

# THE INSIDER

## INTERPLAS EDITION

SEPTEMBER 2021

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## WELCOME

to this special edition of the Fibrax Group's quarterly magazine, *The Insider*, which has been produced exclusively for Interplas 2021.

Having navigated our way through the bizarre and unprecedented challenges of 2020, it's great that we can once again meet with our wider network at events such as this.

We are very much looking forward to this exciting show. Our attendance offers us the opportunity to establish new contacts within a diverse range of sectors. This exposure is invaluable and integral to our ambitious growth plans in the UK.

The Fibrax Group specialises in the design, development and manufacture of high-performance technical plastic and rubber mouldings. Our full service also includes tool design and manufacture, product testing and validation, overmoulding, assembly and project management.

We operate globally across manufacturing sites in the UK, Poland and Morocco, and our family-owned business is committed to offering a personal and professional service at all times.

Welcome continued

Our ethos, polymer solutions by design, is at the heart of our company and, whether we use a customer-owned design or a bespoke concept developed by our engineering team, we endeavour to deliver the optimum solution through part design, material selection and robust validation. Our long-standing adherence to the demanding regulations and standards set out by the automotive industry ensures we consistently deliver components of the highest quality.

Whilst our overseas manufacturing locations offer strategic advantages for global buyers, our UK facility is ideally situated to support the UK supply chain. We provide a responsive and competitive service for UK businesses seeking efficient ways to reshore the production of technically moulded components.

If you would like to know more about the ways in which Fibrax can support you and your business, please visit us at Stand FF44. We will be more than happy to discuss specific projects and offer advice and guidance. Should you wish to get in touch after the show, please contact us via [info@fibrax.co.uk](mailto:info@fibrax.co.uk).

I wish exhibitors and visitors alike all the very best and hope the show is a great success!

Best wishes,  
*Robert Winterbottom*  
*Fibrax Group Technical Sales Director*



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*Fibrax Group*  
*Technical Sales Director*

## INVESTING IN 2K INJECTION MOULDING

**Craig Jones, Tooling and Process Development Manager, announces Fibrax's latest investment**

In response to a recent new development business win, the Fibrax Group has invested in 2K moulding technology at our manufacturing facility in Morocco. 2K moulding, also known as double-injection or 2-shot moulding, is a highly advanced method of moulding components made of multiple materials, specifically the simultaneous processing of thermoplastics and thermoplastics elastomers (TPE).

A new specialist press with a rotating platen has been installed at Fibrax's MPM site. The process begins by injecting a thermoplastic into a mould. The platen then rotates before the TPE is injected into the same mould. This innovative technology will increase output whilst reducing processing and labour costs. It will also minimise the potential for waste.

This new investment will see cycle times reduce considerably, which is enabling us to offer performance mouldings of the highest quality at a competitive price-point. We look forward to supporting global manufacturers with our highly flexible and responsive service.





## SUPPORTING POST-BREXIT SUPPLY CHAINS

**Key Account Manager Mike Heath looks at the importance of flexibility and agility in post-Brexit manufacturing.**

The supply chain challenges brought about by Brexit are being felt throughout all manufacturing sectors. The Sales team at the Fibrax Group is forecasting the impact of Brexit will be felt late into 2022. To create some stability during this time, the technical injection moulding company has developed a resilient supply chain model that actively overcomes disruption and supports the immediate needs of customers operating in the UK.

Businesses have sustained delays and increased costs due to new border formalities. Earlier this year, Fibrax was approached by a large UK retailer, as it was experiencing issues when importing an existing component from a regular European supplier.

The customer manufactures an extensive range of electrical products and accessories, including lighting, switchgear, cable components, alarm control systems and electronic parts.

This was a relatively new market for Fibrax, but with the capability and capacity available at its manufacturing site in Wrexham, North Wales, it was able to meet both the needs of the project and the rapidly reducing deadline.

Fibrax provided a competitive quote that included the modification of the customer's tooling so the parts could be produced locally. This not only ensured the target deadline was met but also delivered considerable economic advantages. Additionally, reshoring the manufacturing and supply of the component to the UK reduced its carbon and ecological footprint.

By combining a collaborative approach with innovative value-engineering, Fibrax has the ability to develop, modify and validate designs, and manufacture existing components that may be delayed due to current import or transportation issues. Its supply chain model has been designed to ensure all departments are fully engaged with the project brief. By streamlining its product development and manufacturing teams, Fibrax has created an agile operating environment that ensures the optimum output is achieved at all times.

UK manufacturers are facing complex challenges as a result of Brexit and the pandemic. The team at Fibrax understands that by offering a competitive and flexible service, it can support the UK supply chain and contribute towards its immediate recovery and long-term prosperity.



## FIBRAX ACQUIRES HI-MARK AUTOMOTIVE LTD

**Managing director John O'Brien welcomes Hi-Mark Automotive Ltd to the Fibrax Group.**

I am delighted to introduce Hi-Mark Automotive Ltd to the Fibrax Group. This exciting acquisition adds a dedicated UK-based plastic injection moulding manufacturing facility to our global portfolio. Our full-service offering increases our ability to respond to customer demand and successfully navigate the post-Brexit operating environment.

