

## TURNSTONE BUSINESS PARK ON TARGET FOR FEBRUARY COMPLETION

Priority Sites' Turnstone Business Park that will deliver 60,000 sq ft (5,574 sq m) of quality business space, is bang on track for its February 2008 opening and has one entire hybrid unit under offer.

Councillor Rob Polhill said: "Turnstone Business Park is a key development at The Waterfront and the news that its first occupier is close is tremendously encouraging.

"In just a few short months the site has been radically transformed and the determination and capability of everyone involved will soon result in new jobs for Widnes."

Visitors to The Waterfront in recent months will have noticed the development



taking shape as the construction process gathered momentum.

John Boanas, Development Director for Priority Sites, added: "We are receiving a very high level of enquiries from prospective occupiers and are delighted to be making such positive strides towards the regeneration of The Waterfront."

Priority Sites is providing its hallmark recipe of high quality office and hybrid accommodation, which has been very popular among a variety of occupiers across the country.

The properties are being marketed toward businesses looking to relocate or expand and are looking for some of the very best accommodation around.

Interested parties should contact joint letting agents Richard Wharton at King Sturge on 0161 236 8793 or Colin Cawley at Eileen Bilton on 01925 444700.



A word from  
**COUNCILLOR  
TONY  
MCDERMOTT  
MBE**

**The delivery of a major regeneration scheme is often a long and tortuous journey with countless hurdles to overcome along the way. It is, therefore, reassuring when particular elements of the scheme finally come to fruition.**

Much has been made, quite rightly, about the impact that the new cinema and ice rink on Ashley Way will have in Halton but from the onset the Widnes Waterfront programme was primarily about the creation of a new and exciting environment for business which would attract new companies into the Borough and thereby create jobs for local people.

I am, therefore, delighted that the first brand new office scheme in Widnes in a very long time is about to open for business.

The Priority Sites development, fronting Earle Road and Dennis Road, totals 60,000 sq ft and is made up of thirteen modern high specification offices and six hybrid, that is office and assembly space over two floors, units.

The Priority Sites development, however, fits into a much bigger picture of job creation across The Waterfront. A number of businesses have already relocated to Heron Business Park on Tanhouse Lane and the new, soon to open, B&Q store will not only provide continuity of employment for the staff at the existing store in Widnes but will create an extra sixty jobs.

Clearly, then the regeneration of The Waterfront is well under way and will, over the next few years, continue to go from strength to strength.

## Funding permits great leap Forward

**The Forward Partnership has secured over £1m of combined public funding for major regeneration work on Widnes Waterfront.**

The development firm has welcomed the approval of £550,000 from the European Regional Development Fund under the North West's Objective Two programme and £540,000 from the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) - for the construction of light industrial and office accommodation.

Forward's £5.3m scheme will regenerate two sites in the area. The first site, located off Brown Street, is adjacent to the newly developed Heron Business Park and will become Forward Business Park with 11 double-height, single-storey, hi-tech light industrial units.

The second is Forward Point at the junction of Tanhouse Lane and Moss Bank at one of the key access points to Widnes Waterfront, where planning approval has also been granted for three modern, flexible office buildings with glass façades.



# News

## JOBS BOOM TO FOLLOW MERGER

**Up to 1,000 new jobs could be created in Widnes after a £138m merger between cult road haulage firm Eddie Stobart and property and ports firm Westbury.**

The new Stobart Group will combine Warrington-based Eddie Stobart, famous for its fleet of red and green lorries, with Westbury's growing ports and logistics business that includes Weston Point Docks, at Runcorn.

*inland water-way, rail and storage businesses, we believe we have the makings of a compelling multi-modal logistics business which will bring valuable benefits to customers and shareholders."*

or taken by rail to Widnes to be put on Eddie Stobart lorries.

Eddie Stobart managing director William Stobart - the son of original founder Eddie - said: "We believe the face of transport is changing as customers look for more efficient and carbon-friendly solutions. There is a huge potential for companies who can respond to this demand and offer a fully-integrated transport solution.

"A key part of the strategy of the enlarged business will be to invest in the new port at Runcorn and maximise development opportunities at Widnes to create an inter-modal port facility with road, rail and deep sea and inland waterway access capable of handling significant cargo volumes, linked to the haulage network."



The Westbury acquisition gives the Stobart Group a stock market listing with a market capitalisation around £250m.

