

£100,000 milestone on donations to STEM subjects to be celebrated at NEAA Awards Dinner

Interview of the Quarter: Decarbonising off-highway machinery: Why there is no single solution

NEAA to launch new Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group

## NEAA SUSTAINABILITY GROUP WRAPS UP WORKSHOP SERIES AND LAUNCHES ENERGY COST REDUCTION INITIATIVE

NEAA concludes its sustainability programme and moves forward with a new Energy Cost Reduction Group to help members cut costs and improve efficiency.



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Cover photo:  
NEAA Sustainability Group members

## CEO CORNER

As we move further into 2026, it is encouraging to see the momentum building across our network and the continued commitment from members to invest, innovate and collaborate, despite the ongoing pressures facing the automotive sector.



One of the highlights in the coming weeks will be the NEAA Annual Awards, which continue to grow in both scale and impact. This year marks an important milestone for the awards as we surpass £100,000 raised to date, a reflection of the collective support from our members and partners. The awards remain a powerful platform to recognise the people, projects and organisations driving excellence across the North East automotive ecosystem – from apprentices and graduates through to innovation, sustainability and outstanding contribution. I look forward to celebrating with members at the dinner on Friday 27th March at Ramside Hall Hotel in Durham.

Alongside celebrating success, our focus remains firmly on supporting businesses to prepare for the future. Programmes such as DRIVE35 and the Supplier Readiness and Transformation (SRT) Fund represent a significant opportunity for companies across the supply chain. These initiatives are designed to help businesses invest, scale and pivot towards emerging automotive technologies, particularly as the transition to electrification accelerates. The NEAA team is actively working with members to help them understand eligibility, shape strong applications and access the right funding routes, ensuring opportunities are not missed.

Cost pressure continues to be a consistent theme across the sector, which is why our Plant Manager Forum has played such a vital role in shaping practical, member-led solutions. Through recent discussions, it became clear that manufacturers are looking for targeted, actionable ideas that deliver real impact. This has directly informed our approach to cost-down support, including the development of the Automotive Driving Cost-Down solutions booklet. By enabling Plant Managers to engage directly with solution providers on areas most relevant to their operations, we are supporting more focused conversations and meaningful collaboration.

The NEAA continues to be at the forefront of the skills agenda, working with the North East Combined Authority and key stakeholders to develop the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP) 2026-2029. The NELSIP will identify the skills most critical to labour market needs and economic growth. The NELSIP provides a strategic mechanism for collaboration between employers, skills providers, and local stakeholders, providing a clear understanding of local skill needs, up to Level 8, and the actions required to address them.

Access to funding, improving operational efficiency and building long-term resilience are all closely linked. Whether it is through cost-down initiatives, capital investment support or shared best practice, our role as a cluster is to bring these elements together in a way that delivers real value to members.

As always, I would encourage you to engage with the NEAA team, attend forums and events, and make use of the support available. The strength of our network lies in its collaboration, and together we can continue to support the competitiveness and sustainability of the North East automotive sector.

**Paul Butler / CEO / NEAA**

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## £100,000 MILESTONE ON DONATIONS TO STEM SUBJECTS TO BE CELEBRATED AT NEAA AWARDS DINNER

The NEAA is approaching its 2026 Annual Awards dinner with the milestone achievement of over £100,000 in donations for STEM subjects at schools throughout the region.

Total donations this year will reach £18,000 bringing the grand total raised to £110,000.

The awards were launched in 2016 and, alongside them, NEAA members have generously donated funds to support education projects.

The highly anticipated evening shines a spotlight on the outstanding achievements of companies and individuals driving innovation, growth and excellence across the automotive industry – from dynamic SMEs and future leaders, to globally recognised organisations.

Paul Butler, CEO of the NEAA, said: "Thanks to the generosity of our award-winning businesses, the NEAA annual awards continue to make a lasting impact on STEM education across the region. Since the event's inception, an incredible £94,000 has been donated to support STEM initiatives and in 2026, we're proud to announce we'll surpass the £100,000 milestone.

"The donations have supported over 20 schools, some of which have been funded several times, and we have supported

many Primary Engineer Programmes as well as the Nissan Skills Foundation and Bring It On."

Schools that have received funding include Bill Quay School, Harton Academy, Wardley Primary School, Epinay Business and Enterprise School, Coatham Primary School, Portobello Primary School and Eaglescliffe School and Sixth Form College.

The annual awards recognise achievements in sustainability, innovation, business success and equality, diversity and inclusion, while individual awards highlight outstanding contributions to industry development.

The full list of Awards are the Geoff Ford MBE Apprentice Award, sponsored by Gateshead College, Graduate Award, Women Who Inspire in Automotive Award, sponsored by Marelli, Innovation Award, sponsored by Newcastle University, Sustainability Award, sponsored by Nissan, SME of the Year Award, sponsored by North East IOT and the Outstanding Contribution Award, sponsored by Sunderland City Council.

Meanwhile, a new category has been added this year. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Employer Award, sponsored by Hitachi Digital Services, celebrates organisations that lead the way in creating truly inclusive workplaces.

The NEAA looks forward to celebrating with members at the Awards Dinner on Friday, 27th March at Ramside Hall Hotel in Durham.



# SUSTAINABILITY GROUP COMPLETES FIVE-PART SERIES AND LAUNCHES ENERGY COST REDUCTION GROUP

The NEAA Sustainability Group has successfully completed its five-part programme of sustainability workshops, delivered by respected sustainability consultant Gareth Kane of Terra Infirma.

The final session was generously hosted by Unipres UK, and the series has equipped members with practical tools, shared insight, and strategic guidance across the most pressing areas of sustainability for the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors.

Gareth will be issuing a summary report on the final topic, which was Energy, providing an overview of best practice, trends, and actionable recommendations for members.

Over recent months, the group has explored key sustainability themes central to operational excellence, regulatory compliance, and long-term competitiveness:

#### Workshop 1 – The Business Case for Sustainability

Members examined how sustainability drives measurable commercial value, strengthens resilience, and unlocks opportunities for innovation and cost reduction.

#### Workshop 2 – Legislation

This session explored the evolving regulatory landscape, giving attendees clarity on emerging requirements and helping them anticipate the future compliance environment.

#### Workshop 3 – Waste Minimisation & the Circular Economy

Focusing on resource efficiency, members looked at practical, achievable steps to reduce waste, embed circular practices, and improve materials utilisation across operations.

#### Workshop 4 – Engagement / Green Jujitsu

Gareth introduced the “Green Jujitsu” approach, aligning sustainability with existing strengths and values within a business to build genuine engagement across the workforce.

#### Workshop 5 – Energy

The final workshop centred on energy efficiency and cost reduction, identifying where businesses can make immediate savings while improving long term energy performance.

#### Next Steps: Launch of the Energy Cost Reduction Group

With the workshop series now complete, attendees agreed to continue momentum by forming a new Energy Cost Reduction Group. This action focused group will meet quarterly and involve onsite visits to member facilities to observe best practice in real operating environments.

The group’s purpose is to support members in identifying proven opportunities for energy savings, sharing operational insight, and accelerating adoption of cost-effective solutions across the cluster.

Highly Marelli will host the inaugural visit in April, offering members the first opportunity to see practical energy saving initiatives firsthand. This is an evolution of the previous NEAA Energy Group which ran for several years and built an archive best practice across a multitude of areas. It represents a shift from the sustainability group’s knowledge gathering to hands on collaboration, ensuring that sustainability, and particularly energy efficiency, continues to be a shared priority across NEAA membership.

The Sustainability Group thanks all participating members and Gareth Kane for his expertise and continued support.



