

# Making it in Leeds

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News release from Leeds Manufacturing

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## Cool Half Million Investment in Manufacturing Training Centre

Leeds-based Airedale International Air Conditioning is making a major investment in a £500,000 state of the art training centre designed to equip a new generation of engineers with the skills and expertise to install and service increasingly high tech air conditioning and control systems.

The Leeds-based manufacturer's brand new training centre will help up-skill engineers already working in the industry but will also play a key role in the next generation of skilled mechanical and electrical engineers.

HR director of the £40 million turnover company, Steve Joynt said: "Manufacturing is sitting on a demographic time bomb and it is crucial that we not only continue to renew the pool of engineering

skills to secure our future. A substantial proportion of our 370 strong skilled workforce is aged 55 or over and it is vital we have a strategy in place for replacing those skills.”

“The training centre will also be used to advance skills for existing employees and is already training engineers from other companies, including BT.”

The new training facility is a true centre of excellence and the premier facility of its kind in the North, featuring actual production and test workshops and tooling. Airedale International has a further £1.5m earmarked for expansion of its extensive on-site test centre.

Managing director Clive Parkman adds: “We are fortunate in having a supportive parent company with the funds to back our educational and training requirements. We have introduced significant change through investment and continuous improvement in the past year. This will continue as the surest route to improved performance and best results.

“The new training centre enables our staff to take on board new processes and systems we will continue to invest in. It will also allow us to sell more external courses to a wider market, making it possible for those new to the industry to acquire quality training in new technology and a solid grounding in regulation compliance.”

Cllr Richard Lewis, Leeds City Council’s lead member for development said: “Apprenticeships are invaluable in recruiting and developing young people and equipping them with the skills needed for tomorrow’s labour market. Leeds is one of the UK’s leading centres for manufacturing and this represents a major investment by Airedale International in the future of the sector here in this city.”

**Ends**

**Photography:** From left, trainee Ross Forrester with HR director Steve Joyce

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**Notes to Editors:**

1. Airedale is the leading UK manufacturer of precision air conditioning units, predominantly for cooling IT equipment. Two expanding divisions are Service & Maintenance and Controls.

Founded by two Yorkshire entrepreneurs in 1974, the company moved to its present 25,000 sq m site in Rawdon in 1984. US-based Modine acquired the company in 2005 when the co-founders retired.

In the past two years Airedale has directed investment towards the growing IT market, tapping into its 35 year experience in cooling computer rooms. With today’s data centres often the size of a football pitch, their critical equipment is vastly more sophisticated and sensitive requiring advanced cooling technology to ensure optimum 24\7 performance. Delivering industry-leading solutions to these problems keeps Airedale ahead of the game.

The company plans to double global sales in the next five years by increasing production and growing exports, currently 20% of sales and covering 50 countries). Russia, China, the Middle and Far East are particular targets for growth and a major recruitment drive is under way. There are also plans to develop the firm's South Africa facility.

Five new products were exhibited at a recent major European event, resulting in a raft of enquiries and praise for Airedale's industry-leading suite of solutions and in terms of advanced technology and quality.

2. Leeds is the UK's second largest centre for manufacturing outside London, with over 36,000 people employed by 1,815 companies across engineering, print and paper manufacture, food and drink, electronics, textiles and medical technologies. The sector generates 10.8% of the city's £15 billion annual output.