# Northern Ireland firm leverages £2.5m digital fund to compete with bigger logistics companies



A Northern Ireland logistics firm is setting a compelling example of how digital transformation can empower smaller businesses to compete on a larger scale. SJ Henderson Fulfilment, based in Kilkeel, has recently integrated advanced technologies into its operations, stating that this capability allows them to "run shoulder to shoulder" with companies that are significantly larger in size.

The transition has been made possible through the support of the Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF), which has injected £2.5 million into 172 businesses since its inception in November 2023. This government-funded initiative targets small and micro businesses to foster the adoption of transformative technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, robotics, and big data analytics. The overarching aim of the fund is to enhance operational efficiency and stimulate growth across the Northern Ireland business landscape.

During a recent visit from Economy Minister Dr Caoimhe Archibald, Stephen Henderson of SJ Henderson Fulfilment showcased how a state-of-the-art 3D imaging and big data scanning system is reshaping their warehousing processes. This technology not only provides accurate information for storage solutions but also optimises space while reducing costs for clients. By adopting such innovation, the company hopes to fulfil more orders efficiently, ultimately expanding its market reach.

This funding is part of a £7.5 million DTFF programme that works across Northern Ireland, driven by a collaboration between various local councils and the local government. Each eligible business can receive funding of up to 70% of project costs, with a minimum match funding requirement of 30%. This framework is designed to ensure that no matter the size of a business, there is an opportunity to innovate and grow through digital transformation.

Councillor Pete Byrne, Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, emphasised the significance of the DTFF, stating that its mission extends beyond mere technology adoption. It aims to provide a foundation for all businesses to innovate and streamline operations, enabling them to unlock new growth potentials. He highlighted how initiatives like this underscore the commitment to building a digitally proficient economy in the region.

SJ Henderson Fulfilment's advancements include the introduction of a cutting-edge digital storage and retrieval system that promises to enhance productivity and accuracy within the company. Martin McKendry, Head of Food, Farming and Rural Affairs at the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), praised the initiative, noting that the investment has positioned the firm well for growth in the coming years.

The impact of such initiatives becomes particularly apparent in the context of the competitive landscape. Stephen Henderson noted that the accuracy of the new technology significantly reduces reliance on manual measurement processes, which he described as tedious and prone to error. This level of precision, down to a hundredth of a millimetre, allows the company to provide their clients with immediate and reliable data, thereby streamlining operations and enhancing client satisfaction.

By leveraging the support from the DTFF, SJ Henderson Fulfilment is not just focusing on immediate gains but is also setting the stage for higher-skilled job opportunities within the local community. With £5 million still available in funding, there is a clear call for other businesses across Northern Ireland to engage in this transformative journey and embrace the potential for significant growth and increased productivity.

As digital technology continues to evolve at an unprecedented rate, initiatives like the DTFF are crucial. They not only equip businesses with the tools they need for immediate operational enhancements but also position them for future readiness in a fast-changing market landscape. For those interested in exploring these opportunities, the next round of applications for the DTFF will open in July, inviting more businesses to create their digital transformation narratives.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraph 4
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraphs 5, 6, 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://techbuzzireland.com/2025/05/16/digital-transformation-in-action-ni-logistics-firm-deploys-3d-scanning-and-big-data-with-dtff-support/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://dtff.co.uk/dtff/> - The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) is a grant scheme aimed at stimulating digital innovation among small and micro businesses in Northern Ireland. It offers up to £7.5 million in funding to support the adoption of advanced digital technologies, including AI, machine learning, process automation, immersive tech, big data, IoT, system integration, and blockchain. The fund is managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council through the Full Fibre Northern Ireland Consortium, comprising all 11 local councils. Grants cover up to 70% of eligible costs, with a 30% match funding requirement from applicants.
3. <https://www.armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk/digital-transformation-flexible-fund-launched-to-stimulate-innovation/> - The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) has been launched to support small and micro businesses in Northern Ireland by providing grants for digital transformation projects. Funded by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), the initiative aims to enable rural enterprises to access opportunities for innovation. Grants range from £5,000 to £20,000, covering up to 70% of project costs, with a 30% match funding requirement from applicants. The fund is open to all business sectors, except primary agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.
4. <https://www.nibusinessinfo.com/content/digital-transformation-flexible-fund> - The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) assists small and micro businesses in Northern Ireland to invest in advanced digital technologies. The fund supports innovative technologies such as smart environments, IoT, simulation, process automation, big data, analytics, immersive technologies, AI, machine learning, and blockchain. Grants range from £5,000 to £20,000, covering up to 70% of project costs, with a 30% match funding requirement from applicants. The fund is open to all sectors except primary agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.
5. <https://craftni.org/the-digital-transformation-flexible-fund/> - The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) offers grants to eligible businesses and social enterprises in Northern Ireland to fund their digital transformation projects. Grants range from £5,000 to £20,000, covering up to 70% of project costs, with a 30% match funding requirement from applicants. The fund is open to small and micro businesses, including social enterprises, that are VAT registered and have been trading for at least 12 months. Eligible projects must focus on one or more of six advanced digital technologies, including smart technologies, process automation, big data, immersive technologies, AI, and blockchain.
6. <https://dtff.co.uk/apply-now/faq/> - The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) provides funding for small and micro businesses in Northern Ireland to invest in advanced digital technologies. The fund offers grants covering up to 70% of project costs, with a 30% match funding requirement from applicants. Eligible businesses must be based in Northern Ireland, VAT registered, and have been trading for at least 12 months. The fund supports projects centered on one or more of six advanced digital technologies, including smart technologies, process automation, big data, immersive technologies, AI, and blockchain.
7. <https://www.fermanaghenterprise.com/digital-transformation-flexible-fund/> - The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF) offers funding for eligible Northern Ireland-based micro and small businesses to invest in advanced digital technologies. The fund supports businesses in integrating new emerging digital technologies into key areas of their operations, fundamentally changing how they operate and deliver value to customers. Grants range from £5,000 to £20,000, covering up to 70% of project costs, with a 30% match funding requirement from applicants. The fund is open to all sectors except primary agriculture, forestry, and fisheries.