NORTH EAST
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY

BUILDING THE TECHNICAL CAPABILITY TO DRIVE THE NORTH EAST'S NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH

Higher-level technical expertise designed around employers across the North East's advanced and emerging sectors.

Explore what this could mean for your business.

Email **neiotenquiries@neiot.ac.uk** or scan the QR code.

BECOMING AN EMPLOYER PARTNER

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Most organisations are operating with greater technical complexity than they were five years ago. Systems are more digital. Compliance standards are higher. Clients expect more.

At the same time, experienced technical staff are harder to recruit and expensive.

The North East's strength in digital, manufacturing, engineering, construction, business and management, and retrofit depends on deeper technical capability at every level. Without it, growth slows and competitive position weakens.

In rapidly evolving sectors such as digital and AI, capability development must keep pace with change.

Strengthening higher-level technical capability in-house reduces recruitment spend, limits reliance on external consultancy and protects operational performance.

Businesses that invest in technical depth now, will gain a measurable advantage in winning contracts and attracting talent.

If you want to assess where your technical exposure sits, email neiotenquiries@neiot.ac.uk or scan the QR code.

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY GET

We work with businesses of all sizes, from growing SMEs to major regional employers across engineering, manufacturing, digital, construction and technical sectors.

When you partner with the IoT, you are not buying a training course. You are strengthening technical capability inside your business.

That could result in a manufacturing engineer strengthening automation capability; a rail technician deepening systems expertise, or a digital specialist building advanced cyber resilience.

In sectors such as digital, manufacturing, engineering and construction - where the North East continues to grow - this depth of expertise strengthens your competitive position.

We will help you identify opportunities to upskill or reskill employees, or tap into the future talent pipeline from courses we run. Learning is aligned to real operational priorities, so impact is visible during delivery. This means capability improves while the employee continues contributing to revenue.

Before anything begins, we clarify the role you want strengthened, the outcome you expect and how progress will be reviewed.

Want to explore what capability your business could strengthen next?

Email neiotenquiries@neiot.ac.uk
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HOW ENGAGEMENT WORKS

It starts with a short conversation about where pressure is building.

We discuss the roles that are hardest to recruit, the areas where projects stall, and the technical capability you will need over the next year.

Strengthening internal technical depth at any level improves readiness for contracts within regional and national supply chains.

In many cases, employer contribution is significantly lower than the cost of external recruitment, and funding contributions are explained clearly at the outset.

From there, we outline a practical route forward. That may involve developing one existing team member against a defined challenge. It may involve building a progression pathway to reduce future recruitment pressure.

Before delivery begins, we agree what success looks like in commercial terms. That could be reduced downtime, improved efficiency, stronger in-house expertise or readiness for new contracts.

You have a named contact throughout. Progress is reviewed formally. Adjustments are made if required.

This is structured support, not open-ended training.

Start with a focused discussion about your current pressures.

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WHAT MAKES THE IoT DIFFERENT

Many employers already invest in internal development. Others use private providers when a short-term need arises. The North East IoT offers something different.

Employers gain access to specialist facilities, advanced equipment and technical expertise aligned to digital, manufacturing, engineering, construction, business and management, and retrofit. This depth of capability would be difficult to replicate independently and can reduce reliance on external contractors.

The North East IoT is not one single site. It connects colleges, universities and employers across the region, including New College Durham, East Durham College, Middlesbrough College, Tyne Coast College, Newcastle University, Bishop Auckland College, Hartlepool College, Derwentside College, Durham University, Darlington College and TDR Training Limited to strengthen higher-level technical skills that support evolving supply chain standards and sector growth.

Provision is employer-led and delivered through applied, work-based learning. Employers sit on advisory boards, shape what gets built and bring real operational challenges to the table. The IoT's role is to turn that intelligence into programmes that work.

Find out more here:
neiot.ac.uk/partners

We complement internal development. We deepen technical capability where it matters most.

If you would like to understand how this compares to your current approach, email neiotenquiries@neiot.ac.uk or scan the QR code.

RISK REDUCTION AND FLEXIBILITY

Committing to skills development should feel controlled and commercially sound.

Learning is structured around live business projects, so contribution continues while capability deepens.

