

The Home of Real Opportunity



Our North East



Kim
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Foreword

OUR NORTH EAST region is made up of many proud local identities united by a shared belief that if we do things our way, not London's, we can thrive. We've seen challenges, we endure hardship, but we know also that there is much untapped opportunity here. We just need the tools to do the job.

Whether it's creating a green economy built around the rivers and seas that shape us, or finally supercharging our arts and culture sector, the people of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and Durham have the potential to shape this country's identity in the decades ahead.

I'm standing to be Labour's candidate to become the first North East Mayor because I want to serve the region I grew up in and use our Labour values to ensure everyone, not just those already at the top, get the opportunity to succeed.

In this Plan for Our North East I'll set out the key areas we need to invest in if we are to make the most of these first steps towards real devolution. I'll take you through my vision for a

region united in its mission to end child poverty and I'll explain how everything from local job creation to better transport contributes to this plan.

Throughout this plan there are two guiding principles that, I hope, will define my time as Mayor. The first is that our region cannot continue in second place or worse to Manchester, Leeds or London. I love this region and all it has to offer, and I'll fight to make it a uniquely successful part of the UK.

And second is my belief that this success has to be something we all share in; that the North East has to be the home of Real Opportunity. That means building a region in which a child going to school today has an equal chance to succeed, no matter where they come from or what their parents do.

But I won't deliver on this plan alone. I'm part of the Labour Party. That's my politics, that's what I believe in.

I've seen what happens when Labour is in power and puts our values in to practise. I saw that as a teenager when Labour

started to fix the Tory mess in '97. And I've seen the success of those values in local government, where our councils strive to mitigate the hardship caused by Tory austerity.

I've delivered Labour values as Police and Crime Commissioner - the first to put fighting poverty at the heart of fighting crime. And I've seen those same values at the heart of our trade unions as they lead the fight to protect our jobs and public services.

I'm asking for your vote to be our Labour Party's Mayoral candidate, and in this plan I'll set out what we can do together for our region. We need an economy that works for everyone, where the benefits of devolution are felt across the region.

This plan ensures that from offshore engineering and automotive manufacturing jobs to high streets and transport, the economy of the North East is inclusive and thriving.

Let's make our North East the best place to work, the best place to live and the best place to visit.

Kim McGuinness

"I'm part of the Labour Party. That's my politics, that's what I believe in."



My vision for the North East economy



Our North East has incredible potential, but after years of Government neglect it is under-performing and the growth is not evenly spread.

As Mayor my investment decisions will be guided by the need to create well-paid, secure jobs across all our region. That means ensuring there are skilled jobs within reach for the majority of the North East, with an economy that works for all.

What do we mean by an economy that works for all? The North East has the potential to lead the way in both green manufacturing jobs and the digital economy. But for thousands of families, those employment opportunities are simply unachievable today.

If devolution is to mean something to all parts of the region then our job creation mix has to offer something for all our residents. I'll create thousands of green jobs to fuel our economy but I won't forget that not every job can, or should, be a senior, graduate level job.

That's especially true when we think about the child poverty crisis facing our region. A family on the breadline today can't feed their kids with the promise of a highly-skilled digital future in a city centre miles away.

What they need is good local jobs, a thriving high street, and an affordable, reliable and safe public transport system – now.

And that's the mix I'll work to create; I'll turbo-charge our green manufacturing base while working with others to revive the high streets that make our towns and villages a great place to live.

This approach, the focus on the foundational economy, has been missing from our devolution story so far. Tory devolution deals have been designed as business support agencies, with no thought given to the wider needs of the region.

I'll change that by directing the region's investment funds towards the foundational economy. By focusing here, on the day-to-day reality of employment in the North East, we can reverse the deterioration of working conditions for thousands and show the benefits of devolution.

Our region can have a stronger manufacturing base and a world-leading digital industry, but if we do not get the foundations of the economy right we will never be delivering change on behalf of the people of the North East.

For too long now, economic plans for the region have focused on headline-chasing investment opportunities and overlooked those whose job provides day-to-day services and goods. In the pandemic and during lockdown we saw the incredible value of the foundational economy, we must never forget those lessons.

My 12 Pledges



End Child Poverty

Create more jobs, better jobs supported by new North East Career Hubs

Run a safer, bigger Metro

Kickstart a new era for our rivers and ports with a region-wide investment programme

Create great homes by building greener houses and supporting renters

Break down barriers to employment with a Mayor's Childcare Grant

Create real opportunity with a new Sure Start-plus model

Bring buses back into public control in my first term

Build the transport infrastructure we need to thrive

Launch a High Streets Commission to reimagine our high streets

Go beyond Net Zero with a biodiversity policy and green building standards

Turn our regional pride, our culture and tourism into a major economic strength

1

End Child Poverty

Our region has the highest child poverty rate in the country – I'll ensure every request for investment received by the Mayor's office is judged first and foremost by its impact on reducing child poverty.

From housing and jobs to transport and culture, ending child poverty will be the thread that runs through every decision I make as Mayor, and I'll work with the North East Child Poverty Commission to get the solutions right.

I'll do this because last year the North East officially became the region with the highest level of child poverty in the country – news that was announced with barely a headline nationally. If a major business was going under we would have had a minister at the dispatch box and a rescue package announced. For crippling levels of child poverty we got nothing. I'll be the Mayor who changes that.

There won't be one single policy that ends child poverty, which is why creating real opportunity for those families will be the thread that runs through everything I do as Mayor.

So in transport, I'll bring in free fares for children, but I won't stop there, there will be subsidised travel for the parents getting back to work so they don't struggle to make work pay.

And in housing, I'll work with our councils to make sure people who rent their home have access to a clean, warm property. Together we'll agree an ambitious minimum standard for housing across the North East that means everyone can live in comfort. We'll reverse the impact of poverty in people's homes with ambitious plans to retrofit social housing to reduce the cost of living in them and the new ones we build will be the greenest going.

But we have to get the basics right and the starting point will be floor covering when you move into a property and a bed for every child. We'll improve the rights of residents when landlords fail to meet the standard.

It's in practical policies such as these and more to come, where every decision factors in, that we will be determined to end child poverty in the North East.

"From housing and jobs to transport and culture, ending child poverty will be the thread that runs through every decision I make as Mayor."



I'll focus on job creation across the whole region, opening dedicated North East Careers Hubs in villages and towns as well as cities, to deliver skills training that people can easily access. I'll work with trade unions to set the standard for a great job and great training.

Skills and training are at the centre of our vision for creating real opportunity in the North East, and it is clear we need responsibility for Job Centres to be

devolved, along with careers advice and skills training from a younger age.

Until then, I'll set up dedicated hubs to ensure everyone, whatever their starting point, can access training and development including a central website and local places to train.

They will offer support to remove barriers such as travel costs and issues around housing and banking, confidence, physical and mental health, alongside training needs.

People using them will be able to work with someone to create a plan, whether that be a route back to work or to change careers.

We've seen a similar model to this perform well in North Tyneside with the council's Working Well hubs. As Mayor I'll expand this success across our region and make our skills work truly accessible.

Whether it's a rural town or an urban neighbourhood hit hard by austerity, all parts of our North East should have access to opportunity.

Alongside the Careers Hubs, I'll ensure our adult skills training is fit for the future, working with business to ensure they have access to the workforce they need to make our region's economy grow. We'll prioritise courses where there's a need.

Our region's housing demands are intrinsically linked to our economic performance - from building new homes to the highest standards to retrofitting properties as part of our fight against climate change. I'll create the retrofitting academy that means our homes are made green by skilled, local hands.

"Whether it's a rural town or an urban neighbourhood hit hard by austerity, all parts of our North East should have access to opportunity."

2 More Jobs, Better Jobs

Run A Safer, 3 Bigger Metro

In Tyne and Wear we've seen historic under-investment in our Metro system. This means safety simply isn't built in. I'll expand the Metro system and I'll prioritise safety. You'll see more gates in our Metro stations, as well as the staff that passengers want to see working at them.

As Police Commissioner I've secured almost £1m for Metro safety improvements, including the youth workers who work hard to prevent disorder before it starts. As Mayor I'll continue this work, ensuring there is always a strong response to Metro crime and antisocial behaviour.

I'll also work to end harassment on the network, with Metro safety campaigns to challenge those who make others feel unsafe.





A New Era for our Rivers & Ports

Working with our councils, I'll create thousands of well-paid green jobs, green housing, biodiversity projects and a new tourist economy on our rivers and coastline. I'll do this by joining up our ports and rivers through a new Mayoral Development Corporation to boost our reputation as world leaders in offshore wind and green hydrogen energy.

The offshore economy has the potential to once again drive the North East, but in recent years we have lost the lead, as others secure investment while our region misses out. The sector is crying out for leadership.

To create a new generation of highly skilled, well-paid manufacturing jobs for our residents I'll create a Mayoral Development Corporation, with improved governance and accountability, to co-ordinate investment along our rivers and ports in Blyth, Tyneside, Sunderland and Seaham. We urgently need this focus if we are to secure our place in the offshore energy jobs boom.

