

**Westminster Social Policy Forum conference:
Next steps for the Northern Growth Corridor**

Timing: Morning, Friday, 16th October 2026

*****Taking Place Online*****

Draft agenda subject to change



- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Implementation of the Northern Growth Strategy - priorities for governance, investment and delivery**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Governance, infrastructure and investment - priorities for growth and development across the Northern Growth Corridor**
assessing the Northern Growth Strategy and coordinating funding / planning and delivering a pipeline of infrastructure and regeneration projects / commercial viability, delivery timescales and supply-chain capacity / City Investment Funds and place-based investment / Mayoral Revolving Growth Fund and city-centre densification / new town proposals, housing delivery and enabling infrastructure / the role of NISTA and the National Wealth Fund / attracting private capital and supporting business investment / Leeds City Fund and role of business rates retention / collaboration across mayoral authorities, local government and industry / spatial planning, planning reform and long-term growth priorities / opportunities for further fiscal devolution
Professor Jim Coleman, Head, Economic Advisory, WSP Group
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, finance
Senior representative, regeneration
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.15 **Devolution, regional leadership and collaboration across the North of England**
Senior representative, combined authority
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.35 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.40 Break
- 10.50 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.55 **Improving access to investment and supporting key growth sectors**
Senior representative, investment
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.15 **Driving economic growth across the region - investment, innovation, productivity and skills**
attracting private investment and improving access to growth finance for SMEs and scaling businesses / the role of the British Business Bank in supporting clusters and innovation / developing skills, workforce participation and pathways into employment / apprenticeships reform, adult skills devolution and employer engagement / graduate retention and responding to skills shortages / innovation adoption, research commercialisation and university-business collaboration / Local Innovation Partnerships Fund deployment / supporting advanced manufacturing, clean energy and other key growth sectors / addressing regional and intra-regional productivity gaps / identifying and developing clusters / widening access to economic opportunity and supporting inclusive growth in towns and cities across the North / strengthening links between education, industry and local labour market needs
David Foreman, CEO, PXN Group
Sharon Jandu, Director, Yaba
Gill Walsh, Careers and Enterprise Project Officer, Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership
Senior representative, manufacturing
Senior representative, skills
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.05 **Delivering major transport projects and improving connectivity in the North of England**
Transpennine Route Upgrade and wider strategic transport delivery / integrating regional and local transport networks across the North / improving east-west and intra-regional connectivity / international connectivity / interaction between major programmes and local schemes / Transport for City Regions Fund and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements delivery / connecting towns and cities to employment and growth opportunities / supporting economic growth, regeneration, housing and development through transport investment / transport priorities for devolved authorities and local government / freight, logistics and supply chain connectivity / delivering sustainable and accessible transport systems / overcoming delivery, planning and funding challenges / devolution of Transport and Works Act Orders
Robert Bolton, Director, Network Planning and Integration, Network Rail
James Richardson, Managing Director, Transpennine Route Upgrade
David Shepherd, Regional Director, Growth, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Senior speaker confirmed from **Manchester Airports Group**
Senior representative, consultancy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.50 **Northern Powerhouse Rail - ambitions, delivery and next steps**
Nick Bisson, Director, Northern Powerhouse Rail and Network Planning, Department for Transport
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.15 **Chair's and Westminster Social Policy Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Harry Nelson, Westminster Social Policy Forum