

Campbells reveals rapid recovery after factory blaze

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CAMPBELLS Prime Meat, the major independent supplier to hotels and restaurants, has reported a "remarkable recovery" from the fire that destroyed its West Lothian meat plant last year.

In its annual accounts published, Campbells said sales recovered to 11% of the pre-fire level within a year, and the directors observed: "Many businesses have lost more than 11% of turnover in the current difficult circumstances even without a fire."

Conditions would remain difficult through 2010 and 2011, but the business has "successfully traded through two difficult years of recession already" and the directors are therefore "very confident regarding the future in our excellent new factory".

Campbells relocated quickly, with the help of Falkirk council and the support of customers, to a former meat plant near Linlithgow, which it said is well located for the workforce and will allow room for expansion.

The directors said: "A number of staff were temporarily laid off following the fire – all who requested have been subsequently re-employed."

They added: "Our bankers the Royal Bank of Scot-

land have also been very supportive.

"Luckily, up until the fire, the company was run on a prudent basis with very little bank debt. It continues to be run on a prudent basis."

They conclude that the company has "done an amazing job in recovering from the fire."

Turnover for 2009 was down by £10 million to £42.5m, and operating profit fell from £1.34m to £549,000. There was, however, a £3.7m gain on disposal of fixed assets producing a £4.2m pre-tax profit, a rise of £3m on 2008.

Shareholders' funds doubled to £8.6m, including a £2.2m boost from the value of the new factory.

Directors' remuneration rose from £339,000 to £505,000 and the highest-paid director, assumed to be managing director Christopher Campbell, rose from £171,000 to £185,000.

The company, reformed in 1971 after the original business founded in 1923 was sold in the 1960s, supplies fresh meat, fish and delicatessen produce to some of Scotland's top Michelin-starred restaurants and venues.

It is one of Scotland's largest meat buyers, spending more than £30m a year on beef, pork and lamb from Scottish farms.