

# N

NORTH EAST DEVOLUTION

# WHITE PAPER

**Raising the bar:**  
A blueprint to supercharge  
North East growth

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Participants discuss the North East's future during a NET x Fairstone roundtable event. Findings from those discussions helped inform the creation of this white paper.

## Foreword

The North East is entering a new era.

With the North East Combined Authority comes a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine the region's economic, social and cultural landscapes.

Devolution is already delivering change through targeted investments into business, improved transport links, stronger skills pathways and efforts to reduce inequality.

But the moment demands more.

To truly realise our potential, we must be bold.

This is not a time for modesty or incrementalism; it's a time to believe in the North East, and back that belief with tangible action.

We must craft a new identity for the region, one which pulses with passion, proclaims innovation and projects confidence to the world.

We must reshape the financial ecosystem to unlock capital and supercharge growth ambitions.

We must reform skills development to meet the demands of tomorrow's industries.

We must rejuvenate transport infrastructure to connect people to places and potential.

The North East is more than a region. It's home.

It's where NET, the house of media brands that includes business sector-focused print publication N magazine and national digital commercial sector news platform Bdaily, continues to grow.

It's where Fairstone, now one of the UK and Ireland's leading wealth management firms, took its first steps.

It's the launchpad for countless other businesses scaling across domestic and international markets.

And it is ready to lead the way once again.

This is our opportunity to build a North East where the next wave of investors, entrepreneurs and innovators put down roots to scale.

This is our moment to shape the region's boldest chapter yet, and set a course for lasting success.

**Steven Hugill**  
Editor-in-chief  
NET

**Lee Hartley**  
Founder and deputy chair  
Fairstone

## Executive summary

From coalfields that breathed life into the engines of empire, to locomotives that stirred rail travel, the colossal seafaring vessels launched from bustling shipyards and the superstructures symbolising the heights of human ambition, the North East's industrial legacy is etched in earth and stamped in steel.

But heritage alone is no guarantee of future success.

And in a rapidly-evolving commercial world, the North East has arrived at a pivotal economic, political and social crossroads.

To secure a new era of prosperity, the region must forge a fresh business strategy – one that helps spur investment and financial growth, hothouses company expansion, trains workers for the highly skilled and well-paid jobs of tomorrow, and overhauls transport links to better plug into UK and global markets.

Crucial to that future is the North East Combined Authority.

And this white paper explores how the decentralisation of decision-making must be truly harnessed to unlock a new epoch of economic and social transformation.

Predicated upon insight from nearly 50 senior North East business figures – many overseeing domestic and international organisations – presented in six roundtable discussions led by multi-platform publisher NET and supported by national wealth management firm Fairstone, this document sets out policy priorities for the North East Combined Authority and mayor Kim McGuinness.

Devolution represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

And this white paper provides a confident, business-led agenda to ensure the North East becomes an industrial leader again.

With focused policy, clear priorities and confident leadership, the region can turn ambition into action and re-establish itself as a national and global powerhouse.

## Introduction

The North East's industrial past is as storied as it is historic.

And with the creation of the North East Combined Authority, significant opportunity abounds to write a new chapter in its narrative.

Founded in May 2024 and led by elected mayor Kim McGuinness, the public body encompasses the local authority areas of Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Newcastle, Sunderland, Gateshead and County Durham.

Backed by a headline £4.2 billion cash commitment, its ambitions envision a region where pillars of lower child poverty, increased social housing, an overflowing net-zero skills pipeline and a greener transport network rise from foundations shaped by centuries of industrial advances<sup>1</sup>.

And progress is underway.

Confirmation of a Government-backed £1.85 billion funding deal to extend the Tyne and Wear Metro to Washington<sup>2</sup> augmented further commitments to boost housing provision, strengthen vocational skills training and support the growth of creative businesses.

These early gains are welcome, but they must serve as stepping stones on a much longer journey.

