



Looking to make a splash in the UK market

A French company that opened a UK facility in Warwick last year is looking to make an impact on the British market this year. GYS employs about 400 people in four countries and makes about 250,000 welding sets and battery chargers per year.

Bruno Bouygues, who runs the company with his father Nicolas, says: "Our key production techniques are all integrated under one roof to minimise handling time and to produce faster and cheaper. Price has become more critical; if

you want to keep your production facility in Europe, you don't have any option other than to consolidate your supply chain where you can. A further benefit is that, because GYS does everything within the company, the barriers to innovation are very low.

"We are constantly looking to see what we can change in our production methods to make the product more robust or give us additional features for a more aggressive price"

UK commercial director Neil Pulsford has

been joined at Warwick by John Hill, who will be responsible for after-sales servicing, repairs and maintenance of all GYS products. "We are pleased to welcome John to the team at a time when we are experiencing steady growth in demand for our products in the UK. Having entered the UK market last year, this new appointment is a natural extension of our investment in the development of GYS in the UK. John is well known in the industry, and his expertise will be a big asset to us."

Exports to crucial Asian market set to rise

A Lichfield-based automotive company is spearheading a new drive to increase British trade links with Asia. Gary Brereton, global sales manager of Charter Automotive (formerly Valve Train Components), which supplies engine and gearbox components, was at a seminar in Birmingham last month to discuss his firm's experiences in Asia.

The event at the International Convention Centre was organised by the Asia Task Force of export promoter UK Trade & Investment. Delegates from about 200 West Midlands companies attend the seminar at which the keynote speaker was Business Secretary Lord Mandelson.

Mr Brereton said: "I'd definitely encourage any company interested in developing business in Asia to take advantage of this opportunity. We first visited Asia in 2003; since that time, and with the continuing support of UK Trade & Investment, we have developed

new business in a number of markets across the continent. We are exporting to China, India, South Korea, Thailand and Taiwan; based on the growing demand, we have recently established a warehouse and distribution facility west of Shanghai to service many of our customers across Asia.

"Our customers now include many of the global OEMs such as VW, GM and Ford, as well as local independent manufacturers in China and India. Like many automotive suppliers, Charter Automotive did experience a slowdown in demand last year, but in Asia — particularly China and India — new business has increased through 2009 and includes both engine and gearbox components."

Charter Automotive currently exports 97% of its £3 million annual turnover to more than 25 countries. Exports to Asia are expected to account for over 25% of its global sales by 2013.

New horizons

Staffordshire manufacturer Olympus Engineering is broadening its horizons — thanks to £1.4 million of funding from Advantage West Midlands. Work is well underway on a new purpose-built facility in Stoke-on-Trent for the firm, which specialises in the production of complex components. Since the company was established by managing director Neil Blood in 2000, Olympus Engineering has enjoyed steady growth, and now competes head to head with other suppliers in Eastern Europe and the Far East. Employing around 100 highly skilled people, Olympus moved to new premises in 2004.

However, following year-on-year growth of around 40%, the site quickly became too small. To cope with medium-term expansion, Olympus Engineering leased an adjacent 30,000ft² unit on College Road in 2007, while the management worked on plans for a bespoke facility in the region.

Mr Blood said: "It's a really exciting time for Olympus Engineering, and we are delighted that work has finally started on our new facility. At times, it looked as though the project would not happen, but we are so glad that we can now stay in Stoke-on-Trent, securing jobs and our future in the region."