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Praise for firm in factory battle

JOHN ROBERTS

A COMPANY has celebrated winning a seven-year battle with red tape with the opening of a new multi-million pound factory in Measham.

AB Produce says it now plans to create dozens more jobs following the relocation from its former home in Netherseal. The Government called in the company's original plan to redevelop its Netherseal site with holiday homes to fund the move, despite support for the scheme from South Derbyshire District Council.

A smaller proposal was finally allowed through seven years later. George Cox, director general of the Institute of Directors, praised the company during the official opening of the state-of-the-art plant at Enterprise House on the Westminster Industrial Estate.

"If ever there was a case of tenacity and perseverance gaining true reward this is it," he said.

"It is an example to all small and medium-sized enterprises that if they believe in what they are doing they should never give up.

"In fact when I was asked by Number 10 to give an example of how red tape can stifle business I used this an example of how Government often works against enterprise instead of for it," he said.

The new plant covers an area of over 13 acres where it processes and packages potatoes and vegetables for wholesalers, retailers and catering outlets across the country.

The company was founded by Alan and Ann Bridgen more than 30 years ago. They later handed control to their sons, Andrew and Paul.

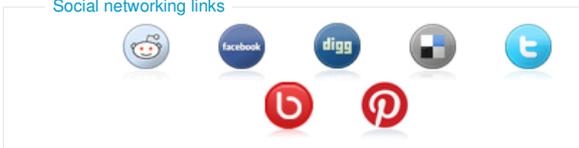
Visitors to the opening day included North West Leicestershire MP David Taylor, who was given a tour of the plant and offices.

Andrew Bridgen, chairman and managing director of AB Produce, said: "This was a great day for both the company and the family.

"It is the culmination of a dream and, although there have been frustrations and setbacks over the seven years it has taken to turn that dream into reality, it is all worthwhile."

The new plant has room to expand so that the firm can double its capacity and increase its workforce in the future.

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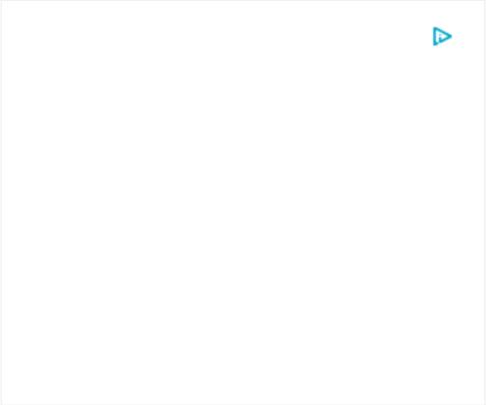
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