

# MAKING IT BIG

Manufacturing excellence was celebrated at Made in the UK 2024 with North West EV company Evec winning Startup of the Year. On the same day Insider held its Future of Manufacturing forum

The pinnacle in manufacturing expertise from across England, Wales and Northern Ireland was celebrated at the prestigious Made in the UK Awards 2024.

The awards recognised the UK's most innovative and successful manufacturers, ranging from SMEs to multinationals, drawing together the winners from all the regional events in 2023/24. The event, which took place in Liverpool, was compered by former England rugby union star Kyran Bracken.

Evec managing director Tom Bloor (left) receives the Startup of the Year award

## THE WINNERS

### National Made Smarter Adoption Award

This award celebrated manufacturers that have achieved success through the Made Smarter programme in their regions.

**WINNER** Choc Affair (Yorkshire)

Shortlisted:

- Heliguy (North East)
- Firstplay Dietary Food (North West)
- Bridge Cheese (West Midlands)

### Food & Drink Award

**WINNER** Thatchers Cider (South West)

Shortlisted:

- Mallows Bottling (Wales)
- Shepherd Neame (South East)
- Primula (North East)
- Lakeland Artisan (North West)
- Regal Food Products Group (Yorkshire)
- Cafeology (Sheffield)
- 200 Degrees (Midlands)
- Lakeland Dairies NI (Northern Ireland)

### Digital Technology Award

**WINNER** Pragmatic Semiconductor (North East)

Shortlisted:

- Geometric Manufacturing (South West)
- DHG (Wales)
- Tadweld Engineering (Yorkshire)
- Zayndu (Midlands)
- MJM Marine (Northern Ireland)
- Autentica Industrial Platforms (North West)

### Export Award

**WINNER** Acorn Stairlifts (Yorkshire)

Highly commended:

I Holland (Midlands)

Shortlisted:

- Fabulosa (North West)
- Feritech Global (South West)
- The English Soap Company (South East)
- JDR Cable Systems (North East)
- ICD Europe (Sheffield)
- Huntingdon Fusion Techniques (Wales)
- Eakin Healthcare (Northern Ireland)

### Medical, Life Sciences & Healthcare Award

**WINNER** James Leckey Design (Northern Ireland)

Shortlisted:

- Ipsen Biopharm (Wales)
- CoolMed (North West)
- Fyous (Yorkshire)

### Sustainable/Ethical Manufacturer Award

Sponsored by Lloyds Bank

**WINNER** Camden Group (Northern Ireland)

Shortlisted:

- Fibrestar Drums (North West)
- Feritech Global (South West)
- Nim's (South East)
- BTS Facades and Fabrications (North East)
- Andel (Yorkshire, Sheffield)
- Amtico (Midlands)
- Burns Pet Nutrition (Wales)

### Automotive, Aerospace & Rail Award

**WINNER** Piran Advanced Composites (South West)

Shortlisted:

- CAV Systems (North East)
- Victoria Production Engineering (North West)
- Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK (Midlands)

### Manufacturing Future Talent Award

**WINNER** IAC (Wales)

Shortlisted:

- RBSL (Midlands)
- Thatchers Cider (South West)
- ACS Stainless Steel Fixings (Yorkshire)
- JSJ UK (North West)
- Liebherr Sunderland Works (North East)
- Rathbane Group (Northern Ireland)
- Paxton Access (South East)

### Apprentice of the Year

**WINNER** Alexia Williams, Rolls-Royce (South West)

Highly commended:

• Anni Sanders, Focus SB (South East)

Shortlisted:

- Thomas Marchant, Brandon Medical (Yorkshire)
- Dylan Lewis, Terex (Northern Ireland)
- Rhys Howells-Smith, IAC (Wales)
- Ethan Nattress, CA Group (North East)
- Mohammed Ismaeel, Impression Technologies (Midlands)

- Laura Wood, Exyte Hargreaves (North West)
- Dan Ferrow, Stanley Black & Decker (Sheffield)

## Manufacturing Startup Award

**WINNER** Evec (North West)

Shortlisted:

- Compact Syngas Solutions (Wales)
- Mexi Bean Express (Yorkshire)
- REP-TEC (Northern Ireland)
- Kelp Industries (South West)
- Flux Aviation ((Midlands)
- Armitage and Wilson Furniture (North East)

## Manufacturing Innovation Award

Sponsored by MHA

**WINNER** Aurrigo International (Midlands)

Shortlisted:

- Limbs & Things (South West)
- Thales UK (Northern Ireland)
- LabLogic (Sheffield)
- Houghton International (North East)
- GOS Tool & Engineering Services (Wales)
- The Potions Cauldron (Yorkshire)
- MPE (North West)
- Tower Cold Chain (South East)

## Manufacturer of the Year (under £25m turnover)

Sponsored by Made Smarter

**WINNER** Denroy (Northern Ireland)

Shortlisted:

- SBD Apparel (Sheffield)
- Proper Cornish (South West)
- John Fredericks Plastics (Yorkshire)
- ATG Access (North West)
- BCB International (Wales)
- Nikwax (South East)
- CAV Systems (North East)
- Equi-Trek (Sheffield)
- Accura Engineering (Midlands)

## Manufacturer of the Year (over £25m turnover)

**WINNER** COOK (South East)

Shortlisted:

- Mivan (Northern Ireland)
- Stovax & Gazco (South West)
- Invertek Drives (Wales)
- RBSL (Midlands)
- KBF Enterprises (North West)
- CA Group (North East)
- EnviroVent (Yorkshire)



# FIT FOR FUTURE



What can manufacturing businesses do to boost productivity and how are new developments in AI and robotics influencing manufacturing growth? These were some of the issues highlighted at Insider's Future of Manufacturing Forum in Liverpool

The Future of Manufacturing Forum, held at the Titanic Hotel in Liverpool on the same day as the *Insider* Made in the UK Awards, featured eight quality speakers in front of an audience of manufacturing and engineering businesses.