The new Stobart Group is also buying Widnes-based freight handling firm O'Connor, which owns a rail freight depot in the town, for £23m. Westbury and O'Connor are already working together on plans to create an £80m road-rail freight interchange at Widnes.

The group wants to build 1m sq ft of new warehousing at Widnes and said that could create up to 1,000 new jobs within 18 months.

Westbury investment manager Richard Burrell said: "This is a fantastic deal for the North West. Talks with Halton Borough Council have already commenced.

"Eddie Stobart is a first-class business in its own right and with Westbury's deep sea,

The planned road-rail freight terminal at Widnes, the Mersey Multi-modal Gateway, has been under discussion for some time, with O'Connor and Halton Borough Council among its key partners.

In March this year, Westbury bought distribution specialist AHC, which owned land adjacent to O'Connor's property in Widnes. That deal was part of Westbury's long-term strategy for the site, that culminated in the recent merger announcement. Together, the AHC and O'Connor land total 143 acres. Westbury bought Weston Point in Runcorn from British Waterways in April for £10m. Last year it announced plans for an investment of about £20m to transform the site into an intermodal hub.

Under the group's new plans, freight unloaded at Weston Point could either be put straight on to the National Rail network

## WIDNES RUFC ATTRACT NEW SPONSORS



As reported in the previous edition of Upfront, Waterfront developer Priority Sites is sponsoring Widnes RUFC for the forthcoming season.

Pictured above are Priority Sites' John Boanas and Murray Carr with WRUFC club president Ivor Lewis and the 2007/08 team.



## Venture Fields naming competition

Members of the public are being given the opportunity to name the new leisure complex that is to be built on Ashley Way.



The exciting development includes plans for a new multi-million pound entertainment complex incorporating a five-screen cinema, an ice rink and associated food outlets.

To enter the competition please complete the online entry form at [www.widneswaterfront.co.uk](http://www.widneswaterfront.co.uk)

The closing date for entries is Friday 16th November.

The winner will be selected by the Board of Widnes Regeneration Ltd, the joint venture between St Modwen Properties PLC and Halton Borough Council.

A prize of £25.00 will go to the winner together with family tickets for the cinema and ice rink.



## ACCESS ALL HOURS

The first 100m of what will become a tree-lined boulevard stretching the length of The Waterfront, has been completed - on time and on budget.

The infrastructure project, undertaken by Birse Civils Ltd, will become the main distribution artery serving the south of the programme area and will open up access to a number of new potential development sites.

The completion of the access road will allow Langtree Group plc to start construction work on their office development.

Further landscaping work around the area is due to be carried out in the near future.



## Jobs in store at Waterfront B&Q

The new 45,000 sq ft B&Q store on Dennis Road will create 60 new jobs and safeguard a further 40 when it opens its doors later this year.

B&Q is already recruiting staff at the £100m development which is twice the size of the existing Widnes store.

A B&Q spokesman, said: "Every single person who works in the old store is moving over. We will be creating another 60 jobs on top of this 40.

"The new store will be a lot more modern, a shop within a shop, more like a department

store, with aisles of cushions and curtains. It will be bigger, better and much more user friendly."

Developed by Manchester based Property Alliance Group, the new store will replace the existing B&Q outlet on Ashley Retail Park.

Case study

# News

## FORUM TECHNIK

The Waterfront is home to a large number of special companies and in this edition of Upfront, we catch up with innovative home design specialists Forum Technik.



Based on Gorse Lane, the company, that recently benefited from a Waterfront BIA grant, opened in Widnes in 2005 and currently employs twelve people in two distinct companies: Forum Living and Forum Technik.

*"Forum Living is our lifestyle brand supplying high-quality bespoke kitchens and furniture while Forum Technik is our home automation and audio/visual brand."* Says Director, Derek Lewis.

Supplying, in some cases exclusively in the North West, some of the most highly sought-after designer home ware from top-of-the-range brands such as Poggen Poll, Sub Zero, Wolf, Arte de Granito, Roberto Caravalli and Edwin Loxley.

*"We import the very best products from all over the world including Italy, USA, Netherlands and Germany along with sourcing the very best Britain has to offer."*

*"We supply exquisite interior design mainly to property developers for the high-end penthouses and executive ranges, but we*

*also have a thriving market in the North West for individuals wanting something extra special in their homes."* explains Derek, expertly refusing to be drawn on names of his 'high-net worth individual' customers.