## FROM AWARDS TO ACTION: HOW NEAA MEMBERS ENRICHED LEARNING AT EPINAY SCHOOL

The NEAA, accompanied by member company Preston Technical, recently returned to Epinay School to see first-hand how funding from the 2025 NEAA Awards has been put into action.

Epinay School supports children and young people aged 4–19 with a wide range of special educational and complex needs, providing a nurturing environment where creative, practical, and confidence building activities play a vital role in learning and development. The visit offered an opportunity to witness how the school has enhanced its facilities thanks to the generosity of NEAA members.

During the 2025 NEAA Awards, Preston Technical was named winner of the SME Innovation Award. The company chose to donate its £1,000 prize directly to Epinay School to support its LEGO based learning interventions. The business went a step further by contributing an additional £1,000 of its own funds, demonstrating its commitment to giving back to the local community. Faltec Europe, a customer of Preston Technical and fellow NEAA member, added a further £1,000 to the initiative. Together, the collective £3,000 donation enabled the school to enhance its LEGO learning resources and create richer opportunities for hands on exploration.

LEGO based interventions play a particularly important role at Epinay School, helping pupils develop fine motor skills, problem

solving abilities, communication, teamwork, and emotional regulation. These structured sessions offer a safe and engaging way for students to build confidence while learning through play - an approach that is especially valuable for children with additional needs.

The return visit by the NEAA and Preston Technical provided a chance to see the tangible difference this investment has made. Staff at Epinay showcased how the new resources have enriched classroom activities and expanded the school's capability to deliver meaningful, skill building interventions. The team expressed their gratitude for the impact the donations have had on pupil engagement and the school's ability to offer innovative, hands on learning experiences tailored to student needs.

For the NEAA, the visit underlined the broader value of the annual awards programme - not only celebrating business excellence, but also contributing directly to the development of future talent and supporting inclusive learning opportunities within the region. For Preston Technical and Faltec Europe, the experience demonstrated the power of industry collaboration and community investment, reinforcing the strong relationships forged within the NEAA network.

As the sector continues to champion skills, innovation, and social impact, this initiative stands as a powerful example of how NEAA members are helping shape positive outcomes far beyond their own operations - supporting young people, strengthening communities, and inspiring the next generation.



# NEAA TO LAUNCH NEW EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION GROUP

**The NEAA is set to launch a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group to champion inclusive practice across the North East automotive sector.**

The group will bring together representatives from OEMs, tier one suppliers, SMEs, service providers and the public sector, ensuring a varied and representative mix of voices shaping its direction.

Led by the NEAA's Mark David and Laura Gage, the group's creation has been shaped by strong member feedback, insight from the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP), and wider sector research. This work highlights the urgency for change.

According to the Institute of the Motor Industry, the automotive workforce is ageing - with more than 47% of employees aged 45 or over - and fewer young people are entering the sector. Women make up just 18.6% of the workforce and only 10.4% of senior roles. Disabled workers represent 16.2% of employees but hold only 9.8% of senior positions. Meanwhile, although ethnic diversity has improved, non-White British employees account for 19.9% of the workforce but just 11.6% of senior leadership.

Positive strides are being made, particularly around ethnic representation, but gaps remain in technical roles, career progression and leadership pathways. Structural challenges

around entry routes, retention and advancement remain barriers for many under represented groups.

The NEAA EDI Group recognises that a diverse, inclusive and future ready workforce is vital for the sector to remain competitive, innovative and attractive to new talent, while better reflecting the communities it serves.

At its January kick off meeting, members aligned on the group's purpose, shared their own EDI journeys, and explored what members hope to gain from the group and how best to drive it forward.

With momentum building, the next steps will involve finalising group membership before reconvening to agree on and develop an EDI best practice benchmarking matrix. This matrix will highlight collective strengths, pinpoint opportunities for improvement, and enable structured best-practice sharing across the group, ultimately supporting the creation of valuable resources.

The NEAA invites companies across the cluster to get involved and help drive a more inclusive, resilient and future-focused workforce.

To find out more information on this working group, please contact Mark David, NEAA Skills Manager at: [mdavid@northeastautomotivealliance.com](mailto:mdavid@northeastautomotivealliance.com)



# NEAA TO SUPPORT AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR WITH COST DOWN SOLUTIONS

The NEAA is set to support the region's automotive sector in addressing one of its most pressing challenges: reducing operational costs while maintaining world class performance.

Through the Automotive Cost-Down Showcase, the NEAA is bringing together a wide range of efficiency boosting and cost reduction solutions designed to help manufacturers improve productivity, streamline operations and strengthen competitiveness. The initiative highlights innovations spanning process improvement, digital transformation, inventory management and wider operational support.

Rather than delivering a traditional showcase event, the NEAA has worked closely with its Plant Manager Forum to develop a more targeted and responsive approach. Solutions submitted through the official Expression of Interest (EOI) process have been reviewed and categorised into four key areas: Value Added, Non-Value Added, Plant Support and Other Solutions. These will be collated into a concise solutions booklet, complete with contact details, which will be shared directly with Plant Managers across the region.

This approach enables manufacturers to identify relevant ideas, technologies and techniques aligned to their specific areas of focus, allowing them to engage directly with solution providers on a case-by-case basis. By facilitating these targeted connections, the NEAA aims to encourage meaningful conversations, demonstrate real world results and open the

door to future collaboration across the supply chain.

The Plant Manager Forum believes this model will be more effective and responsive than a standalone showcase event, particularly at a time when manufacturers are facing increasing pressure around productivity, labour availability and rising operating costs. As a result, the themes reflected within the booklet focus on areas where businesses are seeking both immediate and long-term performance gains.

Paul Butler, Chief Executive Officer of the NEAA, commented: "This is about giving our members a platform to showcase the tangible, innovative solutions they can offer and accelerating the spread of best practice across the region. By connecting businesses with proven ideas and expertise, we can help drive meaningful cost down performance and long term resilience within the sector."

With supply chains continuing to navigate cost pressures alongside significant transformation opportunities, the NEAA's collaborative approach is set to play an important role in helping businesses strengthen margins, streamline operations and adopt innovative methods. By connecting ideas, expertise and technology across its network, the NEAA aims to accelerate cost down performance and support the long-term sustainability of the region's automotive sector.

The NEAA believes this initiative represents a valuable membership offering, reinforcing its commitment to supporting innovation, collaboration and competitiveness across the North East automotive community.



## STRENGTHENING SME RESILIENCE: INSIGHTS FROM THE LATEST ROUNDTABLE

The SME Resilience Group came together recently at Vantec Europe for a focused discussion on strengthening SME resilience across the North East.

With representatives from manufacturing, digital services, professional advisory firms and regional support organisations, the meeting provided a platform for exploring how small and medium sized enterprises can navigate an increasingly complex economic landscape.

The session was hosted by NEAA's Joe Routledge and chaired by Simon Merchant from Interdigitate. It featured two guest presentations, including an overview of funding and growth support from the North East Combined Authority (NECA), delivered by Paul Hughes, and a strategic deep dive into the opportunities emerging within the Defence sector, presented by Lesley Hawke of the North East Regional Defence and Security Cluster (NERDSC).

Highlights from the presentations included how the North East Growth Hub continues to act as a central access point for local firms seeking advice, funding routes, digital tools and signposting to expert programmes. With the region's business community facing rising operational costs, productivity pressures and increasing competition, access to structured guidance has never been more valuable.

The Made Smarter initiative designed specifically to help manufacturing and technology oriented SMEs embrace digital transformation was also covered, along with the Supplier Readiness and Transformation (SRT) Scheme. Set to open for applications in April 2026, the programme will provide grants ranging from £250,000 to £3 million to support projects that boost regional competitiveness.

