HM Treasury

Northern Growth Strategy: Invitation for Views

Summary of Responses and Government Response

October 2026

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ISBN: 978-1-918417-87-6

PU: 3676

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Chapter 1
Background

1.1 The government published *Northern Growth Strategy: Next Steps* on 19 March 2026. Alongside it, the government launched *Northern Growth Strategy: Invitation for Views* to gather evidence from businesses, Mayoral Strategic Authorities, local authorities, universities, representative organisations, communities and other stakeholders across the North. The *Invitation for Views* closed on 31 July 2026.

1.2 The government received 131 substantive responses. Respondents broadly endorsed the direction of the Northern Growth Strategy and welcomed its focus on connectivity, investment, regeneration, skills, culture and devolution. Responses also identified opportunities to strengthen delivery across these areas.

1.3 The government has used this evidence to inform the next phase of the Strategy and the measures announced at Autumn Budget 2026.

1.4 Across the North of England, our major city regions continue to demonstrate what ambitious investment, strong local leadership and long-term direction can achieve for their citizens, and for the towns and regions in their orbit including rural and coastal communities. At Autumn Budget 2026, the government is reaffirming its commitment to boosting growth across the North through the Northern Growth Strategy, working in partnership with Mayoral Strategic Authorities, local leaders, councils, businesses and universities to deliver the next phase of the Strategy.

Chapter 2
Methodology

2.1 The *Invitation for Views* was an open evidence-gathering exercise rather than a formal consultation. Responses were reviewed by officials against the policy pillars in *Northern Growth Strategy: Next Steps* and used to inform the next phase of the Strategy.

2.2 Officials used analytical tools, including artificial intelligence, to help identify and summarise themes. Officials reviewed and validated all findings and conclusions before they were used for policy development or this publication.

2.3 The findings describe the views of respondents and should not be interpreted as representative of the wider population of the North.

Table 2.A Respondents

Stakeholder Type	Responses	Percentage (%)
Business	47	35.9
Representative Body	34	26.0
Regional Government	17	13.0
Individual	13	9.9
Other	12	9.2
University	8	6.1
Total:	**131**	**100**

Source: SmartSurvey

Chapter 3

Summary of Responses

3.1 Respondents broadly welcomed:

- A dedicated Northern Growth Strategy and a more joined-up approach to regional economic growth
- Renewed focus on Northern Powerhouse Rail and wider connectivity
- Greater local flexibility and devolution
- Support for business investment and innovation
- Recognition of Northern economic, cultural and institutional strengths
- Stronger links between skills, employment and growth

3.2 The strongest cross-cutting message was the importance of maintaining momentum and translating the Strategy's ambitions into delivery.

3.3 Respondents emphasised the need for long-term certainty, clear implementation plans, stronger local powers and a clear route from strategy to delivery. They also stressed that the Strategy should reflect the full economic geography of the North, including city regions, towns, rural and coastal communities, ports, industrial places and county economies.

Table 3.A Themes

Theme	Responses Mentioning Theme	Percentage (%)
Governance and delivery	100	76.3
Skills, employment and health	84	64.1
Business investment and innovation	76	58.0
Transport and connectivity	75	57.3
Density and regeneration	71	54.2

Culture and the visitor economy	66	50.4

Source: SmartSurvey

Governance and delivery

3.4 Respondents broadly endorsed the Strategy's direction and welcomed its ambition, while seeking greater clarity on delivery, sequencing and accountability. Deeper devolution, more flexible funding and stronger local delivery capacity were consistently identified as important enablers of delivery.

Skills, employment and health

3.5 Respondents welcomed the focus on skills, employment and participation, highlighting the importance of clearer pathways into work, employer-led provision and stronger connections between growth sectors and local labour markets, alongside action on health-related inactivity and barriers to participation.

Business investment and innovation

3.6 Respondents welcomed the Strategy's emphasis on business investment and innovation, while highlighting opportunities to strengthen investment readiness, investor visibility and pipelines of investable businesses, sites and projects.

Transport and connectivity

3.7 Respondents strongly supported Northern Powerhouse Rail and wider transport investment and welcomed the renewed focus on connectivity within the Strategy. They emphasised that strategic and local transport, freight, ports, airports and logistics should be planned around wider outcomes for housing, jobs, regeneration, skills and investment.

Density and regeneration

3.8 Respondents broadly welcomed the focus on regeneration and place-based growth, while highlighting practical barriers that continue to constrain delivery in some locations, including brownfield land, planning capacity, land assembly, infrastructure and utilities.

Culture and the visitor economy

3.9 Respondents welcomed the recognition of culture, heritage, creative industries, sport and tourism as contributors to growth, regeneration, investment, talent attraction and quality of place.

Chapter 4
Government Response

4.1 The government welcomes the evidence and views submitted through the *Invitation for Views* on the Northern Growth Strategy, and thanks the individuals and organisations involved for their contributions. The government has used this evidence to refine priorities, strengthen the evidence base and inform the next phase of development and delivery.

