

Berwick Innovation & Skill Centre

1. The need for the provision of skills training in Berwick is well established. Currently FE provision is provided by Northumberland College at 3 locations, including the Berwick Ramparts, which hosts their construction courses. Northumberland County Council also offer a range of skills courses. There is no Higher Education provision in Berwick, though Sunderland University did explore the possibility of opening a satellite campus around 2010. Employers have reported that a local skills shortage is holding back economic growth. Yet educational providers have said that they have a shortage of applicants for their existing courses.

2. The main employment sectors in Berwick are

Trade – retail, wholesale & cars

Manufacturing – including a large amount of food processing

Tourism – below the Northumberland average and a clear area for growth

Construction – with a small niche cluster of firms using low carbon & sustainable build technologies

3. Berwick lacks a business incubator unit suitable for start-up SMEs or graduate start-ups. Whilst the Berwick Workspace offers office facilities for start-ups it is not suitable for start-ups that require managed workshops or shared support services.

4. The purpose of this brief is to bring together key stakeholders to discuss the establishment of a Berwick Innovation and Skills Centre, to act as a focus for the delivery of a range of solutions to the above including

- A training centre to be shared between the various education providers, to provide a range of courses at all levels, from day release, apprenticeship support through to degree level.
- A business incubator unit to include light industrial units suitable for design and small scale fabrication.
- A business advice centre, to offer support for SMEs and start-ups, and to offer information on government support for innovation, including Innovate UK, KTPs, H2020 and regional funds.

To be invited

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Berwick Chamber of Trade

Berwick Town Council

Sunderland University

Northumberland College

Berwick Adult Education

Berwick Community Trust