**PR 200**

**July 2021**

**New ‘trusted marketplace’ launches to help SME business owners freely discover and compare tech tools**

* New online service launches to help UK-based entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs find technology solutions that can drive business efficiencies
* A productivity uplift of 20% has been reported by SME business owners who have successfully adopted new technologies for their business
* The Technology Adoption Service has been born out of a strong partnership between London and Manchester authorities

Entrepreneurial business leaders looking for new technologies to help their SMEs to grow and thrive now have a powerful new tool at their fingertips, with the launch of the fully-funded Technology Adoption Service.

[The Technology Adoption Service](https://tas.businessgrowthhub.com/) (TAS) has been launched by GC Business Growth Hub as a result of Greater Manchester and London authorities joining forces to find new ways of helping SME business owners to compare and deploy technologies that can improve productivity, increase efficiencies, and help increase sales and turnover, amongst many other benefits.

For example, brick and mortar retail shops that have been forced to remain shut through the lockdown period can use this platform to find out more about which e-commerce solution might be right for them to help drive their online sales. Other examples include accounting software which can automate invoicing, and sales software which can improve customer support services.

The TAS platform has been developed with support from Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater London Authority in response to the fast-changing conditions that businesses have experienced since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The platform has been launched as part of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, which sets out a programme of measures to support businesses, good employment and sector strengths in the city-region.

Working in a similar way to popular consumer comparison websites, the Technology Adoption Service is an easy-to-access and intuitive online platform, that enables businesses to search and compare technology tools that are designed to drive productivity and growth.

More than 450 products have already been extensively researched and catalogued for the Technology Adoption Service. The products cover an array of categories which include but are not limited to: sales and customer relationship management (CRM), accounting and finance, recruitment and HR, resource management, data and analytics, and social media marketing. The site will be regularly updated with new products and services, and prospective suppliers can apply for their products to be listed via a contact form on the site.

The agency leading on delivery of the TAS platform, GC Business Growth Hub, is part of The Growth Company and part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The Hub is also supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester local authorities.

**Councillor Elise Wilson, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) portfolio lead for Economy, said:** “In partnership with GC Business Growth Hub and London Business Hub, we’re excited to be launching the Technology Adoption Service to help Greater Manchester’s small businesses become more productive.

“Whether a business wants to manage its finances more efficiently, make better use of data, or sell more online, technology can provide a solution, but business leaders can find the landscape difficult to navigate. The platform offers a simple way for businesses to search and identify the tool that best suits their needs, with additional support on adopting the technology provided by the Business Growth Hub.

“Helping businesses of all sizes innovate, improve their productivity, and embrace digital technologies are key parts of our Economic Vision for Greater Manchester. SMEs will play a vital role in powering our recovery beyond the pandemic and we encourage any business that could benefit to explore the service and get in touch.”

**Sarah Novotny, Head of Digital, Creative and Tech for GC Business Growth Hub, said:** “Faced with the day-to-day challenges and constraints of running a business, smaller and medium sized enterprises tend to be least likely to adopt new technologies that could be beneficial to their long-term productivity and growth.

“Yet independent research by the Enterprise Research Centre has found SME businesses report an average productivity uplift of 20 per cent by investing in new technologies. Our solution to this problem is the fantastic new Technology Adoption Service, which can help our business community to easily research and consider many of the technology options that are available to them, via a trusted source.

“The service has been developed with simplicity in mind and is freely and quickly accessible, without a need for creating accounts or using passwords to access its data. As a trusted marketplace, it also has the added benefit of being backed by our wider team at the Hub, meaning that wraparound support is always available for businesses making use of this service in Greater Manchester.”

**Theo Blackwell, Chief Digital Officer for Greater London Authority, said:** “Businesses are continuing to feel the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic so it’s even more important we do what we can to help them expand their online presence and access to new services.

“I’m proud that we are launching this tool in collaboration with Greater Manchester to not only support firms to adapt and innovate but also to help our world-leading tech sector find new markets.”

A virtual event to officially launch the new Technology Adoption Service will take place on Thursday 22 July from 1pm to 2pm.

A panel discussion around the merits of tech adoption, will include business leaders from the Greater Manchester and Greater London regions, and will feature Ben Fowler, Founder and Director of Manchester-based Alternate Experiences, who has recently undergone the tech adoption journey. Additional panellists are to be confirmed.

Speakers will also include Cllr Elise Wilson**,** Portfolio Lead for Economy for Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and Theo Blackwell, Chief Digital Officer forGreater London Authority, as well as representatives from GC Business Growth Hub and London Business Hub.

For more information and to register for free:<https://app.livestorm.co/the-growth-company/technology-adoption-service-launch>

Businesses looking to access specialist support can visit [www.businessgrowthhub.com](http://www.businessgrowthhub.com) for more information about the organisation’s extensive range of services. This and other GC Business Growth Hub projects are part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) as part of the GM Business Growth Hub project designed to help ambitious SME businesses achieve growth and increase employment in Greater Manchester. The Hub is also supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester local authorities.

**ENDS**

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**GC Business Growth Hub (www.businessgrowthhub.com)**

GC Business Growth Hub, part of The Growth Company, helps businesses at all stages of their growth journey with a broad range of services delivered by its experts, as well as public and private sector partners. These services include one-to-one and peer-to-peer business support, events, specialist programmes and funding.

GC Business Growth Hub was launched in 2011 and has helped thousands of start-ups, scale-ups and established businesses across Greater Manchester.

**The Growth Company**

The Growth Company is a UK-wide not-for-profit economic development agency that seeks to generate inclusive growth in the country’s economy by creating jobs and improving lives. It offers a wealth of services that support growth among individuals, businesses, cities and regions. For more information, please visit [www.growthco.uk](http://www.growthco.uk/)

**ERDF**

GC Business Growth Hub is part financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2014-2020, as part of a portfolio of ERDF-funded programmes designed to help ambitious SME businesses achieve growth and increase employment in Greater Manchester. Eligibility criteria apply. ERDF is a fund allocated by the European Union that finances convergence, regional competitiveness and employment and territorial co-operation.

The Department for Communities and Local Government is the managing authority for the European Regional Development Fund Programme, which is one of the funds established by the European Commission to help local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support local businesses and create jobs. For more information, visit <https://www.gov.uk/erdf-regional-guidance-north-west>

**Local Growth Fund**

Local Enterprise Partnerships are playing a vital role in driving forward economic growth across the country, helping to build a country that works for everyone.

That’s why by 2021 Government will have invested over £12bn through the Local Growth Fund, allowing LEPs to use their local knowledge to get all areas of the country firing on all cylinders.

Some additional key facts:

* There are 38 LEPs covering the whole of England
* The government has awarded £9.1bn in three rounds of Growth Deals to local areas to drive economic growth.
* LEPs are investing in a wide range of projects including transport, skills, business support, broadband, innovation and flood defences.

**Northern Powerhouse**

Some Northern Powerhouse key facts:

* The Northern Powerhouse is a key aspect of this Government’s approach to addressing the productivity gap in the North and ensuring a stronger, more sustainable economy for all parts of the UK.
* The government has awarded £3.4bn in three rounds of Growth Deals across the Northern Powerhouse.