

NORTH EAST
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY

North East Institute of Technology

Newsletter

February 2026





Investing in the Next Generation of Engineers

Bishop Auckland College Group marks National Apprenticeship Week by highlighting the vital role apprentices play in strengthening the regional workforce.

From 9–15 February, Bishop Auckland College Group celebrated National Apprenticeship Week by visiting local employers and apprentices to explore the real impact of apprenticeships across the region.

A clear theme emerged within manufacturing and engineering: an ageing workforce means developing a new generation of skilled professionals is more important than ever.

South West Durham Training (SWDT), part of Bishop Auckland College Group, visited Oberlin Filter Company at Aycliffe Business Park. Oberlin designs and manufactures high-performance industrial liquid filtration systems supplied worldwide.

The company employs two SWDT apprentices studying the Engineering and Manufacturing Support Technologies standard.

Second-year apprentice Toby Smith secured his role following a work trial and chose the apprenticeship route because he “wanted to do engineering rather than learn about it in a classroom,” adding that it allows him to earn while gaining hands-on experience.

First-year apprentice Zack Brookes-Wilson progressed from a full-time Level 2 Maintenance course with SWDT into his apprenticeship after completing a successful work placement. He chose this route for the “hands-on experience” and has developed skills including welding and teamwork, working closely with experienced engineers.

Managing Director Mike Johnson said recruiting apprentices is “very rewarding,” allowing experienced staff to pass on their knowledge while strengthening workplace camaraderie. He encouraged other engineering businesses to consider investing in young talent.

National Apprenticeship Week once again highlighted the strength of collaboration between education and industry, ensuring the region’s future workforce is ready to meet demand.



EDC launches two new Digital T Levels

East Durham College is celebrating the launch of its brand new digital T Levels

T Level in Digital Data Analytics

The T Level in Digital Data Analytics is a two-year, Level 3 programme designed for students who want to understand how data drives modern organisations. Learners develop the skills to collect, organise, analyse, and present data in a professional context, alongside completing a substantial industry placement with an employer. The course combines technical knowledge with real-world application, preparing students for careers in data, apprenticeships, or progression to university in computing and analytics-related fields.



T Level in Digital Support and Security

The T Level in Digital Support and Security is a practical, career-focused programme for students interested in IT systems, networking, and cyber security. Over two years, learners build strong technical foundations before specialising in areas such as digital support, infrastructure, network cabling, or cyber security. With a minimum 315-hour industry placement and employer-set projects, the course prepares students for direct entry into technical roles, apprenticeships, or further study in computing and security.

EDC are passionate about training people to flourish in digital careers here in the North East, and the development of these T Levels will ensure that these skills are implemented in the region.

Management success with Unipres

East Durham College is also cementing its working relationship with Unipres through an exciting cohort of Level 5 management apprentices. Following their successful Level 3 Team Leader apprenticeships, these executive managers are embarking on a new management programme that will support the company in future-proofing its management progression strategy.

Carly Dakers, Management Trainer and Assessor, delivers this programme on site at Unipres, and her working relationship with the team there are going from strength to strength.



Rob Dodds, Training Controller, commented:

"When I first met Carly it was clear that she understood what Unipres as an Employer required for their staff to be successful with their apprenticeship. Carly is hard working and very well organised and she has been a pleasure to work with over the past year. She is always there for the learners if they require help or if I have any questions."





Skills Week 2026: Celebrating Talent Across the College

The College rounded off January with its annual Skills Week (26–30 January), a celebration of learner talent spanning engineering, construction, aeronautics, health, public services, and the creative arts. Competitions, industry-judged challenges, and practical showcases filled workshops, salons, and classrooms across the college, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in real-world conditions. See our full [photo gallery](#).

Engineering and technology were particularly well represented. Apprentices from the Process, Instrumentation and Mechanical Trade (PIMT) programme demonstrated precision skills on the college's industry-standard process rigs, overseen by lecturers and judged by industry professionals. Aeronautical Engineering learners across both year groups took part in aircraft build and egg drop challenges, putting theory into practice under the guidance of the team. Meanwhile, AME students across multiple levels competed in themed engineering challenges, each designed to test technical competency in realistic workshop settings.

