
Investing in the future of North West business

Total investment of over

£340m

— POUNDS —

across 440

North West businesses

“

Through our portfolio of over 440 businesses we have created and safeguarded more than 5,500 jobs in the region and the finance has helped boost GVA by more than £135 million, figures that will continue to rise as our investments mature.

”

Malcolm Edge

CHAIRMAN

The North West Fund

The North West Fund

The North West Fund is now fully invested, having supported more than 440 businesses with over £153 million of investment.

The Fund has leveraged a further £170 million in private sector finance, together with an additional £20 million in public sector funding, bringing the total investment to over £340 million.

The Fund, financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the European Investment Bank, provided debt and equity finance from £25,000 to £2 million to small and medium sized enterprises, based in the North West of England.

As The Fund now enters the realisation stage of the programme, there is a continued focus on maximising the growth of each investment, in order to realise the greatest return and create a legacy fund for the region's future businesses.

/ SUPPORTED BY



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Foreword

FROM

The North West Fund is now fully invested having provided a valuable source of finance to more than 440 small to medium sized enterprises. Together with private and public sector funding we have invested over a third of a billion pounds into North West businesses.

Malcolm Edge

CHAIRMAN
The North West Fund

£153m
— POUNDS
INVESTED

I am very proud to be writing this as chairman of such an ambitious fund. When it was created, The North West Fund was the largest of its kind in the UK and one of the largest in Europe. The investments and loans we have provided are resulting in some real success stories as many of the businesses have exceeded their financial expectations. Close to £9 million has already been returned from our equity portfolio and over 40 of the business loans have been repaid in full.

I am also incredibly pleased to see the positive impact our funding is having on the region in terms of economic growth and employment. Through our portfolio of over 440 businesses we have created and safeguarded more than 5,500 jobs in the region and the finance has helped boost GVA by more than £135 million, figures that will continue to rise as our investments mature.

I would like to thank the executive team, support staff and the board, for their hard work. The focus for us over the coming years is to ensure that our portfolio companies maximise their potential. We will continue to work closely with our portfolio companies, regional partners and stakeholders to ensure that our investments, through our legacy fund, drive growth in the region long into the future.

Clive Brook

“ I first became involved in The North West Fund through my advisory work for the North West Regional Development Agency. I have worked with public sector venture capital funds for more than 20 years and I helped to set up a few predecessor funds for the Agency.

I think it is a very significant achievement to have invested a total of more than £340 million across the region. This success is made all the more impressive, given the financial climate when The North West Fund was launched. The economic circumstances were very different when The Fund was set up and we have had to flex and adapt over time.

I am looking forward to continuing my work with The North West Fund as we focus on optimising the funds we receive on exiting the existing investments which will then become available to re-invest in the region, thereby creating a 'legacy fund' for the North West SME community. ”

Rory Earley

“ It is hugely rewarding to be part of the team delivering The North West Fund. I feel very honoured to think that our funding is supporting hundreds of entrepreneurs across the region as they build successful businesses.

I began working with the UK Government on the development and implementation of various venture capital and lending programmes over 20 years ago. In which time, I have seen the economic climate and funding landscape change considerably. However, start-up, early stage and growth capital like that provided by The North West Fund has remained essential in order to stimulate and maintain growth.

Our aim now is to create a sustainable legacy fund, realising money from our existing portfolio which can then be reinvested for the benefit of the North West. ”



The Board Members

Mike Prince

“ When I was asked to join the Board of The North West Fund at its launch back in 2010, I saw it as a great opportunity to play a small part in generating business growth across the North West.

At its launch, The Fund was the largest of its kind in the UK. Having worked in venture capital as a corporate lawyer for over 30 years, I knew that a fund of this type was essential to the development of SMEs across the North West region, and that if successful, it would lead to sustainable business growth in a region I was passionate about.

Seven years on, I am incredibly proud to be a part of the team which, together with private and public sector leverage, has helped to deliver a total investment of over £340 million across the region and has assisted more than 440 SMEs.

The Fund is now fully invested but for us, that is only part of our job. We are continuing to work with our fund managers and portfolio companies to optimise our investments and our continuing objective is to secure successful realisations to generate more money for further investment in the North West region. ”



With an economy which generates over £150 billion of gross value added (GVA) each year, accounting for more than 9.4% of the national GVA output, the North West of England has become a bastion of business innovation and opportunity.

Creating growth

12 Comment

Michael Hartig

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Head of Specialist Teams, Barclays

14 Comment

Jonathan Boyers

PARTNER

KPMG UK

The region is home to nine of England's 44 Enterprise zones – areas that support both new and expanding businesses. From world-class facilities to expert mentorship, the North West has repeatedly proven itself as a leader when it comes to supporting business growth.

The North West Fund, financed by the European Regional Development Fund and the European Investment Bank has provided a valuable source of finance to over 440 businesses.

Some businesses have used the finance to fuel expansion into new markets. Businesses like Fourteen IP and ChargePoint which you can read more about in this document. In 2014 the North West exported approximately £25 billion worth of goods, equal to 9% of the total annual UK export value and many of The Fund's businesses contributed to this.

in the North West

Other businesses are at an earlier stage but have used the additional capital to launch new products or bring new services to life. The North West Fund has been able to support and provide finance to, more than 120 start-up businesses looking to develop a new product or service.