Built-in review points ensure investment remains aligned to commercial priorities and allow adjustments where required.

Funding contributions are clarified at the outset. There are no hidden stages or unexpected obligations.

Many employers begin with one learner aligned to a defined objective and expand once value is evident. Clear progression pathways can also strengthen retention while deepening technical capability.

If you want to explore a low-risk starting point, email neiotenquiries@neiot.ac.uk or scan the QR code.

ESH GROUP AND THE NORTH EAST INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Darush Dodds
Director of Corporate Affairs and Social Value
Esh Group

What happens when industry pulls up a chair?

Esh Group is one of the North of England's largest construction businesses, operating across the civil engineering and infrastructure, affordable housing, and commercial build sectors.

With around 70 apprentices active at any given time - around 55 of whom study at colleges that form part of the North East IoT, covering everything from business admin and quantity surveying to project planning – they're not short of initiative when it comes to skills. But when the North East IoT came along, they saw something they couldn't replicate alone.

A seat at the table

That shift - from leading to collaborating - is at the heart of what the North East IoT offers employers of all sizes. Esh had the relationships, the resource and the drive. The IoT gave them a regional table to sit at alongside other businesses and education providers they wouldn't otherwise have been in the room with.

For smaller businesses in Esh's supply chain, that table exists too - and the work done by anchor employers like Esh helps shape provision that benefits the whole sector.

Darush Dodds, Director of Corporate Affairs and Social Value at Esh Group, said: "For us, it's about strength in numbers. It's about getting a different perspective."

Horizon scanning

That intelligence flows both ways. The IoT gives Esh sight of what other businesses across the region are facing - and a mechanism to turn that collective knowledge into something practical.

> **"We are lucky to have so many providers on our board, but we need more input from businesses because we want to collaborate on the development of future programme provision."**
>
> **Darush Dodds**
> Director of Corporate Affairs and Social Value
> Esh Group

The most tangible outcome of the partnership to date is a groundworker bootcamp, developed through the IoT with Esh as lead construction partner, supported by CECA North East and funded by the Tees Valley Combined Authority.

Ninety-two hours of guided learning over four weeks, designed to take people with little or no construction experience and give them every ticket and certification needed to work on site. Crucially, employers ring-fenced vacancies before training even began.

Seven participants completed the 4-week bootcamp. Six secured jobs, including three with Esh. The programme worked. Within weeks of completion, graduates were starting their first day on site.

More than just training

What made the bootcamp work wasn't just the training. It was the intelligence behind it - businesses around the IoT advisory board identifying a gap, pooling their knowledge of what the role requires, and building something specific enough to matter. That's the IoT doing what it's designed to do - turning employer insight into provision that fills real gaps - for new entrants and existing staff alike.

The same logic applies to what's coming next. Esh is currently working with the North East IoT on understanding the skills implications of district heating network retrofitting - an emerging area of infrastructure work across the region. New technical roles will be needed. Existing ones will need to evolve.

And Esh is already raising questions about emerging capability gaps - from drone operation for site inspections and surveys, to the digital skills required as construction becomes increasingly technology-led. By getting the right businesses and educators in the same room early, the IoT is helping to ask the right questions before the skills gap becomes a crisis.

Investment in the future

Esh's broader activity - supporting T-level placements, working in schools, bringing real industry challenges into college classrooms - reflects their own long-term investment in the region's workforce. The IoT doesn't replace that. It multiplies it. Through the advisory board, Esh can work with colleges and businesses across the North East much easier than they could on an individual basis. And in return, they get perspectives and challenges from outside their own four walls.

When asked what the best part of the collaboration has been, Darush said: "Better understanding of colleges' problems and frustrations - you can appreciate things more and you can help them solve it if you understand."

For businesses considering involvement, Esh's message is clear. The IoT works because the people around the table are genuinely invested. It needs more of them - particularly businesses willing to bring real operational challenges, whether that's finding talent, upskilling existing staff into higher-level technical roles, or getting ahead of the skills their sector will need next.

DRIVING THE FUTURE OF MANUFACTURING

Claire Jones
Head of Skills
Nissan

In the rapidly shifting landscape of the automotive industry, the transition from Internal Combustion Engines (ICE) to Electric Vehicles (EV) has added a new dimension on upskilling the workforce.