The second presentation, delivered by Lesley Hawke, shifted the discussion to the defence sector, a market many SMEs overlook

but which offers significant potential for long term stability and high value contracts. With the UK Government committing to raise defence spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2027 and aiming for 3% by 2029, the sector is experiencing sustained expansion. Many SMEs already possess transferable capabilities, from engineering and digital services to cyber security, logistics and advanced manufacturing, which can be adapted to defence requirements. NERDSC's mission is to bridge that gap. The organisation supports more than 300 member businesses, helping them understand defence procurement processes, build necessary accreditations, improve governance and cyber standards, and access national and global supply chains.

At the roundtable, attendees engaged in a productive discussion around how the region's SMEs can best prepare for future opportunities, whether in defence, digitalisation or advanced manufacturing. The consensus was clear - collaboration, shared intelligence and accessible support networks will be vital.

To continue the momentum, the group has agreed to organise a dedicated Defence Sector Workshop. Led by Lesley Hawke, the session is planned for 8th April at 3T Training and will give SMEs a closer look at routes into defence markets, capability requirements and opportunities.

The SME Resilience meeting showcased the strength, diversity and ambition of the North East's SME community. With significant public sector support, growing regional clusters and new opportunities emerging across high value sectors, local businesses are well placed to build greater resilience and long term competitiveness. The NEAA sees the importance of bringing businesses and people together to share insights, explore challenges, and unlock new routes for innovation and growth.

To find out more information on this working group, please contact Joe Routledge, Membership Manager at: [jroutledge@northeastautomotivealliance.com](mailto:jroutledge@northeastautomotivealliance.com) | 07841 324 323



# INTRODUCING THE LATEST COMPANIES TO JOIN THE NEAA NETWORK

As the UK's largest automotive cluster, the NEAA represents over 260 member companies across the full automotive supply chain.

This quarter, the network continues to grow, welcoming a range of new organisations bringing fresh expertise, innovation and capability into the cluster.

#### City & Guilds

A global leader in skills development for nearly 150 years, City & Guilds partners with employers to deliver life changing learning and workforce capability worldwide.

#### CleanEarth Energy

The UK's leading developer of single turbines, windfarms and solar solutions, delivering CapEx free renewable energy projects to help businesses decarbonise and transform their energy mix.

#### Dengensha Europe Limited

The European sales and service arm of Japan's Dengensha TOA, supplying a comprehensive range of automatic nut and bolt feeders and resistance welding products.

#### Extensive Engineering Solutions Ltd

With over 30 years' experience, EES delivers precision engineering solutions across automotive, aerospace, battery plants and can manufacturing.

#### Innoval Technology Limited

A specialist consultancy providing technical support to aluminium and metals producers worldwide, working across rolling, extrusion, forging and finishing sectors.

#### Leuze Electronic Ltd

An international sensor expert with over 60 years of innovation in industrial automation, delivering cutting edge solutions for smart manufacturing.

#### Loop52

A circular economy specialist recycling plastics from end of life vehicles

into high quality, traceable recycled materials for OEMs and recyclers.

#### Northern Metal Recycling Ltd

The North East's leading metal recycler, offering bespoke metal management services including site and factory wide clearance.

#### Olympus Power Ltd

A renewable energy consultancy delivering end to end decarbonisation and energy solutions for commercial and industrial organisations.

#### Sanber Limited

A specialist laboratory build and refurbishment company, supporting projects from concept and design through to installation and ongoing servicing.

#### Staybridge Suites – Newcastle

Providing residential style accommodation with inclusive amenities, ideal for both short term and extended stays in the region.

#### Tbox Tech

Designers of automated inventory management systems, helping organisations replace manual processes and radically improve operational efficiency.

#### Team Valley Group

A creative print, web and marketing agency supporting brands with everything from business cards to bespoke websites and results driven campaigns.

#### Training and Development Resource

An apprenticeship provider delivering Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships across engineering, science, business and customer service.

#### Tyne Tees Security and FM

A nationwide provider of integrated security and facilities management services, delivering innovative, cost effective solutions with a strong customer focus.



## CELEBRATING APPRENTICESHIPS ACROSS THE AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR DURING NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

National Apprenticeship Week 2026 took place during the week commencing 9th February, and it was fantastic to see the automotive sector unite in celebrating the achievements and potential of its growing apprentice workforce.

This year's activity coincided with new data showing a significant surge in automotive apprenticeships across the UK, demonstrating the sector's commitment to developing the next generation of talent.

According to new survey results released by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), UK automotive apprenticeships have increased dramatically over the past year. The number of apprentices in the sector rose by 33%, with 1,699 apprenticeship starts recorded in the last academic year. A further 1,824 apprenticeship courses were delivered to upskill existing employees, demonstrating the sector's dual focus on attracting new talent and supporting workforce progression.

The SMMT survey also highlights that demand for new skills is accelerating. By 2035, 61% of existing automotive roles are expected to require new capabilities, particularly in areas such as high-voltage systems, battery technology, digital diagnostics, coding, data analysis, and AI. Significant investment, supported by government's £4bn DRIVE35 programme and over £1bn in industry funding announced last year is shaping the transition to a zero-emission future and driving the need for a skilled and adaptable workforce.

The NEAA played an active role throughout National Apprenticeship Week, participating in and supporting a range of activities that champion apprentices across the region.

Some of the NEAA team attended the Nissan apprenticeship recruitment event, engaging with current apprentices, Nissan colleagues, and potential applicants. Member company Unipres also took part, using the event to actively promote its upcoming 2026 apprenticeship opportunities. Sunderland College was present as Nissan's lead training provider, underscoring the strong partnership between industry and local education providers.

The Skilled Innovation Programme plays a vital role in supporting young people not currently in employment, education, or training (NEET). During the week, NEAA Skills Manager Mark David delivered mock interviews to NEET participants preparing for apprenticeships or full-time employment, helping build confidence, interview readiness, and essential employability skills.

NEAA CEO Paul Butler represented the region at the SMMT National Apprenticeship Week reception in London, where several apprentices shared their experiences with industry leaders and policymakers. Paul later contributed to a sector roundtable hosted by the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network, joining employers and skills leaders to discuss the importance of apprenticeships in addressing skills shortages and supporting future workforce needs.

The renewed focus on apprenticeships nationally aligns strongly with NEAA's vision for the sector. As new technologies, electrification, and digitalisation continue to reshape the industry, apprenticeships provide vital pathways for young people and career-changers to access high-quality training and well-paid technical roles.

The NEAA remains committed to supporting employers in building the future talent pipeline. Through advocacy, programme support and industry-education partnerships, the NEAA is helping ensure that the North East is ready for the opportunities created by the automotive sector's transformation.



# HUMAN SKILLS FOR A HIGH TECH FUTURE: DALE CARNEGIE UK EXPANDS IN THE NORTH EAST

For more than a century, Dale Carnegie has been synonymous with unlocking human potential. Founded by the legendary Dale Carnegie, author of the global bestseller *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, the organisation has grown into one of the world's most recognised names in professional development.

Today, Dale Carnegie Training operates in over 90 countries and delivers training in more than 30 languages, supporting individuals and organisations to build confidence, strengthen communication, and lead with influence and impact.

Now, the organisation is deepening its presence in the North East, bringing its global heritage together with a growing network of regional partnerships. While the organisation's international credentials are well established, its roots in the region are already strong, proudly working with several leading North East employers, including Vertu Motors, Caterpillar, and Atom Bank - organisations that recognise the strategic importance of developing people in a rapidly changing world. The organisation also has extensive experience in the motor industry, working nationally with major organisations including Vertu Motors and Cox Automotive.

This expansion comes at a pivotal moment for the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors. As technology accelerates and AI reshapes the workplace, the demand for human skills - communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence, resilience and leadership has never been greater. The organisation believes these capabilities are not just 'nice to have'; rather, they are the competitive edge that will define the next era of business success.

