

Mayor Kim McGuinness

North East Combined Authority

The Lumen

Blue Star Square

Helix Business Park

St James' Boulevard

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE4 5BZ

26th March 2026

Dear Mayor McGuinness,

Re: Gateshead International Conference Centre

You have long been an advocate for the city and region, and I congratulate you on last Tuesday's historic NECA Cabinet meeting approving a record £350mn of investment in the North East, including the transformational £24mn allocated for the Gateshead Quays arena development. There can be no doubt that a new, state-of-the-art arena with increased capacity will prove hugely successful in attracting world-class events and acts to the city.

Across the region, support for the Gateshead Quays International Conference Centre and Arena project is universal. It would, quite simply, be a game changer for the North East.

The £24mn secured for the arena is welcome, and will have a positive economic impact but, it is the International Conference Centre aspect of the original scheme that will radically transform the city and wider region's visitor economy, resulting in tens of thousands of additional visitors on an annual basis. Arenas, by their very nature, tend to predominately serve a regional audience. In contrast, International Conference Centres attract a captive international audience, driving multiple overnight stays from outside of the region, and thus deliver a net economic gain for the region.

This is why the International Conference Centre is an economic force multiplier.

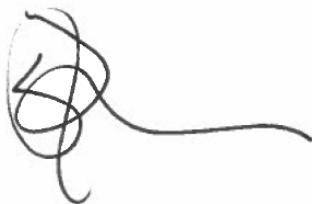
The economic impact of this should not be understated. The conference centre has the potential to unlock a further £500mn of private sector funding beyond the development itself, creating thousands of additional jobs and increasing spend within the hospitality sector by c.£80mn per annum.

It is therefore hugely encouraging that the Chancellor, the Rt Hon Rachel Reeves, announced £120mn of new funding for the Combined Authority to “bulldoze through roadblocks holding up city-centre projects and regeneration schemes”, specifically referencing Newcastle and Gateshead Quays in the £120mn award.

On behalf of NE1s c.1,500 business members and the accommodation provider signatories below, we urge you to seize the day and commit to do everything within your power to ensure this once in a generation opportunity is grasped, and, more importantly, delivered.

If there is anything we can do to assist you in this endeavour, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Patterson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Patterson

Chief Executive, Newcastle NE1

Accommodation provider signatories in support of the International Conference Centre:

