

WEC news

GROUP

Issue Three

Winter 2015



Tom scoops apprentice of the year award

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BREAKING NEWS...

We're launching our brand new division, WEC Powder Coating.

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Message from the board



Steve Hartley, managing director

2014 was one of the most challenging years to date for the WEC Group as we've been faced with increasingly tough market conditions and a competition that's fiercer than ever. Nonetheless, we are proud to have managed to create an extra 25 jobs locally.

We've come a long way in the past 10 years - our latest head count reveals the WEC Group now has more than 450 staff in its ranks, which means we've created over 300 new jobs since 2005! Those of you who have been with us since the early days will know it's been a bumpy ride and we would like to thank and congratulate all our staff for helping us reach this important milestone!

To keep our edge, we've carried on reinvesting all our profits throughout 2014 to purchase state-of-the-art machinery, such as three new CNC machines for WEC Machining, a new waterjet machine for WECJet and two new press brakes for our laser division.

We have started 2015 with a bang having just taken delivery of a new fully automated Trumpf Fibre laser and a third, larger waterjet cutting machine is due to be commissioned in March. Our brand new powder coating division will be up and running in February at our Riverside plant, with a further eight jobs in the pipeline as a result.

With an additional 20 new vacancies to fill for our next phase of expansion, we're looking forward to the year ahead and the new challenges it will bring!

WEC Waterjet keeps going from strength to strength

To cater for an ever increasing demand, WEC Waterjet has just invested a further £500,000 in a third waterjet machine to be commissioned at the end of March.

With a 7.3m x 2m bed, this new machine is a larger version of our existing kit with the capability to cut up to 200mm thickness for any material. It can also cut a 3mm Ø hole in 100mm thick material. The division is now stocking full range of S355 J2 materials.

We are also increasing our manufacturing floorspace by an extra 10,000 square feet as part of the expansion which should hopefully lead to the creation of another five to six jobs in 2015.

Our investments in the latest waterjet technology has enabled us to win large offshore contracts that have benefited other divisions across the group. We are also currently tendering for aerospace contracts thanks to our recent AS 9100/2008 accreditation.



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We're expanding further!

Introducing WEC Powder Coating, the brand new division of WEC Group offering subcontract powder coating services nationwide.

WEC Powder Coating has been launched as a way of furthering our ambitions of becoming a true one-stop-shop. The £500,000 investment in the latest technology now allows us to offer a high-end powder coating service to our customer list across a wide range of industries including rail, automotive, nuclear and aerospace to name but a few.

Based at the group's headquarters in Darwen, the new powder coating line will also enable us to pursue new business opportunities on a subcontract basis.

We selected Swiss Manufacturer Gema as the supplier of our new powder coating system which comes equipped with automatic reciprocators, a 90% recovery system and a five stage in-line pre-treatment plant.

Over the past few years, we have already streamlined our manufacturing services by adding our laser division, WEC Waterjet and large machining. We also recently bought a six acre site at the Walker Business Park in Blackburn, adding much needed production space for our further expansion.

Our Group Commercial Director Wayne Wild, said: "The new powder coating division allows us to do everything under one roof, improving lead times and reducing transport costs. It also puts us in a strong position to establish additional partnerships with First Tiers and OEMs.

"We continue to invest in our workforce as we look to continue our growth - The new division could potentially create 25 new jobs."



Help Us Spread the Word

Please spread the word – If you know anyone who may be able to take advantage of our new in house powder coating services please contact the division on:
powdercoating@wecl.co.uk

Refer a Friend Scheme success!

WEC Group has launched its “Refer a Friend” scheme to reward workers who successfully recommend someone they know to fill a vacancy.



How does it work?

Once the friend you introduced to WEC Group celebrates three months of employment with the company, you will receive a £100 bonus. When your friend has been employed for 12 months you will then receive a further £200 bonus.

A number of employees who have referred friends to the company have received their three months bonus already. Ben Whalley, a Welder who recently completed his five year apprenticeship at WEC Training School, referred Beckie Livesey as Marketing Assistant in September 2014.

“It means I can get my friends into a good company.”

He said: “The scheme is really good because it means I can get my friends into a good company. I never really put much thought into it but as soon as Beckie said she was looking for a new marketing

job I knew the position would be great for her. I’m glad she managed to get the job and I’m also happy because I get the bonus!”

Beckie has settled in her role well, she said: “I think the Refer a Friend scheme is great. It not only has the bonus incentive for employees, but it also gives their friends a chance to be a part of the company. If it wasn’t for Ben I wouldn’t have known about the job.

“I’m really happy to have joined the company and to be a part of the marketing team, and it also means that Ben can now buy me a few rounds with his extra cash!”