That belief has been central to a series of recent initiatives delivered in the region. Earlier this year, Dale Carnegie's Kelsey Greenaway spoke at a NEEN event, exploring 'The Soft Skills Revolution' and how organisations can futureproof their workforce by investing in the human side of performance. The session resonated strongly with attendees, many of whom are navigating the dual challenge of digital transformation and talent retention.

Building on that momentum, Dale Carnegie partnered with Atom Bank to host Unmute: Empowering Female Talent to Speak Up, a development workshop held at the bank's new Pattern Shop offices in Newcastle. Around 100 women from across the region, including many from Atom Bank itself, came together for a powerful session focused on confidence, communication, and amplifying female voices in the workplace.

For Managing Director Nathan McNee, the decision to invest further in the region is both strategic and deeply aligned with the organisation's mission. "We're excited to grow our presence in such a vibrant region," he says. "The North East is home to innovative, forward thinking organisations that understand the value of their people. As industries evolve, human skills will be the differentiator, and we're committed to helping businesses here unlock that potential."

Looking ahead, the Dale Carnegie team plans to expand its presence in the region by strengthening partnerships and creating more opportunities for organisations and individuals at all levels to build the confidence and capability needed to thrive.

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## DECARBONISING OFF-HIGHWAY MACHINERY: WHY THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION

By Viki Bell, Chief Executive, CEA  
(Construction Equipment Association)

Decarbonisation in construction equipment is often framed as a straight line from diesel to electric. In reality, off-highway machinery sits in a very different world from cars and vans. These machines work in remote locations, operate under heavy load and are expected to run for long hours in unpredictable conditions. Energy, in this context, is not just a fuel choice. It is an operational constraint.

What is becoming clear across the sector is that there will be no single answer. Battery-electric machines are expanding, particularly in smaller classes. Hybrid systems offer efficiency gains where full electrification is impractical. Renewable fuels provide an immediate route to carbon reduction in existing fleets. Hydrogen, whether through fuel cells or internal combustion, is being actively developed but brings new challenges around infrastructure, regulation and safety. Each pathway has a place. None works everywhere.

For operators, the question is not simply what sits under the

bonnet. It is whether the site can support the machine. Grid capacity, charging time, battery logistics, hydrogen supply and on-site power management increasingly determine what can be deployed. In some locations, fixed infrastructure can work. In others, mobile charging solutions are emerging as a practical alternative, particularly for larger machines and remote sites. Several manufacturers and technology providers are already exploring this space, recognising that energy needs to move with the machine if low-carbon equipment is to work in the real world.

Cost adds another layer of complexity. Off-highway equipment has wide variation in duty cycles and utilisation. Total cost of ownership depends on application, energy pricing, maintenance, machine life and residual values. Simplistic comparisons between diesel and electric models can be misleading. What works in landscaping may not work in heavy earthmoving. For many users, the business case only becomes viable when incentives, infrastructure and operational change align.

This is why decarbonisation in our sector is a systems challenge. Progress depends on coordination between manufacturers,



hire companies, contractors, utilities, finance providers and government. Regulation plays a central role. Emissions rules, battery legislation, data requirements and safety standards all shape what can be brought to market and how quickly.

In October 2025, the CEA, in partnership with JCB, hosted the first industry workshop focused specifically on the barriers to hydrogen-fuelled earth-moving machinery. OEMs, regulators and hydrogen specialists came together to examine how current non-road machinery standards and refuelling arrangements need to evolve if hydrogen is to move from prototype to commercial reality. The session was practical, technical and frank. It underlined two things: the potential is real, and so are the obstacles. It also marked the start of a wider programme of work, with further technology-focused sessions planned for 2026.

That is the CEA's role in this transition: to bring the industry together, surface real-world constraints and help shape workable frameworks. Introducing new energy carriers onto machines creates hazards that do not exist today. Safety requirements must evolve alongside innovation, but they must remain practical for manufacturers of all sizes.

The CEA's board now includes Chris Sleight, Global Managing Director of Off-Highway Research, bringing independent market intelligence into industry discussion, and Phil Battle, Divisional Director at Volvo CE – Product & Services at SMT GB. Phil now leads the Association's ESG and Environmental Sustainability portfolio, strengthening both dealer representation and the CEA's focus on supporting the sector's transition to a low-carbon future.

At the 2025 Members' Forum, data from Off-Highway Research and KGP Powertrain Intelligence showed that electric machinery's share of new production is expected to

grow only modestly through to 2030, with the majority of new units still powered by Stage V-equivalent engines. Internal combustion and hybrid solutions will therefore remain central to decarbonisation pathways for many years.

The opportunity is significant. UK companies are strong in safety systems, powertrain integration, machine control and specialist engineering. Construction equipment underpins infrastructure, energy transition and productivity across the economy. But progress will not come from mandates alone.

Decarbonisation in off-highway machinery will be incremental, uneven and application-specific. The CEA's position is clear: we support all viable fuels and technologies. Progress depends on enabling multiple pathways, removing friction and building the conditions in which low-carbon solutions can work on real sites. That is what the transition actually looks like.



**CONSTRUCTION  
EQUIPMENT  
ASSOCIATION**



## GRANT FUNDING SUPPORT FOR KASAI UK TO DELIVER GREEN AGENDA

Clive Owen LLP collaborates with Kasai UK to secure grant funding support towards cutting-edge decarbonisation project at its Washington-based production facility.

### Background

Kasai UK, a subsidiary of Japanese company, Kasai Kogyo Co. Ltd, is a tier 1 automotive interior trim supplier, headquartered in Washington. Kasai were looking to deploy a novel solvent free adhesive solution into their manufacturing process but needed some external funding support to ensure the business case was viable.

Clive Owen LLP, a leading independent accountancy firm in the North East and Yorkshire, was appointed by Kasai UK to prepare its application for a six-figure grant funding project that would support its pledge to cut emissions at its Sunderland site by 30 per cent by 2030.

The grant formed part of the Business Growth Fund, delivered by UMi and supported by Sunderland City Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

### Approach and Solution

Carl Wright, Grants Advisory Partner at Clive Owen LLP, and his team worked closely with Kasai's senior team including Managing Director Jill Usher and Finance Manager Anne Marie Coyle, to successfully prepare a grant application on behalf of Kasai UK. This involved supporting Kasai to develop the business case for the project and then presenting it in the grant application format, with the team completing and submitting the process to a timetable agreed with the clients.

The Clive Owen LLP team then supported Kasai's management team in handling queries raised by the UMi as part of the due diligence process, ultimately securing a grant of £100,000.

The assignment was of particular relevance and interest to Carl and

the wider firm, given its standing as an ICAEW Climate Champion, with Carl leading on the firm's ESG and sustainability initiatives.

To date, Clive Owen LLP has helped over 300 clients secure £350m+ in grant funding including many millions for the automotive sector for OEMs and throughout the supply chain.

### Outcome and Advantage

- The six-figure funding will enable the interior trim specialist to switch from carbon-intensive adhesives to a solvent-free, water-based alternative.
- It is estimated this will reduce carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 100 to 120 tonnes each year.
- Crucially, the project will support Kasai UK's pledge to cut emissions at its site by 30 per cent by 2030.

### Testimonials

"We are delighted to have played a role in supporting Kasai UK with its transition from the use of carbon-heavy adhesives to a solvent-free, water-based alternative. As a regional firm, it was a pleasure to be involved in such an exciting and transformative investment within the North East."

*Carl Wright / Grants Advisory Partner / Clive Owen LLP*

"This investment marks a major milestone in our ambitious bid to reduce emissions at our Sunderland plant. To achieve this, we have had to invest significantly as a business, including the installation of new equipment and technology, so it is very much an investment into the future of the plant. It will also have a major impact on the local environment as it'll reduce noise pollution as well as Co2.

