



Aberdeen &
Grampian
Chamber of
Commerce

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Manifesto for Scottish Parliament
Election 2026

Scotland goes to the polls on 7th May 2026 at a crucial moment for businesses across North-east Scotland. Our region has a solid track record as an economic powerhouse but is going through a turbulent period of transition. Business confidence in the region is at an historic low.

If we are to navigate this major economic and social transition successfully, we need a policy and regulatory environment that is more conducive to doing business. We need more effective partnership between government and industry. And we need policy makers at every level of government to work together in the interests of the people and communities they serve.

Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce represents over 1,350 businesses throughout the region, from small family businesses to large global operators, across a diverse range of sectors. Collectively, our members employ over 100,000 people – around half the North-east's workforce.

Our region has repeatedly demonstrated its resilience and ability to adapt to changing economic circumstances. We have abundant human and natural resources: a highly skilled and motivated workforce and a geographical location ideally placed to take advantage of emerging opportunities. But we need policy makers to step up too.

We need the new Scottish Government to use all the levers at its disposal to create the conditions in which business and commerce can flourish, creating jobs, fostering enterprise, driving investment and growing a more productive economy. When businesses are healthy, our communities can thrive.

AGCC's central message is clear: **with the right policy environment, North-east Scotland can continue to deliver exceptional returns for Scotland's economy**—but this requires stronger partnership with government, policy and regulatory stability, and a strategic approach to economic development. Businesses are not seeking handouts; they are seeking **favourable, growth-focused policy decisions** that unlock investment, protect jobs, and sustain productivity.





OVERARCHING PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

AGCC calls on the next Scottish Government to use all available devolved powers and influence to create conditions in which business can thrive by prioritising:

- Economic growth as a core policy objective
- A competitive fiscal and regulatory environment that incentivises investment and job creation
- Strategic, place-based partnership investment aligned to regional strengths and opportunities

ABERDEEN AND GRAMPIAN: THE PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

We need the Scottish Government to **champion those sectors that have significant growth potential.**

Strategic initiatives such as Opportunity North East have delivered real results for our regional economy. The Scottish Government should commit £20 million over the life of the next parliament to match the Wood Foundation's investment to support ONE to continue to diversify and transform the economy at a critical time for the region.

WE NEED A PRO BUSINESS TAX AND REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT

A fair and proportionate system of taxation is a cornerstone of a constructive relationship between business and government. We need a pro-business tax and regulatory environment to boost growth and competitiveness. The current taxation and regulatory regimes overseen by governments at both Westminster and Holyrood are increasingly constraining growth and competitiveness. Our priorities include:

- **Fair taxation:** Scottish and UK Governments need to work together to ensure fair overall levels of business and personal taxation.
- **Explore alternatives to Non-Domestic Rates** to address structural flaws that disadvantage bricks and mortar businesses, particularly in retail, hotels and hospitality, and which fail to reflect profitability or performance.
- **Fewer Scottish Income Tax bands, and an end to uncompetitive rates for higher bands** that make it harder to recruit and retain senior talent across both the private and public sectors.

WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE

Workforce availability and skills alignment are critical constraints on regional growth. We need the Scottish Government to:

- Sustain and expand **work integrated learning**, including **Graduate Apprenticeships without age restrictions** and “earn while you learn” models.
- **In partnership with our universities and college**, deliver a long-term sustainable funding settlement, recognising their role as anchor institutions for skills, innovation and regional growth.
- Address persistent underfunding at **North East Scotland College (NESCol)**, enabling expanded apprenticeship provision, reskilling, and outreach to disadvantaged and disengaged learners.
- Position **Aberdeen as the UK’s global energy workforce standards hub**, supporting reskilling and workforce mobility across oil and gas, renewables, hydrogen, and CCUS.
- Foster **closer working between the Scottish and UK governments** on research, innovation and commercialisation strategy and investment.
- Articulate the benefits of **well-managed immigration** to bolster our workforce and fill skills gaps in sectors of strategic importance to our economy and public services and **resist any further restrictions on visa routes**.



