

JULY 2021

# The Micron



The staff newsletter of AJ Engineering and NEWCo

## PRODUCTION INCREASES DUE TO EQUIPMENT INSTALL AT WATERFORD

**EQUIPMENT** which is part of a multi-million-pound expansion for AJ Engineering has been installed meaning we will be able to double the production capabilities and employ more staff.

And we are already seeing an increase in demand due to the installation of the equipment as part of the £2.5 million development at Waterford.

The fully automated equipment which was imported from Italy will carry out the marking, drilling and cutting tasks on long steel sections allowing our skilled work force more time to focus on complex fabrications.

Alan James, explained: "There are two principal machines that we have bought and the investment means that our highly trained staff are now more available to focus on bespoke work which is more representative of their skill whilst the machinery takes control of the repetitive tasks such as drilling and cutting.

"Essentially, the new equipment marks, drills and cuts the steel. Traditionally, we would have had to have a member of staff with a tape measure doing this and the process would have taken about 45 minutes, but now, the machine can do it all in around five minutes.

"The purpose of this investment is to make us more efficient, and it will provide the company with the ability to increase its throughput but at a lower production cost."

The development has seen the refurbishment of what was a sawmill at Waterford, and over the next three years, Alan expects the expansion will see the staff roll of around 80 increase to over 100.

He said: "Highlands and Island Enterprise (HIE) has been fully involved in the development of our expansion plans and supported us in this project with a grant of £420,000 for our investment in the first and second phases.

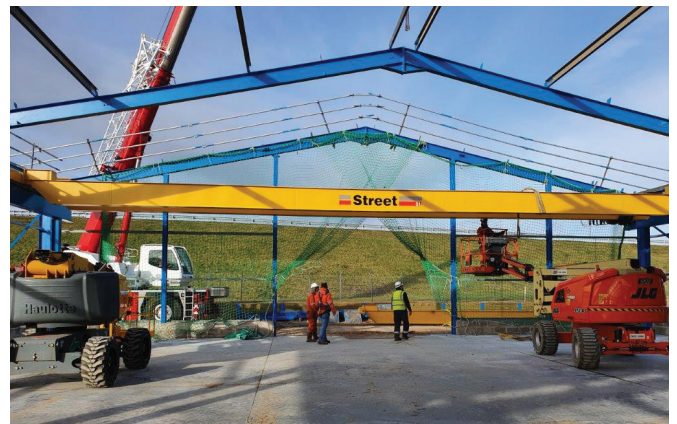
"This is a three-year, three phase project. Phase one is now complete. Phase two will be to install an automatic shot blaster and the third phase is the purchase of a plate processor."

The last significant investment from AJ Engineering was in October 2015 when it bought the Fort William-based engineering firm Northern Engineering & Welding Co (NEWCo).

AJ Engineering currently sits on a total of 2.25 acres at its Greshop Industrial Estate sites, whilst the sister company NEWCo comprises a workshop within 2.7 acres.



The site at Waterford before the renovation began



Crane installation in the new fabrication workshop



Graham and Alan with the new equipment

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# TRIAL FIT FOR STRUCTURE ON HISTORIC ST KILDA

**AJ Engineering has been involved in a project on the remote and historic island of St Kilda.**

The company had been tasked with fabricating two structural frames as part of a bigger development on the island.

The Ministry of Defence has had a presence in Village Bay, St Kilda since the 1950s and over the last few years there has been ongoing works there by defence contractors QinetiQ.

Project Engineer Rob Williamson said: "We were awarded this contract back at the start of 2020, but due to the pandemic things were put on hold. However, it was picked up again last November and I am pleased to say that the structures that we fabricated are now on site and the client is very pleased."

Rob added: "Due to the delays, it ended up being a job that we had to turn around quickly with a short delivery time, but as always the AJE workshop team rose to the challenge. We had to express all coatings (galvanising and paint finishes) associated with the project at short notice

with sub-contractors, in order to meet the client's new delivery date. We were also involved in another project as part of the same development to supply additional steel to help strengthen a structure that was already on the island."

The supply only job is now complete and to ensure the client fitters were able to erect the structures, the AJE team did a trial fit at its new site at Waterford in Forres, to ensure it would be an easy installation for their onsite team.

"It's really important to us, particularly when the project is in a remote location, to ensure that we trial fit the order. That way we can be sure that what we have fabricated is all fitting as it should and that we are satisfied the customer will be able to erect on site, with no issues. We also provided a set of technical installation drawings from our AJE drawing office, to aid the process. I am pleased to say that we have had really positive feedback from the customer."

Last year was the 90th anniversary of the evacuation of St Kilda.

For thousands of years people had lived on St Kilda but over the time the community dwindled and eventually in April 1930 the remaining residents decided it was time for them to leave the island and they petitioned the government for help.

Today, St Kilda supports a community of workers and researchers.



## CONNECTIONS MADE ON HYDRO SCHEME

**The NEWCo team is involved in a project to install a new hydro power scheme at the Blackwater Reservoir above Kinlochleven.**

The project by Green Highland Renewables will generate enough electricity to meet the annual needs of 1,200 Scottish homes.

The contract which involves a range of pipe fabrication, structural steel fabrication, specialist coating and mechanical engineering works was awarded to NEWCo in February and careful planning and manufacturing has been taking place at the Fort William-based facility prior to installation.

NEWCO general manager Neil Worsdall explained: "Basically, the new hydro plant will draw water from the existing Blackwater Dam and our involvement has been to provide the pipework to enable that connection.

"The team has used the large yard space at NEWCo to trial erect some aspects of the project prior to galvanizing, coating, and then final assembly on site.

"Since then we have had six engineers on site so far and it is expected that this part of the project will be completed towards the end of July."

Neil added: "We have already been on site for three weeks and for that part of the job we were working in the chamber to install the retraining frame and a section of pipework. The chamber has to be drained down so we had a three-week window to complete that part of the works.

"The steel frame we had to fabricate is a substantial structure and comes in at over four tonnes whilst the pipework is 1.6m in diameter."

The blackwater reservoir was constructed between 1905 and 1909 and it was the first hydroelectric project in Britain. It was built by the British Aluminium Company to supply power to its smelters in Kinlochleven and later Fort William. The scheme harnesses waterpower from the western section of the Black Water chain of lochs from Rannoch Moor in the east to Kinlochleven in the west.

NEWCo has a long history in the renewable industry and with being based in Fort William it has given the team the opportunity to work on a number of hydro schemes over the years.

