

INVEST **in** ROCHDALE

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**Rochdale
manufacturer**
receives £30m investment
from LDC

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INVEST **ROCHDALE**

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Rochdale manufacturer receives £30m investment from LDC

A Rochdale manufacturer has secured a £30m investment from leading mid-market private equity firm LDC for a minority stake in the business. Wireless CCTV – known as WCCTV – celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2021 and specialises in providing redeployable CCTV, site security, body worn cameras and time lapse video services.



The partnership with LDC will be used to accelerate WCCTV's ambitious domestic and international expansion plans and support the launch of new products and services. LDC is backing the incumbent management team, led by chairman and founder Tim Williams and CEO David Gilbertson.

Under their leadership, WCCTV has successfully established a footprint in the US, opening its office in Texas in 2015, and invested significantly in new product development that has helped the business achieve its market leading position. The deal will see Ian Burnett join WCCTV's board as a non-executive director. He brings over 30 years' experience in supporting the growth strategies of multi-site businesses.



The investment was led by LDC's head of the North West, Dale Alderson, alongside investment director Richard Ibbett and Grant Goodwin. Dale and Richard will also join the board as non-executive directors as part of the deal.

Founder Tim Williams said: "Over the past 20 years we have built our reputation as the go-to for rapidly deployed and redeployable, surveillance solutions.

"I would like to thank our dedicated workforce and accomplished management team who we believe will deliver the next stage of our exciting growth strategy.

"With LDC's backing we have an opportunity to scale at pace, further enhance our product range and extend our footprint both in the UK and overseas."

WCCTV has seen significant growth in its workforce and turnover on the back of increased demand for its rapid deployment CCTV towers and 4G HD dome cameras. The Rochdale business has also seen significant growth in demand for its body worn cameras, which are already been used by traffic wardens, retail security guards and other frontline staff.

Dale Alderson, head of the North West at LDC, said: "The team at WCCTV has successfully built a business in a high-growth market, with a truly customer-centric product range that has supported its growth in the UK and America.

"With our support, the business has the perfect platform to grow even further by adding new innovations and specialisms to their range. We're excited to partner with them at this key stage in their journey."

Cllr John Blundell, an RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration said: "This is tremendous news for WCCTV and LDC's investment reflects the wider business confidence in Rochdale. WCCTV has seen huge growth in recent years and I'm sure the new funding will enable the company to continue its global expansion."

Founded in 2001, WCCTV has three offices across the UK, with locations in Edinburgh and Luton alongside its Rochdale headquarters, with a fourth base in Texas, in the United States. The firm has a strong track record and has grown revenues by more than 50 per cent in the last three years to £14.1m in the financial year end 31 July 2020.

WCCTV was recently named as one of the London Stock Exchange's 1000 Companies to Inspire Britain. WCCTV was advised by GCA Altium and Addleshaw Goddard.

LDC was advised by KPMG and Squire Patton Boggs. EY provided financial due diligence, CIL provided commercial due diligence and Intechica provided technical due diligence.

The principal of Hopwood Hall College has been appointed to join the board of Rochdale Development Agency.



Julia Heap

College principal joins RDA board

Julia Heap said it was an 'honour' to join the board and pledged to use her role to continue to raise the profile of skills and education. She joined the college five years ago and was promoted to principal in April 2019. A qualified accountant she oversees a workforce of 450 staff and an organisation with a budget of £24m.

The college, which also has 3,000 students aged between 16-18, 3,000 adult learners and more than 300 apprentices, has been widely praised for its response to Covid-19 and looking after the welfare of its learners. Julia said: "Rochdale is a friendly, energetic place that is full of passionate people. There's a real energy in the borough and there's a vibrant business sector."

"I'm honoured to be joining the RDA's board. The arrival of economist Paul Ormerod has added to the energy that has been growing. As well as being a Rochdalian passionate about the borough, he brings with him an objective macro view that we can benefit from."

Julia is originally from Oldham but has lived in Rochdale for the last five years. She said: "My eldest son Niall went to Hopwood Hall College to do a BTEC in sport so I've always felt a connection with Rochdale."

"Although my background is in accountancy I started my career working as an adult apprentice in a builder's merchants in Oldham. I understand the importance of skills and training in the workspace and giving an opportunity to young people."

"Rochdale is a wonderful place to live and work. If anyone has any preconceptions they immediately change upon visiting the borough. "The people are its strength and the diversity is a real positive. The work in the town centre has been transformational."

Julia, who has three children and is a big rugby league fan, predicted the best days are ahead for Rochdale.

Paul Ormerod, chairman of Rochdale Development Agency, said: "Julia brings a wide range of skills to the role, from her accountancy background to her vast experience in the further education sector. "Julia has been the principal at Hopwood Hall College for just over a year and is already making her mark by delivering some excellent projects and dealing with the challenge of Covid-19."

"She offers a different perspective and has already agreed to chair a new RDA sub-committee focusing on the labour force and skills."

Momentum continues for Rochdale's £400m regeneration programme

A £50m scheme to deliver 240 new homes and a 146 bed hotel in Rochdale town centre has been submitted for planning approval.

Delivered in a joint venture partnership between Genr8 Developments and Kajima, in collaboration with Rochdale Development Agency and Rochdale Borough Council, the scheme will transform a derelict brownfield site as part of the wider £400m regeneration of Rochdale town centre.

The detailed application proposes two apartment blocks, offering city centre style accommodation for private rent. Spanning up to nine storeys, it will consist of a mix of one- and two-bedroom apartments. The hotel will comprise 55,000sq ft across seven floors. The detailed permission also includes 4,089 m2 of office space, but this will only be built out if an occupier is secured.

Contractor Wilmott Dixon is already on site, delivering an enabling works scheme, ready for construction to start next year.

The scheme will sit next to the Rochdale Riverside retail and leisure development, which opened in April. The £80m development features a mix of well-known national brands and independents, including M&S, River Island, H&M, Reel Cinema, Puttstars mini golf and Bean Coffee.

Mike Smith from Genr8 Developments said: "This is a significant step-forward in the delivery of the scheme which

will support the council's ambitions for housing within the town and also provide a step change in terms of hospitality provision with the delivery of the new hotel.

"The success of projects such as Rochdale Riverside has created a brilliant foundation for the next phase of regeneration and it's great to see the retail and leisure element of the scheme now 87% full with a fantastic mix of occupiers. We are committed to delivering more of the vision we set-out to create a development that's future-focused and community driven."

Rochdale Borough Council Leader, Allen Brett, said: "Creating high quality new homes and redeveloping eyesore brownfield sites is a key focus for us as we continue with our ongoing regeneration programme, which has seen hundreds of millions invested across our borough over the last ten years."

"The incredible financial challenges the pandemic has presented us has made this continued economic growth even more important and, with investment continuing to pour in, we're very much pressing ahead with our plans to make the borough an even better place to live and work."

Genr8 Management Services Ltd is project manager for the scheme and is represented by RPC Planning.

Cartwright Pickard, KKA and AEW are architects for the scheme.





Innovation in Rochdale

How do you put levelling up into practice? That was the theme of the latest Rochdale Ambassador webinar, an event that coincided with the start of the gradual lifting of lockdown in England. With firms beginning to look to the future for the first time in more than a year, would the Government's oft-repeated promises to 'level up' the UK prove anything more than hot air?

There's certainly much to do. Mike Emmerich is former chief executive of New Economy in Manchester and the author of a recent report that highlighted the UK's startling economic inequality. "As the report showed, the UK is by some measure the most geographically unequal developed economy in the world," he said.

While cities and towns in the South East were among the most prosperous in Europe, equivalents in the regions - including the North West - lagged a long way behind.

The problem may be obvious, but the solution is less clear. Mike insisted that any attempt to level up had to be routed in place, and not - as has been the case in the past - centrally imposed from London.

Rochdale forging ahead

In this respect, Rochdale has an advantage. The town developed as a manufacturing centre and manufacturing remains central to the local economy. Over 75,000 people are employed in the sector within a 30-minute drive of the town centre, and it has particular strengths in advanced materials, rubber and plastics. For that reason, the levelling up agenda in Rochdale will have manufacturing

at its core, a fact that the town's ambitious plans for a new manufacturing-focused R&D centre recognise.

That centre is the Advanced Machinery & Productivity Institute, or AMPI for short. AMPI is planned as a state-of-the-art R&D facility for manufacturing technology and skills in Rochdale and the wider region. Just 15 months ago AMPI was a pipedream. Today it has already secured £15m of funding and is likely to attract more in the near future.

