



NORTH EAST
Chamber of Commerce

Support • Connect • Represent

UNLOCKING THE NORTH EAST ECONOMY

**THE CHAMBER'S FLAGSHIP
CONFERENCE MINI-SERIES**



**WE ARE
NORTH EAST
BUSINESS**



THREE EVENTS. ONE SHARED AMBITION FOR THE NORTH EAST.

BE PART OF THE CONVERSATION

Join North East business leaders shaping what comes next.

RESERVE YOUR PLACE: WWW.NECC.CO.UK



A NEW OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE THE FUTURE OF OUR NORTH EAST

Businesses across the North East are being asked to make important choices about how they grow, where they invest and how they prepare for change. The right decisions could unlock new opportunities. The wrong ones risk holding productivity and progress back.

The Chamber's new three-part conference mini-series will help businesses understand these challenges, learn what is working in practice and identify where they should focus next.

One year on from the launch of our Unlocking the North East Economy policy plan, the series will turn the ambitions into practical conversations

about delivery. Three focused events will explore people, jobs and productivity; trade, devolution and global opportunity; and how culture, investment and place can drive growth.

Each event will bring together influential voices from business, government, education and civic life to share real-world experience, challenge established thinking and examine the choices facing organisations and the wider region.

Delegates will leave with practical insight, fresh perspectives and a clearer understanding of how their organisation can respond, contribute and benefit as the North East economy evolves.

TICKETS:

The ticketed series is open to Chamber members and non-members, with discounted rates available for members:

SINGLE EVENT:

£40 MEMBERS, £70 NON-MEMBERS

FULL SERIES:

£100 MEMBERS, £180 NON-MEMBERS



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This conference series will explore how the North East's ambitions can be translated into practical action for businesses. Across three events, delegates will hear what is working, where barriers remain and how organisations are responding to challenges around people, productivity, trade, investment and growth.

It is an opportunity to gain practical insight, make valuable connections and contribute to the conversations shaping the region's future.

The North East has enormous strengths, but potential alone is not enough. Sustained partnership, investment and delivery are essential to create the conditions in which businesses can grow, attract talent, access new opportunities and succeed.

JOHN MCCABE,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF NORTH EAST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**WE ARE
NORTH EAST
BUSINESS**



OUR SPONSORS



EDDIE TRIBE,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
SES TECHNOLOGY



"We see first-hand the scale of opportunity emerging across Teesside and the wider North East. Investment in advanced manufacturing, clean energy, digital infrastructure and AI can create high-value jobs and drive long-term regional growth.

"Realising that potential will depend on developing the skills, talent and capabilities businesses need to grow. Through our work and long-standing relationship with Teesside University, we believe education, innovation and industry collaboration are central to achieving that.

"Bringing businesses, educators and regional leaders together can help boost productivity and ensure transformational investment delivers lasting benefits for local communities."



DAME IRENE HAYS,
OWNER AND DIRECTOR,
HAYS TRAVEL



"The conversation around trade, devolution and the North East's global future closely reflects our own ambitions as a business.

"For 46 years, we have been proud to call Sunderland home, investing in jobs, apprenticeships and skills while growing our business across the UK. Throughout that time, our vision and values have remained constant, with a strong commitment to our people, customers and communities.

"A stronger, more connected North East economy will help businesses grow, create opportunities for people and ensure our region continues to play a confident, outward-looking role nationally and internationally."



DARUSH DODDS,
DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE
AFFAIRS & SOCIAL VALUE



"We believe strong places create strong economies. After more than five decades delivering housing and infrastructure projects across the North East, we have seen first-hand how investment can benefit businesses, communities and individuals.

"Our region has world-class industries, ambitious businesses, skilled people and a strong identity. We must build on these strengths by creating investable places that support long-term, inclusive growth.

"For us, successful development and construction is about more than bricks and mortar. By embedding social value into investment and regeneration, we can create jobs, develop skills, strengthen communities and ensure local people share in the benefits of growth."



HOW DO WE BUILD A WORKFORCE READY FOR THE AGE OF AI?

POWERING PRODUCTIVITY AND GROWTH: PEOPLE, JOBS AND AI

EVENT 1 - KEY INFORMATION:

Date:
Friday 18 September 2026

Time:
08:45 Arrival, continental
breakfast and networking
09:15 Event start
11:00 Event close

Venue:
Teesside University Digital Life
Centre, Middlesbrough

Businesses cannot improve productivity without the right people, skills and jobs. As work changes, organisations need to make informed choices about where to invest, how to support their workforce and when technology can add genuine value.

This session focuses on how the North East can build a workforce that is ready for the future.

