



## North East

### All Party Parliamentary Group

**Chair** Kate Osborne MP  
**Co-Chair** The Rt Hon. Lord Beith  
**Vice-Chairs** Ian Levy MP, Julie Elliott MP  
**Officers** Paul Howell MP, Mary Glendon MP, Chi Onwurah MP  
Mary Kelly Foy MP, Emma Lewell-Buck MP,  
Catherine McKinnell MP, Lord Wigglesworth,  
Baroness Grey-Thompson, Lord Curry of Kirkcaldy

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## MINUTES

### NORTH EAST APPG PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LAUNCH MEETING

### UNLOCKING THE NORTH EAST'S FULL POTENTIAL

12TH SEPTEMBER, 17:00-18:30

COMMITTEE ROOM 14, HOUSE OF COMMONS, SW1A 0AA

#### CHAIRS' OPENING REMARKS

- Kate Osborne MP, Co-Chair, North East APPG

Kate Osborne MP:

- The meeting was opened by the chair, who welcomed the attendees and explained the purpose of the North East All-Party Parliamentary Group (NE APPG).
- The chair presented the draft programme of the NE APPG, which aims to provide a strong and united voice for the North East in Westminster and to influence future policy and investment for the region.
- The programme covers various topics related to the social and economic development of the North East, such as inequalities, connectivity, education, climate, innovation, energy / net zero and housing.

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- The programme consists of a series of sessions and visits that will showcase the North East's potential and challenges, and invite contributions from politicians, stakeholders and businesses.
- The programme will culminate in a 'Manifesto for the North East' that will set out the region's key asks and priorities for the next Government.
- The chair introduced the two founding supporters of the NE APPG: Go-Ahead and Teesside University.
- The chair said that there would be time for other North East Parliamentarians to share their views and encouraged potential sponsors and supporters to get in touch with the NE APPG Secretariat.
- The Chair made apologies for Lord Alan Beith who was temporarily out of the room for votes.

Kate Osborne MP:

- The Chair introduced and handed over to the NE APPG's two founding supporters, Professor Craig Gaskell from Teesside University and Ben Maxfield from Go North East.

#### UNLOCKING THE NORTH EAST'S POTENTIAL

Perspectives from founding supporters and partners on transport connectivity, education, skills and innovation

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Ben Maxfield, Business Director at Go North East

- Go-Ahead North East: Introduced the company and its geographic scope within the region and the group.
- £2 fare cap: Mentioned that Go-Ahead is part of the government's initiative to make public transport more affordable.
- Quorum business park: Described the scheme that allows employees of companies like Tesco Bank to travel for free by bus.
- Collaboration with stakeholders: Stressed the importance of working with local partners to unlock the potential of the North East.
- Infrastructure and green buses: Highlighted the need for infrastructure investment to enable growth and reduce emissions. Noted the government's competing priorities between sectors.
  
- Professor Craig Gaskell, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange, Teesside University
  
- Teesside University: Presented the University as a Tees Valley institution with a London campus.
- Regional challenges: Identified issues such as poor connectivity within the North East.

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- University impact: Reported that Universities contribute £2.2bn to the region's economy and retains 85% of its graduates locally. Claimed the University is a key driver of new businesses.
- Key priorities: Listed areas such as reducing inequalities, improving skills, addressing health disparities, enhancing connectivity (digital and physical). Called for collective action and ambition.

#### Chair:

- Thanked Ben and Craig, and re-emphasised the call for collective action.
- Highlighted unsolved issues such as the A1, and that public transport links are far from ideal.
- Handed over to Parliamentarians.

#### PARLIAMENTARY PERSPECTIVE ON PRIORITIES AND RESPONSES:

- Ian Mearns MP, Gateshead
- North East Assembly: Recalled his campaign for a regional assembly. Said public opinion was strong, but the referendum failed due to the opposition's portrayal of the assembly as a talking shop.
- Skills and talent retention: Urged the North East and its combined authorities to keep and attract skilled workers and talented people. Emphasised the region's huge potential.