AMPI is a public/private partnership project that, if all goes to plan, will occupy a large site on the town's Kingsway Business Park by the end of 2024. Tony Bannan is CEO of Precision Technologies Group (Holroyd) in Milnrow and one of the people behind the vision for AMPI. The facility is essential, he believes, to help the UK catch up with global competitors in the manufacture and maintenance of the machines that advanced manufacturing needs.

"Manufacturing is hugely important in a diverse economy, but the thing that underpins the manufacturing sector is the machines that do the making. That's where the challenge lies," he said.

Professor Paul Shore, head of engineering divisions at the National Physical Laboratory and founding Director of the UK's Machine tool company, Loxham Precision, agreed. "It's more and more obvious that the UK produces far too little of the machinery that we need to manufacture the stuff that people want," he said.

The panel produced a blizzard of statistics to prove the point. The UK is the 9th largest manufacturer in the world, but isn't in the top 20 when it comes to making the manufacturing robots that the sector increasingly relies on. Switzerland, not a nation traditionally associated with industry, produces four times as many manufacturing machines as the UK.

The manufacturing heart of the UK

Instead, the UK imports much of the machinery it needs, and the skills to maintain that technology. It's a situation that stifles innovation, drives down profits and hands a manufacturing advantage to our global competitors.

But it's also an opportunity. Rochdale has manufacturing in its DNA, and is in prime position to lead innovation in the sector. Paul said that "the manufacturing centre of gravity in this country is close to Rochdale. This is an opportunity and AMPI can help the borough grasp it."

So what will AMPI do? In short, the facility will be a practical and accessible resource for any business that needs help with machines, new technologies, advanced processes or integrated systems. It will offer physical space for businesses to experiment with new designs and develop prototypes, and it will have a core educational remit, equipping workers with the skills they need to maintain and repurpose advanced machinery.

It will also give businesses access to cutting edge software and equipment they might otherwise be unable to afford.

And it won't operate in a vacuum. AMPI will be part of a connected ecosystem of businesses and institutions helping to promote advanced manufacturing in the region. It will work with local universities in Greater Manchester and West Yorkshire, as well as Rochdale's celebrated Further Education sector.

Julia Heap, principal of Hopwood Hall College, said the FE sector had a key role to play in the area's manufacturing renaissance. The college has recently committed £6.1m to a new technology centre, reflecting the growing number of students interested in the sector. "The FE sector plays a key role in the AMPI jigsaw," she said. "Manufacturing machinery needs people to create, operate and maintain it. That's where Hopwood Hall and others in FE, particular Rochdale Training, come in."

Paul Dixon, chair of This Is Rochdale, said that AMPI would help bring other businesses to the borough. "Once you create something like AMPI, it attracts other high end manufacturers who want to be part of that innovation ecosystem," he added.

As the panellists acknowledged, levelling up is easier said than done. But the consensus was that Rochdale is going about it the right way, by focusing on its traditional strengths in manufacturing and innovation. With AMPI, the town is updating those strengths for the challenges of the 2020s and beyond.

Rochdale Economy set for £300m boost

The Rochdale economy is set for a £300m investment boost thanks to the work of the Rochdale Development Agency.



The £300m has been triggered by the RDA and the council securing over £80m of public funding for a series of regeneration projects through successful bids made in 2020/21.

Cllr Blundell an RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration said the £40m figure is significant in its own right but it is the scale of the additional investment that this funding will leverage which will ensure Rochdale thrives in the future. He said: "We have secured funding which unlocks key projects across the borough with a total investment value of £300m.

"This will deliver 1,500 new homes, 2.2 million sq ft of commercial floor space and 3,600 new jobs for Rochdale residents in the next three years."

He said: "The impact of Covid-19 raises a number of economic challenges, but the borough is in the box seat to bounce back with the investment projects the RDA is developing with Rochdale Borough Council and our public and private sector partners."

One of the largest projects is at South Heywood where funding secured for a new link road to the M62 motorway means substantial industrial and residential development can now go ahead. The RDA and the council have worked with the developer Russell WBHO to bring forward this scheme.

Other RDA-led projects at Kingsway Business Park, Rochdale Town Hall, Rochdale Fire Station, Rochdale Riverside, and Chamber House Farm will also make a significant contribution to the economic success of the borough.

The chairman of the RDA, economist Paul Ormerod, said Rochdale had forged He said: "The RDA is the economic development arm of the council and the extra investment it has secured and the projects it will be delivering in the next few years means our best days are ahead of us."

Rochdale set for £20m of new industrial units

Rochdale Council is planning on building £20m of new industrial units after reaching 100 per cent capacity



The council's portfolio of 118 industrial units is at full occupancy with a lengthy waiting list of businesses wanting to move into the borough. Rochdale Development Agency manage the council's property portfolio and is just about to go out to tender on a new 13 unit, 24,000 sq ft development off Oldham Road.

One of newest arrivals to the borough is D&G Utilities, which moved into Rochdale Council's Logic development at Kingsway Business Park. Managing director Richard Bennett said: "Our headquarters are in Rotherham but we were attracted to the high existing skillset in Rochdale and we felt we could tap into it. We're right next to the M62 and we can manufacture from this site. It's perfect for us."

Bob Neave, of Bob's Biltong, has two units at Phoenix Close Industrial Estate in Heywood with a third one undergoing a fit-out. He said: "We came to the UK nearly 20 years ago from South Africa and settled in Rochdale. I started Bob's Biltong from my house but as it grew I took on industrial space and found Rochdale was the perfect place to base my business. We currently have six staff but have plans to grow further."

Cllr Blundell, RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration, said the borough was getting calls on a daily basis from companies looking for space in Rochdale.

"They're all occupied and there's a massive demand for units at the moment. We saw a lot of interest, particularly over the lockdown period, from logistics companies and businesses that are expanding.

"We haven't lost a single tenant due to Covid-19. We've had a couple of tenants deciding to retire but these units have been re let immediately. "We've got a pipeline of about £20m worth of projects coming forward across various sites in the borough."

He said the rent collection for the last quarter to the end of September was 95 per cent. The council's portfolio of 118 industrial buildings across 10 estates total 172,000 sq ft of commercial space.

Councillor Blundell added: "Our occupants range from SMEs to sole traders. Rochdale's resilience has shone through during Covid-19. Businesses have continued to trade through the pandemic. A lot of them are online businesses, which has helped.

Capital and Centric to deliver UK first neighbourhood concept in Rochdale



Rochdale Borough Council, in partnership with Rochdale Development Agency, has agreed a deal to bring social impact developer Capital & Centric to the town, with a vision to redevelop the former Central Retail Park site into a thriving new community.

The brownfield site will be the first in the UK to deliver Capital & Centric's new housing concept 'Neighbourhood'. Neighbourhood Rochdale will include over 200 suburban homes for rent, including a mix of modern, spacious and low carbon homes. Designed by shedkm to be a sustainable exemplar, it will also include a linear park, running track, gym and community hub alongside community space such as café-bars and delis.

The site is a short walk from both the train station, which offers an easy commute into Manchester city centre, and Rochdale town centre. The site, which has been vacant for nearly a decade, was previously occupied by Wynsors, Focus and MFI. The plans are part of the transformation of Rochdale town centre, which is in the middle of a £400m regeneration programme.

Councillor John Blundell an RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration said: "With millions already invested into Rochdale town centre, we've set the bar very high in terms of what we want to achieve here and this type of high quality housing is the perfect fit.

To see the first large scheme come forward from Rochdale's Rail Corridor strategy is a major milestone and shows the commitment to the strategy. "The work we're doing to create a high quality retail and leisure offer and a reimagined public realm, makes Rochdale a really attractive place to live and I know that these will be the first of many new homes to be built in Rochdale."

Adam Higgins, co-founder of CAPITAL&CENTRIC said: "Many Greater Manchester towns have been hit hard by the declining high street but there's a huge opportunity for places like Rochdale to reinvent themselves with town centre living. The Council have a

really ambitious vision to transform the town centre and we're working with them to create an aspirational community with super energy efficient homes, game changing architecture and all the amenities that will attract people to town centre living."

Designed to breathe life back into struggling town centres, the Neighbourhood concept could be rolled out by CAPITAL&CENTRIC across the UK. It aims to reinvent suburban living, designing homes and communities that suit how people live today. Using modern methods of construction and with open-plan, design-led homes that maximise the use of space,

Neighbourhood is a challenge to generic, out-dated housing types. Focusing on curating mixed communities for people of all ages, it goes beyond thinking just about housing, and includes workspaces, community hubs and amenities.

