

Historic Places Panel Review Paper

Barrow-in-Furness, November 2024

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1. Executive Summary

In the 19th Century Barrow expanded exponentially in response to a need for growth related to industry; and in 2025 it once again faces a similar challenge. These are promising times for Barrow and its communities, resulting from the Government's continued investment in its submarine programme, including the AUKUS programme and partnership with Australia, which requires BAE Systems to significantly grow its workforce beyond the 14,500 people it employs today. This alongside Government's pledge of £200m over the next 10 years – the Barrow Transformation Fund (BTF) – will help make Barrow an attractive place to live, work and invest.

This presents both opportunities and challenges for the Council and its partners in 'Team Barrow', the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and BAE Systems, in their quest to make the greatest impact from this investment and bring to fruition the town's renaissance.

Following their visit to Barrow in November 2024, the Historic Places Panel's key recommendations are as follows:

General

- 1.1 Maximise advantages through the newly formed Council and forthcoming devolution deal for Cumbria, together with partnerships like 'Team Barrow' and the 'Barrow Rising' branding, to launch a collectively shared, mutual vision with the community. The scale of Ministry of Defence (MoD) investment in BAE Systems and the commitment from MHCLG is gratefully acknowledged by the local area. There is real opportunity for this commitment from individual Government departments and other key local employers, such as Ørsted, to add benefit through joint working across government departments.
- 1.2 The Panel encourages Team Barrow to highlight and promote this opportunity to other Government departments and partners, which would certainly help to drive social and economic value across all sectors, especially in health, education and skills. This would help fill the gap to becoming a model for holistic cross-sectoral regeneration. 'The Oxford / Cambridge Arc' cross Government departmental working is a good example of how this can be achieved. The BTF should create a culture of local supply chain and skills growth that can function within the parameters of national security whilst allowing for independent local growth without dependency upon BAE Systems alone.

Delivery

- 1.3 Through 'Team Barrow' plan a gradual build-up of social, cultural and commercial value, driven by community-led quick wins. Prioritise improvement of the public realm, with improved wayfinding around the Town Hall/the Forum/the Market (Heart of Barrow) and focus investment on the buildings. Ensure quality community engagement and use the best designers, building upon the positive influence of the 'Careers Inspiration Hub' project, as part of a strategic framework for investment. Ensure governance of the Delivery Board allows for local representation, reflecting the impressive passion, local pride and desire to nurture sustainable growth for Barrow.
- 1.4 Carefully control development of land through a joint venture agreement for Marina Village, to ensure quality outcomes beyond speculative house building. Re-brand the Marina Village site as 'Cavendish Dock' to better reflect the offer of the site. Also, look to decrease the high-volume of serviced accommodation within the town by improvement of 'place' and 'offer' directly in the town centre, creating an environment that would encourage re-location, rather than that of a weekly commuting culture, thus meeting the needs of Barrow as a whole.
- 1.5 Launch a renovation and environmental improvement programme for existing terraced and tenement housing, ensuring parity with new developments. Consider a delivery partner and bringing tenures under one ownership, if necessary. Involve residents throughout the whole process and offer life skills and training along the way. Build on local examples of co-operative and sweat equity renovation, engaging Homes England for implementation of low-carbon initiatives.

Connectivity

- 1.6 Advance a strategic framework for transformation for key transport modes - road, rail, water and air - through modal shift to sustainable movement; and identify green, blue, and grey networks. Reduce car dominance through traffic calming, reduced parking, and the introduction of a BAE park and ride. A large proportion of the town centre is currently covered by car parking, with the natural asset of the waterside inaccessible and underutilised. Taken together with a rebranded Marina Village, liberating these spaces of parked cars creates an opportunity for attractive, sustainable placemaking. With the development of Marina Village, create a clear waterside route linking through to the Town Hall; alongside a quality public realm, this will allow growth of activity and dwell time. Link the transformation with sustainable energy and smart communication networks - with a focus on the Marina Village site - to support a zero-carbon economy.

Cultural Heritage

- 1.7 Establish a broad continuous process of genuine engagement, where community groups and the third sector are thoroughly invested and trusted to enrich cultural life and wellbeing in the town, highlighting the strong influence of women and community arts. Take advantage of support, especially but not exclusively, from external agencies like Historic England, the Arts Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- 1.8 Celebrate Barrow's rich history through sensitive heritage-led regeneration, transforming key points such as the station and the cultural hub of the Town Hall, Forum and surrounding spaces. Involve the community in planning for real and in the selection of consultants for these and other key projects, which should aspire to the highest quality of sustainable renovation and public realm design. Expand on successful community programming events, such as 'Dave Day', tapping into the appetite of Barrovians in celebrating Barrow-ness. Fully exploit the potential of the Town Hall by, for example, opening-up the Clock Tower as a public viewing attraction.
- 1.9 The Panel valued their visit to Barrow and believes that implementing these recommendations will help Barrow to reach their potential as a place that both delivers for its existing communities and key employers, whilst attracting and retaining new residents and visitors. The Panel looks forward to watching this transformation unfurl.



Figure 1: Sketch of Barrow-in-Furness Town Hall by Panel Member Geoff Rich, highlighting public realm and clock tower views potential. [Historic Places Panel © Historic England]

2. Introduction to Barrow-in-Furness

- 2.1 Barrow-in-Furness, ‘*where the Lakes meet the Sea*’, is a Cumbrian coastal and industrial town on the south-west tip of the Furness peninsula. Located just over ten miles from the boundary of the Lake District National Park and on the shores of Morecambe Bay, Barrow has a fascinating history including settlement by Vikings and Cistercian Monks.
- 2.2 Barrow is the second largest settlement in Cumbria, but due to its geography, it is relatively isolated and difficult to access. Road access along the A590 suffers from resilience issues and the train service is relatively limited with one train per hour to/from Lancaster. It does however have close commuting and business links with Ulverston and South Lakeland.

