

£277k AI project aims to transform warehouse management for food and drink wholesalers

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BCP and Manchester Metropolitan University partnership will develop practical AI capabilities for BCP's Accord warehouse management system, with an initial focus on labour and warehouse optimisation.

STOCKPORT, OCTOBER 2026 – Food and drink wholesale technology specialist BCP has partnered with Manchester Metropolitan University on a £277,000 innovation project to develop new applications for artificial intelligence within the wholesale warehouse.

The two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) is funded by UKRI through Innovate UK and supported by BCP, and will bring together BCP's decades of experience in food and drink wholesale technology with Manchester Met's expertise in artificial intelligence, data science and academic research.

At the heart of the project will be the development of new AI-led capabilities for BCP's Accord warehouse management system, with an initial focus on improving labour and warehouse management.

The ambition is to investigate how AI can use the large volumes of operational data generated within wholesale businesses to support better decision-making, improve productivity and help warehouse teams make more effective use of people and resources.

Potential applications include identifying patterns in warehouse activity, strengthening labour planning, anticipating resource requirements and highlighting opportunities for greater efficiency.

The project comes as food and drink wholesalers continue to face pressure from rising operating costs, tight margins, changing customer expectations and the need to increase productivity across increasingly complex operations.

BCP believes this makes the case for practical applications of AI particularly compelling.

David Shield, Solutions Architect at BCP, said:

"There is a huge amount of discussion about AI, but for our customers the question is much simpler: what can it actually do to make their businesses better?"

"Wholesalers already generate enormous amounts of valuable data. The opportunity is to use AI intelligently to turn that information into insights and actions that make a tangible difference on the warehouse floor."

"We have spent decades working alongside food and drink wholesalers, so we understand the realities of running these businesses. By combining that industry knowledge with Manchester Met's expertise in AI and data science, we have an opportunity to develop technology around genuine industry challenges."

"Labour and warehouse optimisation are an important starting point, but the bigger opportunity is to learn where AI can deliver measurable value across wholesale operations. That is what makes this partnership particularly exciting for us and, ultimately, for our customers."

The partnership will embed specialist AI expertise within BCP while drawing on academic support from Manchester Metropolitan University, helping turn research and emerging AI techniques into technology that can be applied in a real-world wholesale environment.

Dr Kate Macfarlane, Senior Lecturer in AI at Manchester Metropolitan University, said:

"The project is focused on taking advanced AI research beyond the academic environment and exploring how it can be applied to genuine challenges within wholesale, creating capabilities with clear commercial relevance."

Dr Seun Ajao, Senior Lecturer in Data Science & AI at Manchester Metropolitan University, said:

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“This Knowledge Transfer Partnership is an excellent opportunity to combine academic expertise in artificial intelligence and data science with BCP’s deep understanding of wholesale operations.”

“Working directly with BCP and the wholesale sector will also give us valuable insight into how AI can be deployed responsibly and effectively in complex, real-world business environments.”

The collaboration forms part of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership programme, which helps UK businesses access academic expertise to deliver strategically important innovation projects.

For BCP, the project is part of a wider commitment to helping food and drink wholesalers make better use of technology and data to drive efficiency, strengthen profitability and remain competitive.

Jeff Higgs, Head of Development, added:

“Technology succeeds when the people using it can see the benefit. Our measure of success won’t be how much AI we put into Accord; it will be whether the technology helps wholesalers make better decisions, work more efficiently and improve their businesses.”

-Ends-

Notes to editors

About the project

The Knowledge Transfer Partnership between Business Computer Projects Ltd (BCP) and Manchester Metropolitan University is a two-year project focused on developing AI-led capabilities and enhancements for BCP’s Accord warehouse management system. The project has a stated value of £277K and is funded by UKRI Innovate UK, with BCP participating as the business partner. Its initial areas of focus include the optimisation of labour and warehouse management functionality.

About BCP

BCP is a specialist technology provider to the food and drink wholesale and distribution industry. With decades of experience working with wholesalers, BCP develops ERP, warehouse management and digital solutions designed around the operational requirements of grocery, foodservice and cash & carry businesses. Its Accord solution helps wholesalers manage key areas of their operations, with BCP continuing to invest in technology designed to improve efficiency, productivity and profitable growth.

About Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) bring businesses together with UK universities and other knowledge-base organisations to deliver strategic innovation projects. KTP projects are part-funded through grants from Innovate UK, with participating businesses contributing towards the cost of the project.

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