

# **The Humber's headline-making deals that made 2022**

Is an exit strategy a new year's resolution? Will growth through acquisition be on the cards in 2023? Well let us serve up a little inspiration ahead of our return to regular news updates.

The Humber region entered 2022 on the back of a modest rise in business deal activity and the year saw little let up as mergers and buy-outs were agreed and completed. At times it felt like a frenetic pace, with a significant interest from the US, perhaps aided by a strong dollar.

Here we take a look back at 10 that caught our attention, and a few more besides. Happy new year!

## **Singleton Birch bought out by US quarry firm**



Paul Hogan, chief executive of Mississippi Lime Company, left, with Richard Stansfield, chief executive of Singleton Birch at the Melton Ross site.

(Image: Darren Casey / DC Imaging)

One of the longest standing heavy industries on the Humber, Singleton Birch has been operational for 212 years. This year it was bought out by a US business of half its considerable vintage.

Mississippi Lime Company, part of HMB Holdings, swooped in September, buying from the Katherine Martin Charitable Trust.

She was the wife of founder William Singleton Birch's grandson, Lionel Martin. He used the family business to help him fund his passion for cars and went on to found Aston Martin. The buy-out triggered "an impactful contribution to the three charities that it benefits" – the NSPCC, RSPCA and Barnardo's.

Singleton Birch's brand is retained, with work on zero carbon lime production ongoing on-site.

[Read the full story here](#)

## **Croda's £667m industrial division sale to Cargill**



The Hull Croda site that became Cargill's in 2022.

(Image: Google Maps)

The £667 million deal has seen performance technologies and industrial chemicals ownership head over the pond too.

East Yorkshire's FTSE-listed smart science team is focusing on people, having made huge strides in healthcare and beauty.

It launched a marketing exercise, catching the attention of the US agri-giant, one of the world's largest privately owned companies.

Key plants are located in Hull, Holland and China, with a turnover of £382 million reported in the year before the sale. The business units support automotive, polymer and food packaging solutions and applications.

[Read the full story here](#)

## **Triton Power lights up the Energy Estuary**



Saltend Power Station.

(Image: SSE Thermal)

Equinor and SSE Thermal are behind several strands of the Humber's interwoven decarbonisation plans when it comes to hydrogen and clean power.

This £341 million acquisition, agreed in June and completed in September, brought a business back from the US, with Energy Capital Partners selling.

The key asset is the 1.2GW power station at Saltend, where fuel switch plans are being progressed as a key pillar of the Zero Carbon Humber project

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## **HSH Coldstores takes on ACS&T**



HSH Coldstores has acquired ACS&T. Inset, Anthony Howard, HSH Coldstores' managing director.

The £16.5 million deal uniting the two cold storage giants of Grimsby brought the curtain down on reported activity in 2022, agreed as a coldsnap started to thaw.

It hots up activity for HSH, having also just been awarded significant backing for a new-build project at Europarc.

HSH, part of Constellation Cold Logistics, will acquire the

larger business from tea trader Camellia Plc, as it concentrates on agricultural interests. The merged entity will be a £38 million plus operation, with significant pallet capacity in the UK seafood capital.

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## **Broadband at the double for Connexin**



Tony Jopling, centre left, managing director at Pure Broadband, and Furqan Alamgir, chief executive and co-founder of Connexin, shake on the acquisition, flanked by Jaak Cheshire, general manager at Pure Broadband, left, and Alex Yeung, chief operating officer and co-founder at Connexin.

(Image: Jaydine Foley)

Hull-based digital infrastructure specialist Connexin acquired two city broadband firms in the space of a week as it rolls

out a network to deliver on.

The heavily backed smart tech entity snapped up Pure Broadband and Wisper Broadband in July, fast-tracking its ambition to become a challenger to KCom.

Pure, founded by Adrian Bolster and led by Tony Jopling, was launched in 2009, with Wisper – the brainchild of IT engineer Michael Foley and electrician Paul Barker, emerging in 2013.

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## **Local authority buys a shopping centre**



Council leader Philip Jackson outside Freshney Place.

(Image: Rick Byrne / GrimsbyLive)

Grimsby's Freshney Place Shopping Centre was bought in a

distressed deal by

North East Lincolnshire Council, having been placed into receivership as the year began.

Lincolnshire's largest undercover mall is a large part of the town centre, with the local authority already working on cinema-led leisure plans as part of its success in securing government funding.

It is now being operated at arms length, with Queensberry Retail and Montagu Evans supporting, as it looks to widen the offer from purely a hard-hit high street.

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**As one deal closes, a bathroom door opens...**





Summerbridge Doors in Anlaby, Hull, has been acquired by Kartell UK Ltd.

Humber Doors, a 120-employee operation in Hull, was bought by Kartell UK as it expanded its domestic manufacturing presence.

The company is a trade-focused producer of kitchen and bathroom cabinets and doors, and had expanded significantly under Summerbridge Holdings.

The Bedford-based company added the £7 million turnover business to a group including Just Trays, a leading shower tray manufacturer in Leeds, and Vogue, a specialist manufacturer of designer towel warmers, in Willenhall in the West Midlands. It had run up sales of £140 million in the year prior to the swoop.

[Read the full story here](#)

## **Documenting growth of digital market**



Digitising documents at Storetec, a specialist Hull company acquired by Bridges Fund Management.

(Image: Storetec)

Significant backing to help a document digitisation specialist meet anticipated demand and grow internationally came in November.

A majority stake was taken in Storetec by UK investment house Bridges Fund Management.

Launched almost 20 years ago, it has expanded significantly into a state-of-the-art scanning bureau off Freightliner Road, employing 100 people.

Now overseas markets are being looked at as it capitalises on data legislation and the drive from paper to cloud storage.

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## **Cranswick takes a bite of the pet food market**



Cranswick chief executive Adam Couch sees the pet food platform as an attractive opportunity for growth.

Pork and poultry specialist Cranswick entered the pet food sector with the acquisition of Lincolnshire-based Grove Pet Foods.

The Hull-headquartered business, where sales recently topped £2 billion, described it as an attractive platform for further growth, having courted another prior.

Grove enjoyed sales of £21.5 million at the time of the January deal, employing 100 people. It produces dry dog food for several leading brands under private label relationships, while also owning Vitalin and Alpha Feeds.

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# Urbaser says 'hola!' to Willerby's Wastewise



Organic waste specialist Biowise has been bought by Urbaser Group. Inset, executive chair James Landau.

Where there's muck there's brass, as European environmental specialist Urbaser knows well.

With 40,000 employees across 25 countries, it added Willerby operation Biowise to the books in May.

Founded by the Landau family, and trading under the Wastewise name, it specialises in local authority waste treatment and recovery, turning kerbside collections into compost for retail. A 43-strong team delivered revenues of £13 million prior to the deal, with 260,000 tonnes handled. Since the

acquisition it has taken steps towards clean energy production from hard-to-handle waste.

[Read the full story here](#)