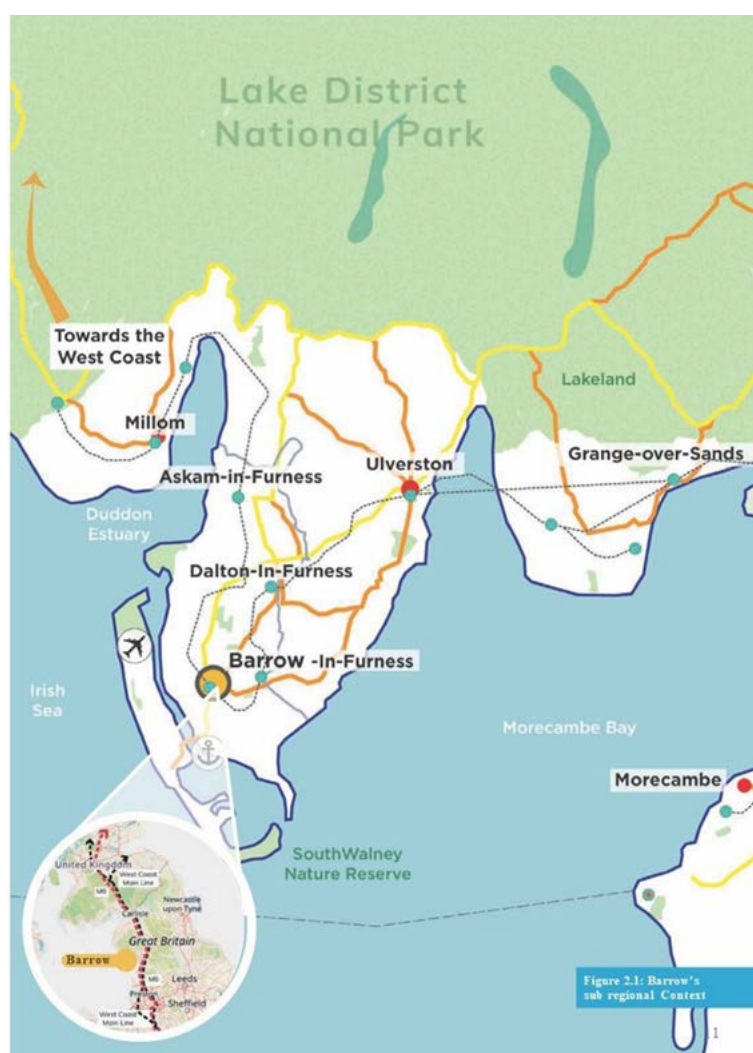


Figure 2: Barrow-in-Furness Location Map. [Town Investment Plan © Westmorland and Furness Council]

2.3 Population data (census 2021):

- In 2021 Barrow's population fell to 67,400, a decrease of 2.4%.
- 97% of Barrow's population identified as white, whilst the largest 'other' group is Asian at 1.4%.
- Barrow in 2019 was the most deprived Cumbrian district, ranking 31st most deprived nationally.
- Unemployment is below the national average at 4.3% (compared to 5.4%).

2.4 The monumental structure of BAE System's Devonshire Dock Hall (DDH) dominates Barrow's skyline and views around the town, symbolising the town's long association with shipbuilding and maritime activities. The economy of Barrow remains dominated by its shipyard where there are currently some 8,500 workers plus contractors. This has grown by around 3,000 since 2013. Barrow is currently centre of the "national endeavour" to develop a new generation of nuclear deterrent submarines (the £40 billion Dreadnought programme). The fortunes of the economy of Barrow are now heavily dependent on the rollout and development of BAE System's Dreadnought programme.

2.5 Barrow port acts as the UK's west coast hub for oil and gas and the offshore wind farms in the Irish Sea, including Ørsted, the world's largest operational wind farm. This is complemented by Furness College's £4m Advanced Manufacturing and Technology Centre (AMTC); opened in 2016, it is located 10 minutes' walk from the town centre, and the – currently under construction – University of Cumbria campus on Barrow Island. The port also acts as a gateway to Sellafield.

2.6 Barrow and its surrounds house a number of high paying employers such as: BAE, Ørsted and Kimberley-Clark. The disparity between 'haves' and 'have nots' is very clear in the town, with Barrow having the largest concentration of worklessness, low quality housing and people with poor skills and health in Cumbria. The five most deprived wards in Barrow on their own would make it around the fourth largest settlement in Cumbria, highlighting the concentration of deprivation within the town centre, with BAE dominating the town centre both physically through the presence of DDH and economically too.

2.7 Parts of Barrow's proud historic town centre, as typified by its broad tree lined streets and fine red sandstone Town Hall, face decline due to the nationally changing 'high street' retail habits. Events like "Dave Day" honouring 'Hairy Biker' Dave Myers, offer a chance to rejuvenate the town. The successful 2024 event will expand to two days in 2025, helping Barrow diversify beyond its industrial roots and promote its heritage, culture and beautiful coastline as a gateway to the Lake District.