4.2 The measures announced at Autumn Budget 2026 represent an important step in delivering the Northern Growth Strategy, alongside ongoing work with Mayoral Strategic Authorities, businesses and other partners to develop and deliver future priorities across all six policy pillars.

4.3 Devolution is core to delivering growth across the North, giving local leaders genuine control over the resources required to deliver change, the certainty to plan beyond annual funding cycles and the flexibility to be able to invest in what they know will grow their economies. In July, the government published *Rewiring The State* which set out a series of reforms to shift power, funding and accountability closer to people and places they serve. Autumn Budget 2026 takes significant steps to drive forward these ambitions, laying the foundations for the *Rewiring The State Delivery Plan* which will be published before the end of the year.

Supporting connectivity within and between city regions, including towns

4.4 Through the *Invitation for Views*, respondents highlighted the importance of strategic and local transport in supporting growth and widening access to opportunity.

4.5 Improving connectivity within and between city regions, including towns, is a route to raising productivity, strengthening labour markets and widening access to opportunity across the North. These dividends will not only be felt in the cities themselves. The government's approach is to improve connectivity and ensure the benefits flow to neighbouring towns and regions so that more people can access the jobs and opportunities these cities will provide. The government is committed to delivering Northern Powerhouse Rail as a core part of its long-term plan to improve connectivity across the North.

4.6 The government is working with local leaders and delivery partners to progress Northern Powerhouse Rail and wider transport investment to support housing, regeneration, investment and access to opportunity. Northern Powerhouse Rail will improve connections between the northern cities, delivering a turn up and go railway for the

Northern Growth Corridor: Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, and York; with regular services onward to Newcastle via Darlington and Durham, Hull, and Chester for North Wales connections. This builds on the government's commitment to provide £10.4 billion up to 2032 for northern intracity transport through the devolved Transport for City Regions (TCR) settlements.

4.7 Since January, the government has announced a number of measures to further support connectivity, including:

- The establishment of an independent Mass Transit Taskforce in May 2026 to examine barriers to developing and operating mass transit systems and identify options to support their delivery.
- Continued delivery of the £11bn Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU), including a complete remodel of Huddersfield station, helping increase capacity in one of the North's busiest rail corridors. This includes a £1 billion investment in 29 new battery-electric trains for the TransPennine Express network, announced in September 2026. The trains will be built at Alstom's Derby Litchurch Lane Works and will help deliver faster journeys, increased capacity and improved accessibility across the North.

4.8 **At Autumn Budget 2026, the government announced:**

- Progress on the development and delivery of up to £45 billion for Northern Powerhouse Rail, including a new station in Bradford, which will be built at the Interchange site. The government is also confirming a total of over £300 million for the Leeds Existing Station Programme, set to be delivered by 2030. This will deliver a major package of upgrades to increase capacity and improve accessibility at Yorkshire's busiest railway station.
- The green light for main construction works to begin on the A66 next month, delivering a continuous 50-mile dual carriageway between the M6 and A1(M), strengthening connectivity between the North-East and Cumbria. The project will be delivered through a revised nine-year programme, with construction commencing in November 2026 and phased delivery aligned to the funding profile agreed at Spending Review 2025.

Increasing effective city size, density and town regeneration

4.9 Respondents supported regeneration and development in well-connected places, alongside action on practical barriers to delivery.

4.10 The government recognises the role that housing, regeneration and place-based investment can play in supporting economic growth and increasing opportunity across the North.

4.11 **At Autumn Budget 2026, the government announced:**

- The rolling out of Good Growth Funds across England. Good Growth Funds allow local leaders to bring together different funding tools

alongside the private sector to deliver a strong investment pipeline which unlocks major projects and drives catalytic investment in urban development. Autumn Budget 2026 provides £285 million of seed funding in 2027-28 for areas to set up their own Good Growth Funds, to bring together different investment tools to invest alongside the private sector to unlock major projects, and access to a new borrowing facility of up to £1.5 billion from 2028.

- Through its Priority Projects Programme, No.10 North will help places unlock their potential by joining up plans and agencies across government, business and academia. By partnering with local leaders, the programme puts local priorities at the heart of government's efforts to overcome barriers to growth.

Supporting business investment and innovation

4.12 Respondents welcomed the Strategy's emphasis on business investment and innovation, while highlighting opportunities to strengthen investment readiness, investor visibility and pipelines of investable businesses, sites and projects.

4.13 The government recognises the importance of improving access to finance and increasing the visibility of investment opportunities to support growth across the North, particularly for ambitious businesses seeking to scale.

4.14 **In May 2026**, The Great North partnership of Northern mayors launched the *Great North Investment Prospectus* at the inaugural Great North Investment Summit in Leeds. Developed with the Office for Investment and government support, the prospectus showcases more than £14 billion of strategic investment opportunities across the North and provides a collective proposition to attract private investment and support regional growth.

