

NETWORK

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Skills plans to train local people for local jobs in the North East is published

Interview of the Quarter - Evolving for the future - How Unipres is scaling capability in a changing market

NEAA collaborates with Ingeus and North East MSA on bespoke inclusion programme



EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR MEMBERS TO HELP PUT MORE UK-BUILT CARS ON THE ROAD

The initiative will support UK manufacturing while giving NEAA members access to competitive vehicle leasing opportunities on some of the country's most successful home-produced Nissan models.

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Cover photo:
New exclusive Nissan NEAA member
scheme with partners Lookers Motor Group
and Select Lease by Mobilize

Credit: David James Wood Photographer

CEO CORNER

As we move into one of the most important months in the NEAA calendar, there is a real sense of momentum across our network.



September marks the return of the North East Automotive Expo 2026, our flagship industry event that continues to bring together manufacturers, suppliers, innovators, educators and stakeholders from across the automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors. This year's Expo comes at a pivotal time for our industry as businesses navigate changing markets, emerging technologies, skills challenges and new opportunities for growth and diversification. The Expo provides an invaluable platform to share ideas, build new relationships and showcase the incredible capabilities that exist right here in the North East.

Throughout this issue, there is a common theme of collaboration. Whether it is the publication of the new North East Local Skills Improvement Plan, our partnership with Ingeus and the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority on a bespoke inclusion programme, or the conversations taking place through our SME Resilience Group and Plant Manager visits, we are seeing first-hand how organisations achieve more when they work together.

Another exciting development for members is the launch of our new exclusive Nissan vehicle offer, delivered in partnership with Lookers Motor Group and Select Lease by Mobilize. This initiative provides members, their families and friends with access to competitive offers on British-built Nissan vehicles, including the Qashqai, JUKE and all-new electric LEAF. It is a practical example of how we can create additional value for members while simultaneously supporting UK manufacturing, safeguarding jobs and championing one of the country's most significant automotive production facilities here in Sunderland.

Another organisation helping to shape the future of our sector is Unipres, our Interview of the Quarter and a valued partner sponsor of the North East Automotive Expo 2026. As one of the region's leading Tier 1 automotive suppliers, Unipres continues to invest in advanced manufacturing technologies, workforce development and operational excellence while exploring opportunities in new and emerging markets. In this edition, Gary Gilby discusses how the business is strengthening its capabilities, responding to changing customer requirements and building the flexibility needed to thrive in an evolving automotive landscape.

Skills continue to be one of the defining challenges and opportunities facing our sector. That is why we are delighted to feature AMTEC (Advanced Manufacturing Technical Excellence College) in this edition. AMTEC represents a major investment in the future of manufacturing skills in our region and is part of a nationally backed initiative to create specialist technical excellence colleges that support the UK's industrial priorities. Located at New College Durham, AMTEC will help develop the next generation of engineers, technicians and manufacturing professionals, ensuring employers have access to the skilled workforce needed to support future growth, innovation and competitiveness.

I look forward to welcoming many of you to the North East Automotive Expo on 24 September. Together, we continue to demonstrate why the North East remains one of the UK's leading automotive and advanced manufacturing clusters, and why collaboration remains our greatest strength.

Paul Butler / [CEO](#) / [NEAA](#)

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SKILLS PLANS TO TRAIN LOCAL PEOPLE FOR LOCAL JOBS IN THE NORTH EAST IS PUBLISHED

New plans published will make sure local training equips people with skills needed by local employers.

A total of 39 Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), covering the upcoming three years, have been unveiled across England, including the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan (NELSIP), which is led by the NEAA, and includes the seven local authority areas of County Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Following engagement with more than 1,200 stakeholders, the NELSIP sets out the practical actions needed to ensure training provision aligns with business needs and addresses key regional challenges, including youth unemployment.

The NELSIP will reflect current strengths and emerging opportunities across the strategically important sectors highlighted in the North East MSA's Local Growth Plan and the New Deal for North East Workers – all of which are vital employers and growth drivers across the North East. This includes Advanced Manufacturing; Creative Industry and Content; Defence, Security and Space; Life Science, Pharmaceutical and Process; Offshore Wind and Renewable Energy; Tech, Digital and AI; Adult Social Care; and Construction.

Paul Butler, CEO of the NEAA, said: "The NELSIP has been shaped through extensive collaboration between employers, colleges, universities, training providers, employer representative bodies, local authorities and regional stakeholders, ensuring that the voice of industry remains at the heart of skills planning. It focused on the key sectors that will drive the region's future prosperity, and

important foundational sectors that underpin economic and social wellbeing. It identifies the workforce challenges, skills priorities and actions required to meet current and future employer demand.

"As we move into implementation, maintaining this collaborative approach will be critical. No single organisation can address the region's skills challenges alone; by aligning our efforts, sharing expertise and working towards common goals, we can build a more responsive skills eco system that delivers lasting benefits for businesses, individuals and the wider regional economy."

North East Mayor Kim McGuinness, said: "Everyone in the North East deserves the opportunity to gain the skills they need to build a good career and a secure future. That's why we are working with employers, colleges and training providers to make sure local people can access training that leads to real jobs in growing industries, today."

"The Local Skills Improvement Plan will help ensure the training we provide reflects their needs and creates more opportunities for people across our region."

Catriona Lingwood, CEO at Construction Excellence North East, said: "The North East LSIP stands as a powerful testament to what can be achieved through true collaboration and partnership working. Bringing together employers, education providers, sector bodies, and regional stakeholders, we have created a skills framework that supports innovation while directly responding to the ever-changing needs of the construction sector."

Download the NELSIP Report at:

<https://northeastautomotivealliance.com/neaa-projects/nelsip/>



NEAA COLLABORATES WITH INGEUS AND NORTH EAST MSA ON BESPOKE INCLUSION PROGRAMME

A new tailored learning programme designed specifically for the automotive sector is set to help businesses across the North East build more inclusive, equitable and productive workplaces.

The seven-part programme has been developed through a partnership between the NEAA, Ingeus and the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority (North East MSA), building on the free support already available through Ingeus' InclusionWorks service.

Funded through the Government's Get Britain Working strategy and championed by North East Mayor Kim McGuinness, InclusionWorks provides employers across the region with specialist advice and support to help create more inclusive workplaces and unlock opportunities for a wider range of talent.

Following discussions within the NEAA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group, partners identified an opportunity to create a bespoke programme tailored specifically to the workforce challenges, skills needs and recruitment priorities facing the automotive and wider manufacturing supply chain.

The result is a structured seven-part learning journey that will run between September and November 2026, providing manufacturing businesses with practical tools and insights to help attract, retain and support employees from all backgrounds.

Participants will explore a range of key workplace topics including inclusive leadership, neurodiversity, recruitment, disability inclusion, workplace adjustments, wellbeing, mental health, menopause, age inclusion, belonging and workplace culture.

The programme has been designed to give employers practical

actions they can implement immediately, helping to strengthen workplace culture while supporting recruitment, retention and employee engagement.

Paul Butler, Chief Executive of the NEAA, said: "The automotive and advanced manufacturing sectors are facing significant workforce challenges, from attracting new talent into the industry to retaining experienced employees and creating workplaces where everyone can thrive. Through our EDI Working Group, members highlighted a need for practical, sector-relevant support, and we're delighted to be working with Ingeus and the North East MSA to develop a programme tailored specifically to the needs of our businesses."

Stephen Ward, Project Manager for InclusionWorks at Ingeus, said "Ingeus has delivered employment services in the North East for over 20 years and we understand the value that diverse talent brings to organisations and communities. InclusionWorks reflects our commitment to helping local employers create workplaces where everyone can thrive."

Mike Herbert, Inclusion Champion at North East MSA, said: "Through InclusionWorks, businesses across the North East can already access free support to become more inclusive and equitable employers. What makes this programme particularly exciting is the opportunity to deliver a structured series of workshops for the automotive sector rather than adhoc sessions."

NEAA members, HR professionals and EDI practitioners are being encouraged to take part and share the opportunity across their organisations. With no cost to attend, the initiative demonstrates how collaboration between industry and regional partners can help manufacturers access tailored and relevant support.

Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/workplace-inclusion-programme-automotive-sector-4865625>



NEAA PARTNERS WITH LOOKERS MOTOR GROUP AND SELECT LEASE BY MOBILIZE TO SUPPORT BRITISH-BUILT NISSAN CARS

The NEAA is championing an exclusive scheme for members that will help put more UK-built cars on the road.

In partnership with Lookers Motor Group, one of the UK's leading automotive retailers representing more than 30 vehicle manufacturers through a nationwide network of dealerships, the NEAA scheme will include offers on British-built Nissan cars, including the highly regarded Qashqai, the compact crossover JUKE and the all-new 100% electric LEAF.

The initiative supports UK manufacturing while giving NEAA members, their families and friends access to competitive offers on some of the country's most successful home-produced models.

The Qashqai has been designed and built in the UK for the last 20 years and remains one of Nissan's greatest success stories, combining practical design, everyday usability and innovative technologies developed specifically for European customers.

Since its original launch in 2010, the JUKE has captured the imagination of more than 1.5 million customers across Europe, reshaping the compact crossover segment with its bold and unconventional design.

Meanwhile, the Nissan LEAF continues to play a significant role in the UK's transition to electric mobility. First introduced in 2011 and built at Nissan Sunderland since 2013, the LEAF helped bring affordable electric motoring to the mainstream and has become the first mass-market electric vehicle to be produced across three generations at a single manufacturing facility.

Supported by Nissan Motor GB Limited and working with Select Lease by Mobilize, the UK leasing brand operated by Mobilize Lease & Co UK Ltd, NEAA members will benefit from access to market-leading business and personal contract hire offers designed to make British-built vehicles more accessible and affordable.

By bringing together the UK's largest automotive manufacturer, a leading automotive retailer, a specialist leasing provider and one of the UK's most important automotive clusters, the scheme aims to encourage more motorists to choose vehicles built by the highly skilled workforce at Nissan Sunderland, supporting jobs, investment and the wider UK automotive supply chain.

Paul Butler, Chief Executive of the NEAA, said: "As an organisation dedicated to supporting the UK's automotive sector, we are delighted to launch this exclusive member benefit.

"Nissan Sunderland is one of the UK's most important manufacturing plants, and by making these British-built vehicles more accessible through our partnership with Lookers Motor Group and Select Lease by Mobilize, we are helping members support UK manufacturing while benefiting from highly competitive offers."

This latest initiative forms part of the NEAA's ongoing commitment to creating added value for members while championing the strength and capabilities of the North East automotive industry.

Members can simply visit <https://www.mydvs.co.uk/neaa> or scan the QR code above to access the dedicated offer website and view the latest available deals.



Unlocking Higher-Value Markets:

How Cyber Essentials, Cyber Essentials Plus and Penetration Testing Build Trust



BUILDING HIGHER-VALUE MARKETS: FROM CYBER ESSENTIALS INTENT TO PROOF AND VALIDATION

The North East is one of the UK's most important automotive and advanced manufacturing regions, built on precision engineering, supply-chain discipline and the ability to deliver complex components at scale. Yet the market around manufacturers is changing quickly.

Automotive supply chains are adapting to electrification, reshoring pressures and changing customer expectations. Many manufacturers are now looking beyond traditional automotive opportunities towards aerospace, rail, defence, energy and other high-value engineering markets.

In these sectors, cyber security is no longer just an internal IT issue. It is increasingly part of supplier assessment, tendering and customer trust. Buyers want confidence that suppliers can protect designs, production schedules, customer specifications, supplier information, remote access links and, in some cases, access into wider customer or partner systems. In defence, aerospace, rail and critical infrastructure, this information can be highly sensitive. A supplier's cyber posture is now part of the customer's risk profile.

Recent manufacturing incidents show why this matters. In 2025, Jaguar Land Rover suffered a major cyber attack that halted production and disrupted suppliers. Similar risks have been seen before, with Toyota suspending domestic factory operations in Japan after a supplier cyber incident, and Norsk Hydro switching some facilities to manual processes following ransomware. Cyber risk now travels through the supply chain. If your business connects to a customer's systems, holds their intellectual property or supports their production schedule, your controls become part of their risk profile.

Cyber Essentials is therefore a practical commercial enabler. It demonstrates intent: a recognised commitment to baseline cyber security and supply-chain trust. It encourages organisations

to understand their scope, manage devices, control access, secure internet-facing services, apply security updates and remove unnecessary exposure. It also starts an important cultural shift. Cyber security is no longer solely the responsibility of IT; it touches finance, operations, HR, engineering, procurement, sales and senior leadership.

This matters particularly where IT and OT environments meet. IT may include laptops, servers, Microsoft 365, ERP systems and file shares. OT may include CNC machines, PLCs, production lines, control systems, robotics, sensors and legacy equipment. These environments have different priorities and different risk profiles. On the shop floor, patching a production system can be far more complex than updating an office laptop. Separation between IT and OT is therefore critical, reducing the chance that an incident on the office network can spread into production systems.

Cyber Essentials provides the intent, but intent alone may not be enough in more demanding markets. Cyber Essentials Plus provides proof. It builds on the same five core technical controls but adds independent technical verification, including external testing, vulnerability scanning and checks across a sample of devices to confirm that controls are working in practice.

A customer assessing your suitability for a higher-value contract may not simply want to know that you have a policy for patching, access control or secure configuration. They may want assurance that your systems have been tested, that critical vulnerabilities are being managed, and that your environment is not carrying avoidable risk. In simple terms, Cyber Essentials is the statement of intent. Cyber Essentials Plus is the evidence that the intent has been tested.

Vulnerability scanning is the missing link between policy and reality. On paper, patching may be in place. In practice, an old engineering workstation, unsupported application, exposed remote access service or forgotten server may still be present. Manufacturing environments often evolve over many years as

systems are added to support production, suppliers connect remotely to maintain machinery, and older platforms remain in service because they are tied to specific equipment or processes.

Regular vulnerability scanning helps identify what is present, what is exposed, what is unsupported and what needs attention. It supports better decision-making by helping the business prioritise remediation based on real risk rather than assumption. This is increasingly important as Cyber Essentials requirements continue to tighten. High-risk and critical updates need to be managed promptly, and cloud services must be protected with multi-factor authentication where available.

Cyber Essentials Plus and ongoing vulnerability management can help automotive manufacturers pivot into new markets by demonstrating a verified commitment to cyber security across aerospace, rail, energy and other high-value supply chains. These sectors depend on supplier resilience. They need confidence that designs, production data, commercial information and delivery schedules are protected from avoidable cyber weaknesses. Certification does not guarantee contract success, but it can remove friction from procurement conversations and strengthen a supplier's position.

A separate route exists for Ministry of Defence opportunities. Defence Cyber Certification is a cyber security certification framework for UK defence suppliers, developed by the MOD and IASME. It provides organisation-level assurance that can support UK Defence procurement and strengthen resilience across the defence supply chain. The scheme is structured across Levels 0 to 3, with the required level linked to the cyber risk associated with the supplier's role. All levels start with Cyber Essentials, while Levels 2 and 3 require Cyber Essentials Plus.

The final stage is validation. Formal certification is important, but it is not always the end of the conversation. Where two suppliers already hold similar accreditations, the ability to show that cyber

controls are regularly tested through structured security penetration testing can become a powerful differentiator.

A live attack does not follow an assessment checklist. Attackers look for weak processes, exposed services, poor segmentation, excessive permissions, insecure remote access, gaps in monitoring and human error. Penetration testing validates controls under realistic conditions and creates additional evidence that can sit alongside formal certification. In a competitive tender, evidence of regular testing can increase confidence, strengthen scoring and improve the chances of being selected.

The greatest value often comes from purple teaming, where offensive and defensive teams work together. The red team tests, the blue team observes and responds, and both sides use the results to close gaps, improve detection and strengthen defences. These exercises can also tune Security Operations Centre (SOC) and Managed Detection and Response (MDR) services by checking whether alerts trigger, escalation routes work and response playbooks operate as expected.

Cyber Essentials demonstrates intent. Cyber Essentials Plus provides proof. Defence Cyber Certification extends that assurance into MOD supply chains. Penetration testing provides the final validation that controls will perform when challenged.

Cyber resilience is no longer simply a technical requirement or a compliance exercise. It is becoming a condition of entry into higher-value supply chains. North East automotive manufacturers that can evidence strong controls, independent verification and regular testing will stand apart from less-prepared competitors. They will be better positioned to win customer confidence, reduce procurement barriers, diversify into new sectors and secure the contracts that will shape their future growth.