To truly deliver sustainable growth, the North East Combined Authority must:

- Lead on the delivery of a blueprint that avoids short-termism and prioritises long-term economic prosperity through strategies rooted in the region's distinct industrial strengths
- Create an assured and ambitious identity that refreshes the North East's commercial narrative and showcases its investment opportunities domestically and internationally
- Foster an environment that accelerates the momentum of existing standout businesses and rapidly-scaling SMEs and university spin-outs
- Focus on high-value employment and emphasise career creation over job volume
- Support the formation of an investment ladder to provide early-stage, scale-up and mature businesses with easier access to capital

- Build on existing work to continue strengthening ties between industry and education, to equip learners today with the skills for tomorrow's jobs
- Help drive further transport improvements to bolster inter-regional connectivity, and better open up the North East to domestic and global businesses
- Truly utilise its business and economy board by drawing on members' knowledge and expertise to shape and implement commercially-focused growth strategies
- Boost the region's industrial and commercial sectors on the global stage through an annual investment expo
- Provide dedicated support for existing businesses operating as major players in their respective industries, and focus on sectors with proven businesses and success stories
- Invest in genuine growth by moving away from a historic grant culture
- Encourage the development of businesses led by people from under-supported backgrounds

To achieve true success, the North East Combined Authority must operate as a high-performing cluster organisation, blending devolved spending powers with a fusing of the private and public sectors to fashion a single – and focused – growth agenda.

This white paper provides a comprehensive framework for that collaboration to materialise.

Informed by real-world insights from nearly 50 senior business leaders, it sets out clear and actionable priorities.

Devolution provides the region with an opportunity to turn policy into progress and potential into performance.

And this white paper sets a clear strategy to definitively reshape the North East's business future and reassert its reputation as a competitive force.

# Taking control: A blueprint for change

## Creating a refreshed financial landscape

Finance is the engine that powers business growth and regional economic development.

Too often, however, an underdeveloped and fractured capital ecosystem stifles ambition and stalls crucial scale-up activity.

For the North East to fully realise its economic potential, it is therefore imperative businesses – from early-stage innovators to established cross-continent firms – have access to funding mechanisms better tailored to their needs and demands.

## Creating a model for growth

The North East Combined Authority has taken important initial steps to strengthen the region's financial infrastructure.

Key measures include the £70 million North East Investment Fund<sup>3</sup>, which aims to help create as many as 2300 jobs by unlocking venture capital worth £350 million, and the £1.5 million Culture and Creative Investment Programme aimed at businesses across the region's vibrant arts sector.

This white paper recognises the considerable value of those interventions, alongside further efforts such as the Business Growth Fund, which is backed by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supports firms across Gateshead, Newcastle, North and South Tyneside, Northumberland and Sunderland to create jobs by leveraging £11.5 million in private sector investment.

However, to truly supercharge the region's economic capacity requires the creation of a comprehensive and more resilient financial ecosystem.

This model would transcend traditional lending by combining diverse and extensive sources of capital, and have great potential to transform a £100 million regional capital pot into an integrated £10 billion funding channel.

## The Northern Growth Ladder

By convening carefully selected investment partners across public and private finance, the venture – carrying a working title of the Northern Growth Ladder – would create a dynamic and collaborative capital network that would de-risk growth, stimulate entrepreneurship and provide access to a wider capital spectrum.

Structured for long-term impact, it would provide



Becky Crow, LightOx head of projects, speaks during a NET x Fairstone roundtable event. Findings from those discussions helped inform the creation of this white paper.

businesses with tangible and direct support to accelerate growth across areas including research and development and workforce and plant expansion.

Helping attract large-scale, aggregated development finance to the region, the Northern Growth Ladder would combine regional venture funds, Enterprise Investment Scheme support, private equity, family office, sovereign wealth, unitranche debt provision and local pension fund allocations into a collaborative, scaled investment ecosystem.

## The Northern Growth Ladder: Climbing the ladder

The Northern Growth Ladder would have multiple entry and exit stages for chosen investment partners, with affiliates selected through a rigorous process factored upon benchmarks including strategic alignment, track record, capacity, sector appetite and investment horizons.