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- Emma Lewell-Buck MP, South Shields
- Set out some of the region's challenges such as connectivity, pockets of poverty, etc. However, said that there is talent, skills and energy in the region.

#### STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS AND OPEN DISCUSSION

Chair:

- Thanked Parliamentarians for the contributions.
- Turned to the audience for further contributions and get your views on what we need to unlock the North East's potential and any other thoughts on other issues that the NE APPG should address throughout the programme and in our 'Manifesto for the North East'.
- Jamie Driscoll, Mayor, North of Tyne
- Underinvestment in infrastructure: Argued that the North East needs more funding for transport and skills to boost its economy and create wealth.
- New railway line: Mentioned that the North of Tyne is one of the few places in the UK that is building a new passenger rail line, between Newcastle and Ashington.
- Child poverty eradication: Stated that it is possible to end child poverty in the region by investing in education, health and social services.

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- North East capitalisation: Suggested a campaign to change the spelling of 'north east' to 'North East' to reflect its status as a proper noun and a distinct region.
- Manifesto anticipation: Expressed his eagerness to see the manifesto that will outline the vision and priorities for the North East.
- Ken Robson, Durham County Council
- Welcomed the 'all party' initiative.
- Chris Lines, Durham County Council
- Discussed the regional campaigns of 'One North East' and 'Passionate People, Passionate Places'.
- Urged the APPG to be persistent and long-term in its vision. Said it is not a matter of one election cycle, but decades of commitment.
- Thom Campion, Newcastle City Council
- Stressed the importance of retaining young people in the region. Said many leave for other cities like London, Sheffield, Manchester etc. for better opportunities.
- Gill Morris, North East APPG Secretariat

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- Acknowledged the feeling of being overlooked in the North East. Said there is a lot of potential in the region. Said it is about the future generation.
- Jack Lister, LGIU
- Asked how to involve local councils in the regional agenda.
- Jamie Driscoll
- Responded by explaining the role of a regional mayor as a facilitator and coordinator of regional stakeholders, from councillors to businesses.

*Lord Beith takes the Chair.*

- Clare Morley, Rise North East
- Highlighted the poor health statistics in the region, but noted the new Integrated Care System.
- Said that investing in health upstream can have a huge economic return. Said health investment should go along with social and economic activities.
- Scott Hunter, Tees Valley Monitor Ltd
- Pointed out the governance gap in the North East. Said there is no authority for the middle area between Tees Valley and North of Tyne.

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- Jamie Driscoll
  - Agreed that the gap was a problem when he ran for mayor. Said it hindered the devolution of transport. Said the two Combined Authorities need to work together. Said it may depend on funding.
- Baroness Hilary Armstrong
  - Emphasised the need for cross-party and cross-stakeholder collaboration. There is so much to do, and so it is necessary to work out priorities.
  - Spoke about the importance of the NHS. Universities in the North East have a massive opportunity, with the Workforce Plan, to train new staff and diversify.
- Charlie Campion, Mental Health Matters
  - Spoke about the voluntary sector in context of Baroness Armstrong's comments.
- Martin Osborne, Karbon Homes
  - Introduced Karbon Homes. Welcomed the North East APPG and said they wanted to be part of the North East Manifesto.

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- Michael Henson, UK2070 Commission
- Stated by saying, there cannot be devolution without fiscal devolution, otherwise delivery is limited.
- In the Parliamentary timeline, there is only 36 weeks per year for delivery. This also limits what can be done at a local level.

#### CHAIR'S' CLOSING REMARKS

Kate Osborne MP, Co-Chair, North East APPG:

- Expressed gratitude to the audience for their participation and interest in the public launch of the North East All-Party Parliamentary Group
- Stated the group's goal of providing a strong and united voice for the North East in Westminster and working with all stakeholders to build consensus and drive future investment and growth for the region
- Invited the audience to follow the group on X (formerly Twitter) at '@NorthEastAPPG' and to attend the upcoming sessions on transport, housing, education and skills and culture
- Encouraged the audience to contact the group if they wanted to find out more and get involved
- Ended with a positive note and a thank you

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