

Piano firm is set for vital talks

23/12/1997

WORKERS at a world famous piano factory near Stroud will meet with management today in a last-ditch attempt to save their jobs.

More than 30 employees at the Woodchester firm of Bentley Pianos have been put on short-time by directors who look set to sell the company to their main competitor, Welmore, based in London.

One employee, who has served Bentley for 41 years, said workers had agreed short-time working but only for December.

"We are meeting with management today for further negotiations," he said.

A petition has also been started by the workers who plan to send it to Stroud MP Roger Knapman.

Meeting

The crunch for workers will come on January 4 when they will all meet with directors to re-negotiate their position.

Many of the employees would find it hard to find work in such a specialised field if they were laid off.

No-one at Bentley Pianos was available for comment today.

The piano workshop has been based at Woodchester since 1938 but has twice been hit by fire.

The last fire, which gutted the building, was in 1989 but it was rebuilt and officially re-opened in May last year by Princess Michael of Kent.