

## Wolverhampton engineering firm creates new jobs

New jobs have been created by a Wolverhampton engineering firm that has doubled its order book to £20 million in a year. Parkburn Precision Handling Systems, which specialises in marine engineering, brought in the Network Recruitment Partnership, also based in the city, to find design and service engineers along with skilled fitters, project managers and draughtsmen.

Parkburn, which employs 75 people, mainly sells into the offshore, oil industry and naval markets. It supplies equipment to the Royal Navy and those of the USA, Pakistan, Greece, Australia and Japan. The company markets itself as a one-stop source for all commercial, marine, offshore and naval handling system requirements, including cable and pipe handling, seismic and oceanographic equipment, drives and controls, mine-hunting and mine-sweeping technology.

Parkburn's Wolverhampton base was once Dowty Precision Handling Systems and it includes a major fabrication facility. General manager Simon Griffiths said Wolverhampton had once been largely limited to telephone cable laying equipment, but when Parkburn acquired it in 2002, new markets opened up.

He added: "There are three particular growth areas at the moment. We have a big project on for servicing deep-water well-heads; we are involved in diving bell-handling systems; and we have a lot of work on carousels for laying cable for offshore wind farms. We don't employ hundreds of people, but we do require highly skilled engineers and fitters. They are not always easy to find and that is why we turned to Network Recruitment Partnership. They have provided a number of people to help move our business forward, and the recruits have settled in well — but we still need more."

## Satellite deal

Aerospace and precision engineering firm Hampson Industries has announced new contracts worth £2.4 million for 'state of the art' tools for space satellite and military aircraft. The Los Angeles facilities of the Brierley Hill-based firm will design and manufacture very-close-tolerance tools for composite structures for the space, satellite and military aerospace markets.

Hampson chief executive Kim Ward said: "The engineering strength and manufacturing capabilities of our tooling businesses are unique assets that are continuing to support a diverse range of important programmes in both the growing space satellite, as well as commercial and military aerospace sectors. With a number of further potential orders at the tendering stage, we remain confident of securing new contracts over the coming



## Automated punch press cell

KMF (Precision Sheet Metal) has a turnover of £20 million and over 450 active customers on its books. The company has achieved its position as one of the UK's largest sub-contract manufacturers of precision sheet metal components and assemblies through a process of continuous investment, and the latest item to be unveiled at its factory in Newcastle-under-Lyme is a £750,000 CNC punch press cell, based on a Trumpf TruPunch 5000 with a working range of 3,000 x 1,500mm. This cell features twin 180-tonne sheet storage towers, SheetMaster systems for loading, unloading and scrap handling, and systems for sorting parts, either in sheet form or individually.

Managing director Gareth Higgins says: "While this cell will initially meet the require-

ments of three new customers, its versatility and unmanned-running capability will also provide us with additional capacity for potential new business when the demand arises, due to the level of automation we have specified. For instance, by using the Trumpf ToolMaster system, we can increase the number of tools available at any one time from 70 to 300 through the use of multi-tools. This alone gives us much greater flexibility in terms of what work can go on the machine at short notice.

"Our policy is always to invest in new equipment before we reach full capacity. This puts us in a better position to take on additional business and provide customers with the confidence that we can immediately meet their delivery requirements."

## Jaguar Land Rover secures short-term financial future

Jaguar Land Rover's owner Tata has secured private-sector funding for the company's short-term financial needs, and Government support for the manufacturer is not now needed, the Department of Business said last week. Tata Motors of India bought JLR from Ford last year and first approached the Government for funding last September.

The Jaguar XF, XJ and XK models are manufactured at JLR's Castle Bromwich plant in Birmingham, while the Jaguar X-type is being produced alongside the Land Rover Freelander 2 at the Halewood plant in Liverpool (until the end of 2009). Land Rover's Defender, Discovery 3, Range Rover Sport and Range Rover models are all built at the Solihull plant. JLR employs nearly 15,000 people, most of whom work in the UK, including around 3,500 engineers at two product development centres (at Whitley in Coventry and Gaydon in Warwickshire).

Business Secretary Peter Mandelson said: "The fact that the banks and commercial capital markets are meeting JLR's funding is a clear sign of confidence in the company,

its products and the automotive sector. This additional funding will allow JLR to invest in future models and successfully launch the new XJ saloon on schedule, plus updated Land Rover models later this year."

He went on: "The Government had offered bridging finance from the automotive assistance programme if necessary. We understand the Tata group will now be successful in resolving longer-term financial needs, but we are willing to help again if necessary. This is a good and encouraging outcome for JLR, its workforce and its supply chain."

News of the JLR finance deal came a short time before the Serious Fraud Office announced that it would not be starting a criminal investigation into the collapse of car maker MG Rover. The Government has chosen 11 September as the date to publish a £16 million report on the circumstances surrounding the sale of the MG Rover group. The report was compiled by independent inspectors appointed by the then Department of Trade and Industry.