The Visit

- 2.8** In the context of delivering the Barrow Transformation Fund (BTF), the Council invited the Historic Places Panel to visit Barrow over the two days in late November 2024, to seek their advice with focus on three questions relating to ‘delivery’, ‘connectivity’ and ‘cultural heritage’. The Panel engaged with the town through presentations, tours, and discussions; meeting stakeholders from the BTF initiative and the wider community.
- 2.9** The Panel were welcomed by the Council’s Assistant Chief Executive, Alison Hatcher, at the town’s Dock Museum, with its unique setting within a former dock space. Presentations were given by Council officers and Team Barrow (the Council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and BAE Systems). These helped provide the Panel with context for the visit and set out the tremendous opportunity Barrow has ahead with the BTF.
- 2.10** Presentations were complemented by a guided coach tour around the town, taking in key sites including: Walney Island; Barrow Island, the home of BAE systems with the new University of Cumbria campus as well as the historic tenements; Marina Village housing site; and Furness Abbey. A further walking tour focused on the town centre, taking in the highlights of the Town Hall, Market, the Forum, the new Inspiration Hub (established by BAE in the former Debenhams building), Barrow Town Centre conservation area and former High Street Heritage Action Zone, terraced housing adjacent to Duke Street and the ever-dominating Devonshire Dock Hall (DDH), manufacturing base of BAE. The Panel were enthused by the quality of the town’s buildings and the ease of access to nature and heritage.
- 2.11** The tours were followed by focused discussions on the three key questions at Barrow Town Hall, with a range of community stakeholders whose local experience was invaluable to the Panel. What was particularly notable was people’s pride in the town. This pride also shone through at the wonderful dinner at the Nan Tait Centre hosted by the community arts organisation Art Gene, who the Panel would very much like to thank for its hospitality, energy, enthusiasm and clear passion for Barrow and its people.
- 2.12** It was an extremely engaging and stimulating visit and the Panel would like to thank and commend the Council and all its partners for their efforts to date. The Panel hope that their advice can positively influence Barrow’s journey of transformation ahead.



Figure 3: HPP Barrow-in-Furness Visit Dinner, Nan Tait Centre. [© Art Gene]



Figure 4: HMS Agamemnon Submarine Launch at DDH. [© BAE Systems]

3. Plans, Strategies and Funding Overview

The Panel were provided with an overview of the some of the key plans and strategies in development, current funding, as well as the governance structure for delivery of the BTF:

3.1 Government Funding:

1. £17.5 million former Levelling Up Funding for revitalising Barrow's Market Hall, the Forum, and public realm.
2. £25 million Towns Fund (2022) supporting projects such as Marina Village remediation, housing renewal (including Barrow Island tenements), a new University of Cumbria campus, and improved cycling and walking infrastructure.
3. The previous government in March 2024 announced the creation of the 'Barrow Transformation Fund' with the commitment of £200 million over the next 10 years (at least £20m per year).

3.2 Team Barrow:

Team Barrow (a partnership between the Council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and BAE Systems) was established to deliver the BTF, with a Delivery Board that will oversee the five separate workstreams: Economy, Master Planning and Place; Transport; Education Employment and Skills; Health Equality and Wellbeing; and Communities and Social Impact.

3.3 Barrow Rising:

Team Barrow has commissioned consultants to create a shared identity for Barrow's transformation, which focuses on the growth potential of BAE and the BTF.

3.4 Key Plans and Frameworks:

1. **Adopted and New Local Plans:**
 - a. Barrow Local Plan (2016-2031), adopted in 2019, allocates the Marina Village site for 650 homes.
 - b. Westmorland and Furness, the newly established Unitary Authority area, is working on the preparation of a new Local Plan for the whole of the area.
2. **Design Code:**

A Design Code is in development to support the Local Plan and set the vision for the design quality of all development across Westmorland and Furness.
3. **Marina Village Supplementary Planning Document (SPD):**

The draft SPD proposes 800 homes of a diverse range of densities, housing types and sizes. It brings together master planning work to date, key technical information, provides clear guidance and summarises recent remediation work carried out. It is expected that the SPD will be finalised imminently.

3.5 Barrow Masterplan:

Team Barrow with Homes England have commissioned the first stage (6 months – completion spring 2025) of a two-stage masterplan. The first phase will address the town centre in the context of BAE with the second phase (to be procured) aligning with the new Local Plan.

3.6 Barrow Port Masterplan:

Associated British Ports' plan focuses on expanding capacity for advanced engineering, net-zero industries, and local businesses.

3.7 Cultural Framework:

A new cultural framework is being shaped with input from local artists groups, such as Art Gene and other cultural stakeholders. The draft is nearing completion.

4. Westmorland and Furness Council's Questions to the Panel

Delivery: How can we maintain momentum and increase investor confidence in Barrow, to help deliver on the range of accommodation and attractions needed – including residential, with particular focus on Marina Village – and improve the quality of new development, when considering the historically low building rates and land values that create viability concerns?

Panel Response and Recommendations

Recognition of People and Place: 'Barrow-ness'

- 4.1 Barrow's unique sense of place, rich heritage, and abundant natural assets offer incredible potential for growth. Opportunities in renewable energy, given the presence of Ørsted as a major supplier of offshore energy, align with the push for sustainability. In the town centre, the orthogonal grid pattern of streets and spaces, with some high-quality architecture, gives Barrow a wonderful basis to invest in placemaking and the public realm, which can strengthen community identity and attract visitors. Make Barrow an attractive, thriving place for its residents, and visitors and investment will follow. Leveraging its diverse business opportunities and the clean slate of the newly formed Westmorland and Furness Council provides a chance for a forward-thinking, resilient economy. By thoughtful balancing of green, blue, and grey spaces, Barrow can mitigate flooding and create a thriving environment.
- 4.2 The marketing programme for the "Barrow Rising" brand provides an opportunity to 'launch' meaningful cross sector engagement, fostering collaboration to establish a community led vision for the town. The success of Barrow's development relies on early, inclusive and meaningful engagement with residents and partners, ensuring that diverse perspectives shape the future. Confidence in community-led decision-making, paired with thoughtful risk-taking, can empower local ownership. It is important to balance addressing the needs of current residents, with delivering positive change to attract new residents. Engaging townspeople and workers (in particular BAE Systems workforce) through thorough participation will help define an identity that reflects Barrow's unique character and needs.