Adam went on to say:

"Neighbourhood is our way of bridging the gap between urban and suburban living. An antidote to poor quality, out-dated and uninspiring housing types, it recognises that people want to live in communities not just homes. So, in Rochdale we're planning plenty of green space, a community hub and café-bar.

With easy links into Manchester and a proper mix of homes, we see it appealing just as much to young professionals as downsizers. It'll also be pretty unique in that it's suburban homes but all of them will be for rent."

A planning application for Neighbourhood Rochdale is expected early next year. It will be built by leading construction company Willmott Dixon who recently completed the £80 million retail and leisure development nearby at Rochdale Riverside.

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, was the key speaker at the Ambassadors' Autumn event



It was clear during the event that Mr Burnham is a passionate and eloquent promoter of the region and its businesses.

Andy said that positives could come out of Covid for boroughs like Rochdale, because it would usher in a new era of house building and green construction, and accelerate the resurgence of local high streets.

His office was working to promote these outcomes, in consultation with local councils. "We do know is that when people can turn their thoughts to recovery we won't be starting from a blank page - we'll have plans in place. We want Greater Manchester to be first out of the traps when recovery happens," he said.

Those plans include an acceleration in the progress towards becoming a zero carbon region, which Andy said had a huge potential to boost jobs and investment in Greater Manchester.

He argued that, alongside digitisation, decarbonisation would be a major global policy focus and economic stimulus for decades to come. "Which means that if we can get to zero carbon quicker and better than other places - and that's the aim - we can reap the benefits of early adoption," said Andy. "The climate debate is a business opportunity."

A modern vision

Andy also praised Rochdale's modern vision, and in particular the work that is being done rethinking the town centre. As well as the creation of new local jobs thanks to schemes like the Northern Gateway, he believes Rochdale will benefit from providing affordable housing, a great quality of life and efficient connectivity for those who work in Manchester city centre but don't want to live there.

"This is a really good vision for the town but it's not one I'm imposing," Andy said. "This is Rochdale's vision and my role is to enable it, and get people buying into it."

Needless to say, there is much work to do to meet these ambitions, and Andy admitted that one of his main focuses

at the moment was getting an integrated public transport for the region that matched London's coordinated system.

"There's a lot of talk of 'levelling up', but we won't be levelled up until a single bus ticket in Rochdale costs the same as it does in London," he said. "We need a public transport system that helps, not hinders. At the moment ours is fragmented and overpriced."

Andy finished on a hopeful note, "Rochdale is in a great position and Rochdale has real ambition.

The full video can be watched here

Reshoring in Rochdale

Rochdale seeks to benefit from supply chain ‘reshoring’ Neil Eccles, Head of Innovation at the Rochdale Development Agency, says the town’s thriving manufacturing sector stands to benefit from a new focus on resilient supply chains.

This time last year the pandemic was sweeping through Asia and the supply chains of many UK businesses crumbled. As Covid-19 reached Europe, hospitals struggled to source effective PPE, supermarkets ran short of everyday items, and businesses ground to a halt as ‘just in time’ supplies of components and materials succumbed to lockdowns and border closures.

Twelve months later, as we begin to emerge from a third national lockdown, those aren’t quite so pressing. Chinese factories are back to full capacity, and ports are open for business. On the surface, supply chains are back in working order.

But, while businesses are generally sourcing the parts and products they need, the shock caused by the first Covid wave remains fresh in the memory. The fragility of complex, international supply chains was cruelly exposed by the pandemic. British businesses haemorrhaged money because of forced factory closures thousands of miles away.

A CLEAR BUSINESS RISK

Given all that, it’s not surprising that the events of 2020 led to renewed calls for some ‘reshoring’ of procurement and for bringing at least some of the most critical elements of production back to the UK from Asia.

An over-reliance on Chinese production has been revealed as a clear business risk. Meanwhile nobody knows when the next crisis will occur, and what form it might take. Research completed before the pandemic found that companies already expected serious disruption to production lines every three to four years. And as the researchers noted, “the fact is that the world has more shocks.”

So, while Covid might eventually fade away, a number of other potential disturbances to international supply chains are waiting in the wings. Pandemics can happen again, and trade disputes are always on the cards. Brexit, for example, looks likely to upset the supply chains of a significant number of businesses, at least in the short term.



And let’s not forget, the US and China were locked in a destabilising trade war as recently as the end of 2019. A changing climate is likely to bring its own economic problems. The need for resilience is an increasingly crucial part of any organisation’s long-term strategy.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING WILL BE CRUCIAL

With that in mind, the response of UK manufacturers to the early stages of the Covid crisis was encouraging. Rochdale seeks to benefit from supply chain ‘reshoring’ Neil Eccles, Head of Innovation at the Rochdale Development Agency, says the town’s thriving manufacturing sector stands to benefit from a new focus on resilient supply chains example, manufacturers quickly pivoting to make PPE, components for ventilators and infrastructure for Nightingale hospitals.

When push came to shove, Rochdale companies tweaked production processes, recalibrated machinery and started delivering the parts and products the nation needed most.

That’s a promising sign, because it shows that, in places like Rochdale, the manufacturing capacity and expertise still exist to make reshoring a reality. In fact, the death of UK manufacturing has been greatly exaggerated. In Rochdale, 14% of the workforce is still employed in the sector, and the

region is a well known hub for advanced manufacturing, including the production of technical textiles.

Rochdale’s manufacturing heritage also means that it has the skills and infrastructure to ramp up production at short notice. That expertise will be enhanced in future by the Advanced Machinery & Productivity Institute (AMPI), a new resource for any business that needs help with new technologies and advanced processes, helping Rochdale businesses drive the next wave of digital manufacturing.

That’s important, because the success of any reshoring strategy is likely to hinge to some extent on cost. Manufacturing moved to Asia en masse because of cheap labour.

But, 21st century manufacturing relies more on advanced machine tools and automation than manned production lines, reducing the cost disparity between components produced in China and the UK. And of course, technology mitigates against the effects of lockdowns. Robots don’t need to socially distance.

Rochdale’s abundant affordable industrial space and cost-effective labour pool also give it a head start in spearheading the rejuvenation of British manufacturing.

LOGISTICS WILL ALSO BENEFIT

And while cost is always important, Covid-19 will encourage businesses to take a more rounded view of procurement. Cost will be one factor, but supply chain resilience will be another. A ‘Made in the UK’ label won’t just be a guarantee of quality, it will guarantee a consistent supply.

Nobody is predicting the wholesale reshoring of supply chains, and a resulting boom in British manufacturing capacity. But it seems likely that some supply chain production will return to the UK, at least for products that are seen as nationally important (such as PPE). Companies that need guaranteed supply may also heed the lessons of Covid and set up secondary domestic supply chains for at least some of their procurement.

It’s certainly an opportunity, and not just for manufacturers. Rochdale is also a hub for logistics businesses, and stockpiling is another potential bulwark against supply chain vulnerability. We are already seeing ‘just in case’ replacing ‘just in time’ procurement strategies, involving larger inventories held closer to home.

There are many downsides to the Covid pandemic for business. But one upside is a potential for reshoring some of the manufacturing supply chain, and the resulting opportunity for British manufacturers and logistics businesses. Rochdale is perfectly placed to benefit.

Rochdale managed IT services company gears up for growth

A Rochdale-based managed IT services company is targeting £1m+ turnover next year after moving into new offices. Creative Networks was founded by brothers Azeem Javed and Shakeel Ahmed in 2005 and has now grown to 15 staff, supporting hundreds of clients with IT support and services.

The company has always been based in Rochdale and recently moved into Moss Bridge House on Moss Bridge Road, which was previously occupied by Zen Internet. Director Azeem Javed said their new office gives them the space to grow as they look to hit £1m turnover for the first time.

He said: "Our objective for the rest of 2020 and into 2021 is to scale the business and we now have significant extra capacity to help achieve that. "When we were looking for a new office we had no intention of leaving our hometown Rochdale from where we have built a number of successful companies.

"Moss Bridge House was perfect because of the brilliant transport links it boasts. We're really glad we moved." Creative Networks is a family business run by brothers, Asim, Azeem, Kasim and Shakeel Ahmed. The brothers also run a successful refurbished tech company – ineedamobile.com – and have recently extended its services into digital marketing under Creative Marketing.

The company works across all sectors including professional services, manufacturing, ecommerce and public sector. Javed said: "Our values, beliefs and ethics are at the heart of everything we do at Creative Networks and we're 100 per cent committed to continuing our professional work ethic.

"The keys to our success thus far have been reliability, trustworthiness and keeping our promises. "We started with a single engineer and a single customer and have grown on the back of our customer-centric approach.

