

NEPPCO NEWS

North of England Plastics Processing Consortium

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NEPPCO Ltd. Offers Work Placement To French Students

Two French students, Raphael Pichon and Arnaud Bodier from the INSTITUT SUPERIEUR de PLASTURGIE D'ALENCON have been on a 15 week placement at two NEPPCO companies, PLASTEKNIK Ltd. and Process Plastics. The programme is an offshoot of last year short-term PDCU competitiveness projects, where high quality, final year students, working within the PDCU's in-house systems framework, were involved in process improvement projects designed to have a quick impact on the competitiveness of the partner companies involved.

The two students are pictured below with their supervisors at their respective attached companies.

Arnaud Bodier, working at Process Plastics Ltd., made both cost savings and process improvements in various departments within the company. He contributed significantly to process and physical modifications of the ZMD-4 Thermoforming machine, leading to a reduction in reject of about 70%. Work on the vacuum former led to a reduction of production and cycle time by about 40 %.

Mr Charlie Kay, the operations Director of Process Plastics and Arnaud's supervisor wrote ' It has been useful to have an independent person like Arnaud looking internally at our processes to identify where gains can be made. He has identified many basics and some fundamental issues, and made many practical suggestions including culture change, which Process Plastics need to now implement'.

Mr Kay concluded that they can foresee huge

paybacks and financial gains from little investment.

Raphael Pichon, attached to Plasteknik Ltd. was able to make a significant process and product improvement. This was achieved by overhauling the production procedures and moulding operating conditions in the Injection moulding machines and Compression Presses. He diagnosed and solved problems in the production of Injection Moulded battery lids. By increasing injection and holding pressures and cooling times, the quality problem was solved.

Raphael, also helped in detecting the reasons for poor quality moulding associated with raw materials, especially acrylics. He changed the drying conditions and decreased the time before re-drying is required. This led to a 70% reduction in production waste.

Mr Lee, the Managing Director of Plasteknik wrote ' Plasteknik was pleased with the effort and quality of work produced by Raphael. Despite the slight language barrier, he worked very well as an integral of our team. He was very instrumental in the quality of a product that we produce for a major customer, which has allowed us to increase our share of the volume available.

We would have no hesitation in having him or another of his colleague back at Plasteknik or in recommending the scheme to other NEPPCO members.

Both students showed good grasp of plastics and plastics processing techniques and have both contributed positively to the competitive edge of the attached companies.



Arnaud (left) at Process Plastics Ltd.



Raphael (centre) at Plasteknik Ltd.

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New Summer Work Placement Projects

The summer work placement scheme organised by the Process Development & Competitvity Unit (PDCU) with member companies has been extended beyond the polymer sector. It now includes companies from the food and general engineering sectors. A total of 9 companies are involved this summer.

New Look NEPPCO Website (www.neppco.co.uk)

In the tense and competitive electronics mail markets, NEPPCO Ltd., continues to upgrade its website so as to maintain its presence and increase its productivity in the polymer industry. The new version is now up and running. The site can now be assessed through the normal HTML route and the modern shock wave enhanced route. The new enhanced home page is customer-friendly and well presented.

The website also incorporates direct links to all NEPPCO services. The NEPPCO Services section has been revised, business and membership enquiries forms are now user friendly. We hope the substance and presentation of the new site will attract more business and enquiries.

ERDF New Bid

A new bid for Phase 3 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is underway. This project will establish a Techno-Economic Assessment Unit (TEAU) as the 3rd phase of the Process Manufacture Centre, and also will involve an expansion of the Centre beyond the Polymer Industry. Phase 1, the Product Design & Manufacturing Unit (PDMU) and Phase 2, the Process Development & Competitvity Unit (PDCU), have already been established through ERDF Funding and are operating successfully.

The TEAU will diagnose, in quantitative terms, the business and technological needs of SME networks and individual SME, within the priority sectors, and develop and implement customised support packages for them. The Unit will use its unique methodology already proven in the material fields for appraisal in order to select and implement the most appropriate projects in order to maximise the creation of additional jobs, and increase the turnover of SMEs.

The Process Manufacture Centre will implement the projects directly within the SME factories using a scientific systems approach for product development and process improvement, and provide any necessary off-line research and development support. Collaborative innovation and research programme with SMEs will be established as in phases 1 & 2, leading to an expansion of SME links and development of new networks.

Paul Hunter will soon be contacting NEPPCO companies to ask for letters of support for this new bid.

Audus Noble makes wide-mouth PET tub

Audus Noble, a NEPPCO member has claimed a breakthrough with the development of wide-mouth square or rectangular containers in PET.