T Level students in Design, Surveying and Planning presented ambitious college extension proposals to Ruth Dent, Director of Assets and Customer at RE:GEN Group, having researched, designed, and produced professional-standard presentations as their Skills Week project. Among the cohort are Net Zero Technology (NZE) scholars, whose work on the project also forms part of the college's growing pipeline of green skills talent and its connections with industry partners including BP. This was a fantastic opportunity for our learners to present their ideas to professionals from the college's Construction Industry Advisory Board.

It was also a meaningful week for the college's Choices and Inspire programmes, which support young people who have found traditional education challenging. Choices learners took part in a wide range of skills challenges including Carpentry and Joinery and Automotive activities throughout the week. Over 62% of Choices learners go on to further study, with others stepping into employment or internships; the Association of Colleges recently featured the programme as a [case study](#).



THE BIG APPRENTICESHIP EVENT: 19TH ANNUAL SHOWCASE

February brought further cause for celebration as Hartlepool College welcomed up to 70 employers and hundreds of attendees to its 19th BIG Apprenticeship Event, held during National Apprenticeship Week (9–15 February 2026). Engineering, construction, and technical trades featured prominently among the employers exhibiting, reflecting the college's strong STEM provision and its deep roots in the Tees Valley's industrial economy.



NORTH EAST

I N S T I T U T E O F
T E C H N O L O G Y

New Renewable-Energy Technology Powers Next Generation of Engineers at Middlesbrough College Group



Middlesbrough College has taken a significant step forward in its commitment to future-focused engineering education, thanks to the arrival of new renewable-energy training equipment supplied by Festo.

This investment marks an important enhancement to the curriculum delivered at the college, ensuring learners gain hands-on experience with the technologies shaping tomorrow's workforce.

The equipment will be embedded into the Higher National Certificate and Diploma programmes in Electrical/Electronic and Mechanical Engineering, giving students access to real-world test data that complements the theoretical foundations taught within the course. By working directly with industry-standard systems, learners will be better prepared for the demands of modern engineering roles across the region and beyond.

Curriculum Team Leader, Daniel Still, welcomed the addition, highlighting the impact it will have on both teaching and student development:

"The Solar Thermal Rig especially will bring to life the theoretical aspects studied across all pathways in Engineering.

"At the same time, it will help students strengthen their practical skills and build confidence in independent study. We are all looking forward to bringing it into the curriculum in 2026-27."

This expansion reflects Middlesbrough College's ongoing commitment to supporting the North East's growing clean-energy sector and ensuring NEIoT learners are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving industry.



Now based at the Middlehaven Campus, TTE offers aspiring engineers exceptional pathways into industry, opening doors to careers across multiple engineering specialisms.

Find out more about Engineering at Middlesbrough College and TTE



**NORTHERN
SKILLS**

M C Middlesbrough College Group

TTE



Dyer Crowned National Winners for Developing Future Talent



We're delighted to share that Dyer has been named National Winner – Developing Future Talent at the Make UK National Manufacturing Awards, recognising the strength of the Apprenticeship Programme delivered in partnership with New College Durham and the impact it's having in closing the engineering and manufacturing skills gap.

The awards ceremony was held at Madame Tussauds London, bringing together leaders from industry, education and government to celebrate excellence across the sector.

Adam Leggett from Dyer commented: "You have to grow your own talent – otherwise you'll run out of it. This award reflects the time, care and commitment our teams put into developing the next generation, and why apprenticeships remain central to the future of our business and our industry."

Having already been named regional winners in October 2025, taking home the national title is a huge moment and a real testament to everyone behind the programme — from apprentices and mentors to managers, ASCs and the wider apprenticeship team, alongside our partners.

A fantastic achievement — and one we're incredibly proud to be part of.



Jackson Gill Secures WorldSkills Silver

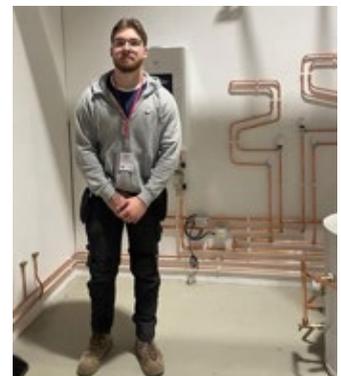
Jackson Gill's achievements in 2025 have firmly established him as a rising star in the plumbing industry, and his latest success on the world stage is a true testament to his dedication and skill.