4.3 The Panel recommends:

1. Aligning Team Barrow, community and partners around a clear set of no more than three objectives.
2. The current top-down Barrow Rising brand would be better placed as the stimulus for bottom-up activity that leads to three visionary objectives, ensuring they are simple and actionable by government and local communities.
3. The third sector should be active in the process to ensure an inclusive approach that reflects the broader community's needs. They have the networks and trust that is needed for true engagement.

Governance

4.4 Effective governance of 'Team Barrow' is key to the success of BTF, given the time constraints of delivery. The Panel recognises that there will be change and complexities; patience will be required. Successful delivery will come from strong relationships between councillors and government structures, but it is also important to consider how other businesses can be represented in Team Barrow. Establishing democratic frameworks and inclusive decision making will enable legitimacy and trust.

4.5 To foster greater collaboration and ensure successful development, encourage deeper engagement and alignment from Government departments beyond MHCLG. This will help integrate diverse expertise and resources. By embracing regional thinking, in particular the forthcoming Devolution for Cumbria, Team Barrow can create a governance structure that drives sustainable growth and community representation.

4.6 The Panel recommends:

1. Governance through Locality Boards should prioritise democratic processes, best value and transparent decision-making. Patience and careful board member selection are essential to effective governance. This will ensure sound leadership and build trust within the community.
2. The close involvement of other Government departments would bring expertise and resources across Government for a holistic approach.

Planning

4.7 It is encouraging that a comprehensive strategic masterplan is in development, moving previous studies towards a clear, unified vision for the future. It should guide long-term development and provide a roadmap for coordination across stakeholders, ensuring a holistic approach.

4.8 Investor confidence in Barrow will be built on a comprehensive approach to placemaking, with a focus on revitalising the town centre, encouraging vibrancy and footfall. Design codes and other supplementary planning documents should not be overly prescriptive, instead seeking a flexible framework for development that can evolve to accommodate market changes and emerging

opportunities. Presenting Barrow as an attractive and well-served location, with a clear vision for its future, will enhance its appeal to investors, fostering sustainable growth. [Medway Council's Chatham Design Code](#) represents a good example. Urban Design Learning provides resources on design codes, together with lessons learnt from the Pathfinder authorities: [Resources - Design Codes](#). The Design Council also provides resources on design codes: [Design Codes – Design Council](#).

BAE Systems and Beyond

- 4.9** BAE's engagement and collaboration is welcomed and commendable, and the firm's significant contribution to the economy of the area is undoubted. However, the Panel recognised the challenges this can bring with high wages compared to other employers, economic dependence and a lack of diversity of employment and business opportunities. Barrow's economic base should be broadened by attracting additional businesses to complement BAE. Expanding beyond one dominant employer would ensure a more resilient and diversified economy. Additionally, BAE should take a more active role in transport mitigation, contributing to infrastructure improvements and incentivising staff to change travel patterns, through car sharing and implementation of a Park & Ride scheme. By fostering a wider range of business opportunities and ensuring fair contributions from BAE, Barrow can build a more balanced future, developing a 'Business Ecosystem' to ensure resilience of the economy.

4.10 The Panel recommends:

That other major employers in the area join the Team Barrow governance in some form, to bring more diverse business voices to the table. The Panel also recommends BAE takes an even more proactive role in local infrastructure and community-building initiatives, such as:

1. As a "responsible neighbour," BAE should contribute to housing and infrastructure, aligning efforts with community need. It should also create more diverse job opportunities such as traditional trades e.g. plumbers and electricians.
2. Developing an active travel plan with modal-shift incentives for employees.
3. Providing accommodation for staff to put down roots in the town (taking headleases on properties, for example).
4. Developing a local purchasing policy.
5. Creating a training programme focusing on construction trades to deliver the housebuilding programme.
6. Further include the local community in BAE's future (in a manner that does not compromise security). For example, present a life-size submarine in a public space as part of a STEM facility linked to training.

Education and Skills

4.11 To foster growth and address regional challenges, Barrow should leverage local talent and expand opportunities beyond BAE. BAE's careers and training hub is a positive addition to the town. However, improving visibility without compromising security (as seen with Sellafield) could further enhance access to the local community skills base, which is currently under-utilised. Establishment of a STEM lab funded by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, alongside the University of Cumbria's scientific courses offers significant opportunities to develop a skilled local workforce. By building on these initiatives, Barrow can create a more diverse and resilient economy.

4.12 The Panel recommends:

That investment in skills is paramount for the BTF, not just for the major employers such as BAE and Ørsted, but also for sectors demonstrating local deficiencies such as construction trades:

1. Training initiatives should prioritise economically disadvantaged residents and focus on skills that benefit the broader community, to support inclusive growth. Broader skills development drives greater job opportunities, enhances community resilience, and contributes to a more equitable economy.
2. Training should create opportunities for those not considering higher education (despite the University of Cumbria's great offer), particularly in science and technology.

Town Centre Renewal

4.13 Team Barrow should show leadership in the use of tools such as compulsory purchase, community auctions, energy improvement grants and Homes England investment in small sites and renovation projects. Limited urban green space presents an opportunity for transformation, with new green and blue networks enhancing amenity, leisure, biodiversity and flood mitigation. Refurbishing historic buildings – including housing – will preserve Barrow's architectural heritage for the future. The high proportion of surface car parking in the town centre should be reimagined for biodiverse green space and infill mixed use development, whilst the closing and rationalisation of some car parks will encourage modal shift. Sites with the potential for housing or public realm could come forward in the Local Plan.