All of the sub-funds have focussed on driving innovation through investment in cutting-edge facilities and technology. The majority of the businesses to receive finance from The Fund are at the forefront of innovative new technologies, and have used the investment to grow their business.

Gaining competitive advantage through new skills and expertise is something which all successful businesses need to prioritise. Finance from The North West Fund has helped to create or safeguard over 5,500 jobs, a figure that will continue to increase as the investments mature.

The North West Fund has supported hundreds of entrepreneurs with much needed finance. Over the coming years The Fund will continue to inspire these entrepreneurs as they strive to build successful businesses across the region.

**“A continued
commitment
to North West
businesses”**

———— COMMENT FROM



The regional funding landscape has evolved considerably over the lifetime of The North West Fund but one consistency has been the multitude of ambitious entrepreneurs and innovative businesses with the potential for growth.

Barclays has worked closely with the fund managers and executive team at The North West Fund since its launch. In this time, we have helped hundreds of regional businesses achieve their development plans and supported many local entrepreneurs as they realise their ambitions.

Michael Hartig

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Head of Specialist Teams
Barclays

Traditional finance from lenders like Barclays makes a huge difference to regional business growth. As principal bank for one in four businesses across the North, Barclays support their SME clients with a team of dedicated sector specialists.

With a focus on supporting the regional growth agenda, in 2015 Barclays opened a new base for its operations in Manchester Piccadilly along with Rise Manchester, the Barclays open innovation programme and workspace for the FinTech community. In November 2016, Barclays opened its newest site in the North West, a brand new Eagle Lab at Media City in Salford. These are all evidence of Barclays' focus on the next generation of high growth businesses.

Finding the right type of finance is the key to any successful business development story and it is important that businesses are able to access a wide range of different finance options. The alternative finance provided by The North West Fund is already contributing significantly to the growth of the North West economy. We look forward to continuing our on-going relationship with The Fund as the portfolio companies grow and a legacy fund is created.

Over the last six years, The North West Fund has played a key role in the provision of risk capital for the regions emerging and growing SME business community.

Every successful economy has at its core a strong and expanding stock of entrepreneurial businesses from which the next generation of larger businesses will emerge. Just as an epic journey starts with a small first step, every great business starts with an idea and an initial investment of capital.

Jonathan Boyers

PARTNER
KPMG UK

These companies must be supported, nurtured and guided through the inevitable challenges that they will face along the way. The availability of early stage investment of this nature, often for enterprises that are pre-revenue or loss making is hugely important if the economy of the North West is to continue to grow.

With around 35,000 new businesses being created in the region every year, for the past few years, it seems clear that future economic growth will be driven by those businesses which can make the all-important transition from small, to medium and beyond.

By financing these small businesses, The North West Fund is not only helping to drive economic growth, but also increase job creation and boost the competitiveness of the region. Without funding at this early stage, the small businesses we see today will struggle to grow into the large businesses of tomorrow.



“Future
economic
growth”

—— COMMENT FROM

International markets can play an important role in the development of a growing business. The North West is well-served in terms of global connectivity, being home to two international airports, 14 higher education institutions and access to practical advice and support through organisations such as the Department for International Trade and local Chambers of Commerce.

Fuelling

18 ChargePoint Technology

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22 Comment

Clive Drinkwater

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Department for International Trade, North West

This support is often well placed, as first time exporters worry about the cost of doing business overseas, overstressing themselves and operating in countries with different business practices. Meanwhile, some companies that are already exporting stick to the countries that they know and think that dipping a toe into more exotic markets further afield might be a step too far.

In an ever-globalised economy, international expansion is a natural goal for companies regardless of size. With technology making it increasingly easy to access new markets, SMEs have a great opportunity to recognise their growth potential.

expansion into new markets

A number of The North West Fund's portfolio companies are targeting growth in international markets. International corrosion management specialist, C-Probe is moving into new markets thanks to a £250,000 loan from The North West Fund for Loans Plus. The company is a well-established provider of corrosion management products and services to the construction sector.

Fourteen IP which provides communications solutions for hotels has increased sales by over 80% and grown its international client base, following a £500,000 investment from The North West Fund for Venture Capital.

For many entrepreneurs the idea of moving into international markets can be daunting. The fear of the unknown can outweigh the excitement of the potential for growth. However, the North West has a history of success when it comes to global trade and confidence among UK exporters is high.



Soaring global demand for ChargePoint valves

ChargePoint Technology, a Liverpool-based specialist manufacturer for the Pharmaceutical and Biotech sectors has moved to a new multi-million pound production facility amid soaring global demand for its products. The company supplies precision containment valves to some of the biggest pharmaceutical names across the globe.

NAME ChargePoint Technology

LOCATION Speke, Liverpool

INDUSTRY Pharmaceutical

ChargePoint Technology

Fuelling expansion into new markets

The decision to relocate to larger premises in Speke, was made to help the company expand and compete more effectively in the growing aseptic bio-pharma market.