"Clients have needed a reliable IT network more than ever during Covid-19 and that's where we've been able to step in."



Councillor John Blundell, cabinet member for regeneration, business, skills and employment at Rochdale Borough Council, said: "We're very proud of companies like Creative Networks that have continued to grow within the borough. Their new office at Moss Bridge House is a statement of intent and sets the company up for continued growth in 2021 and beyond."

Rochdale wins funding for pioneering renewable energy project

Rochdale Council is one of five local authorities in Greater Manchester to have won funding for a pioneering clean energy project – that will develop 10 renewable schemes across the conurbation – and create a blueprint that can be replicated in other regions across the UK aiming for Net Zero carbon emissions.



Unlocking Clean Energy in Greater Manchester (UCEGM) has brought together five local authorities that have declared a "climate emergency" – Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, and Wigan.

The 3-year £17.2m project – part-funded with £8.6m from the European Regional Development Fund – will capitalise on under-utilised council-owned sites and buildings, to develop:

- 10 Megawatts of solar PV and hydro-electric generation,
- battery storage,
- electric vehicle (EV) charging, and
- smart energy management systems.

The projects planned include solar farms in Rochdale and Salford, three rooftop solar schemes in Stockport and a rooftop solar scheme in Wigan.

Importantly, the UCEGM project will also focus on innovative new business models to maximise the value from the electricity generated, for example by taking advantage of regulatory changes, or utilising flexibility between clean energy assets distributed across the city-region as part of Greater Manchester's emerging Local Energy Market.

Energy Systems catapult said: "There are three equally important parts to this innovation project.

"Firstly, building renewable energy generation on under-utilised council land to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions for local authorities.

"Secondly, incorporating energy storage and electric vehicle charging using smart digital systems to make weather dependent renewable generation more flexible to local energy demands.

"Thirdly, developing a range of innovative business models that not only reduces energy costs but which may attract private sector investment and grow local businesses.

"The aim for Energy Systems Catapult is to provide a blueprint that is replicable and can help scale-up local and national clean energy systems."

The UCEGM project is an example of how the Greater Manchester districts are collaborating to deliver the regions aspiration of 2038 carbon neutrality. The outputs delivered will account for 22% of the Greater Manchester 5-year environment plan energy generation target.

In Rochdale the funding will support the development of a 27-acre solar farm at Chamber House Farm between Rochdale and Heywood. The scheme, which was granted planning permission last month, has been developed by Rochdale Development Agency acting on behalf of the Council.

Councillor John Blundell, an RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration said: "The planned solar farm at Chamber Farm will generate enough energy to power 1,250 homes, or 1.4 per cent of our borough's homes annually, over the next 30 years.

"This will make a significant contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and tackling climate change and supports the important commitment we've made, alongside other GM boroughs, to make the city region carbon neutral by 2038, 12 years earlier than the national clean air target."

Manufacturer pledges to be carbon neutral by 2022

A Rochdale manufacturer has announced plans to be carbon neutral by 2022 – 28 years ahead of the Government’s target of 2050. Crystal Doors is so committed to becoming one of the first businesses in Greater Manchester to be carbon neutral it has unfurled a 9m x 3m sign on the side of its factory declaring: ‘We’re closing the door on carbon emissions by 2022.’



As part of the pledge managing director Richard Hagan said the manufacturer of vinyl-wrapped doors would completely eradicate the climate impact of its direct operations, staff and supply chain within 18 months – making it one of the most radical green manufacturers in the UK.

By the start of next year, the remaining power Crystal Doors needs to draw from the grid will be from 100 per cent renewable sources. To eliminate ‘indirect’ emissions from the supply chain and achieve full carbon neutrality by 2022, suppliers and customers will be encouraged to make their own improvements, and the remaining carbon footprint will be offset through local initiatives such as tree planting.

The company has also trained its staff in carbon literacy and has offset the carbon footprint of every employee, giving a cash reward to those who can demonstrate a lower climate impact each year.

Mr Hagan said: “We’re putting the climate emergency at the heart of what we do as a business, not because it’s good for profit, but because it’s the right thing to do. I strongly believe those with the ability to lead the way must do so, which is why we’re telling the world about our plan and, crucially, sharing our knowledge on how we’re doing it.

“Our new sign is visible to everyone who travels in and out of the estate so we hope it will start a conversation about how we can all reduce our impact on the environment.”

Andy Burnham, the Mayor of Greater Manchester, has announced his ambition for his region to be carbon-neutral by

2038, 12 years’ ahead of the Government’s own target. Crystal Doors has already cut its carbon footprint from direct operations and electricity use by a third since 2015 by investing in cutting-edge energy efficient technology, an electric car and a 245kW solar panel system covering its entire rooftop.

The factory is now one of only around 500 commercial buildings in the country to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of A+. Most of this has been achieved without affecting cashflow.

Mr Hagan explained: “There’s a perception that doing the right thing is expensive. That’s simply not true. The finance repayments on our investments are covered by the energy savings we make – meaning we are reducing our environmental impact with no impact on our cashflow. If a small business like ours can do it, everyone can.”

He said there’s never been a better time for businesses to take action, despite the economic difficulties caused by Covid-19.

“The disruption we’re seeing at the moment will be nothing compared to climate change unless we move faster on reducing emissions,” he said.

“Thankfully, Covid-19 has shown us that we’re willing to come together and take drastic action to protect each other in a moment of crisis. We have an opportunity now to not only build back better, but build back greener. We stand ready to play our part in this green recovery and help other organisations do the same.”

K75 is let at Kingsway

Cleland McIver Lifestyle has expanded its footprint at the Rochdale business park by agreeing a 10 year lease on the final new-build unit at Plot K. The textiles manufacturer has signed an agreement with landlord Ropemaker Properties to occupy K75, a 75,000 sq ft detached industrial unit at Kingsway Business Park.

The deal takes Cleland McIver’s total occupancy at the park to 115,000 sq ft, after it purchased the adjacent Plot K40 in 2017. Security systems company Thales and German retailer Nobilia Kitchens also occupy units at Plot K.



Kingsway Business Park is located off Junction 21 of the M62 in Greater Manchester and comprises more than 2m sq ft of warehouse space. Other occupiers include Asda, logistics firm Wincanton, JD Sports, freight company Dachser.

Richard Johnson, director of industrial and logistics at JLL, said: “Cleland McIver’s expansion within the park is testament to Kingsway’s credentials as a premier industrial location and its inherent flexibility to be able to accommodate and facilitate the growth of its occupiers.

“The full occupancy of Plot K further underlines the demand for Grade A mid-box space, the appeal of Kingsway and the quality of its offering.”

Cllr John Blundell, an RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration added: “Cleland is a great company with ambitions to be even more successful.

“It speaks volumes about Rochdale borough in general, and Kingsway Business Park in particular, that this exciting business realised it could find everything it needed for future success right on its doorstep. Its decision brought another ambitious and growing business to Kingsway, one of the UK’s best-performing business parks.”

It's a Yes for the BID at Stakehill

Stakehill businesses celebrate positive BID result

Businesses across Stakehill have voted in favour of plans of the Stakehill Business Improvement District (BID), securing a significant £800,000 to be spent on supporting businesses and improving the area.

The positive result follows 18 months of planning, in-depth interviews, surveys and workshops and a month-long ballot in which hundreds of businesses in the area were asked to vote on the proposals.

79% of votes cast voted in favour of the BID renewal ballot by total number of businesses, and 74% of votes cast voted in favour of the BID by Rateable Value.

As a result of the yes vote the Stakehill BID will commence, on the 1 July 2021.

The plans were spear-headed and driven by the Stakehill BID Steering Group of business representatives from across the Industrial Estate, supported by pfbbUK, who develop and deliver Business Improvement Districts across the country.

Speaking about the 'Yes' vote, Martyn Barrow (MID Communications) Chair of the Stakehill BID Steering Group said: "This is superb news for Stakehill Industrial Estate and huge congratulations must go to all the businesses which rallied and joined forces to ensure we secured a yes vote BID Ballot. Thanks must go to all those businesses who engaged in the process by sharing their ideas and opinions on how we can work together to improve the area and who, ultimately, voted in favour of the plans that to support each other in these challenging and uncertain times."

"The BID's business plan, which businesses were being asked to vote on, has been designed to begin addressing the issues which came up during the lengthy consultations with the businesses in the BID area. The collective voice of businesses working together also translates into productive relationships and outcomes, and the ability to influence more strategic issues such as road and rail networks when working with other organisations and public bodies."