Based on three headline rungs, the model would:

- Nurture start-up firms – with venture-standard enterprise values – with regional Enterprise Investment Scheme and Seed Enterprise Investment Scheme funds to a capacity of about £100 million
- Support scaling businesses – with enterprise values between £25 million and £250 million – with a balanced combination of three family office and three mid-market private equity fund operators, to a capacity of about £3 billion



- Back mature organisations – with enterprise values between £250 million and £1 billion – with a balanced combination of three sovereign wealth and three regional pension funds (between five and ten per cent) to a capacity of about £7 billion

Delivering a new funnel of investment opportunity, the Northern Growth Ladder would additionally provide selected partners with a range of strategic benefits including:

- Full visibility of firms' progress involved in the Northern Growth Ladder, to provide greater investor confidence
- Co-investment opportunities alongside other partners to reduce risk and blend funding packages
- Opportunities to invest in regional businesses with lower operating costs and fewer growth impediments
- A source of largely untapped investment opportunities with potential to generate enhanced returns
- A clear route for generating liquidity/return on investment as businesses mature and scale
- Additional deal flow, with options for minority or majority equity holdings
- Long-term engagement with businesses to build investment synergies

### The Northern Growth Ladder: Maximising the broader impact

Implementing the Northern Growth Ladder would provide ambitious businesses with greater capacity to grow sustainably, create high-value jobs, drive regional productivity improvements and support talent retention.

Through a wider support strategy, the model could spur initiatives such as:

- Graduate recruitment incentives designed to encourage businesses to hire and invest in locally-grown talent, which would strengthen the region's workforce
- Tailored linked learning pathways for employers able to offer significant numbers of quality jobs
- Adoption of unused office space to create a meaningful scale-up hub to foster collaboration and a stronger community ecosystem
- Rates concessions for higher-growth firms to support expansion across the region
- Travel incentives for businesses operating on a national or global scale
- Marketing support for companies keen to grow internationally



Jonny Catto, iPac managing director, speaks during a NET x Fairstone roundtable event. Findings from those discussions helped inform the creation of this white paper.



**From heritage  
to horizon:  
A new brand  
for the North  
East**

## A bold new identity

From the virgin seams of coal cut deep beneath North East soil, to the first turn of a wheel on the Stockton and Darlington Railway and the tankers and warships that peered above lines of terraced rooftops, the region has proudly carried its industrial legacy for centuries.

These enduring symbols of ingenuity run like a golden thread through the North East's timeline.

But heritage alone isn't sufficient to shape the future.

The North East must define a bold new identity, one which positions it as a destination for business growth, innovation and opportunity, and a place where people can truly thrive.

## A fresh identity

This white paper notes the North East Combined Authority's place within The Great North partnership<sup>4</sup>.

Drawing together existing mayoral-led organisations and areas in the devolution priority programme across the North East, the North West and Yorkshire, it aims to catalyse collaboration between authorities to increase inward investment opportunities and ramp up spending on areas including green energy, sport and culture.

The North East Combined Authority's place within the venture is a welcome move, for it provides a platform to further amplify the region's status as a strong commercial hub where businesses can invest and thrive.

However, while The Great North represents a valuable collaborative podium, the North East must take ownership of its narrative to create a unique identity – built around its commercial strengths – to be heard distinctly among the wider Northern chorus.

This new identity must be anchored by a unified branding and marketing strategy, which leans into the North East's industrial past but places significantly greater emphasis on championing the modern-day innovative businesses and organisations powering growth in future-facing sectors.

It should project ambition and self-assurance while remaining grounded in authenticity, and draw strength from the North East's dynamic commercial sector and the depth of its higher education and research ecosystem.

Its mission must be unambiguous: to establish the North East as a region where businesses grow, careers flourish and future generations seize opportunity.

## A New North

To deliver this new identity, this white paper calls for the launch of a bold marketing campaign.

Carrying the working title of New North, and accompanied by a strapline of The Place to Rise, the multi-platform strategy would operate across print, television and digital mediums.

Through powerful business-focused messaging, underpinned by impactful case studies of investment successes and pan-regional and pan-continental commercial expansion, New North would serve as a statement of intent, setting the tone for a confident and forward-facing region building its own future.

Spotlighting specific business sector strengths around areas including advanced manufacturing, renewables, biosciences, financial services and technology, New North would fashion a fresh commercial identity that definitively demarcates the North East from UK contemporaries.

Led by the North East Combined Authority, in collaboration with local authorities, universities, anchor institutions and private sector leaders, New North would represent a major statement for a region on the move.

It would actively pursue stakeholder and community engagement, using practical illustrations of businesses that have invested in the North East to promote the brand and its messaging to national and global business leaders across a number of internal and external marketing channels.

