

WEC *news*

GROUP *Issue One* **Summer 2014**



A striking piece of artwork created by WEC Group's m-tec division is turning heads in the Nigerian city of Uyo.

The five metre diameter globe was shipped out to West Africa after being created in Darwen. Here m-tec's Tom Elliot, left, is pictured with Martin Tyas from client Branton Knight. Full story page three.



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Expansion plans are in the pipeline at WEC Group as it looks to continue its growth across the business



The company has bought a six-acre site at the Walker Business Park in Blackburn and it has won planning permission to create a new 120,000 sq ft factory on the site.

The company will announce more details about its plans later in the year, but it is firmly focused on growth in all areas of the operation.

The latest investment comes on the back of an ambitious expansion plan that has already seen the group open two new factories in Blackburn in 2013. WEC group is also currently looking to utilise available capacity at its Sherburn Metalwork division in Leeds with new orders.

And looking further ahead its rail division is hopeful of securing work as a result of the proposed HS2 infrastructure programme.

Wayne Wild, group commercial director of WEC Group, says: "We are excited about our expansion plans at the Walker Business Park.

"The land we have bought gives us much-needed space to grow as our other sites are near capacity in size and in operation. So this really is a statement of future intent by us.

"We continue to invest in machinery and in our workforce as we look to continue our growth. We see aerospace as a sector where we can make great strides and we are actively working to ensure that happens."

We'll keep on investing in our plant & people

Managing Director Steve Hartley looks to the future



There is no secret to our growth over the past few years. It is based on continual investment in the most modern cutting-edge machinery.

We have invested in the region of £5 million in the past three years to make sure WEC remains at the forefront of technology in all its sectors and is well-placed to win new business.

We've also continued to diversify and to develop businesses across the whole spectrum of the engineering sector. Again this has been done by reinvesting profits.

Since 2011, we have opened two new factories and we have created more than 50 jobs and this has all been achieved against the background of the UK's difficult economic times.

I'm pleased to say that today the fabrication and engineering sector is feeling more buoyant. However, it is still exceptionally competitive when it comes to price.

We have recently created WEC Group's 12th and latest division. Goose Foot, based in Darwen, and its expert team is creating a striking range of street furniture.

Fabrication expertise spans the globe



A striking piece of artwork created by our m-tec division is turning heads in the Nigerian city of Uyo.

The type 316 bead blasted five metre diameter globe was shipped out to West Africa after being created by the m-tec team in Darwen.

And it now stands on a prominent roundabout in the city, which is in south-eastern Nigeria and is the capital of Akwa Ibom, a major oil-producing state.

The globe which was fabricated by m-tec is tilted to 23.5 degrees and it rotates by a hydraulic motor.

M-tec's stunning architectural metal fabrication projects can be seen in towns and cities across the UK – but this is the first piece of artwork it has delivered to Africa.

It took 19 days for the distinctive piece of artwork to reach its destination and after arriving in the capital Lagos it was shipped by road from one side of the African country to another.

The globe was created for South Yorkshire-based procurement

company Branton Knight, which has been working on the city's redevelopment and road remodelling project for five years, supplying construction and civil engineering materials. The sculpture was commissioned by the Akwa Ibom State Ministry of Works and Transport and members of the m-tec team were involved in its installation.

Tom Elliot, the divisional manager of m-tec, said: "This is our first contract for the African market and we are delighted with the finished product and the impact it is having in its new home. The globe looks absolutely stunning in its new home and has already become a major local landmark".

The globe, which was installed in March is the latest in a series of high-profile artwork which m-tec has been commissioned to create recently.

They include the distinctive Airbus sculptures which can now be seen at various BAE Systems operations across the UK and the Darwen Spitfire Memorial in WEC Group's home town.



Training academy that goes from strength to strength

WEC Group's Training Academy remains the only one of its kind in the country – and it continues to go from strength to strength.

The academy, set up in 2006 to meet the challenges of the skills shortage in engineering and fabrication, has entered this year's UK Apprenticeship National Awards.

And WEC Group had a strong story to tell to the awards judges in its submission.

Today, 10 per cent of WEC's total workforce is made up of apprentices. The majority are welding apprentices and they make up 28 per cent of the group's welding workforce.

The academy, headed by Kris Mercer, has put together a programme to train people to the high standard required by WEC Group as it continues its growth and development.

