



VEHICLE ELECTRIFICATION OPPORTUNITY EVENT OPENS UP NEW HORIZONS

A bright automotive future awaits the North East, thanks to surging electric vehicle adoption. That was the uplifting message from an event bringing together engineering and manufacturing businesses keen to tap into emerging opportunities.

The Vehicle Electrification Opportunity event, hosted by B2B marketing company, Horizon Works, provided a deep insight into the electric vehicle landscape, its future and its challenges. With the UK mandating 100% electric car and van sales by 2035, it spotlighted how engineering firms can capitalise on this pivotal moment.

Recent investment totalling over £3 billion has cemented the North East's reputation as being the leading region in the UK, if not Europe, for vehicle electrification. Headlining this is Nissan's high-profile commitment to develop its EV hub, plans for EV36Zero, and to manufacture three new electric models at its North East mega-plant, including the next-generation Leaf and electric editions of popular Qashqai and Juke SUVs.

The gigafactory revolution has also reached the region via AESC's new battery plant in Washington. This adds to existing prominence, with the North East

now containing six OEMs, 21 R&D hubs, 34 tier-one suppliers and over 200 wider supply chain companies. Industrial clustering allows extensive collaboration, while unique Power Electronics, Machines and Drives (PEMD) capabilities enable fully integrated research and production.

Paul Butler highlighted the strength of support available for vehicle electrification in North East England, through organisations such as the NEAA, EV North and the North East Battery Alliance.

Paul was joined by Christopher Appleby, Innovation Manager at the NEAA, who covered recent announcements in the UK's NetZero plans for 2050 and the landmark decision between the EU and the UK on rules of origin regulations.

The recent EU-UK trade deal extension pleased attendees. Delaying tighter rules of origin regulations until the end of 2026 on EVs traded across the channel facing a 10% tariff, potentially impacting the UK by £4.3 Billion over the next two years. This deal will now allow North East companies the time needed to scale up and bring online facilities such as the new AESC gigafactories to progress and provide certainty for manufacturers to move ahead with EV investments.

Chris then took the opportunity to delve into likely supply chain opportunities in the North East for components like housings,

pressings, precision fasteners, wiring, cabling and so much more, and urged businesses to lean into their existing specialities to grasp emerging EV opportunities, while keeping an eye on future developments.

Christopher Black, Global Director Automotive Business Development and Sven Brehler, Director of Engineering at global distributor and manufacturer of fasteners and category-C products, TR Fastenings, also presented. They explained how collaboration and early involvement during the design stages can provide substantial benefits in assembly, product life cycle and recyclability. TR offers extensive technical consultation and support to help manufacturers optimise their joining solutions, which has led to sustainable supply into multiple programmes.

Samantha Vassallo, Managing Director of Horizon Works, said: "Technology, investment and innovation around EV is shaping the industrial future of both North East England and the UK as a whole.

"We were therefore delighted that the NEAA and TR Fastenings were able to share their experiences and expertise with delegates. Attendees left the event with both practical advice on working with the EV sector, and a picture of what the future looks like, thanks to the speakers' invaluable insights."