

New association shows businesses powering on with Northern Powerhouse, now Theresa May has confirmed it will continue

- Northern Ports Association will boost North's imports and exports
- As the Chancellor looks for "shovel-ready" projects for Autumn Statement infrastructure boost, £100-million east-west connection could deliver rapidly inclusive prosperity post-Brexit.

The north of England's four main ports will today agree a new partnership to create jobs, boost exports and prosperity across the whole of the North of England. In a sign the Northern Powerhouse agenda marches forward, a new Northern Ports Association will unite northern ports and make importing and exporting much easier than today.

The association's creation is a recommendation in IPPR North's *Northern Ports* report, which highlighted the domination of southern ports and the problems this creates in transporting imports and exports across the UK. For instance, at present, 60 per cent of freight destined for the North is delivered to southern ports - leading to unnecessary motorway traffic, delays, pollution and inefficiency.

Bringing the four ports - Liverpool (ran by Peel Ports), Hull (ABP), Tees Valley (PD) and Tyne (Port of Tyne) - together will mean the North can act as a genuine gateway to the world, connecting Atlantic shipping in Liverpool in the west to the east's links with the continent.

The association is being launched in parliament today [13 September] from 1830, with the four ports signing a Memorandum of Understanding to take forward the commitment. Speakers will include Transport minister John Hayes; chair of the Commons Transport select committee Louise Ellman MP, and former deputy prime minister Lord Prescott.

Ed Cox, Director of IPPR North, said:

"Post-Brexit, the Northern Powerhouse agenda is more important than ever. Far from the powerhouse being a Whitehall-led scheme, northern businesses are leading the charge and creating much-needed jobs and prosperity. For just £100 million, the government could open-up east-west port connections and create a gateway to a global North. This is exactly the kind of 'shovel-ready' project the government is looking to be eyeing-up ahead of the Autumn Statement."

Mark Whitworth, Chief Executive of Peel Ports, added:

"Liverpool and the other northern ports sit at the heart of some of the most dynamic national growth clusters. That's one of the reasons we're investing £400m in Liverpool2 and more than £350m in other infrastructure projects. There's so much potential for the

north to be a true global gateway covering both coasts, especially at a time when our future trading relationships are unclear. "Ports will remain a fundamental enabler in the performance of the entire UK economy. As business look to improve the efficiency of their supply chains, and logistics processes therefore become ever more sophisticated, there is a massive opportunity for the north of England to be at the cutting edge of new patterns of freight distribution. Our vision is that we will see created a series of multimodal distribution parks and strategic rail freight interchanges, supported by an east–west cargo super-corridor, linking Atlantic traffic with the European mainland.

"While the greater collaboration within the industry is very welcome, the lack of investment in east–west freight and logistics capacity limits our ambitions in the longer term. There must be urgent investment in trans-Pennine road and rail links to better connect the whole region. We also need to see the Government adopting a consistent and long-term energy policy to provide certainty for this crucial sector. Finally, there is a pressing requirement to prepare for the future by providing the next generation of workers with the essential, advanced skills our ports will depend on."