The Stakehill BID vision is for 'The Stakehill BID area to be recognised as the place where businesses develop and grow through collaboration and investment.'

The BID will:

1. Provide an infrastructure for businesses to operate and people and services to access and move around, safely, and effectively.
2. Work closely with key stakeholders & partners to create and maintain a safe and secure working environment for customers and workers on the estate.
2. Provide a strong coordinated voice to represent the interests of the businesses and all those who work on the estate.

A company will now be formed to deliver the objectives of the BID over the next five years. For more information please visit <https://www.stakehillbid.com/>



Romac Logistics expands into new Middleton HQ

Manchester-based Romac Logistics has expanded into a new head office and distribution centre at Stakehill Industrial Estate.

The company, which specialises in chilled and ambient logistics, offers warehousing and national distribution services for the UK's food and drink manufacturers and retailers.

The move adds an 80,000 sq ft temperature controlled facility to Romac's portfolio.

Property consultancy Gent Visick advised the company and negotiated the leasehold acquisition. The site was marketed by BC Real Estate on behalf of CCLA, fund managers for the owner, the COIF Charities Property Fund.

Rob McAdoo of Romac Logistics said: "At this stage in our growth it was important to evolve our service offering while taking stock of our infrastructure.

"In consolidating two of our smaller operations and merging the head office into the distribution centre at Stakehill Industrial Estate we will deliver an abundance of efficiencies that will ultimately benefit our customers."

Daniel Walker of Gent Visick added: **"Stakehill Industrial Estate will make a fantastic HQ for Romac Logistics in a prime location. The site will see continued growth of the business through a cold store facility and oversized service yard, so it ticks every box for Romac Logistics and successfully negotiating this deal on the company's behalf is a great result."**

Virtual Tour of Kingsway Business Park



Photographer Dan Root is used to travelling the globe taking photos of some of the world's most exotic locations but his latest assignment has been a lot closer to his Rochdale home. Dan Root is a multi award-winning photographer for Google Street View and creates fully immersive 360 virtual tours of all types of business.

While Dan has been grounded during the Covid pandemic he's used his skills in drone photography to create a virtual 360 degree tour of Kingsway Business Park in Rochdale.

The interactive technology allows visitors to identify available plots of land and find out which other businesses are on the park already.

"It's a really easy way for a potential investor from anywhere in the world to get a bird's eye view of Kingsway and identify potential opportunities."

Dan had been a hobby photographer before a lucky break meant he could turn it into a full-time career.

"Most people know about Google Maps or Google Street View but you can also promote businesses like hotels through the platform.

"I remember in 2014 I was asked to visit

36 hotels in 49 days in Mauritius, Maldives, Oman and UAE and it went from there. I've now photographed 300 hotels around the world.

"I use specialist photography equipment and take 20 photographs to create a single 360 degree image.

Explaining how they work he said: "The 360 degree virtual tour of Kingsway Business Park is made up of a series of aerial 360 photos created from 24 different images taken using a drone."

"If you log onto the website you can hover the cursor over a building and it will identify the occupier and if you click on it you can find out more about the business.

"If you want to see which plots of land are available and the size you simply hover the cursor over it, you can then click through to the RDA's contact form if you wish to submit an enquiry regarding that unit or plot of land.

"You can navigate around the business park simply by clicking on the navigational icons."

Dan said the interactive virtual tours bring fields and buildings to life. "How do you sell a field?" he asked. "If you can show people the position of the space relative to other businesses, local amenities and its transport links it will hopefully attract more interest. It's a really beautiful business park and I think it needs to be seen to be fully appreciated.

"You don't need to sell the benefits of Rochdale to me because I'm from the area but the virtual tours sell Rochdale and the Kingsway Business Park to the rest of the world."

To explore the immersive Kingsway Business Park experience please click here



Fast growing logistics company takes 23,000 sq ft site in Heywood

Fast-growing logistics business MW Fulfilment Services has continued its expansion by opening up its first facility in Rochdale.

The company has taken a nine-year lease on a 23,000 sq ft unit in Broadfield Business Park, Heywood, which will be the base for its eCommerce division. Founder and managing director Mike Walls said he has invested £200,000 in the new facility and expects to create 20 new jobs including some apprenticeships.

Rochdale Development Agency supported the company by helping identify potential properties and assisting with their move. The entrepreneur said this was the third time he's based a business in Rochdale following on from LED Hut and Fowler Welch. "There's a very good pool of people in Rochdale and that's crucial," he said.

"I've always found Rochdale Borough Council and RDA really receptive in helping with finding a suitable warehouse and recruitment.

"I describe the business as a 'mini Amazon'. This is an exciting time for MW Fulfilment Services and we're really pleased to be doing it and creating jobs in Rochdale." Walls, who is a logistics veteran with 38 years' experience, launched MW Fulfilment Services in 2018.

"The Heywood site became operational at the start of August and we're really pleased with the way it works.

"Transport is only part of the business but it's a very important part and the Heywood site benefits from first class motorway connections. We think it's the perfect place to meet the needs of our growing customer base."

Rochdale is home to the largest commercial and logistics cluster in Greater Manchester, and nearly 30,000 people are employed in the sector in the town and surrounding areas.

Cable manufacturer looks to grow after expansion

The boss of a Rochdale-based cable manufacturer is eyeing up European growth after taking on an extra 5,000 sq ft of space. Jeremy Kemsley-Pein bought Heatsense Cables out of administration in 2014 and relocated it from Burnley to Rochdale.

The company, which produces specialist high-performance cables for a range of sectors including aerospace, automotive, nuclear, R&D and oil & gas, has just signed a 10-year lease on another 5,000 sq ft at Transpennine Trading Estate, in Gorrells Way, Rochdale, increasing its floorspace to 17,000 sq ft.

The company grew turnover to £2.1m last year and was looking to reach £3m this year until Covid-19 struck. South African-born Mr Kemsley-Pein said he was confident Heatsense Cables had ridden out the worst of the pandemic storm and was on track to become a world class specialist cable manufacturer.

"Since buying Heatsense Cables out of administration in 2014 we've trebled turnover to more than £2m and doubled our workforce to 18 people," he said.

"Heatsense Cables was founded in 1984 and consistently made profits but it was bumbling along and I thought we could build a really specialist manufacturing business. The idea was to first position the company so there were no barriers to large corporates doing business with us so we obtained all the necessary quality and environmental accreditations.

"We also invested in our products and our website because nobody had heard of Heatsense. The company has developed a digital strategy and is in the process of rolling out Industry 4.0 technology across the entire operation. This will lead to further improvements in efficiencies, quality and throughput rates." Mr Kemsley-Pein said trading conditions in April, May and June were 'difficult' but were showing signs of recovery.

"The only way we can match previous turnover is to win new business," he said. "You have to believe in your strategy, keep investing, keep broadening your manufacturing capabilities and employ highly skilled individuals. We want to position Heatsense at the cutting edge of cable manufacturing globally and we aspire to be a world class company. Our senior team has a passion for specialist high-end manufacturing."

Mr Kemsley-Pein said being based in Rochdale had been pivotal to the company's success.

"Rochdale Borough Council and Rochdale Development Agency have always gone the extra mile for us," he said. "All our staff come from Rochdale and I'm proud to be associated with Rochdale. It's the perfect place to grow a business."



Rochdale manufacturer opens new £3m assembly centre



Rochdale manufacturer Dunphy Combustion is focused on growth with the opening of a new £3m assembly centre. The family-owned business, which specialises in the design, manufacture, installation and maintenance of combustion equipment and boiler rooms across the world, described construction of the 35,000 sq ft unit as a 'landmark day' in their 56-year history.

The two-bay industrial unit was built by Heywood-based PLP Construction while the four 60 tonne cranes were supplied by another Rochdale business in Granada Material Handling.

Eddie Kuligowski, operations director at Dunphy, said the company had been 'bulging at the seams' until construction of the new assembly centre. "Previously we'd had a fabrications centre and assembly area under one roof," he said. "The R&D facility completed in 2015 has allowed us to expand the bio energy centre side of the business. This new centre will allow us to double our capacity.

"Until now we've had to turn down work. There's nothing worse than taking an order and not being able to deliver it so we turned work down. "Around 50 per cent of our work goes to export and this opens up new markets for us. This is a long-term investment for us."

Dunphy employ 110 people and have an annual turnover of £14m. Customers include Shell and Rolls Royce. The new building is expected to be open in October. Kuligowski said he was delighted to have been able to use two other Rochdale companies in the project.