"We are grateful to Carl and his team for supporting Kasai UK throughout the entire grant application process, and were delighted to have secured this significant funding that will greatly support our emissions pledge."

*Jill Usher / Managing Director / Kasai UK*

## AR POWER ACHIEVES NATIONALLY RECOGNISED INDUSTRY ACCREDITATIONS

AR Power is proud to announce that they have successfully achieved Achilles Silver Plus Supplier accreditation and SafeContractor recertification, including accreditation under the Principal Designer (PD) and Principal Contractor (PC) criteria within the assessment.

This milestone reflects their continued commitment to the highest standards of health and safety, compliance and professional excellence across all areas of operations.

The schemes are leading third-party accreditations that rigorously assesses businesses on their health and safety policies, procedures and overall risk management systems. Achieving certification demonstrates that AR Power meets nationally recognised standards and operates in full alignment with current legislation and industry best practice.

Importantly, the SafeContractor accreditation extends beyond core contractor requirements. The inclusion of Principal Designer and Principal Contractor criteria within the SafeContractor assessment further validates the company's capability to manage and coordinate health and safety responsibilities at every stage of a project lifecycle.

Under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (CDM), Principal Designers and Principal Contractors carry significant legal duties to plan, manage, monitor and



coordinate health and safety throughout construction projects. Successfully meeting these additional criteria confirms that AR Power has the systems, competence and leadership in place to fulfil those roles responsibly and effectively.

For their clients and partners, this provides additional assurance that projects delivered are underpinned by robust governance, clear risk management processes and a proactive safety culture.

Commenting on the successful accreditations, Chris Balmer, Operations Director at AR Power, said, "Safety is not simply a compliance requirement, it is embedded within our operations. From initial design and planning through to installation and project completion, we prioritise the wellbeing of our employees, clients, subcontractors and the wider public.

Successfully passing the assessments demonstrates not only that our systems are comprehensive but that they are actively implemented and maintained.'

## PORT OF TYNE APPOINTS DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION

The Port of Tyne has announced the appointment of Elaine Scott as its new Director of Innovation. Elaine will lead the Port's sustainable innovation agenda and run the National Maritime Innovation Hub.

The Port of Tyne has announced the appointment of Elaine Scott as its new Director of Innovation. Following her promotion from Innovation Partnerships Manager, Elaine will lead the Port's sustainable innovation agenda and run the National Maritime Innovation Hub.

Supported by a dedicated team, she will drive forward a range of programmes including Venture Connect, alongside international collaboration initiatives such as the Ports Innovation Partnership. Elaine brings over twenty five years' experience across economic development and regeneration, with a strong focus on technology-enabled innovation and sustainability-led initiatives.

Before joining the Port of Tyne, Elaine was Director at Space North East England based at NETPark, the region's first science park. She is currently completing a Doctorate in Business Administration at Durham University, with research focused on innovation ecosystems for emerging sectors.



Matt Beeton, Chief Executive Officer at the Port of Tyne, said: "We're delighted that someone of Elaine's calibre is taking the National Maritime Innovation Hub forward into its next phase of development. Her passion for innovation and clear understanding of how strong ecosystems drive growth will be invaluable as we continue to position the Port and the Hub at the forefront of sustainable innovation."

Elaine Scott commented: "I'm thrilled to take on this role and lead the National Maritime Innovation Hub. This is an exciting time for the maritime sector, as technologies that improve productivity and support sustainability are rapidly moving from concept to application. I look forward to driving innovation as we work towards the Port of Tyne becoming the UK's first Smart Port."

## ECOVADIS PLATINUM RATING FOR PRO-AD

For Pro-Ad, sustainability is woven into every aspect of the business — from the way their products are created to how the company works with and supports its partners.

So, we're delighted to announce that Pro-Ad has been awarded the EcoVadis Platinum rating, placing us in the top 1% of companies globally. This milestone reflects our continued dedication to sustainability, ethical business practices and making a positive impact across our industry and communities.

The EcoVadis assessment considers a company's environmental impact, its labour and human rights record and its overall ethics, as well as the sustainability of its procurement. The purpose of the ratings is to provide existing and potential partners with the confidence of a high level of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practice.

Loren Nardini, Pro-Ad's Commercial Director, commented: "Our company is dedicated to delivering high-quality promotional merchandise while minimising our environmental impact, and therefore we are delighted to have achieved an EcoVadis Platinum rating."

"For our clients, the rating provides added confidence that they're working with a partner committed to responsible sourcing, strong governance and continuous improvement – helping to reduce supply chain risk and support ESG requirements.



"At Pro Ad, caring is at the top of our list of values. This extends to our clients, as well as community projects that benefit others. As a promotional products specialist, we go the extra mile to find solutions that create positive outcomes for everyone involved.

"Our drive to help inform better product choices goes beyond the pursuit of profit. We believe that, to realise an ongoing contribution to our culture, economy and community, we must operate responsibly within our environment."

The company is particularly focused on conserving natural resources and reducing both waste and pollution. In doing so, Pro-Ad is continually looking to reduce carbon emissions, embrace the values of a circular economy and integrate these values into everyday business decisions. To help clients put sustainability into practice, Pro-Ad has also launched two dedicated product hubs – one focusing on eco product solutions, the other on responsibly-sourced, UK-manufactured products.

[www.proad.co.uk](http://www.proad.co.uk)

## OPTIMAS INTERNATIONAL ANNOUNCES EXCITING OWNERSHIP TRANSITION



Optimas International, a leading global provider of integrated supply chain solutions and engineering fasteners, has announced that it has been acquired by leading European private equity firm, Exponent.

This strategic move marks a significant milestone in the Company's evolution and highlights the growing success of Optimas International as a standalone entity.

Optimas International is well positioned to build on its achievements with the support of Exponent, leveraging Exponent's strong track record of executing corporate carve-outs and successfully scaling businesses. The partnership will focus on supporting management to deliver Optimas International's long-term strategy and drive the next phase of global growth. This investment underscores the strength of Optimas International's long-term strategic vision, robust performance, and dedication to delivering value to its customers worldwide.

The Company's journey towards independence began in

2019 with the decision to regionalise operations into Americas and International divisions. This operating model has enabled Optimas International to thrive, positioning it as a strong, independent business ready to seize new opportunities under Exponent's guidance.

"The decision to fully transition Optimas International to a standalone business reflects our success and positions us for a future of enhanced innovation, customer service, and sustainable growth," said Mike Tuffy, CEO of Optimas International. "We are delighted to have the support of Exponent, whose expertise and resources will help us achieve our ambitious goals."

The transaction, expected to close by the end of Q2 2026, will not affect the day-to-day operations of Optimas International. The company's leadership team, led by CEO Mike Tuffy, along with its dedicated employees, will remain in place to ensure a seamless transition and uninterrupted service for customers.

## RARUK AUTOMATION PARTNERS WITH NORD MODULES

UK automation distributor RARUK Automation has announced a new partnership with Danish company Nord Modules. This collaboration will enable RARUK Automation to offer Nord Modules' complementary autonomous mobile robot (AMR) top modules to its UK customers.

Known for supplying collaborative and mobile robots, RARUK Automation has a longstanding partnership with Teradyne Robotics' company Mobile Industrial Robots and has achieved MiR Gold Partner status due to sales achievements in the UK. Nord Modules offers AMR top modules designed specifically for the Mobile Industrial Robots range, providing additional functionality such as lifting mechanisms, roller conveyors, carts and other accessories.

Nord Modules products are designed to optimise space utilisation and offer modular flexibility for companies looking to deploy AMRs. With Nord Modules, the transportation of totes or pallets between conveyors, racks and other pick-up/ drop-off zones is seamlessly accurate. The full range consists of Quick Movers, Lifts and Conveyors, which come with the option of adding integrated blue light and barcode scanners, as well as other accessories.