The programme consists of a five-year apprenticeship, which includes time at the training academy, three years at college on day release and work carried out on the shop floor.

Entrants work towards Level Three City and Guilds in Welding and Fabrication and their work is coded to BS EN 287-1 MAG Welding – an internationally recognised welding qualification. WEC works with training organisations and colleges including Training 2000 and Burnley College.

Each year 10 apprentices are taken on. They spend their first year in the academy under the supervision of Kris. During that time they work on a set curriculum designed by the company, which involves apprentices working on community projects.

Following this initial 12 months they are deployed to a division within WEC, such as special projects or large fabrication, working on commercial projects.

Kris says: "Their progress is monitored throughout, with mentoring on the job and three-monthly assessments to discuss not only their professional progress but any issues they may have in the workplace.

"The academy is expanding, providing training in other parts of the business including machining and technical support. The plan is to eventually double the intake to more than 20 apprentices per year."

He adds: "We have over 100 applications every year and 10 are taken on. It is a five year apprenticeships and they come out exceptionally highly skilled."

With running costs for the programme at £100,000-plus per annum, this is an investment in the future of the business and the engineering sector.

The WEC Group's apprenticeship programme's aim is to make us a better company throughout. It shows that we are clearly committed to investing in individuals, providing the training required to secure a skilled position in the engineering industry.

The success of any company is down to its employees: By investing in local skill development WEC Group is securing a sustainable competitive advantage in the long-term.

Praise for scheme

WEC Group's training academy has received praise from Prime Minister David Cameron and Business Secretary Vince Cable, both of whom have visited.

The Prime Minister praised the scheme and WEC Group's commitment to providing facilities and training, especially in difficult economic times.

We have also had numerous fact-finding visits from other manufacturing groups looking to emulate our industry-leading training programme.

The academy provides apprentices with the skills required to carve out a career in the engineering sector, to a standard which secures long term employment even in the most trying economic times.

Spreading the word

WEC Group has played a leading supporting role in this year's '100 Apprentices in 100 Days' initiative in East Lancashire. Academy head Kris Mercer and apprentices have spoken at various events and attend appropriate jobs fairs.

We support and publicise apprenticeships through our visits to and strong links with local schools.



What our apprentices say

Two of our young workers were also nominated for the awards' apprentice of the year honour.

Here's what they told the judges about WEC's Training Academy and the benefits they have received from the training course.

"I have gained vital experience in my field and I now have a vast experience in both workshop and site work.

"My apprenticeship has given me a skill nobody can take away. It has disciplined me and given me the drive to do more.

"I now want to study for more qualifications and get a degree and I'd like to be a role model for youngsters in the trade.

"I'm now helping the younger apprentices and showing them new techniques on how they can improve their work. They can relate to me as I came to WEC straight from secondary school."

Ben Whalley



"I have gained vital experience in my field and I now have a vast experience in both workshop and site work."

"I chose a welding engineer apprenticeship because of the promising future it offers when I am fully-qualified.

"To get my place on the training academy I had to go through three interviews. Some 200 people had applied for a place and I was one of eight who got through the process.

"I've proven with no background experience before my apprenticeship that anyone can give engineering a shot and work towards a bright and secure future.

"The company has made a huge impact on my life, the skills I've learnt don't only get applied at work but also at home or when out and about."

Amir Khan



"I chose a welding engineer apprenticeship because of the promising future it offers when I am fully-qualified."



Putting Sherburn in the driving seat

Plans are underway to utilise available capacity at WEC Group's Sherburn Metalwork division in West Yorkshire.

The division was launched in 2011 and the factory at Sherburn-in-Elmet, Leeds, specialises in the fabrication of bus structures.

WEC Group is now looking for general fabrication work for the plant to use the extra capacity that exists there.

Wayne Wild, group commercial director, said: "Sherburn Metalwork has been a real success story for WEC Group since its launch.

"We now see great potential for further expansion there and again we are actively working to achieve that and to seek out new business.

"We are looking to recruit an external representative

Sherburn Metalwork



who will start to look for general fabrication work for Sherburn as we continue to grow the business."

As part of the growth plan a robot welder is being transferred from Darwen to the West Yorkshire operation to boost its robotic production facility.

Wayne added: "We are looking to expand the services that Sherburn offers out to the wider fabrication industry."



