

First phase of work at Prudhoe recycling plant complete

Political leaders have been given a sneak preview of progress on the UK's most advanced wastepaper recycling plant currently under construction in Prudhoe.

The Unifibres operation, on the town's Princess Way, supplies recycled paper pulp to the adjacent Essity tissue mill, and the Swedish parent company's other sites in the North West. Here it is made into leading brands such as Cushelle, Plenty, Velvet and Tork.

Northumberland County Council leader Glen Sanderson, councillor for Prudhoe South Gordon Stewart and Hexham MP Guy Opperman visited the site to mark the end of building work and learn about a series of further investments planned.

During the visit, Coun Sanderson said: "Investing millions of pounds in the site is not just a great thing to do for Prudhoe but for the whole of Northumberland. There's a great team, doing great work and a fantastic product – I'm just so pleased they are employing so many people and creating real household names that are made here in Prudhoe."

The largest financial investment at Prudhoe Mill since the installation of its second paper machine in the early 1980s, the work will see the total demolition of the existing 50-year-old Unifibres complex.

Four replacement buildings, towards the centre of the site and less visible from the main road, have now been completed – with the installation of new machinery and the transfer of some existing production equipment taking place over the next 18 months.

An Essity spokesman said: "The importance of this multi-million-pound investment cannot be overstated. It reduces our dependence on virgin pulp, will enable us to recycle lower-grade paper and board, enhances our ability to segregate plastic and metal contaminants, reduces waste sent to landfill and improves energy efficiency.

"Our old Unifibres facility was at the end of its working life – and this scale of investment helps secure the future of the mill, helps us to continue meeting demand for our products such as Cushelle, Velvet and Tork and, importantly, provides a more attractive and safer working environment for our 420+ employees."

Hexham MP and Government minister Guy Opperman added: "It was a pleasure to meet up with the team at Essity to see for myself the difference this latest multi-million-pound investment will make to the local economy and community.

"The technology behind the new paper recycling facility is truly transformational and will secure many more jobs and apprenticeships, as well as maintaining our precious environment by helping to eliminate waste sent to landfill.

"This is huge direct investment in Prudhoe, and a massive vote of confidence in the town. I want to thank Essity for working with me over the years to make sure that local people here in Prudhoe have access to high-quality jobs and opportunities."

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