The new collaboration between RARUK Automation and Nord Modules reflects a shared focus on making automation simple, scalable and flexible for real-world manufacturing applications. When investing in an AMR solution, customers will gain faster deployment and smooth integration between mobile robots and



existing factory infrastructure by choosing Nord Modules' proven, standardised top module equipment.

Ross Lacy, Sales Director, RARUK Automation, said: "Our partnership with Nord Modules strengthens our commitment to delivering simple, scalable and fully integrated AMR solutions to UK manufacturers. By combining Nord Modules' proven top modules with our expertise in Mobile Industrial Robots, we will be able to bring immediate, tangible value to our AMR customers."

Frank Ib, CSO, Nord Modules, added: "We are very excited to partner with RARUK Automation, who are not only the sole MiR distributor in the UK but also hold MiR Gold Partner status. The UK is a high-priority market for Nord Modules, and RARUK Automation's deep expertise in MiR and automation makes them an ideal partner for bringing our solutions to this market. With our top modules known for their superior quality and durability, and RARUK Automation's strong local presence and technical expertise, we are confident this partnership will create real value for UK customers."

## GLOBAL DECAL MANUFACTURER CELEBRATES 25 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Gate 7, a specialist in decal manufacturing and high-performance print solutions, is marking 25 years in business through celebrating a number of significant milestones: opening a manufacturing facility in India; investing in cutting-edge digital print technology and growing its headcount worldwide.

Founded in Gateshead, UK in 2000 by Keith Wickham, the company quickly established itself as a leader in designing and manufacturing decals for vehicles, plant and machinery with a presence in international markets. This led to it being awarded a Queen's Award for International Trade in 2005 and 2018. With further recognition of its achievements being received in 2017, when the company's then Managing Director, Kate Medcalf, was awarded an MBE for export and overseas investment.

To further cement its global reach the company invested in a U.S. headquarters and expansion of its warehouse facilities at its UK base. Most recently, through the opening of its 15,000 sq ft manufacturing facility in Pune, India the company is acting on its growth ambitions to build partnership with leading players in the construction industry as well as scaling up operations for the Indian



market and pursuing export opportunities in Southeast Asia. The facility will act as a gateway for Gate 7 to connect with customers across the globe.

The company, which initially focused on the Off Highway market, later expanded into the Agriculture, Construction, Industrial and Rental markets.

Growing from just six employees in the UK this year, the company now employs 120 staff worldwide. At its Pune facility, it currently employs 40 staff and plans to have a further 30 in the next 12 months. The company's high-performance print solutions help businesses to enhance safety, market their brands and support equipment aesthetics. The company is committed to compliance, quality and the environment. Its materials are tested to relevant ANSI, ASTM and it holds ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.

## CLIVE OWEN LLP STRENGTHENS SPECIALIST TAX OFFERING SERVICE

One of the North's leading independent accountancy firms is expanding its service lines further after welcoming a VAT Partner.

Clive Owen LLP, which has offices in Darlington, York, Durham, Middlesbrough and Newcastle, has announced the appointment of experienced tax professional Hydeam Sulton, who will lead the firm's VAT and indirect tax offering.

Hydeam brings a wealth of experience to the regional practice, gained over several years at HMRC, where he was latterly Head of Tax Professionalism, as well as in practice at large independent firms and the Big Four, and in industry leading VAT across the EU for a FTSE 100 company.

He joins Clive Owen LLP from a national independent firm, where he was a Tax Partner and Head of VAT & Indirect Tax, as well as its Lead Office Partner in Newcastle.

Over the course of his career, he has helped clients navigate the complexities of VAT and helped them save/recover millions of pounds in VAT, deal with HMRC checks and investigation and manage VAT risks.

Specialising in VAT and indirect tax, Hydeam will support clients with successfully managing and optimising their VAT position. Now in post at Clive Owen LLP, he also plans to grow the VAT and indirect tax



provision at the firm, creating further job opportunities in the future.

Commenting on his appointment, Hydeam Sulton, VAT Partner at Clive Owen LLP, said: "I am delighted to join Clive Owen LLP at such an exciting time of sustained, organic growth.

"The firm's values really resonate with my own experience and approach to client service, particularly its focus on people. It has a strong emphasis on delivering a personal, client-focused service that you don't always see in larger practices, while also offering a depth and quality that not all independent firms can match.

"Clive Owen LLP's commitment to its people at all levels was also a key factor for me, demonstrated through its recognition as a Great Place To Work certified organisation, highlighting its dedication to fostering an outstanding experience and inclusive culture for colleagues."

## PMT (GB) LTD LAUNCH THEIR NEW HIGH SENSITIVITY PARTICLE COUNTER

PMT (GB) Ltd is launching the A030 0.1µm Portable Particle Counter. Setting a new standard for high-sensitivity cleanroom monitoring.

Manufactured by MicronView Limited, a global leader in real-time sterile environment monitoring, PMT (GB) Ltd is proud to announce the release of its latest innovation, the A030 0.1µm Airborne Particle Counter. Engineered for the most demanding environments, the A030 provides unprecedented sensitivity, detecting particles as small as 100nm to meet the rigorous demands of ISO Class 1 and Class 2 cleanrooms.

As semiconductor, pharmaceutical, and high-tech manufacturing processes become increasingly sensitive to contamination, the A030 offers a robust, portable solution for monitoring air quality and compressed gases.

The A030 features a high-performance 28.3 LPM flow rate. Key technical highlights include:

- Six Size Channels: Simultaneous monitoring of 0.1µm, 0.2µm, 0.3µm, 0.5µm, 1.0µm, and 5.0µm particles.
- True Portability: Weighing just 7 kg the device supports



- battery-powered operation for several hours of cordless monitoring (runtime dependent on operating settings).
- Ultra-Long Life Laser: Equipped with a laser diode backed by a 10-year warranty, ensuring consistent wavelength stability and long-term reliability.
- Superior Flow Control: A built-in mass flow meter and PID controller maintain a ±3% flow rate accuracy, even in fluctuating conditions.

Designed for the modern digital laboratory, the A030 is fully compliant with FDA 21 CFR Part 11 and offers massive storage and seamless reporting. For more information on the product, contact PMT (GB) Ltd on [info@pmtgb.com](mailto:info@pmtgb.com)

## Olympus Power

### Driving decarbonisation across the automotive sector

Olympus Power is a UK renewable energy consultancy supporting commercial and industrial organisations to take control of their energy infrastructure, reduce exposure to volatile energy markets and improve long-term operational resilience. With more than 40 years of experience and installations that have delivered over one million tonnes of CO2 savings, the company helps automotive businesses protect margins, secure uptime and future-proof critical sites.

Working extensively across the automotive ecosystem, Olympus Power delivers end-to-end energy infrastructure projects from strategic energy assessments and system design through to delivery and flexible financing. Its technology-agnostic approach enables organisations to deploy the most effective mix of on-site generation, battery storage, EV charging infrastructure and intelligent energy management, aligned to operational demand and business priorities.

The impact of these projects is already being realised across UK manufacturing and dealership networks. A 530 kW rooftop solar installation for Lawrence David provides greater control over on-site power supply, delivers approximately 350 tonnes of annual CO2 savings and reduces energy bills by up to 30 percent. At Sertec, a 1 MW system significantly strengthens site resilience, cutting electricity costs by as much as 66 percent while reducing reliance on grid energy during peak periods.

Olympus Power has also completed a multi-site energy infrastructure rollout for Cambria Automobiles, installing



approximately 1.3 MW of rooftop solar across 12 dealership locations. The programme delivers consistent energy-cost reductions of up to 35 percent while supporting long-term site resilience and scalability as energy demands evolve.