"Like us, PLP Construction and Granada Material Handling are long-established Rochdale businesses," he said. "Rochdale is a good place to do business. We have the welders, electricians, fabricators and fitters to be able to do everything that we need."

Laurie Bradley is the construction director of PLP Construction, which directly employs 45 people and has a £15m turnover. By coincidence he was in the same class at school in Rochdale as Kuligowski.

He said: "We had a three-week delay because of Covid-19 so it took 43 weeks in total but other than that it was relatively straight forward. Also we had to leave elements of the roof open so we could bring the cranes in.

"As a local business it's great to be involved in schemes like this in Rochdale."

Richard Lewis is the sales engineer at Granada Material Handling, which designs, manufactures and installs heavy duty lifting equipment. The company is 40 years old, employs 90 people and has a £20m turnover.

He said: "Our customers would typically be anyone who lifts heavy loads. It could be a car manufacturing plant or a company in the aerospace sector.

"We've installed four 60 tonne cranes into the new Dunphy building across two bays. The cranes work in tandem so can lift as much as 120 tonnes.

"The cranes were only manufactured a mile away so it's fantastic that something as impressive as this can be delivered 100 per cent by Rochdale businesses."



Russell WBHO set to deliver over 120,000sq ft temperature-controlled storage for logistics giant



Russell WBHO is set to deliver 126,000 sq ft of cold storage capacity for Lineage Logistics at two UK sites. Work has commenced work on an 80,000 sq ft or 21,000 pallet cold storage unit at the firm's UK headquarters in Heywood, Greater Manchester.

The project is the culmination of a multi-phase expansion of capacity at the Heywood site that Russells has supported over the last decade. In total, the team will have built 260,000 sq ft of space, housing upwards of 57,000 pallets, at the Heywood facility since 2004.

Russell WBHO has worked with Lineage Logistics for more than 15 years and has already delivered in excess of 1million sq ft of cold storage space across its national network of 14 sites. The team takes on every aspect of the project, from design and planning right through the build, handing over the completed scheme just prior to temperature pull down.

Andrew Russell, joint managing director of Russell WBHO, said: "The seamless working relationship developed over the last 15 years means we operate as a genuine extension of the Lineage team. Working together from the early concept stage ensures the buildability aligns directly with the client's requirements, budget and timescales.

"We are very proud to support the expansion of the UK's largest cold storage and distribution operator, and will continue to deliver the high quality, state-of-the art facilities that their customers expect."

Lineage Logistics is continuing a planned programme of expansion across the UK, responding to demand for cold storage facilities from manufacturers, retailers, and food service providers.

Jonathan Baker, executive director Lineage Logistics, said: "The value of the cold chain has never been so apparent as it is today, with pressure on food manufacturers and retailers resulting in increased demand for temperature-controlled storage and distribution facilities.

"The expansion of our storage capacity was already in progress due to existing demand, though the current situation has highlighted the need for an extensive and enlarged cold chain provision throughout the world.

"Having Russell WBHO on board significantly reduces the time it takes to deliver that additional capacity, thanks to their familiarity with our requirements and the strength of relationships within the project team. Together with their specialist suppliers, these new facilities will be coming on-line over the next two years, providing our customers with the most up-to-date systems and resources available."

Rochdale firm BES joins Covid vaccine fight

Rochdale-based pharmaceutical design and construction specialist BES was appointed to fit-out the new Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (VMIC) in Oxfordshire.

The project has been fast-tracked for early completion in 2021 due to Covid-19 and will enable vaccine developers to refine their processes and prepare vaccines for clinical trials.

This Government-funded project was already planned prior to the pandemic, with completion originally scheduled for 2022. The urgent need to produce vaccines at scale to fight future pandemics has prompted the project handover to be moved forward by 12 months.

Steve Marsh, managing director of BES, said: "Effective vaccines play an important role in public health, and the new VMIC facilities will enable the UK to respond quickly to new health risks, including pandemics, by enabling large scale production of vaccines for both clinical use and emergency response."

Earlier this year the Rochdale firm was praised by Covid-19 vaccine researchers for completing a new facility for Keele-based Cobra Biologics despite the pandemic.

With more than 18 years' experience of delivering complex pharmaceutical environments, BES will leverage the expertise of its multidisciplinary team to provide design coordination and internal fit-out of pre-clinical development

laboratories, vaccine manufacturing suites, cold storage and filling areas.

Working collaboratively with principal contractor, Glencar Construction, BES will provide integrated process, architectural, mechanical and electrical services to meet the challenging programme and complete the state-of-the-art centre to the highest standards.

Eddie McGillycuddy from Glencar Construction said: "Delivering this project will be a major milestone in achieving improved resilience to the pandemic and to any future public health challenges. We are delighted that BES has joined our team and we look forward to rapid progress on site."

COO of VMIC, Chris Lucas, added: "Delivering the VMIC facility during a pandemic is challenging, and the need to fast-track the project by a year has resulted in a level of complexity unparalleled in construction. With their level of expertise, BES will form an important part of the collaborative group delivering this project of national importance."

VMIC is a not-for-profit organisation established to provide the UK's first strategic vaccine development and advanced manufacturing capability and is

taking a leading role in advising Government teams on vaccine manufacturing in response to Covid.

Based at Harwell Campus in Oxfordshire, the organisation's new 7,400m² specialist manufacturing centre will enable vaccine developers to refine their processes, prepare vaccines for clinical trials, and scale-up for mass production in the event of any future public health emergencies.

A Government grant of £93m was awarded to VMIC in May 2020 to fast track the build and expand its manufacturing capacity.

The highly specialist facility will form a key element of the Government's future pandemic response and, when completed, will be capable of producing 70 million pandemic vaccine doses in just four-six months.



Dunsters Farm goes national after Covid

Wholesale food distributor Dunsters Farm launched a national home delivery service after Covid-19 left it fighting for its future.

Dunsters farm had been targeting turnover growth from £12m to £15m until the pandemic struck. Dunsters Farm, supplies food to the school, restaurant and hospitality sector, all of which were devastated by the lockdown.

It has a number of clients in Rochdale including Hollingworth Academy and Hopwood Hall College. With tens of thousands of pounds of stock about to go out-of-date during Covid the business launched an eCommerce website and started selling direct to the consumer for the first time.

Joint managing director Hannah Barlow described the last year as a 'rollercoaster ride' but said the 58-year-old business was approaching the future with confidence. She said: "The business was set up by my grandfather Les Ratcliffe in 1963 as a milk round and my parents Elizabeth and Jeremy came onboard as the second generation.

"My brother Tom and I joined in 2014. We call ourselves a food service. We're the middlemen between the supplier and the catering teams that work in hospitals, schools, restaurants and universities.

"When Covid happened overnight 95 per cent of our customers were forced to close through no fault of their own. We were losing money every single day we stayed open but we never considered closing because we had to serve schools who were staying open for key workers." However with tonnes of food about to go off Dunsters Farm had to pivot their business model in just a couple of days to go online.

"We've always allowed our trade customers to order online but we didn't have an eCommerce facility," she said. "We sell in bulk like giant bags of grated cheese and 2 kilo tubs of sour cream and it's too big for your average shopper.

"We were in danger of losing tens of thousands of pounds of food so we started selling online and delivering to people's homes through our fleet of smaller vehicles."

Orders of over £30 were delivered for free in the Greater Manchester area and home delivery sales peaked at £5,000 a week. The business also held 'yard sales' on the last Saturday of every month and donated a huge amount of produce to local food banks. Hannah said: "It has kept the staff that weren't furloughed busy and helped us move our stock.



"We have still lost a significant amount of money but the situation would have been a lot worse without it.

There have been a lot of sleepless nights over the last year and there remains a lot of uncertainty but we remain committed to serving Rochdale and now the UK for many more years to come."

Acquired tech firm to remain in Rochdale

The founder of a Rochdale tech firm that's been acquired in a private equity-backed deal has said the business will remain in the borough. Steve White founded Lone Worker Solutions (LWS) in 2009 to provide BS8484 certified emergency alarm devices and apps for people working alone.

The company is used by 70,000 field-based workers and customers include Vodafone, United Utilities and the NHS. It was bought by Belfast-based software company Totalmobile for an undisclosed sum.

The lone worker protection solution provided by LWS will be rebranded as Totalmobile's 'Protect' product, with operations continuing to be based in Rochdale.

Mr White said: "Totalmobile approached us while in lockdown as they were looking for a lone worker protection company to enhance their leading Work Force Management software. "The UK leads the world in lone worker solutions, so it was a great fit to be acquired by another UK leading software company.

