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Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister

On behalf of the North East Chamber of Commerce and our 1,800 members who together employ more than a third of this region's workforce, I congratulate you on becoming Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. We wish you every success as you lead our country through what is both a challenging and exciting period for our economy.

Your appointment is significant for the North. As an MP representing a northern constituency and following your years as Mayor of Greater Manchester, you understand both the opportunities and challenges facing places beyond Westminster. We welcome your ambition to establish a 'No. 10 of the North' and hope it becomes a genuine gateway into government for businesses, communities and leaders from every part of the North, building on the success of Darlington Economic Campus. The North East stands ready to play a full part in that ambition.

Working alongside North East Mayor Kim McGuinness and Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen, we have shown how business and devolved leaders can work together to unlock investment and deliver better outcomes for our communities. We encourage your government to build on this approach by giving mayoral combined authorities the long-term funding certainty and flexibility they need to drive investment, improve productivity and support good growth across every region.

Businesses continue to face significant pressures following increases in employer National Insurance contributions, the National Living Wage, inflation and energy costs. More than ever, employers need confidence, certainty and stability to invest, recruit, innovate and grow.

The North East is a region of ingenuity, creativity and resilience. We are home to world-class advanced manufacturers, internationally successful exporters, pioneering clean energy industries, leading universities and Further Education colleges and ambitious entrepreneurs. We stand ready to work with your government to help deliver the good growth that you have rightly placed at the heart of your agenda.



Our [Unlocking the North East Economy Policy Plan](#) sets out practical recommendations developed by employers across our region. To deliver good growth across every part of the country, we ask your government to commit to six practical actions during the remainder of this Parliament.

1. Deliver the skills system employers need

Commit to long-term funding for Local Skills Improvement Plans, reform the Growth and Skills Levy to support flexible modular training and work with employers to implement Alan Milburn's recommendations to tackle economic inactivity among young people. A modern economy needs a modern skills system, designed with employers at its heart.

2. Unlock the North East's net zero / energy security opportunity

Reform grid connection processes for nationally significant industrial projects, reduce industrial electricity costs to improve international competitiveness and invest in strategic port infrastructure to maximise opportunities in offshore wind, hydrogen, carbon capture and advanced manufacturing. These are investments that will strengthen the UK's energy security while creating high-quality jobs.

3. Improve connectivity to unlock investment

Commit to delivering the Leamside Line, improve rail connectivity between Tees Valley, County Durham, Sunderland, Newcastle and Northumberland and fund strategic highway improvements, including Moor Farm roundabout on the A19 and other nationally important congestion pinch points. Alongside this, accelerate investment in digital infrastructure and support SMEs to adopt AI and emerging technologies, helping businesses improve productivity and competitiveness.

4. Back exporting businesses

Establish a nationally backed Export Growth Programme, expand access to export finance, trade missions and market-entry support, simplify customs processes and introduce Digital Trade Vouchers to help more SMEs enter and grow in international markets. The North East remains England's leading exporting region outside London and has an essential role to play in growing the UK economy.

5. Support healthier communities through good work

Build on the success of the North East Economic Inactivity Trailblazer by creating long-term devolved employment, health and skills funding that enables local partners to develop genuinely joined-up employer-facing services. Combined with sustained investment in programmes such as Connect to Work and the Youth Guarantee, this would help more people into sustainable employment while supporting business productivity and tackling economic inactivity.

6. Make good growth work for everyone

Strengthen social value requirements across public procurement, adopt consistent national standards that reward local economic impact and work with employers to deliver the Child Poverty Strategy through integrated employment, skills and family support. Employers need a simpler, joined-up route into government-funded programmes that creates opportunity for individuals while helping businesses recruit, retain and develop talent.



Alongside these priorities, businesses need a stable and competitive tax environment. We urge your government to avoid further tax increases on business and to deliver root-and-branch reform of business rates, creating a fairer system that encourages investment and productivity across every region.

These are practical, achievable commitments that can be delivered during this Parliament. Together they would give businesses the confidence to invest, create jobs, improve productivity and contribute to the good growth that benefits every nation and region of the United Kingdom.

The North, including the North East, stands ready to play an even greater role in our nation's success. Our employers want to work with your government to invest, innovate, trade and create opportunity. Together, we can unlock the full potential of our region, strengthen the wider North and build a more prosperous, inclusive and internationally competitive United Kingdom.

You and I are fellow Great North Runners so you know you can be assured of a warm welcome in our wonderful region. It would be my pleasure to host you at a Chamber of Commerce event where you can meet with a wide range of our members and set out your stall for partnering with all of us in delivering growth in our region. This is an open invitation for you to join us at any time. We look forward to working with you and your team.

Yours sincerely



John McCabe
Chief Executive
North East Chamber of Commerce