To support organisations planning future-ready energy infrastructure, Olympus Power offers a free energy consultation assessing site suitability, load profiles, operational risk and potential cost savings. This enables automotive businesses to make confident, data-driven investment decisions that strengthen energy security, protect uptime and support sustainable growth.

#### Get in touch:

Tel: 0113 868 9993

[www.olympuspower.co.uk](http://www.olympuspower.co.uk)



**OLYMPUS POWER**  
ZERO CARBON TOGETHER

## Innoval Technology

Innoval delivers technology, innovation and sustainability solutions to many of the world's leading producers and users of aluminium and other critical materials.

Innoval Technology was formed in 2003 by people from Alcan's Banbury Technical Centre. For seven decades 'Banbury Laboratories', as it was known, was responsible for some of the most significant technological developments in aluminium, including the leading automotive sheet technology used by today's car manufacturers.

We have been building on our heritage and this, combined with our new and growing expertise, enables us to meet the challenges of today's aluminium industry.

Since 2012 we've been owned by Italian equipment manufacturer, Danieli. During 2024 the company moved into a state-of-the-art facility within the new Danieli UK HQ building on the Advanced Manufacturing Park in South Yorkshire. From this location the Innoval team provides industry leading technical resources to support materials design and development, sustainability, knowledge transfer and advanced manufacturing process activities. We still provide the same confidential, independent service as we've always done, but now we have the support of a multinational company behind us.



The team of expert consultants come from a wide range of technical disciplines with many decades of real-world experience between them. With such a unique amount of talent and expertise under one roof, Innoval is ideally placed to deliver sustainable aluminium solutions to its clients.

#### For more information please contact:

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Tel: 01709 724300

[www.innovaltec.com](http://www.innovaltec.com)

**INNOVAL**

## Team Valley Group

### Driving marketing solutions that deliver measurable growth

Established 20 years ago and based on the Team Valley in Gateshead, we are a 28-people strong specialist branding, web, print and marketing agency delivering commercially focused solutions for ambitious businesses across the North East and beyond. As a member of the North East Automotive Association, we are excited to support the region's thriving automotive sector with joined-up strategies that drive measurable growth.

We don't see marketing as a bolt-on service. We see it as a business tool. Our role is to ensure your brand communicates clearly and confidently, your website actively supports revenue generation, and your marketing activity aligns directly with your commercial objectives.

We see your website as more than a "shop window". Our digital solution is built around meaningful conversations designed to deliver bespoke solutions, unique to your business's needs. Whether that is transforming your website into an efficient, data-driven sales tool or delivering a brochure website designed to showcase your products. We can help automotive businesses improve website performance on search engines, refine user journeys, integrate CRM and automation systems, enhance lead qualification processes, and capture data from visitors.

Alongside web development, we provide strategic marketing support including social media management, email marketing, paid advertising and content creation. We can help amplify your business's voice across on and offline channels, always advising



on what is right for your business and market position with your business objectives at the forefront of every strategy.

Our in-house print capability ensures brand consistency across every touchpoint, from digital platforms to physical materials. We create and supply everything from stationary, to signage, exhibition banners to vehicle graphics.

What sets us apart is our joined-up approach. Branding, web, marketing and print working together, under one roof, to create cohesive, commercially driven solutions that generate real results.

#### For more information, please contact:

Vikki McIsaac | Marketing Director  
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Tel: 07727 634019  
[www.teamvalleygroup.co.uk](http://www.teamvalleygroup.co.uk)



## Refreshment Systems Limited

### Vending firm fuels growth in Sunderland following strategic acquisition

A North East vending business is entering a new phase of expansion after being acquired by national operator Refreshment Systems Limited (RSL) earlier this year.

Bradford-based RSL strengthened its regional presence in May with the purchase of Sunderland's North East Vending, securing local jobs and laying the foundations for significant growth. The family-run company has retained all existing employees and has since expanded its Sunderland workforce to 12 full-time team members, operating from its base on Villiers Street in Sunnyside.

The acquisition forms part of RSL's wider national growth strategy, with the business targeting a 25 per cent increase in turnover over the next 12 months. Known for supplying innovative vending and coffee solutions to organisations across the UK, RSL combines advanced digital technology with a strong commitment to sustainability. Its machines feature real-time stock management systems, while long-standing carbon offsetting initiatives ensure its vending solutions are carbon neutral.

Rhiannon Owens, Business Development Manager at RSL, who joined the company to accelerate growth across the North East, said the move signals strong ambition for the region. She highlighted the company's investment in people, equipment and emerging technologies, as well as its environmental focus, as key



drivers behind its success. RSL now aims to expand its customer base from Northumberland down to Northallerton, building on its established national reputation from its Sunderland base.

With more than 2,000 machines nationwide, RSL serves sectors including healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality and local government. Existing clients include Marelli, Nifco, Biffa, Sunderland Hospital and South Tyneside Council. Managing Director Steve May said the company is proud to continue North East Vending's legacy while driving innovation and creating new opportunities across the region and beyond.

#### For more information please contact:

Email: [info@refreshmentsystems.co.uk](mailto:info@refreshmentsystems.co.uk)  
Tel: 0800 169 3686  
[www.refreshmentsystems.co.uk](http://www.refreshmentsystems.co.uk)



# Leuze

## Prepared for the car of the future

The market for alternative drives is growing rapidly. An increasing number of models and equipment options require even more flexible production and an extensive quality management system. Our goal, as a partner for our customers, is to ensure your success in an industry that is ever evolving. The automotive industry in particular currently faces great challenges.

Based on years of industry knowledge, we orient our product range toward current and future application solutions. Predictive maintenance and diagnostic possibilities for Industry 4.0 are as much in focus as high system availability and smooth production processes.

### Flexible manufacturing and e-mobility

The production processes in all areas of automotive industry are becoming increasingly flexible requiring scalable manufacturing concepts that can be adapted to production capacities. The trend towards emission-free vehicles is also changing manufacturing processes with the complexity and the number of components in the powertrain decreasing and the production of batteries and battery packs growing.

### Maximum system availability and certified quality standards

Our sensors support you in all areas of automation, quality assurance, traceability and machine safety. They stand out for their easy handling during commissioning and replacement. With sophisticated functions, intelligent devices ensure smooth



production and material provision. The long-term quality as well as the availability of the sensors are guaranteed. Our products thereby help to ensure and maintain the high availability of the system.

### Safety without compromise

The advance of automation gives rise to new requirements with regard to the safety of persons and machines. Through our specific application know-how and more than 30 years of experience in machine safety, we offer unique insight into safety-related applications. With our safety product range consisting of high-quality products, intelligent systems as well as competent technical services, we provide you with targeted answers.

For more information please visit:

[www.leuze.com](http://www.leuze.com)

# Leuze

# Tbox Tech

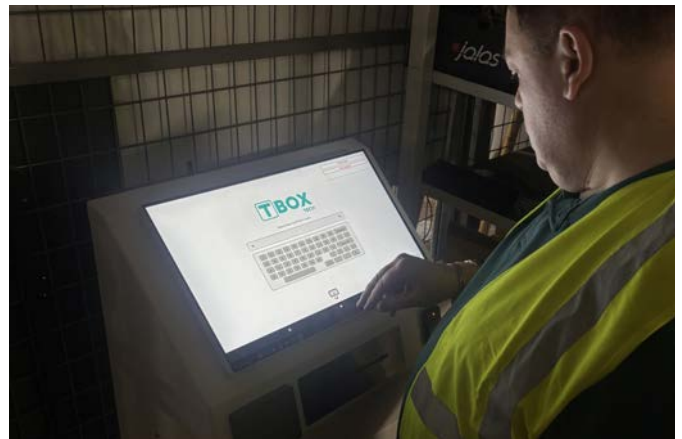
## Inventory Excellence. Powered by RFID.