"The ultimate plan is that our Rochdale office will be the new centre of excellence for Totalmobile's Protect product. This is great news for us as we look to expand our team in the future, having access to a wealth of local support from the Rochdale Development Agency and outstanding young local talent from

Rochdale Sixth Form College and Hopwood Hall College." Lone Worker Solutions employs 22 people, with 17 based in Rochdale and a sales team of five in London.

Explaining how he came up with the idea for Lone Worker Solutions Mr White said: "We were concerned about what would happen when people work alone. It could be district nurses, delivery drivers or utility workers.

"A lot of organisations were cutting costs by going from a two person to a one person team. We introduced a platform solution that integrated apps and devices to a single solution." LWS provides access to safety alerts, status updates and locational information to support staff who are operating in high risk environments or undertaking sensitive activities.

The software is also used to support employee wellbeing and provide compliance assurance across a diverse range of enterprise level customers. Lone Worker Solutions had grown turnover to £3m at the time it was bought.

Jim Darragh, CEO of Totalmobile, said:

"In lone worker solutions we have acquired some of the most well-regarded solutions in the market with subject matter experts who have the experience of growing strong annual recurring revenues. We look forward to welcoming the staff and customers to the Totalmobile family."



Vita group's new innovation centre

The Vita Group remains at the forefront of innovation and sustainable initiatives for the furniture and bedding industry. Focusing on the innovation process for bedding products, The Vita Group's latest innovation investment has been completed and launched by its Comfort Division. Significant investment in people and infrastructure has equipped this facility to monitor all aspect of a comfortable night's sleep including durability, spinal alignment, quality, temperature, and humidity, so each can be calibrated and mattresses refined to create the ultimate product.



The Bedding Innovation Centre built in Middleton combines Vita's technical expertise in foam chemistry with the latest state-of-the-art testing equipment and systems. The facility is specifically designed to provide its customers with the ability to follow a complete development program from initial concept through to finished foam core, providing an exceptional customer experience. In recent years, Vita has delivered significant innovative products.

These include Revo, its cool sleep concept for the bedding industry, that was developed to fulfil a desire to create a foam that has high airflow and can maintain a stable temperature environment for the sleeper while giving the support of a sprung mattress. Recently Vita launched FRee foam, an environmentally friendly alternative to standard foams that is fully compliant with UK flammability regulations. By opening the Comfort Bedding Innovation Centre Vita is demonstrating a continued commitment to innovation for the bedding industry.

Gilbert Davids, MD for Vita's Comfort division, said 'Vita has a long tradition of innovation. The opening of our centre at Middleton allows Vita to respond quickly and effectively to the ever-changing need of our customers and the bedding industry. Once COVID restrictions are relaxed it will allow us to bring our customers to Middleton where we can highlight our chemistry and design expertise, allowing them to see their mattresses being tested right in front of their eyes. We have a dedicated team developing new, innovative products for the bedding market. We will continuously deliver innovations for customers through our new product development pipeline.'

Vita has created a video virtual tour of its laboratories and the centre. This provides a view of the new facilities and an introduction to the chemists and technicians working there. The innovation centre has already received great support and accolades from several bedding and mattress manufacturers. For more information about the Comfort Bedding Innovation Centre, please visit www.thevitagroup.com

Speaking about the centre, Ian W. Robb, Group CEO for The Vita Group said "The Vita Group's innovation centre at Middleton will provide our customers with a bespoke journey and delivers a creative environment to work with our chemists and technicians. It has already received great support and accolades from a number of our bedding and mattress customers."

Haulier A.D.D. Express Ltd has created 10 new jobs after moving to its new Rochdale facility. The West Yorkshire haulier has invested £1.4m in the refurbishment of its state-of-the-art building on Chichester Street which will accommodate up to 4,000 pallets per night at full capacity.

A.D.D. Express expands to Rochdale with £1.4m investment

Dave Fairbrother, managing director of A.D.D. Express Ltd, said: "The Rochdale site is the perfect location for us as it provides space to expand our fleet and grow with our customers.

"The business has been growing at a rate of 10 per cent year-on-year for the last five years and that is all organic growth via word of mouth.

"We've been wanting to expand our warehousing space for some time, but it has taken us two-and-a-half years to find a site with suitable space and facilities for this expansion.

"For the first time we will be able to proactively expand our business and reach our full potential.

"It is an exciting time for our business and our team, who have faced real challenges during the last few months, and we will continue to defy expectations.

"Our presence will also benefit the local community in Rochdale; we have already invested heavily in future proofing the site and will be creating more new roles as our operation expands."

Key features of the new site include a five-acre yard, sort facility, drive-thru canopy, dedicated scanning bays, extensive CCTV and a weigh bridge – all located just minutes from junction 21 of the M62.

A.D.D. Express Ltd is a shareholder and founder member of the Pall-Ex network – a pallet network of SME haulage firms, which operate independently, but work together to deliver freight cost-effectively throughout the UK and Europe.

Its new Rochdale site will become Pall-Ex's Northern Hub, providing a spacious and accessible location for Pall-Ex members in the north to deliver freight for sorting.

Barry Byers, Pall-Ex managing director UK, said: "The opening of our Northern Hub is an exciting step in Pall-Ex's on-going journey and welcome news during what has been a challenging year for the sector."

Cllr John Blundell, an RDA board member and Rochdale Council cabinet member for Regeneration, said: "A.D.D. Express Ltd is a perfect example of a company that has seen the benefit of having a presence in Rochdale.

"The refurbished facility looks fantastic and is perfectly placed to take advantage of the quick access to the motorway network."

A.D.D Express Ltd, which was established in 1991, will retain its existing 60,000 sq ft facility in Elland.



Manufacturing recruiter eyes up £1m turnover

A fast-growing Rochdale recruitment company is targeting £1m turnover in 2021 as well as making a number of additions to its own team.

Optima Consultancy Services is preparing to move from Princess Street in Rochdale to new offices in St Chads Court and grow its own workforce from six to 10. The company, which was founded by Kyle Davies, specialises in helping manufacturers attract and retain talent.

Last year the firm made a six figure profit despite the pandemic and its head of operations Ryan Lockett said it was looking to break £1m revenue in 2021 for the first time. Both Mr Davies and Mr Lockett have previously worked in Manchester city centre but said Rochdale was the perfect place to base a business focused on manufacturing.

“Manufacturing is in the news all the time in Rochdale and the AMPI project and £6.1m extension to Hopwood Hall College’s Technology Centre is really exciting, along with the amazing support offered by Rochdale Training,” he said. “Ultimately, we’re both born and bred in Rochdale. I support Rochdale AFC, we both plan to stay in the borough so decided to set up here. We have a real passion to make a difference and if we can help to put Rochdale on the map whilst building the business, then that would be amazing.”

Optima has worked across the UK for a range of clients and in Rochdale it’s worked with KP Industries, based in Kingsway Business Park. “We want to play our part in helping Rochdale’s manufacturing sector grow,” said Mr Lockett. “We can help companies attract and retain talent and we have product packages to suit your needs.

“There’s no doubt the pandemic has had an impact but in our experience business is definitely picking up, with more and more people within manufacturing getting into new roles.”

Optima has 30,000 potential recruits on its database and works closely with both candidates and customers. Mr Lockett said: “We help candidates create marketing portfolios, including one-page profiles, one-way video interviews and psychometric tests to improve their chances of finding a role.”



Optima plans to grow its own staff to 10 and its head of operations predicted its best days were ahead of it.

“Rochdale Riverside is already here and there are even more exciting improvements on the horizon,” he said. “We’re really excited at the prospect of working with more Rochdale manufacturers.

“We’re also proud partners of the Northern Powerhouse and we’ve chosen the Rochdale and District Mind as our charity for the year.”



Enterprise targets growth after securing New Rochdale Location

Enterprise Rent-A-Car has created a new purpose-built facility in Rochdale that will help the company grow its operations in the town.

The new location, at the junction of Oldham Road and Ainsworth Street close to Rochdale town centre, is three times larger than the company’s previous property. It will allow further expansion of the business while providing a modern and comfortable environment for customers and staff.

The total site area is approximately 17,850sq ft and incorporates a modern office building, a customer car park and space for rental vehicles. The car park will include 24 hour access to two car club spaces. Car club is an increasingly popular and sustainable way to drive.

Jason Black, Group Facilities and Construction Manager, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, said: “We are excited to be able to invest in a location that will help us to better serve our customers with their mobility needs. The new site is purpose-built and more than three times larger than our old site, so will allow for anticipated growth in the future.

“We’re grateful for the support provided by Rochdale Development Agency in helping us to find and invest in this site.”

