

# Business Review

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## 12 ways to beat the recession

PUBLICISING free events and encouraging firms to move to Reading are included in a 12-point plan to tackle the credit crunch.

Businesses, politicians and voluntary groups held two credit crunch summits to fight recession and a steering group has been formed.

A one-off payment of £85,000 was made to Reading Credit Union, and council leader Jo Lovelock, who chairs the group, said: "We will be looking to work with others, like banking institutions, over the next year or so to make sure Reading can weather these difficult times."

She added: "We hope that by working together and being creative in the ways we address the recession we are best placed to deal with it."

The 12 point plan:

- Attracting companies to relocate.
- Improving skills and boosting apprenticeships.
- Paying small businesses in 20 days, then eventually 10, rather than 30.
- A mortgage rescue package.
- Increase take up of benefits.
- Support for people made redundant.
- Promotion of the credit union.
- Promotion of public transport and free cycle training.
- Getting more businesses to offer discounts for Your Reading Passport holders.
- Promotion of free events.
- Tackling fuel poverty in deprived areas.
- Encouraging volunteering.



It's a wrap: Mike Ryan, of pack & Send, far right, with from left Tony Fowles, Graeme Rhodes and Phil Rivers. 090677r1

## Mike's sent his career packing

**M**IKE Ryan used to be commercial director for Thorne EMI, worked at a high level with private equity firms, had a leading role in First Choice Holidays and ran, and eventually sold, Betterware. Now he packs boxes and sends them.

Yet, his plans are as ambitious as ever. Mr Ryan has opened Pack & Send in the UK, the first of what is destined to be between 240 and 400 stores nationwide.

The concept has been a success in Australia and now the UK version, headed by Mr Ryan, is destined to spread across this country at the rate of around one new shop every fortnight.

Pack & Send does what it says on the tin – or the cardboard box. Stocked up with boxes, bubble wrap, special foams and all manner of other protective

packaging, it's shop in Reading's Kings Road deals with everyone from the ebay trader to art dealers to large corporate companies sending computers to far off places.

Mr Ryan said: "I was asked to look at Pack & Send and immediately fell in love with it. I could see an awful of potential in the UK market for such a proposition.

"It had been trading 14 years in Australia and was just beginning a major international expansion. That then led to me pulling together a team of people.

"Between us we spent the best part of 18 months having a look at Pack & Send and the particular market niche in which it sits. Between us we spend four months in Australia.

"The plan is for about 240 stores in the UK, maybe more. When we've got the first four or five up and running we will take a

judgement on whether it's 240 or 400."

He and his directors are mucking in, wrapping artwork, china and many extraordinary items. The team at Reading consists of Mr Ryan, Martyn Grealey, Tony Fowles, Phil Rivers, Graeme Rhodes, Paul Jago and Mark Jones.

Pack & Send's motto "We send anything, anywhere" is backed by some of the requests Mr Ryan has already dealt with.

He has packed and sent, 60 Mars Bar ice creams to a woman in Australia who got a taste for them while visiting England. Pack & Send had to buy the ice creams and pack them in dry ice for the 10,000 mile trip. Another was for around 80 litres of pubic hair dye, again for Australia, and sending the ashes of a man from Liverpool to Tasmania so he could travel a route he had enjoyed while he was

alive. An aircraft ejector seat had to be protected against going off in transit and in a more recent job Mr Ryan packed an original Rolf Harris painting to be sent to Toronto.

Transport links in the Thames Valley were, as ever, one of the attractions for setting up in Berkshire but Pack & Send's Antipodean roots give it a big contract with Aussie airline Qantas, making Heathrow as important.

There are also important road links to the docks at Southampton. A further attraction is the strength of the economy in Reading.

Mr Ryan said: "It's not a macro economy but it is much better positioned than most places to stand its ground. Everybody talks about Microsoft and the IT but there is a lot more to it than that. It's got a fabulous retail environment."

Link [www.packsend.co.uk](http://www.packsend.co.uk)