It would also highlight the region's cultural and lifestyle offer to boost talent recruitment and retention drives.

Showcasing the North East's seaside and countryside attractions, historic settings, national parks and thriving independent hospitality sector, it would additionally spotlight the access to healthcare across the region and mass participation events such as the Great North Run.

It would use social media and associated digital engagement tools to reach diverse markets beyond the UK, and use high-profile events to signpost investors to the North East's commercial potential.

Its success would be closely monitored with targets set around brand sentiment and investor perception, the latter shaped by annual surveying, and tracking of inbound investor leads to help shape future messaging.

Ultimately, New North would deliver a clear, measurable

and inspiring statement of reinvention across a region leading global change and inviting investors, founders, graduates and global talent to rise with it.

A marketing campaign in the mould of New North would serve as the centrifugal force behind a tailored movement to showcase the region's commercial sector strengths, cultural heritage and community ambition to the investment world.

For many years, conversations around devolution have been accompanied by calls to look westward for inspiration.

Sir Howard Bernstein, Sir Richard Leese and Andy Burnham, long credited as the architects of Manchester's transformation from 'Cottonopolis' to a thriving advanced manufacturing, technological and cultural hub, remain frequently cited as figures for emulation.

Rather than attempting to replicate the North West city's model, though, or going further and seeking to mimic London's hyper-commercialised landscape, the North East must provide contrast and carve its own identity.

Put simply, the region must avoid spreading the jam too thinly.

### A region-specific approach

To avoid such a scenario demands a pragmatic approach, one bound tightly around the region's core strengths in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, renewables, biosciences, financial services and technology.

Strong and consistent messaging around these sectors – where firms have scaled, created skilled jobs, exported intellectual property and delivered innovation that has attracted repeat investment – should be supported by case studies of inward investment and global success stories of businesses growing from the North East.

This method must also reflect the high-calibre pipeline of spin-out ventures that continue to emerge from the region's five universities.

Not only placing fresh commercial endeavours into the economy, these latter national research assets are also leading skills development and sector-specific innovation so valued by global organisations.

Combining both would build a compelling and differentiated narrative capable of resonating with stakeholders.



Lee Hartley, Fairstone founder and deputy chair, speaks during a NET x Fairstone roundtable event. Findings from those discussions helped inform the creation of this white paper.

To that end, the North East Combined Authority must truly leverage the potential of its high-profile business and economy board.

With a membership drawn from a cross-section of industry leaders, the board has the reach, insight and real-world experience to shape a unified and market-ready investment proposition.

It should be empowered to help define the region's economic brand, shape priorities, interrogate results, champion the region externally and serve as a strategic partner in delivering long-term growth.

### Highlighting the lived experience

Messaging must also extend to the region's lived experience.

This should include its deeply embedded culture of collaboration, its quality of life, wherein professional ambition and family life coalesce harmoniously, and its tourism appeal, where sweeping coastlines, historic sites and vibrant, energetic urban centres create an authentic sense of place.

And the narrative must incorporate the region's skills base, where increasingly collaborative programmes between industry and further and higher education are strengthening provision of work-ready learners across a number of sectors.

Participation in broader alliances such as The Great North provides immense value, offering crucial access to shared resources, integrated infrastructure planning and stronger collective advocacy.

But co-existence must not lead to homogenised conformity or an erosion of identity.

Collaboration should amplify, rather than dilute, and a dedicated campaign as envisioned through New North would project a confident, distinct and focused voice.

### **Converting perception into pipeline**

By anchoring the North East's message in real strengths, empowering its leadership structures and focusing on high-impact sectors, the region would lay foundations to not only differentiate itself but lead the way.

A successful campaign would elevate the North East's visibility, convert perception into pipeline, attract new investors, retain talent and position the region as a testbed for innovation and long-term economic resilience.



# Driving watershed transport improvement



Natasha McDonough, MMC Research founder and chief executive, and North East Chamber of Commerce vice president, speaks during a NET x Fairstone roundtable event. Findings from those discussions helped inform the creation of this white paper.

### Moving forward with better transport links

Despite being the birthplace of rail travel two centuries ago, and now home to Nissan – the UK’s largest car making plant – the North East’s transport network remains something of a paradox.

