

To: Chancellor of the Exchequer
Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP
Sent by email

10 November 2025

Dear Rachel

Thanks to devolution, the North is delivering for our communities - driving innovation, tackling inequalities, and building stronger economies. Locally led solutions are making a real difference. We can go further, faster and continue to be the delivery arm for a successful government. The budget provides an opportunity to work together on priorities for the north to accelerate progress and unlock opportunity for our people and businesses.

While individual regions have submitted detailed budget proposals, this letter highlights three areas where we, as the Great North, speak with one voice. These are priorities that transcend boundaries and reflect a shared ambition to tackle poverty, grow our economies, and deliver opportunity for all.

First, to connect our people and businesses and unlock the full potential of our regional economies, we must invest in infrastructure. Infrastructure underpins opportunity.

The North is already developing transformative infrastructure investment plans to connect people to jobs, education, and opportunity.

The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review recognised that realising the untapped potential of the North requires a transformation in infrastructure that delivers faster, more reliable rail journeys. It also needs increased capacity to improve resilience and meet growing passenger, business, and freight demand.

Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR), delivered in full, is key to realising this potential, complementing other rail investment.

This full NPR network includes a new line from Liverpool to Manchester, running from Liverpool Lime Street via Liverpool Gateway, Warrington and Manchester Airport to an underground through station at Manchester Piccadilly. The new line would continue onwards to Huddersfield and Leeds via a new station in central Bradford and include electrification of the Leeds-Sheffield line.

It also requires significant upgrades to the Hope Valley and upgrading the East Coast Main Line north of Northallerton including unlocking capacity by reopening the Leamside Line to ensure effective services through to Sheffield, Hull and the North East.

Previously committed improvements north of York and electrification of the Midland Main Line to Sheffield, and the long overdue 70 mile stretch which connects Hull to Selby and Doncaster are needed.

NPR in full is the spine that connects the North. In addition to directly linking major destinations, it can provide better connectivity for Chester, Crewe, Lancashire, Cumbria and the Tees Valley. It also will benefit other areas by releasing capacity on the existing rail network for more freight and local passenger services.

Second, to ensure those communities thrive, we must support the businesses that power our local economies.

Across the North, Strategic Authorities are working with Business Boards and through growth hubs to prioritise business support and foster inclusive growth. Locally tailored interventions are already driving entrepreneurship and innovation.

We are now calling on government to ensure the successor to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) delivers devolved, stable, and long-term support for business growth across the North, including through the rollout of its new Local Growth Fund.

There is a need for all areas to have a sustainable funding model for business support to drive growth, including outside of city regions and including a replacement for the Rural England Prosperity Fund which has provided additional support in recognition of the challenges of delivering support in rural geographies and should be considered in future funding models.

We must reimagine business support to grow the economy. Fragmented models fail to meet businesses at their point of need. We need a system that fosters entrepreneurship, celebrates success, and builds a thriving ecosystem of start-ups and scale-ups. That means investing in direct support, storytelling, networks, and ambition.

Crucially, this must be underpinned by local government finance that is of sufficient scale and includes revenue support. Without this, local authorities will lack the capacity to deliver the kind of strategic, place-based business support that drives inclusive growth.

We call on government to work with us to design a future model that leverages private sector innovation, simplifies access through a single front door, and delivers value for money.

Now is the moment to back the Great North: to unlock potential, attract investment, and build a business support system that drives inclusive growth.

We're asking for the tools to deliver what our communities deserve: a future of opportunity and prosperity.

Third, addressing child poverty is essential to dismantling systemic obstacles and ensuring every young person in the North has a fair shot at a brighter future.

The North is already developing innovative approaches to prevention and inclusive growth to tackle child poverty.

To go further we are united in our call for you to lift the two-child benefit cap — a policy change that would lift hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, including over 100,000 in the North.

Many Northern communities are disproportionately affected by the two-child benefit cap, with higher rates of child poverty. Its impact is most acute in areas of entrenched disadvantage.

Reversing the cap would lift around 630,000 children out of poverty nationwide — with the North seeing the greatest impact. It is one of the most cost-effective and immediate levers to reduce poverty and unlock opportunity.

We must act. The children of the North cannot wait.

Together, these three asks - investing in infrastructure, transforming business support, and tackling child poverty - will help to unlock the North's full potential.

Devolution has shown what the North can achieve with the right powers and partnerships.

Across our regions, locally led leadership is already delivering meaningful change — boosting growth and improving lives.

With the right policy choices, government can help us build on this momentum and go even further.

Let's work together to deliver a Budget that backs the Great North and unlocks opportunity for all.

Kind regards



Kim McGuinness

Chair – The Great North



David Skaith

**York and
North Yorkshire Mayor**



Tracey Brabin

West Yorkshire Mayor



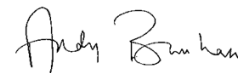
Luke Campbell MBE

Hull and Yorkshire Mayor



Oliver Coppard

South Yorkshire Mayor



Andy Burnham

Greater Manchester Mayor



Steve Rotherham

Liverpool City Region Mayor



Cllr Stephen Atkinson

**Lancashire Combined
Combined Authority Leader**



Cllr Louise Gittins

**Cheshire West and Chester
Council Leader**



Cllr Jonathan Brook

Westmorland & Furness

Council Leader



Cllr Mark Fryer

Leader of Cumberland Council