“If it wasn’t for Ben I wouldn’t have known about the job”



Marketing Assistant, Beckie Livesey and Welder, Ben Whalley

Other successful referrals include Ben Edwards in Laser, referred by Sean Procter. Sean was made aware of the scheme when he received a call from HR to see if he knew anyone who would be good for a Press Brake operator role.

He knew Ben Edwards would be great for the job and as it turned out he was actually offered a Project Engineer position in Laser!

Do you know someone suited to a position at WEC?

If you would like to find out more about the reward schemes, please contact Rebecca Hickey in HR on rebecca.hickey@wecl.co.uk

EBL proves a winner

Our exciting and innovative new Employee Benefit Loan Scheme is proving a success since its launch towards the end of last year.



In the last issue of WEC Group News we revealed how we had come together with the Jubilee Tower Credit Union to give you an alternative way to borrow money.

It's the first scheme of its kind in the UK – a chance to switch current high interest loans and cut your debt. And we're delighted to say you've seized the opportunity.

Since its launch at the end of October, 35 loans have been granted under the scheme – with just over £45,000 of low cost borrowing handed over to members of the WEC Group staff.

We've created a framework for borrowing in a plain and easy way to understand. It allows people to apply for a loan simply and quickly – and the decision process is both fair and impartial.

The EBL scheme also encourages a responsible payback method and repayment period with no rollover borrowing. The result is **RESPONSIBLE BORROWING** and **AFFORDABLE REPAYMENTS** – helping you to get ahead.



EBL

The scheme is the brainchild of group commercial director Wayne Wild, who is delighted with the positive response so far.

He said: "We're really encouraged by the response to the launch of the EBL scheme.

We set out to create a scheme that would have real benefits for WEC workers and that certainly seems to be the case."



From the left: Wayne Wild, Nathan Cross, who successfully applied for a loan and Janice Parker

Janice Parker, chairman of the board of directors at the Jubilee Tower Credit Union, is also delighted with the response from WEC workers.

She said: "We've had some really positive feedback from people who have gone through the application process, which is very encouraging."

The WEC EBL scheme also rewards workers who have longer service – the more service you have, the more you can borrow.

Your affordable loan is only a few clicks away!
For more information and to apply just visit:
www.employeebenefitloans.co.uk

WEC Apprentice of the Year Awards 2014



Our Annual Apprentice of the Year Awards took place at the Whitehall Hotel, Darwen. Guests included Darwen MP Jake Berry, the Mayor and Mayoress of Blackburn with Darwen Council and the Mayor of Darwen.

The evening recognised the success of our students who attend the WEC Welding & Engineering Training Academy. We presented our best apprentices with awards based on their attendance, commitment and welding excellence, and also rewarded those who have successfully completed the five year course.

The standard of work from the WEC Training Academy apprentices was fantastic this year, and it was difficult for the judging panel to make a final decision. This year's "Apprentice of the Year" Award went to Thomas Woodburn. In second place was Paul McDonald, 28, and in third place was James Ennis who joined us from Darwen Moorland. Each apprentice received a trophy made by our apprentices and a WEC certificate of completion.

Ryan Hindle was the winner of the "Commitment Award" due to his consistently high level of work. Other awards on the evening included "Welding Excellence" which was won by Philip Hosey and the "Outstanding Academic Achievement" award which was won by Chris Taylor.

Fourteen percent of our total workforce is now made up of apprentices who have trained/are training at the academy, keeping employment local and highlighting the success of the programme which was set up eight years ago.

Darwen MP Jake Berry, who regularly visits the academy, said: "I enjoy seeing the work of the apprentices and if I was interviewing two candidates, one had been to university and one had been an apprentice who had worked at a business for five years, I would choose the apprentice every single time."

WINNER 2014

Joining us from St Bede's High School at the age of 16, Thomas Woodburn has adapted excellently to working in an engineering environment. He has a natural ability to welding and learned new skills easily. He shows a methodical approach to any task given and always produces an excellent standard of work. This combined with his excellent work ethic surely makes Thomas Woodburn 'Apprentice of the Year'.



Top 100 Employer

WEC Group enjoyed a year of great achievements in 2014 and being recognised as one of the UK's Top 100 apprenticeship employers was just one of them.

It was announced at the National Apprenticeship Awards which took place during The Skills Show in Birmingham in November. We also won the regional award for Large Employer of the Year and finished in the top three in the National Large Employer of the Year category. We were competing with powerhouses worth billions of pounds that have more than 10,000 employees, meaning it is a fantastic achievement.

The Top 100 List, compiled annually by the National Apprenticeship Service in partnership with City & Guilds, recognises excellence in businesses that employ apprentices. It showcases the breadth of employers who now offer apprenticeships, and we are proud that our organisation is on such a prestigious list.

Apprentices are hugely important to our organisation and we are delighted that everyone's hard work and dedication has been recognised.