Those ports play a vital role also in supporting the region's car industry and supply chain. I will prioritise the automotive industry when it comes to creating Investment Zones in our region.

5 A Great Home

I believe our region is the best place in the world. It should be an outstanding place to live.

A good home is the bedrock of good health and success. As Mayor I'll work to ensure everyone has a good home, not just those who can afford to buy one.

In the next few years we need to build thousands of new homes across our region. I want those built with the support of the Mayor's office to set the standard for what a new home can be. We will build the greenest, most sustainable homes in the UK and ensure we are retrofitting existing properties to make our housing stock greener, cheaper to run and warmer.

In our region, people should have easy access to green space. This is essential to our health and wellbeing. New developments will need to consider and prioritise this beyond the minimum requirement. I'll also work with our councils to ensure the North East is planting more trees than it cuts down.



We all need to commit to tackle the climate emergency head on. By using the latest developments in technology, respect for nature and a commitment to creating and preserving biodiversity our housing goals can be compatible with our climate change goals.

As well as creating great places to live, house building schemes provide the opportunity to grow our regional economy. Net zero targets, affordable energy projects and new, green methods of construction will all need a skilled local workforce. As far as I'm concerned, our housing targets are intrinsically linked to our skills and job creation plans.

"As Mayor I'll work to ensure everyone has a good home, not just those who can afford to buy one".

Under my leadership the North East will lead the way, I'll expand the brownfield housing fund to deliver thousands of houses on brownfield land by the end of my first term.

But, like many areas, to make the best possible impact we need more devolution of more housing powers. As Mayor I'll lobby hard to ensure the funds that are currently managed by the Homes England quango are handed to the Mayor and elected representatives in the North East, so we can choose how best to spend it to improve people's lives.

To make renting easier we need the power to seize properties from the worst private sector landlords and hand them to social housing organisations. Social housing should be the gold standard and more people should have access to a great, social home with no stigma.

6 Breaking Down The Barriers To Work

I'll remove financial barriers to work and training by trialling a Mayor's Childcare Grant and 'travel to work' credit for those that need it most.

A strong economy that works for all is the key to ending child poverty, and that means spreading the benefits of devolution to all parts of our region. In some homes, the cost of getting a job outweighs the benefits.

From childcare to public transport, or simply learning new skills – sometimes the path to a good, well-paid career seems overwhelming.

So I'll change that. As Mayor I'll trial free childcare for those households that need it most, alongside public transport passes for those starting a job they secured through the Combined Authority.

It is only by radical intervention in the lives of these hardest hit households that we will ensure all parts of the North East benefit from our devolution journey.



Labour transformed lives with Sure Start.

We can empower a new generation with Start North East. From after-school clubs that deliver pre-apprenticeship training to youth clubs and music lessons for those in hardest hit neighbourhoods, we'll support families and create real opportunity.

Young people in the North East have born the brunt of austerity and suffered under the pandemic. Since the Tories took over in 2010, more than £32m a year has been wiped off youth budgets.

There are teenagers with no idea what a youth club is. In the hardest hit neighbourhoods, criminal gangs prey on the kids with no healthy role models.

As Police Commissioner, I've made crime prevention a priority, especially when it comes to diverting young people away from criminality. As Mayor, I'll continue this work to ensure the North East does not suffer the consequences of a lost generation.

That means creating real opportunity so that no matter what your parents background is or the school you go to everyone will have the chance to succeed.

As Mayor I'll work with our councils to invest in the youth services that give an advantage to those in need. I'll also ensure we use our skills budget to train the youth workers and childcare

specialists that can inspire young people.

I will fund special after school clubs that give pre-apprenticeship training to young people and offer a fun way to learn new skills.

For this, we'll need new powers from government to train younger people, not just those over 19. I'll lobby for this to secure our young people's futures.

And to make sure our young people can truly feel part of our region, I'll introduce free public-transport for children and care-leavers.

Sure Start Plus

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8 Buses Back In Public Hands

I will introduce a public transport system which puts people before profit.

I'll urgently bring buses back into public control so buses go where we need them, not just where is profitable. Travel will be free for young people and there will be subsidies for those getting back in to work.

A well-run bus network can unlock real opportunity. That means free travel for young people in education and training and those leaving care. I'll subsidise fares for those returning to work or training and those in our hardest hit areas.

Our public transport network will be a fully integrated system, where one payment, either through your card or an app, is all you need to travel from Bishop Auckland to Berwick, be it on bus, Metro, train, bike or scooter scheme or even our ferry. And we'll take the steps needed to make ours the greenest fleet in the UK.

