

20 July 2026

Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP
Prime Minister

Dear Andy,

Heartfelt congratulations to our new Prime Minister. As North East Mayor I am looking forward to working with you on rebuilding trust in politics through meaningful delivery. When I joined you at your launch speech in Manchester, you rightly made clear that all parts of the UK need to feel the benefits of change, and that we need to end the trickle-down economics that has held back our regions. You and I know people don't judge government by what happens in Westminster. They judge it by what happens where they live. If they can see their place improving, they begin to believe politics can improve their lives.

To do that, we need to end not just trickle-down economics, but trickle-down power too. Now is the time to be bold and allow the English regions to enjoy what the German Bundesländer and American states take for granted – the freedom a federalised system gives them to intervene locally in order to make life better.

To take us towards a new era of power in the regions, the people of the North East need system change, immediate interventions to tackle the cost of living, and long-term changes that give them hope of a better future. Devolution in these three areas will allow people to see that their place is improving. It is that local delivery which should define your premiership. People trust results they can see.

1. **Empowering the regions.** The North East needs the freedom to intervene in the cost of living and create jobs. The last Chancellor signalled a historic shift in Treasury policy when she used her Mais Lecture to announce that she will work toward fiscal devolution, granting mayors a share of national revenue. You will know yourself that it is vital we do not allow this progress to slip. Fiscal devolution, with redistribution to reflect the growth the north still needs, is the most important next step in our devolution story. In a similar way, we need to build on your determination to reform procurement in order to grow regional economies. The North East is ready to lead. By backing local workers instead of sending major government contracts overseas, we could double the number of jobs in our green industries alone. When we have the power to create the jobs local people ask for, trust will grow.

2. **Action to help local people now.** People welcome the hope you promise, but they will want to see results. The most immediate change you can make here is to guarantee long-term funding for capped bus fares. In the North East, the Mayor's Fares pledge has delivered real cost of living help, capping fares at £2.50. Without further funding from Government we will struggle to keep fares down. Intervention here would be the most visible sign that this Labour government is prepared to back people in every part of the UK. Another way your government can help people in the short term is to devolve housing retrofit funding to mayors. We can move faster and more efficiently to make homes cheaper to heat. With radical devolution here we can bring down bills and create thousands of local jobs. When people see bold local action to reduce their bills, they will trust us to stand by them on other challenges.
3. **Long-term change for a better North East.** You and I have already discussed our shared sense of frustration that the regions simply do not have the power to intervene at an early stage to improve young lives. There are too many young people who are not in employment, education or training and there are too many powers hoarded in Whitehall buildings. The result is lost life chances. We can change this by handing power back to the regions. By devolving youth investment, skills funding for 16- to 19-year-olds and employment support, we will see results much more closely aligned with local needs. If we give the North East hope that a better future is coming, we create the conditions for trust.

There are of course further measures the North East needs, and I will be writing to your cabinet ministers to discuss ways of working with them on these.

The people of the North East are incredibly proud of their local identity. We have a strong record of working together to get things done. If the people here begin to see more of their hometown improving, their bills coming down and their children finding opportunity close to home, they won't simply believe in devolution. They'll believe politics can work again.

You are the first Prime Minister in British history who genuinely believes in using devolution to tear down the barriers to local growth. If we get this right, we will finally show people what take back control looks like. The North East is ready to work with you on this.

Yours,
Kim



Kim McGuinness
North East Mayor