

Dear candidate,

Last week we briefed many of you as part of North East Business Week about the things that are needed from you to ensure that entrepreneurship can thrive in this region.

The North East of Scotland is already the most entrepreneurial place in Scotland, with over 1300 new businesses set up last year, well in excess of the 1000 target from the Scottish Government. However, more can be done to make this region an even better place to set up, run and grow a business:

While we have gone into detail during our briefing sessions, the following areas should be your focus, if elected, to ensure businesses can thrive.

1. Recognise, value and develop the support needed to build a culture of entrepreneurship in the North East

The private sector business support organisations in the North East of Scotland lead the way in developing an entrepreneurial environment where start-up businesses can flourish and grow. The city and shire is independently recognised as both the best place to start a business and is, per capita, the most entrepreneurial place in Scotland. Through collaboration, the support system that has been put in place by the 4 principal partners of North East Business Week is unlocking the true potential of the region as a powerhouse of entrepreneurship. However, the public sector has a significant role to play in supporting and facilitating this effort. The most entrepreneurial regions in the world are signified by strong public and private sector collaboration on a level we have yet to see delivered anywhere in Scotland. The dynamism required for long-term prosperity in the North East should not be left to chance.

2. Review the unfair and unnecessary costs placed on business

Businesses face too many costs on their operations before they can even make a penny of profit. Business rates in particular requires fundamental review and reform. We believe the current rates system and processes are a disincentive to business growth and economic development. While this is a difficult challenge to resolve, it is one which must be addressed by the Scottish Government during the next term of the Scottish Parliament.

3. Deliver infrastructure improvements

The North East's transport connections have been highlighted as one of the biggest barriers to growth by our collective memberships and service users.

We welcome the delivery of projects such as the AWPR and re-opening of Kintore Station, but in partnership with our organisations you now need to make the case for the next stage of infrastructure investment which will be required to make North-east towns more competitive and better connected to the rest of Scotland and the UK. In some cases these investments will guard against relative increased peripherality and deprivation for the North-east communities.

However, it is not just physical connections which require investment. Digital connectivity is also a key part of making businesses more competitive and we encourage the Scottish Government to streamline businesses engagement with the public sector to online engagement as well as accelerating investment in super-fast broadband. Much of the processes businesses have to comply with when engaging with the public sector, for example when submitting property rating appeals, could be done online.

4. Increase efforts in internationalisation

Many businesses have international growth potential. However many still do not know how or where to access support which will give them access to new markets, or indeed feel they may be ineligible for such assistance. We believe that more can be done to better utilise our respective networks and to deliver a truly collaborative approach between the public and private sector.

We expect a lot from the next Scottish Government and from our elected representatives over the next five years. We want you to reflect the needs of businesses, to promote local business success and make the case for investment in the region. The North East is a great place to do business in Scotland and your support over the next term of the Scottish Parliament will ensure this region can continue to drive the Scottish economy.

Yours Sincerely



James Bream
Research & Policy
Director
Aberdeen & Grampian
Chamber of Commerce

Ian Armstrong
Regional Director
Scottish Council for
Development &
Industry



Andy Willox OBE
Convenor, Scottish
Policy Unit
Federation of Small
Business



Gary McEwen
Chief Executive
Elevator