



## Telford employer bucks investment trend

Avara Foods, one of the UK's biggest food businesses and a major employer in Telford, is going against the national trend for UK manufacturing. According to [a recent survey by EEF and Santander Bank](#), manufacturing investment "contracted quite sharply" in the first half of 2018. Not so at Avara, where investment continues in many forms and guises

Since reopening the Telford plant in 2015, following a £36m expansion and refit, investment in technology, automation and infrastructure has continued. Within the building, whole chickens are portioned and packed into the products that will be familiar to supermarket shoppers. During August, Telford hit a new high of 1.5 million chickens processed per week.

Graham Clempner, site manager, said: "This year has been fantastic for our Telford site. The factory has quickly adjusted, exceeded targets and managed the additional demand exceptionally well. The amount of extra work coming in to Telford will be great for ongoing recruitment and development."

Alongside investment in technology, investment in people has been at the heart of Avara's recent growth and success. Between March and August 2018, Avara took on an additional 150 people to help meet rising demand for chicken. At the end of September they also concluded a pay review – resulting in an inflation-busting 4.4% increase for over 850 of the Telford team.

With the available labour pool reducing further, due in part to Telford's low overall unemployment, competition for new recruits is tougher than ever. Avara's policy is to build for the future and invest in the next generation of talent. In September seven new apprentices joined the team, including the first degree apprentices, studying food science and food engineering with Harper Adams. Successfully completing the five year programme will give each apprentice a permanent job, a degree and valuable hands-on experience, all without the mounting debts that most university students face.

Andrew Brodie, People and Communications Director explains: "Now, more than ever, we must focus on sourcing and developing our own talent. 2018 is the pilot year for our degree apprenticeships, which we hope will open up higher education for talented students aiming to earn while they learn."

Looking further ahead the spectre of Brexit, and the uncertainty surrounding it, isn't dampening plans.

“There’s no doubt that the Brexit vote has thrown everything up in the air,” continues Brodie, “All we can do is focus on what we do best – great food, produced efficiently and to high standards. Automation will be essential to our future success and as part of our people strategy. By automating repetitive tasks we can become more efficient and also create new, more skilled roles that are more meaningful and better rewarded.”

#### **Notes to editors**

Avara Foods is one of the UK’s largest food businesses, supplying chicken, turkey and duck to retailers, food service and food manufacturers. Established in 2018, Avara Foods operates a fully integrated supply chain, across agriculture, processing and distribution, where around 6000 highly skilled individuals deliver great quality and great service every day. Avara Foods is a 50/50 joint venture between Cargill and Faccenda.

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