

Have the vision to make eco savings

■ Companies turn to video conferencing

■ New technology means fewer trips

■ BEN ROOTH

FIT-OUT and refurbishment company Claremont Group has seen a 'surge' in the demand for video-conferencing facilities.

Tony Whitehead, director of the Warrington-based company's audio-visual division said that integrated lighting, well-placed speakers and multiple cameras have all radically improved video-conferencing.

He said; "Early video-conferencing systems did not take off straight away - initially it was quite basic, unreliable and difficult to use therefore people weren't keen on using it for meetings, still preferring to travel to meetings for that face-to-face interaction.

"A combination of factors changed that. Impact on the environment now undoubtedly plays a part, and due to traffic, the length of time it takes to get from A to B means that people are out of the office a lot longer than they would like to be.

"Add to that the vast improvement in the technology used for video-conferencing, which now really feels like you are in the same room as your colleagues, and it is understandable why companies are looking to videoconferencing as a solution and way forward."

The Manchester office of law firm Halliwells, which moved in to its new offices at Spinningfields last this year, appointed Claremont for the complete provision of furniture at No.1 Hardman Square, which included the company's largest video-conferencing installation to date.

Ian Austin, managing partner of Halliwells, said: "We weren't convinced at first that people would take to the video-conferencing facilities but the usage has far exceeded our



» **IN THE PICTURE** Many companies are finding video conferencing to be cost effective

expectations and has already resulted in more effective use of time, a reduction in travel costs, and an improvement in the Firms' carbon footprint."

Cable manufacturer Belden appointed Claremont for the relocation of its Manchester office in serviced accommodation to Manchester International Office Centre. Claremont

was responsible for the furniture, video-conferencing and telephone systems.

Belden spokesman David Stokes said: "Prior to our move, we'd never had video-conferencing facilities before, but we've already seen a dramatic reduction in the amount of money and time we spend travelling."