



Sajid Javid, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, at the South West Growth Summit

Uniting behind growth charter to unlock unlimited potential

We must take the message to Government, the country and the world, writes **Chris Loughlin**

This region can achieve more together than apart.

That was the message from the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP during his keynote speech at the South West Growth Summit, hosted by Pennon at the University of Exeter.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, himself an Exeter graduate, was quick to praise the many attributes of the South West: its natural beauty; growing tourism economy; world-class universities and leading businesses in sectors such as aerospace.

He spoke of the region's 'unlimited potential' but made it clear that the success of any drive for devolution ultimately requires the communities of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and beyond to embrace a stronger sense of collaboration and co-operation.

It is precisely in this spirit that the South West business community, out in force at a packed Reed Hall for the Summit, has come together with the support of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the region's MPs to develop the South West Growth Charter.

This is a vision for the region's economic future which will be presented to the Government ahead of the autumn statement on November 23.

The cornerstone of this vision is a commitment to drive greater collaboration between region-wide business, public sector partners and Local Enterprise Partnerships themselves.

Doing so will contribute to

wards regional self-sufficiency, one of the charter's other key commitments, reducing its reliance on grant aid and facilitating the delivery of more innovative funding solutions.

In addition to collaboration and self-sufficiency, the charter will set out commitments from the South West to strengthen links between business and education, support growth through innovation, and invest in infrastructure and the environment.

In return, it will present four key 'asks' for Government.

First and foremost, a new Government partnership with

ing the transmission and distribution restrictions that currently restrain regional growth.

Finally, investment in transport connectivity is critical.

The Government must commit to the Peninsula Rail Taskforce's long-term plan for rail improvements (set to be published later this year) and provide a re-affirmed commitment to road improvements, including those currently in the pipeline.

The South West Growth Charter will be ambitious but realistic, offering a vision for the future that has the support of a united and forward-thinking business community.

proper governance models in place – governance that is clear, transparent, and accountable.

In terms of regional growth the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine have each staked their claim.

More will follow suit.

In the largely rural and dispersed South West it is clear that one county or community on its own cannot compete with these larger entities.

The peninsular nature of the region means connectivity and infrastructure must be rolled out in a joined up way.

Pockets of isolated investment simply will not generate the long-term growth required to improve the region's economic future as a whole.

We need a more outward-looking approach.

Mr Javid acknowledged that successive governments have failed to do enough for the South West but the onus is not just on the current administration to solve the region's problems.

The South West must set out its own stall and take its message to Government, the rest of the country, and indeed the world.

The South West Growth Charter will be that message. It starts here.

#backthesouthwest

Chris Loughlin is the chief executive officer of the Pennon Group



Wednesday:

HEALTH Simon Parker on why we can't trust the Conservatives with the NHS

the South West – a firm focus on South West Growth in the Government's Industrial Strategy and a funding roadmap for the region.

Secondly, investment in digital connectivity.

We need an Ultra-Fast South West, a new partnership with the private sector to deliver ultra-fast South West 5G mobile, fibre and wireless broadband.

Thirdly, investment in energy connectivity.

The focus here is on address-

The Government has expressed its openness to look at credible cases to give decision-making power back to regions with clear economic strategies and supported by strong local leadership.

With business behind it, the charter will take us one step closer to achieving just that. The energy and dedication of our region's MPs will also be integral in driving it forward.

Furthermore, as Mr Javid noted, regions that want ambitious deals need to have

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