

East Midlands Chamber Business Manifesto



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Supporting business in leading the way for growth

Over the course of this Parliament, businesses in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire have demonstrated a robustness, tenacity and ambition that has placed the East Midlands at the front of the pack in terms of growth.

The decisions taken across the term of the next Parliament will be instrumental in determining whether the growth seen over the past year slows and falters or is able to push on and reach new heights. The opportunity exists to place businesses in the East Midlands at the heart of a UK economy built for success.

This document has been developed by the East Midlands business community and makes specific, deliverable asks across five areas:



Placing business at the centre of local growth



Delivering on our long-term Infrastructure needs



Fixing the link between education and the world of work



Reducing the cost of doing business



Supporting business to succeed overseas



The next Government of the United Kingdom must:



Place business at the centre of local growth

Businesses have always provided the heartbeat for communities in the East Midlands, wherever they are based – both have a vested interest in each other's success and in providing the mechanisms to enable this to happen. The voice of business must be a central driver of local decision-making.

To place business at the centre of local growth, the next Government must:

- **Offer clear commitments on the devolution of future powers and the role businesses must play in the structures by which this will happen:** Over the course of this Parliament, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Core Cities have been working towards becoming 'fit for purpose'. Throughout this process the business community has been a willing partner. The successes and lessons of the past five years must be built upon to ensure robust, business-led delivery.
- **Guarantee a Business Ratepayers' vote on local economic strategy:** Democratising business rates would strengthen economic strategies and deepen the working relationship of local authorities and business communities.
- **Commit to further rounds of Regional Growth Fund:** Successive rounds of RGF have improved on the ones before, with administrative lessons being learnt. Further funding via this route should be guaranteed as soon as possible.
- **Legislate to increase the opportunities for SMEs to benefit from public contracts:** Steps to increase the accessibility of public sector contracts to SMEs should continue, including the introduction of a single set of principles to be followed by public sector organisations, toughening the engagement standards for public agencies on working with local businesses and enhancing the importance of supporting local growth over the lowest cost. All new measures introduced in this area should be done so in consultation with SMEs to ensure they don't inadvertently discourage these businesses from tendering.



Deliver on our long-term Infrastructure needs

Properly addressed, infrastructure can be both the driver and facilitator of growth – creating jobs and wealth through its development and enabling further growth through its existence. However, large-scale infrastructure projects have too often been made political footballs, falling victim to the short-termism and self-interest created by parliamentary timeframes. This undermines business confidence and our ability to succeed as a country against international competitors.

To deliver on long-term infrastructure needs, the next Government must:

- **Develop and implement a 50-year UK Energy Security Strategy:** Tackling the most fundamental issue faced by the country by laying out how the UK will produce – and have access to – the energy supplies needed to meet current and future growth, including a clear policy on shale gas extraction. The strategy must cover all elements of our energy needs, including long-term measures to reduce energy usage.
- **Commission an independent body to develop a roadmap for delivering on the National Infrastructure Plan (NIP) and identify longer-term requirements:** The NIP has identified a pipeline of over 650 projects required by 2030 at a cost of £375bn. At present, this is in danger of reading less as a pipeline and more as a wish list. A plan for delivery in which business can have confidence must be developed by an independent body. This body should also be charged with expanding the horizon beyond the current time-frame to meet the longer-term strategic interests of the UK. For the East Midlands, this includes a long-term aviation strategy and improvements to road and rail connectivity North to South and East to West.
- **Take the bold decisions needed to meet housing need:** While all political parties have committed to building significant numbers of new homes, the fact remains that the track record of recent Governments in this area is poor. Commitments need to be backed by bold decisions around funding for house building, incentives for smaller builders, removal of local planning blockages and the opening up and provision of new land for housing development. This is an area where the next Government will be judged on its outputs.
- **Ensure every business has access to superfast broadband and lead the world in the development of 5G technology:** It is unacceptable for businesses today to operate with poor broadband connectivity. Access is fundamental and should be viewed as being equally as important as other utilities. Government must address connectivity shortcomings for businesses on industrial estates, in cities and rural areas to allow them to compete in a global marketplace. In addition, the Government should have the ambition to lead the rest of the world in developing our digital infrastructure for the next generation.
- **Proceed to delivery of HS2 as rapidly as possible, ensuring the groundwork is done for concurrent development of both the Eastern and Western Legs of Phase 2:** HS2 will bring to the East Midlands the capacity and connectivity that will help underpin the region's future success and must deliver for the whole region. The legal framework must be completed as soon as possible and delivery commenced.



Fix the link between education and the world of work

The greatest asset for the business community in the East Midlands is its employees. Businesses will always support staff development and improvement. However, too often people entering the labour market for the first time are ill-equipped in terms of the skills, attributes and knowledge of opportunities needed to succeed. The link between education and business is broken, creating a cost for the individual, business and society as a whole.

To fix the link, the next Government must:

- **Incorporate employment outcomes in the assessment of secondary schools:** The incentive for schools to ensure young people leave secondary education with the employability skills needed to succeed does not exist. Ensuring this becomes part of the secondary school assessment process will focus resources on equipping individuals with the skills and careers advice needed to succeed. To enable this, destination data covering employment, further training and education details needs to be provided in a timely and accessible fashion.
- **Ensure ‘experience of work’ is embedded into education from primary-age through to when a person leaves education:** Numerous studies have shown the benefit that meaningful work experience has on employment prospects. However, this must go further than a non-compulsory, limited period of student-business contact towards the end of education. Business engagement in all its forms must be embedded throughout the curriculum, alongside activity that builds character, resilience, problem-solving, team work and leadership skills into learning.
- **Champion vocational options in education:** The future success of the UK economy relies upon a broad base of business sectors. The country will not succeed without a genuine equality of esteem being placed upon vocational education – this is not solely an option for those deemed to be less academic. Continued support and alternate routes is essential alongside the fostering of a longer-term cultural shift in the way these options are viewed, with our politicians leading from the front.
- **Ensure that there is a clear link between the curriculum and the current and future demands of the labour market:** To future-proof skills supply, curriculum development and careers advice must be informed by the demands of business, providing young people with a clear link between the skills they develop and future career prospects and progression. Alongside this, to further support teachers, a business engagement module should be compulsory within teacher training.



Government policy relating to issues such as regulation, employment law, business rates, accessing finance and energy costs have intentionally and unintentionally increased the day-to-day costs of running a business. For many businesses, growth is now being seriously impeded by the mounting costs that they incur.

To reduce the cost of doing business, the next Government must:

- **Undertake a root and branch review of the broken Business Rates system to deliver something that fairly reflects a business's ability to pay:** The existing system has resulted in the highest business rates in Europe and areas of the East Midlands where otherwise viable commercial space is left empty. While a review is taking place all business rate increases should be frozen.
- **Deliver regulatory policy that enables a more flexible and less burdensome trading environment:** Despite clear commitments on cutting red tape and regulation, businesses still identify activity to comply with unnecessary regulatory policy as taking up a disproportionate amount of time. There are also large concerns around the detrimental impact on businesses having to manage the consequences of employment legislation. It is essential that programmes to identify and reduce regulatory burdens are enhanced and that these are directly informed by the experience of business.
- **Develop a detailed programme for Government policy-makers from across all business-related Departments to spend time at Chambers around the country:** Giving policy-makers the real life experience of how a business operates and the time and cost implications that regulatory measures have.
- **Ensure the traditional routes to business finance are effective and that new route development is supported:** Affordable business finance is a pre-requisite for the majority of businesses looking to grow. Banks must be able demonstrate local knowledge and business judgement in reaching finance decisions. Alternative and emerging sources of finance must be assessed and offered appropriate support. The Business Bank must be beefed-up and meaningful delivery on the ground accelerated.
- **Act to simplify and increase transparency of the current tax system:** The UK tax system is growing increasingly complex, increasing the burden on businesses looking to navigate it and creating a lack of transparency that undermines confidence. The Office of Tax Simplification has not achieved the job it was developed to do. This trend must be reversed in the next Parliament. As part of this, income tax and employee National Insurance Contributions should be merged.
- **Pledge to take no unilateral measures over the life of the next Parliament that increase energy costs for UK businesses:** Ensuring the international competitiveness of the UK, and particularly high-energy user businesses, is not further undermined.



Developing the export base in the East Midlands is central to the region's long-term success. This must take place through the enhancement of activity from existing exporters and by supporting new businesses to enter overseas markets.

To support business success overseas, the next Government must:

- **Reform Air Passenger Duty to support the development of new air routes and make better use of existing capacity at our regional airports:** Business aspirations to grow internationally and reduce the trade deficit is being hindered by APD policy that deters new route development and limits the use of existing aviation capacity. This places the UK at a competitive disadvantage to other countries. A full review needs to take place and APD for new routes at regional airports should be frozen for a period of two years.
- **Ensure long-term Government support for the development of a global business-to-business network to support all UK businesses:** Providing trusted links for East Midlands-based businesses to peers in overseas markets that they are looking to enter. This will strengthen the multilateral trading system and increase opportunities for business to benefit from trade and investment with a wider range of countries. Opportunities for overseas business placements for young people setting out in business should compliment these measures.
- **Develop UK Export Finance into the world's best export finance agency and ensure support for accessing opportunities is clear:** Giving businesses access to the same level of support and products as international competitors.
- **Introduce a 'fast-track' passport issuance scheme for British exporters:** Ensuring delays in passport processes don't result in lost opportunities for business growth overseas.

Delivering the Manifesto

Growth will be driven by business, with policy the enabler. The business community stands ready to partner with Government on these areas. Businesses are committed to ensuring that the resource, knowledge and skills that exist in the East Midlands are utilised to full effect in working with the UK Government to deliver growth. In doing this it is essential that businesses' commitment to this partnership be demonstrably reciprocated by our politicians.