Tbox Tech is a UK-based, family-owned technology business specialising in automated, point-of-use inventory control for automotive, Tier 1, and manufacturing environments. Founded in 2013 and based in Newton Aycliffe, Tbox Tech has spent over a decade delivering proven RFID-driven solutions to some of the most demanding industrial operations.

The company designs and manufactures patented RFID inventory systems that automate the control, tracking, and replenishment of critical consumables directly at the point of use. Tbox Tech's technology is built to operate reliably in high-throughput production settings, where accuracy, accountability, and uptime are essential.

Its flagship solutions include the patented RFID ProPod Portal and RFID Kiosk, which provide automated tracking of inventory movement, alongside the patented ProVyda industrial vending units, which securely dispense controlled items while capturing real-time usage data. Together, these systems eliminate manual stock checks, reduce human error, and provide full visibility of consumption across production lines and facilities.

Tbox Tech's solutions are widely deployed across automotive Tier 1 suppliers and manufacturing organisations, where they help automate inventory processes, cut waste, and reduce overstocking and stock-outs. By ensuring the right parts are



available at the right time, customers improve productivity, minimise downtime, and significantly lower operating costs.

With more than ten years of live deployments in automotive and manufacturing environments, Tbox Tech is a proven partner, trusted to deliver scalable, robust solutions that integrate with existing ERP and supply chain systems.

For more information please contact:

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[www.tboxtech.com](http://www.tboxtech.com)

# TBOX TECH

## BPL Engineering Group

### Prototype to Production Specialists

BPL Engineering Group Ltd is a specialist turn-key engineering company supplying prototype and production-volume sheet metal components and assemblies to OEM and Tier 1 supply chains.

Family-run and built on a long-established management team, BPL is a highly skilled team of engineers with broad industry expertise.

Operating across three manufacturing sites in the Midlands, the business is driven by a genuine passion for engineering and manufacturing, underpinned by core values of honesty, integrity, and commitment.

#### Core Capabilities:

- Rapid Prototyping
- Design, Simulation and Feasibility
- Toolmaking
- Presswork (Hydraulic, Progression & Single Operation)
- Laser Cutting (Flatbed Bed & 5-Axis)
- CNC Bending
- CNC Machining
- Welding (Robotic, Manual & Projection/Spot)
- General Assemblies

BPL is accredited to: IATF 16949, ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 45001, AS9100D and holds Cyber Essentials Plus. This demonstrates a



strong commitment to quality, environmental responsibility, and health & safety across all operations.

BPL supports a wide range of industries including Automotive, Aerospace, Defence, Medical, and Rail, enabling a strong and resilient operation across multiple market sectors.

BPL supports customers throughout the entire product lifecycle, from prototype and pre-production stages through to full-scale production.

#### For more information please contact:

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Tel: 0121 725 2224

[www.bpl-group.co.uk](http://www.bpl-group.co.uk)



**BPL Engineering Group**  
Prototype to Production Specialists

## Extensive Engineering Solutions

### Engineering and construction built on expertise

Extensive Engineering Solutions is a UK-based engineering and construction group delivering integrated mechanical, electrical, and construction services across commercial and industrial sectors. Operating nationwide, we also support a variety of projects across Europe and South America.

With over 45 years of combined leadership experience, our team brings strong technical knowledge and practical delivery capability across mechanical installations, electrical systems, fabrications, automation and industrial upgrades. We support projects from early planning and coordination through to commissioning and final handover, ensuring works are delivered safely efficiently and to the required standard.

We deliver technically demanding projects within manufacturing and industrial environments, supporting facility improvements, equipment integration and operational enhancements. Our teams are experienced in working within live operational settings, where safety, organisation, and minimal disruption are essential to maintain productivity.

In addition, to our engineering capability, we regularly operate as Principal Contractor, taking full responsibility for site leadership and overall project delivery. This includes managing subcontractors, overseeing health and safety compliance, maintaining programme control, and ensuring clear communication through to job completion. By managing both engineering and construction under one structure, we provide clients with



accountability, efficiency, and streamlined project experience.

#### Core Services:

- » Robotics & Automation
- » Plant Installation & Relocation
- » Site Management
- » Comprehensive Construction

**Sectors:** Automotive & manufacturing | Industrial & logistics | Energy & infrastructure | Commercial developments

#### For more information please contact:

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Tel: 0191 535 6147

[www.extensivesolutionsgroup.com](http://www.extensivesolutionsgroup.com)



## Sanber Ltd

Sanber Ltd are a family business based in Bolton, established over 30 years ago.

Sanber Ltd are a specialist laboratory build/ refurbishment company and associated laboratory services. We work through customers projects from concept and design to installation and servicing and everything in between. Our scope of work ranges from tackling your smallest problematic issues, to complete Project Management of a build, including Design & Build for large and small projects, alike. Sanber work to all the current standards, and health and safety is always our number one priority.

Sanber Ltd will provide all the necessary solutions from minor building works, ducting and extraction to supply and installation of laboratory furniture, fume cupboards, biological safety cabinets, laminar flow cabinets, bespoke containment, flooring, and various finishing requirements.

Sanber Ltd have a consultative approach to laboratory builds and refurbishments and always have the customer in mind, every step of the way. We are not tied to individual suppliers and are very flexible, proactive as well as reactive. As such, we have designs and product ranges that fulfil most price points and budgetary limitations of our clients. Sanber use a unique laser scanning system that autonomously takes all internal measurements and enables speedy transfer of 3D images should the need arise. This system also eliminates human error.

Sanber Ltd have worked, either directly or via a contractor, with



many top pharmaceutical companies, chemical companies, universities, hospitals, and schools. One of the more unique customers we have helped has been a driving range to help with their extraction and airflow!! In fact, wherever there is a laboratory, we have the products and services to help you.

We will design your projects how you would like them, as long as they are safe and within building regulations, but we will add our recommendations so that you have a laboratory that not only suits your needs but is safe and designed to meet all current legislation.

**For more information, please contact:**

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## NSA UK Ltd

Specialists in Marine Logistics and Port Services

NSA UK is a specialist logistics provider with over 38 years of experience in the maritime industry. Founded in 1986 in Bristol, the company quickly expanded, relocating to Teesport the same year and establishing operations at Tyne Car Terminal in South Shields in 1994. Today, NSA manages over 250,000 vehicles and more than 3,000 High and Heavy units annually, accommodating vessels up to 250 metres and up to 9,100 vehicles per ship.

Our expertise covers Ro-Ro cargo, breakbulk and project shipments, and static cargo requiring specialist handling. Skilled shore lashing teams ensure safe and efficient loading and discharge, while 24/7 operations provide flexibility to meet client schedules. NSA also offers trusted independent port agency services, coordinating arrivals and departures, optimising turnaround times, and ensuring compliance with international standards.

The Global Documentation Team provides end-to-end support for import and export processes across the UK, including customs declarations, certificates of origin, EUR.1 certificates, T1 transit documents, and deferment account management. We specialise in Japanese vehicle and machinery imports, handling customs clearance, documentation, duties, and delivery, so clients can focus on their core business.

At NSA UK, safety, reliability, and precision are at the heart



of everything we do. We work closely with staff, customers, subcontractors, port authorities, and shipping lines to deliver seamless, efficient, and compliant maritime logistics solutions. We directly source and manage our own workforce, including drivers and lashers. Our Labour Resource department oversees 90 experienced employees, enabling us to provide reliable labour solutions supported by full recruitment, training, scheduling, payroll, and HR services.

**To speak to a member of our team please contact:**

Email: [Hello@nsauk.ltd](mailto:Hello@nsauk.ltd)

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# BE PART OF OUR NETWORK

