# The Future of Connected Autonomous Logistics Roundtable
## 22 February 2023

On Wednesday 22nd February, Professor of Intelligent Transport Systems at Newcastle University, Phil Blythe, brought together industry experts and government officials to discuss the future of Connected Autonomous Logistics (CAL) in the UK. Attendees agreed that the implementation of autonomous logistics vehicles will have significant benefits for productivity and the economy, and that collaboration and investment in research and development, education, and infrastructure in the North East could act as a 'test bed' to unlock these benefits and roll them out further across the UK.

## Key points raised:

- CAL technology has economic and productivity benefits for the logistics sector, which contributes over £13 billion to UK GDP annually. With the sector headed for a potential shortfall of at least 100,000 drivers by the end of the decade, CAL could make jobs more appealing and enable wider participation in the workplace by reimagining roles and where they are performed from.

- Trials of CAL in the North East have very extremely positive, but there are still a number of steps needed before CAL can be implemented on the UK's road network, including approval by the UK's Vehicle Certification Agency, development of robust communications infrastructure and cyber-security systems, and regulations governing teleoperation drivers. Widespread adoption will also need to consider the impact on SMEs, who will be operating with different business models and require significant investment in the UK's road network.

- The economic and productivity benefits of CAL need to be first proven in a controlled environment to strengthen social and consumer perceptions of autonomous vehicles, with public understanding critical to uptake. The North East would be a good 'test bed' for this, with an ecosystem of 1,100 companies already engaged in the CAL sector and strong ties between industry and academic leadership.

## Recommendations:

1. Industry, government and academic collaboration to tackle final technical barriers to CAL rollout (including a fast-track pathway towards type approval for CAL vehicles, 5G and 6G telecommunications infrastructure and protecting the UK's cyber-security capabilities).

2. A focus on R&D investment in the North East to help drive further innovation in the region to create end-to-end integrated business models and systems, support levelling up and ensure education providers are supported to develop new qualifications and adapt existing courses to equip students with the skills to develop and/or operate CAL technology in the future.

3. The creation of a globally leading national centre for CAL in the North East of England, which builds upon the UK CAV ecosystem and acts as a 'test bed' to demonstrate the productivity and economic benefits of CAL.