The event set out to understand the latest thinking on how the manufacturing sector can respond to various challenges, how new developments are impacting the sector and what's on the horizon.

**Jim Davison**, Make UK's membership director for the south, outlined the "ten pillars of support" that Make UK have published. "The Makers Manifesto sets out the key issues our members need support with and we've been busy making sure that the political parties are aware of this," he said.

"The hard fact is that too many businesses in this country are not investing in the kind of state-of-the-art equipment they need. So, one of the key points in our Makers Manifesto is: how can we create an environment where more companies are able to make those investment choices?"

He also highlighted the fact that skills shortages were a barrier to manufacturers improving productivity and growing their businesses: "For the last three years, apprenticeships – particularly in engineering and manufacturing – have dropped by 60 per cent, so fundamentally the system is broken right now. Skills is one of the most critical

issues affecting productivity in companies in this country and we have to, without doubt, employ people from very broad, diverse backgrounds because the talent pool we normally fish in has disappeared or is far shallower than it was before."

The Made Smarter programme, launched in November 2019, was created to identify what manufacturing businesses need to do to adopt technology in order to improve the productivity gap. **Donna Edwards**, Made Smarter's managing director for the North West, spoke about the initial reluctance manufacturers had shown in adopting new technologies. "The pilot for the programme was designed to help build confidence, knowledge and skills for leaders," she said. "We assumed at the start that everybody would have a strategy for adopting technology – we found that the majority of companies didn't – and therefore we've introduced the digital transformation workshop element to the programme.

"Very often it's the leadership and supervisory levels that don't have the necessary skills and knowledge, and we can equip them to feel comfortable with the changes they're going to have to implement. This is all about a journey, you can't get from A to B in one go, you've got to do it in a managed way."

Lloyds Bank has created a Women Entrepreneurs programme which aims to support women-led businesses to scale,



Left to right: Nick Doyle, Alexia Williams, Ian Jackson and Neil Gregory



Left to right: Jim Davison, Donna Edwards, Eleanor Baker and Mark Lumsden-Taylor

provide more networking opportunities, and encourage more girls and women into sectors such as manufacturing. Working in partnership with the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) and others, the programme is headed by **Eleanor Baker** who explained the concept: "We want to provide networking opportunities because women want to be around other women that are doing similar things, and we want to support girls and women into manufacturing."

"You may see things branded as 'women in manufacturing', but please read the small print because men are welcome, and allies are really important – there's no point in women sitting around the table telling each other the problems we already know."

Heading up accounting firm MHA's environmental, social and governance (ESG) responsibilities, **Mark Lumsden-Taylor** was keen to dispel some myths about sustainability. "Sustainability is different to environmental, social and governance, it is a regulatory, reporting framework and I think many people misinterpret it. People don't necessarily know what they're talking about and my strongest advice is: talk to people who know what they're doing – talk to regulated, audited, accounted professionals who can help you on your journey."

"As a firm we took a massive decision to

invest heavily in this area. My message is: sustainability is here to stay, so you have to think about the strategy you want to implement over a period of time, not simply a quick fix, or it'll come back to bite you."

### Looking ahead

The Forum also heard from four manufacturing businesses about what their future growth and investment plans are. **Nick Doyle** is director of group operations at Sussex-based Nikwax which manufactures cleaning and waterproofing products. He spoke about the decision to create an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT): "We wanted to protect the company for the future. It's given an opportunity for people to be able to get invested in the business. People are driven by generating sustainable profit and understanding what their contribution and productivity will do to the bottom line."

**Ian Jackson** is general manager at Consett-based CAV Systems in County Durham which manufactures drag reduction systems for Boeing as well as an ice-protection line which services the general aviation market. He said: "We are the only manufacturer of a wet system for de-icing wings in the world."

Sustainability is a key focus for the business, as he explained: "Some of our products are specifically designed to reduce drag and

fuel emissions. On a New York to London Boeing 787 running twice a day, adopting a laminate floor system would save more than 300,000 tonnes of carbon footprint each year. We've developed our own green biofuel in partnership with the CPI. We are trying to hit our sustainability goals, not just because we're told to and we have to, but we believe it's important for us to offer that option."

**Alexia Williams** is a Rolls-Royce apprentice who is a deployed lifecycle engineer on defence engines and also runs capability improvement projects. "I started on a Rolls-Royce apprenticeship and then went down a masters apprenticeship route. For the first four years I did placements, from engine testing, to CAD [computer-aided design] but decided not to work in the area I started out in. My advice is always try different areas, you might find a passion for something."

Stressing the importance of encouraging more girls to look at engineering as a career, she added: "When I started in 2018 I was the only female apprentice. It's getting better but is still not where it should be. Role models are very important. If you have people in your company who can go out to schools, particularly primary schools, having that engagement makes a massive difference."

**Neil Gregory** runs Wales-based GOS Tool & Engineering Services. "We are market leaders in the UK, Germany and Australia," he said. "We export through Canada, Sweden and Ireland – exporting is a big part of our business but we have had major challenges in finding new countries to export to."

Sustainability, he thinks, is a double-edged sword for GOS. "We've got solar panels on our buildings and we generate 100 per cent of our own power but we also have 30 per cent excess. One of the big issues we have is the grid – we can't put anything back into it. So if we have sunshine over the weekend, it's lost – it's a crazy system."