**Made Smarter virtual conference to help Greater Manchester manufacturers fast-track recovery, growth and resilience with digital tools and technology**

***The free-to-access summit (March 10) will showcase the 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' of digital manufacturing with packed day of analysis, inspiration, and practical tips from industry leaders, experts, and peers***

Made Smarter is to deliver a virtual conference to show Greater Manchester manufacturers how to leverage and fast-track digital technology and tools for a year of recovery, growth and resilience.

The free-to-access online summit, Made Smarter: The journey to digital manufacturing, will take place on Wednesday, March 10, from 9.00am-5.00pm.

Curated by manufacturers for manufacturers, the conference features an impressive line-up of industry heavyweights who will showcase the 'why?', 'what?' and 'how?' of digital manufacturing, including:

* **Juergen Maier**, Chair of the Digital Catapult and co-Chair of the Made Smarter Commission;
* **Stephen Phipson**, the Chief Executive of Make UK, the manufacturers' organisation;
* **Andrea Hough**, Managing Director of ATEC Engineering Solutions, based in Salford; and
* **Glyn Jones**, Service Delivery Director at BAE Systems, based in Lancashire, and Chair of the Made Smarter Pilot Steering Group.

They will be joined by a host of SME manufacturers sharing real-life stories of their experience of Made Smarter’s North West Adoption programme and how new technology has helped them overcome challenges and reap the benefits of digital transformation. They include:

* **Fabricon Design**, an Ashton-Under-Lyne-based business which uses advanced manufacturing methods to produce innovative plastics, aluminium and steel component design;
* **MacKinnon and Saunders**, a world’s leading puppet-maker for TV and Film based in Altrincham;
* **Arden Dies**, a Stockport-based die and tooling manufacturer;
* **Bindatex**, a manufacturer of advanced materials based in Bolton;
* **Crystal Doors**, a manufacturer of bespoke vinyl wrapped furniture components based in Rochdale;
* **Creative Apparel**, a clothing manufacturer based in Stockport; and
* **Starlight Bedrooms**, a furniture manufacturer based in Bolton.

Donna Edwards, Managing Director for Business Support & Business Finance at The Growth Company, said: “Manufacturing has always been at the heart of Greater Manchester’s economy from our textile heritage to our world-leading position in advanced materials, chemicals, food and textiles.

“To keep us ahead of the global competition we must strive to create one of the world’s best manufacturing environments.

“This conference is an unmissable opportunity to showcase to Greater Manchester’s manufacturers the tremendous achievements of the Made Smarter North West Adoption pilot and the value technology can bring to the sector, using real-life examples of makers who have started their digital journey, reporting growth, productivity and efficiency gains, and job creation.

“Whatever you make, wherever you are in the region, the Journey to Digital Manufacturing conference offers you the chance to learn from the experiences from industry leaders, hear directly from your peers, and gain the know-how you need from experts about taking the first or next step.

“By utilising the support available, including The Growth Company, manufacturers can build resilience, accelerate growth, keep up with the competition during these uncertain times, and seize the opportunities offered by digital tools and technologies.”

The packed one-day programme, which will be hosted virtually using an interactive online platform, will include insightful panel discussions and roundtable debates, interactive workshops; demonstrations of the latest digital manufacturing technologies; and one-to-one advice sessions, giving businesses the vital intelligence needed to start their digital journey or take the next step.

To ensure the Made Smarter message reaches as many people the conference is free to access for anyone from the spectrum of UK manufacturing and engineering, including aerospace, automotive, chemical and pharmaceutical, construction, defence, electronics, energy, food and drink, nuclear, plastics, security, steel, space and textiles.

To register your interest, visit [https://www.madesmarter.uk/conference](https://www.madesmarter.uk/conference/)

Juergen Maier said: “I am delighted to be participating in the Made Smarter: The journey to digital manufacturing conference to share my passion for the benefits of digital technology and celebrate the positive impact that Made Smarter’s adoption pilot is having on individuals, businesses, the environment, and the UK economy.

“For manufacturers by manufacturers, this summit is a must-attend event for anyone working in the sector to learn how to make their product or process smarter.

“In these tumultuous times COVID-19 has, without doubt, demonstrated that digital tools can enable and accelerate innovation, and create resilience.

“Grasping the digital opportunities has never been more important for businesses to recover and return stronger.”

A rich blend of sessions will cover themes including: the Made Smarter vision, achievements and future; building resilience through digital tools, and how technology can help manufacturers enhance and improve sustainability, exports, new product development, and the supply chain.

Manufacturers will be able to access practical, actionable advice through workshops including: how to get started on a digital journey, led by Made Smarter’s technology advisers; and how to lead the digital transformation in your manufacturing business, led by Lancaster University Management School;

Technology Demonstrators Alley will showcase the latest solutions available to manufacturers which enable them to integrate systems, capture and analyse data, create simulations of their plants and processes, as well as how 3D-printing, automation, and robotics can solve business challenges.

There will also be the opportunity to speak one on one with a variety of business advisers to explore the advice, support and funding available to manufacturers.

Made Smarter: The journey to digital manufacturing will be hosted by the Made Smarter North West Adoption pilot, which has been driving technology adoption in the region for two years.

The pilot has worked with 1,200 makers in every corner of Cheshire and Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Liverpool, providing advice, expertise and financial support to help them grow their business, increase competitiveness and reduce inefficiencies through digital tools.

550 businesses have received intensive support including expert, impartial technology advice, digital transformation workshops to help manufacturers take their first steps to transform their business, a leadership programme, and funded digital technology internships.

For more information visit [https://www.madesmarter.uk](https://www.madesmarter.uk/conference/)

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**About Made Smarter**

Made Smarter is the UK national industrial digitalisation movement to drive productivity and growth of manufacturing industries and put the UK at the forefront of the 4th Industrial Revolution. Backed by world-renowned businesses and working in partnership with the UK government, Made Smarter will make a real, everyday difference to people from the boardroom to the factory floor.

Made Smarter was formed following a nationwide review into UK manufacturing that recommended key changes: more ambitious leadership; greater innovation in developing new technologies; faster implementation and adoption of these technologies; and deeper understanding of the sector’s skills requirements. We’ll be boosting digital skills in the sector, bringing businesses and R&D together to develop new technology, and helping makers embrace new digital tools. In doing so, we’ll inspire the next industrial revolution and make the UK a leader in digital technologies.