Our Managing Director and founder of the Training Academy Steve Hartley, said: "The recognition we have received at the National Apprenticeship Awards is particularly down to the hard work of Kris Mercer, who heads up our training academy, and all the staff who contribute to making it a success year after year."



Kris Mercer, right, is pictured here at the awards evening receiving a trophy from Steve Fogg, MD Shared Services at category sponsor BAE Systems

"We are immensely proud of our young people who themselves put in a lot of hard work to complete their training and education."

We launched the training academy when we realised we could not grow as quickly as we wanted to because we could not find welders skilled to the level required.

"14% of our workforce are apprentices"

Kris Mercer, our Welding and Engineering Instructor, added: "This recognition is something we are very proud of. Today, 14 percent of our workforce are apprentices and our turnover has nearly trebled since the Apprenticeship programme began."

Current Projects: Our new intake of apprentices are working on a number of exciting projects, including a weather vane for a local church and a sculpture inspired by the piece 'a man and his dog' painted by the famed North West artist LS Lowry.

m-tec Spires hit the heights in South Wales

The Abertillery Gateway feature represents the historic locations of former colliery sites from the surrounding area. m-tec manufactured the Super Satin finished stainless steel spires, which are 8mm thick with a diameter of 450mm.

The six spires were fabricated in two sections and welded together to create the height ranging from 14 to 17 metres tall. The spires are made from grade 316 stainless steel and polished to a satin finish.

The overall project symbolises the history of the mining community and now forms part of the landscape to remind the public of the Welsh mines and the mining community.

A huge well done goes to the all the team who have been a part of this stunning piece of work, the project is a real accomplishment.



The Abertillery Gateway Spires, South Wales

Goose Foot is the word on the street



Central Gateway Project, Fishergate, Preston

We would also like to congratulate all those involved with the Fishergate regeneration project which was a great success and we are now adding the new benches to our range of street furniture.

Goose Foot has played a key role in the regeneration of Preston city centre as it continues to make a real name for itself in the industry.

The division was selected by Lancashire County Council and urban architects PlanitIE to design and manufacture the stylish seats which can now be seen throughout the Lancashire city's Fishergate area. The contract was part of the Central Gateway project to improve the main approaches to the city centre and its commercial heart.

Current Projects: Goose Foot is currently working on a number of interesting projects, including four bespoke seats for Colwyn Bay and many more.

MP Jake's hair-raising charity efforts pays dividends

Rossendale and Darwen MP Jake Berry's hair-raising effort in support of the Movember cause has received a £1,000 cash boost from us. We handed over the money to the MP when he paid a Christmas visit to our Darwen offices.

The MP's moustache, grown in support of the month-long campaign to raise and help men's health programmes, attracted the attention of the Prime Minister.

The WEC Group's boost means the MP is more than two thirds of the way towards his £2,000 fundraising target. As active supporters of his campaigns, the group also donated £500 to the cause last year.

Managing Director Steve Hartley said: "We think it's fantastic that a local MP is raising money for a cause that affects so many people's lives - Supporting Jake Berry in Movember is very important to us and we're extremely proud to contribute towards the fundraising."

Now clean-shaven, MP Jake said he was extremely grateful for the support from WEC. He said: "I am once again overwhelmed by WEC's very kind donation to my Movember fundraising – it's fantastic that such an important Darwen business has really got behind Movember."



WEC Group, MD Steve Hartley and Darwen MP, Jake Berry



From the left: Wayne Wild, Chuka Umunna and Will Straw

'Britain needs more WECs'

Labour's shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna was shown the importance of engineering to Britain as he hit the election campaign trail with a tour of our Darwen factory.

Mr Umunna was accompanied by a BBC television news crew and ended up on that evening's North West Tonight main bulletin.

He said: "A business like WEC Group illustrates what we are trying to achieve more of. It has grown through sustainable long-term investment, has a good business model, treats its workers well and therefore has good levels of productivity. The problem is, we as a country don't have enough companies like the WEC Group."

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or a marriage, a sporting success or just something you want to shout about. Email stories to newsletter@wecl.co.uk

Joe's a real lifesaver!

WEC worker Joe Harrison's quick thinking helped save the life of a teenager who fell into a canal in Blackburn.

Joe, 26, a maintenance worker at our Darwen factory, pulled the youngster from the water near the Aqueduct pub site in Ewood after he was flagged down by an elderly woman.

She'd seen the young man face down in the canal whilst walking her dog. Joe raced to the scene and managed to haul the man from the water.

Joe said: "All of a sudden I saw parked cars and a woman in the road right in front of me. I stopped to ask what had happened and she told me there was a man in the canal face down.



"I pulled over and saw him. I grabbed him and tried to lift him out from the side, but couldn't so I had to get in the water to get him out. He must have been about 17 or 18 years of age and he was blue with the cold.