UNLOCK HIGHER-VALUE CONTRACTS WITH ADVANTEX

Cyber Essentials-as-a-Service

Advantex Cyber Essentials-as-a-Service helps manufacturers build trusted cyber credentials for higher-value supply chains, from gap analysis and remediation through to certification support and ongoing control management.

Why Advantex CEaaS?

We help make Cyber Essentials part of business as usual — not a once-a-year scramble — so your team can stay focused on production.

What's Included



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NEAA STRENGTHENS CONNECTIONS THROUGH PLANT MANAGER VISITS

Understanding the opportunities, challenges and priorities of manufacturers across the region remains a key focus for the NEAA. Recent visits to member sites have provided valuable insight into the issues shaping the future of automotive manufacturing, while also creating opportunities to connect businesses with support programmes designed to drive growth and competitiveness.

Over recent months, the NEAA team has continued its programme of plant manager engagement visits, spending time with senior operational leaders from across the membership to better understand current business priorities, identify opportunities for collaboration and ensure the voice of industry remains at the heart of the NEAA's activities.

The visits have offered a valuable opportunity to see first-hand the innovation, investment and continuous improvement taking place across the region's automotive supply chain. From advanced manufacturing technologies and process improvements to workforce development and operational excellence, each site visit has reinforced the strength and resilience of the North East automotive sector.

Meetings with plant management teams at Gestamp, Labone Castleside, Magna, Unipres UK and Minth have highlighted a number of common themes impacting manufacturers today. While every organisation faces its own unique opportunities and challenges, discussions consistently focused on productivity, workforce skills, supply

chain resilience, sustainability, technological advancement and the need to remain competitive in an increasingly dynamic global market.

Alongside these discussions, the visits provided an important opportunity for the NEAA to promote the Supplier Readiness and Transformation (SRT) Programme, helping member companies understand the support and funding opportunities available to them. Conversations explored how the programme can assist businesses with improvement projects, innovation, productivity enhancements and capability development, ensuring companies are aware of the practical support available to help strengthen long-term competitiveness and resilience.

For the NEAA, these conversations provide essential intelligence that helps shape future member support and strategic initiatives. Equally, they allow the NEAA to act as a connector between businesses and the programmes, funding streams and collaborative opportunities that can support future growth.

The visits also provide an important platform to explore how members can benefit from greater collaboration. By bringing businesses together to share best practice, address common challenges and identify new opportunities, the NEAA continues to strengthen the connections that underpin the region's automotive ecosystem.

As the industry continues its transition towards electrification, digitalisation and net zero manufacturing, maintaining close engagement with operational leaders is more important than ever. Plant managers play a critical role in driving performance, implementing change and developing the workforce needed for the future, making their insights invaluable to both the NEAA and the wider sector.

FROM SKILLS GAPS TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: HOW AMTEC WILL SUPPORT NORTH EAST EMPLOYERS



Alison Maynard, Deputy Principal at New College Durham examines how achieving AMTEC status will support the region's advanced manufacturing industry, employers and workforce.

Great things are happening across the North East. Our advanced manufacturing industry is thriving as global giants such as Nissan, Lockheed Martin and AESC choose the region to develop, innovate and grow; while thousands of SMEs support these industries, driving innovation and local employment through workforce development.

Our strength lies in world-class production facilities, major supply chains and an employer-led approach to developing the skills industry needs.

However, rapid change across advanced and high-integrity manufacturing, electrification, space and AI technologies presents a significant challenge. How can employers stay competitive without access to a sufficiently skilled workforce? How can SMEs release workers to upskill? And how can they access appropriate, affordable provision?

AMTEC is designed to help solve these issues. Having become one of only four colleges in the country to be awarded Advanced Manufacturing Technical Excellence College (AMTEC) status, New College Durham is uniquely positioned to help employers meet their workforce needs and thrive.

The North East has many of the ingredients needed to become a national centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing skills. It has one of the highest proportions of students studying STEM subjects in the UK, and the third highest proportion of students studying engineering and technology. By bringing employers and education providers together to identify skills gaps and develop skills provision, the North East Institute of Technology, led by New College Durham, creates the employer-led higher-level skills pipeline needed to support the region's ambitions.

AMTEC takes that ambition to the next level – bringing national recognition, investment and advanced manufacturing expertise to an ecosystem already collaborating to meet industry needs.

Working closely with Hartlepool College, Middlesbrough College, Newcastle College Group and Sunderland College, AMTEC allows New College Durham to act as a pivot between the region's education and employment ecosystem. Provision will focus on understanding what employers require now and anticipating

what will be needed in one, three and five years' time. This will shape practical, employer-informed training through placements, apprenticeships, upskilling and reskilling.

The AMTEC will also strengthen the capacity and agility of the region's education, training and employment ecosystem. This includes high-quality continuing professional development (CPD) for teaching and technical staff, keeping those delivering training at the forefront of new technologies, industrial practices and emerging skills needs. Partners will be able to develop and share specialist resources, build complementary expertise and avoid unnecessary duplication.

For employers, AMTEC provides a single route into a wider network of skills expertise. Whether a business needs to recruit new talent, upskill its existing workforce, respond to emerging technologies or develop bespoke training around a specific skills gap, AMTEC will connect it with the right expertise and provision across the regional network.

Flexibility is critical. For manufacturers, production lines cannot simply stop so staff can attend training. The College will therefore incorporate innovative solutions around delivery times, rotational release, twilight, evening or weekend provision and funding support. This means training can be shaped around operational pressures as well as future skills needs, helping employers address gaps before they become barriers to growth.

The AMTEC model is collaborative, reflecting the North East 'way'. Regional delivery partners work together to avoid duplication and maximise specialist expertise, while AMTEC peers enable shared resource and teaching approaches. This can bridge delivery gaps, including through live-streaming lessons across colleges to address the national shortage of engineering lecturers.

The latest analysis by Skills England and the Department for Business and Trade, published in June, shows priority occupations within Advanced Manufacturing are projected to grow by 13% by 2035. Taking expected departures into account, national demand is 148,000 workers. AMTEC will help build a stronger pipeline of industry-ready people for today's and tomorrow's needs.

Working as a strategic hub for advanced technical skills, we will bolster our regional talent pool and attract individuals looking to upskill from further afield. For employers, this means a more responsive skills pipeline to support growth, innovation and competitiveness - helping the North East maintain its trailblazing role in nationally and globally significant industries.



TIER ONE SUPPLIER CELEBRATES LANDMARK ANNIVERSARY

A leading automotive Tier One supplier is celebrating a major milestone, marking four decades of manufacturing excellence, investment and workforce dedication in the North East of England.

Marelli North East is proudly celebrating 40 years of automotive manufacturing in the region, with a history that closely mirrors the growth of Nissan's Sunderland plant and the wider North East supply chain.

The company's roots stretch back to 1986, when TI Nihon U.K. Ltd opened at Bental Business Park in Washington, supplying exhaust systems for the first Nissan Bluebird built at Nissan Sunderland. Further investment followed in 1989 with the opening of Marley Kanto Ltd in Sunderland and Calsonic Climate Control U.K. Ltd in Shildon, helping establish the Tier One supplier network that would support one of the UK's most successful automotive manufacturing operations.

Today, those businesses operate under the Marelli North East banner, continuing a proud tradition of innovation, quality and customer commitment. The company operates facilities in Sunderland and Washington, producing interior systems, cockpit modules, exhaust systems and steering members, while supporting vehicle production through warehousing and just-in-time manufacturing solutions. The Sunderland site also serves as Marelli's regional Interior Experience Division centre.

For Marelli this anniversary is more than a reflection on years in business. It provides an opportunity to celebrate the people,

partnerships and achievements that have helped build a successful operation at the heart of the region's automotive sector.

To mark the anniversary, the company hosted Town Hall briefings across its three North East sites ahead of the summer shutdown. Employees were given the opportunity to reflect on the business's contribution to the region's automotive success story, while commemorative displays and souvenirs celebrated the milestone.

Marelli continues to benefit from exceptional workforce loyalty, with 14 employees achieving more than 35 years of service. Their dedication reflects the strong culture and sense of community that has helped shape the business over four decades.





