

**BUSINESS
READY**

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
SCIENCE PARK

Specialist blinds manufacturer set for strong growth after help from Business Ready

Guthrie Douglas, which is based at the Heathcote Industrial Estate in Warwickshire, was established nearly 40 years ago and makes specialist blinds which are sold all over the world. Recent orders included automated shading systems for the new Google Headquarters in London, through to a skyscraper in Sydney and a new airport in Kuwait.



The company saw an opportunity to grow by making more of the parts in-house and that meant purchasing a new CNC lathe and also adapting its Warwick headquarters to create more space.

The overall investment was £150,000 and, after contacting the Business Ready team at the University of Warwick Science Park, Guthrie Douglas secured a capital grant of £35,000 through Warwickshire County Council.

The company

Guthrie Douglas has been operating for 40 years as a specialist manufacturer of blinds which are sold all over the world and are used within prestigious building projects – both commercial and residential.

The company is based on the Heathcote Industrial Estate in Warwickshire and is run by managing director Andrew Kitching with a team of around 20 staff.

The Challenge

The company saw an opportunity to grow by making more of the parts within its shading systems in-house. That would mean investing in a new CNC lathe and also adapting its Warwick headquarters to create more space both for additional equipment and staff.

Andrew Kitching, managing director of Guthrie Douglas, said: "By making more of the components in our blind systems in-house, we saw this as an opportunity to grow the business which is already trading very successfully.

"Around 80 per cent of what we do is export, mostly to high-end construction projects. We deliver projects in around 35 different countries each year and because of the nature of the jobs we are working on, it's a very resilient market."

The Solution

The overall investment was £150,000 and, after contacting the Business Ready team at the University of Warwick Science Park, Guthrie Douglas secured a capital grant of £35,000 through Warwickshire County Council.

Andrew said: "When I was putting the growth plan together, I spoke to Business Ready straight away. We have worked with them before and knew they could add value to what we were planning.

"They take a step back, look at the plan and will offer a good sounding board. Furthermore, they gave us an insight into what grants might be available and supported us in our application.

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This project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund, forming part of the CW Business: Start, Grow and Scale Programme.



"We would have made some kind of investment without the support but what the help from Business Ready and Warwickshire County Council has allowed us to do is purchase a twin-spindle lathe which, without being too technical, means we can make parts much, much quicker.

"We've also created more space by adding a mezzanine floor which means we can increase both headcount and efficiency. We're delighted to have received such incredible support and not only is it a boost for Guthrie Douglas but for the local economy too."

The Results

Andrew Kitching said the investment will see the company significantly increase its staff numbers and more than double turnover over a three-year period.

Dirk Schafer, of the University of Warwick Science Park, said: "We are extremely pleased to have supported Guthrie Douglas. The company is a great example of a high-end manufacturer that wants to invest and grow.

"Through Business Ready, we have enabled the company to execute that plan more quickly and the grant funding has meant they could make a more significant investment that will deliver in stronger growth."

Louisa Smith, of Warwickshire County Council, said: "We are really happy to support this kind of project within Warwickshire by way of a Small Capital Grant. Guthrie Douglas have shown themselves to be an innovative and ambitious business in the Leamington area who now have a worldwide presence.

"This investment, along with the advice received from our partners at the University of Warwick Science Park through the Business Ready programme, will not only assist increased productivity within their business but will also create new skilled jobs within the area."



Business support for the next level

The Business Ready programme is managed by the business support team at the University of Warwick Science Park. The experienced Business Growth Advisers team have been delivering business growth and support services to technology based businesses for over 30 years.

In addition, the team are supported by a range of specialist mentors who have run their own businesses and have expertise and experience supporting, advising, coaching and mentoring other growth businesses.



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