

£8 million government boost for manufacturers across England to go digital

- SMEs across England to benefit from £8 million to adopt cutting-edge, digital technology
- projects supported to date include the world's first smart black pudding factory and adopting 3D printing for stop-motion animated puppets
- new funding will help businesses build back better by increasing productivity and reducing emissions

New £8 million government funding for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to help them modernise, go digital and create new jobs.

The funding, part of the government's Made Smarter Adoption programme, will support up to 1,000 small and medium sized manufacturers, across the North West, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and the West Midlands regions, in adopting digital technology.

A pilot of the programme launched in January 2019 in the North West and has already worked with more than 1,000 firms and directly supported over 500 businesses to use digital technology to overcome challenges or access opportunities to grow their business.

The additional funding announced today (18 February 2021) will allow businesses in the North West to continue to access support and, starting in the coming months, for more manufacturers across other parts of England do the same.

The Bury-based Black Pudding Company is already using support from Made Smarter to help create the world's first smart black pudding factory by using automation and digital tools to increase product quality and substantially reduce waste.

Meanwhile, Altrincham-based Mackinnon and Saunders, the stop-motion animators who worked on Postman Pat and collaborated with Hollywood directors Tim Burton, have received support to adopt digital technology such as 3D printing to keep up with bigger, global rivals.

Minister for Investment, Lord Grimstone, said:

The proof is in the pudding and for the companies that have adopted the latest digital technology they are already reaping the rewards.

To help level up the country, we want to ensure businesses have the right tools for the job so that they can build back better and greener from the pandemic.

By supporting adoption of industrial digital technology, such as robotics and automation, additive manufacturing or the Internet of Things, the programme can help level up regions by enabling manufacturers to increase their productivity, create high-skilled well-paid jobs and reduce their emissions.

Chairman, Accenture UK & Ireland, and Made Smarter Commissioner, Olly Benzecry, said:

Having been actively involved in the North West pilot we have seen the power of this scheme to help a broad range of manufacturers exploit industrial digitalisation to increase productivity and employment. It is great to see this approach now being made available more nationally, building on the strong foundation developed and proven in the North West over the past 2 years.

Made Smarter Commissioner and Managing Director of ATEC Engineering Solutions in Salford, Andrea Hough OBE, said:

This support plays a vital role in helping manufacturing SMEs like mine understand the advantages of adopting digital technology. My own firm has seen first hand the importance of digitalisation.

I have supported the pilot programme in the North West since it launched and am pleased that its work will continue and will be rolled out to three new regions to help even more businesses benefit from technology.

Made Smarter Commissioner and Chairman of ICW in Wakefield, Margaret Wood, said:

The rollout of Made Smarter Adoption support is a much needed booster in these changing times. I am happy to see that government is making this investment to enable a new era in manufacturing and to develop the possibilities for a new, digitalised industrial landscape.

By rolling out support across the North of England and the West Midlands, this will help increase regional productivity and innovation, helping to unleash countless possibilities.

Chief Executive of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, Helen Golightly, said:

Despite the rapid pace of digital adoption during the coronavirus pandemic, many SMEs still need support to introduce new technologies within their businesses that can improve productivity, efficiency and performance.

The Made Smarter Adoption Programme will help businesses in the North East adapt to a new, smarter way of working by embracing digital.

Innovation Lead for the West Midlands Combined Authority, Jamie Elliott, said:

This funding is a step in the right direction. We have 14,500 SME manufacturers in the West Midlands many of which would benefit from access to new technologies, which would both boost the region's economy, help create skilled jobs and contribute towards a cleaner, greener West Midlands.

Rolling out the 'Made Smarter Adoption' programme to additional regions is set to help more manufacturers, with support for firms in the North West continuing.

Other projects that have benefitted from support in the North West include:

- Preston-based, nutrition supplement manufacturer Nutree Life has adopted state-of-the-art automation technology to enable faster and more accurate production whilst improving efficiency. This has helped the firm to meet increased demand and allowed them to double their workforce
- Wirral-based Parity Medical has used their support from Made Smarter to develop a virtual showroom for their specialist medical technology that will reduce sales team travel by 30,000 miles a year and accelerate their demonstration process from two days to just one hour

The government's Made Smarter Adoption programme includes free impartial, expert advice, funded digital internships, access to specialised leadership and management training, as well as match funding for digital transformation projects.

SME manufacturers in the North West can continue to access Made Smarter Adoption support.

More information about Made Smarter Adoption support in the North East, the West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber will be made available in the coming months as local partners gear up to work with SMEs to help them take advantage of digital technology.

Alongside support for adoption, government is also investing £147 million through a Manufacturing Made Smarter Challenge to drive innovation in new digital solutions for manufacturers.

Made Smarter is a national movement to drive growth amongst UK makers and advance the UK economy. Backed by world-renowned businesses and the UK government, it will improve the development and adoption of emerging technologies, making a real, everyday difference to people from the boardroom to the factory floor.

Made Smarter was formed following a nationwide review into UK manufacturing that recommended 3 key changes: more ambitious leadership, more innovation in developing new technologies, and faster implementation and adoption of those technologies. It will be boosting the digital skills of industry leaders, bringing businesses and research development together to develop new technology, and helping makers embrace new digital tools. In doing so, we'll inspire the next industrial revolution and make the UK a leader in digital technologies.

For more information, visit madesmarter.uk.