NEAA SME RESILIENCE GROUP FOCUSES ON FINANCIAL STRENGTH

Businesses from across the North East came together recently for the latest NEAA SME Resilience Group meeting, hosted by AV Dawson, with discussions centred on one of the most important foundations of long-term business success – financial resilience.

In an increasingly complex and competitive landscape, the ability to adapt, manage risk and maintain financial stability has never been more important. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity for NEAA members to explore practical strategies that can help businesses strengthen their operations, navigate uncertainty and support sustainable growth.

Hosted at AV Dawson's Teesside facility, the session brought together representatives from across the region's manufacturing and supply chain community, reinforcing the collaborative spirit that continues to underpin the North East's industrial success.

A key part of the agenda focused on financial resilience and forecasting, with expert insights shared by Clive Owen LLP. Discussion centred around the importance of forward planning, effective forecasting and building robust financial strategies that enable businesses to remain agile while pursuing growth opportunities.

The group also heard from Durham University's Arrow Innovation Programme, which is funded by the North East Mayoral Strategic Authority. They outlined the innovation support available to businesses across the region, showcasing how companies can access expertise, funding opportunities and collaborative projects to drive innovation and improve competitiveness.

Beyond the formal presentations, the session provided what has become one of the most valued aspects of the SME Resilience Group – the opportunity for open discussion and peer-to-peer learning. Attendees shared experiences, discussed common challenges and exchanged practical advice, creating an environment where businesses can learn from one another and identify new approaches to improving resilience.

The conversations demonstrated the strength of the North East business community and the benefits of collaboration in tackling shared challenges. By bringing together companies of different sizes and specialisms, the group continues to create a trusted forum where members can access expert knowledge, build connections and gain valuable insight from their peers.

The NEAA SME Resilience Group forms part of the NEAA's ongoing commitment to supporting members beyond day-to-day business operations, helping organisations build the skills, knowledge and networks needed to thrive in an evolving industrial landscape.

Looking ahead, the next meeting will turn its attention to one of the most significant opportunities facing businesses today: Artificial Intelligence. The session will provide an overview of AI technologies and explore practical ways manufacturers and supply chain companies can incorporate AI into their everyday operations to drive efficiency, productivity and innovation.

As the pace of change accelerates, forums such as the SME Resilience Group continue to play an important role in ensuring North East businesses remain well-positioned to respond to challenges, embrace new opportunities and build resilient organisations for the future.



EVOLVING FOR THE FUTURE: HOW UNIPRES IS SCALING CAPABILITY IN A CHANGING MARKET

As a Tier 1 automotive supplier, Unipres (UK) plays a critical role within both the UK and global manufacturing landscape. Operating at the forefront of metal pressing and component manufacturing, the company works closely with OEMs to deliver high-quality, precision-engineered solutions that underpin vehicle production programmes.

With a strong heritage in the automotive sector and deep roots in the North East, Unipres (UK) continues to evolve, strengthening its capabilities, driving operational excellence, and exploring new opportunities for growth and diversification.

In this quarter's interview, NEAA speaks with Gary Gilby, General Manager – Commercial & Purchasing at Unipres Europe, about navigating industry change, future-proofing operations, and the company's ongoing commitment to the region and sector it has helped shape.

Unipres (UK) has built a strong reputation within the automotive sector. How would you describe your core capabilities today, and what differentiates your offer in a competitive market?

At our core, Unipres is a global precision metal forming and assembly business. Across our operations in the UK and France, we specialise in producing complex, safety-critical body structures and for some of the world's leading vehicle manufacturers.

What differentiates us is the combination of engineering expertise, advanced automation and manufacturing scale. We don't simply produce components; we help customers develop robust manufacturing solutions that deliver quality, cost competitiveness and supply chain security.

We also have the advantage of combining local responsiveness with the strength of a global organisation. Customers can access world-class manufacturing capability while working with teams that understand the specific needs of the European market.

What key investments - whether in technology, facilities or people - have been critical in strengthening your capability and future readiness?

We've continued to invest heavily in automation, digital manufacturing technologies and process improvement to ensure we remain competitive in a rapidly changing industry.

However, our biggest investment has been in people. Through the Unipres Training Academy, we're developing the next generation of engineers, leaders and manufacturing specialists. Technology

delivers value only when you have skilled people who know how to maximise its potential.

Our approach is: invest in world-class equipment, invest in world-class people and continuously improve both.

As OEM demand fluctuates and production volumes shift, how is Unipres (UK) positioning itself to support output while maintaining operational excellence?

The automotive industry has become significantly more volatile over recent years. We have responded by building greater flexibility into our operations.

Advanced automation, lean manufacturing principles and a highly skilled workforce allow us to react quickly to changing customer demand while maintaining the quality and delivery performance our customers expect.

Our focus is always on being a dependable partner. Whether volumes increase, decrease or shift between vehicle programmes, customers need confidence that we can respond efficiently and consistently.

How important is collaboration with customers and supply chain partners in ensuring you can respond flexibly to changing volume requirements?

It's absolutely critical. The strongest customer relationships are built on transparency and trust. The earlier we're involved in discussions around future programmes, capacity planning or engineering changes, the more value we can add.

The same applies to our supply chain partners. Strong collaboration enables us to manage risk, improve competitiveness and ensure continuity of supply.

In today's environment, success isn't achieved by individual companies working in isolation. It's achieved through strong partnerships across the entire value chain.

Beyond your established automotive base, where do you see opportunities for diversification, and how are you exploring these new markets?

Our expertise in precision stamping, automated manufacturing and assembly is highly transferable.

While automotive remains our primary focus, we see opportunities in sectors that require high-quality engineered metal components and industrialised manufacturing solutions. That includes areas linked to electrification, energy and other advanced manufacturing industries.

The key for us is leveraging the capabilities we've developed over decades in automotive to create value in adjacent markets.

What lessons from the automotive sector are you applying as you consider growth into adjacent industries?

Automotive sets some of the highest standards in the world for quality, efficiency, cost management and continuous improvement.

Those disciplines are equally valuable in any manufacturing environment. Our experience in launching complex programmes, managing supply chains and delivering consistently high levels of quality provides a strong foundation for growth outside traditional automotive markets.



Despite exploring new opportunities, Unipres remains a key player in the automotive supply chain. What underpins your continued commitment to the sector?

We remain fully committed to automotive because we believe the sector has a strong future and because our core capabilities are highly aligned to the challenges OEMs are trying to solve.

Vehicle manufacturers are looking for suppliers that can deliver quality, competitiveness, flexibility and sustainability. These are all areas where Unipres is investing and developing.

Our objective is not simply to supply components. We want to be a trusted manufacturing partner that helps customers successfully deliver future vehicle programmes whilst strengthening local supply chains within the UK and Europe.

How do partnerships with organisations such as NEAA support collaboration, capability improvement and visibility for Unipres across the region?

The North East has one of the strongest automotive clusters in Europe, and organisations like NEAA play a vital role in bringing businesses together.