ChargePoint is currently the second largest manufacturer in the world for containment valves and is investing heavily in product development to become the major player for the technology, which is used for transferring raw materials safely and efficiently.

ChargePoint's new headquarters are a 27,000 sq ft production and office space and have been fitted out with more than £1 million worth of technology for the manufacture of the devices that are transforming the way medicines and vaccines are processed.

“Our move is in line with our growth and our ambition and drive to offer the highest quality products for sectors that need to use contained transfers.

“The first quarter of 2016 showed phenomenal growth for the company and we have adapted to the demand around the world for our products.”

CHRIS ECCLES, MANAGING DIRECTOR



The company exports approximately 80% of its products and won the Queen's Award for International Trade in 2012. In 2015, global sales saw a 20% increase on 2014 at just over £8 million.

ChargePoint generates 20% of its annual revenues in the US and its customers include pharma heavyweights such as Merck, Roche Genentech, Johnson & Johnson, Ritedose and Pfizer. It is also seeing rapid growth in countries such as China and India.

The company received a £900,000 investment from The North West Fund in 2013 and has used the finance to create more than 65 skilled jobs, as well as expand into new markets.

Originally developed in 1996 in conjunction with GlaxoSmithKline, ChargePoint valves are now used by almost every major pharmaceutical manufacturer globally and increasingly in other industries such as chemical, food manufacture and consumer goods.

Stopford accelerates global outreach



Industry leading engineering & environment consultancy experts Stopford Projects Ltd, has strategically invested in people to fuel growth in a global portfolio of projects, with activities spanning Europe, USA, Middle East and Asia Pacific.

NAME Stopford Energy & Environment (SEE)

LOCATION Ellesmere Port & Lancaster University

INDUSTRY Engineering, energy & environment

Fuelling expansion into new markets

Stopford, with its head office in Ellesmere Port and a subsidiary R&D and environmental consultancy office based at Lancaster University, secured £1.65 million of investment from The North West Fund for Energy & Environmental.

The investment is being used to develop Stopford's business strategy to deliver expert solutions to a global engineering, energy and environment sector, allowing the company to realise its growth ambitions.

“Receiving the investment from The North West Fund has been key to realising our growth plans. The finance is being used to support our global portfolio of projects and cutting-edge development R&D activities”

PRITH RAJENDRAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR



Stopford began trading some 30 years ago in 1984. During this time the company has successfully maintained and grown a multi-national client base, with extensive experience of design and build projects overseas, commissioning for major corporates, such as Shell, BP, AstraZeneca, BASF and Tata, alongside other leading players like BAE Systems, Yorkshire Water, Morgan Sindall and Veolia.

The company has developed complimentary consulting and engineering capabilities comprising innovation, multi-disciplined consultancy, engineered solutions, and education/up-skilling across the Nuclear, Defence, Oil & Gas, Water & Waste and Renewable Energy sectors globally.

Stopford rebranded in 2015 to become Stopford Energy & Environment (SEE) a name more reflective of its global engineering and environmental consultancy activities. SEE has recently been awarded multi-million pound contracts with two major global clients in the Biofuels and Aviation sectors for projects located in the USA and the Middle East respectively.

“Export for growth”

COMMENT FROM

The North West is the biggest manufacturing region in the whole of the UK and is one of its biggest exporting regions. Combined goods and services exports are in the region of £33 billion with around 20,000 North West firms currently exporting. Exporting firms demonstrate very clearly that they are more flexible and agile, more resilient and more profitable.

The lessons learned from exporting also lead to increases in UK sales. Exporting firms are on average 66% more innovative and undertake three times the R&D of non-exporting businesses. They also see gains in productivity from becoming more rapidly responsive to customer demand.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR
Department for
International Trade
North West

The quality of UK products, its expertise, spirit of innovation, creative ways of thinking and problem solving are all reasons why people around the world are looking for what the UK has to offer. Our research, however, shows that many UK businesses don't think their product or service is suitable for markets overseas. Many do not recognise themselves as would-be exporters.

Clive Drinkwater

Do not underestimate the importance of financing your exports. It's a gift until you are paid but, given sometimes long shipping periods and possible extended payment terms, there can be a lengthening of your export working capital requirements. UKEF can help support you through this process along with your bank and we are delighted The North West Fund has supported firms to the tune of over £150 million. Department for International Trade (DIT) and The North West Fund have worked very closely together and our partnership has benefited both the drive to support more new exporters and the increase in new high growth markets of businesses that are already involved in international trade. So the UK needs to up its game.

One of the biggest barriers to firms starting their exporting journey is concerns over cost and risk. It is inevitable that exporting will require some investment but that investment will bear rewards in the long term. Companies can ensure that they minimise their risk by undertaking certain steps. On 14th November 2016 we launched a new digital service to provide both opportunities and a framework for researching markets most effectively. It also allows you to seek the help of an International Trade Advisor who will help you through the planning processes. Networks are extremely important to help you in internationalising your business so make the most of them, both here and overseas. Some of your best advice will come from fellow exporters and in the North West we benefit from having nearly 100 Export Champions who can help mentor you through the early stages.

We have challenging targets to increase numbers of exporters and our exports in general, but by taking advantage of the opportunities overseas and by seeking support we can really see growth in the numbers of North West firms exporting.