4.14 Other models could bring in private knowledge and equity, whilst maintaining control and quality. This could be particularly useful for the Marina Village development where it will be important to ensure that the interests of both landowner and developer – short, medium and long term – are aligned. This latter point is essential as it engenders a truly sustainable development that is impactful across all aspects: social and economic, as well as environmental. A new local development company could be explored, in a similar vein to PEARL (Pendle Enterprise & Regeneration Ltd), a joint venture created for Brierfield's Northlight mill complex in Lancashire. This could drive a more locally attuned development approach and set a benchmark for sustainable renewal and community-led regeneration.

4.15 The Panel recommends:

1. Prioritising high design quality and sustainability to ensure long-term community and environmental benefit.
2. Implementing a balanced integration of green, blue, and grey spaces (including Sustainable Urban Drainage systems) to address flood mitigation and build climate resilience. Enhance green and historic spaces for their cultural and ecological value.
3. Using quick wins and meanwhile uses to build community confidence and improve the town centre environment, creating immediate impacts before longer-term projects are underway. The Arcade Group (a community shareholders group) in Dewsbury, offers a good example of meanwhile use, whereby they are utilising vacant retail units in the main shopping precinct for community uses (such as arts and crafts, exhibitions, pop-up shops) to add vibrancy and maintain interest in the Arcade.
4. Utilising tools such as compulsory purchase, community auctions and energy improvement grants.
5. Implementing a programme of public realm improvements across the town centre, with specific focus on the station forecourt as a key gateway into the town; as well as the Town Hall, enhancing its setting to create a civic space together with the Forum.
6. Reimagining surface car parking for biodiverse green space and infill mixed use development.

Tenements and Terraced Housing

- 4.16** Barrow's housing strategy should also focus on solutions to enhance its existing stock. The Panel were moved by the poor condition of the tenement blocks and recognised their huge potential, agreeing that improving their condition should be a priority. Historic England will offer assistance and advice on how these buildings could be adapted.
- 4.17** Barrow's stock of terraced housing also needs attention. Models such as Housing Revenue Account or institution and pension-backed development, potentially supported by the local building society, could stimulate housing improvements. Local authority pension scheme investment opportunities could potentially arise from Barrow becoming a part of a unitary authority, and further still with devolution for Cumbria on the table. A good example and link for further information is the Greater Manchester Pension Fund and how it invests in the regeneration of Greater Manchester: [Place-Based-Impact-of-GMPF-Local-Investment-Portfolios-Sept-2023.pdf](#)
- 4.18** Community-based renovation, like Barrow Women's Community Matters' *Homes with Love* and [Project John](#), show how local schemes could involve local residents. Comparators from Liverpool's [Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust](#) and [Place First's Welsh Streets](#) showcase effective refurbishment.

4.19 Other examples include Future Fit Homes in Walthamstow, which is buying and renovating terraced homes with institutional finance and a professional supply chain, then reletting them to deliver financial returns from real estate investment. Temporary solutions, such as modular housing, should be explored, particularly during redevelopment, to provide immediate housing options and minimise disruption for residents during the renovation process. This approach will help maintain the town’s character while promoting sustainable growth, showing that current residents’ needs are being recognised and addressed.



Figure 5: HPP Panel on-site visiting the Tenement Blocks, Barrow-in-Furness. [Historic Places Panel © Historic England]

4.20 The Panel recommends:

1. Bringing ownership of the tenements and terraced housing back into one freeholder such as the Council, Housing Trust, or a housing provider, which not only provides housing but also provides holistic support in terms of training, employment and life skills.
2. Community engagement should be a key part of this, exploring options for retrofitting tenement blocks with residents. For example 'Cumbria Action for Sustainability' and its initiative 'People Powered Retrofit': <https://retrofit.coop/blog/partner-spotlight-cumbria-action-for-sustainability>.
3. Exploring the provision of temporary modular housing during refurbishment of tenements.
4. Collaborating closely with Historic England to simplify the approach to conservation of heritage assets, funding through the BTF the streamlining of consents to make changes whilst preserving the historic character.



Figure 6: Marina village site, Barrow-in-Furness. [Historic Places Panel © Historic England]

Marina Village

- 4.21** Marina Village presents a significant opportunity for Barrow that must be approached with a clear strategic plan in place before partnerships with developers are entered into. Traditional housebuilding models may not align with Barrow’s aspirations for sustainable, community-focused development. For example, it is crucial not to squander this opportunity by sticking to the currently anticipated density of 30 dwellings per hectare; instead, mid-rise, street-based urbanism with 4-5 storeys would be more sustainable. Careful management of development and innovation would create a balanced, characterful urban environment, foster community life, and enhance long-term viability. There are wider opportunities for creating the kind of accommodation that would encourage workers to put down roots in a high-quality placemaking masterplan. Delivery via a joint venture, and land transfer and Build to Rent options should be explored.
- 4.22** A further factor that would attract a high-quality private developer partner is the strength of the social initiatives already in place. As more funders and developers have an increasing focus on environment, social and governance commitments, one of the most difficult elements to deliver is the ‘social’. The existing community networks and social networks in Barrow could be a major differentiator and attractor, especially if presented as an integrated opportunity.
- 4.23** The Panel recommends:
1. Developing a robust procurement strategy for when Team Barrow goes to market for a development partner to develop the site, focusing on delivering tangible outcomes rather than solely design work.
 2. Creating a strategic plan to align Marina Village with broader goals, incorporating short-term and long-term opportunities.
 3. Going to market with a comprehensive package that includes social infrastructure and business forums to foster community engagement and growth.
 4. Exploring various funding models such as joint ventures and alternative financing mechanisms.
 5. Considering a diverse range of housing types including build to rent, co-living, and student accommodation, with options incorporating tenancies tied to employers. This approach will help meet varying housing needs, support employment and contribute to a dynamic community.
 6. Creating a digital infrastructure plan to ensure Marina Village is equipped for future growth and technological advancements, which will enhance long-term digital connectivity.
 7. Re-naming the site from Marina Village to Cavendish Dock. This would provide a more authentic and meaningful identity that better reflects the area’s heritage and future vision.
 8. Considering a higher density of housing on the site.

