

PM speech at Convention of the North in Rotherham

It's great to be here in Rotherham, in the magna centre which is of course the plural of magnum which as every knows is the Latin for ice cream

And great to be at the biggest ever convention of the north

Only right that we are meeting here on the banks of the Don, literally the crucible in which the history of the nation was forged – and indeed of the modern world

When Nelson defeated the French at Trafalgar and set this country on course for about 100 years of imperial expansion, the cannons on HMS Victory were forged here at Walker and Company

It was Rotherham pipes that brought fresh drinking water to Hong Kong, Rotherham steel that clad Brunel's Great Eastern and formed the skeletons of New York skyscrapers and did you know that every fire hydrant in New York was cast in British steel less than two miles from here at the works of Guest and Crimes.

That was before it occurred to anyone to put tariffs on British steel

This place where we meet was so central to our national life that it was bombed in both the first and second world wars

And so it was entirely fitting that 50 years ago the works here at Templeborough adopted as its logo the phoenix – perpetually rising from the ashes

And across this region you can feel that phoenix-like transformation as the Northern Powerhouse – which Jake just spoke so eloquently – thrums into life with a low-carbon, fuel efficient roar

Look at Catcliffe.

Where a factory that once made superb glass is now being used by McLaren to turn super-light, super-strong Yorkshire carbon fibre into the fastest production cars on earth

Right next door, at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre, Xeros Technology are producing the world's most environmentally friendly washing machine

That's the spin and I bet it's true

Boeing chose Sheffield as its first civil aerospace factory in Europe – with nearly half its employees taken on as apprentices.

And did anybody have a bagel this morning? Did you? No?

Well if you did, it was probably made just up the road in Mexborough, where, in the largest bagel factory in Europe produces fully three-quarters of the bagels eaten in Britain every day.

Sheffield is the home of the UK's largest provider of hybrid and electric vehicle drive systems, a company called Magtec.

A world-first initiative, Magtec is retrofitting Sheffield's refuse lorries with battery-power, with enough juice to negotiate the seven hills and recharge themselves with energy they generate from the very rubbish they collect.

Rubbish powered rubbish vans – there's a joke there somewhere which I will leave to you.

I tell you, there is no limit to the imagination, innovation, ingenuity and leadership in the North.

And I have a profound belief that talent and genius are uniformly distributed around the UK.

But opportunity is not, and that is why we need to level up across our amazing country, and we need investment in education, the giant precondition that determines whether you have the freedom and the confidence to make the most of your talent

So this government will give every child the world class education they deserve.

We are levelling up across the country

Investing an extra £14 billion over three years and increasing the minimum level of funding for every pupil in primary and secondary schools.

We're backing the teachers who change our lives

We are putting up salaries for new teachers, funding pension increases, and giving teachers the backing they need to deal with disruptive pupils.

And we cannot afford any longer the chronic under-funding of our brilliant FE colleges, which do so much to support young people's skills and our economy.

It is absurd that employers have been driven to import so much skilled labour from abroad, in large part because of the failures of vocational training in our own country.

We have a world class universities sector – we should be very, very, very proud of it -and it is time we aspired to the same status for our further education institutions, to give everyone the opportunity to express their talents.

And of course education is not enough on its own, you need to be able to connect with other people

To get that job interview, to find that customer

And so we in this new government are supporting gigabit broadband – which is a lot I understand – for every home by 2025, eight years earlier than previously promised.

And they can do it Spain. If they can do it in Spain, why can't we do it in the UK?

We have a new stronger town fund – a £3.6bn stronger town fund

So that local people can invest in libraries, parks, youth clubs areas, places to bring people together

And that kind of intervention cannot come, cannot be redirected, from central government

So let's be frank about we're trying to do, what is needed most of all in addition to the technology, the infrastructure and the education we're supplying,

It's of course local leadership.

Trusting people, to take back control and run things the way that they want to.

Because of course central government cannot abdicate responsibility, but only local champions can really make a difference for their towns and their communities.

I am the first Prime Minister since Clement Attlee to have been a mayor – and I know the transformative potential of local, accountable leadership.

Someone with the power to sort out what matters most to local people

What we want to see in this region is towns and communities able to represent that gentlemen and sort out his needs, and whether it's transport they use to get to work, or good housing – whatever it happens to be

Someone to drive big infrastructure projects, to boost investment, to wave the flag for the area and act as a local champion and say: "Come and invest here."

But of course along with that power, comes responsibility and accountability.

And it's time we gave more people a say over the places where they live.

We are going to do devolution properly. We are going to maximise the power of the north with more mayors across the whole of the north.

And I know there is real enthusiasm for devolution in Yorkshire and I welcome

the establishment of a Yorkshire Committee as a practical step for facilitating greater collaboration on a Yorkshire-wide basis.

In the meantime, we are committed to getting the Sheffield City Region done – and I also want to open up negotiations with Leeds and West Yorkshire so we can make a mayor work there too, whatever the nature of any longer term arrangements in Yorkshire.