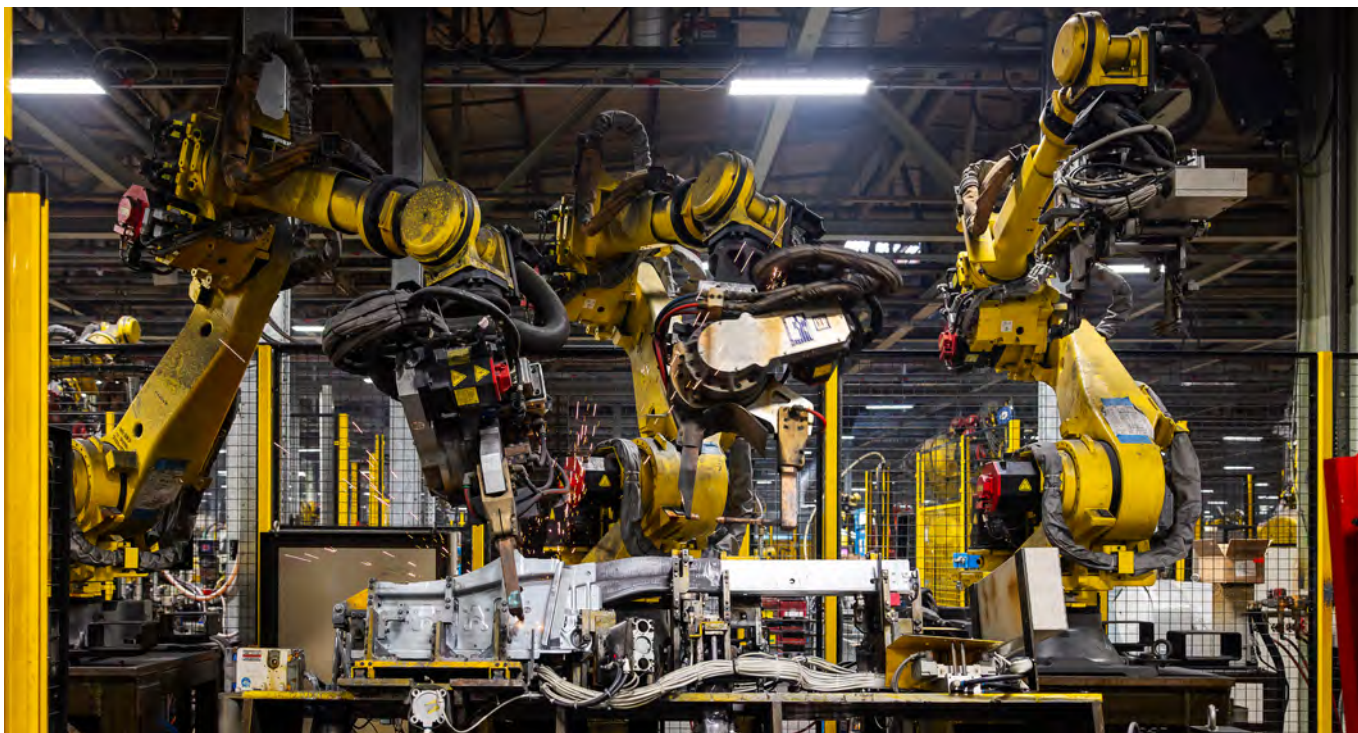
The network provides opportunities to share best practice, collaborate on challenges, develop skills and raise awareness of the capabilities that exist within the region.

For Unipres, it is also an excellent platform to engage with existing customers and potential new partners whilst contributing to the continued success of UK manufacturing.

People are critical to manufacturing success. How are you investing in skills development to ensure your workforce is ready for future demand?

People remain our greatest asset.

The Unipres Training Academy is central to our long-term strategy and supports everything from apprenticeships and technical training through to leadership development programs.



Manufacturing is changing rapidly, and future success will depend on having people with the right skills to operate advanced technologies, solve complex problems and lead continuous improvement.

We're committed to creating opportunities for individuals to develop their careers while ensuring Unipres has the capabilities needed for future growth.

Sustainability continues to be a key focus. What steps is Unipres (UK) taking to reduce environmental impact while maintaining competitiveness?

Sustainability is increasingly important to both our customers and our business.

We are focused on reducing energy consumption, improving manufacturing efficiency, minimising waste and supporting responsible sourcing throughout our supply chain.

Many of our investments in automation and process improvement deliver both environmental and commercial benefits. Reducing waste, improving resource efficiency and lowering energy use is good for the planet, but it's also good business.

Looking to the next 3-5 years, what are your priorities for growth, and what does success look like for Unipres (UK)?

Our priority is sustainable growth.

That means strengthening relationships with existing customers, securing new business opportunities, expanding our capabilities and continuing to diversify our customer portfolio.

We will continue investing in technology, people and operational excellence to ensure we remain a competitive manufacturing partner.

Success for us means being recognised as one of Europe's leading suppliers of precision stamped and assembled

components whilst continuing to grow our presence across existing and new markets.

If there was one message you'd like to share with customers, partners and the wider NEAA network about Unipres (UK), what would it be?

The automotive industry is evolving rapidly, and so are we.

Unipres is a business with strong foundations, significant manufacturing capability and a clear vision for the future. We are investing in technology, investing in people and investing in the long-term success of our operations in both the UK and France.

Whether you're an existing customer looking for a strategic partner or a company exploring new manufacturing solutions, we'd welcome the opportunity to discuss how Unipres can support your future ambitions.

For further information about Unipres, please visit:

www.unipres.co.uk



UNIPRES

Pressing Toward a Brighter Tomorrow



CHANGING DIRECTION? YOU NEED A NEW MARKETING MAP...

As an industrial marketing company that's embedded into the UK's engineering and manufacturing landscape, Horizon Works has seen the recent drive for diversification at first hand.

Samantha Vassallo, Managing Director, looks at what this means for marketing – and explains how Horizon Works is helping businesses on their diversification journeys.

The automotive sector continues to face significant challenges. Economic pressures, changing consumer demand, global competition, supply chain disruption, evolving trade requirements and uncertainty around investment have created a complex operating environment.

As a result, many automotive businesses are exploring opportunities to diversify into adjacent sectors such as defence, renewable energy and rail, as they move to improve resilience, access new investment, and take advantage of exciting new opportunities.

Diversification, however, requires more than technical capability alone. Businesses must effectively communicate how their existing expertise, quality standards, manufacturing capabilities and sector experience can address the needs of customers in new markets.

This often involves repositioning products and services, developing new value propositions, increasing visibility with different audiences and building credibility within target sectors.

Horizon Works helps automotive businesses identify and capitalise on diversification opportunities through strategic marketing, positioning, sector-focused content, thought leadership, PR and digital marketing activity.

By translating existing capabilities into compelling market propositions, we help organisations gain visibility with new customers, strengthen their presence in growth sectors and accelerate market entry. Whether supporting businesses moving into defence supply chains, renewable energy projects or new areas within the automotive sector, our approach helps create the awareness, credibility and engagement needed to support successful diversification and long-term growth.

To support automotive businesses navigating these challenges, we will be hosting a dedicated webinar on 20 October for NEAA members, focused on industrial diversification.

'Marketing for diversification – a new direction needs a new approach' will examine emerging opportunities across defence, renewable and nuclear energy, and advanced manufacturing, while providing advice on how organisations can leverage existing capabilities, strengthen market positioning and accelerate into new sectors.

The webinar forms part of Horizon Works' commitment to supporting supply chain businesses as they adapt to changing conditions and pursue new opportunities. We'll be:

- Tackling the challenges businesses face when diversifying, from building an evidence base to attracting attention in a new market.
- Sharing guidance on creating a marketing strategy for diversification – and ensuring that the key building blocks are in place.
- Providing advice on brand identity and messaging for businesses who are changing lanes.
- Looking at how to approach marketing tactics, when engaging new audiences.

A specialist industrial marketing partner

Founded in 2010 and based in Blyth, Horizon Works accelerates growth for technical companies in complex industrial sectors with energetic, impactful marketing. We've worked with companies across the UK automotive sector supply chain, including Gestamp, Seta, Gate 7, Calatherm and Lancereal. And we have brought our creative expertise to bear for the NEAA, helping it to promote the North East Automotive Expo, NEAA Awards and the NEAA's 10th anniversary, and powering a campaign to support a project for the advanced manufacturing sector.

We have a long track record in helping companies succeed in industries such as offshore wind, subsea, rail, advanced manufacturing, precision engineering and chemicals. And as a partner in the Make UK Defence Fit for Defence programme, we've supported more than 40 SMEs in shaping their marketing for the defence sector.

Sign up for the marketing for diversification webinar

12.00 – 1.00pm | 20 October 2026

Visit: horizon-works.com/diversification-webinar/

For more information on how Horizon Works can support you, visit: horizon-works.com or contact our team on hello@horizon-works.com



WHAT CAN AUTOMOTIVE AND OFF-HIGHWAY LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?

Dave Luscombe is Special Projects Consultant at CEA (Construction Equipment Association), where he leads the CESAR Scheme and works closely with manufacturers, contractors, police and industry partners across the construction equipment sector.

Ahead of his appearance on the panel at the North East Automotive Expo 2026, he considers where automotive can offer useful lessons for off-highway, and where construction has experience of its own to share.

For decades, automotive and off-highway have followed many of the same technology paths, although not always at the same pace. Both have dealt with tighter emissions standards, increasingly sophisticated electronic controls and, more recently, electrification and connected machines. There is plenty construction can learn from automotive, but the differences in how equipment is used mean that what works for a passenger car will not necessarily work for an excavator, loading shovel or hauler. Equally, it would be wrong to assume that all the learning flows in one direction.