As technology continues to change the nature of work, there is a growing need to balance technical capability with adaptability, creativity and strong workplace cultures. This is not just about skills provision, but about how organisations attract, develop and retain people in a way that supports long-term productivity.

The discussion will explore how businesses are responding to these challenges in practice. This includes approaches to skills development, inclusive recruitment and employee wellbeing, alongside the role AI is beginning to play across different sectors.

AI will be considered in a practical sense. Not just as a tool to improve efficiency, but as something that is changing how people work, solve problems and make decisions.

SES SEE FIRST-HAND THE SCALE
OF OPPORTUNITY EMERGING
ACROSS TEESSIDE AND THE
WIDER NORTH EAST.



SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS



Lord Elliott of Mickle Fell
President, Jobs
Foundation



Evenna Ottey
Senior Director, AI strategy
and transformation, Sage



Claire Ainsley
Director and former policy
director to Sir Keir Starmer in
Opposition, PPI



Darren Hankey
Principal and CEO,
Hartlepool College



Kate Shoesmith
Director of Policy and Insights,
British Chambers of Commerce



Eddie Tribe
Managing Director,
SES



HOW CAN NORTH EAST BUSINESSES COMPETE AND WIN ON A GLOBAL STAGE?

TRADE, DEVOLUTION AND THE NORTH EAST'S GLOBAL FUTURE

EVENT 2 - KEY INFORMATION:

Date:
Thursday 1 October 2026

Time:
08:45 Arrival, continental
breakfast and networking
09:15 Event start
11:00 Event close

Venue:
The Culture House, Sunderland

The North East is competing with regions around the world for investment, talent and opportunity. Businesses need a stronger regional offer, better access to new markets and a clearer understanding of how devolution can support growth.

This session looks at how the North East can strengthen its position on a national and international stage.

As competition for investment and talent increases, there is a need for the region to present a clear and confident offer. This goes beyond individual sectors and looks at how the North East is understood as a place to do business.

The session will explore how trade, connectivity and devolution can support this. There will be a focus on how businesses can access new markets, build relationships and navigate an increasingly complex global environment.

It will also consider how the region tells its story. This includes how its strengths, heritage and ambitions are communicated in a way that resonates with investors and partners.

A STRONGER, MORE CONNECTED NORTH EAST WILL HELP BUSINESSES GROW AND STRENGTHEN THE REGION'S ROLE NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

Sponsored by



SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS



Tom Riordan
Northern Growth Corridor
Envoy, HM Treasury



Deborah Walton
CFO, Palintest



Sarah McCann
Senior Solicitor - External
Affairs, NorthStandard



Søren Nikolajsen
Managing Director,
Government and Industry
Engagement - Defence and
Trade, NatWest



Dame Irene Hays
Owner and Director,
Hays Travel



Richard Oppenheim
Director of the Diplomatic
Advisory Hub, British
Chambers of Commerce



WHAT MAKES A PLACE SOMEWHERE BUSINESSES WANT TO INVEST, GROW AND SUCCEED?

PLACE TO PROSPERITY: CULTURE, INVESTMENT AND GROWTH

EVENT 3 - KEY INFORMATION:

Date:
Thursday 15 October 2026

Time:
08:45 Arrival, continental
breakfast and networking
09:15 Event start
11:00 Event close

Venue:
The Glasshouse International Centre
for Music, Gateshead

The places where people live and work directly affect investment, recruitment and business confidence. Creating attractive, connected and inclusive locations is essential if the North East is to secure growth and ensure its benefits are widely felt.

This session focuses on how the North East can translate its strengths into places that attract investment and support long-term growth.

This includes the role of infrastructure, development and regeneration, but also how places are designed and experienced by the people who live and work in them.

The discussion will explore how different elements come together to create investable locations. This includes transport and digital connectivity, sustainability, town centres and wider community identity.

There will be a focus on practical examples, including how organisations are approaching development and how projects are being shaped to deliver both economic and social value.

The session will also introduce the Social Value Framework and how it can support a more joined-up approach to investment across the region.

THE NORTH EAST CAN LEAD THE
WAY IN SHOWING HOW ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL
IMPACT CAN WORK HAND IN HAND.

Sponsored by



SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS



David Hopkinson
CEO, Newcastle United FC



Vicky Pryce
Chief Economic Adviser,
Centre for Economics and
Business Research



George Clarke
Architect and former
Government adviser
on homes



Dr Catherine Glover
Assistant Professor,
Northumbria
University



Marie Nixon
Theatre Director,
Sunderland Empire
Theatre



Lucy Dixon
Head of External
Affairs, Karbon
Homes



Darush Dodds
Director of Corporate
Affairs & Social Value,
Esh Group



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