Please do take a few moments to visit the new **GREAT.gov.uk** site. It's an excellent starting point for business owners looking to begin exporting or to grow their existing export business.



“

The North West Fund has provided a vital form of support to the region's SMEs over the past six years. Having been lead advisor to The Fund since before its launch, we are hugely proud of its achievements so far.

”

As more and more people attempt to realise their dreams of starting their own business, the need for risk capital increases. The availability of early stage funding of this nature, often for pre-revenue businesses, is hugely important if the economy of the North West is to continue to grow.

It has been a privilege to work so closely with the executive team and the Board of The North West Fund, through all the highs and challenges of this project. Their commercial approach is refreshing, together with their absolute dedication and commitment to ensure the maximum benefit for businesses in the region.

We look forward to continuing our on-going relationship with The Fund, as the investments mature and begin to create legacy finance for future North West businesses.

John Schorah

MANAGING PARTNER
Weightmans LLP

Anyone can have a great business idea but those who take the steps to make their vision a reality can change lives with the invention of the right product or service.

Bringing new products

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Gaynor Dykes

REGIONAL GROWTH FINANCE MANAGER

Grant Thornton

Every product on the market today started as an idea. From a mobile device to a software platform or a kitchen gadget most items you can purchase came to life through the process of invention.

The road from concept to finished product can be a long one and those who travel it usually face numerous obstacles and setbacks. Often entrepreneurs will struggle to access the right type of finance for their business. The North West Fund has been able to support and provide finance to more than 120 start-up businesses looking to develop a new product or service.

Premaitha Health is transforming healthcare using the latest advances in DNA analysis technology to develop tests for non-invasive prenatal screening and other applications. Following an investment from The North West Fund, the company has set its sights on expanding its IONA test product and listed on the London Stock Exchange's Alternative Investment Market (AIM) in July 2014.

Music intelligence platform Beatroot used investment from The North West Fund to drive the development of its unique platform. Since its launch in September 2015 the company has seen considerable interest in its services from well known industry figures.

and services to life

In 2014 there were 35,200 new businesses created in the North West, an increase of 43% from 2009. Of the £153 million invested by The North West Fund more than £55 million has supported start-up and early stage businesses helping many of the regions entrepreneurs turn their vision into a reality.



It's child's play for Connect as it launches new products

Connect Technology

Established childcare systems developer
Connect Technology is experiencing rapid growth following an investment from The North West Fund for Digital & Creative.

NAME	Connect Technology
LOCATION	Burnley
INDUSTRY	Childcare

Founded in 2004, Connect Technology is a specialist in the supply, installation and support of management software, time/attendance and security systems to the UK childcare sector. The firm boasts over 1,750 public and private sector users across the UK and provides continual development to ensure its technology complies with the latest legislation.

The North West Fund investment has enabled the development and release of two new products; iConnect, a gateway for nursery staff to view key room and child profile information; and ParentZone, an innovative smartphone app that displays a Facebook-style timeline of a child's day in nursery.

Since the 2012 investment, the business has moved from its 1,500 sq ft premises to a new 3,000 sq ft office in Burnley. Connect Technology has also boosted its headcount, growing from 13 to 40 members of staff, including a number of senior hires. This has enabled the business to increase turnover.

“We are delighted that the investment we received from The North West Fund helped us to bring forward and expand upon our growth plans. The investment enabled us to employ additional, highly skilled staff who have been instrumental in bringing our new innovations to the market for existing and new customers.

“ParentZone and iConnect have already made a big impact on the childcare industry and we are proud that our innovative products have been recognised with some prestigious industry awards.

“Our latest developments have been key to helping us secure contracts with many of the UK's largest nursery chains. We are really excited about the future growth possibilities for our products and company following the investment from The North West Fund.”

CHRIS REID, CEO





Strong growth for University spin-out Fusion Implants

NAME	Fusion Implants
LOCATION	Liverpool
INDUSTRY	Manufacture

Fusion Implants, a spin-out from the University of Liverpool, has developed a surgical implant to cure lameness and restore mobility in dogs.

Fusion Implants

Bringing new products and services to life

The business which launched in 2013 produces veterinary implants using the latest 3D printing techniques. The Liverpool-based team, have devised a way to manufacture high-performance implants from titanium using 3D printing, or additive manufacturing as it is also known.

Their new device, for use in canine knee reconstructions, is already being sold to veterinary practices nationally and the company is now focusing on expansion plans across Europe, Australia and the US.

The company received a six-figure investment from The North West Fund for Venture Capital and has used the funding to roll out its existing product, employ a design engineer and finance new product development.

The process for manufacturing and fitting the device is so innovative that Fusion Implants will not sell products to vets without them undergoing a training programme.



“We hold regular sessions for vets. We teach them how to use the app we have developed to plan their operations and we take them through a number of practical demonstrations.

“Already more than 250 successful operations have been carried out and we are expanding into Europe, Australia and the US. Finance from The North West Fund has allowed us to launch our product, drive sales and grow our business.”

