Zen hosts launch of Rochdale Ambassadors and helps promote “a great place to live and work”

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Over 70 representatives from business, education and local government came together at Zen’s Rochdale offices last week to mark the start of a new scheme to help promote the town through a network of local advocates.

Rochdale Ambassadors aims to empower those who already live and work in the town to share positive messages about Rochdaleand promote the town as a place to live, work and invest. Stephen Warburton, Zen’s managing director for Channel partnerships, will be one of 17 members of a new Place Board that will meet regularly to lead the scheme.

At the launch event, a number of speakers praised Rochdale’s ongoing renaissance, singling out new business creation, improved transport links to the major regional hubs of Manchester and Leeds, and a growing appreciation of the town’s natural resources and surrounding landscape.

But there was also a recognition that Rochdale has not always been good at telling positive stories, which were too often crowded out by negative images of the town.

Speaker after speaker confirmed that there were many good stories to tell. Zen founder Richard Tang talked of growing up in the town and assuming he would have to move south to start a business in computers. His 430 employees now run the country’s largest independent data network from offices in the heart of Rochdale.

David Bottomley, chairman of Rochdale Football Club and chair of the Place Board, did move away, and 30 years later returned to an area that he said had fundamentally transformed, and now boasted clear advantages for business and the population it supports.

As confirmation of that, Councillor Richard Farnell, leader of Rochdale Borough Council, talked about the Rochdale firms making air filtration systems for Dreamliner aircraft, fire retardant materials for the London Underground, and many other innovative and world-leading products.

There were other success stories, including the transformation of the town’s further education sector. The Department for Education rates Rochdale Sixth Form College the best in the country for A-level progress – and has done for the past four years.

The Ambassador scheme will try to make sure this side of Rochdale’s story gets heard, both by Rochdale’s own residents and by those from outside the area.

Stephen Warburton said: “Zen is proud to be part of the scheme and happy to be an active Rochdale Ambassador for the town. We’ve heard today that there are a lot of good stories to tell. It will be the task of the Place Board to find new and innovative ways to get those stories to a wider audience. The launch event at Zen today was an excellent start but there is a lot of work to be done.”

Councillor Richard Farnell said: “Rochdale is a great place. We’ve got beautiful, abundant countryside, fantastic heritage assets and enviable transport links, as well as unprecedented levels of regeneration, which are transforming the borough.

“What we also have is innovative business people, who have come to Rochdale and created brilliant success stories, and they are the best people to go out and shout about all the opportunities we have here in our borough. We want to get the message out far and wide that Rochdale is the place to be and this initiative is a great step in the right direction.”

Ends

For further information, please contact Hugh Wilson, press officer, Zen Internet. Hugh.wilson@zeninternet.co.uk 01706 902000.

Notes to editors

Zen Internet is a leading independent telecommunications and internet services provider.

The company has won numerous awards including the UK IT Industry Award for Services Company. It was recently named PC Pro’s Best Broadband Provider for a record-breaking 13th time, and is a Which? Recommended Provider for Broadband.

Zen is a Sunday Times 100 Best Companies To Work For.

Zen Internet employs more than 400 staff and last year (2016) generated revenues of more than £57million.

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