RECRUITMENT DRIVE STARTS

The process of choosing the latest intake for our academy is about to get underway. If you know someone who is interested in a career in engineering and fabrication and is eager to train with the best contact Kris Mercer on 01254 773718 or email kris.mercer@wecl.co.uk

New division is a streetwise move

We are aiming to make our mark on the growing street furniture sector with the launch of a new, specialised manufacturing division.

Our new company Goose Foot designs and manufactures a range of cutting edge street furniture. It has already sealed orders with several local authorities and is looking to recruit external sales staff.

The company has developed a range of new products including seats, benches, litter bins and cycle stands



and has others, including planters and tree grates, on the drawing board.

WEC Group products are already a familiar sight on town High Streets. The company is a well-established supplier of CCTV poles to councils across the country.

Goose Foot is the 12th and latest division of the WEC Group as Steve Hartley, the managing director, and his team continue to invest and expand in the north of England.

The street furniture sector is highly competitive, but MD Steve Hartley

believes Goose Foot's innovative design, its range of products and the high quality of manufacturing is already giving it a real edge as it chases orders.

He said: "The creation of Goose Foot follows many months of detailed work and planning to develop and produce an extensive new range of street furniture.

"We have been extremely pleased by the reaction of the market to our products and to our approach to design, manufacture and customer service.

"Our aim is simple. We are working to become the market leader in the UK and we believe we have the products and the workforce to achieve that aim."

At present Goose Foot has a specialised workforce based in Darwen. Wayne Wild, group commercial director, said: "We are excited about our plans for Goose Foot.

"The company has hit the ground running and has already sealed a number of significant orders with local authorities in what is a very competitive sector.

"The new venture has been forged specifically to offer a fresh, new alternative to the street furniture options available today."



A Home Win For AFC Darwen

The group's winning links with its home town football team continue to grow and strengthen as the club looks to score success on and off the pitch.

WEC is already AFC Darwen's main sponsor. Now group commercial director Wayne Wild has joined the club as chairman.



The shelters, which offer substitutes and managers some protection from the elements, made their debuts for the club's recent home game against Oldham Boro.



And our great team of apprentices at the training academy has done its bit by creating new dug-outs which have been installed at the WEC Group Anchor Ground.

It would have cost the club in the region of £5,000 to buy the dugouts which were created by the apprentices under the supervision of the head of WEC's academy Kris Mercer.

Waterjet division proves it has the real cutting edge

A £1 million investment in, literally, cutting-edge technology in the Waterjet division has resulted in a new industry record for sealing deals.

Since its launch last August new machines have been commissioned to ensure the Waterjet Cutting division can provide a competitive service to a range of sectors.

It recently delivered a major offshore order in just six weeks, which is an industry record and Waterjet is going from strength to strength thanks to the additional technical investment it has received.

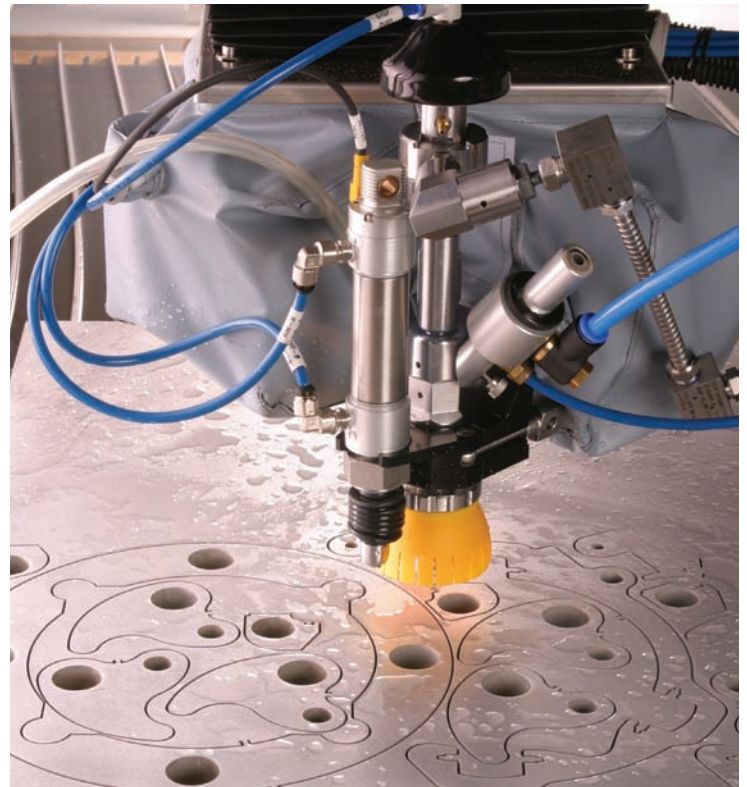
A new factory has been found to house the new equipment and more than £1 million has been invested in the division.