DR DAN JONES, DIRECTOR

Fusion Implants has already demonstrated strong growth nationally and the company hopes to claim a slice of a market worth around \$1.32 billion in the US alone. It also believes the process can be applied more widely to veterinary surgery and is exploring other common problems that could benefit from this process.

“Growth finance for ambitious new businesses”

COMMENT FROM



Gaynor Dykes

REGIONAL GROWTH
FINANCE MANAGER
Grant Thornton

I lead Grant Thornton's Growth Finance service in the North, assisting small and early stage companies to raise finance to support their growth. I'm very fortunate to work with entrepreneurs with amazing ideas who have the drive and ambition to be successful in their field.

When it comes to developing a new product or service offer, companies can bootstrap to a certain point, but once the concept is proven and there is a clear market opportunity, the next step to commercialisation and scale up typically requires access to external finance.

There is no 'one size fits all' solution. Availability and type of finance at this time depends upon a number of factors: how much you need to raise, the sector, growth projections, assets, your structure and so on.

It's important the funding market provides a wide range of solutions, based on the specific needs of these businesses, because finding the right investor or lender is vital to enable companies to grow and flourish, safe in the knowledge that a secure funding structure is in place to support their business strategy and goals.

The North West Fund has worked with Grant Thornton on many occasions to provide the right type of finance package for businesses across the region.

“

When we heard about The North West Fund and the finance available to businesses in Merseyside, it made absolute sense for us to partner with them. We're located in the heart of Liverpool, have been established for more than 10 years and have 120,000 sq ft of high-specification commercial space on offer. Combine this with access to funding and we had a really strong proposition to offer local businesses.

”

By collaborating with SPARK Impact five years ago we have been introduced to a number of their investee companies which now operate out of Liverpool Science Park. This has helped us evolve into the broad based science park that we are today and, together, we have created a biomedical cluster for early stage investments. This allows like-minded companies to interact with one another, while also providing a fertile environment for them to develop their products and services. We have seen first-hand the positive impact this can have after Evgen Pharma joined AIM with a market capitalisation of £27 million in October 2015.

Our partnership with The North West Fund just goes to show how a combination of funding, brainpower and flexible accommodation, is the key to building businesses and attracting new companies in this space. We look forward to continuing our work with The Fund as their investments mature.”

Chris Musson

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Liverpool Science Park



“

ICAEW members are often the first port of call for businesses in the North West who need well-informed, considered and balanced financial and business advice. We also have a lot of members working within companies, so they play a big part in giving advice about finance options. It is extremely important that businesses in the North West can get access to the right sort of affordable finance at the right time for them to invest in expansion.

”

The North West Fund has played a key part in a vibrant network of investment and entrepreneurialism in the region. Forecasts are for private sector growth in the North West to outstrip growth for the UK as a whole and funding is absolutely vital if this is to happen.

Melanie Christie

REGIONAL DIRECTOR

North West and Northern Ireland
ICAEW



Far from the survival approach taken during the recession, businesses are now on the lookout for opportunities to grow. The ability to access finance is crucial, in order to maximise this growth potential. Fortunately, investor confidence in the region is also high, creating an environment in which businesses can thrive.

Driving innovation through investment

38 Diagnostic Healthcare

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Brian McCann

CHAIR

Merseyside Innovation Awards

DIRECTOR

Liverpool Chamber of Commerce

LEADS MC VANGUARD

Corporate Finance arm of Mitchell Charlesworth.

The major strategic investments in the region over the last few years at MediaCity, Manchester Airport, the Atlantic Gateway and through the Northern Powerhouse, are acting as catalysts for growth.

In recent years, new product, process or technology has become even more critical as companies struggle to maintain a competitive edge against increased competition. The North West Fund has supported a number of entrepreneurs, working at the forefront of innovative new technologies who have used the investment to take their business to the next level.

in cutting-edge facilities and technology

Innovative online ticketing platform, Fatsoma, has accelerated its international sales after receiving investment from The North West Fund in 2013. Connect Technology, a software specialist in the UK childcare sector, has used the finance from The Fund to develop two new products including an innovative smartphone app that displays a Facebook style timeline of a child's day at nursery.

Innovation can be a key differentiator between market leaders and their rivals. Investing in innovation is imperative, not only in future proofing the regions businesses, but also in protecting the economic wellbeing and prosperity of the North West.

Diagnostic Healthcare



Diagnostic Healthcare enjoys 400 percent growth

Altrincham-based medical service provider Diagnostic Healthcare has quadrupled turnover since being backed by The North West Fund in 2013.

NAME Diagnostic Healthcare

LOCATION Altrincham

INDUSTRY Healthcare



Driving innovation through investment in cutting-edge facilities and technology

Since the firm's establishment in 2004, Diagnostic Healthcare has built a high reputation in the market, specialising in diagnostic services and treatments including MRI, Ultrasound and Bone density scans, Health screening and Varicose Vein Treatments.

Following its funding back in 2013, the business has seen its turnover rise by 400 per cent. The £1 million funding from The North West Fund allowed the firm to prioritise the training and employment of new staff, and since then has increased its team to 160 people, branching out to over 75 sites across the UK.

Diagnostic Healthcare merged with Ultrasound Now in 2013, securing additional NHS contracts and new clients. With this merger, the business was able to expand further, while strengthening its clinical expertise and abilities.