As expertly crafted and oozing in quality as these interior design solutions undoubtedly are, it is the other side of the business that is really at the cutting edge of the latest technology.

Forum Technik, deals in the supply of the very latest in home automation, climate control and high quality audio/visual hardware dealing in brands such as Bang & Olufsen, Jung and Siemens.

The system allows for on-site or off-site remote control of every aspect of the home's lighting, temperature and security systems – they can even be controlled by text message command from mobile phone handsets.

The technology developed by Siemens, known as Konnex, operates via a microchip in every intelligent switch panel that is

programmed for one of a range of functions - temperature, light level, security camera operation etc.

### Applications for commercial developments

Derek Lewis believes that there is enormous scope to roll out this technology in this country and not just in residential developments – he sees a future where more and more developers are including this system in commercial office developments.

*"On mainland Europe they are years ahead of us in terms of utilising this technology and we are going to follow their lead because of pending legislation."*

*"The flexibility, accuracy and control that this system provides means that energy savings of around 30 per cent are quite easily achievable. The UK Government's targets for energy efficiency and the climate change will lead to more efficient systems being installed in each and every development."*

*"There is a premium to pay up front but not as much as you might expect as the infrastructure, i.e. the work up to the second-fix, is exactly the same for any lighting or air conditioning system."*

*"What at the moment would be seen as a superfluous added-extra, will in time become something that all quality commercial developments will have installed as standard - it will be seen as a marque of quality."*

Bosses are bullish about growth potential predicting a 30% increase in turnover each year for the next five years. The future looks bright for Forum Technik.

For further information on Forum Technik, please visit [www.forumtechnik.com](http://www.forumtechnik.com)



# DESIGN FOR LIFE



## GET NOTICED!!!

If you would like your company featured as a case study in any future editions of Uprfront, please contact: **Tim Leather**, Widnes Waterfront Programme Team on 01928 516126

## Completion of Tanhouse Lane landscaping



A £400,000 overhaul of Tanhouse Lane has been completed that includes a range of environmental improvements to the public realm, street lighting and signage.

Part of the wider environmental uplift programme for the whole Waterfront area, improvements to Tanhouse Lane are seen as a key element in creating a good first impression.

*"As it is a major access route into the development site, Tanhouse Lane has for too long not been up to the standard required for a 21st Century business park."* Says Councillor Rob Polhill.

He continued: *"These improvements help set the right tone for the area and will undoubtedly make the whole Waterfront a more attractive inward investment opportunity."*

## NEW SIGNS SHOW THE WAY



New perimeter signage has been installed at key locations around The Waterfront, welcoming visitors to the area.

The 3.5m tall metal signs have been brought in to replace the temporary signage that has been in place for the last two years.

## LINEAR PARK – ON THE RIGHT LINES

Preparatory site investigation work has started on a new Linear Park that will run for half a kilometre through The Waterfront along the line of a disused industrial railway branch line.

The park, that will include a 3 metre wide pedestrian and cycle route, will connect Tanhouse Lane with the newly-built access road off Earle Road roundabout, and is being carefully designed to become a haven for butterflies that will be attracted to the area with a range of planting.

*"By recycling some of the remnants of the old railway line, such as timber sleepers and a section of the old railway track, we hope to provide a bit of interpretation on the industrial heritage of the area. And*

*using the limestone chippings already on the site to promote particular types of foliage will attract butterflies which are an important part of the eco-system here."* explains Phil Esseen (Principal Landscape and Conservation Officer) at Halton Borough Council.

It is hoped that the park will be complete towards the end of 2008 and will significantly add to the overall diversity of The Waterfront.



# Autumn on the Widnes Warth

**With the tang of autumn in the air birdwatchers are revived from the doldrums of summer.**

Bird migration is underway and Widnes Warth is an excellent place to witness the changes first hand. In the dying days of September observers may spot the last of summer's Barn Swallows jinking low across the marsh, desperately refuelling on the dwindling supply of aerial insects before they embark upon their epic journey southwards which may take them as far as the Cape of South Africa.

On the tails of swallows come birds from points north, with many taking up winter quarters on the banks of the Mersey Estuary. Ducks, geese and various wader species are to be found in significant numbers in the upper estuary and the viewing platform on the Widnes Warth will provide close views of Eurasian Teal, Mallards, Shelduck, Canada Geese, Lapwings and Redshank. A careful scan with binoculars will reveal many other



hidden gems, maybe a Spotted Redshank, or Pintail will be lurking among their more plentiful relatives.