ABERDEEN AND GRAMPIAN: NEW ENERGY CAPITAL OF EUROPE

The energy transition is mission critical to a thriving North-east economy but is currently off track. The Scottish Government must:

- Press for an **end to the UK Energy Profits Levy in 2026** and accelerated introduction of the Oil and Gas Price Mechanism to protect jobs, restore confidence, and unlock up to £50bn in investment.
- Ensure continued support for **licensing and domestic production** while the UK remains reliant on oil and gas, to protect jobs, revenues, and energy security.
- **Double the original £500 million allocation for the Just Transition Fund and ensure it is fully delivered by 2030.** In tandem, re-open discussions with the UK Government about match-funding. Only £100 million of the promised funding has been allocated to date - and going forward the JTF needs a **laser focus on strategic priorities, job creation and investment**, not fragmented annual projects.
- Take responsibility for - and speed up - **renewable energy-related consenting**, including grid upgrades.
- Press for **reform of transmission charging and Contracts for Difference** to put Scottish projects on a level playing field.
- Deliver a properly resourced **Offshore Wind Hub in Aberdeen**, with real powers and staff on the ground.





ABERDEEN AND GRAMPIAN: A THRIVING CITY REGION

Our economic competitiveness depends on creating an attractive, liveable environment. That requires investment in place – in our cities, culture, housing and infrastructure. The next Scottish Government should:

- **Support city centre regeneration** - including redevelopment of landmark sites such as Woolmanhill Hospital, Broadford Works, Marischal College East and a new community stadium - through active government partnership.
- Treat **arts, culture and heritage assets as core economic infrastructure**, with more equitable, area-based funding and long term stability for key organisations.
- Address **Scotland's housing emergency** by reintroducing a presumption in favour of sustainable development, tackling planning delays and unlocking land for homes.
- Support our region's visitor economy which has significant growth potential, but needs **a fair share of government funding and support** to bring national and international sporting and cultural events to the North-east.
- Offer financial and policy support for our **world-class food and drink producers** as they navigate a changing global trading environment, and recognise their outstanding contribution to food security, environmental management, and the rural economy.





ABERDEEN AND GRAMPIAN: CONNECTED TO THE WORLD

Our region's connectivity still lags behind other parts of Scotland and acts as a brake on economic development and growth. We need the Scottish Government to:

- Commit to building a **new Buchan railway** and deliver on the previous **£200 million commitment to reduce intercity journey times between Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow**.
- **Fast-track strategic and safety interventions on trunk and other key roads**, including the A96, A90, A947, and A952.
- Invest in **bus infrastructure**, restore full funding for partnership schemes including Aberdeen Rapid Transit, and ensure fair reimbursement to operators for concessionary travel schemes.
- Support air route development, recognising **Aberdeen International Airport's** strategic role as an aviation hub at the heart of the energy transition, and its potential to lead in green aviation. The Scottish Government must also ensure that the new Airport Departure Tax provides a level playing field between Aberdeen and Inverness on UK domestic connections.
- Accelerate delivery of **full fibre broadband**, including policy interventions to overcome deployment barriers in rural areas and multi dwelling buildings.
- Eliminate discretionary local limits on **Private Hire Car (PHC) licenses**, which currently restrict supply, stifle economic growth, and prevent PHC services from meeting peak-hour and late-night transport needs.





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CONCLUSION AND KEY ASKS

North-east Scotland is a proven economic powerhouse, with a track record of resilience, innovation and exceptional return on public investment - but it cannot be taken for granted.

The next Scottish Government has a choice: allow uncertainty and underinvestment to erode that contribution, or work in genuine partnership with business to unlock growth that benefits the whole of Scotland.

AGCC's key asks of the next Scottish Government are:

A clear commitment to **economic growth as a central objective of government policy**;

A more competitive tax and regulatory environment, including reform of **Non-Domestic Rates and fewer Scottish Income Tax bands to improve** talent attraction and retention;

Sustained investment in skills and the workforce of the future, including work-integrated learning, graduate apprenticeships and fair **funding for universities and colleges**;

Stronger support for the energy transition, including pressing for an end to the UK Energy Profits Levy, **accelerating renewable energy consenting, and doubling £500million Just Transition Fund to £1billion**;

Targeted place-based investment to support city and town centre regeneration, housing delivery, culture and the visitor economy, including **a new community stadium for Aberdeen**; and

Improved connectivity, including a commitment to reconnecting Peterhead, Fraserburgh and Ellon to the rail network, enhancing existing rail links, safer trunk roads, better public transport, full-fibre broadband and support for Aberdeen International Airport as a national asset.