The company's plans for the future include maintaining high levels of organic growth and possibly increasing the number of acquisitions it makes.

"It is very fulfilling to see the company's growth, transforming our vision into a reality. The investment helped us secure highly motivated people and technology kits that have contributed on a daily basis to the company's growth."

LIAT KARNI, CEO

The medical sector is thriving at present, with many of the North West region's businesses making great progress. With these companies having access to funds, they are able to take up new opportunities in the sector, investing in the newest, most innovative pieces of technology.



At the forefront of innovation in 3D printing

Burnley-based, FDM Digital Solutions is pioneering the use of 3D printing for manufacturing in aerospace, engineering, automotive and other sectors, as well as made-to-measure insoles for the NHS.



FDM Digital Solutions

NAME FDM Digital Solutions

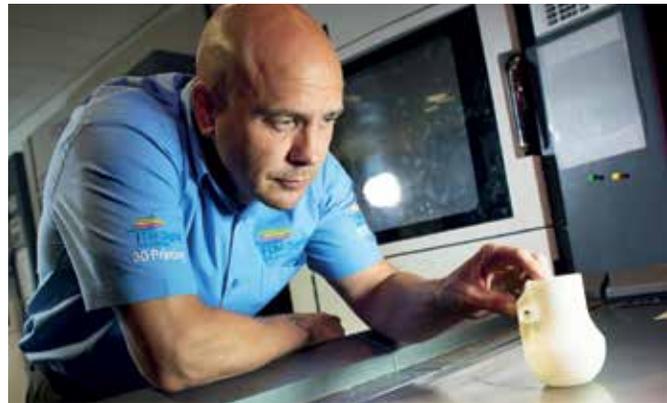
LOCATION Burnley

INDUSTRY Manufacture

Having won a £1.4 million grant from Innovate UK for the insoles project, along with partners at the University of Salford, Salford Insole and East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, the company secured an £860,000 investment from The North West Fund for Venture Capital and Lancashire's Rosebud Finance in 2013 and received a further £300,000 from the two funds in 2015. This finance has allowed the company to expand its print capacity to meet rapid growth in sales from the other sectors that it operates in.

Founded in 2012, FDM Digital now employs twelve staff and industry consultants working with leading global engineering companies to identify new uses for 3D printing. The investment has been used to put in place some of the largest capacity and most up-to-date 3D printers in the UK, including ones capable of printing items up to 1 metre in size. Using the latest 3D print and scanning technology FDM Digital can capture data from any shape and use it to create, or recreate, bespoke items.

Working with leading aerospace and automotive customers the company is now at the forefront of designing and manufacturing innovative high performance parts. A single piece 3D printed part can now replace multiple complex traditional parts, allowing previously un-manufacturable shapes to be produced from innovative materials, in a single operation that offers weight, time and cost savings, and delivers higher performance. In addition the direct to digital print on demand technology delivers the ultimate lean supply chain.



“The funding we have received has put us ahead of the field by allowing us to invest in the very latest technology. We are committed to driving the uptake of digital manufacturing technology across UK industry. We have developed a wide customer base with significant export sales and we are demonstrating that the key is working closely with customers to educate them on the benefits.”

GRAEME BOND, CEO

For the NHS the technology should replace traditional hand-made techniques and could revolutionise the way the NHS buys orthotics and other products. Hospitals will be able to scan a patient's foot shape and email the company, where the team will then print and dispatch insoles to the exact specification within hours as opposed to the multi-week process currently used.

“Businesses driven by ideas”

COMMENT FROM



The North West Fund has been partners with MC Vanguard and a range of other sponsors in the Merseyside Innovation Awards for several years now.

The objective of the awards is to encourage and support innovation in new and growing businesses in the Liverpool City Region.

We do this partly through providing a cash prize to the winning company but primarily through the publicity and sponsor support offered to several of the applicants each year.

The North West Fund has introduced a wide range of applicants, via its Fund Managers. The team clearly recognise that fostering innovation based businesses is partly about providing finance and also partly about supporting management in those businesses to turn great ideas into great businesses, which then contribute towards the region's economic development.

Many of the businesses which come forward are driven by the ideas and technical skills of the entrepreneurs behind them and benefit greatly from the experience and support available from the fund managers and other innovation awards sponsors.

Brian McCann

CHAIR

Merseyside Innovation Awards

DIRECTOR

Liverpool Chamber of Commerce

LEADS MC VANGUARD

Corporate Finance arm
of Mitchell Charlesworth.

“

The smaller end of the market has proven over the years to be remarkably tricky, with SMEs often unable to gain access to the funding they require to maximise growth. The North West Fund has become a vital form of support for these businesses, funding more than just companies, but aspirations and entrepreneurial spirit over the last six years.

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By stepping in where banks often cannot, The North West Fund has offered a level of flexibility and stability to companies going through the tumultuous early stages of their journey. The fund managers have played a key role in the rise of the North West economy in recent years, and will continue to be crucial to the success of the region in the future.

