

Dear Prime Minister,

As business representations in the Northern Powerhouse, we write to you together to urge your government to take a new approach to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. The efforts of the Health Secretary and Chancellor to put in place an improved way forward is right, but we believe that local government, Metro Mayors and businesses must be closely involved as parts of the North of England come under more stringent limits on our freedoms, our families and our economies.

As former Northern Powerhouse Minister Jake Berry MP argued in Parliament this week, the restarting of the country was based on the circumstances of large parts of the South of England, and the government must learn from that and now do better – by trusting our leaders to work with you in the national interest.

It is our view that the following proposals should be rolled out immediately:

1. Local decision making to agree additional lockdowns before they happen, and what measures are to be deployed between relevant services, with additional powers to take immediate action on non-compliance. Lockdown triggers to include a broader assessment than just absolute numbers, and not to include further economic restrictions.
2. A locally controlled Test and Trace system that is sensitive to local knowledge and needs of communities. This should include a joint planning response with universities to provide effective support to students as part of containment plans.
3. An improved Business Compensation Package to support those most affected. This will otherwise put at risk the Government's ambitions to level up within this Parliament, as our cities stand to lose tens of thousands of jobs.
4. Financial support for everyone who needs to self-isolate. Payment should recognise the additional support needs in our cities with higher levels of deprivation, and not be distributed on a per head of population basis.
5. Improved monitoring of the impacts of the additional restrictions that have recently been put in place to understand their effect on Covid-19 rates.

As our leading regional newspapers have said before, Power up the North has to be a long-term economic strategy. Our city regions have set out their ambitious and evidence based recovery plans, which present the government

a basis to co-invest alongside private finance. The need to rebalance the British economy has never been clearer, and we need to see bold and decisive measures such as a patient capital fund and the unlocking of further local investment decisions set out clearly in the Comprehensive Spending Review. For as we control the virus, we must also plan for what comes after this winter – a recovery to Build Back Better for every part of the UK.

Yours sincerely,

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