



Hyde Group Nuclear puts focus on quality

Manchester-based Hyde Group is targeting new work across the nuclear sector after being granted Fit For Nuclear.

Established in 1968, Hyde has developed a string of subsidiary businesses over the decades, offering a range of engineering capabilities to meet customer demands. The Hyde Group now includes 22 companies employing around 600 people, almost all in the Tameside area of Greater Manchester.

Hyde first took the Fit For Nuclear assessment in the mid-2010s, but the team decided it didn't then meet their needs. As their engagement in the nuclear sector grew, they re-entered the programme with the main aim of benchmarking their capabilities.

"When we first looked at F4N, it seemed to take us in a direction where all our systems would be focused around nuclear and this would have been a distraction from our work in other sectors," says Will Pearson, business development director for Hyde Group Nuclear.

"Our approach to F4N now is complementary to everything we do – it's more about validation of what we've achieved, and to demonstrate to clients our ability to deliver the quality of work they demand."

The new assessment led by F4N industrial advisor Nigel Goodrich identified a few areas for development, mostly around communicating strategic information with all levels of staff.

"When we had the initial assessment, we were apprehensive of the initial feedback," says Simon Collins, group quality director. "But when we looked at it as a management team, there were valid points being made, there were opportunities to look at our processes and tweak them here and there."





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Simon Collins, group quality director

The F4N action plan worked hand-in-hand with the group's various customer-led initiatives on quality management, Collins notes, extending established improvement programmes into new areas. "It's very much an improvement process – not just achieving the business standard, but driving forwards for improvements," he says.

The team closed the gaps by improving 5S and visual management tools, with information boards and daily meetings at all sites. The group management also emphasised the value of sharing information and best practice between sites and companies.

"If one company has an issue, we make sure everyone else within the separate group companies understands the details and solution to ensure learning opportunities are applied at each site in order to prevent reoccurrence," Collins says. "And if there's a good process, it doesn't matter what customer it's for, we'll deploy it right across the organisation."

The team also addressed the way they managed the continuous improvement process itself, to improve staff buy-in to changing ways of working.

"We've always had continuous improvement plans, but what Nigel highlighted was are we getting everyone's involvement, or are we just talking to management?" Collins says "We put in an employee suggestion scheme so it's easier to communicate. We then engage the people who made the suggestion in the improvement project."

The group has also made significant advances in its drive for sustainability and carbon reduction, with the installation of solar panels across many of the production facilities in Tameside.

"Carbon reduction is one key part of our agenda, and an extremely important one," Collins says. "We're also pushing forward to improve the energy efficiency of our machines,

replacing lighting with more energy-efficient solutions and transferring our vehicle fleet over to electric power.

"However, sustainability should be recognised as a much wider topic, and as the largest private sector employer in the area, we take our responsibilities seriously. We have high levels of engagement with local schools and colleges that support our apprenticeship programme, and ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of employees at all our facilities is also key to us as a business."

Alongside the business process improvements, Hyde Group continues to invest in new machine tools, with some £12 million spent over the past year. It has also repurposed a number of existing machines for nuclear work.

The team see strong opportunities for growth across the nuclear sector, and say the diversity of operations across the group is a large part of their offer to customers. With capabilities spanning very large-scale precision machining, fitting and assembly, design, automation, testing and system integration, the group rarely has to rely on third parties for delivery, they note.

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