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Centre for Digital Supply Chain Excellence opening coincides with launch of first testbed project in North

World-leading research expertise is at the heart of the Centre for Digital Supply Chain Excellence, which has been launched by Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University.

The University sees strong commercial potential for the game-changing solutions the Centre will allow businesses operating in a vast range of sectors

that are supply chain dependent.

One of four locations across the UK chosen to create a digital testbed environment, the Centre is funded by the Digital Supply Chain Hub program, supported by the Digital Catapult.

The first testbed project focuses on the spare parts supply chain, in a collaboration between the Centre for Digital Supply Chain excellence, the NBT Group, Vytech Solution, Troy Group, Womble Bond Dickinson and North East Automotive Alliance.

Professor Robert MacIntosh, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the faculty of Business and Law at Northumbria University and chair of Chartered Institute of Business Schools, said: “Supply chains are hugely significant in a whole range of sectors and the new Centre for Digital Supply Chain Excellence is an exciting resource for the North East. It brings together insights from practice and world-leading research expertise to test and deploy innovations in our digital and physical hub, driving best practice and improving efficiency for our partners. Importantly, it will also allow our students to acquire insights and skills from some of the leading players in industry, which is key to the ethos of the Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University.

“We invite any public or private organisation, from any sector, to join us in the Centre for collaborative work, such as networking, flagship programmes and projects, funded-projects, CPD courses and consultancy, for example.”

The Centre is a physical and digital space attached to the Research Group associated with the Department of Marketing, Operations and Systems (MOS) and Newcastle Business School at Northumbria. It looks to address the pressures on manufacturing, service and public sectors and their supply chains caused by competitive market, geopolitical issues, the pandemic, environment and energy crisis. With an initial focus on the manufacturing supply chain, the digital testbed enables the development of an agnostic digital twin of an entire spare parts supply chain, accessible to a wide range of sectors, including the NHS, FinTech and construction.

The project follows Newcastle Business School's Innovate UK funded Feasibility Study, in 2021, which demonstrated 50.1% less machine downtime across all manufacturing plants and potential for realising downtime savings of £38.2M through digital spare part supply chain and maintenance

integration.

Northumbria University's Dr Alireza Shokri, Associate Professor (Reader) in Operations and Supply Chain Management and Director of the Centre for Digital Supply Chain Excellence said: "The Centre offers an exciting opportunity to co-create knowledge, impact and innovation to excel supply chain and operations of organisations in any sector. For example, the testbed provides a digital platform to test and try innovative supply chain solutions without disrupting the real-world environment has a number of objectives including enhancing critical measures in the end-to-end supply chain such as inventory, forecasting, supply and demand management and CO2 emission to ultimately address resilience, efficiency and sustainability performance.

"With the opening of the Centre and the first testbed in place, we want to move quickly to a position where we can identify strategic partners who can enhance the potential of the project, regional and national stakeholders who will promote the work we are doing and both trade bodies and businesses for whom continual innovation in operations and supply chain performance, is critical to them."

Toby Bridges, Executive Chair, the NBT Group, part of the consortium that has driven the automotive spare parts project, said: "We are fortunate to have a very talented, passionate and committed consortium who bring their own unique skills and insight to a project, which we are certain will have a very positive impact on a vast range of industry supply chains going forward.

"To eradicate waste, diminish our carbon footprint, and mitigate risk in UK supply chains, ongoing digitisation of mainly manual disconnected processes, is vital. While progress has been notable, the journey to streamline these processes in a trusted environment, persists.

"The establishment of the Centre for Digital Supply Chain Excellence at Northumbria University is a significant milestone, aiding both large and small enterprises in adopting new technologies, alongside current UK initiatives. The Centre will not only assist companies to navigate through digital transformation complexities but also tackle the operational and cultural shifts necessary for seamless integration."

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