But I also want to build on the fantastic job so many mayors are already doing – and ensure you can deliver on ambitious commitments to your communities.

That will mean levelling up powers for existing mayors

And to make sure our great Northern Powerhouse is firing on all its cylinders, to champion investment and opportunity, we are going to work with leaders across the north, the mayors, local businesses and others to create a new, stronger Northern Powerhouse growth body. It will be a genuine partnership across the region, led by a northerner chosen in close consultation with you. I imagine there will be a process to work out who's going to do but it will be done in close consultation with you.

But if there is one field of policy that can change people's lives for the better

And level up opportunity – on field of policy that in my view must now be devolved – that policy is transport

Nearly two hundred years ago, this country invented a machine that went on to unite great surfaces, great areas of Great Britain, spread its iron web across the earth and it transformed everywhere it touched.

The North of England gave the world the railway.

And at a time when the rest of the human race could travel no faster than a galloping horse,

40,000 people watched as Locomotion One puffed its way like some fire breathing beast along the tracks between Stockton and Darlington in 1825.

It was ours, a world first, the common ancestor of both the McLaren and the rubbish eating dustcart I just described

And yet two centuries later, in this birthplace of the railways, we can do so much better

Today – coming from London on the train, it took me just over an hour and a half to get to Doncaster.

But if, for example, you travelled from Liverpool to Rotherham – less than half the distance– you might have had to leave an hour earlier than me, and change as many as three times.

Your journey may have been on two and three-carriage trains, some of them built in the early 1980s with a body designed for a bus. And maybe bus seats too.

I love buses – but not when they are supposed to be trains

When I was in Yorkshire last week, I reaffirmed my commitment to Northern Powerhouse Rail

And I eagerly await your plans.

And before we get on with a project of that scale I deeply believe in the absolute importance of everyday ordinary transport that people rely on.

There are some terrific local transport services in the North – from Manchester's trams and Mersey rail, the most punctual railway in Britain, to the Tyne and Wear Metro.

And there has been some very significant Government investment with 2,000 additional services now operating each week, £500m on new trains, £100m on the refurbishment of the rest – including WiFi and power sockets. And as well as the electrification of the railways in the North West,

And the Pacers will be gone within months.

But still the overall picture is patchy.

All too often, Northern England has to put up with old diesel trains, running once or twice an hour, from stations where the only form of welcome on the platform is yes, a bus shelter.

William Wordsworth campaigned furiously against the railway coming to the Lake District.

Last year, during the timetable meltdown, Northern and Network Rail gave him his wish.

And what's the difference between the superb services like Merseyrail, the Tyne and Wear Metro, the Manchester Metrolink and the ones let you down far too often.

Well partly the answer is money

But the other difference is accountability – right answer from the mayors in the front.

Each of those well run services is run by, or on behalf of, locally elected politicians.

And they're always going to care more about their trains and trams than someone in Whitehall.

London was just the same. Before 2000, when London Transport was run by central government, the tube was frankly shabby and neglected. But when my

predecessor and I ran it as London Mayor, services improved

Though I can't speak for the current incumbent

So today I am announcing my intention to give the railways of the north back to the people of the north. Back to the places where they were born. Back to Stockton and to Darlington. Back to Liverpool and Manchester.

In the combined authority or joint transport committee areas in the North East, West Yorkshire, Sheffield City Region, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, it is time for the north to run its own trains. Keith Williams, who is leading a review of the railways for us, has I think been in touch with most of the people concerned.

On your local lines in metropolitan areas, we will give greater control over fares, service patterns, rolling stock and stations.

And outside the combined authority areas, I want communities to take control too

That might be through county councils taking on similar roles, in their areas, for stations or branch lines.

Or it might be by transferring local branch line and rural services to community rail partnerships, owned by local people.

And as you have asked, we will give you far greater control over your budgets.

But as well as taking power, this is the kicker, you will have to take responsibility. That means alongside taking the credit, you will be taking the heat.

Just like a mayor has to in London. Nobody blames the government for problems on the Central Line. They blame the Mayor of London.

Now we will be generous on capital spending, but we won't be able to afford everything that everyone wants. So choices will have to be made. And if you people want more than we can afford, then they will have to raise the money themselves.

And, of course, the north's railways must still be part of the national network which passengers tell us they want, with many trains obviously running across the boundaries of the region. So there still has to be a role for the centre.

This will be a partnership between the railway and the leaders of the north. And I think it's a formula that can work and will deliver better services for the people of this country.

And that is how we do it. That is how we level up and unleash the talent of the whole country

Better education,

Gigabit broadband sprouting in every home

Reliable comfortable and affordable transport with someone accountable
delivering your service

These are the pumping pistons that will drive the northern powerhouse

And that Northern Powerhouse is turning before our eyes into a new locomotive
for the UK economy

Two centuries ago this region literally became the engine that propelled the
world to new discoveries and new horizons – bringing people together,
bringing countries together and bringing new opportunities for everyone.

That is what the Northern Powerhouse can achieve in the 21st century and this
is a Government that will back you to deliver it.