

## Rainford Timber Co Branching out with digitalisation

“ Investing in digital technologies will truly transform our current business, increasing profitability - while remaining highly competitive ”



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A timber frame manufacturer is forecasting to significantly increase productivity, create new jobs, and drive growth after investing in automation technology, supported by Made Smarter.

Rainford Timber Co, based in Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancashire, makes timber frames used by the North West's construction sector to build houses, apartments, hotels, and care facilities.

To overcome the challenges of increasing production within the limitations of its current site, the business has replaced manual processes by investing in a CNC panel-making machine.

Digitalisation is streamlining the process, and supporting a strategy to grow by 60 per cent over the next three years. Accuracy has improved, waste reduced, and output increased.

Ross Smith, Contracts Manager, said: *“Made Smarter’s support has enabled us to invest in digital technologies that will truly transform our current business, increasing profitability while allowing us to remain highly competitive.”*

### The Challenge

Established in 2006, Rainford Timber Co has ISO9001 and CATG accreditation, meaning its products are built to the highest standards and use sustainable materials certified by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC).

It has grown steadily to become a trusted supplier of timber frames to construction firms across the North West.

With increasing demand for its products, Rainford Timber Co needed to ramp up production from its current location. However, they are restricted to

traditional workplace hours, due to proximity of neighbouring buildings. Rainford Timber Co needed to transform their processes.

Another challenge for Rainford Timber Co’s sustainability goals were being impacted by its reliance on paper. A huge amount of paper was being used as production worksheets.

*“Our panel production was much below the demand level,” Ross said. “To stay as a top supplier and meet our customers’ needs, we had to increase our production.”*

*“While we have a highly skilled workforce, we were too reliant on traditional manual processes. This was limiting our capacity to increase productivity.”*

*“The only way to increase our output was to digitise and speed up our manufacturing operation.”*

*“Using so much paper was also putting a dent in our sustainability goals. We needed efficiency and technologically advanced operations in our production processes.”*

### The Solution

Working with Made Smarter, Rainford Timber Co has been able to invest in the solution: an automated CNC panel making machine.

It will replace three assembly benches. The cutting team who are responsible for cutting the studs, top and bottom rails to length in bulk will feed the machine directly.

The Mobi-One machine is PC controlled with interactive touch screens. It feeds directly from the CAD design software.

The heavy-duty table comes with one fixed side and one moving which allows accuracy whilst cutting, reducing timber wastage.

Other standard features include nail guns, motorised table opening, automatic brake locking and an independent retractable clamping system.

The solution will contribute to around 40 per cent of the businesses panel output.

### The Benefit

The automated process means that external panels are manufactured significantly quicker than they were previously.

The speed of throughput will help Rainford Timber Co achieve their growth plans from their current premises. The business aims to create three new jobs for the residents of Bamber Bridge, Preston and upskill six existing staff.

The reduction in manual handling will increase quality and reduce wasted time and resource.

*“The automation will be revolutionary for the business,” Ross said. “It will help us grow in a controlled manner. It will improve output and quality, supporting the demands of our customers.”*

*“Operationally, it will modernise Rainford Timber Co and allow us*



*to attract young talent looking for a career in manufacturing.”*

The automation will also support Rainford Timber Co’s sustainability goals by eliminating paper from the factory floor.

The machine will calculate and optimise the timbers to reduce waste.

Ross added: *“Rainford Timber Co is already making great headway on the road to carbon zero. All the front and side loaders in the factory are now electric and it is our aim to replace out entire fleet with electric vehicles by 2030. We also aim to reduce our carbon footprint 10% year on year and this investment will help.”*

### The Future

The next step is more digitalisation and investing in new technologies that help increase efficiencies.

Rainford Timber Co is hoping to achieve year-on-year growth and see the business double its turnover in the next three to five years.

*“Investing in digital technologies will truly transform our current business, increasing profitability - while remaining highly competitive,”* Ross said.

*“We are committed to growing a sustainable business in our current location and supporting both the UK’s carbon zero policy and the current housing crisis.”*