Energy and Utility Networks

- 4.24** Using energy and utility networks as sources of funding and long-term partnering with an Energy Service Company (ESCOs such as Eon, Vattenfall or SSE) could deliver a green, low carbon energy network for Marina Village (such as a 5th generation ambient energy loop), in which the ESCo provides the upfront capital expenditure for the District Energy Network (DEN), recouping the cost via plot connection charges and low-cost energy tariffs. At the same time, this would lower the cost of energy for local communities, de-carbonise the area, and allow for new technologies to be added as they become available.
- 4.25** Other local natural energy resources such as the sea, ground source or air source or even sewage waste heat, as well as opportunities to capture waste (heat) energy from plant/industry, could help create an integrated, highly sustainable energy network. This would encourage developers and funding partners to join.
- 4.26** Some ESCOs can also provide a similar provision for other utilities such as water, data etc, as well as energy, sometimes referred to as Multi-Utility Service Companies (MUSCOs). Again, there are various business models that can provide capital funding for long term arrangements.
- 4.27** Given the companies and renewable energy (wind and solar) provision in the area, as well as the technology-led BAE Systems already in the locale, this could form the basis of an innovation district, and the foundations of a business ecosystem that would broaden Barrow-in-Furness's jobs and skills base. In particular, new and innovative industries could provide a counterbalance to BAE Systems, whilst being interconnected, in the same way the jute industry was historically developed as a balance to the shipbuilding.
- 4.28** The Panel recommends:
1. Partnering with ESCOs and considering use of waste energy from local industry.
 2. Investing in the creation and expansion of green and blue networks to address the lack of green space, including Sustainable Urban Drainage systems. This can support biodiversity, enhance flood mitigation, and improve permeability.

This overall approach aims to create a sustainable, socially integrated and economically resilient future for Barrow.

Connectivity: How can we make Barrow a better-connected place, with particular focus on:

- a. Road and rail links into and out of town; and
- b. Encouraging behaviour change to more sustainable ways of moving around town?

Panel Response

- 4.29 By default of its location, Barrow is remote and difficult to get to, with road and rail networks that are susceptible to delay and disruption, notably caused by adverse weather conditions such as flooding. Therefore, to attract international businesses to Barrow, improving transport and connectivity is essential. Addressing transport issues on road and rail will improve access and resilience. Strategic integration of transport into the town's masterplan is crucial to long-term growth. Leveraging existing assets such as waterways and the airport can strengthen Barrow's appeal for business and investment. The town's geography and energy-related potential present significant opportunities, making transport improvements a key factor in driving future success.
- 4.30 Key transport challenges in Barrow, particularly the slow connectivity with North Cumbria, emphasise the importance of a comprehensive transport strategy that takes advantage of local government reorganisation. Community engagement is crucial for gaining approval and enriching project outcomes. The response must stress a shift towards sustainable transport, acknowledging the lack of a BAE Park & Ride and the need to reduce car usage by employees to improve traffic flow and sustainability. The overall goal being to enhance connectivity and create a more sustainable and healthy integrated transport system for Barrow.
- 4.31 Strategic improvements to Barrow's rail infrastructure are crucial for enhancing accessibility and creating a positive first impression. Key recommendations include redesigning the station approach and adjacent public areas, improving station facilities, and incorporating wayfinding. Promoting the town's heritage through these improvements can help address the current poor arrival at Barrow, ensuring a more welcoming entry point.
- 4.32 Improving local movement within Barrow is essential for creating a more sustainable and accessible town centre. Key initiatives include developing and connecting public spaces, integrating traffic models that safely accommodate buses and cyclists, and reducing car dominance. Traffic calming and restricting car access to specific roads will encourage a shift towards more sustainable travel options. Creating a cohesive, pedestrian and cycling-friendly environment through upgrades, slower speed, and better public transport options is vital. Areas ripe for transformation include Abbey Road and Ramsden Square. These measures will enhance accessibility and health, promote sustainability, and improve the functionality and appeal of the town centre. The Panel were encouraged to see steps already made by the Council through the

master planning work undertaken in 2018 that formed part of the Town Investment Plan: <https://www.op-en.co.uk/projects/barrow-town-centre>.

- 4.33** With the dramatic setting of geography, sea and landscape, and only a 4% share of Cumbria's (Lake District/gateway to Lakes) sustainable growth in tourism, Barrow has the potential to raise its profile within the region, through the creation of a coastal route from Lancaster to Hadrian's Wall. Taking its inspiration from successful established tourist routes, such as Scotland's 'West Highland Way' or Ireland's West Coast 'Wild Atlantic Way', which attract tourism and the associated economic benefits. Additionally, Barrow should establish this route to help promote the town as a 'biker' destination on the back of the Hairy Biker, Dave Myers' 'Dave Day' and its motorbike/ speedway history.