Rising tides create movement in the birds, triggering a change in sound. Suddenly the air will be filled with the yelping calls of Redshank, the whistle of teal, the anxiety notes of the massed Lapwing and perhaps most evocative of all, the mournful calls of the Curlew and Golden Plover.

For the more experienced birdwatcher an early morning vigil on the viewing platform can bring a procession of migrant birds passing overhead. As autumn progresses the cast list changes, Meadow Pipits may dominate in the early part of October to be succeeded by Redwings and Fieldfare from mid-month. The end of October sees many thousands of Woodpigeons on the move.

For many watchers the most thrilling experience of all is the passage of wild geese. Pink-footed Geese, freshly arrived from Iceland, set off from their staging areas on the Lancashire Mosses shortly after dawn, they pass over around 8.00am, their presence is heralded by the sounds of distant conversation, this slowly resolves itself into the high pitched musical barking of 'wild goose' calls as the skein approaches. As the arrowhead of geese process onwards to their destination on the Norfolk coastline their calls recede like a tide flowing out of the estuary.

## Artists take up residence at Waterfront

**Artist-Film Maker Jordan Baseman and artist collective TEA, have become the first two artists to take up residence at The Waterfront.**

TEA are already making waves in Widnes with a project entitled 'Brown Fields Blue Skies', involving the establishment of a number of observatory 'hides' designed to glean insights and issues from people already using The Waterfront for business or leisure.

Concentrating on the southern end of Tanhouse Lane, they have already met up with a wide range of people including cyclists, a vicar, quad-bikers and security guards. Adding these ad hoc encounters to set piece meetings with Waterfront businesses, TEA aim to unearth what makes The Waterfront tick.

Jordan Baseman's documentary film work is similarly focussed on the individual's experience of place. Due to start in earnest in November, Jordan's commission will be seeking to uncover people's aspirations and desires for the changing Waterfront. To help achieve this, he hopes to be able to negotiate a working base out of Widnes Library on Victoria Square.



Visit: [www.teaweb.org](http://www.teaweb.org) and [www.jordanbaseman.co.uk](http://www.jordanbaseman.co.uk)

In a separate development, a second opportunity for artists to engage in the public art programme has been advertised in the artist's trade media. The two-stage process will devise a shortlist of artists to develop a landmark public art project for The Waterfront.

It is anticipated that both the residencies and the landmark commission will relate to other arts initiatives devised by The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park and Liverpool's Capital of Culture, as part of a strategic 'Windows on the Waterfront' cultural programme.

## WIDNES REGENERATION ACQUIRE FORMER CHEMICAL PLANT SITE

Widnes Regeneration Ltd, the joint venture between St Modwen Properties PLC, and Halton Borough Council, has acquired the 12-acre former Croda Chemicals site in Gorsey Lane, Widnes, which was closed approximately 18 months ago.



The acquisition of the Croda site, the development of which will ultimately be linked with an adjoining 20-acre site owned by Halton Borough Council will create a major employment park, providing general industrial and distribution accommodation.

This acquisition is a further demonstration of Widnes Regeneration's commitment to Widnes, and in particular The Waterfront.

Richard Bakes, development manager of St Modwen, the UK's leading regeneration specialists, said: "These two parcels of land together with Heron Business Park, where

we are considering a second phase, takes Widnes Regeneration's land holdings for employment projects within The Waterfront to 40 acres.

"This is in addition to the joint venture's £10 million leisure centre project, which is expected to be open by the autumn of 2008 and will provide major family-orientated facilities in the town."

He explained that the demolition of a number of buildings, plant and equipment on the Croda site is expected to begin shortly to allow an extensive site investigation to determine the level of contamination and the subsequent remediation strategy.

As part of the acquisition deal, Croda agreed to make a capital contribution towards remediation works. The adjoining council-owned land will be combined with the Croda site and will be developed in part to provide accommodation for the relocation of existing businesses within The Waterfront.

Councillor Rob Polhill, Halton Borough Council's Executive Board Member for Regeneration and Urban Renewal, commented: "The acquisition of the Croda site represents another milestone in the regeneration of Widnes and demonstrates our commitment to the wholesale regeneration of the area."

### Further information

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