Charging is a good example of where automotive has the advantage. By the end of June 2026, the UK had 121,171 public EV chargers across 46,731 locations. That infrastructure has grown around a huge automotive market, with drivers increasingly able to charge at home, at work or while travelling.

Construction has a much harder infrastructure problem to solve. A machine may spend months on a major project or move regularly between short-term sites, where the available electrical supply can vary enormously. It may also be expected to work hard for most of a shift, so charging has to fit around production rather than the other way around.

Volvo CE's ECR25 Electric compact excavator shows how far the technology has already come. It has an indicative runtime of up to eight hours, depending on application. Volvo quotes around five

hours and 50 minutes to charge using 230V AC at 16A, while an off-board 400V AC charger can take the battery to 80% in around one hour and 40 minutes. Those figures can work very well in the right application, but construction covers an enormous range of machines, sizes and duty cycles. What works for a compact excavator doing intermittent work is unlikely to be the answer for a large machine operating continuously on heavy earthmoving.

Autonomy is where the comparison becomes more interesting. Off-highway has been working with autonomous equipment commercially for many years. Komatsu dates its first commercial autonomous mining solution to 2008 and commissioned its 1,000th autonomous ultra-class haul truck in April 2026. Caterpillar says its autonomous mining fleet has moved more than 11 billion tonnes of material and is now bringing technology developed in mining into excavators, loaders, haul trucks, dozers and compactors.

A controlled mining environment is very different from a public road, but nearly two decades of commercial deployment is significant. Off-highway has expertise of its own to bring to the table, and autonomy is one area where automotive can look to construction and mining rather than the other way around.

CESAR ECV makes a similar point in a less headline-grabbing way. HS2 became the first infrastructure project to adopt the emissions identification scheme after helping the CEA develop it. Instead of an inspector having to locate an engine plate, potentially stop a machine and wait for it to cool, ECV provides a colour-coded label backed by QR-linked emissions information. It was developed around a problem specific to the way construction equipment is managed on site, rather than adapting an answer from another sector.

Dave will discuss these issues at the North East Automotive Expo 2026 on 24 September. Both sectors have an opportunity to look closely at what can genuinely be shared, without assuming the same answer will work everywhere. Construction has plenty to learn from automotive, but in some areas off-highway has already been solving these problems for years.

FREIGHTLINE CARRIERS STRENGTHENS NORTH EAST PRESENCE WITH NEW OFFICE

Freightline Carriers has expanded its North East presence with the opening of a new regional office, strengthening its ability to support businesses across one of the UK's key automotive and manufacturing hubs.

The expansion represents an important milestone for Freightline as the company continues to grow its operations and build closer relationships with customers across the region. Establishing a dedicated North East base will enhance local knowledge, improve accessibility for customers and create a stronger platform for supporting the region's automotive supply chain.

As specialists in urgent, time-critical logistics, Freightline provides tailored road and air freight solutions designed to keep critical supply chains moving. From dedicated UK and European transport and customs clearance to Next Flight Out (NFO), On-Board Courier (OBC) and air charter services, the company supports both planned requirements and urgent situations where every minute matters.



This responsiveness is particularly important for automotive manufacturers and suppliers operating within just-in-time environments, where a delayed component can quickly impact production. Freightline can position themselves to collect within two hours while offering customised logistics solutions, supported by real-time shipment tracking and proactive communication, giving customers greater visibility and control over critical movements.

The new North East office also strengthens Freightline's ability to work alongside the region's automotive community, providing local businesses with direct access to its team of experienced logistics professionals and 24/7 support.

NET-DEFENCE CELEBRATES DECADE OF GROWTH WITH KEY INDUSTRY HONOUR

Net-Defence is celebrating ten years in business with a significant industry honour, recognising the company's transformation from a telecommunications provider into one of the North East's leading cyber security and managed IT specialists.

The accolade, presented by the Tyne and Wear Business Awards UK, recognises Net-Defence's continued growth, technical excellence and commitment to helping organisations strengthen their cyber resilience against an increasingly complex threat landscape.

The recognition comes during a milestone year for the business as it marks ten years as Net-Defence. Established within the third-generation family-owned Ogilvie Group, the company has spent the past decade investing in technical expertise, automation and customer-focused services while building a strong promote from within culture.

Their progress has also attracted national attention, with Net-Defence recently shortlisted in the prestigious Outstanding Security Performance Awards (OSPAs), further reinforcing its growing reputation within the UK cyber security sector.

Debra Cairns, Managing Director of Net-Defence, said: "Receiving this recognition is an incredible achievement and reflects the dedication, expertise and commitment of every member of our team.



Over the past decade we've deliberately built a business centred on trust, technical excellence and long-term customer relationships. We've invested in our people, embraced innovation and remained focused on helping organisations strengthen their cyber resilience while delivering outstanding managed IT and security services.

This achievement belongs to our entire team; every day they go above and beyond to protect our customers, deliver exceptional service and build the trusted partnerships that have made recognition like this possible."

The honour follows a year in which Net-Defence has continued raising awareness of the growing cyber risks facing SMEs across the North East and beyond, warning that many organisations still underestimate the scale and sophistication of modern cyber threats.

Recent high-profile attacks, increasing regulatory enforcement and the rapid evolution of AI-enabled cyber crime have reinforced the need for organisations to adopt proactive cyber resilience strategies rather than relying on outdated security measures.

MANUFACTURER OF ELECTRIC MOTORS LANDS £16M TO ACCELERATE DEVELOPMENT

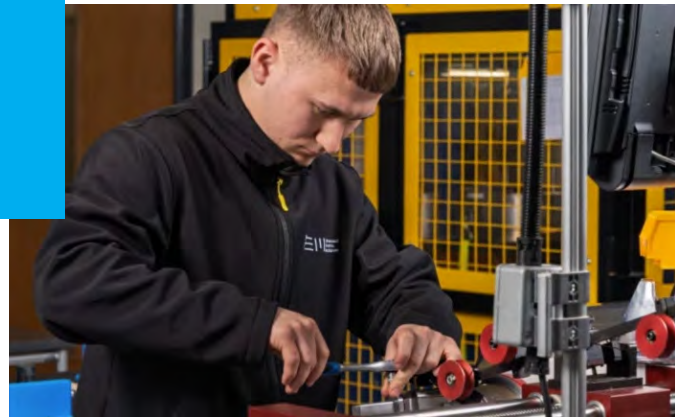
An electric motor and powertrain system maker says it is poised to press the accelerator pedal after securing £16 million support.

Advanced Electric Machines has been backed to expand its product portfolio. The funds will spur the development of a next-generation high-torque motor platform (and) extend its technology into more demanding commercial vehicle and industrial applications.

They add it will also expand “facilities, expertise and production capability” at the Wearside-based company’s Washington plant, which makes apparatus that replaces traditional copper motor windings with compressed aluminium for cars, motorbikes, trucks, buses and construction machinery.

Its funding round was led by existing shareholders Barclays Climate Ventures, PXN Ventures, Northstar Ventures and the Low Carbon Innovation Fund, alongside new investors and Innovate UK loan support.

Dr James Widmer, co-founder and chief executive at Advanced Electric Machines, said: “Manufacturers are increasingly looking for motor technologies that can deliver performance, cost competitiveness and scalability without dependence on rare earth materials and magnets.



“Our technology has already demonstrated this is possible. This funding enables us to accelerate development of our next generation of products and expand our offering into higher-power and higher-torque applications.”

The support comes after the Newcastle University spin-out unveiled a car maker deal with an Asian operator and a previous £23 million investment round.

Greg Debicki, Barclays Climate Ventures’ director – principal investments, said: “We are delighted to support Advanced Electric Machines.

“Its growth highlights the important role UK technological innovation can play in supporting the global transition to electrification.

“We are glad to support the expansion of this regional champion.”

MEMBER OFFER: 10% DISCOUNT ON LEVEL 4 HNC IN GENERAL ENGINEERING

NEAA members can take advantage of an exclusive 10% discount on the Level 4 HNC in General Engineering, delivered by NC Group Ltd.

The accredited programme is designed to help Level 3 apprentices and engineering professionals develop the advanced technical, analytical and leadership skills required for higher-level engineering and supervisory roles.

