and mill towns, the modernity and motorways yet connected by high speed trains and with easy access to the M6. Lancaster has the lion's share of Lancashire's grandeur. Here is the County's magnificence.

A royal city, a place of Kings and Queens stretching as far as Carnforth and the South Lakes, across to East Yorkshire, down to proud Preston and beyond to Ireland and the Isle of Man. Canals, countryside and coastline receive City status in Lancaster.

The heady arts and cultural landscape mixed with the impact of two universities and a young, student population means this attractive city has an all-age bohemian vibrancy. It's bookish, trendy, eclectic and 'hip' with a range of busy bars and laid-back coffee shops alongside the traditional high street shops and high-quality independents.

There's an energy which attracts people in creative employment, with a broad interest base. There is a tolerance and a neighbourliness which adds to the feeling of being safe on the streets backed up by friendly, passionate Business Improvement District (BID) Ambassadors and knowledgeable shop staff providing great customer service.

We attract free-spirited and discerning families, looking for healthy lifestyles and interesting housing stock. This is a diverse population of people with enquiring minds, who enjoy participating and investing in the vast community networks of interest which underpin the lifestyle of the city region.

Bailrigg Garden Village will link the city with Lancaster University, providing a modern place for living and a focus for growth. Strategically placed to capitalise on the regions connectivity, families grow with access to the fresh air and finer City assets like museums, theatres and galleries.

We're growing our City centre assets

Lancaster's asset rich city centre is a natural hub and the jewel in the crown for the wider region.

We will use the natural geographical boundaries and infrastructure of the multi-stakeholder Lancaster BID as a natural conduit to lead a refreshed, commercially driven, coherent strategy for promoting the town to visitors and businesses.

We will create visitor-focussed journeys which will link Castle Hill to the shopping centres and theatres. We will drive footfall to the independent shops on side streets and the maritime history at the quay side, using themes, storytelling, clear signposting and multi-site partnership event and marketing strategies. We will work with our hospitality businesses to promote Lancaster as a place to stop, shop and spend the day with lots to do.

The City is already a place to live, work and play. We will provide good quality, affordable hotels for people to stay, providing short breaks for the soul where visitors can step out into the heart of history and explore the wider Lancaster City region.

Lancaster City, Hub and Heartland

Lancaster's new story is managed by a creative, commercial and community minded team of stakeholders firmly focussed on the vision and values of the City.

Our strategy is based on a shared narrative to bring people together to celebrate, collaborate and refocus on our core strengths.

Our boundaries, our neighbours and our connections provide us with spheres of influence and access to a whole range of networks.

By changing our thinking, doing things differently we can utilise all our assets: radiating influence, building confidence, cultivating and encouraging strong leadership, bringing business and place together.

We are drawing together our resources, bringing in structure and harnessing creativity with a new big city region story for Lancaster.

Collective action by our experienced, passionate and creative people will revitalise Lancaster and drive us forward as we step out and step up.