4.15 **In September 2026**, the Chancellor announced the Northern 500: a new initiative to bring together the North's most ambitious mid-sized businesses into a single growth community, led by The Great North partnership of mayors, alongside government and private sector partners. The Northern 500 will help raise the profile of high-growth Northern companies, strengthen connections between businesses and investors, and support efforts to unlock investment and growth across the North.

4.16 **At Autumn Budget 2026, the government announced:**

- Delivery on the government's commitment to develop the Northern 500, bringing together ambitious mid-sized Northern businesses through a single growth community led by The Great North partnership of mayors, with up to £0.8 million funding for a new Council and Steering Group overseeing its development. Working alongside private sector partners including NatWest and Sage, the

programme will support ambitious Northern businesses to scale and grow.

- A new 'front door' in No.10 North will be established to help places realise their Industrial Strategy sector strengths, joining up support across government to identify and unblock barriers to growth and investment. The offer is available to clusters in all parts of the United Kingdom.
- The government is also working to unlock future opportunities for investment, including through £3 million of new funding for the Ella Armitage site to enable a multi-let wet-lab incubator in the Sheffield Innovation Spine.

Investing in skills and human capital

4.17 Respondents emphasised the importance of linking skills, employment and health support to employer demand, sector strengths and opportunities for young people.

4.18 The government recognises that improving participation and ensuring people can access the skills employers need will be critical to delivering sustained growth.

4.19 **In July 2026**, the government published *Rewiring The State*, which set out reforms to shift power, funding and accountability closer to the people and places they serve. This included a stronger role for local leaders in shaping skills provision around the needs of local people and employers.

4.20 **In September 2026**, the government announced an additional £100 million to expand local apprenticeship services to all current mayors, helping more young people access local apprenticeship opportunities and supporting employers to recruit apprentices. Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Tees Valley Combined Authority, South Yorkshire Mayoral Authority and Greater Manchester Combined Authority were successful in securing funding through the first wave.

Enriching culture

4.21 Respondents highlighted the contribution of culture, heritage, creative industries and tourism to growth, regeneration and place.

4.22 The government recognises the contribution these sectors make to local economies, attracting visitors and investment, and supporting thriving places across the North.

4.23 **At Autumn Budget 2026, the government announced:**

- £7 million funding to conduct a feasibility study for a potential future bid to host the Olympics and Paralympics in the North of England during the 2040s. The study will report in 2029 and will also consider how this could best deliver transformational regeneration.

- £20 million from the Growth Mission Fund towards the redevelopment of the Littlewoods Campus in Liverpool, creating a new production hub for film, TV, gaming, immersive technology and digital screen industries, subject to business case approval.
- £10 million from the Growth Mission Fund to support the regeneration of Bury town centre by restoring and bringing back into use the Bury Indoor Market building, subject to business case approval.

Further devolution

4.24 Respondents highlighted the importance of local leadership, funding flexibility and effective partnership between local and national government.

4.25 The government recognises the important role of local leaders and institutions in delivering growth across the North.

4.26 **At Autumn Budget 2026,** the government announced measures to drive forward these ambitions and lay the foundations for the *Rewiring The State Delivery Plan*, which will be published before the end of the year. These measures include:

- A Fiscal Devolution Roadmap, setting out a new long-term funding model for regional government, including mayors receiving a share of business rates from 2027, a share of income tax from 2028, and the introduction of an Overnight Visitor Levy.
- £285 million of seed funding in 2027-28 for areas to set up their own Good Growth Funds, to bring together different investment tools to invest alongside the private sector to unlock major projects.
- A £150 million uplift to capacity and capability funding in 2027/28, to strengthen in-house analytical, commercial and delivery capabilities of Strategic Authorities to support the effective delivery of Good Growth Funds.
- The intention to take forward the first wave of new Mayoral Strategic Authority Business Rates Retention Zones, including in Greater Manchester, East Midlands, Hull and East Yorkshire, Liverpool City Region, Tees Valley, West of England, North East, and York and North Yorkshire, within which Strategic Authorities can retain 100% of business rates growth above an agreed baseline, subject to Full Business Case approval and legislation.

Chapter 5
Next Steps

5.1 The government will continue working with Mayoral Strategic Authorities, local leaders, councils, businesses and universities across the North as it develops and delivers the next phase of the Northern Growth Strategy, boosting growth across Northern city regions, towns and rural and coastal communities.

5.2 The next phase of this work will be led by No.10 North, bringing together officials from HM Treasury, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Business and Trade and other departments across government to support development and delivery of the Strategy.

5.3 The government thanks everyone who contributed to the *Invitation for Views*. The responses have strengthened the evidence base behind the Northern Growth Strategy and reinforced the importance of continuing to work in partnership with Mayoral Strategic Authorities, businesses and local partners as the Strategy develops.

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