And while we prepare for a new era of local bus powers, I'll work with our councils to support existing bus routes, making the economic case for subsidising key services now rather than waiting while they disappear.



9 Building The Transport Infrastructure We Need To Grow

I'll back the key projects we need to thrive, including the new Weardale passenger railway in Durham, the reopening of the Leamside Line, the Newcastle to Blyth railway and the Washington Metro expansion. I'll back the Bowburn Bypass in Durham and roll out electric vehicle charging points.

My office will work to expand our cycle network and introduce an electric bike hire scheme, I'll appoint an Active Travel champion to ensure all of the design work in the region is of the highest standard, and works for all road users.

We must work with cycling groups on a new region-wide campaign to get people out of their cars and on to the bike and we'll start by working with local authorities to make sure it's safe for every family to walk or cycle to school, by joining up our neighbourhoods and parks.

I'll lobby for the subsidies needed to make electric vehicles the first choice for car buyers in the North East and invest in the charging network that turns our region greener.

Re-opening negotiations on Durham's transport settlement to unlock funding sooner is a key priority, to bring the county in line with the rest of the region.

10

Reimagined High Streets



As part of my plan to ensure all of our region feels the benefits of devolution, I'll create a new High Street Commission to advise the Mayor on the changes we need to support towns and villages.

That will include looking again at what services and housing can be built around our high streets to help them thrive, as well as the support for the small and medium-sized businesses that keep our local economy going.

And I'll work to devolve power down to our communities to support their efforts to revitalise high streets.



11

Beyond Net Zero

I will ensure the North East economy becomes a green economy by default. Our response to the climate crisis will be built on greener jobs, better transport and new homes but we'll improve our environment too. That means protecting jobs as we decarbonise and transition the economy and decarbonise the North East, so our region can grow as a home of skilled manufacturing even as we play our part in responding to the climate crisis.

My plan for a new Mayoral Development Corporation will boost our reputation as world leaders in offshore wind and green hydrogen energy. I'll work with an incoming Labour Government to ensure our manufacturing sector is a key feature of our national energy action, especially as we look to replace our fragmented energy supply system with a resilient green energy system. I'll work with business to support their efforts to generate their own power, as well as the communities that wish to develop their own local renewable energy projects.

As Mayor I'll work with our councils as they decarbonise their parts of the public sector. House building and renovation is at the forefront of the region's efforts to tackle climate change. As Mayor I'll ensure we set higher standards for new developments, so we build the greenest houses in the UK. I'll also make sure we're retrofitting properties across our region, using a locally skilled workforce, so we can reverse the existing damage and bring down the cost of living.

To reduce emissions and cut travel costs I'll deliver good public transport in every city, town and village and roll out a new generation of electric vehicle charging points. I'll create a fund for biodiversity projects that increase green spaces and trees and improve water and air quality. And I'll make the green economy a feature of our cultural plans, by substantially increasing the amount of forest cover in the region and applying for a new national park status in the North East countryside.



It's time we put regional pride back at the centre of our plans for the North East. From sports to music, our region has a world-class offer but no one selling it to the rest of the nation and beyond.

I will be the Mayor who makes the North East the UK's unofficial capital of culture all year round. That means supporting our local music scene, investing in sport for everyone and making arts and culture a key part of our regeneration plans.

For too long, the North East has lacked a voice championing our cultural offer, it's something devolution simply hasn't done to-date. And yet the people who live here are incredibly proud of our history and the way it shapes our current cultural offer. From the Pitmen Painters to Sam Fender, from Durham Cathedral to Bamburgh Castle, the North East has a unique identity that is missing from our devolution plans.

I'll be the Mayor who changes that and ensures that from job creation to attracting inward investment, culture and sport are a key consideration.

It's important to me that when we talk about culture and creativity, we don't just talk about venues. Our arts and sports projects should be life enriching projects, that do as much to improve our mental health as they do our economy.

And that means ensuring everyone, regardless of their background, can benefit from our cultural offer, not just those who already consider themselves "cultural".

Our cultural scene, our regional pride, is the glue that binds our success. We've seen in Sunderland's city centre how arts are creating a new era for the high street, or in Newcastle's Ouseburn where the creative sector has made it one of the most desirable places to buy a home.

I want to build on that success and put the creative sector right at the centre of our economic plans – from powering ambition in our young people with acting lessons in our hardest hit neighbourhoods to a new tourism offer built around our thriving music scene and the small venues that keep it growing.

If we get this right we create, as others have said, a place that talent wants to live.