Tim Grogan

DIRECTOR

Deloitte, North West



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We have been involved with The North West Fund since it started and over this time, we've been impressed with the impact it has had on the North West economy. Having access to sources of alternative finance can be crucial in helping businesses unlock their growth potential and many of the businesses that have received support from The Fund are now entering new markets, expanding their work force or introducing new products or services.

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We look forward to continuing our on-going relationship with The Fund, helping to drive growth and prosperity across the region, and helping local firms realise their ambitions.

Alistair Pike

RELATIONSHIP DIRECTOR

SME Banking in Merseyside,
Lloyds Bank Commercial Banking



Having ambition and the right product or service for the market-place are obvious pre-requisites for business growth. Together with a skilled workforce, professional support and appropriate finance, any business is well placed to flourish.

Gaining competitive

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54 Comment

Dr Dale Heywood

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES

MSc Entrepreneurship,
University of Liverpool Management School

Across the North West 1.4 million people aged 16-64 are educated to degree level or higher. This is 31% of the working age population. There are 14 higher education institutions in the region with a student population of over 250,000, yet the skills gap remains a frustration for many employers.

In order for companies to grow and become successful they need the right people in place and most of the businesses supported by The North West Fund have used the finance to invest in recruiting skilled staff to take the company forward.

Computer games developer and publisher, Ripstone, prides itself on the combined experience and skill-set of its staff. Its team has been responsible for some of the most well-known, respected and commercially successful games of recent years. Investment from The Fund supported the creation and safeguarding of more than 20 jobs.

Voice and data specialist, Rock Networks, was a start-up business which received funding in 2011 and has gone from strength to strength. The company has grown from a small team of three to a 20 strong company in just a few years with plans to take on more staff as the company continues to grow.

To date, The North West Fund has created or safeguarded more than 5,500 jobs helping to deliver employment, skills and prosperity to the region. This figure is expected to grow significantly particularly as more than 25% of the investments made have been into start-ups.

advantage through new skills and expertise



Formisimo

Award winning Formisimo launches new product and expands team following investment

NAME Formisimo

LOCATION MediaCityUK, Salford

INDUSTRY Software

Online analytics company, Formisimo is going from strength-to-strength. Since its launch in 2013 the company has set up its head office at MediaCityUK, recruited skilled staff, secured thousands of global customers, launched a new product, won numerous prestigious awards and raised almost a million pounds of investment.

Founded by digital entrepreneurs Al Mackin and Tom New, the company is improving online sales for thousands of companies across the world, including brand names like, Secret Escapes, Virgin Active, Uber, QVC and Toyota.

Formisimo measures and analyses consumer behaviour in online checkouts and online forms, showing companies how they can make small adjustments that drive big increases in revenue.

As a new start-up, Formisimo secured a £350,000 investment from a syndicate led by The North West Fund in 2014. The company has since received further finance including; follow-on funding of £450,000 and more recently, over £160,000 from Publicis90.

The finance, together with mentorship, advice and guidance from fund managers, angels and leading accelerator, Seedcamp, is allowing the founders to grow their MediaCity team further as the company concentrates on expanding and enhancing its technology.

In 2015 the company was selected as one of the Tech North Northern Stars, having previously been awarded 'best digital tool/software' at the Northern Digital Awards and won the top prize at Venturefest's innovation showcase competition.

Earlier this year Formisimo launched its new product, Nudgr. This new tool works alongside the company's existing technology and uses machine learning to optimise website conversions. Formisimo provides an analytics solution, Nudgr is a complimentary solution that uses machine learning to engage customers in real-time before they abandon the form.



“We are really pleased with what we have been able to achieve in such a short space of time. Securing investment has allowed us to recruit highly skilled staff quickly. In a fast-paced industry like ours, this is imperative.

“As part of launching our new tool we have recruited a machine learning expert, bringing world class knowledge, innovation and expertise to the North West. Without investment this would not have been possible.”

AL MACKIN, CO-FOUNDER



Perfectus Biomed increases jobs in the North West

Daresbury-based Perfectus Biomed has vowed to boost the North West jobs pool, with 25 roles on offer over the next three years following investment from The North West Fund.

Perfectus Biomed

NAME Perfectus Biomed

LOCATION Daresbury, Cheshire

INDUSTRY Healthcare

The firm, based at Daresbury Science Park, provides microbiological testing for its clients, offering 'fit for purpose' experiments in a scenario that is made to mimic real life antimicrobial scenarios.

Since the £150,000 investment from The North West Fund, the firm has strengthened its commercial reach internationally, via increased promotional activity. The funding was also used to increase the number of staff the business employs, which now amounts to eight.

The growth of the company has enabled Perfectus Biomed to win a number of new private clients, and is now aiming to increase its headcount, as well as branching out further into the public sector.

"We have witnessed phenomenal growth in the last couple of years. There has been an influx of new business since we increased our headcount, and with a larger team, we have been able to branch out, expanding our offering and providing services to a greater number of clients. The North West has become a hub for the life sciences sector, so it is important that we keep increasing the amount of jobs we have available to match the growth of the region.

"The North West Fund has been incredibly supportive throughout the last two years. Not only did the team provide the funding we needed to expand, but they continued to support and develop our strategy, and really helped structure the company to become what it is today."