The Fibrax Group comprises a polymeric injection moulding company that operates manufacturing facilities in the UK, Poland and Morocco. These locations enable us to provide localised manufacturing expertise, reduce the speed to market and deliver competitive and cost-effective solutions. As a 100% shareholder of Hi-Mark Automotive Ltd, we can offer our global client base high-performance plastic injection mouldings alongside our existing production of technically-advanced rubber, plastic and TPE mouldings.

Wrexham-based Hi-Mark has been designing and manufacturing high-quality injection moulded components for over forty years. It manufactures products for some of the largest automotive brands in the world. Like Fibrax, it has a British manufacturing heritage and operates a thriving exports division. As part of a truly global group, we aim to drive future growth by developing Hi-Mark's range of products, which includes suspension spring isolators and relative-motion spring pads, whilst creating mutually beneficial relationships with customers worldwide.

Hi-Mark will continue to operate from its existing purpose-built premises in Wrexham. Business will continue as usual and Hi-Mark will be seamlessly and meticulously integrated into Fibrax's key systems, operating practices and continuous development strategies.

This acquisition signals an exciting and optimistic time for the Fibrax Group. We look forward to supporting our customers with our full-service offering. I take this opportunity to thank our team for welcoming our colleagues at Hi-Mark and enabling a smooth transition for all.





## BEYOND BREXIT

**A post-Brexit review by Peter Katihrob, Operations Manager.**

Throughout 2020, our Brexit taskforce in Wrexham worked tirelessly to ensure we maintained our stability following the UK's withdrawal from the EU. These efforts have enabled us to identify the potential impacts to our business, overcome uncertainties and implement robust systems and processes.

Following extensive training, new technology integrations and the dedication of Aneta Jaszczak, Carole Hargreaves and Sylwia Szymanska-Gluszek, I am delighted to say all our systems and processes are working effectively and efficiently. Having attended numerous training courses and awareness workshops, we were able to keep abreast of the many changes that would directly impact our operations. Any delays experienced in the first quarter due to customs and border issues were out of our control and I am satisfied that everyone here has continued to successfully fulfil orders within the usual timescales.

As a result of this considerable effort, sales are stable and we haven't experienced any loss of business due to Brexit. Exports to our facility in Morocco are unaffected, whilst our shipments to our manufacturing site in Poland have incurred minimal change.

Enormous thanks must go to Linda Jones, our IT Manager, who has been instrumental in implementing a new IT system to manage our Exports Division. Linda's knowledge of all-things Brexit has been impressive and her invaluable input has been welcomed and very much appreciated.

## POWER TO THE PEOPLE

**Kevin Rimmer, Manufacturing Director, introduces a new EV charging infrastructure and hybrid vehicle technology at Fibrax.**

Part of my role within Fibrax involves overseeing the company's environmental management strategy, which includes implementing policies, encouraging best practices and, importantly, providing our workforce with the tools required to meet our eco targets. When we decided to update our Wrexham fleet, I set about investigating alternative fuels. After much consideration, I ruled out all-electric vehicles, as we often travel further than EV ranges allow. Instead, I specified a plug-in hybrid (PHEV), which would enable us to test this new technology and demonstrate its benefits.



By introducing hybrid technology to our fleet, we hoped to inspire others to consider using more environmentally-friendly vehicles. Of course, only by providing suitable charging points would this stand a chance of becoming a reality. We therefore installed two charging points at our Wrexham site in an effort to make electric and hybrid vehicles a more attractive proposition for all.

The charging points are part of the Pod Point network, one of the UK's leading providers of EV charging. Cars parked in any two of six parking spaces can access the charging points. As well as fleet users, any Fibrax employee can charge their own private vehicle whilst they are working onsite.

We hope this new environmentally-friendly scheme will give people across the business the confidence to invest in EV and PHEV vehicles. Additional charging points will be installed as demand grows.

## NEW APPOINTMENTS



**Teresa Mayer,**  
UK Finance Director

The Fibrax Group is pleased to announce the appointment of Teresa Mayer as UK Finance Director and has welcomed her to the boards of directors at Fibrax Limited

and Hi-Mark Automotive Ltd. Teresa joined Fibrax in 2018 as the Management Accountant for the UK operations. She now replaces Phil Crawford who will remain with Fibrax as Company Secretary.

Prior to joining Fibrax, Teresa spent 15 years working for a family-owned business in the frozen food storage and distribution industry. As the company's Financial Controller, she was responsible for overseeing all financial aspects of the business. She holds a degree in Accounting for Business and the CIMA advanced diploma in Management Accounting.

As Finance Director for Fibrax, Teresa is responsible for the cash management of several currencies to optimise market fluctuations; the monitoring of budgets and forecasts; financial modelling and analyses; and legislation compliance. She also contributes towards defining the Group's UK financial strategy and oversees the HR function of the business.