For years, a skills gap has existed because traditional classroom learning struggled to keep pace with the high-speed evolution of a modern factory, leaving many young people in the North East feeling that a career at a world-leading automative business such as Nissan was out of reach.

As the region's largest employer with nearly 6000 staff, Nissan recognised that staying ahead of this curve was not only a business requirement but a regional responsibility; so they chose to build talent rather than wait for it to appear.

Central to this ongoing mission is Nissan's anchor partnership role with the North East Institute of Technology (NEIoT), a collaboration designed to bridge the gap between classroom theory and industrial application, with a focus on electric vehicles and digital innovation, ensuring long-term career paths for the next generation and driving growth in the region.

The voice of the industry

At the heart of the NEIoT's effectiveness is the integration of high-level industrial expertise into the educational framework. Claire Jones, Nissan's Head of Skills sits on the NEIoT Strategy Board, providing that valuable voice of the industry.

"Working collaboratively with the NEIoT ensures that the curriculum delivered by Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) providers isn't just theoretically sound but is aligned with the real-world needs of advanced manufacturing, creating a blueprint that benefits both Nissan and regional employers alike," comments Claire.

This collaboration allows Nissan to share foresight into transformative trends such as AI and high voltage battery systems, enhancing the NEIoT training modules before skills gaps become critical. Consequently, Nissan's partnership with the NEIoT ensures that every employer in the North East can benefit from a workforce that is ready for the complexities of modern industry.

A holistic approach to apprenticeships

Nissan manages between 200 and 250 apprentices at any given time, with an impressive retention and completion rate exceeding 90%.

Recognising that post-COVID cohorts often face lower confidence levels, Nissan have also integrated wraparound care into the curriculum. This includes modules on mental health, neurodiversity, financial management, and life skills such as safe driving, to help build more rounded individuals with personal resilience - who are better equipped to lead in a fast-paced and rapidly evolving work environment.

A regional commitment to economic growth

Nissan recognises its role in supporting a supply chain that employs tens of thousands across the region. In its partnership with the NEIoT, Nissan helps set a gold standard for technical education that benefits smaller regional employers who may not have the resources to design their own training programs.

As Claire notes, “the strength of the NEIoT lies in the heritage of collaboration unique to the North East. It is a relationship built on the private sector’s drive for quality and cost-efficiency meeting the public sector’s commitment to inclusive education.”

The partnership between Nissan and the North East IoT serves as a blueprint for how industry and education can co-evolve. By aligning curriculum with future industrial needs and fostering an inclusive environment for learners from primary school to postgraduate levels, the IoT is ensuring the North East remains a powerhouse for advanced manufacturing, on a global stage.

If you would like to explore similar impact within your organisation, email:
neiotenquiries@neiot.ac.uk
or scan the QR code.

TRIDONIC AND THE NORTH EAST INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Ben Kennard
Manufacturing and Supply Chain Manager
Tridonic UK

TRIDONIC

Building the pipeline from scratch

When Ben Kennard, Manufacturing and Supply Chain Manager at Tridonic UK and his dedicated team, sat through three weeks of interviews and still couldn't find the right people, he started doing the maths differently.

Tridonic's Durham Spennymoor site - a precision electronics manufacturer producing around three million units a year - was facing a familiar but urgent problem. Employing around 170 staff, around four experienced operators were retiring every year. The external recruitment market wasn't delivering. Candidates were disengaged, unfamiliar with the equipment, and needed months of training before they were productive. Tridonic needed a better route.

The answer came through a conversation with Business Durham, who connected Ben with the North East IoT. That introduction changed the approach entirely.