Enterprise worked alongside the Rochdale Development Agency and Rochdale Borough Council to find the right site for their needs and agree the deal which will see the business move from its current location in Queensway. The move safeguards the company’s current staffing levels and opens the likelihood of further local recruitment in future.

Allen Brett, Councillor for Milkstone and Deeplish, said: “This move will secure local jobs, help a local business grow and make productive use of a currently unused pocket of land. We’re delighted that Enterprise has shown faith in Rochdale and sees a real growth opportunity in our town.”

RMO moves into Logic

The boss of a fast-growing start-up predicts turnover at its Rochdale base will double to £6m following their move into new premises.

Ryan Hopley only launched Repair Maintenance & Overhaul (RMO) in 2018 but it already boasts four offices and an annual turnover of £6m, with Rochdale accounting for half. The business is an electrical mechanical and instrumentation distributor and supplies multiple sectors including oil and gas, construction, rail, water, utilities and food production.

It grew by a third in 2020 despite the pandemic and is about to move into a 6,488 sq ft unit at Rochdale Council's Logic development at Kingsway Business Park.

Mr Hopley said: "We're really excited to be moving to Logic. We were literally bursting at the seams at our old site in Harriett Street. We had no room but didn't want to leave Rochdale. We worked with Rochdale Development Agency and as soon as we saw the unit at Logic we realised that was where we wanted to be. It's a great location next to the M62.

"We currently employ eight people in Rochdale but that will increase to 12 after the fit-out of our new unit at Logic. Rochdale accounts for half our turnover and we think that will double to £6m with the move. I'm a Milnrow lad so setting up a business in Rochdale was the natural choice."

Mr Hopley only decided to launch his own business after a shock cancer diagnosis in 2015. He recounted: "I was working for a large corporate electrical distributor and developed a bulge in my stomach that I wrongly assumed was a hernia. I had a scan and it turned out to be kidney cancer. I've been given the five-year all clear and I'm living life to the full.

"Going through something like that changes the way you approach life. I'd always wanted to set up a business so after my cancer battle I decided to do it and jumped in feet first."

Mr Hopley was 46 when he launched his first RMO site in Harriett Street, Rochdale, and followed it up with branch openings in Liverpool in 2019, Grimsby in 2020 and the acquisition of a Teeside-based business.

He explained: "The Grimsby move was a game-changer for us because it allowed us to expand into mechanical and instrumentation and that's fuelled the growth. We're now bringing the mechanical and instrumentation together with the electrical into Rochdale which is why we needed the bigger space at Logic."

The managing director said he had another personal reason for moving to Logic.



"Before Logic was built my Mum used to keep horses on the same land as the new unit is on," he said. "It feels like fate coming here. The unit is currently been fitted out but when it's finished we're going to put a horse shoe on the boardroom wall for good luck.

"I should have launched the business years ago but I feel as though we're catching up for lost time.

"Rochdale is a great place to base a business because of the people and the excellent connectivity and we can't wait for the move to Logic in week commencing March 22 when we look forward to helping customers old and new with their requirements."

Rochdale construction firm hit record £16m turnover

Rochdale-based PLP Construction has reported record turnover in 2020 of £16m. The family-run business was founded by managing director Philip Bradley. His son Laurie Bradley and daughter Joanne James are both directors and responsible for the day-to-day running of the business. PLP Construction employ 40 people and specialise in education; commercial; and housing.

Last year the company was involved in 30 projects and had a record turnover of £16m, made up of £13m from their construction division and £3m from their civils division. The figure is up from £12m in 2019. Projects included the building of a £3m assembly centre at Rochdale manufacturer Dunphy Combustion.

Director Laurie Bradley put their record-breaking performance down to the combination of hard work and having a dedicated workforce.

"2020 was a very challenging year because of Covid-19 so we're very proud of our trading performance," he said.

Director Joanne James said: "The company is a family-run business built on a foundation of strong family values of honesty and openness which is reflected in the high level of repeat business we have from our clients.

"Our greatest asset is our locally-based, directly employed workforce. We have a low staff turnover with the majority of our staff being employed by us for in excess of five years.

"We invest heavily in staff training and development, as well as employing apprentices and trainees, to future-proof our business. We also have a strong supply chain.

"Hopefully our clients appreciate the level of quality and uniformity in terms of our product and the fact we strive to deliver our projects on time and to the agreed budget."

Laurie added: "We can do most things in a construction environment ranging in value from £50,000 up to £5m. We endeavour to have a good mix of work to insulate ourselves against the rise and falls we experience within the sectors of the market."

Education accounts for 25 per cent of their work while commercial work constitutes another 20 per cent. The company's house-building arm is also flourishing.

"Rochdale is very important to us and accounts for about 20 per cent of our work," said Joanne. "We're proud that a lot of our education work has been in Rochdale at places like Castleton Primary School, Hopwood Hall College; St Luke's C of E Primary School and Harwood Park Primary School."

Laurie added: "A significant part of our work is in the housebuilding sector and we work closely with housing associations and private developers where individual house prices can be in the millions of pounds."

Experienced property expert Matt Sorrigan has recently started working with PLP Construction, which is due to celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2022.

Laurie said: "We want to continue to invest in our people and strive to improve the quality of what we deliver. We also want to protect our margin by looking at our systems and procedures to ensure we deliver the right product to the right quality on the first attempt.

"Finally, we want to ensure we can pass on to the next management team a business with a strong balance sheet and a healthy pipeline of work and is which is resilient in all measurable aspects".



Rochdale firm marks 30th anniversary with growth pledge

A Rochdale business that specialises in installing glass partitions is looking to double its turnover as it celebrates its 30th anniversary. Ian Masterson founded Office Blinds & Glazing (OBG) in 1991 and today it employs 30 staff and has an annual turnover of £2.5m.



The business was originally called Office Blinds Direct when it launched in 1991 but changed its name to Office Blinds & Glazing (OBG) in 1995 when it started doing floor to ceiling glass partitions. It now installs 1,000 floor to ceiling glass panels every month. "Most of our customers are office fit-out contractors," said Mr Masterson. "Everything ground to a halt at the start of Covid-19 and was pretty frightening but thankfully we only had to shut down for a month."

"We developed a range of glass Covid screens for hairdressers and office desks and that saw a big increase in demand at the beginning of Covid and we expect our services will be in demand as people return to open plan offices."

"We're aggressively going for growth and expansion. We're relaunching the website and want to get to £4m-£5m turnover." OBG operate out of a 8,000 sq ft office in Chichester Business Centre and Mr Masterson said being based in Rochdale had been vital to their success.

"The beauty of Rochdale is its location," he said. "The easy access to the M62 opens up the whole country to us. We're delighted to have reached our 30th anniversary but we're excited by the next stage of our journey."



IT business hits £1m turnover in landmark year

An IT managed support company has hit £1m turnover for the first time in its 21st year. MysonPages saw a big surge in demand for its services in 2020 during the Covid pandemic as clients switched to remote working.

MysonPages has 200 clients, of which the majority are based in Rochdale, including Rochdale Football Club.

Founder and director Dave Brereton said the company's success had been built around great customer service, evidenced by their inclusion in Zen Internet's Circle of Excellence Awards.

Brereton said: "We provide managed IT support for small businesses. We are their outsourced IT department and help companies to build their businesses."

"2020 was a tough year for a lot of people because of Covid but it meant we were incredibly busy. Everyone was reliant on us to keep them working and help move to remote."

"We launched the business in 1999 so it was an incredibly proud moment to hit £1m turnover for the first time in our

21st year, in a year of so much uncertainty."

MysonPages employs 12 people and while starting on Drake Street, is currently based in Delph between Rochdale and Oldham.

Brereton described MysonPages' inclusion as one of only five companies in Zen Internet's Circle of Excellence Awards as a 'game-changer'.

The awards recognise companies that deliver service excellence and are based on customer feedback. MysonPages were given a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 86.

Brereton said: "It's the ultimate accolade because it's based on our customers feedback, it's effectively the viewers' vote. We've worked with Zen for 16 or 17 years but being included in the Circle of

Excellence Awards has been a game-changer, it will act as a catalyst for change."

"2020 was a successful year for us and 2021 will be about adapting. As a business we've embraced remote working and that's going to continue to drive change amongst our clients."

Brereton is a member of the Rochdale Ambassadors and praised the borough's business community.

"The physical signs of regeneration have transformed the borough but there's been a real coming together of the business community too," he said.

"It feels appropriate that after 13 years we're moving our offices back into the borough in 2021, back where we've always belonged."

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