The two-year programme starts on 5 October 2026, with rolling start dates available throughout 2026-27, and is delivered by experienced industry professionals at the NC Group Academy in Newton Aycliffe.

This is an excellent opportunity for member companies looking to strengthen their talent pipeline, support employee progression and invest in the future of engineering within their business.

To find out more or register, contact NC Group Ltd on 01388 737121 or training@ncgroupltd.co.uk

HIGHER EDUCATION - Pearson Accredited

KEEP ENGINEERING YOUR FUTURE

NORTH EAST AUTOMOTIVE ALLIANCE (NEAA MEMBERS)

Level 4 HNC in General Engineering

Your Level 3 apprentices already know the job. The HNC in General Engineering takes them further—building the technical depth, analytical thinking, and leadership skills your top talent needs to step into higher-level technical and supervisory roles.

- Industry Experts
- 2 Year programme
- Location: NC Group Academy

STARTING 5TH OCTOBER 2026
*rolling start dates are available throughout 2026 - 2027

ENROL NOW 10% DISCOUNT FOR NEAA MEMBERS

SCAN ME

Pearson HNC External Quality Assurance Feedback:

All learners said that lessons were very 'focused and interesting' and the support from staff was 'first class'.

The learners 'unanimously' described the teaching as 'very good'.

Learners stated they felt comfortable getting pastoral support when needed.

GROWING RESPONSIBLY AT EDWARDS COMMERCIAL CLEANING

Over the past year, Edwards Commercial Cleaning (ECC) has achieved a 15.2% reduction in gross carbon emissions compared to the previous reporting period.

It's a milestone they're incredibly proud of and another important step on their journey towards Net Zero by 2030.

Achievements like this don't happen overnight. They happen because people across the business make good decisions every single day. From improving route efficiency and investing in the fleet to reducing waste and continually reviewing the way ECC works, sustainability has become part of its day-to-day thinking.

Every member of the team has played a part in this achievement while continuing to deliver the high-quality commercial cleaning services that their clients rely on every day.

A huge thank you must also go to Tamma Carel and the team at Imvelo for their continued guidance and support. They've challenged ECC, supported them and helped them better understand the environmental impact year after year.



Following their recent NEAA Sustainability Award (SME) win, this latest Carbon Report is another reminder that ECC are continuing to make real progress.

Perhaps what makes them most proud is that they've achieved this while continuing to grow as a business. It shows that sustainability and commercial success really can go hand in hand.

Looking ahead, their ambition remains clear. ECC will continue to invest in its people, review the way it works and look for new opportunities to reduce its environmental impact. In fact, this month they are launching a new uniform recycling initiative to ensure worn and damaged uniforms are recycled rather than sent to landfill. It's another small step, but one that reflects ECC's commitment to continually improving.

CLIVE OWEN WELCOMES LATEST GRADUATE AND TRAINEE INTAKE AS IT CONTINUES INVESTMENT IN FUTURE TALENT

Clive Owen, one of the North's leading independent accountancy, business and tax advisory firms, has welcomed a new cohort of graduates as part of its continued commitment to developing the next generation of accounting and tax professionals.

The latest intake sees seven new trainees join the firm across its Audit & Accounts and Tax teams, based in Darlington, York, Durham, Middlesbrough and Newcastle. They join colleagues who began their training earlier this year, reflecting the firm's ongoing investment in attracting and developing talented people across the North of England.

The appointments form part of a long-term strategy to nurture future leaders through structured professional development, practical experience and mentoring, enabling trainees to build rewarding careers while supporting clients across a broad range of sectors.

Clive Owen is recognised nationally for its commitment to workplace learning and development as a Platinum Member of The 5% Club, the highest level of accreditation awarded to employers demonstrating exceptional dedication to creating



meaningful opportunities through apprenticeships, graduate programmes and other earn-and-learn initiatives.

Jonathan Doyle, Partner and Qualified Person Responsible for Training at Clive Owen, said: "Investing in talented people has always been fundamental to our success. We are delighted to welcome our latest graduates, each of whom brings enthusiasm, ambition and fresh perspectives to the firm.

"We are passionate about creating an environment where people can thrive professionally while gaining hands-on experience working alongside our experienced teams and clients.

"As a Platinum Member of The 5% Club, we are proud to be recognised for our commitment to developing careers and helping individuals reach their full potential. We look forward to supporting each of our new starters as they progress through their professional qualifications and become the next generation of advisers at Clive Owen."

Freightline Carriers

Growing Our Reach, Strengthening Our Service

When a shipment simply can't wait, businesses need more than a logistics provider. They need a partner that can respond quickly, navigate complexity and deliver with confidence. That is where Freightline Carriers specialises.

As a leading time-critical logistics provider, we support businesses across the UK, Europe and beyond with urgent road and air freight solutions. From critical automotive components and aerospace parts to manufacturing materials and time-sensitive commercial shipments, our experienced team provides the expertise and responsiveness needed to keep supply chains moving.

Operating 24/7, 365 days a year, Freightline offers a comprehensive range of solutions including dedicated UK and European road transport, Next Flight Out (NFO), On-Board Courier (OBC), air charter and Aircraft on Ground (AOG) services. With two-hour collection windows, real-time shipment visibility and proactive communication, we are equipped to respond when conventional logistics solutions aren't enough.

As our customers' requirements continue to evolve, so does Freightline. We are investing in our people, capabilities and geographical presence to ensure we can provide the same high level of service wherever our customers need us.

Today, Freightline has established offices in Warwick and Slovakia, alongside our newly opened North East Office. The expansion



strengthens our ability to support customers across key UK and European markets, while giving our teams greater local knowledge and closer connections with the industries we serve.

The North East opening marks another exciting milestone in our growth journey, but it is not the final one. With further expansion already in the pipeline, we are continuing to build a network that brings Freightline closer to our customers while strengthening our international capabilities.

Our footprint may be growing, but our focus remains unchanged: providing responsive, reliable time-critical logistics when every minute matters.

For more information, visit:

www.freightlinecarriers.co.uk



J Denham Metals

Over 60 Years of Trusted Metal Recycling

Since 1964, the Denham family has been a trusted name in the scrap metal and recycling industry. From a single processing site in Bishop Auckland, we've grown into the largest independent scrap metal processor in the North East of England.

Today, the third generation of the Denham family continues to invest in people, technology, and facilities to deliver reliable, efficient, and profitable recycling solutions for businesses across the region.

We help manufacturers, engineering companies, demolition contractors, and industrial businesses maximise the value of their scrap metal while reducing waste and improving sustainability. Whether you need a one-off collection or a fully managed recycling programme, we'll create a solution tailored to your business.

We specialise in both ferrous and non-ferrous metals, combining decades of industry experience with access to UK and international markets to secure highly competitive prices. This allows us to maximise the value of every load and pass those returns directly to our customers. Trusted by more than 200 manufacturers across the North East, we've built our reputation on dependable collections, responsive service, and long-term partnerships.

Our modern fleet can collect everything from stillages and skips to full 44-tonne articulated loads, ensuring efficient collections with minimal disruption to your operations.



Our dedicated dock facility at Hartlepool allows us to export vessels carrying up to 30,000 tonnes directly to global consumers, giving customers the benefit of stronger market prices while enjoying the personal service of an independent family business. With over 60 years of expertise, industry-leading facilities, flexible collection services, and a customer-first approach, J. Denham Metals is more than a scrap metal processor—we're a trusted recycling partner committed to helping your business recover maximum value and operate more sustainably.

For more information, please contact:

Email: darren@jdenhammetalsltd.com

www.jdenhammetalslimited.com



Darlington College

At the heart of the local community striving to serve the community's educational needs.

Darlington College is a leading provider of vocational, technical education and skills development in the North East, playing a vital role in strengthening workforce pipeline. With a strong focus on employer-led training, the College works closely with industry partners to deliver high-quality, relevant programmes that meet the evolving needs of the region.

The College offers a comprehensive range of qualifications, including full-time vocational courses, T Levels, apprenticeships, and higher education pathways in automotive engineering, manufacturing, and related disciplines.

Through close collaboration with regional employers and organisations such as the North East Automotive Alliance, Darlington College ensures its curriculum remains responsive to emerging technologies, including electrification, advanced manufacturing, and digitalisation. Students benefit from exceptional industry-standard facilities, experienced teaching staff and opportunities to engage with real-world projects, helping them develop the practical skills and behaviours required in modern workplaces.