DR SAMANTHA WESTGATE, CEO



TCC expands team and moves to new state-of-the-art contact centre following funding



Company

The Contact

One of the Wirral's largest employers, The Contact Company (TCC), has used a multi-million pound package of public and private funding from The North West Fund for Loans Plus, Barclays, profit re-investment and the Regional Growth Fund to construct its new state-of-the-art contact centre on the Wirral.

NAME	The Contact Company
LOCATION	Wirral
INDUSTRY	Communications

The move into the new £11 million, 900-seat centre has enabled the company to continue expanding and increase the range of services it provides.

TCC has gone from strength to strength since Chief Executive Officer and owner Asif Hamid set it up in 2006. Now one of the largest employers in the Wirral, TCC has seen turnover soar from £10.2 million to £20.4 million over the past twelve months.

Working to address the customer contact needs of a wide range of businesses across the UK, the company offers outsourcing support to a portfolio of clients including River Island, Superdrug and Argos.

“Our skilled and loyal staff are key to our business model and we’ve built our business by closely tailoring our services to suit our customers’ specific needs. This has given us a real competitive edge and boosted our reputation. Our new business levels are up and we’re ambitious for the future.

“The move to our new premises has increased our capacity, allowed us to service new customers and introduce a host of new services. We’re also planning to take on more staff locally as we continue to grow. We’ve combined our own funds with an impressive funding package to get the project off the ground.”

ASIF HAMID, CEO AND OWNER



**“Championing
the development
and recognition
of new skills”**

———— COMMENT FROM



Coming from a long career of business ownership, it came naturally to me to move into higher education ten years ago to help develop the skills and learning experiences of young and not so young people.

The North West Fund champions the development and recognition of new skills and increasing levels of expertise in businesses of all sizes. Perhaps these are needed most in small and micro businesses but also in large firms who are sometimes slow to respond to innovative services, products and ways of doing things.

Dr Dale Heywood

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES
MSc Entrepreneurship,
University of Liverpool
Management School

In many businesses there is often a 'Girl [and/or] Boy Friday' covering several ranges of expertise but whilst that is encouraging, it puts firms into the realm of vulnerability if that 'Friday person' leaves. In my experience, it is strategically more prudent to ensure any staff member with a desire to up-skill, is worth investing in. At Universities we often refer to the 'wicked problem' of not knowing what the jobs of the future will be and therefore how we prepare practitioners for what we don't yet know will be required. Whilst this is a little defeatist, there are some skills that will always be needed such as entrepreneurial mind-sets, flexibility and technological adaptability.

Building a legacy

COMMENT FROM

Cliff Maylor

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Neil Morrey

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



The Executive Team

Mike Kenyon

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER



We are extremely proud to have managed the delivery of The North West Fund. It is a huge achievement to have invested a total of more than £340 million across the region, through our own stakeholder capital and joint investment. This finance is already making an impact on the region, as we hope is evident from the case studies and comments included in this document.

As The Fund is now fully invested, the focus for us turns to ensuring that our portfolio companies maximise their growth in order to realise the greatest return for our investment. Within the next few years, we hope to begin building a legacy fund which will provide finance to small and medium sized businesses across the region, long into the future.

We believe that the availability of early stage investment, often for enterprises that are pre-revenue or loss making is hugely important for the economy of the North West. In supporting these early stage businesses with much needed capital, The North West Fund is not only helping to drive economic growth but also increase job creation and boost the competitiveness of the region.

We would like to thank our stakeholders for their valued support and guidance throughout the initial investment phase of this programme and we look forward to continuing this relationship as the investments mature and begin to create legacy finance for future North West businesses.

Our impact at a glance

We've supported more than



440

North West businesses

WITH OVER

£153m

OF INVESTMENT.

THROUGH THESE INVESTMENTS

we have leveraged a further

£170m

Mu

in private sector finance...

...and an additional

£ 2 0 m

in public sector finance

BRINGING THE TOTAL INVESTMENT TO OVER

£340 million

...and created or safeguarded more than

5,500

jobs in the North West.



This has had a significant impact on the North West economy

boosting GVA by more than £135m

a figure that will continue to rise as our investments mature.

We have invested in everything from

cold and flu remedies to



pioneers of 3D printing



'twenty something' entrepreneurs to



sixty year old business tycoons

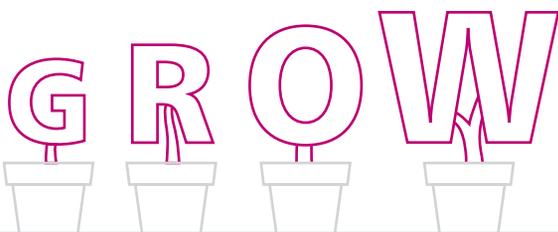


growing businesses that have been established for over 20 years.



start-ups to

All of our investments have one thing in common – they are helping to...



the North West economy.

“

It is a huge achievement to have invested a total of more than £340 million across the region, through our own stakeholder capital and joint investment. This finance is already making an impact on the region, as we hope is evident from the case studies and comments included in this document.

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Cliff Maylor

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The North West Fund

The North West Fund

/ SUPPORTED BY



INVESTING IN
englandsnorthwest

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND



European
Investment
Bank