Connectivity is the lifeblood of modern economies and a cornerstone of any growth strategy.

Yet the region’s road, rail and air infrastructure has too often fallen short of its potential, pulling the handbrake on productivity, restricting mobility and stalling investment.

Progress, however, is being made.

The planned extension of the Tyne and Wear Metro to Washington represents a flagship investment by the North East Combined Authority, and a powerful example of the transformative effect of devolution and local leadership.

### 21st century scale and vision

But for the North East to compete on a national and global scale — to attract inward investment, unlock productivity and connect people to opportunity — it requires a transport system equipped with 21st century scale and vision.

This white paper strongly welcomes the campaign, led by mayor McGuinness and the North East Combined Authority, to reopen the Leamside Line, the 21-mile rail route cutting through green boltholes and former mining communities between Pelaw, in Gateshead, and Tursdale,

near Ferryhill, in County Durham, which has lain dormant since the early 1990s.

And it applauds confirmation of Government support to extend the Nexus-run Tyne and Wear Metro light railway to Washington by 2033.

Promising to use the northern section of the Leamside Line to create a so-called Washington Metro Loop, it would improve journey times and access for more than 100,000 people<sup>5</sup>.

Restoring the full Leamside Line would ease capacity constraints on the East Coast Main Line too, allowing both freight and local passenger services to divert off the critical London-to-Edinburgh artery.

This would improve passenger journey times between the English and Scottish capitals, while bolstering connections to cross-country links serving commercial powerhouses such as Manchester and Birmingham. And this is significant, as east-to-west rail travel remains a weak point.

In an era of rising costs and ever-changing work patterns, this white paper also calls for the consideration of a flexible season pass on the East Coast Main Line, which would make regular business travel a much more affordable exercise.

The North East Combined Authority must additionally continue pressing service providers and rail authorities to ensure connections to key business hubs such as Manchester, Bristol and Cardiff remain robust and cost-effective.

## Focus on road and air

Improved rail capacity is only part of the solution.

The North East's future depends on a fully integrated transport network.

The case for dualling the A1 between Morpeth and Ellingham remains compelling. The route, which links the region to Edinburgh, is a vital economic channel.

So long a conduit funnelling tourists to the region, the A1 is also crucial to the distribution of goods and services across the border, and provides access to the North East's busy deepwater ports that continue to play increasingly important roles in the international green energy agenda.

It is therefore incumbent on the North East Combined Authority to continue lobbying the Government to unlock funding and increase capacity.

## Elevate regional aviation

Better air links are essential to strengthening the North East's role in the global economy.

Airports underpin trade, investment and international competitiveness.

The region's aviation hubs already serve as global gateways, notably via Newcastle International Airport's Emirates service to Dubai<sup>6</sup>.

The North East must further leverage this status, to better magnetise inward investment.

Improved connectivity to key destinations such as London City Airport, European financial centres and emerging global hubs would also significantly enhance the region's appeal to international investors, multinational firms and high-growth start-ups looking to expand or relocate.

The North East Combined Authority, working alongside business leaders, airport operators and the Government, must develop a proactive aviation strategy that seeks to secure new and cost-effective routes.

Focus must also be placed on the potential of creating an air shuttle service, which would act akin to an 'air bus service' and provide fast transport links to the UK's main peripheral cities.

These moves would ensure the region remains plugged into boardrooms, decision-makers and global networks.

# Creating a stronger skills pathway



## Creating a stronger skills pathway

As the world continues to shift to a more sustainable and increasingly digitised future, the clamour for an adaptable and highly-skilled workforce has never been more critical.

Emerging technologies, green industries and data-driven economies are transforming how we live, work and compete.

Meeting these challenges head-on requires a labour market actively shaping change.

But in an equally fluctuating social landscape, where economic pressures continue to push more people below the poverty line, broad and meaningful engagement with education represents a significant challenge.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the North East.

Latest figures show around a quarter of the region's working-age adults are not in employment<sup>7</sup>, with generational deprivation often persisting in communities that neighbour world-class universities and globally-competitive employers.

The North East Combined Authority has recognised these structural imbalances and made important progress to tackle the landscape.

