

Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering Training Centre

In 2020 Warrington & Vale Royal College was awarded £656,000 by the Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to support the transformation of digital and advanced manufacturing and engineering skills across all sectors of business in Cheshire and Warrington.

The award, from the LEP's Local Growth Fund, allows the college to develop their curriculum and facilities, supporting the college's plans to serve the region as a specialist centre for materials measurement, testing and analysis, and enhance the provision of digital and manufacturing skills training. The specially-equipped AMET centres will enable local employers to engage in cross-sector collaboration and transform their business practices.

In the initial stage of the project, the college transformed the ground floor of their Winsford campus, installing specialist facilities housing the latest engineering and manufacturing equipment. This stage was completed in time to be utilised by new students who were beginning their engineering studies at the start of a new academic year. Newly installed equipment included: Colchester lathes, a XYZ Protorn SLX 1630 CNC lathe, a XYZ SMX2500 vertical milling machine and a horizontal milling machine.

Meanwhile, the college's Warrington campus, which already offers a wide range of engineering qualifications and apprenticeships, has seen investment throughout 2021 as it gears up as deliver the enhanced curriculum from September 2021.

As part of a five-year plan, the Warrington & Vale Royal College AMET centres will continue to be equipped with 'core' equipment that supports the skills required for smarter manufacturing techniques and accelerates the adoption and use of Industrial Digital Technologies (IDTs) such as robotics, industrial control and digital intelligence. The equipment is designed to mirror and augment workplace manufacturing and engineering practises and processes, enabling trial, fault finding, diagnosis and innovation. Utilising this equipment will enhance the skillset of local employers, driving increased productivity and competitiveness.

Local employers have highlighted their aspiration for growth and competitiveness and, more specifically, to digitalise manufacturing processes and upskill their employees in parallel. The Warrington & Vale Royal College AMET centres will support and enable this growth and the move towards digitalisation. The college aims to become a 'centre of excellence' for advanced manufacturing and engineering, whilst serving as a hub for local employers who aim to raise levels of productivity and innovation within their workplaces.

Tiger Trailers, local employer to the Winsford AMET centre, stated: "We envisage the (AMET) facility will increase skills in the local area. This will hopefully, in turn, increase our productivity and improve business and prospects for growth."

The investment from the LEP will enable the college to deliver bespoke skills training packages for local employers and expand on the range of technical qualifications and apprenticeships offered to learners.

This project serves to recognise the need to support circa 45,000 jobs in advanced manufacturing and engineering across Cheshire and Warrington and the need for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to scale up their productivity to secure growth.

Employers cite a lack of required skills and lack of experience as barriers to productivity. Local employers will have flexible access to the various facilities, equipment and resources provided by the AMET centres. Their employees (and prospective employees, such as apprentices) will have the opportunity to engage in a range of local skills training packages, education and research. This will enable employers to:

- Upskill their workforce without the need to travel 'out of area'
- Recruit to 'hard-to-fill' vacancies, especially at the higher skill levels
- Improve productivity and secure growth
- Create new jobs and apprenticeship opportunities.

The college are keen to hear from any engineering, manufacturing or allied services organisations or sector specialists local to their sites who may be interested in getting involved with or utilising the equipment to help develop their workforce.

To discuss your business needs, or to arrange a tour of these exciting new facilities, please contact the college's Employer Engagement Team on: 01925 494271 or email: employers@wvr.ac.uk. The team are on hand to discuss how these new facilities could support you and the growth of your business.

Apprenticeships, vocational, professional and higher education qualifications are all available through the college, who specialise in providing hands-on, vocational training. If you would like to view the full range of opportunities available, please visit: wvr.ac.uk.