Our region has a track record for hosting major sporting events, something I led on during my time on Newcastle Council. I'll create a Mayor's Sports Forum to get the heads of all our biggest clubs, venues and organisations together to bid for the biggest and greatest sporting events in the world to take place here. We saw what the Commonwealth Games did for Birmingham, it's time there was leadership in the North East securing our place at the table.

I'll boost the Culture and Creative Investment Fund to ensure cultural organisations have the ability to grow and expand, giving them access to financial support and expertise.

And I'll back what's already working to make it bigger and better. In Durham, for example, I'll work to expand the Lumiere Festival to other locations, let the world know about Northumberland's coast line and ensure we have a regular calendar of major tourist events in the region.

I'll work with local authorities to grow the number of Culture and Creative Zones, to give people access to culture in their communities.

Some of this will be paid for from the Mayor's office, but for there to be real success the North East needs a Tourist Tax on hotel rooms. We've seen hotels in Manchester sign up to a voluntary levy via their Business Improvement District adding £1 per room per night. I'll work with businesses to replicate that here, regionwide, while lobbying the Government for Mayoral powers to make it statutory. Crucially, I'll reinvest this money back into our region to better help us tell our story.

But all of this will mean nothing if it isn't accessible to all parts of our region. My child poverty pledge will cover our culture funding just as it does job creation – everyone in the cultural sector working with the Mayor's office will have to set out how they will ensure children in disadvantaged areas get free access to arts and sports.

Working with the next Labour Government

This plan is based around one core idea – if we put our Labour Party values into office we can improve lives for everyone.

I know that winning the Mayoral election in 2024 will be key to regaining the seats we need to win in the North East – whether the General Election is at the same time or after it.

I will work with candidates across our region to get Labour elected at every level. As a candidate I will make sure my campaign complements and supports your local campaigns. I'll be a champion of all the hard work that our Labour members put in day after day.

I want the North East to be the exemplar of devolution in England, and my mission will be to hot wire Labour's policies and values into the North East Mayoralty. I have campaigned hard with Keir Starmer and the front bench as the North East's Police and Crime Commissioner, and I will be fully committed to Keir and Labour's victory in 2024.

My promise to Labour Party members is simple – as Mayor I will work every day to improve the life of people in the North East and put our region back on the national stage.

I love our region, it shaped me and I tell people where I am from with pride. There are challenges, yes, but I genuinely believe the next few years could be the start of a transformational journey for our region.

But for that to happen, we have to start delivering real, radical change. We have to start making devolution mean something to all parts of the North East. And we need a Mayor prepared to champion our region.



What could devolution look like to people in the North East?

Devolution should be something everyone in our region can benefit from. It can't just be our city centres or big employment parks, as important as these are to our economy.

Imagine the Harvey family living in Stanley, five years from now. Mum, dad and three kids. They've lived all their lives in a home provided by the housing association but their house was cold and their bills were soaring, until their landlord used a Mayoral scheme to retrofit the home.

Dad Tom had been out of work, but through our North East employment centres he learned how to fit new air source heat pumps- a skill we're lacking in our region. He now has a great job, as part of our plans to build and retrofit homes to green standards, using the local workforce.



Amelie is 15 and Leo is 9. Both go to a breakfast club. With a Labour Government every child has a good start to the day, is fuelled up and ready to learn. Mam Alison went to university but there weren't any local jobs so she used to travel to work on the outskirts of Sunderland – that took one bus ride to the city centre and another to the job, with different bus companies and different fares. Then one bus service was cut and fares went up for the other. When Harry came along two years ago, childcare and travel costs meant Alison couldn't justify going to work, even though she wanted to.

Today, the buses are back on after our region took control and ensured bus routes match the needs of all our communities, especially those most in need of jobs. Alison also did a skills course through a local employment centre that helped with childcare.

Now she can drop the baby off at a local nursery and get the bus for free for a year, thanks to a project we're trialling for extra nursery care provided by highly skilled staff.

As school finishes Amelie is already doing a pre-apprentice course in engineering, to give her a skills grounding and introduce her to local employers. Later she'll go to a local Youth Club with qualified youth workers who trained through the Combined Authority. Younger brother Leo goes to an after-school club where he's learning to code but it's really just a game to him.

When they all get home talk at the dinner table turns to this weekend's North East festival. It's going to be massive and is paid for by a new tourist levy to boost the region's cultural scene. The question is whether they'll walk to the newly revived High Street for the free gig this Saturday or buy one of our festival transport passes and spend the weekend seeing all our region has to offer in Durham, Newcastle, Sunderland or the coast.

None of this is cheap, none of it will happen overnight. But if we're to finally take back control of our region, it's time we put people at the centre of that vision.

“Devolution should be something everyone in our region can benefit from”

Ways to keep in touch



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