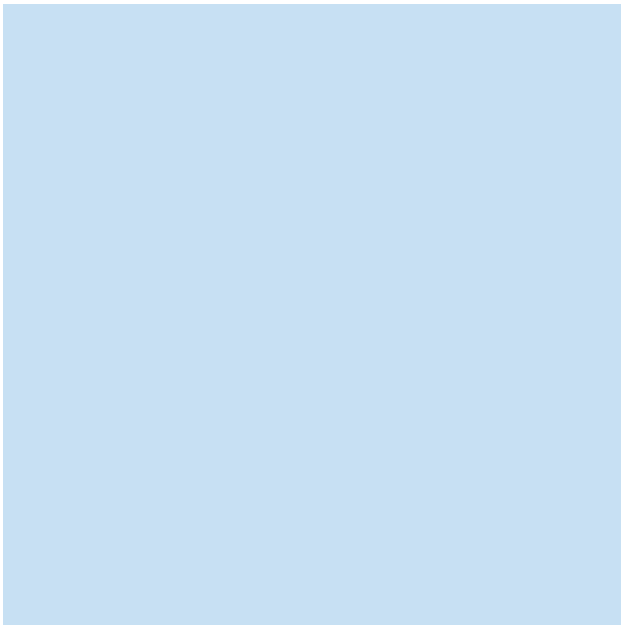


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Thanet secures 550 jobs with UK's  
biggest ever glasshouse  
development



Britain's foremost fresh produce supplier, Fresca Group Ltd, has announced plans to develop the most hi-tech greenhouse complex on the Isle of Thanet. More than 550 jobs will be created when the Kent-based company teams up with specialist large-scale growers of tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers in a venture that is sure to capture both local and national interest.

British consumers are eating more and more salads, but most of the crops in our supermarkets have to be imported. This development will add significant amounts of British-grown produce to the supermarket shelves, helping reduce food miles and the time it takes to get a tomato from plant to plate.

A massive £80 million will be invested in building the 91-hectare site located between Birchington and St Nicholas at Wade. The site, now officially named Thanet Earth, will include seven glasshouses, each covering the area of around 10 football pitches, and will use the very latest in efficient hydroponic growing techniques.

An automated packing facility will be built at the site as the huge scale of the project allows the venture to exploit recent technological innovations to increase its efficiency. With the addition of the Research and Visitor Complex, Fresca expects the site to become the UK's leading centre for developing new varieties. As part of the educational programme schools and the local community will also be invited to witness the process that gets the crop to their plates.

The greenhouses will be computer-controlled and will produce crops 52 weeks a year. They'll also be equipped with latest growing kit including the CHP (Combined Heat and Power) installations that will provide enough electricity to supply over 50,000 homes; more than half of Thanet's needs. CHP will generate power for the National Grid but will also produce the by-products needed to grow the crops. Thanet Earth will use the hot water to replace conventional boiler heating normally needed to warm the greenhouses whilst the carbon dioxide will be absorbed by the plants as part of the natural growing process.

Chris Mack, Chairman of Fresca Group, is understandably proud of his company's achievement in getting such a landmark operation off the ground. "I doubt that there's any other company that would have had the resources, the ambition, the persistence and the vision to make Thanet Earth more than an idea", he said. "It's taken a committed team over two years to turn the idea into a reality. As a Kent-based company, we're very excited about developing in Thanet. The creation of so many jobs will further enhance our position as one of Kent's leading employers."

## Steve McVickers is the man in charge of Thanet Earth.

With extensive international experience in the salad business, he has been instrumental from the outset in bringing the team together and designing the site to allow all the latest growing industry innovations to finally come to the fore. Once production begins he'll be Managing Director of the new company coordinating operations and marketing. Steve's keen to focus on the new employment opportunities for the area. "We are very much a 'hands on' business and only ever as good as the team who put in the energy and commitment on a day to day basis. It's quite specialised both at production and central operations and offers some really exciting opportunities for people to learn new skills. We are looking forward to putting the recruitment and training programme into motion early next year."

No-one's hanging around on this, and Thanet Earth will begin to take shape in early October 2007. The first glasshouses are scheduled for construction in March 2008, and the first Thanet Earth crops will hit the shelves during the autumn of 2008.



Approved design Consultancy were pleased to act as the Building Control Body on this project to help facilitate the exciting design standards developed both in concept and detail by the Architects RPS. Approved design have been instrumental in developing the fire strategy with the end user taking into consideration the damp environment and water irrigation system.

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