"I checked he was breathing, then I thought I couldn't wait for an ambulance to arrive so I got him into the car and took him to hospital.

"I've had a bit of ribbing at work, people asking me where my cape is! I'm just glad it all ended well."

Mick's pub strip is the Full Monty!

WEC Group's Mick Brown did the Full Monty in a packed pub – raising the eyebrows of the audience and more than £300 for a worthy cause.



Ready for action: Mick Brown, far left, with the Full Monty crew

Brave Mick, 51, from Engineering, joined his mates and two nephews for the charity strip at the Victoria pub in Radcliffe.

The five-strong troupe attracted a large audience and the proceeds from the evening went to the local charity Ethan's Gift, which provides children with disabilities and health conditions with equipment, services or experiences to enhance or help with their special needs.

Mick said: "We raised more than £300 on the night, not bad just for getting your kit off.

"I only got roped in a couple of weeks beforehand, when they couldn't get any young un's to do it, so I did my bit for the older ladies in the audience.

"It was all for a great cause, the charity spends all the money that it collects helping disabled children lead better lives."

For more details about the charity visit
www.ethansgift.com

Paul's peak performance!

Paul Thompson bravely walked and completed the Three Peaks in Yorkshire for the Alzheimer's Society in memory of Peter Wilkinson.

Paul, who works in Engineering, managed to raise a fantastic £415.00, exceeding his personal target of £300. Paul completed the challenge with a walking group who in total raised £2,000 for their chosen charities.

Congratulations to Paul and the group for taking part in the tough challenge for a cause that affects so many people's lives.



Our staff are warming up this winter to raise money for local charities

Our marketing assistant Elouise Pemberton and CAD Programmer Sean Procter are braving the cold weather every night in preparation for the Winter Warmer 10k race in February.

The Blackburn run is a scenic course, starting and finishing on the athletics track at Witton Park and taking in the stunning scenery over Pleasington.

Sean is fundraising for the Rosemere Cancer Foundation, He said: "I'm raising money for Rosemere Cancer Foundation as one of my life-long friends was treated there. Any donations would be greatly appreciated as what they do is fantastic."

As a keen runner, Sean is hoping to beat his time from last year and take part in a number of 10K events and marathons throughout the year.

Raising money for a different charity, Elouise is racing in aid of "Help The Homeless - East Lancashire". They rely heavily on fundraising and volunteers to be able to provide essentials for those in need.

Elouise said: "Winter is the hardest time for people who have to sleep rough, and I wanted to raise money for foil blankets and clothes to help them keep warm."



CAD Programmer, Sean Procter



Left: Marketing Assistant, Elouise Pemberton

If you are interested in taking part or would like to donate, please contact Elouise.Pemberton@wecl.co.uk or Sean.Procter@wecl.co.uk for more information.

GETTING TO KNOW...

**WEC Group
Accounts Director
MOIRA HARTLEY**



Moira Hartley, Accounts Director

When you were a child what did you want to be when you grew up?
I always wanted to join the air force but my mum wouldn't allow it.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I like spending time with family and friends and I am also learning to play the piano which I enjoy.

Who is your favourite singer?

Robbie Williams, he is such an entertainer.

What is your favourite film?

Love Story, it's a film that has always stuck in my memory.

What makes you smile?

My dog Lucy, she is an eleven year old Doberman and she is so faithful.

What's your favourite holiday getaway?

Dubai, we have been several times.

Who is the person you admire the most?

The Queen, she is an example to people who put their whole life into a job.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

To always work for the things you want, no one gives you anything.

If you could have a superpower what would it be?

To be able to transport myself to a destination without actually having to travel. I must be the world's worst passenger.

If you could meet someone living or dead, who would it be?

I'm a massive Formula 1 fan so for me it has to be Lewis Hamilton.

What's your favourite food?

Italian food without a doubt.

What's the craziest thing you've ever done?

As a challenge and after one drink too many a friend and I once stripped off and ran naked along a beach. I still can't believe we actually did it.

What would you say is your greatest achievement to date?

When we started WEC Group I had zero knowledge of any accountancy or office procedures so setting up and running the accounts department for 30 years is something that I'm quite proud of.

What's the highlight of your time at WEC Group?

There isn't one particular thing, I think just being involved from the beginning in helping the company to reach success. It's been a lot of hard work but I can honestly say I really have enjoyed my job.

CCTV in Dubai

WEC CCTV recently exhibited at Intersec 2015 in Dubai.



It was a successful weekend bringing many promising enquiries for CCTV export - the future is looking bright.

Helping the homeless - WEC charity Golf Day 2015

- WEC Group's annual Golf Day will this year raise funds for local charity Nightsafe - a great local cause helping homeless youngsters in Blackburn and Darwen.

- For more details of what Nightsafe does and how you can help support its work visit:

- www.blackburn-nightsafe.org.uk

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