

23 March 2009

Turkish Delight Builds Exports From Leeds



A £200,000-plus export order for a hotel project in Turkey has crowned a fifth successive year of growth for an innovative Leeds-based construction components firm.

The masonry support and heavy duty cast in channel systems from Cross Green based ACS Stainless Steel Fixings are destined for Ankara and follow other prestige orders for the on-going refurbishment of Selfridges London store and Broad Gate, the former Alders store on the Headrow, Leeds, which has been redeveloped by Highcross. Major projects for Leicester Tigers Rugby Union ground and Skipton Building Society's head office, are also contributing to sales growth.

A sea change in operations three years ago cut stocks to a minimum and moved towards 'Just In Time' production, a strategy that greatly improved cash flow. Shrewd financial management also means the company remains debt-free and poised for further capital investment and sustained growth.

ACS has grown strongly in recent years and continues to buck the downturn in the UK construction industry. "We work closely with Sheffield University's Department of Engineering, where product tests for companies including British Airways and Rolls Royce are also carried out," says managing director David Flannery. "This official stamp of approval aids credibility in the market place when ACS is pitching for prestigious projects to large architects and engineering practices. The University has drastically reduced the time lag required to bring new products to the market, which has had a positive impact on our growth plans."

The company now employs a skilled workforce committed to innovative and technically advanced construction solutions. "We have a very active specification and

technical department who are able to offer value engineered solutions to our clients, whilst our skilled engineers repair and refurbish production machinery to as “good as new” and often manufacture tailor-made equipment to ACS’ requirements, saving substantially on capital expenditure.”

But David Flannery attributes much of the continued success to sustained investment in product research and development and advanced IT software packages designed in-house. Added to lean manufacturing operations these advances have created an order completion and delivery time measured in days, and are the envy of an industry more accustomed to working in weeks. A constantly updated website has also helped to gain orders, including the Turkish project.

Sales offices in Glasgow and Dartford help to cover the UK and the export market has been exploited as the home construction sector has slowed down. Recent overseas sales destinations have included Dubai and northern Italy, as part of a delegation of manufacturing companies taking part in “Leeds Week in Milan,” organised by Marketing Leeds.

Cllr Andrew Carter, leader of Leeds City Council, said: “Continued growth in today’s climate is a remarkable achievement, especially for a company whose main markets are construction related. Developing new export markets is crucial to the long-term future of Leeds manufacturing companies and their success in this area is a tribute to the innovation and enterprise of the whole team at ACS Stainless.”

Samples and a newly translated brochure have been warmly received in Italy and Australia and ACS has also supplied products to UK-funded building projects in sunny Barbados.

Nearer home, Ireland has proven a strong export market and, as UK speculative building has slowed, ACS has concentrated on working with architects, engineers and contractors involved in PFI and public contracts. “We made a conscious decision to move on from our basic wall tie ranges into the higher end of the structural market sector, but to do this successfully you must have the necessary infrastructure in place,” says David Flannery.

“We’re by no means the cheapest in the market, but consistently deliver value for money, on time, while our project management systems that have been developed in house, help to manage the information flow between contractors, sub-contractors and suppliers.”

Ends

Photography: David Flannery (right) and Iain Taylor, asset manager for developers Highcross at the Broad Gate development on the Headrow, Leeds. Flannery’s ACS Stainless company has supplied steel fixings for the development.

Website: www.acsstainless.co.uk

Notes to editors:

The origins of ACS Stainless began in 1983 when Leeds-born civil engineer Michael Flannery launched the construction accessories merchanting operation.

A major step forward came with the acquisition of a small Huddersfield-based wall tie manufacturer. Armed with an Economics Degree from Newcastle University and following a spell with a major bank, David Flannery joined this outpost as delivery driver and subsequently office sales and purchasing manager.

Five years ago, he recruited an experienced sales director and took the major decision to build the dedicated R&D and IT teams that lie at the heart of the company's current successful trading operations. A new and highly experienced operations director arrived three years ago to complete the picture and the substantial team-building investment was almost immediately repaid with a £350,000 order for the Birmingham Bull Ring rebuild project.

The constantly expanding ACS product range still includes wall ties, but also comprises windposts and sophisticated masonry support systems, with innovative USPs to speed up construction. International patents protect many of these products.

One industry-leading product is the firm's clip in masonry support system, which is uniquely front-loading. This product was designed specifically for the export market. The Atlas range of support and restraints are interchangeable, as experience dictates that on-site conditions frequently vary from original plan drawings. This allows distributors to hold the Atlas range on the shelf and to accommodate their customer's requirements, either the same or next day, without a customer experiencing lost time on site.

For further information please contact: Duncan Greenwood at Appeal PR on 01423 569999 or email duncan@appealpr.com