Case study

F4N Fit For Nuclear

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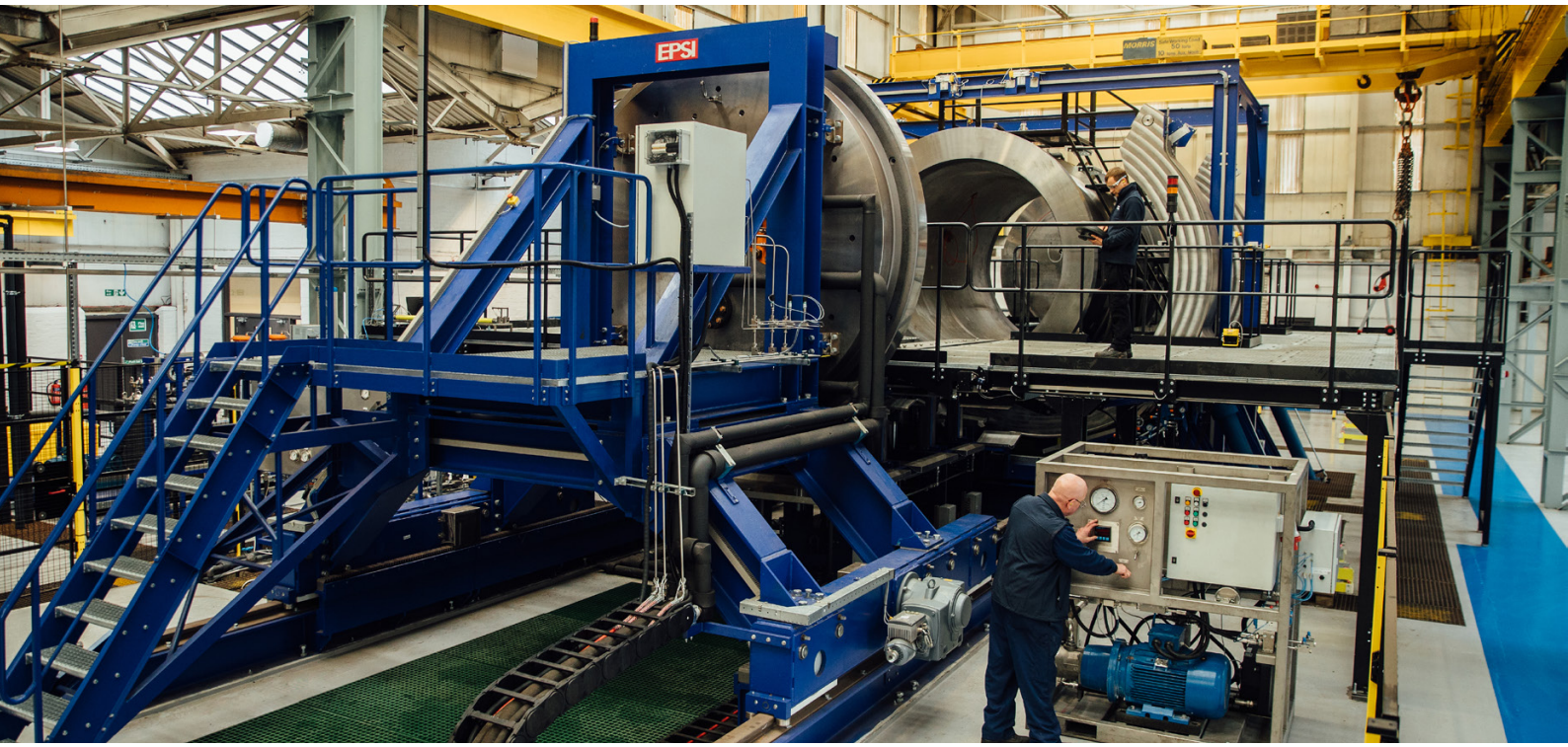

Tyne Pressure Testing gets deeper into nuclear

Established in 2018 as a partnership between the British Engines group and Newcastle University, Tyne Pressure Testing offers specialist pressure testing services and dedicated assembly space to meet the most stringent requirements. CEO Paul Smith discusses the company's journey through the F4N programme and ambitions for the sector.

Tyne Pressure Testing was primarily set up to support subsea developments within the oil and gas industry. We operate nine hyperbaric chambers, including one of the world's largest commercially available facilities which can simulate water depths and temperatures down to 4,500m. This has developed to cover other sectors such as defence, mining, marine, aerospace and petrochemical.

We also started to carry out work for the energy sector, which we wish to further develop. Our first exposure to the nuclear industry was with Rolls-Royce's submarines business, where we carried out both assembly and testing work. We have also done work through Doosan Babcock for EDF, where we pressure-tested manifolds used on kill systems for reactors for a number of nuclear power stations.

We saw the Fit For Nuclear programme and what it brings in terms of approval status and increased exposure as an ideal means to try and secure further opportunities, and started our F4N journey in April 2021.

The assessment identified a number of areas for development. Most were areas we were aware of, but needed to do extra work to raise our standards – these included accreditation of our management systems to ISO 14001, formalising our continuous improvement activities, reviewing value stream management, and business continuity planning.

We also had two areas identified which we had not started to develop. One was a formal project management closure and review process. We used to do everything through our contract review process at the front end, but our industrial advisor said there were benefits from a project closure review in terms of what went well and areas we could improve on.

The other was to develop SQCDP (safety, quality, cost,

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delivery and people) boards to disseminate business and departmental progress. We used to have morning meetings with the workforce, but SQCDP allowed us to formalise it and share more information than previously. It gets everyone more involved.

We developed and introduced an implementation plan that set out what we needed to develop, how we were going to develop it, and who had responsibility for the development. We shared this plan with the entire workforce, and held regular meetings to review progress and keep everyone updated.

The systems we have changed or introduced have not only helped us attain the standards required for F4N, they have also improved the effectiveness of our management systems. This has improved the way we communicate and interact with the workforce and stakeholders, enhancing the culture within the business.

Introducing a formal continual improvement system has been the biggest benefit for us. This has enabled us to engage with the workforce to discuss issues from an operational, health, safety, environmental and quality perspective. Because team members could see improvements being made and were actively involved in this process, the levels of frustration in the business dropped and teamworking and communication improved.

We used to do a lot on an ad hoc basis – people were sometimes mentioning things but we wouldn't necessarily get them done. Now, because we formally register all these, we can assign actions, and we're closing them out to the satisfaction of the whole team.

All told, the F4N programme has been a great help to improving our overall business performance, as well as making TPT a better place to work with improved job satisfaction all round. We hope the journey we have undertaken will help open up new opportunities for the business, not only in nuclear but also in other sectors.

Our engagement with F4N has only recently begun, and we have not as yet secured any work directly attributable to it. We do however believe that involvement in F4N will give us increased exposure within the nuclear sector and opportunities to sell our service offerings.

We see further opportunities in our core offerings of pressure testing and assembly work. We want to build on our current nuclear related work through delivering an exceptional service to exceed customer expectations that will put us in good position for additional work, along with recommendations to others to use our services.

We also want to fully utilise the opportunities from being a granted company to showcase our capabilities to the nuclear sector audience.

In five years' time, I hope that we will be well established in the nuclear sector with a larger customer portfolio, and possibly an extended service offering meeting the needs of existing and future customers. We are very customer focused, and we will try where possible to support customer needs. If this involves investment in people or equipment to achieve this objective, then that will be considered.

We want to be known as the go-to company for pressure testing and assembly services which is prepared to support and take on work that fully meets customer needs, and to build longstanding business relationships

tynepressuretesting.com
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