From automatic free school meal enrolment to a £50 million support programme for those with health and disability barriers, and a £2.7 million package to reduce school-day costs and boost after-school learning<sup>8</sup>, it has begun rebuilding important social foundations.

But to truly bridge the region's economic fault line demands more than incremental change.

## Reimagining learning

Such watershed transformation requires a reimagining of the learning ecosystem, one which better coalesces employment with education, raises aspiration, drives attainment and places skills development at the heart of economic growth.

There are encouraging signs that work by the North East Combined Authority on this area is beginning to take effect.

The Universities for North East England initiative<sup>9</sup> – which is backed by the combined authority and unites Northumbria, Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham and Teesside universities – is helping shape national policy



Nicki Clark, UMi chief executive, speaks during a NET x Fairstone roundtable event. Findings from those discussions helped inform the creation of this white paper.

while amplifying a place-informed voice to widen regional access to higher education, innovation and investment.

And the Colleges for North East England venture – which draws together a number of further education providers across the North East Combined Authority's footprint – demonstrates a crucial collaborative approach at an important learning juncture.

At the same time, investments such as an £8.48 million combined authority commitment to expand Newcastle College Energy Academy<sup>10</sup>, which will triple student capacity, highlights a growing obligation to match skills supply with the demands of the clean energy transition.

But to unlock truly inclusive economic growth – and meet the demands of global investor blueprints – the region must go further.

## A bridge between ambition and delivery

In such a changeable landscape, the North East Combined Authority must be central to leading change.

By fully harnessing the powers of devolution, it holds a generational opportunity to fundamentally reshape how skills, prospects and prosperity are distributed across the region.

It must act as a bridge between ambition and delivery, connecting employers with educators, learners with careers and communities with sustainable futures.

By deepening collaboration with employers and education providers across the learning spectrum, it can ensure curricula decisively meets business needs, and help build inclusive and aspirational pathways into employment.

It can support efforts to expand high-quality apprenticeships, modernise training bases and deliver careers guidance that raises aspirations in youngsters from an early age across all backgrounds.

This strategy must play to the North East's unique industrial strengths, from its nationally-significant electric vehicle and battery manufacturing cluster to its ever-growing renewables, bioscience and technology ecosystems.

These sectors stand as pillars of the future economy.

Yet without a pipeline of local talent, opportunities and investment could be lost.

With the right focus, the North East Combined Authority can harness devolution to help build a future-facing skills system that truly meets employer demand, nurtures homegrown talent, attracts skilled individuals and ultimately creates thriving commercial ecosystems attractive to global investors.

# Conclusion

## Refreshing the narrative

The North East stands at a critical inflection point.

For centuries, the region has delivered innovation, industry and ideas to the world.

But the North East must now lead with refreshed purpose in a new era.

This white paper presents a blueprint for the region to achieve such ambition, by taking meaningful control of its business strategy to deliver economic transformation.

It sets out practical – and realistic – measures to rebuild the region’s financial ecosystem, redefine its identity through a sector-led narrative, modernise its transport network to bolster domestic and global connectivity, and strengthen its skills base to lead future-facing industries.

The proposed Northern Growth Ladder represents a powerful catalyst, combining public and private finance to provide dynamic and scalable support.

It would bring new capital into the region, de-risk innovation and create a more coherent pathway for investment at scale.

Addressing the region’s entrenched connectivity gaps, through rail extensions, road upgrades and enhanced aviation routes, it would remove frustrating growth shackles and unlock the true potential of the North East’s ports, business hubs and industrial clusters.

A concerted focus must also be placed upon the region’s education and skills system.

With five high-performing universities and a strong tradition of community-based learning, the region has the tools to create an agile and future-ready workforce.

But partnerships must be strengthened, and curricula evolved, to meet immediate industry needs while building long-term talent pipelines for the jobs of tomorrow.

And it must all be presented through the prism of a refreshed narrative.

The proposed New North campaign would provide the vehicle for such watershed change, using real-world business success stories and sectoral excellence to present the region as a vibrant commercial destination to investors at home and abroad.

There remain many obstacles to the North East’s

economic and social progress, not least enduring structural inequalities, pockets of deprivation and generational disengagement.

This white paper does not seek to suggest they can be reversed in a single motion.