Panel Recommendations

Strategic

- 4.34** To support the long-term development of Barrow, transport strategies should be integrated with the strategic master plan, ensuring all transportation infrastructure is aligned with broader growth and sustainability goals. Seize the opportunity to embed energy and digital communications networks into the planning process. This will enhance connectivity and resilience, and position Barrow as a forward-thinking, energy-efficient, digitally connected hub, ready to attract investment.

Utilisation of the Aerodrome

- 4.35** In the short term, encourage BAE to allow air taxi flights from regional UK airports to the aerodrome, appealing to high-net-worth individuals and corporate investors, while enhancing the terminal with low-budget decorative improvements and a meet-and-greet presentation space for investor visits. Engage with UK airports to explore their capacity for supporting small air taxi or helicopter services. In the medium term (7–10 years), focus on developing active travel routes and bus connectivity to the aerodrome. In the long term (10+ years), assess the feasibility of licensing affordable small passenger and freight flights to benefit the wider local population.

Ferry Opportunities

- 4.36** Consider the viability of an express car, pedestrian, and cycle ferry across Morecambe Bay as an alternative to a bridge, which lacks a viable road investment strategy business case. This should include planning for a sustainable cycle, bus, and pedestrian network linking the ferry's jetty terminal to destinations within the town, creating jobs and opportunities. In the long term (10+ years), explore the potential for a ferry jetty terminal near the aerodrome to enhance access, supporting the viability of future sustainable small commercial air services. Alternatively, a town centre jetty terminal should be incorporated into the Future Ports Masterplan, to offer services to Isle of Man, for example.

Regional

4.37 To strengthen Barrow's transport infrastructure, leverage the new unitary authority structure and potential devolution deal to implement a more resilient road transport plan. Key actions should include:

1. **Upgrading the regional road network:** Improve the resilience of key roads to support local and regional connectivity.
2. **Enhancing bus services:** Engage with service providers to improve bus routes, frequency and reliability, ensuring that the transport network meets the needs of all users.
3. **Collaborating with regional stakeholders:** Work closely with regional authorities to ensure alignment in transport planning and support long-term initiatives.

By taking these steps, Barrow can enhance its transport infrastructure, making it more resilient, accessible, healthy and capable of supporting future growth. For example, discuss with Cumbria Tourism the potential for a coastal route from Lancaster to Hadrian's Wall.



Image 7: Barrow-in-Furness Station Forecourt ©Historic England, Historic England Places Panel

Rail

4.38 To enhance Barrow's transport infrastructure and improve the visitor experience, collaborate with the newly established Great British Railways to advocate for regional-level rail improvements. Key actions should include:

1. **Redesigning the station approach:** Redesign the station entrance and surrounding area to improve the arrival experience, offering easy access to local amenities and transport connections. Invest in upgrades including clear signage and wayfinding to improve accessibility and help visitors navigate the area with ease.
2. **Promotion of Barrow:** Use the station as an opportunity to promote Barrow's heritage, culture and tourism offer, creating a more welcoming and informative first impression for visitors.
3. **Transport Hub:** Remove the Council Station Carpark and replace with a Transport HUB including cycle and bus interchange. Consider an express bus from the rail station to BAE to encourage modal transfer of workers. You can see BAE buildings from the entry to the current car park, so a dedicated service along Dryden Street or Abbey Road, removing on street parking bays, would have BAE employees in work in under 10 minutes.
4. **Rail Freight:** Identify with National Rail/Great British Railways a location for freight to terminate, unload and be sustainably delivered to destinations within the town. There appears to be a redundant north track which dead ends and is adjacent to a commercial area that might be expanded to serve as a freight depot.

Town Centre

4.39 To foster sustainable growth and improve the town centre experience, advance a strategic development framework that supports sustainable movement and site-specific planning. Key steps should include:

1. **Strategic Development Framework:** Develop a town centre framework that incorporates sustainable transportation principles, ensuring individual sites are aligned with the broader vision for the area, taking into account the recently revised National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF).
2. **Utilising Traffic Modelling:** Implement traffic modelling to safely accommodate buses and cyclists, enhancing accessibility and prioritising active travel options.
3. **Restricting Car Access:** Restrict car access to certain roads to encourage a shift towards alternative modes of transportation such as walking, cycling, and public transit.
4. **Phased Car Parking Reduction:** Gradually remove parking spaces to shift towards more sustainable transport options, alongside a new BAE Park & Ride service.

5. **Developing Public Spaces:** Connect and develop public spaces in the town centre, improving accessibility, connectivity, and the environment. This could be achieved by planning and delivering a phased rollout of Local Transport Note 1/20 segregated cycle and pedestrian lanes, connecting significant origins and destination in the town. A particular focus should be placed on connecting employment, tourist, social infrastructure i.e. BAE, schools, hospitals, health clinics, and the future park and ride, for example.
6. **Community Engagement:** Engage the community through practical and meaningful consultation to ensure development aligns with local needs and gains support. Work with existing third sector organisations who have the trust of local communities.

4.40 Integrating these measures would create a more sustainable, vibrant, healthy and accessible town centre for residents, workers and visitors, whilst reducing its carbon footprint.



Image 8: Barrow-in-Furness Town Hall from Market Street Car Park. [Historic Places Panel © Historic England]

Cultural Heritage: How can Barrow's rich cultural heritage be used as a catalyst to change perceptions and build a positive identity for the town?

Panel Response

Identity

- 4.41** Barrow's rich history and strong sense of purpose are embodied in its historic buildings, museums, cultural organisations, and community initiatives, fostering a deep sense of belonging amongst residents. The Panel were particularly impressed by the rich ecology of community based cultural and social activity that they found in Barrow, such as the community arts organisation 'Art Gene' led by Maddi Nicholson. Art Gene has delivered a whole host of engaging activities across the town and Walney Island, and their leadership through caring for and nurturing Barrow's development, shines through very strongly.

