

21 May 2018

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

PROSPERITY DEPENDS ON 'FIXING THE FUNDAMENTALS' HERE IN THE UK

I write today representing Chamber of Commerce business communities in every part of the United Kingdom – bringing together 75,000 firms employing nearly six million people.

At this moment, forecasts for the UK's economic performance are being pared back. Despite a strong current of global growth, the BCC Quarterly Economic Survey – the biggest private business survey in the UK – has indicated for some time that the UK is, at best, treading water.

Many businesses are concerned about the future at this time of uncertainty and change, and all are clear that getting the best possible deal for the UK with the EU is of critical importance.

Yet the very same businesses are also concerned about perceived inaction in Westminster and Whitehall on other key economic matters. Our future success depends not just on Brexit negotiations, but also on big economic decisions that must be made here in the UK.

It is time, Prime Minister, for you to set out a compelling, pro-enterprise and pro-growth vision for the future, and a bold set of domestic policies to make it happen.

Your speech yesterday on the Industrial Strategy was a welcome step towards this, but it must be the start of a focus on the key domestic issues, aimed at promoting and championing the growth and success of the United Kingdom.

We encourage you to bring alive and articulate an economic mission that business, government and the wider public can rally behind. Making this happen, however, depends on your government taking swift and radical action to tackle some of the more basic and obvious barriers to growth around the UK.

Like any successful business, Her Majesty's Government must fix the fundamentals first. Even the best possible Brexit deal could fail to support our future competitiveness if we do not get the basics right for growth here at home.

It is time for you to tell business communities across the UK how your government will act – fast – to stabilise the faltering training and apprenticeship system and give clarity on migration rules, as businesses face unprecedented labour and skills shortages all across the country.

It is time for visible action to rebuild our rutted and potholed roads, to use the resources of the state to build more homes, and to speed up the delivery of airport, rail and energy upgrades.

It is time to eliminate the significant gaps in mobile and digital connectivity that continue to strangle business productivity and UK competitiveness – the central theme of our ‘No More Not Spots’ campaign.

It is time to set a new mandate for HMRC and economic regulators to support, rather than pursue and punish, the small and medium-sized firms that can drive future growth, and focus their enforcement activities on the small number of companies pursuing questionable practices that are ultimately paid for by the rest.

After decades of delay and incremental change, it is time to tackle the huge costs and complexities of the UK tax system, which actively discourage investment, risk-taking, and the stronger export performance we all want to see.

And it is time for your government to deliver a far more explicit blueprint to support economic growth in all regions and nations – including greater local decision-making, away from the centralising instincts of Westminster and the devolved administrations.

Prime Minister, the many thousands of firms we collectively represent are clear: business as usual is not good enough at a time of significant uncertainty. A concerted drive to ‘fix the fundamentals’ would unlock business confidence and investment – and set the UK on a path to long-term growth, alongside a comprehensive settlement between the UK and EU.

Yours sincerely,



Adam Marshall
Director General

For and on behalf of the 53 accredited Chambers of Commerce in the United Kingdom