

Job-creating relaunch of expat food seller British Corner Shop led by North East brothers

Two entrepreneurial brothers from the North East have set out ambitions to revive the British Corner Shop brand with job-creating plans on home soil.

Harvey Hayer and Amar Dulay acquired the intellectual property of the £18m-turnover expat food retailer after it fell into administration earlier this year, having struggled with exporting its British brand favourites in the wake of Brexit. Now the pair, who are behind emerging North East housebuilder Magna Homes, have acquired a 20,000 sqft distribution facility near Sunderland and plan to rebuild the business, which is said to have served more than 700,000 customers worldwide.

Speaking to BusinessLive, Mr Hayer said the Rainton facility is likely to create between 20-30 jobs with hopes the relaunched British Corner Shop will employ about 50 people within a year of it trading again. Magna, which now owns the British Corner Shop website through which worldwide sales were secured, has gone into partnership with an ecommerce investment business with hopes the brand can become an international success again but this time based out of the North East.

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Sale of the intellectual property to Magna comes after the

second administration for Bristol-based British Corner Shop. The firm was first rescued by turnaround private equity firm Rcapital in March last year, but it ran into difficulties again, suffering losses and eventually calling in insolvency specialists earlier this year, who were forced to close its doors with 20 staff made redundant.

Magna approached the administrators, acquiring the firm's website domains, customer databases, social media channels and trademarks, which it will use to relaunch in June. Mr Hayer explained that Brexit had significantly hampered British Corner Shop's ability to export to its key market in Europe, with the firm having set up a distribution facility in the Netherlands in 2021 to try and counter barriers but with costs becoming unsustainable.

Mr Hayer says the team now has plans to go back into Europe, and further afield, with a fresh strategy including focussing on business-to-business wholesale. British Corner Shop previously had exclusive rights to distribute around 150 Marks & Spencer products around the world and also had an agreement in place with Morrisons. The Magna team now hope to emulate that type of setup with a well known supermarket chain, once the business is established.

On longer-term ambitions, Mr Hayer said will look at the UK on-demand grocery market using the British Corner Shop name and the same range of products. Magna also has wider plans to establish a group of businesses via potential acquisitions.

Mr Hayer said: "Grocery has been in our blood from day one. Our dad had corner shops which we used to help run when we were kids and which we got in involved with a bit when we finished university. Then we sold them. I've always been interested in the retail industry even though I've been out of it for the past five years. I'd always kept a close eye on British Corner Shop because I was fascinated with what the guys who ran it had achieved."