Competing at the WorldSkills Plumbing competition in Bridgend from 25 - 28 November 2025, Jackson earned a silver medal, scoring an impressive 86.38 out of 100 in, narrowly missing out on gold by just 0.08 of a mark. Going head-to-head with the world's best young plumbers, he demonstrated remarkable technical prowess, precision under pressure, and professionalism throughout the competition. Securing silver at this level is an incredible achievement and places him among the very best emerging talents in the trade.

This international success builds on a dominant year nationally. Jackson won both the regional and national Heating and Plumbing (HIP) competitions in 2025, showcasing his expertise in heating systems and plumbing and cementing his reputation as a versatile and highly skilled tradesperson. His earlier silver medal at Oldham College and regional victory at York College further highlight the consistency and determination that have defined his journey.

Selected for individual training in Northern Ireland earlier in the year, Jackson's commitment to continually improving his craft has clearly paid off.

All the staff of the plumbing department at New College Durham are extremely proud of Jackson's achievements and look forward to seeing the continued success he will undoubtedly achieve in the future.





Supporting Success: EPA Preparation for Plate Welder Apprentices

TDR Training is proud to continue strengthening its provision for welding apprentices as several Plate Welder apprentices approach their End-Point Assessment (EPA) this spring.

Our specialist welding instructors are providing enhanced preparation sessions focused on practical test readiness, safety, and compliance. In addition, apprentices are receiving structured support to achieve industry-recognised welding coding qualifications—a critical requirement for many fabrication and engineering employers.

These qualifications help ensure apprentices progress into well-paid, in-demand technical roles across the region's manufacturing sector. This commitment aligns with TDR Training's wider mission to deliver industry-led skills development and support apprentices into high-value careers.



TDR Apprenticeship Open Day - 20 February 2026

TDR Training were excited to welcome over 250 school leavers, adults, parents, and guardians to TDR Training's Apprenticeship Open Day on Friday 20 February 2026. Visitors had the chance to meet tutors, assessors, the recruitment team and connect with employers such as GeoPura, JDR Cable Systems, Siemens Energy, British Engines, Country Style Foods, amongst others.

Tours of our workshops included CNC, hand fitting, mechanical and electrical maintenance, and welding. Visitors were able to explore apprenticeships in Engineering, Manufacturing, Science, and Business. The event provided fantastic opportunities for anyone considering an apprenticeship pathway in 2026!





TyneCoastCollege

T Level Students Get Hands-On At Our New Build Site



We are excited to highlight the valuable opportunities the construction of our new campus will create for T Level students. From February to May, a cohort of students studying Building Services Engineering for Construction at South Tyneside College will undertake four-week block industry placements with Castle on our new build site.

These placements will provide students with meaningful, hands-on experience within a live construction environment, enabling them to develop practical skills and gain insight into the day-to-day operations of a major construction project. By working alongside industry professionals, students will strengthen their readiness for future careers while contributing to the next generation of skilled talent for the sector.

Engineering Student Achieves Success At Regional Skills Challenge



Our engineering students recently had the opportunity to showcase their technical skills and creativity by taking part in a regional engineering challenge hosted by Middlesbrough College and delivered by NEIoT.

The event brought together fellow NEIoT members from East Durham College, New College Durham and Middlesbrough College, creating a fantastic environment for collaboration and friendly competition.

We are delighted to celebrate our engineering student, Noah Wilburn, who achieved an impressive second place, demonstrating his outstanding hard work, commitment and technical talent. The competition provided a valuable real-world experience, allowing students to collaborate with like-minded students from across the region while applying their skills in a practical, industry-focused challenge.

