

Tyneside ground screw entrepreneur expects to create jobs following investment

A Gateshead entrepreneur who has developed an alternative to concrete foundations for holiday lodges has secured investment to further his venture.

Having introduced ground screws to the UK more than a decade ago in partnership with a Swedish brand, Andy Gabel has recently launched a new system for securing lightweight holiday lodges without pouring tonnes of concrete into the ground. His firm Groundscrew4u offers other products that are used for domestic and commercial structures including garden rooms, home offices, modular classrooms and home annexes.

Mr Gabel showcased the Staygrounded product at the Great Holiday Home Show in Harrogate last month and says there has already been interest from big industry names, with a number of new projects in the offing for next year. Now a £50,000 sum from the North East Small Loan Fund, arranged through NEL Fund Managers, will be used to market the system, including taking it to subsequent trade shows.

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Anticipated demand over the next 12 months means Groundscrew4u expects to double its eight-strong team of installers. Mr Gabel said: "Ground screws offer a faster and cleaner solution for solid foundations for all types of timber and lightweight structures than traditional concrete foundations. Alongside

this, they typically have a 60% lower environmental impact, which is especially important to businesses working towards carbon neutral status.

“When the opportunity arose to move into the holiday park industry, we spent many months designing, testing and refining a system that we know is precisely fit for purpose, and that will also prevent tens of thousands of tonnes of concrete being poured into the ground every year. Our Staygrounded launch generated a huge amount of enthusiasm among many of the industry’s biggest names, and as it’s simple to use and put in place, we’ll be able to quickly train up new installers to meet the high levels of market demand that we’re expecting.

“It’s the only system of its type available in the UK, has been accredited by all the key trade bodies in the holiday park and leisure sector, and is fully insurance-backed so having brought in this investment from NEL, we’re now ready to realise its full potential. Being able to access capital from within the North East was important to us, as was being able to meet the team offering it, and we were made to feel very at ease and reassured right through the investment process.”

Jonathan Armitage, investment executive at NEL Fund Managers, added: “Andy and his team have applied unrivalled specialist knowledge to a particular market to develop a bespoke system that will provide substantial efficiency and environmental benefits to customers.”

The £9m North East Small Loan Fund is part of the £130m North East Fund and is aimed predominantly at smaller SMEs. It typically offers loans of up to £100,000 to businesses in Tyne & Wear, Durham and Northumberland.