This heritage will provide a vital foundation for future growth by:

1. Establishing a unified place identity to strengthen community ties and attract investment.
2. Celebrating stories and memories to promote community engagement and learning from the past.
3. Recognising the key role that women play in the town where the heavily male-dominated workforce sits at the forefront. The Panel feels that these women's voices could be better represented together through the arts community.

Harnessing Barrow's heritage inclusively and strategically will unlock its potential for regeneration.

Regeneration Opportunities

- 4.42** Barrow's regeneration strategy should prioritise cultural and heritage-led developments, promoting sustainable development whilst conserving Barrow's architectural legacy. Key areas for focus are the station approach, tenements and the Town Hall/the Forum.
- 4.43** Revitalising key sites like the Town Hall, currently not open to the public, is crucial to providing vibrant spaces for cultural activities, community events and public engagement. Opening these spaces would preserve heritage, offer resources for local schools and arts organisations, and foster a sense of pride and connection within the community; ultimately creating a more inclusive and engaged town.
- 4.44** The Panel recognised the value of the Forum and Market to the local community but felt that the building and its surroundings needed urgent attention.

Community Engagement

- 4.45 The community should be involved in developing the brief for key projects, selecting the very best consultants and developer partners. Involving communities (through schools, arts organisations, tenant associations, sports clubs etc.) is key to preserving cultural identity while creating opportunities for future generations. The Daedalus Waterfront development in Southampton exemplifies this approach, where a public-private partnership between MurrayTwohig, Homes England and Patron Capital successfully aligned commercial viability with community needs, demonstrating how collaborative development can achieve community-focused outcomes.

Events

- 4.46 The success of past public events could be built upon, with Barrow's future growth supported through vibrant, community-driven initiatives that celebrate its heritage and foster engagement.

Panel Recommendations

Community Engagement

- 4.47 Host a community conversation day (learning from Art Gene, involving food freely available to attendees) to define a shared vision and integrate existing networks into the planning process. Ensure that the right people are facilitating the conversations and 'nurture the seeds beneath the snow'. Imagining and articulating the fusion of local passion, and utilising the knowledge and experience of the people already on the ground.

Community Spaces

- 4.48 Conduct an audit of community spaces and implement improvements to enhance accessibility; ensuring they are inclusive and welcoming for all members of the community. This should include an Urban Room initiative that establishes and subsidises an Urban Room to serve as a hub for community dialogue and engagement with urban planning and development.

Heritage Celebration

- 4.49 Highlight Barrow's heritage at key arrival points, in public spaces, and through development projects, to establish the town as a local destination:
1. Develop a targeted strategy to revitalise the Town Hall and surrounding area, integrating the building into a cohesive placemaking strategy which could include creating a public park on its south side, mitigating the current vehicle/pedestrian conflict, and opening up the tower of the Town Hall for tours.
 2. Review plans for the Forum and Market Hall. Retain and remodel them - considering the embodied carbon in the current fabric - using innovative designers to work with the community to challenge and inspire. Consider the surrounding streets and spaces holistically, as an opportunity alongside the Town Hall, to create a central civic hub. Meanwhile uses can be used to help to inform future uses, but without trying to find one big solution straight away.



Image 9: Dave Myers 'The Hairy Biker' mural by Shawn Sharpe, The Kings Pub, Barrow-in-Furness. [Historic Places Panel © Historic England]

Cultural Investment

- 4.50** The Panel recommends enlivening the Town Centre to provide the setting and opportunities to 'experience' Barrow, recognising the shift away from the traditional use of the high street from retailing to 'meet and socialise' patterns. This can be achieved through the dynamic programming of events to activate and animate the town centre, engaging both locals and visitors, and utilising existing infrastructure and equipment already available for events in the town. Expand on cultural activities and events, such as building on the success of 'Dave Day' (the memorial event for the late Dave Myers) to enrich cultural life, strengthen identity, and create an animated and attractive town centre.

5. Historic England Supporting Advice

- 5.1 Going forward, Historic England wish to offer their support to help Team Barrow take forward the recommendations of the Historic Places Panel. The focus of which will be driven by further engagement with Team Barrow and the Barrow Delivery Board.
- 5.2 With their historic building expertise and experience in retrofit, Historic England can help support plans to upgrade the Barrow Island tenement blocks. Historic England can also advise on the use of planning tools to help streamline the consent process. This would be alongside Historic England's current grant support for the tenements, which centres on tenant engagement and building survey work.
- 5.3 Seeing is believing. Historic England can use their national expertise and experience to showcase successful housing development across England. Providing examples of successful large scale housing sites, housing built at higher densities, and the reconfiguring and retrofit of existing dwellings.
- 5.4 Building on their recent experience of delivering the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme, Historic England can provide support on town centre masterplanning.
- 5.5 Historic England can also use their national expertise and experience to showcase best practice across community led regeneration, repurposing shopping precincts and reutilising civic buildings.
- 5.6 Historic England will provide support on Local Plan matters through their advice in respect of the historic environment.
- 5.7 Historic England support Barrow's primary schools through the Heritage Schools Programme in the town.

6. The Panel

The Historic Places Panel provides a broad spectrum of independent expertise to help local authorities and others engage in the regeneration and revitalisation of historic places.

List of panel members who attended the visit to Barrow-in Furness on the 27–28 November 2024:

Ben Derbyshire

Nairita Chakraborty

Jane Dann

Honor Fishburn

Daisy Froud

Jane Gibson

Geoff Rich

Peter Runacres

David Ubaka

Atam Verdi

Katie Wray



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