

paul  
heathcote



## Using the knowledge

I NEVER pay a visit to the University of Central Lancashire without being impressed with what it is doing. It is fair to say that looking back over the last decade, it has been the only positive growth which has taken place in Preston and we have benefited from that. I am not just talking of the new facilities it has brought in the form of conference venues and sports facilities, nor am I talking about the quality of people it attracts to the city, I am talking about the huge opportunities it brings to Preston. For example at the huge population of Chinese students, that is an enormous resource not just to link into their booming economy but the more obvious benefits it brings. In Manchester and London and many other places where there is a strong population, they create the so-called Chinatown areas and you only have to look at the success of these to recognise the potential. On top of that, the university has a very strong background in media and fashion with the courses it offers to students considered to be among the best in the country, yet what do we do to take advantage of this? A lot of talk in the last few weeks has been on what the future face of Preston will look like and I believe a lot of the answers lie within the university. I listened with interest about the potential for using the creative industries within the city to develop 'quarters' which will attract people to areas where they might not otherwise come and, as someone who witnessed the emergence of Manchester's Northern Quarter from a no-go area into one people flock to and businesses thrive in, it obviously can be done. If we could create something like the Afflecks Palace - a very niche retail for shoppers after different

# Fire-hit firms seeking refuge in warehouse

BUSINESSES hit by a huge fire which ripped through a Lancashire industrial estate have turned to a storage firm which has just moved to the area.

David Wilson, group property manager of K2 Storage Solutions, said a number of firms left homeless by the blaze which gutted buildings on the Lancashire Enterprise Business Park in Leyland last month were talking to him about using his firm's 40,000 sq ft warehouse in nearby Walton Summit.

The firm has opened the former Bodycare warehouse, which is capable of holding 10,000 huge pallets of goods, on the industrial estate just a month ago having outgrown its headquarters in Burnley.

Mr Wilson said he was hopeful the companies would come on board to use its warehouse on a permanent basis.

He said: "We are talking to one or two people who were involved in the fire, they are obviously still counting the cost because they have lost a lot of



HOPE: David Wilson at the 40,000 sq ft warehouse

stock. The key for them is to get up and running as quickly as possible and we can offer them that and, if we can show them we deliver a good enough service, they might choose to stay with us.

"There are a lot of companies looking to offset the cost of things like warehousing and all the overheads it brings with staffing, energy bills, transportation, and we are in the right

place at the right time."

The storage expert said his firm had also seen a surge in entrepreneurs coming to it looking to store huge quantities of stock shipped in from overseas manufacturers.

It is taking regular deliveries of giant 40-tonne containers to its new warehouse from customers who often operate from home.

The property manager said:

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"A lot of these people just work from a Blackberry and outsource everything else and that is part of the beauty of the service we deliver.

"They can have 100 pallets stored with us and can just call and say they need 20 boxes from three separate pallets for a customer they have secured online, then we will have those boxes ready for whenever they want to send their delivery guy round.

"That is something we have seen a real increase in recently."

He added that the company was now employing around 30 people at its new site at Walton Summit, including a large number of casual staff through an employment agency.

## Leaders' plea for overseas export help

MORE support is needed to fast-track a national exports push if the trade deficit is to be closed, according to a Lancashire business leader.

Babs Murphy, chief executive of the North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, said the Government needed to step up its drive behind overseas sales in key areas such as trade finance, insurance and promotion.

She was speaking after figures showed the deficit in goods and services widened to £2.6bn in November last year from £1.9bn the previous month.

The chief executive said that longer-term comparisons showed the rebalancing of the economy towards exports is going ahead, but the pace is inadequate and must be strengthened.

## Cooking up a storm

A LANCASHIRE restaurant is playing host to some of Britain's finest chefs. Northcote Manor, the county's only Michelin-starred restaurant, opened its annual Obsession food and wine festival yesterday attracting some of the country's leading restaurateurs. They including Bryan Williams, of Odette's in London, Hans Neuner from the Ocean in Portugal, Michael Smith from the Three Chimneys on the Isle of Skye, and Northcote chef patron Nigel Haworth.

## Lender is backing small firms

THE head of one of Lancashire's leading lenders has insisted it is bucking the trend in lending to small businesses in the county.

John Robson, regional director for Lloyds TSB Commercial, said it lent £9.6bn to small and medium-sized enterprises in the first nine months of 2011 despite a decline in net lending to firms.

He insisted this kept the part-state-owned bank on course to meet targets set by the Government.



CHEERS: Wine enthusiast Emma Bailie who has started up her own business hosting wine-tasting parties

## Drinking to an enjoyable new business

EMMA Bailie is aiming to take wine tasting

provide something for everyone will grow into a flourishing business.

can see people's eyes light up and they always take a real interest. They are pleased that there is someone in the busi-

events in people's living rooms and at office parties for the last 18 months. She is now offering packages aimed at hosting