

EAST MIDLANDS MANUFACTURING AND TRADE CONFERENCE

24 MARCH 2026

A FRAMEWORK FOR GROWTH

08:00	Arrival for registration, tea/coffees and exhibitors
09:00 (5mins)	Welcome – Dr Cham Kang, President, East Midlands Chamber (Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire Leicestershire)
09:05 (10mins)	Welcome from Loughborough University – Professor Nick Jennings, Vice Chancellor
09:15 (20mins)	Sector overview: Make UK – Chris Corkan, Regional Director – Midlands & East of England & Affiliates Partner Programme, Make UK Includes time for Q&A
09:35 (50mins)	INTERNATIONAL TRADE Update from Lucy Granger, Head of International Trade, East Midlands Chamber (10mins) Overview of the current marketplace, available business support, impact of new trading legislation (e.g. CBAM, EUDR) and Free Trade Agreements Business Case Study – Trading Internationally, Chris Ratcliffe Sales and Marketing Director, Cosy Direct (15mins) Cosy Direct, a Derbyshire-based supplier of educational resources, has been awarded the prestigious 2025 King's Award for Enterprise for International Trade. The company was recognised for its "export hyper-growth" and for increasing sales to over 50 countries across North America and Europe, with overseas business value growing significantly. The award highlights Cosy's success in growing its export market for natural, sustainable, and eco-friendly nursery and school resources, with exports reaching over 50 countries Panel Discussion – chaired by Lucy Granger (25mins) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ioan Reed-Aspley, Head of Corporate Affairs – East Midlands Airport • Hollie Coxon - International Freight Forwarder, Nationwide Courier Service • Mitchell Perks, Deputy Director of Trade Services, British Chamber of Commerce • Chris Ratcliffe, Sales and Marketing Director, Cosy Direct
10:25 (40mins)	Break and transfer to workshop of choice

<p>11:05 (45mins)</p>	<p>Workshops (choice of one of four)</p> <p>WPT001 - Beyond the Levy: Creating strategic Provider: Employer Partnerships to develop future skills together - Rachel Hall, Director for Apprenticeships, Leicester College and Ian Mallabone, Global HR & Training Director, Nylacast Holdings</p> <p>WPT003 - Considering the User when Gathering Digital Twin Information Requirements: An Approach – Professor Mey Goh, Professor of Transdisciplinary Design Engineering, Associate Director of the Intelligent Automation Centre, Loughborough University</p> <p>WPT004 - Don't forget the office! - AI automation flows in manufacturing context – Alistair Wilson, CEO, flowmondo</p> <p>WPT005 - Building a Resilient Energy Strategy - Jaz Aujla, Strategic Energy Partner, DCC Energy</p>
<p>11:50 (5mins)</p>	<p>Return to main auditorium</p>
<p>11:55 (20mins)</p>	<p>Industry 5.0 - the next big manufacturing paradigm, but how will it deliver Resilience, Productivity and Growth? - Professor Peter Kinnell, Director of Loughborough Intelligent Automation Centre and High Value Manufacturing Lead</p> <p>The Intelligent Automation Centre at Loughborough University has been conducting research in the field of Automation and Robotics, for industrial and manufacturing applications, since it was founded in 2011. Our core mission has been to conduct research that facilitates the uptake of technologies to deliver growth, resilience, and productivity.</p> <p>In this context we will examine the potential impacts of Industry 5.0 through the lens of industrial value creation. Reflecting on our experiences over the last 15 years, we will present a critical evaluation of past projects in Cyber Physical Systems, Robotics, Automation, and Industry 4.0, capturing the important lessons learned. Using these experiences as a foundation, we will define how the Industry 5.0 paradigm, coupled with rapidly emerging trends in AI, Sensing, Automation and Robotics has informed our vision for the future and motivated our latest research activities.</p>
<p>12:15 (15mins)</p>	<p>Driving Growth: New Supply Chain Opportunities in the Defence Sector - Lee Noble, Co-Chair, East Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster</p> <p>The East Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (EM RDSC) brings together academic institutions, government bodies, public sector agencies, and the defence and security industry across the East Midlands and aims to play a crucial role in enhancing military capabilities and driving economic growth by working closely with the UK Ministry of Defence, facilitating innovation to be tested, partnerships to be made, and growth at scale to be realised through the cutting-edge R&D capabilities, defence assets, and collaborative approaches available in the East Midlands.</p>

<p>12:30 (20mins)</p>	<p>Supply chain Opportunities in the UK's Developing Nuclear Capabilities - Andrew Storer, CEO & Founder of NucCol (Nuclear Collaboration Ltd)</p> <p>The nuclear supply chain in the East Midlands is undergoing a major expansion, driven by its history in advanced manufacturing and its role in the UK's next-generation nuclear projects, such as Small Modular Reactors and Fusion. On the day we will hear from NucCol, who are a leading organisation dedicated to advancing the UK's nuclear manufacturing capabilities, who will detail the potential range of opportunities and routes to engage in the nuclear supply chain.</p>
<p>12:50 (40mins)</p>	<p>Attraction and retention of talent and how to improve productivity through people</p> <p>Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP): Three Years on, how LSIPs support talent pipeline development – Richard Blackmore, Director of Policy and Insight, East Midlands Chamber (10mins)</p> <p>Panel discussion - Chair Richard Blackmore, Director Policy and Insight, East Midlands Chamber</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor James Flint, Associate Dean, Education & Student Experience, Wolfson School of Mechanical, Electrical and Manufacturing Engineering and Professor of Wireless Systems Engineering • Shabir Ismail, Principal/CEO, Leicester College • James Ferraby, Chief Executive Officer, Digital Planning • Sarah knight, Recruitment Operations Manager, ER Recruitment
<p>13:30</p>	<p>Close of main conference</p>
<p>14:00 - 14:45</p>	<p>Additional Workshop (WPT001) - Digital technology promises to transform manufacturing - but the path from promise to reality is rarely straightforward - Dr Jeannie Holstein, Senior Lecturer in Strategy and Innovation Loughborough Business School, Loughborough University</p> <p>Everyone from manufacturers to finance providers, and technology providers to policy makers – knows the potential of digital technology: improved productivity, reduced energy costs, stronger bottom lines. But there are also challenges - uncertainty about returns, concerns about finding the right technology partners, questions about what support actually works.</p> <p>This workshop cuts through the noise. We share findings from the InterAct research - which surveyed manufacturers, finance providers, and technology suppliers across the UK and internationally - to identify the real barriers holding SMEs back from successful digital adoption. More importantly, we'll work together to turn these insights into practical steps you can take.</p> <p>The workshop will cover the business challenges around investing in digital technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigating digital tech investment and financing in the context of uncertain returns – understanding the measurable benefits, not just the costs • Finding the right fit between your needs and technology providers' offerings – to make a stronger case for investing time and energy • Accessing networks and local support that accelerates adoption – to support more effective implementation”