

We are writing as northern mayors and business leaders to state our case for accelerating the Net Zero re-industrialisation, a key part of building the Northern Powerhouse.

War in Ukraine will require steps to challenge Putin which will affect our economy. Gas prices, which have quadrupled in the past year, are set to rise again, with ourselves and the rest of the major world economies without a shared strategic reserve. Our European neighbours are working to become less dependent on Russian gas. Meanwhile, the IPCC's latest report last Monday issued a stark warning that the risks from climate change are even greater than thought, with the window to act "brief and rapidly closing".

The case for a net zero transition has never been stronger – and the north stands ready to play its part. Two centuries after we powered Britain through the first Industrial Revolution with our coal-fired factories that transformed us into an international trading power, we are now in a global race to develop capabilities in emerging green sectors.

It's an opportunity to re-industrialise the north, create well-paid jobs and turbocharge our flagging productivity. It's also an opportunity to improve the lives and livelihoods of people across our regions, making it cheaper and easier to use public transport and heat our homes – all while reducing our carbon emissions.

Done right and the north can compete at a global level – but we're in danger of getting left behind. We can't afford to stand by and watch while the rest of the world builds up huge industries in sectors such as electric vehicles and low carbon hydrogen. We need more investment in R&D to develop clean technologies, more investment in local supply chains and more investment in skills so people can access these new green jobs.

The north already produces more than half of the country's renewable energy. Many northern regions are accelerating our own local plans to reach carbon neutrality well ahead of the national target of 2050, from insulating homes in Greater Manchester and building a green jobs taskforce in West Yorkshire. We have offshore wind on the Humber and hydrogen power on Teesside. We have fusion capabilities at the UKAEA and small modular reactors at the Nuclear AMRC in South Yorkshire, as well as carbon capture and storage technologies from the East Coast across to the Mersey. We're leading the nation towards a renewable energy future. We need to be leading the world.

Opening more gas fields is not the answer; its impact will not be sufficient to bring down the global gas price and drive down bills for consumers. Gas power expansion would need to be matched by even more support for low carbon hydrogen and CCUS to guarantee our path to net zero. Our first priority must be to double down on renewables to secure cheaper prices, with investment in nuclear small modular reactors as a backup to provide the base load to replace gas.

The north has the solution. All we need is for Government to trust us to get on with the job so we can change people's lives for the better.

Signed,

Professor Juergen Maier CBE, vice-chair of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester

Tracy Brabin, Mayor of West Yorkshire

Dan Jarvis, Mayor of South Yorkshire

Jamie Driscoll, Mayor of North of Tyne