

The Northern Echo

TEES VALLEY & N YORKS

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EXCLUSIVE **McCLAREN'S STORY**
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Clocks go forward by an hour tonight



Welcome

A momentous day for the region as steelmaking and train manufacturing make a historic return to the North-East



CREATING JOBS: Left, SSI president Win Viriyaprapaikit with John Bolton, from Tata Steel, performing a symbolic key handover ceremony. Right, Phil Wilson MP with chairman of Hitachi Rail Europe Chiaki Ueda and Alistair Dornier, managing director of Hitachi Rail Europe

THE North-East was celebrating a double triumph last night - the return of steelmaking and train manufacturing.

The new owner of Teesside Cast Products, the giant blast furnace at Redcar, hailed a new manufacturing era as he flew in to sign a £291m takeover deal.

Win Viriyaprapaikit, president of Thai company SSI, which has bought the moth-balled plant from Tata Steel, was speaking on the day his

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company officially took control of the plant.

The deal will safeguard 700 jobs and lead to hundreds more being created.

As part of its global ambitions, SSI has pledged to invest \$1bn in the plant - a move that is expected to create 800 jobs. Recruitment starts

shortly and steel production is expected to resume in about six months.

Mr Viriyaprapaikit said: "This isn't just about the re-starting of steel making, it restores 150 years of heritage - it is part of history. You have proven to us and to the world, that you can fight. You have taught us, that if you believe in something, and if you don't give up fighting, then anything is possible."

Those words were being echoed 30 miles away on a greenfield site on the outskirts of Newton Aycliffe.

Chiaki Ueda, chairman of Hitachi's European rail division, was making his first visit to the site where his company will assemble a new generation of high-speed trains.

Although the initial deal will see Aycliffe building trains for the UK, Mr Ueda said Hitachi was also negoti-

ating with ten other European countries for further orders.

When the first trains roll out of Aycliffe in 2015, about 500 people will be employed, with thousands more jobs created in the supply chain.

Mr Ueda said the region's reputation for hard work had won the day.

"There are many Japanese companies here in the North-East including, of course, Nissan, and we know from them of the high level of skills of the workers," he said.

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The TEES VALLEY GARDEN SHOW
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remarkable turnaround for steelmaking and trainbuilding



TOASTING TOWN'S SUCCESS: Chris Newby, landlord of the Locomotion No1 pub at Newton Aycliffe, pulls pints for MP Phil Wilson and Hitachi guests including chairman Chiaki Ueda and managing director Alistair Dormer
Picture courtesy of PHILIP HUNTON (philiphunton.co.uk)

Rail heritage hailed as platform for real future

By Chris Lloyd
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THE chairman of Hitachi's European rail division spoke yesterday of his delight at winning the contract to build the next generation of passenger trains in the North-East.

Chiaki Ueda was making his first visit to Amazon Park at Newton Aycliffe where his company will next year start building the train-making factory.

After three years of bidding and negotiating, Mr Ueda watched on television on March 1 as Transport Secretary Philip Hammond announced that Hitachi had secured the £4.5bn InterCity Express Programme.

"We were watching TV in our London office and everyone was cheering, everybody was doing the thumbs up," said Mr Ueda. "We are delighted."

He stressed that it will be some months before the final contract is signed with the British Government, but it

Firms can register interest online

AT noon on Monday, a website will go live where North-East companies can register their interest in working with Hitachi, in Newton Aycliffe.

Since March 1's announcement by Transport Secretary Philip Hammond about the awarding of the IEP

contract, Hitachi, Durham County Council and the Amazon Park developers Merchant Place have been inundated with requests from businesspeople wanting to build the supply chain.

A Hitachi spokesman explained: "The website will provide a platform for

these companies to register their interest and their details will be kept on file. The three organisations involved, will approach registered companies at the most appropriate time throughout the project." The website's address is hitachirailproject.co.uk/

also emerged yesterday that Hitachi has been talking to ten European countries with a view to Aycliffe building their trains, too.

When the first trains roll out of Aycliffe in 2015, about 500 people will be employed, with thousands more jobs being created in the supply chain.

Aycliffe was chosen as the site ahead of about 40 locations nationwide.

Mr Ueda explained: "First of all there are many Japanese companies here in the North-East including, of course, Nissan, and we know from them

of the high level of skills of the workers.

"And the site is very good, near to the railway and the port. It really is a very good place."

Alistair Dormer, the managing director of Hitachi Rail Europe, said: "The main thing was the enthusiasm of the people. We have been received so warmly by them, so many have signed the petition and supported The Northern Echo's Back on Track campaign.

"There is also a relationship with the 30 or 40 Japanese businesses in the North-East,

Locomotion No 1—the world's first passenger steam engine—by chairman of Durham County Council, Simon Henig.

Mr Wilson then took Mr Ueda to the Locomotion pub on Heighington Lane where George Stephenson is said to have assembled the engine in 1825 and which could be the world's first railway waiting room.

Mr Ueda said: "It is also very well known in Japan that the first locomotive was given to us in 1872 by the Vulcan foundry of Newton-le-Willows in Lancashire, and Edmund Morel introduced railway technology to Japan—he is known as the father of the railways in Japan."

Phil Wilson, the Sedgfield MP who spearheaded the campaign, said: "I am sure this is the first of many visits Mr Ueda will make to Newton Aycliffe and I know how appreciative he and his team are of the people of the North-East for their efforts in the campaign."

Mr Ueda was impressed with the region's railway heritage. At a reception at the Excel Centre in Aycliffe to thank local people who had helped with the campaign, he was presented with a model of

Hunt for missing teenagers widened

THE descriptions of two teenagers missing from Darlington have been circulated to other police forces in a bid to find the pair.

Natalie Ferguson, 15, and Sophie Sowerby, 14, have not been seen since 2.30pm last Saturday, March 19.

Darlington Police are continuing to carry out inquiries to trace the two teenage girls, who were initially believed to have gone missing on Friday, March 18.

The force's inquiries suggest the girls may be in the York area.

Their descriptions have been circulated to other forces. Officers in Darlington are in regular contact with colleagues in North Yorkshire and British Transport Police.

Natalie, 15, is 5ft 2in, with collar-length dyed red hair. When last seen, she was wearing a black vest top, black tracksuit top and black jogging trousers.

Sophie, 14, is 5ft 4in, with short dark brown curly hair. She was wearing a red T-shirt, grey and navy sweatshirt and grey jogging trousers.

A police spokeswoman said: "The girls are considered vulnerable due to their age."

Anyone with information is asked to ring Durham Police on 0345-60-60-365 and ask for the duty inspector at Darlington or any police officer.

Two more are charged with murder

TWO more men have appeared in court charged with the kidnap and murder of a man.

Lee John Woodier, 24, of Shelley Road, Middlesbrough, and Andrew Jackson, 25, of Cornforth Avenue, Middlesbrough, appeared at Teesside Magistrates' Court yesterday.

John Newton, of Brimham Court, Redcar, east Cleveland, suffered head injuries on Saturday and died in hospital on Monday.

The 45-year-old was allegedly kidnapped from his home, bundled into a van and beaten.

Mr Woodier and Mr Jackson were remanded in custody until Tuesday when they will appear at Teesside Crown Court.

Father and son George Thomas, 51, of Penhill Close, Middlesbrough, and Steven George Thomas, 29, of Charlbury Road, Middlesbrough, have also been charged with kidnap and murder and were remanded in custody at Teesside Crown Court on Thursday.

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60 active minutes 5 A DAY meal time up & about snack check me size meals cut back fat sugar swaps

NHS Darlington