



## Michell Bearings puts safety culture first

Michell Bearings, a long-established supplier to the nuclear industry, has taken its safety culture to a higher level with help from the Fit For Nuclear programme.

Based in South Shields, Michell Bearings designs and manufactures hydrodynamic bearings for the industrial, commercial marine and naval markets. Founded in 1920 by AGM Michell, the inventor of the tilting pad bearing, the company is now part of the British Engines Group.

Michell Bearings has a long history of supplying into the nuclear market, says quality manager Jeff Hall, but did not hold any formal recognition of its capabilities for the sector.

“The F4N programme was identified as an ideal way of helping us demonstrate to both customers and OEMs that Michell Bearings understand the unique requirements of the nuclear sector, and its commitment to delivering high quality nuclear products and services in accordance with the principles of a nuclear safety culture,” he says.

The business already had a mature and robust business

management system certified to ISO9001, ISO14001 and ISO45001, but the initial F4N assessment identified some areas for improvement around people and process excellence. These then formed the basis for the company’s improvement plans.

“Although we were initially daunted by the journey, the whole process was easily managed through the excellent F4N portal which allowed us to benchmark the business and create action plans to improve in the required areas,” Hall notes.

The action plans focused on rolling out nuclear safety culture training across the business, with the company using its new learning management system to engage the whole team. The firm also provided 6S training for shopfloor personnel, as part of a factory-wide programme to improve workplace organisation.

“We found the F4N process both enlightening and rewarding, as it has enabled us to identify potential areas for improvement.”



“To further improve our people excellence score, all non-managerial employees were asked to complete a safety climate questionnaire to gather views on health and safety in the business,” Hall says.

“This survey tool had been developed by the Health and Safety Executive, and was totally anonymous to allow individuals to express their thoughts on our strengths and weaknesses. The information gathered helped us look at what we do well, and which areas we need to improve on.”

An increasing awareness across the business of the importance and criticality of nuclear-related work was one of the biggest benefits of the F4N journey, Hall notes.

“By rolling out nuclear safety culture training, employees now have a better understanding on the importance of compliance to ensure that products and processes continue to meet the stringent and unique requirements in this sector,” he says.

Michell Bearings was granted F4N in October 2022, becoming the third company in the British Engines Group, after CMP Products and Tyne Pressure Testing, to secure the hallmark.

“F4N status gives the business formal recognition of its capabilities,” Hall says. “The business has already identified and targeted a number of UK and overseas nuclear projects which offer new opportunities for our bearings.”

“Overall, we found the F4N process both enlightening and rewarding as it has enabled us to identify potential areas for improvement, and to improve awareness throughout the business on the safety-critical nature of this sector.”

[www.michellbearings.com](http://www.michellbearings.com)  
January 2023

**Fit For Nuclear (F4N)** helps UK manufacturers get ready to bid for work in the civil nuclear supply chain.

**F4N**  
Fit For Nuclear


Hundreds of companies have completed the online F4N assessment, with most receiving ongoing support and development from the F4N team of nuclear specialists and experienced industrial advisors.

Begin your F4N journey: [namrc.co.uk/services/f4n](http://namrc.co.uk/services/f4n)




**NUCLEAR AMRC**

To find out how the Nuclear AMRC can help your business:

 [namrc.co.uk](http://namrc.co.uk)

 [enquiries@namrc.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@namrc.co.uk)

 0114 222 9900

**Nuclear AMRC**, University of Sheffield,  
Advanced Manufacturing Park, Brunel Way, Rotherham, S60 5WG

**CATAPULT**  
High Value Manufacturing

 **University of Sheffield**