Aimed at confectionery bulk packaging, the Noble range is the result of a project during the late 1990s when the company explored methods of making a wide square-neck container in PET. The project, code-named 'Hyacinth' was backed by Belgian sweet maker Astra Sweets, and was exhibited at the ISM exhibition in Cologne.

The target market for the Noble range is held by injection moulded polypropylene. The new product aims to give improved clarity, impact strength and low temperature resistance as well as improved barrier properties based on 60 times the oxygen barrier of PP. The initial tooling and machinery costs are also lower. Drums are made in sizes from 500 ml to 6 litres. Audus Noble believes this is a first for PET.



Keith Stephenson, managing director of the company said that the new design will have 'significant implications for the confectionery industry'.

The range represents a key stage in modernising the company's portfolio. Wide-mouth sweet jars have been in the company's range since the 1970s. They have evolved from PVC to PP materials, but increasingly PET has become the preferred option.

ARRK increases in-house capacity to 15 Selective Laser Sintering (SLA) machines

European Rapid Product Development Service Provider, ARRK, have increased their in-house prototyping capacity to 15 machines with the addition of two 3D System, large frame stereolithography machines.

The purchase allows ARRK to keep up with customer demand, whilst also allowing selected machines to be dedicated to specialist resins, such as the latest ABS Replica resin, which offers considerable flexibility, high temperature resins, and high accuracy tooling master resins.

Further more, the company is able to build an even greater number of large parts, whilst also helping to bring down production lead times. The move now brings ARRK's range of machines to an impressive four SLA 250, five SLA 350, five SLA 500, and one SLA 5000, in Europe. Overseeing the installation of the machines at ARRK's Gloucester site, is Operations Director, Robin North, along with key personnel Jonathan Brundell and Gary Toor. Robin North explained that due to the nature of ARRK's business of satisfying short lead times with high quality components, it required even more capacity. The acquisition of two further large frame machines was the best route forward to meeting customers needs at all times.

Although ARRK houses extensive SLA capacity, it now boasts three Selective Laser Sintering (SLS) machines, two DTM SLS 2500 and one DTM SLS 2000, across Europe,

allowing customer's prototype parts to be built in the process that best suits their needs. Paul Bevan, ARRK's key SLS operator, has been working continually to develop even higher quality prototype parts and as a consequence customers have been delighted with the parts they have received.

ARRK can now offer a comprehensive range of rapid product development services, including Vacuum Casting, RIM, CNC, in-house foundry services, tooling & injection moulding as well as Stereolithography or Selective Laser Sintering parts.



ARRK PDG Ltd. SLS/SLA Manager Jonathan Brundell (left) inspects the installation of the two SLA 500s with Robin North, Operations Director.

NEW MEMBERS



Haywood
PLASTICS

Haywood Plastics is a Rotational Plastic moulding specialist. The company's state of the art manufacturing facility is capable of producing complex technical mouldings.

Haywood Plastics comprehensive design, development and tooling division enables them to take projects from initial conception through to production in the shortest possible time. The company has an excellent reputation for quality, reliability and customer service. Major products includes Traffic Bollards, Grit-bins, Machine Housings, Medical Equipment and Automotive Parts.

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Have

a

nice

summer

holiday!

The New NEPPCO Offices

The refurbishment in the new NEPPCO Office suites is almost complete. The offices, officially to be called *The NEPPCO SME R&D Suite*, was inspected by the NEPPCO Committee members last month.

The Suite will serve as a 'drop-in' centre for member companies at short notice and for use as a meeting place with suppliers or customers coming in to the Region. It is only a half-hour drive from Manchester International Airport. The Suite will also house a 'Design Gallery' to promote members' products and services to visitors.

Members will be advised when the Suite will be open for their use and those with innovative products who wish to display in the new Suite should contact Paul Hunter.

Interplas 2002!!!

Interplas 2002, the all embracing plastics and rubber exhibition will soon be here again. The exhibition based in NEC, Birmingham will be open to the public from 30th

September through to 4th October 2002 and is billed to be the biggest, all-embracing polymer and rubber exhibition being staged anywhere in the world.

NEPPCO Ltd. and many of its members have benefited from all previous Interplas exhibitions attended. The Exhibitions have resulted in increased enquiries and business opportunities over the years. Such business opportunities have turned to sales for some NEPPCO members.

NEPPCO manager, Paul Hunter, reported on Interplas '99 'Over the 5 days, a total of 75 enquiries had been taken, which is more than the two previous events in '93 and '96. The general quality of enquiries appears to be higher too'.

NEPPCO Ltd. will be booking the same stand, which is in a strategic position at Interplas 2002. All members interested in sharing this stand, should contact Paul Hunter as soon as possible.

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