However, it does argue that with the powers and opportunities provided by devolution, allied to strong civic leadership, genuine private sector input and a shared sense of urgency, the North East can begin to lay the foundations for lasting change.

## Creating the UK’s growth story of tomorrow

The North East is not Manchester, nor is it London or any other UK city or geography with devolved powers.

And rather than seeking to emulate contemporaries, it must create a compelling offer of its own.

Its strengths in advanced manufacturing, renewables, biosciences, digital, technology and financial and legal services should be the foundation stones of a confident identity, one that showcases a region already contributing significantly to the national economy and with capacity to do much more.

To fulfil that promise, the North East Combined Authority must lead with clarity, courage and consistency.

It must tell the region’s story confidently, invest wisely and build coalitions that translate strategy into tangible outcomes.

Devolution represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity.

It is imperative we now seize the moment and create the UK’s defining growth story of tomorrow.



## Credits

This white paper was compiled using insight from nearly 50 senior North East business figures from organisations operating across domestic and international commercial sectors.

Their thoughts were presented in six roundtable discussions led by multi-platform publisher NET and supported by national wealth management firm Fairstone, with NET creating standalone reports for each event in its flagship print publication N magazine and across its digital websites N and Bdaily.

The roundtable discussions featured\*:

- David Alproovich, chief operating officer, Middleton Enterprises
- Arnab Basu, co-founder and chief executive, Kromek Group
- Richard Bradley, chief executive, SST Group
- Paul Butler, chief executive, North East Automotive Alliance
- Alex Buchan, investment director, Northstar Ventures
- Kevan Carrick, co-founder, JK Property Consultants; director, North East BIC
- Jonny Catto, managing director, iPac
- Aman Chahal, co-founder and chief executive, TaperedPlus
- Gary Chapman, head of the North East and industrial and infrastructure director, Lloyds Banking Group
- Malcolm Clarke, public affairs business partner, Northumbrian Water
- Nicki Clark, chief executive, UMi
- Robin Cordy, chief commercial officer, Seriös Group
- Becky Crow, head of projects, LightOx
- John Devitt, chief executive, Recovery4Life
- Darush Dodds, corporate affairs director, Esh Group
- John Duns, business development director, NET
- Alison Gwynn, chief executive, North East Screen
- Richard Hogg, founder and chief executive, Jackson Hogg
- John Hollingsworth, chief philanthropy officer, Community Foundation North East
- Stephen Hall, senior partner Newcastle office, Deloitte
- Brendon Hayward, joint managing director, Osbit
- Lee Hartley, founder and deputy chair, Fairstone
- Jen Hartley, assistant director of capital investment and growth, Newcastle City Council
- Charlie Hoults, founder, Opencast; managing director, Hoults Yard
- Craig Huntingdon, partner, Scaleup North East
- Ian Johnson, executive director of customer services, Karbon Homes
- James Katirai, head of investments, NEL Fund Managers
- Nick Lane, infrastructure and government director – corporate finance, PwC
- Sarah Law, partnerships and marketing manager, Bdaily
- Clare Loveridge, vice president and general manager of Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Arctic Wolf
- Alasdair MacDonald, chief executive, Tekmar Group
- Stephanie Marshall, digital transformation lead, Turner & Townsend
- John McCabe, chief executive, North East Chamber of Commerce
- Paul McEldon, chief executive, North East BIC
- Chris McHugh, head of public affairs, Stephenson-Mohl
- Natasha McDonough, founder and chief executive, MMC Research
- Dan Monnery, chief strategy officer, Northumbria University
- Iain Nixon, group vice principal – partnerships and business solutions, Education Partnership North East
- Stephen Patterson, chief executive, NE1 Ltd
- Mark Renney, founder, Wubbleyou
- Fozia Saleem, chief executive, Magnitude Biosciences
- Mark Stoner, chief financial officer, Port of Tyne
- Josh Tate, operations director, Washington Metalworks
- Ed Twiddy, director of environment, society and government, Atom bank
- Fiona Whitehurst, associate dean engagement and place, Newcastle University Business School
- Kirsty Wells, chair, Merit
- James Widmer, co-founder and chief executive, Advanced Electric Machines

\*Titles correct at time of roundtable events and subsequent reporting

## Notes

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