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PACKING IN THE ORDERS – Reading East MP Rob Wilson, right, visits Pack & Send and meets chief executive Mike Ryan

CHILLY LAUNCH: shipping firm's unusual first order

Send 60 Mars ice cream bars to Oz!

BY LINDA FORT

THE first customer to a new packaging and shipping company which opened in Reading in January had a challenging request.

The company's philosophy is to "send anything, anywhere" but the UK chief executive Mike Ryan at the new offices of Pack & Send in Kings Road had to keep his cool for the first commission.

He told Reading East MP Rob Wilson when he visited last week: "Our customer wanted us to provide safe collection and delivery of some catering items but the challenging thing was that the items were 60 Mars Ice Cream Bars which needed buying in the UK and delivering – still frozen – to her in Sydney, Australia."

The MP dropped into the Reading Pack & Send to meet the team there and find out how the business lives up to its claim of being able to send anything, anywhere.

The Reading branch is the first of a planned 240 stores in the UK. Tony Fowles, UK general

manager, said: "Pack & Send was the perfect choice for this shipment."

"Not only were we able to supply insulated packing and sufficient dry ice to keep the ice cream frozen for the day-long plane transit, but through our contacts with the airlines we were able to arrange refrigerated storage at Heathrow prior to the flight down to Sydney and again at the other end."

"You must love your ice cream to have it shipped halfway around the globe, but as Pack & Send originated in Australia, and is the leading retail freight business there, it is no surprise that we were the first choice when it came to shipping from the UK."

The Pack & Send store handles the collection and delivery of any item to any location in the world.

The company says it is its secure packing and crating services and door-to-door freight management and ability to handle fragile, large, awkward and valuable items that sets it apart from conventional courier solutions.

Since serving the first customer and delivering her ice cream bars

safely to Sydney, Pack & Send have packed and sent 12th century Islamic pottery, an antique model of a London trolley bus that was one of only five left in the world and thousands of pounds of paintings, including a Rolf Harris original.

Mr Ryan said: "We've also been involved in packing and sending more conventional items – though no less important and valuable to the sender."

"We have packed and sent personal possessions, excess baggage, laptop computers and IT equipment, mobile phones, teddy bears, birthday presents – the list is endless."

Mr Wilson said: "I was delighted to come along and see for myself how someone is starting a business up in the middle of the recession."

"Mike has found a gap in the market and it appears that his flagship store here in Reading is doing extremely well."

"It's great to hear of a success story during these difficult times and I wish the team all the best for the future expansion of the business."