



# Creating Connected Tourism Hubs: North Coast 500 and Northumberland 250

 Northern Scotland & North East England

The North Coast 500 and Northumberland 250 are two key initiatives in the UK which have accelerated rural tourism by advertising destinations to local, national and global audiences. They have been powerful tools in unlocking the potential of rural locations by providing clear routes for accessing them which has enabled a large impact upon local businesses and communities.

## The North Highland Initiative: North Coast 500

The NHI use tourism as a vehicle for creating sustainable communities. This has resulted in the creation of The North Coast 500, a 516-mile route that has attracted an audience of 3.3 billion people around the globe in 2018 and created an additional 200 jobs in its first year of operation.

Following the creation and development of North Coast 500 Ltd, it has received

private investment, however NHI remains a significant investor.

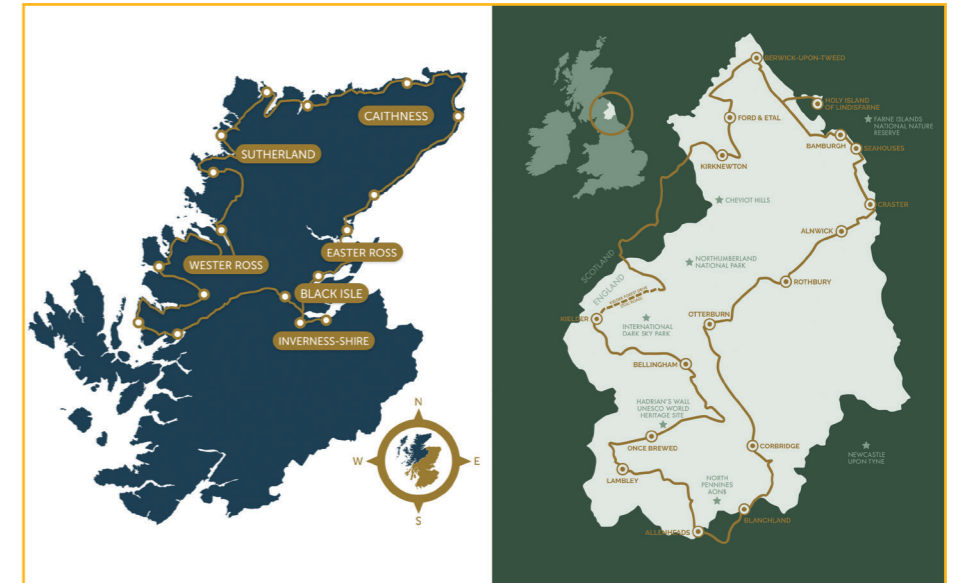
Subsequently, NHI has assisted communities with fundraising and the development of projects. The success of the NC500 has prompted the NHI work with communities to create projects with community and wider regional benefits.

## Northumberland 250

Northumberland 250 is a small private business and primarily an online platform promoting the diverse attractions of Northumberland along a 250-mile

route. The business also provides the opportunity to hire a Land Rover to enjoy the landscape of Northumberland.

The founders of the business travelled the whole of Northumberland to identify a logical route to travel Northumberland. The concept and wider project originated on Instagram and has been a powerful tool for developing relationships with North East businesses and to generate marketing collaborations.



## Relevant links:

### The North Highland Initiative: North Coast 500

Website: <http://www.northhighlandinitiative.co.uk/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/NorthHighlandsScotland/>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/north\\_highlands](https://twitter.com/north_highlands)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/northcoast500/>

### Northumberland 250

Website: <https://northumberland250.com/>

Press Release: <https://northern-insight.co.uk/media/bringing-northumberlands-adventure-to-life/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Northumberland-250-102766235237010>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nland250/>



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## Interview Questions and Responses

### The North Highland Initiative: North Coast 500

#### What are the origins of the project?

In 2015, the North Coast 500 was launched by the North Highland Initiative (NHI) to strengthen the tourism sector. The route now brings in more than £20 million in tourism spend per annum and brings benefits to over 500 miles of scenery, beginning and ending in Inverness.

The North Coast 500 concept and brand was created by NHI and is now owned, managed and developed by North Coast 500 Ltd, a privately funded company. North Coast 500 Ltd was established in 2017 to create a self-sustaining commercial entity which could promote the North Coast 500 brand. NHI held a majority stake in the organisation until 2019 when Wildland Ventures Ltd took the majority stake.

#### How did they secure funding?

A range of corporate, business and public sector partners support the North Coast 500. The North Coast 500 brand is now monetised through license agreements. As a result, they have established Business Club, Business Partner and Corporate Partners memberships which enjoy the use of the brand as part of the membership. Business memberships start from £110 per annum, price depending on the size of the business. This means that businesses can use the 'North Coast 500' and 'NC500' brand, are listed on the website and receive social media promotions and monthly newsletters.

Additional actors have applied for external funding to maintain the infrastructure of the NC500. For example, Highland Council has bid for £44 million from UK Government's Levelling Up Fund to fund road improvements along the west of the NC500 route.

#### How is the project managed or governed?

The project was originally managed and governed by the North Highland Initiative, and influenced by the Highland Council and Scottish Government. The project is directly managed and governed by North Coast 500 Ltd, a registered limited company in Scotland. The company has key corporate partners including The Singleton Distillery, Johnny Walker Clynelish Distillery, the Caledonian Sleeper, Dunnet Bay Distillers, Arnold Clark and Highland Titles.

#### What are the impacts of the project to date?

The route has been the most successful route development in Scotland and has project economic benefits to the North Highlands. The Moffat Centre for Tourism at Glasgow Caledonian University found that the route generated over £22.89 million in GVA in 2018 and supports sales for accommodation, retail and attractions near the route.

### Northumberland 250

#### What are the origins of the project?

David Cook founded Northumberland 250 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and developed the start-up alongside his job in the sports travel sector<sup>1</sup>. David was passionate about travel and wanted to enable people to explore Northumberland. He then created a route to travel Northumberland, which marked the birth of the Northumberland 250 concept. He took inspiration from projects such as the NC500 and the Cabot Trail in Canada.

#### How is funding secured?

The business grew after spreading organically on Instagram and the business sells a wide range of products on its website to generate revenue. However the business also makes charitable donations. For example, the official map for the Northumberland 250 costs £6.00 and every 25p from the purchase of these maps is donated to the Kielderhead Wildwood Project.

#### How is the project managed or governed?

The project is directly managed and governed by its co-founders David Cook and Ella Mckendrick as a registered limited micro business.

#### What are the impacts of the project to date?

Customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and the route has encouraged people to visit Northumberland. The company also advocates its 'leave no trace principles', which encourage tourists to be responsible and minimise the impacts of their journey on the landscape.

In addition, the Northumberland 250 has collaborated with local businesses and the wider creative sector in the North East, generating new collaborative projects with organisations such as BOX Pizza, Hesleyside Huts and Defender Camping. The business has also collaborated with North East based artists and social media professionally to develop exposure for local talent.

<sup>1</sup> BRINGING NORTHUMBERLAND'S ADVENTURE TO LIFE – Northern Insight Magazine (northern-insight.co.uk)