This manifesto is not a standalone document, but is part of the business community's ongoing dialogue with politicians and decision-makers. Tackled jointly, this work will confirm the East Midlands as the leader of economic growth in the UK, ensuring our businesses' local, national and international success over the next five years and beyond.



Area	Population aged 16-64	Labour supply - economically active %	Qualifications at NVQ2 and above %	Gross weekly pay - all full-time workers £	Jobs density* %	Employee jobs by industry - manufacturing %**	Employee jobs by industry - services %	Total jobs full-time %	Total jobs part-time %	Total number of businesses	Businesses 0-49 employees %	Businesses 50 - 249 employees %	Businesses 250+ employees %
United Kingdom	40,915,200	77.5	72.5	518.1	0.78	14.3	85.7	67.7	32.3	2,263,645	97.9	1.7	0.4
East Midlands	2,913,300	78.2	69.7	483.4	0.75	19.1	81	68.3	31.7	151,770	97.9	1.8	0.4
Ashfield	76,600	72	60.8	412.4	0.66	28.8	71.1	69.8	30.2	2,480	96	3.2	0.8
Bassetlaw	70,900	74	61.7	476.9	0.72	24.9	75	67.1	32.9	3,480	98.3	1.3	0.4
Broxtowe	70,500	77.4	71.2	558.9	0.57	21.8	77.8	66.4	31.7	2,810	98.0	1.6	0.4
Gedling	71,800	76	74.7	501.9	0.45	19.4	80.6	60.8	39.2	2,965	98.0	1.3	0.5
Mansfield	67,100	81.1	62.8	407.5	0.58	19.1	81	62.6	37.4	2,260	97.1	2.4	0.4
Newark and Sherwood	72,100	77.8	68.1	454.2	0.69	17.4	78.9	63.2	36.8	4,295	98.6	1.3	0.1
Nottingham City	217,000	70.7	70.7	415.2	0.98	7.3	92.3	64.5	35.5	7,300	96.3	2.9	0.8
Rushcliffe	69,800	79.9	80	605.2	0.65	12.7	87.2	64.4	35.6	4,345	98.4	1.4	0.2
Amber Valley	77,200	78.9	71.8	502.4	0.72	30.9	69.1	75.2	24.8	3,985	97.2	2.3	0.5
Bolsover	48,300	71.2	57.8	421.5	0.62	23.7	76.3	78.1	21.9	1,840	96.8	2.4	0.5
Chesterfield	65,800	80.9	65.8	449.6	0.9	12.5	87.5	67.6	32.4	2,910	96.5	2.7	0.7
Derby City	160,100	78.7	64.2	504.1	0.83	21.6	78.5	68.5	31.5	6,165	97.4	2.0	0.6
Derbyshire Dales	42,400	83.8	76.4	543.4	1.07	19.6	80.3	69.7	30.3	4,390	98.7	0.9	0.2
Erewash	71,300	83.9	71.7	530.6	0.62	26.4	73.6	72.8	27.2	3,205	97.8	1.9	0.3
High Peak	57,900	80.3	78.6	508.9	0.67	22.7	77.4	71.2	28.8	3,520	98.5	1.3	0.1
North East Derbyshire	60,600	77.8	73.4	488.6	0.49	26.8	73.2	72.2	27.8	3,035	98.5	1.3	0.2
South Derbyshire	61,900	85.1	74.3	530	0.63	29.4	70.6	74.7	25.3	3,180	98.4	1.1	0.5
Blaby	59,100	87.3	75	519.3	0.93	15.8	84.1	70.7	29.3	3,650	97.9	1.6	0.4
Charnwood	112,000	79.8	76.3	518	0.6	20.7	79.3	67.8	32.2	5,500	98.0	1.6	0.4
Harborough	53,700	80.5	74.3	553.6	0.79	12.5	87.4	70	30	4,660	98.2	1.5	0.2
Hinckley & Bosworth	66,600	76.1	72.8	479.1	0.63	27.7	72.4	69.4	30.6	4,035	97.9	1.6	0.4
Leicester City	223,900	72.6	62.7	414.4	0.78	19.9	80	67.7	32.3	9,290	97.5	2.0	0.5
Melton	31,500	85.6	69.7	427.3	0.77	27.4	71.8	65.6	34.4	2,270	98.2	1.5	0.4
North West Leicestershire	59,200	73	71.7	488.2	1.05	21.7	78.2	74.1	25.9	3,775	97.3	2.3	0.5
Oadby & Wigston	34,800	83.9	74.9	476	0.58	18.6	80.4	63.3	36.7	1,650	97.9	1.5	0.3

*The density figures represent the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64.

** Figures include manufacturing, construction, energy and water and primary services

With 3,800 member businesses, the Chamber is the second-largest in the UK and the leading voice for business in the East Midlands.

The Chamber's membership reflects the broad base of business sectors in the East Midlands, with specific strengths in the manufacturing and engineering, transport and logistics, construction and property and professional services sectors.



