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## R30-million investment in JBay

A major player in international umbrella manufacturer, Woodline Shade Solutions has relocated to the Eastern Cape where it is currently constructing a new purpose-built, modern factory.

And the factory location is just outside the popular coastal town of Jeffrey's Bay where entrepreneur, Fritz Watter, who has already invested more than R30-million, "Relocating our headquarters and manufacturing to the Eastern Cape of South Africa is not only a strategic move that makes good business sense," says Watter, who is also Woodline's managing director. "The move will open further opportunities to an area incredibly rich in natural resources, and skilled labour."

Watter reveals that he now plans to make Woodline the best "Shade solutions" manufacturer in the world.

Woodline has joined forces with, Commercial Marine, which has 5 South African branches and one in Namibia that supplies quality stainless steel products and fittings.

And at the modern and upmarket Jeffreys Bay branch of Commercial Marine Watter has added a new dimension to offer an refreshments proposal by the popular InFood Concept, Southern Jeffreys Bay. There is a delightful new kiosk that opened at the end of October providing artisan coffee and pastries for Commercial Marine's clientele.

"Commercial Marine is undergoing somewhat of a transformation," says Watter. "It is experiencing huge growth in its product offerings and embracing outdoor living as a whole while still keeping true to its foundation of marine products."

"We are excited to bring these two dynamic businesses together and seeing where they can best continue."

Commercial Marine, has been operating in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere since 1989. The group has recently undergone a rebirth since its recent acquisition by Watter. This major importer of stainless steel products for the marine and commercial building industry is now branching out to offer other outdoor products.

"Working with Woodline is proving to be a formidable partnership that fits hand in hand with our new approach," says Richard Venter, Commercial Marine's GM. "We are committed to our loyal customer base and believe this new partnership will provide offerings that customers are looking for, whether it be commercial fishing, fishing tackle, boating, or pure outdoor living offering a great final product experience."

Asked about the reason for his purchase of Commercial Marine group of companies, Watter said that having been in the ocean and fishing industry in Alaska and with his passion for the marine environment he decided to buy the group -"a perfect match!"

He says the group has been supporting Catch and Release workshops and has recently renewed the company brand with a new logo and with the slogan "discover outdoors". Many

new products have been sourced -designed particularly for the marine environment which also applies to the daily life style along the coast. Woodline and Commercial Marine will be sharing offices directly behind the Commercial Marine Showroom, with high-tech equipment, personalised customer support servicing local and international markets.

In addition, with a keen interest for protecting the environment, the offices as well as the factories are off the grid and supply their own water and electricity. There is a water harvesting program, with a rainwater collection for irrigation, uses natural lighting and solar energy light plus renewable energy in the new factory's construction for the sourcing of timber from FSC certified forests and timber mills for its wooden products.

Woodline believes that environmentalism is essential for a prosperous future, which is why we do it responsibly where it counts in everything we do," Watter says.

He states that although poor investment has restrained the Kouga's economic development, now is the time to invest in the future. "We plan to open a state of the art factory in Jeffreys Bay at the end of 2015. "From our new factory we plan to offer exceptional service to match our outstanding quality. And the investment is something an asset to the Kouga area as Woodline has the potential to employ 210 staff and currently has 80 staff."

It will be a great advantage having two International harbours, and an International airport to service our customers around the world right on our doorstep."

With more than 25 years of shade manufacturing experience established in 1989, Woodline has gone from strength to strength to be the dominant shade supplier in Africa as well as producing parasols for a host of international customers, Watter says.

Also specifically on the subject of its huge factory at Smith Town, Watter continues, "Woodline has a great manufacturing and engineering operation and this site is something I wanted to do for my new home. Moving Woodline to its new home is exciting and rewarding."

"Transplanting Woodline's wood works plant from White River and its stainless steel, steel, aluminium and composite windows, doors, cladding and sewing and printing operations from Johannesburg to a tranquil sea side town of Jeffreys Bay is a large undertaking. Woodline brings invaluable expertise and offers employment opportunities and expert training which will benefit the local community significantly."

Apart from the factory, Watter has other properties in Jbay, including property in the vicinity of Fountains Mall - 20 590 sqm for future development for a lifestyle centre and office, plus a retail unit on offer on Da Gama Road. "We are enriching to be here and show our commitment to the community in this way and invest so much into the area," says Watter. "With

By Bev Mortimer



The huge Woodline factory at Kouga now houses commercial Marine store and offices at JBay.



Fritz in the InFood & Food Society kiosk

Photos by Bev Mortimer

vast areas of land to expand their operation and plans to provide a vegetable garden to support their staff, Woodline reinforces its dedication to the community and the fact that it is here to stay."

And for this highly successful businessman, says Watter, "I am a simple man in South Africa with only two suitcases, he says, and through sheer hard work, he built an empire. He does not only help himself, however. He believes in assisting others to rise to greater heights as well."

He continually strives to empower and uplift his

Employees of the CM group have been encouraged to show their best potential and have experienced healthy increases and promotions.

One success story is that of Obed Modisha, now factory manager at Woodline, but who used to be a petrol attendant. Walter brought him in through the ranks up to managerial level in the

wood working plant and has also engaged him in travelling with him overseas and meeting with the company's biggest overseas clients.

Another example is that of Lester, a floor sales person in the Commercial Marine Jbay branch who he bought it. Lester has now been promoted to branch manager.

About Woodline:

Woodline has been creating the finest quality parasols for 25 years and was started in 1989 on the East Rand of Johannesburg.

Woodline exports to more than 60 countries around the world.

Woodline's employment at its new factory in Smith Town, Jeffreys Bay will start with a minimum of 80 staff. Once all the productions are in full operation that number is projected to double.

Woodline's Smith Town industrial estate facilities are planning to be operational towards the end of this year or early next year.

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