

Solar monitoring firm rolls out service in US after major contract win

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An energy consultancy that offers a unique service monitoring the performance of commercial solar systems has won a major contract from a leading US soft drinks brand.

[Test Consulting](#) has been commissioned to monitor solar installations at over 50 bottling plants throughout North America. The company has raised £150,000 from [NPIF II – Mercia Debt Finance](#), which is managed by Mercia Debt as part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II (NPIF II), to help it roll out the service, win further business in the UK and US and target the Spanish market.

Test Consulting was established in 2016 by John Swallow, who has over 30 years' experience in electrical engineering and smart building integration. The Leeds-based company helps businesses to reduce energy use and carbon emissions and gain accreditations. It provides energy monitoring covering all fuel types for clients including brick manufacturer Ibstock, Thorn Lighting and Mid-Counties Cooperatives.

Its specialist solar monitoring service was developed at the request of a leading installer, Sol PV Group. Test Consulting uses its own proprietary software, which can be linked remotely to any type of solar system and brings together data from multiple sites in one place.

The software creates a 'digital twin' of each installation and takes account of weather conditions to show the expected power output, then compares it with actual output from the site. By identifying any issues at an early stage, it enables operators to take swift action and achieve maximum performance and 'uptime'.

Test Consulting, which currently has a seven-strong team, expects to create three to four new jobs in the year ahead.

John Swallow, founder and CEO, said: “Solar power enables businesses to cut costs, reduce reliance on the grid and enhance their brand. However many fail to achieve the full benefits and in some cases, cannot claim carbon credits because the installations do not perform as well as expected. Monitoring gives complete visibility and quickly reveals any panels that are underperforming.

“The US contract is a real accolade for us and demonstrates the value of our unique service. We now aim to make further inroads in the US market and target other countries such as Spain with high uptake of solar energy.”

Gary Whitaker of Mercia Debt added: “Test Consulting’s innovative service could help businesses worldwide to maximise their use of solar power and reduce their carbon emissions. We are pleased to support John and the team as they roll out the service internationally.”

Lizzy Upton, senior investment manager at the British Business Bank, said: “NPIFII was created to back innovative businesses just like Test Consulting across Yorkshire and the Humber. Its proprietary solar monitoring technology has the potential to drive real impact, both commercially and environmentally, and we’re proud to support the team as they scale their operations across the globe.”

Moustafa Elgendy from the Department for Business and Trade worked with the company to support its international expansion and provided fundraising advice.

The £660m Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II (NPIFII) covers the entire North of England and provides loans from £25k to £2m and equity investment up to £5m to help a range of small and medium sized businesses to start up, scale up or stay ahead.

The purpose of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II is to drive sustainable economic growth by supporting innovation and creating local opportunity for new and growing businesses across the North of England. The Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II will increase the supply and diversity of early-stage finance for the North’s smaller businesses, providing funds to firms that might otherwise not receive investment and help to break down barriers in access to finance.