A partnership that builds from the ground up

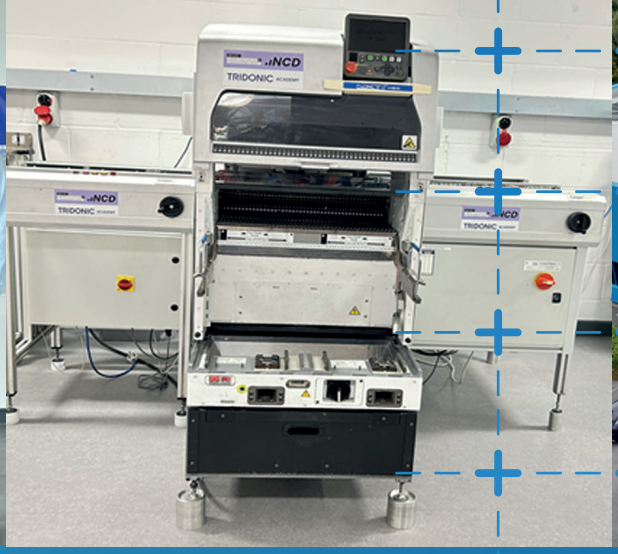
Through the IoT, Ben was connected to the right people at New College Durham - not just the right department, but the specific staff needed to co-design a new programme from scratch. Working with the college's electrical and engineering faculty, Tridonic co-wrote the curriculum for what became the Tridonic Electronics Academy: a dedicated training course running inside the college, with its own branded room, equipment and materials.
The IoT's role was critical here. As Ben puts it: "When businesses reach out to colleges, you can end up speaking to four or five different people. Having the IoT meant I knew who to talk to, and who could make decisions."

The programme works across multiple levels simultaneously. The college provides the accredited qualification. Tridonic contributes 20 per cent of the content - three hours of hands-on delivery every Thursday for free, covering practical skills like surface mount placement and hand soldering, using actual Tridonic equipment installed on campus.

Students learn on the same machines used on Tridonic's production floor. That's not accidental. By the time a student joins Tridonic, they're already familiar with the equipment, the processes and the people.

The commercial case

The logic behind the academy is straightforward. As Ben explains: "Rather than invest time interviewing people who are not interested, we can train people who are interested in electronics." Three weeks of fruitless external interviews was roughly equivalent to 120 hours of in-college delivery. Same time investment - very different return.



The initial setup cost around £30,000, covering the machine transfer, project management and room fit-out. But the ongoing saving is in productivity. As Ben puts it: "New employees from the college are delivering within the month, whereas a new employee from outside in the marketplace takes six months." Every early hire from the academy means five fewer months of below-capacity output - and that compounds quickly across a succession plan built around several retirements a year.

The first cohort of 29 students completed the programme in 2024. The first graduate to join Tridonic was James Trudgill, then 21, who came in as a production operator and has already been promoted to cell leader - managing a small team within his first year. James describes what the academy gave him: "It was very informative and very practical. The soldering and machine training gave me the opportunity to prepare for the start of my new role - I felt I had everything I needed."

A leadership programme starting this autumn will develop him further. With career progression potentially reaching engineer level, Tridonic presents students with a clear, structured pathway from the production floor upward. James is the proof it works.

Tridonic is believed to be the only electronics manufacturer in the North East delivering this kind of free, industry-led training through an IoT institution - recognition that has contributed to the business being awarded the winner for Manufacturer of the Year 2026 at the North East England Awards.

What the IoT makes possible

Tridonic already had the drive and the internal expertise. What the IoT provided was structure, institutional connection and the governance to make it sustainable. A formal partnership agreement now in place - running to 2030 - sets out shared standards for safeguarding, quality and reporting, giving both parties the confidence to plan long-term. A second cohort of 29 students is already lined up, with the programme set to expand further from September 2026.

Several existing staff are currently completing higher-level maintenance, Business Improvement and test apprenticeships through New College Durham and East Durham College - both IoT member institutions - moving into technician roles with significantly stronger earning potential.

Ben chairs the IoT employer advisory board quarterly, feeding real operational intelligence back into the system and helping shape provision that benefits the wider sector, not just Tridonic.

For businesses weighing up whether engagement is worth the effort, his answer is direct: "Most people who reach out to the IoT already know that developing the next generation is the right thing to do. The IoT helps you structure that need."

START WITH A CONVERSATION

Engagement doesn't require immediate commitment to a programme. It begins with clarity.

We can review your recruitment pressures, growth plans and technical capability gaps, outline the potential impact specific to your organisation, and the level of investment required.

A short discussion often brings practical next steps into focus.

There is no obligation. Only insight.

Employer engagement lead:

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GATSBY

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