Commenting on her new appointment, Teresa said: "I am delighted to be given the opportunity to progress my career into the role of UK Finance Director here at Fibrax. Our ambition within the Finance Team is to maximise every financial opportunity by driving continuous improvements throughout the business to gain the greatest possible benefit from every investment made. We are focused on data analysis to identify key improvement opportunities. We carry out comprehensive cost benefit analysis on all potential capital investment to ensure it meets with our core business growth strategy in a competitive way. We want to ensure we create sustainable financing as we look towards the key UK ambition of net zero carbon emissions by 2050." Group Managing Director, John O'Brien, commented:

"Teresa has been a huge asset to the development and growth of our UK business. I am pleased to welcome her to the boards of directors at both Fibrax Limited and the newly

acquired Hi-Mark Automotive Ltd. She will be instrumental in supporting our ambitious growth strategy and I wish her all the very best in her new role."

From its manufacturing site in Wrexham, North Wales, Fibrax has implemented an exciting programme of accelerated growth, which will see it enter new markets in the coming year whilst continuing to support the tightly regulated automotive sector.



**Lily Vernon,**  
Human Resource  
Manager

The Fibrax Group has appointed Lily Vernon as its HR Manager for its UK operations. Lily will be responsible for

the recruitment and onboarding of new talent; providing coaching support for managers on all people-related issues in line with legislation; designing and delivering training on HR processes across the business; promoting employee engagement and retention; and maintaining policies, best practices and the Covid-19 people management strategy.

Lily brings with her a wealth of recruitment and HR expertise. She has worked as a HR professional for over eight years and holds the CIPD Level 7 qualification. She gained considerable experience working in the manufacturing industry and with both blue-chip and privately-owned companies. Lily has also given much of her time to a variety of volunteering and mentoring projects across Cheshire and Merseyside.

At Fibrax, Lily's primary aim is to ensure people are seen, heard and supported. She is passionate about creating a motivated workforce by ensuring roles are optimised and employees feel valued. Commenting on her vision for her role, Lily said:

"People are incredibly important to the success of any company. Ensuring employees feel respected and supported is key to maintaining a proactive and collaborative working environment. Attracting the right talent is part of my role but I am equally focused on nurturing the development and advancement of our existing workforce.

*New Appointments continued*

“We want our people to approach their roles proactively and adopt a strong sense of accountability. To do this, they must feel safe, supported and appreciated. I am committed to meeting with and understanding the needs of our people to ensure we collectively continue to improve and innovate. To safeguard the psychological wellbeing of our people, I will be operating an open-door policy, which I hope will be welcomed by all.”

Fibrax shares excellent working relationships with local universities and colleges. Lily is keen to leverage these relationships, not only by offering work placements and job opportunities, but by delivering a structured people development programme. She said:

“The culture at Fibrax is collaborative and innovative. There is a tremendous team spirit here, which I’m eager to celebrate and promote. In doing so, I hope to attract high quality candidates to further our growth in new markets.”

Commenting on Lily’s appointment, John O’Brien, Managing Director for the Fibrax Group said:

“I am delighted to welcome Lily to the UK operations of the Fibrax Group, which includes the recently acquired Hi-Mark Automotive Ltd. Lily brings with her the experience and drive to maintain an agile, people-focused operating environment in which our employees can maximise performance and advance their careers. I’m confident Lily will play an integral role in our ongoing success.”

## OVERMOULDING MOVES UP A GEAR AT MPM

**Boubker Laafou, MPM General Manager, outlines how localised manufacturing in Morocco is adding value and increasing speed to market.**



The production of over-moulded assemblies of main harness bulkhead grommets has commenced at MPM, our manufacturing facility in Morocco. The project is part of a platform used for all-electric, plug-in hybrid and mild hybrid vehicles.

Adam Chmielarz has been leading the technical development of the project. He has project managed the design and development of the component, consulted with our Materials team to identify the most practical solution and carried out all pre-production validation at our UK site in Wrexham, North Wales.

Overmoulding offers several functionality benefits, including improved structural strength, better sealing capabilities and recyclability. It was chosen for this project as it offers the necessary premium performance for up-market vehicle platforms. The manufacturing process of four components will include the use of a robotic arm to assist with the loading of the polypropylene substrate plates, which will be overmoulded with TPE-S.

The harnesses are being manufactured in Morocco, as MPM is best placed within the Fibrax Group to deliver the goods to our local supply chain partners. Our location enables us to fulfil orders quickly and efficiently, which adds significant value to the project and strengthens our overall relationships with our key customers. MPM will be responsible for fulfilling orders for 160,000 vehicles per annum.

# HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

Meet your contacts



**JOHN O'BRIEN**  
Group Managing Director



**ROBERT WINTERBOTTOM**  
Group Technical Sales  
Director



**KEVIN RIMMER**  
Group Manufacturing  
Director



**TERESA MAYER**  
UK Finance Director



**LOUISA JONES**  
Sales Manager



**MICHAEL HEATH**  
Key Account Manager



**GLENN GRIFFITHS**  
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