NORTH EAST
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Higher and Degree
Apprenticeships



Drive engineering innovation in your organisation

Level 6 BEng
Product Design and Development Engineer
Degree Apprenticeship



Applications now open for September 2026
Find out more ncl.ac.uk/electrical-engineer



NORTH EAST
I N S T I T U T E O F
T E C H N O L O G Y

Next-Gen Engineers Take on University-Level Challenge

Some of the brightest young engineering minds in the North East have showcased their technical skills at a regional engineering challenge hosted by Middlesbrough College, delivered by the [North East Institute of Technology](#) (NEIoT).

The NEIoT engineering challenge brought together T Level engineering students from Middlesbrough College, East Durham College, New College Durham and Tyne Coast College for a full day of hands-on competition, testing precision, creativity and problem-solving under pressure. Across the day, students completed two technical challenges. In the morning, competitors reverse-engineered a physical component using Creality Sermoon 3D scanners, producing accurate CAD models and orthographic drawings. In the afternoon session, students worked from a digital STL file to recreate the component to industry standards.

Following a closely fought competition, Airden Clark, a student from New College Durham, secured third place, while Noah Wilburn, from South Tyneside College, achieved second place. First place was awarded to Ethan Sawyer, from Ingleby Barwick, who studies T Level Design and Development at Middlesbrough College. Ethan said: "I really enjoyed my experience. Although I wasn't nervous, I did find it stressful towards the end, especially as we had to use reverse engineering, which is a university-level skill. I'm both surprised and pleased to have won. It's been a brilliant opportunity to compete and develop my skills, and something I signed up for to help my CV truly stand out."

The event was supported by [Autodesk](#), whose sponsorship enabled participating colleges to access industry-standard software and invest in advanced Creality Sermoon 3D scanners, allowing students to undertake ultra-precise reverse engineering by capturing complex surfaces with exceptional accuracy.

The competition was judged by Steve Taylor of [3DGBIRE Ltd](#), an Autodesk Learning Partner and organiser of WorldSkills additive manufacturing competitions. Taylor also authored the test project for the WorldSkills finals held in Lyon in September 2024.

Iwan Roberts, Education Account Manager for Autodesk Education Experiences, said: "At Autodesk, we're passionate about helping the next generation of engineers develop the skills they need to succeed in industry. Events like this bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world engineering, giving students hands-on experience with the same digital workflows used by professionals every day."

Dr Sharon Grant, Director NEIoT, added: "This competition demonstrated the outstanding talent coming through our colleges and the value of collaborative, industry-led learning. We are incredibly grateful to Autodesk for their support, which has enabled access to cutting-edge technology and valuable staff training across our partner colleges.

"I would also like to thank Steve Taylor for his expertise in helping to make this such an inspiring and high-quality event. Congratulations to all the participants for their dedication, and especially to the top three students for their outstanding achievements."

The North East Institute of Technology is a partnership between leading further education colleges across the region and Newcastle University, working closely with employers including Esh Group and Nissan. The partnership delivers higher technical education in engineering, manufacturing, digital and construction, equipping learners with advanced skills to support regional growth and innovation.

Bishop Auckland College, Derwentside College and Hartlepool College of Further Education have recently joined the partnership, further strengthening NEIoT's commitment to accelerating higher technical skills development across the North East.



December 2025

NORTH EAST INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY'S DIGITAL AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME BRINGS CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY EXPERTISE TO ITS BIGGEST COHORT YET

Construction and Built Environment businesses support North East colleges to deliver the best quality education to the future workforce



[North East Institute of Technology's Digital Ambassador Programme brings Construction industry expertise to its biggest ever cohort | Institutes of Technology](https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7407360789751349249)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7407360789751349249>

STEM On Track is a national STEM and engineering programme that enables students to build and race a full-sized kart while completing accredited STEM learning through our digital Race Academy platform. The programme is designed to build practical engineering skills, improve STEM attainment, and strengthen pathways into technical and engineering careers.



Industry partners typically support STEM On Track by sponsoring schools, providing careers advice, or supporting national events. In return, partners benefit from:

- Strong Social Return on Investment (SROI), up to £33 for every £1 invested
- Direct engagement with future STEM talent
- Volunteering opportunities aligned to ESG and social value reporting
- Brand visibility at regional events and National Finals

We currently work with a wide range of industry partners including BWT Alpine Formula One Team, Mercedes-AMG, Haas F1 Team, Kier, Stellantis and the LFC Foundation, among others.

