

Piano firm tunes up for early re-launch

PIANOS should soon be rolling off the production line at Stroud again now that an historic relaunch of a traditional local business is nearing completion.

The new Woodchester Piano Company has been formed from the remains of the former Bentley Pianos at Woodchester, and boss of the new firm Peter Freke said manufacturing would now start again this spring.

Mr Freke worked behind the scenes for more than a year after Bentley's was sold off and eventually clinched a new financial package to buy out the old factory and machinery.

That deal was completed last Thursday and now Mr Freke and his new fellow directors are working to organise electricity, telephones and other services to their site.

Orders

Eventually it is hoped most of the 30 or so Bentley's workers made redundant by the closure will be re-employed by bosses at the new Woodchester firm.

Mr Freke said he also planned to attend the international piano fair in Frankfurt next week to begin securing orders for Woodchester instruments.

Bentley's were sold out to competitors Welmore who kept the "intellectual property" including the name of the business but shed the workforce.

Later the premises became involved in a voluntary liquidation, followed then by a creditors' liquidation.

However, Mr Freke and his supporters rallied round to raise enough private capital to secure the purchase of the building and equipment.