

UK manufacturing continues to grow



From left: Cllr Neil Foster, Durham County Council Economic Development, Pamela Petty, MD at EBAC, Darren Race, Durham Oktoberfest.

Manufacturing as an industry sector is continuing to show welcome signs of growth, according to reports in the national media. Survey compilers Markit published results in early November, which showed that manufacturing notched up its seventh straight month of improvement; manufacturing output is growing at a quarterly rate of around 1-1.5%. Making a 'solid start' to the last quarter of 2013, the manufacturing sector was helped by a rapid rise in export orders and provided a major boost to the UK economy in October, the survey revealed.

Manufacturing is often considered to be the 'metal bashing' side of engineering, but the sector is diverse and far more than the likes of automotive and aerospace. Manufacturing includes food and drink, packaging and print, ceramics, pharmaceuticals, textiles, clothing, footwear, electronics and electrics, timber, furniture and other wood products, processing of raw materials,

oil, chemicals etc. No surprise then to read the comments of senior economist at Markit, Rob Dobson: "The UK is no longer being left behind in the chase to benefit from improving global markets. A strengthening domestic market, riding on the crest of a wave from recent positive economic news, also remains a prime driver of the recovery. This should help UK manufacturing remain one of the brighter growth spots in the world manufacturing economy, as highlighted by its position at the top of the global PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) rankings throughout the third quarter."

As a supplier to manufacturing and indeed every other sector, productivity improvement specialist Scott-Grant Ltd has also seen evidence of this upturn in the sector. Managing Director Richard Taylor observed, "Upwards of 50% of our business comes from engineering and manufacturing organisations and we have seen during this year an upsurge of activity

in that sector. For example in our training business our volumes have increased by 20% and within that, there has been a 15% rise from the manufacturing sector. To illustrate the diversity of the sector, we have helped businesses making shower cubicles, coffins, bread and cakes, ceramics, gas boilers, car seats, building products, books, advanced medical machines and military hats!"

Scott-Grant was keen to be active and support the sector on a regional basis and was a sponsor and exhibitor at the recent annual Durham Oktoberfest in the North East of England. Now in its sixth year, the Durham Oktoberfest has gained momentum year on year as the region's premier engineering and manufacturing show. Over 120 companies exhibited at the event and visitors on the day totalled almost 1,500.

David Noble, Scott-Grant's

Operations Manager in the North East was delighted at the response to the company's presence at the Newton Aycliffe event. "We received a number of good enquiries on the day which have led to some interesting proposals. Scott-Grant has been well known to companies in the North East and over the years has helped many improve their productivity either by supplying people on a project or contract basis or via delegates on our training courses." David was supported on the Scott-Grant stand by fellow Operations Manager Mark Cooper and John Brennan, Operations Director.

The show's co-founder and organiser Darren Race, is also chairman of both South Durham Business Network and South Durham Engineering and Manufacturing Forum. He commented: "There has been a huge buzz at this year's event, which has not just been about size, but about quality and promoting the excellent work that is done in both sectors. As a celebration of all things good in the engineering and manufacturing industries in the North East, I think we can say it has been a huge success."

