



**Aberdeen &
Grampian
Chamber of
Commerce**

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
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Open letter from Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

Dear Prime Minister,

please accept our very best wishes as you head into your premiership at a highly challenging time for the nation.

I am writing on behalf of the 1,150 member companies and the 125,000+ people they employ across the North-east of Scotland.

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce is the largest Chamber in Scotland, acting as the voice for one of the most engaged and influential business communities in the United Kingdom. We are a co-author and delivery partner of the regional economic strategy and closely involved in many of the key economic growth and diversification projects across North-east Scotland, an area that punches significantly above its weight as a net contributor to UK plc.

We want the Aberdeen City Region to continue as a leading contributor to the success of the national economy. With this in mind, we have outlined 10 specific asks of your Government, alongside the calls in the letter you have received from Dr Adam Marshall, director general of British Chambers of Commerce.

- Continued UK Government support towards maximising the economic recovery of the North Sea oil and gas industry, with a commitment to maintain a predictable tax regime which supports both investment in the sector and the progress towards a Net Zero Solution by the industry.
- To champion Aberdeen's role at the heart of the energy transition agenda. This region has the talent and the supply chain to act as a technological centre of excellence, driving the UK's clean growth ambitions. Specifically the region is uniquely placed to support the delivery of the UN COP26 conference to be hosted in the UK in 2020.
- To commit to a structured consultation and discussion with key regional stakeholders regarding policy which maximises economic development opportunities for the maritime and ports sector in the North-east of Scotland.
- We recognise the national imperative to progress with the delivery of HS2. However, initial economic analysis suggested that Aberdeen's economy will be one of few negatively impacted by this investment. For this reason, we would urge you to commit the UK Government to work in partnership with the Scottish Government to explore alternative options to support the North-east's connectivity via rail and air.



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- Clarity around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Specifically, we'd encourage a more deliberate approach to invest in regions with a firm track record of success. The fund should prioritise sustainable economic growth, build in greater local autonomy, and ensure closer engagement with business around the use of funds.
- A commitment to work alongside the Scottish Government to ensure the meaningful devolution of fiscal powers to Scotland's City Regions. The Aberdeen City Region deal is delivering at pace while leveraging substantial private sector funding. We believe that greater fiscal freedom would provide the conditions to enable this area to make an even stronger contribution to the UK and Scottish economies.
- A commitment to work with Chambers of Commerce across the UK to ensure that our businesses and communities are prepared for all potential outcomes of the UK's exit from the European Union, including tailored support for our farming and fishing communities in place from the date of our exit.
- A commitment to ensure that the future migration system works for all parts of the UK. Our region's key growth sectors have vastly different needs and it is critical that employers have ongoing access to skills at all levels with minimal costs, barriers or delays. We continue to call on Government to lower the proposed minimum salary threshold for higher-skilled workers below the current £30K cap for non-EEA nationals.
- Consideration of the business case, closely linked to our regional economic strategy, that the North-east of Scotland should be designated a pilot region to demonstrate the impact on the economy of full 5G coverage.
- Confirmation that focus will be maintained on the 'place-first' approach outlined in the UK Industrial Strategy and continued support given to sector deals where this region has demonstrated its ability to return on the investment made.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and we hope to be able to continue our strong track record of positive engagement with the UK Government as we work towards a new chapter in the history of our nation.

A copy of this letter has been shared with the Secretary of State for Scotland, local MPs and council officials and the regional media. We would welcome the opportunity to arrange and host a visit to the Aberdeen City Region to discuss the priorities for business in North-east Scotland in more detail.

Yours sincerely,



Russell Borthwick
Chief Executive
Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce