



## Wetherby Whaler steps in to save Harry Ramsden's Leeds restaurant

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A fish and chip chain said today it would save the original Harry Ramsden's restaurant in Leeds with a £500,000 investment.

Harry Ramsden's announced last year that it was to close its original Guiseley branch - the first restaurant it opened in the UK - after 83 years in business.

Today, the Wetherby Whaler fish and chip group revealed it would take over the premises and return the restaurant to its "glory days".

In November, Harry Ramsden's said its flagship restaurant, which opened in Guiseley, Leeds, in 1928, was losing money and needed a considerable investment before it could become profitable again.

The branch, which led to the chain of 35 restaurants across the UK, was originally run out of a wooden "shed" before moving into its famous art nouveau-style building, complete with chandeliers, in 1931.

Now, the Wetherby Whaler group, which has four restaurants and takeaways in Yorkshire, said it would invest £500,000 on refurbishing the restaurant to become its flagship branch.

A spokeswoman for the group said the famous chandeliers would be updated with new fittings and it was hoped that the original "shed" could be preserved.

Phillip Murphy, who launched the Wetherby Whaler with his wife Janine in 1989, said: "The famous fish and chip restaurant in Guiseley is the spiritual home of fish and chips in England. It would be a national scandal if it were to close at this time of economic uncertainty.

"Our investment has saved a Yorkshire landmark and will ensure the tradition of fine fish and chips continues at this important location.

"The new Wetherby Whaler in Guiseley will be our flagship restaurant. We expect it to recapture the atmosphere and flavours of Harry Ramsden's best years.

"We are confident that with the right investment, careful attention to detail, great-tasting fish and chips and excellent value for money, we will make a lasting success of this new venture and return the restaurant to its glory days.

"Our family-owned business is built on solid foundations and this has given us the confidence to invest. It fits perfectly with our business strategy of controlled growth and accentuates our belief that Yorkshire is a great place to do business."