

As Chair of the newly established All-party Parliamentary Group for Economic development, I am delighted to welcome you here today for our launch event.

I want to particularly thank Jake Berry who has done so much for the North in his role as Minister for the Northern Powerhouse. I also want to extend my thanks to Bev Hurley- Chair of the Institute of Economic Development.

I know with both their support, this APPG will set the agenda and be a driving force for sensible economic policy in this country.

We will begin our work by looking at what needs to be done to revitalise highstreets and coastal towns. By taking an in depth look at their unique selling points we will work to safeguard them for the future. We will also look at how to increase productivity across the whole country. How will the technological revolution affect local economies? We will also look at how communities are funded at a local level right across the country. What does further devolution look like? These are just some of the questions that we hope to tackle over the coming year.

Whatever your views on Brexit, the British public now want politicians to focus on the things that matter to them. The NHS, schools, transport infrastructure, the list goes on.

The only way to guarantee the investment these public services need is with a sound economy. I'm sure that all parties can find common agreement on that.

So let's not make this a partisan issue. By engaging with colleagues, cross-party, and working together for the good of the economy, we can truly make a positive difference to lives of everyone across the country.

This is the opportunity that this new APPG presents. And as Chair, I will give it all my energies to ensure it is a success.