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## ROMAN EMPIRE KEEPS EXPANDING WITH HSBC SUPPORT

County Durham-based shower enclosure and bath screen manufacturer Roman has secured a £1.3 million finance package from HSBC Commercial Bank to support the development and launch of new product ranges and continued international expansion.

The company launched its exclusive Decem range at the end of last year, targeting high-end retail markets in the UK and overseas, and is set to introduce its Lumin8 range of enclosures later this year. Roman manufactures its range of shower enclosures and accessories at its Newton Aycliffe headquarters and exports its goods globally.

Export markets include France, Spain, Holland, Poland, Malta, Canada and the UAE, and the company has identified significant growth opportunities in Singapore, USA and the Middle East. Currently just under 10% of its turnover is generated from overseas sales and the business believes it can grow that to 20% of an already rapidly increasing turnover within three to five years. Roman has set up a subsidiary company in Malaysia, Roman Asia, which is positioned to increase sales within the Asian market, primarily targeting the growing South East Asia luxury hotel market.

Roman has switched its full business banking to HSBC's Tyne Tees Commercial team in a deal led by Senior International Commercial Manager Stuart Henry. HSBC's international capabilities and trade expertise were key drivers behind the deal. HSBC has also put in place a forward exchange contracts facility, which helps protect the company against adverse movements in exchange rates.

David Osborne, Roman Managing Director, said: "Roman is growing internationally and we also have a subsidiary in Malaysia, which encouraged our move to HSBC. HSBC is a bank with genuine global reach, which is massively

important in simplifying international trade. We have also received consistently good advice from HSBC.”

He added: “We aim to establish a number of partners in key markets and to be able to mature in those markets with all our new products, such as our Decem and Lumin8 ranges. Our Decem range is designed for the international hotel market, as the range incorporates all the key features and benefits required, such as increased height of shower enclosures, tailored design specifications and the fact that it has been developed and manufactured in Britain.

“Roman is a well-established UK Brand, and is home to the UK’s largest shower manufacturing plant. Being a British manufacturer is becoming increasingly important in international markets as it is a key differential and a trusted sign of the highest quality of products.”

Roman, which employs 160 people, was established in 1985 by David Osborne's father, Gerry, who has now stepped up to the role of Chairman. It operates three main brands: Roman, Haven and Roman at Home - an online homeware proposition.

Pat Dellow, HSBC Tyne Tees Area Commercial Director, said: “Roman is proud of the quality of its products and the ‘Made in Britain’ stamp certainly strikes a chord with international buyers. This progressive and innovative company clearly recognises the benefits of targeting overseas growth, which helps to secure and create jobs in the North East and boosts the local economy. The Government has set a target of doubling exports by 2020 and it is companies such as Roman that will contribute to that.”

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