Last year alone, the programme delivered:

- Over 4,000 hours of structured STEM learning per sponsored school
- Significant engagement with students from underrepresented backgrounds
- High renewal rates from both schools and partners

This short explainer video provides a helpful overview of the programme: [STEM On Track Explainer Video](#)

Testimonials from our Partners and Schools here: [Alpine F1](#), [Stellantis](#), [Salford City Academy](#)

<https://www.stemontrack.com>



SKILLS BOOTCAMP IN CONSTRUCTION ADDRESSES CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SKILLS GAP

On Wednesday 14 January NEIoT partner Hartlepool College of Further Education shared a first look at the Groundworker Skills Bootcamp - Meet the Employers event. The full press release is now live, highlighting how this collaborative initiative is helping tackle the region's construction skills shortage and creating real job opportunities across Tees Valley.

Working with [Tees Valley Combined Authority](#), [North East Institute of Technology \(NEIoT\)](#), CECA North East and [Seymour Skills Academy](#), the partnership has already identified 25+ vacancies for new entrants, with more expected as demand grows.

To learn more about the programme, the employers involved, and how the collaboration is supporting both new starters and existing groundworkers, you can read the full update here:

<https://lnkd.in/enqFxFZT>

Contact to register your interest:

 sam-amy.hall@hartlepoolfe.ac.uk

 01429 857199



CECA North East feedback: This is a fantastic initiative. Our plans are to scale this model across the North East region to run more sessions like this (excellent candidates on the day by the way 🍌) to try and get more people started in a career in the civil engineering sector.



Calling North East employers in Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering

Why are Level 4 & 5 technical skills falling behind, and what needs to change?

We're inviting employers to share quick insights on:

- Barriers to higher technical training
- Whether current qualifications meet your skills needs
- Upskilling staff and attracting new talent

 **Takes just 5 minutes**

 Your feedback will shape future training, employer-led pathways, and the region's talent pipeline.

Help close the higher technical skills gap in the North East.

 **Complete the Microsoft Form <https://lnkd.in/esw NX-G>**

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Are Higher Technical Skills Meeting Your Needs?

Tell us what's working
– and what isn't in
Advanced Manufacturing
& Engineering

Take the Survey

Calling Manufacturing and Engineering Employers across the Tees Valley. The North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC) is leading the development of the Tees Valley Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and we need your voice.

🌟 Your insight matters.

We're inviting employers, especially SMEs and supply-chain partners to help shape a skills system that truly reflects current and future workforce needs.

👤 Join our employer-only LSIP Roundtable:

📅 Wednesday 4th of March 2026

🕒 10am

📍 Online

🔗 Register here:

<https://lnkd.in/eFhesQFG>



At the roundtable:

- ✕ Sharing real-world insight on current and future industry skills gaps
- ✓ Feeding employer needs into colleges, universities and training providers
- 🌟 Helping ensure funding and provision reflect how this sector is evolving
- 🌱 Strengthening the talent pipeline

Be part of the conversation shaping the future skills pipeline.

[Manufacturing and Engineering sector skills online roundtable Tickets Wed, Mar 4, 2026 at 10:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)



Funded by



Department
for Education

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is being refreshed, and this is your chance to shape the future skills landscape in our region. Your insight is vital to ensuring employers' needs are heard loud and clear. If you operate in any of these key sectors within the North East Combined Authority, please take a few minutes to complete the relevant survey below:

🔧 Advanced Manufacturing <https://lnkd.in/efaYgM-2>

🛡️ Defence, Security & Space <https://lnkd.in/eXjXRSbN>

🧬 Life Science, Pharma & Process <https://lnkd.in/ejkVtY4e>

🌊 Offshore Wind & Energy Transition <https://lnkd.in/eC7NyBNV>

💻 Tech, Digital & AI <https://lnkd.in/e2cdcPSD>

🏗️ Construction https://lnkd.in/eGvvuP_P

Your feedback directly informs the region's skills priorities and helps ensure training and provision align with real business needs.



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