



Driving change: the CPE team all trained in business improvement.



Nuclear ready: a flanged closure in SA508 steel for a nuclear assembly.

CPE secures its future

CPE Pressure Vessels has won new work in nuclear, and secured new owners and investment after transforming the business with Fit For Nuclear.

CPE produces bespoke pressure vessels, pipework and pressure systems in stainless steels, carbon steels and alloy materials for a range of demanding industries.

The Tamworth-based company has a long history as a family-owned business, but fourth-generation managing director Steve Newall has now secured new owners and investment to drive the business forward – and he says that the firm's Fit For Nuclear approval was a key attraction for Global Energy Group.

CPE began its F4N journey in 2013, after learning about the programme at a meeting of the Pressure Vessel Manufacturers Forum. "As a manufacturer of high quality pressure vessels for the oil and gas industry, we realised that we needed to find a new market for our products, and our experience of working with difficult specifications and certification meant that the nuclear sector was an obvious area to grow into," Newall recalls. "We were excited by the scale of the proposed new build programme, and it was clear that there could be extensive opportunities in the nuclear sector."

The firm had already produced a few small orders for the nuclear industry, so Newall assumed that being granted F4N would just be a formality. "We were very wrong!" he says. "The nuclear journey triggered the most significant changes in the company's 70-year history.

"When we first completed the F4N

evaluation, we were surprised by the results. We thought we were a great company, with great products and great quality. We had a fantastic reputation. However, the results enabled us to see our business from a new perspective and made us look at areas such as vision, values and strategy."

Newall's team created a vision for the business, and a strategy for how to get there. That involved changing peoples' roles, changing the culture and setting targets. Everyone in the 28-strong business, from trainee welders to the MD, took an apprenticeship in business improvement to ensure that all had the tools to drive change.

"We now have 5S systems, Kaizen boards and 8D projects everywhere – our whole team have embraced the lean culture and see the benefits of the improvements," Newall says. "The end result is that we have improved quality, safety, service and efficiency. We have reduced rework, returns and non-conformities, and therefore reduced cost. We are a much better company, a better employer, a better supplier and a more sustainable business."

Since being granted F4N in 2015, CPE has won several substantial projects in the nuclear industry, with the sector now contributing up to 30 per cent of total turnover. The programme has brought significant improvements in culture and efficiency, and the F4N badge has also

helped the firm in other markets. "Oil and gas clients feel assured that a F4N company will easily be able to handle their certification requirements," Newall notes.

But for CPE to achieve its strategic goals, it needed long-term investment. Newall found a white knight in Global Energy Group, which completed its acquisition of CPE in early 2018.

"Our new owners were encouraged by our involvement in F4N but, more importantly, were impressed by the management systems and culture which we had established as a result of our participation in F4N," says Newall. "They saw us as having all the necessary building blocks for growth."

Inverness-based Global provides manufacture, construction and maintenance services to highly-regulated energy and infrastructure, and believes that CPE's capabilities will complement the other companies in their portfolio as they strive to become world leaders in their field.

The acquisition will allow CPE to continue its growth journey and develop within the group's established welding operations. "The opportunity to grow within their wider platform will allow us to continue to develop into the leading provider and manufacturer of pressure vessels in the UK," says Newall.

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