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REPORT RANKS CUMBRIA LEAST INNOVATIVE PLACE IN THE COUNTRY

Joshua Hammond

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Cumbria has been ranked the least innovative place in the UK, according to new research.

ENGLISH LEAS	Product/Service	New to market	Process	Strategy/Marketing	R&D	Collaboration	Overall
Oxfordshire LEP	1	5	1	2	1	1	1
Greater Cambridge & Peterborough	5	10	5	1	2	2	2
South East Midlands	3	6	7	3	9	6	3
Gloucestershire	2	17	12	7	6	3	4
Enterprise MS	4	1	21	12	7	4	5
New Anglia	43	38	25	40	41	37	42
Eastern Scotland	36	32	43	42	29	44	43
Northern Ireland	41	39	36	43	42	42	44
Cumbria	42			44	43	43	45

Topping the table for innovation is Oxfordshire, whilst Cumbria languishes at the bottom.

A report carried out by the Enterprise Research Centre, found that Cumbria was frequently ranked in the lowest of 45 districts in the UK for innovation.

The report scores the county poorly in all of the innovation benchmarks; product and service, new to market, process, strategy and marketing, collaboration and research and development.

Professor Stephen Roper, director of the Enterprise Research Centre and one of the authors of the report said: "One of the things that you have to be aware of is that this was a survey, not an analysis of all of the companies, rather just the ones that responded and the numbers from Cumbria were rather small.

"I think the position of Cumbria is one that is consistent with what we're seeing in other areas of the UK, the numbers are not inconsistent with other more rural and coastal areas.

"I think the whole aim was for the project to help us get a better idea of the geography and where the challenges were and the challenges in Cumbria are similar to other rural areas.

"Building innovation through supply chains for big projects is exactly the kind of response we'd expect to see and we should have more recent data available soon to update the league table."

The county, which has recently been **hailed for its commitment to innovation**, ranked below Northern Ireland, Eastern Scotland, New Anglia and Greater Lincolnshire.

MP for Westmorland and Lonsdale, Tim Farron said: "Cumbria is an innovative county, I see that from the businesses I visit or the apprentices I meet at factories throughout South Cumbria.

"But this report shows that our businesses need more help and

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tailored support to help them get their product to market.

“I am urging everyone with a stake in the public sector to look at what they are doing and to redouble their efforts on this.”

The data used was from the period of 2010 to 2012 and does not recognise innovations in the past three years.

Established in 2013, Innovus was created by the National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) to try and address the shortfall in innovation in Cumbria.

Simon Walker, stakeholder manager at Innovus and the NNL responded to the findings and said: “The figures that are quoted in the table accompanying the report are what prompted The University of Manchester and National Nuclear Laboratory to pursue the Innovus idea.

“As a result, nearly £2m of additional investment has been made into Cumbrian innovation since August 2013, with 36 grants awarded.

“The target for Innovus is to help to develop the culture of investment in innovation, research and development in Cumbria, raising the level from less than 1% of turnover to the European average which is 3%.

“The results won’t be seen overnight as technology development is often a lengthy process, but already the results are starting to be seen.”

What do you think about Cumbria's low ranking? Tell us in the comment box below or email joshua.hammond@cngroup.co.uk

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