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Superconnected Cities

Digital connection safeguards Leeds base for North’s largest TV independent

Award winning independent television production company True North has enhanced its facilities in Leeds after it gained a dedicated fibre optic broadband connection with a £3,000 award from Superconnected Leeds Bradford.

The high speed line has increased the firm’s broadband upload speeds by 1,000 per cent and enables edited HD programmes to be sent digitally from its Leeds head office for the first time.

The funding, part of the government’s Superconnected Cities initiative to help SMEs access high speed internet services, means that True North can digitally deliver its programmes directly to broadcasters from the company’s own in-house post production facilities rather than having to outsource this part of its work to London or Manchester.

Launched by three former Yorkshire Television producers, True North has grown to become the largest independent television production company in the North. With a workforce of up to 200 staff, turnover increased by over 25 per cent last year to £9.5m, and earlier this year the Marshalls Mill-based company received investment from Channel Four’s new £20m Growth Fund. True North’s programmes include BBC One’s Animal Frontline, Building the Dream for Channel 4, and CBBC’s Junior Vets.
Digital delivery of film and television programmes to post-production houses and broadcasters has become an industry standard, and the broadband upgrade has secured True North’s commitment to its Leeds production base.

True North managing director Marc Allen said: “If you go north of London and east of Manchester we are basically the final bastion of independent factual television production of significant scale. We’re very proud of our roots in Leeds and we plan to stick here. Even when we make programmes elsewhere it all comes back to Leeds, which is very much where the heart and soul of our organisation is.”

He added: “The funding from Superconnected Leeds Bradford has really changed the game for us. We were struggling to find a way to meet the professional industry standard of digital programme delivery that’s now required. But with the help we received we were able to take that giant step and everything has changed for the better for us as a result. We’re now on the SohoNet digital network, able to deliver programmes to the broadcasters professionally and we got there very quickly thanks to the £3,000 connection voucher and the help and advice we received.”

John Duncan, business development officer at Superconnected Leeds Bradford, said: “We are helping more and more businesses in Leeds and Bradford to unleash their potential by getting them connected to high speed internet services.”

He added: “True North is a Leeds legend whose programmes are watched all over the world and it’s fantastic news that their future in the city is now secure. More and more businesses are coming forward to claim their share of the £9m fund that we have available but the scheme does end in March and we’re urging businesses to check out our website at SuperconnectedLeedsBradford.co.uk and start their own application process before time runs out.”

ENDS

Photograph: Left-right: True North managing director, Marc Allen; John Duncan, Superconnected Leeds Bradford business development officer, at True North

Video link: http://youtu.be/lzEdgfXxymU

Notes for editors

1. The Superconnected Leeds Bradford programme was officially launched on Wednesday 19th February 2014 and is being delivered by Leeds City Council’s economic development service on behalf of the two West Yorkshire cities which jointly received the largest funding allocation for the programme outside London.

2. ‘Superfast’ broadband typically refers to download speeds of above 30 megabits per second. Connection Vouchers can be used to support a variety of technical solutions, including both
wired and wireless connections. As well as meeting the ongoing running costs of the broadband connection, the SME will need to pay for the VAT on the connection charge. The scheme runs in Leeds and Bradford until 31st March 2015.

3. Companies simply have to complete an online application form and obtain a supplier quote detailing the costs of connection. Further details and the application form are available at www.SuperconnectedLeedsBradford.co.uk

4. The ‘Superconnected Cities’ programme is part of a national programme to improve broadband connectivity and is running alongside the Superfast West Yorkshire infrastructure programme, which aims to bring high speed connectivity to residents and businesses in more rural areas. For more information about superfast broadband in West Yorkshire and Government-funded projects to improve access visit: www.superfastwestyorkshire.co.uk