

FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL PRESS RELEASE

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Chatteris business enters phenomenal growth period with support of Fenland for Business

A “phenomenal growth” period is beginning for a Chatteris family business that credits free business support service Fenland for Business as a key contributor to its success.

Vita-Nova Solutions, which provides wholesale automation services to meet client needs, such as high-functioning food packing robots for production lines, is taking bigger sales orders than ever and expanding its workforce.

It’s also in the process of developing a product that director Paul Millard believes to be a global first, with a huge global market, which he expects to bring to market in the next 12 months.

Vita-Nova Solutions, based in Teal Close, has been enjoying support from Fenland for Business for three years and has benefited from advice, signposting and grant funding.

Paul said: “It has been key to everything we have done. I can’t overstate how valuable the Fenland for Business team has been to us.

“If they are not supplying us a grant they are supporting us in other ways. They have been vital in what we have been doing.

“If I don’t know what to do, my contact at Fenland for Business points me in the right direction.”

Last year (2023), Vita-Nova Solutions was one of eight firms to be awarded grant funding to help develop its growth plans in the first round of the Fenland Investment in Business Programme.

Other Fenland business and [start-ups](#) have the chance to put themselves forward for second round funding until April.

One of the things Vita-Nova Solutions funded with its grant was a 3D printer, which means it can design and manufacture parts for its automation systems itself, in some cases at a cost of around £100 whereas previously it would have had to order them, wait several weeks, and spend £2,000 to £3,000. The result is the company can deliver to customers quicker and at more competitive rates.

This year, it is signing a string of contracts that, at in the region of £750,000 in one case, are up to almost double that of its previous biggest sales.

Paul, 57, has lived in Chatteris since he was 19, and worked initially for his family’s former-business KLM Manufacturing, in Earith, which has now been sold on, before progressing his career elsewhere.

Paul, his son, design director Keanu, 26, and Paul’s wife Cheryl launched Vita-Nova Solutions at the end of 2019.

They took their first orders just as they, along with most other firms, were ordered to close as the country went into Covid-19 lockdown.

They overcame that and two-and-a-half years ago were able to take on an apprentice.

Then last year, the cost-of-living crisis brought huge challenges, leaving Paul to have to draw on his pension savings to keep the business afloat. Customers, wanting to reduce their outgoings, postponed and retracted orders en masse.

The team realised they needed to turn their attention to markets outside the UK and have found success in Europe with new partnerships in Ireland.

They have plans to promote their product-in-development in America.

Orders already secured will keep them growing for the next 12 months and they have recruited a fabrications manager to join them in April. They expect to need to recruit again in August and grow by a total of four people in the next 12 months.

They're now in talks over other investment totalling around £300,000 to develop their new product.

Paul said: "It's going to be a period of phenomenal growth from April onwards."

Fenland District Council-backed [Fenland For Business](#) provides free help and support to businesses to aid the growth and prosperity of the district.

It supports with funding, skills and training, contacts and networking, new business premises and expansion, research and product development, Fenland District Council services - including planning, environmental health and waste.

Its excellent local and international connections and knowledge mean it is perfectly placed to help businesses to overcome challenges, take advantage of opportunities and move forward.

Fenland District Council's portfolio holder for economic growth Cllr Ian Benney said: "This team is an incredible asset to Fenland and the feedback we get from the business that engage with it says it all.

"We often hear that the team provides an unparalleled sounding board to help businesses work through barriers and maximise opportunities.

"Once businesses are working with them, it's like having an extension of their own team always scouting out opportunities and feeding back information on how to secure them – from newly available funding pots to free services that do exactly what they need."

Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Dr Nik Johnson said: "We are working to make sure funding coming to the region to boost business growth really does provide effective support after many unprecedented economic challenges. This is a great example of partnership working with Fenland District Council to make a real difference to an important local employer's plans for growth."

- Expression of interest for [Fenland Investment in Business](#) and [Start-up Business Support Programme grants](#) can be made until Saturday April 6.

The grants are being delivered by Fenland for Business and funded by the UK Government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Shared Prosperity Fund thanks to

a successful bid by Fenland District Council in partnership with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

- Round Two of [Fenland Rural Prosperity Fund](#) is also now open until April 6, with grants available for investment in capital projects.
- Free Fenland for Business support is available year-round. See: www.fenlandforbusiness.co.uk, visit www.fenlandforbusiness.co.uk/contactus , email business@fenland.gov.uk or call +44 (0)1354 622506.

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Picture: Vita-Nova Solutions' director Paul Millard with design director and son Keanu and one of their automation services products.