Darlington College is committed to supporting regional economic growth by developing a highly skilled talent pipeline, enhancing productivity and helping automotive businesses attract, train, and retain the workforce they need to succeed.

For more information, please contact:

Email: CHankey@darlington.ac.uk

www.darlington.ac.uk



Technology Partners Limited

Transforming Manufacturing Performance Through Smarter Business Systems

Technology Partners is a leading Sage Business Partner, helping organisations modernise their finance, operations, and business management systems through innovative ERP and financial software solutions. With more than 25 years of Sage implementation expertise, the company supports businesses across the UK in improving visibility, control, and performance through technology-led transformation.

Working with manufacturers, supply chains, finance & operations, Technology Partners delivers tailored solutions that align technology with strategic business goals. Their expertise spans Sage ERP solutions, Sage Intacct, integrations, training, and support, ensuring customers maximise the value of their investment.

For manufacturers in particular, access to accurate, real-time information is critical. Technology Partners helps businesses improve production planning, inventory management, quality control, financial reporting, and operational efficiency through systems designed to provide greater transparency and informed decision-making. By combining industry knowledge with technical expertise, the team enables organisations to streamline processes, reduce manual workloads, and create scalable foundations for future growth.

What sets Technology Partners apart is their consultative approach. Rather than simply implementing software, they take the time to understand each organisation's challenges, processes, and objectives before recommending a solution. This ensures that technology supports the wider business strategy and delivers measurable improvements across departments.



As digital transformation, automation, and AI continue to reshape the manufacturing sector, Technology Partners remains committed to helping businesses embrace new technologies with confidence. Their focus on long-term partnerships, strategic guidance, and responsive support enables customers to continually evolve and improve in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Technology Partners is delighted to be part of the North East Automotive Alliance and looks forward to collaborating with fellow members across the region. Whether supporting manufacturers with ERP modernisation, financial transformation, process automation, or business intelligence, the team is passionate about helping Northeast businesses unlock greater efficiency, resilience, and growth.

For more information, please contact:

Email: aroxburgh@technologypartners.co.uk

www.technologypartners.co.uk



The Noledge Group

Financial Management & ERP Specialists

With a presence in Newcastle, The Noledge Group has recently joined the North-East Automotive Alliance (NEAA) to build closer ties with the region's automotive supply chain and offer guidance to members on selecting the right financial management and ERP solutions to fit their needs. Noledge helps organisations choose systems that reflect how they actually operate, supporting greater efficiency, improved performance and growth.

"The North-East has a strong, close-knit manufacturing and automotive community and we wanted to be properly part of that rather than working at arm's length," says Chris Hawley, Managing Director of The Noledge Group (GB). "Getting involved with the NEAA gives us a direct route to understanding what businesses here need and where we can genuinely help."

At the core of the group's offering is expertise in Sage and NetSuite. That ranges from Sage 50 for smaller, growing companies through to Sage 200 for scaling mid-market businesses, and up to NetSuite for organisations that need finance, operations and more, running on a single platform. This breadth is backed by three specialist businesses within the group: Pimbrook (Sage 50), Envisage (Sage 200 and Sage Intacct) and OSSM (NetSuite).

Manufacturing, distribution and field services form a significant part of the client base, industries that overlap closely with the



automotive supply chain, alongside sectors such as construction, retail and professional services.

For The Noledge Group, joining the NEAA is part of a broader commitment to the North-East: building relationships locally and understanding the challenges automotive and manufacturing businesses across the region are facing. The aim is to become a familiar, trusted presence that helps organisations operate more efficiently and supports their growth over the long term.

Find out more at:
www.noledge.co.uk



ADM

Delivering Advanced Manufacturing Solutions

ADM is a UK advanced manufacturing and engineering company delivering high-quality fabrication, coded welding, automated robotic manufacturing, powder coating, automotive-grade wet paint finishing and complex assembly for some of the UK's most demanding industries. We work with customers from concept and prototyping through to full production, providing reliable, cost-effective manufacturing solutions backed by a highly skilled workforce and a strong commitment to quality.

Our extensive in-house capabilities include 2D laser cutting, 5-axis laser cutting, CNC press braking, fabrication, robotic and manual welding, automated manufacturing, powder coating, automotive-grade wet paint finishing, and advanced inspection using our TrackScan 3D measurement system. This allows us to deliver complete manufacturing solutions while maintaining exceptional quality, accuracy and traceability throughout the production process.

ADM supports customers across the automotive, clean energy, hydrogen, defence, nuclear, rail and industrial engineering sectors. We continue to invest in the latest technology, equipment and skills to improve efficiency, reduce lead times and provide scalable manufacturing solutions for both low-volume and high-volume production.

As a member of the North East Automotive Alliance, we look



forward to collaborating with fellow members, OEMs and Tier 1 suppliers to strengthen UK manufacturing and develop long-term partnerships across the automotive supply chain.

Whether you're looking for a trusted manufacturing partner, prototype support or a full production solution, ADM has the capability, expertise and capacity to help bring your projects to life.

For more information, please contact:

Email: jenglish@admpressings.co.uk

Tel: +44 (0)191 238 7005

www.admpressings.co.uk



CW Financial Management

Introducing Anthony Cunningham – CW Financial Management

I am proud to work with individuals and businesses across the North East through CW Financial Management, helping people make informed, confident decisions about their financial future.

With over 10 years' experience in the financial services industry, I have built my career around one simple principle: delivering excellent client service by making financial matters easy to understand. I believe everyone deserves clear, straightforward guidance, particularly when it comes to pensions and retirement planning.

For many people, a pension is their most valuable asset after their home, yet it is often the least understood. My aim is to help clients understand what their private or workplace pension pot really means for their future, whether they are just starting to save, approaching retirement or anywhere in between.

I also work closely with clients to maximise the years they have before retirement through smart, tax-efficient planning. Whether that involves increasing pension contributions, making the most of salary sacrifice arrangements, or taking advantage of available tax allowances, careful planning today can have a significant impact on tomorrow's retirement income.



If you would like an informal conversation about your pensions or wider financial planning, I would be delighted to help.

Members of the North East Automotive Alliance are welcome to be introduced to me by Paul Butler, CEO of the North East Automotive Alliance, for a warm, no-obligation introduction. Whether you are looking for reassurance, clarity or simply want to understand your options, I would be pleased to have a conversation.

For more information, please contact:

Anthony Cunningham DipPFS I
Financial Adviser
Email: a.cunningham@sjpp.co.uk
Tel: 07590315692



Ashgarth Engineering

Subcontract Machining and Assembly Services

Based in County Durham, Ashgarth Engineering is a specialist subcontract engineering company providing high-quality, precision-machined components to customers across a diverse range of industries.

Combining extensive technical expertise with a continued commitment to investment and innovation, Ashgarth has established a strong reputation for quality, reliability and responsive customer service. The company specialises in the manufacture of precision-engineered components, supporting everything from higher-volume production requirements to low-volume, technically complex projects.

Ashgarth's advanced CNC machining capabilities, supported by automation and lights-out manufacturing processes, enable the business to deliver efficient and cost-effective production while maintaining consistently high standards of accuracy and repeatability.

Founded in 2017, the company has experienced significant growth in a relatively short period. What began with a single CNC machine and just two employees has developed into a thriving engineering business employing 30 full-time members of staff, including six apprentices, and operating from a modern manufacturing facility in Consett.

Continued investment in the latest manufacturing technology has allowed Ashgarth to expand its CNC machining, inspection and automation capabilities, helping the company remain at the forefront of modern precision engineering. This investment includes advanced multi-axis machining, automated production and specialist high-volume manufacturing capabilities, enabling Ashgarth to support an



increasingly diverse range of customer requirements.

With more than 250 years of combined industry experience across its team, Ashgarth Engineering prides itself on supplying high-quality products, supported by comprehensive inspection and documentation, competitive lead times and dependable customer service. Its continued focus on technology, skilled people, apprenticeships and long-term customer relationships has positioned Ashgarth as a trusted manufacturing partner for businesses requiring reliable subcontract engineering support and precision machining expertise.

For more information, please contact:

Email: dan.morgan@ashgarth-engineering.co.uk
Tel: 01207 655656
www.ashgarth-engineering.co.uk



BE PART OF OUR NETWORK