Steve Hartley, WEC Group managing director, said: "Our investments in market-leading, dynamic waterjet cutting technologies are really paying off.

"The equipment we have, and are adding to, means we can offer machined tolerances and quality to the UK's highest standards. It's an area where we can see strong growth.

"Our investment and our ability to deliver is being recognised by the broad range of industries we are now servicing, including offshore oil and gas, nuclear and architectural metalwork."

The division recently commissioned a second waterjet cutting machine to accommodate increasing demand – with plans for a third machine already in the pipeline.



Now CCTV division is in the picture for overseas expansion

WEC Group's CCTV division has built up more than 30 years of expertise and has, for many years, been regarded as the market leader in the European closed circuit television mounting equipment sector.

Now WEC is looking to use that expertise and reputation to exploit new markets further afield.

Following successful forays into the lucrative Middle East market WEC is looking specifically to target the Gulf states, such as Saudi Arabia, Dubai and the United Arab Emirates.

Early contract successes include the sealing of a £1 million order in the region to supply CCTV poles and towers.

Group commercial director Wayne Wild said: "We believe that there is great scope for our industry-leading products in the Middle East and further afield.

"It is something that we are now actively pursuing spearheaded by our dedicated export manager."

He added: "We now have ongoing orders to supply camera poles and brackets in the Gulf. North Africa is another area we are looking to develop."

As part of the export drive WEC CCTV has exhibited its products at major international tradeshows, including the largest security exhibition in the Middle East, which was held in Dubai.

Growth plans for 5750 Components

The 5750 Components division is also earmarked for growth as part of WEC Group's overall expansion plans.

The Merseyside-based laser cutting company has gone from strength-to-

strength since it became part of the group in 2008 and has benefited from continual investment in machinery and staff.

Now there are plans to bolster the division's sales team as it looks to win more orders.



A shining example

A stunning nine-metre mirror-polished sculpture created by WEC Group's innovative m-tec division now has pride of place in a Scottish town centre.

The Trinity Mirror stands in the newly re-developed main shopping area of Bridgegate in Irvine and is a focal point to the regeneration of the town.

The piece of art was fabricated using 12mm thick grade 316 stainless steel sheets welded to form the distinctive shape.

Ready for take off

WEC Group is in the final stages of its work to achieve important aerospace accreditation as part of its strategy to continue its growth in the sector.

AS9100 is a widely adopted and standardised quality management system for the aerospace industry.

It was released in October 1999 by the Society of Automotive Engineers and the European Association of Aerospace Industries.

Major aerospace manufacturers and suppliers worldwide require compliance and/or registration to AS9100 as a condition of doing business with them.

Getting on the right track with HS2

Calls to speed up the delivery of the HS2 high speed-rail project have been welcomed by WEC Group.

Sir David Higgins, Chief Executive of HS2 Ltd, who heads the £50 billion scheme, is advising Government ministers to speed up the delivery of the massive infrastructure project.

The timetable would currently see a high-speed route opening between London and Birmingham by 2026 with further extensions to Manchester and Leeds by 2033.

Workplace pensions: we're all in!

After months of planning and hard work WEC Group's new workplace pension scheme is up and running.

The company has successfully met its auto-enrolment deadline under the government's new pension legislation. Finance experts Chase De Vere acted as the group's consultants in the process and recommended a scheme with Scottish Widows.

All WEC Group eligible monthly paid staff – around 800 in total – were auto-enrolled from April 16 – with contributions starting to be made on May 15.



**YOUR NEWS...
...YOUR VIEWS**

This is your newsletter and we want to know your stories. Send us your big news – whether it's a birth, an engagement or a marriage, a sporting success or just something you want to shout about.

Contact Jean Dziki on 01254 773718 (ext:2226), marketing@wecl.co.uk