



DRIVE

Newsletter

Winter 2022



FROM THE CEO

Since our last edition of "Drive", the UK has witnessed the start of a Carolean era following the passing of our longest serving monarch Queen Elizabeth II, and endured extraordinary prolonged political turmoil that has resulted in resignations, cabinet reshuffles and a third Prime Minister this year.



compared with other leading European automotive producing nations.

Restoring business confidence, introduction of consumer incentives to adapt to net zero emission vehicles, and a competitive ecosystem that is supported by upskilling the workforce, driving the latest innovative technologies and intervention to assist longer term energy costs will attract investment, thus contributing to sector recovery.

WAF continues to engage with several OEM's in an attempt to provide supply chain support, and signpost local sourcing opportunities into our membership. Our emphasis has been a comprehensive understanding on the total cost of acquisition focusing on end-to-end supply chain costs beyond just piece price and indeed, we have contributed substantially to an initiative being considered at the UK Automotive Council.

Let us hope that 2023 delivers greater political, economic and supply chain stability, enabling our highly skilled and much respected sector to gain the impetus and investment it richly deserves.

The domestic political unrest may have longer-term implications on business confidence which could undermine future investment strategies, but the more immediate challenges for our resilient sector continue to impact. OEM volume adjustments to align with semi-conductor availability negatively influences operational performance, productivity and capital tie-up by way of blocked inventories. The cost of business crisis, geopolitical tensions, material shortages, inflated freight costs and longer lead-times continue to undermine our competitiveness, when

ON THE ROAD...

Cenex LCV

Yet again a significant Welsh presence at the [Cenex Low Carbon Vehicle and Connected Mobility event](#).

For the first time at this prestigious and internationally renowned event, a Welsh Government Minister provided the keynote address. After his speech, the Minister for Economy, Vaughan Gething, met with five WAF member organisations: [Riversimple](#), [Meritor](#), [Deregallera](#), [Dawson Shanahan](#) and [Tri-Wall UK](#), who were showcasing their expertise, competence, products and capabilities at the very impressive Welsh Government stand. A fantastic automotive occasion that provided numerous excellent network opportunities.

We'll be heading back there in 2023 so please join us!



Autolink

In September, WAF delivered Wales's leading automotive conference which took place at Cardiff City Stadium. An extremely well attended symposium and exhibition that provided members with the very latest sector news. It was a delight to meet once again in person with our members, delegates and exhibitors, with the Minister for Economy, Vaughan Gething MS Cardiff South & Penarth addressing our attendees in his keynote speech. 130 registered guests were engrossed in relevant and topical

updates that encompassed both reality and optimism, delivered by Peter Campbell, [Financial Times](#) Global Motor Correspondent, our 'resident' sector analyst Ian Henry from [AutoAnalysis](#), Dan Bunting from [The Advanced Propulsion Centre](#), and the team from WAF Member [Thales](#). May we once again thank our sponsors [Thales](#), [Tri-Wall UK](#), [Cardiff University](#), [2Buy2](#) and [Control2K](#) for their ongoing commitment and support to our sector. We will order more pies for next year!!



WAF Annual Networking Dinner

After a three-year hiatus, the Welsh Automotive Forum Annual Networking dinner returned in some style. Over 220 attendees from our resilient sector celebrated the significance and importance of the automotive sector to the Welsh economy. 10,000 highly skilled and well remunerated roles contributing ca10% to the manufacturing GVA in Wales.

A fantastic evening including the [Stem Cymru EESW](#) Student of the Year award presented by Michael Straughan, COO from [Aston Martin Lagonda](#). A special thanks to our keynote speaker Mike Hawes, CEO at [Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders \(SMMT\)](#) and the new Welsh Automotive Forum Chair, Lawrence Davies MBE, for joining us at the [Vale Hotel Golf & Spa Resort](#). Significant member representation and OEM presence from [Jaguar Land Rover](#), [Aston Martin Lagonda](#), [Toyota Motor Corporation](#) and [HVS \(Hydrogen Vehicle Systems\)](#) is testament to a united voice when it comes to the auto supply

chain in Wales. We were also joined by senior officials from [Welsh Government](#), [Department for International Trade \(DIT\)](#) and the [Office for Investment](#).

We would like to acknowledge our kind event sponsors namely: [Aston Martin Lagonda](#), [Thales](#), [Tri-Wall UK](#), [Forward Waste Management Ltd](#), [Caerbont Automotive Instruments Ltd](#), [Cardiff University / Prifysgol Caerdydd](#) and [Control2k](#).

The impressive "Made in Wales" Aston Martin DBX707 was showcased, and we were also joined virtually by Toto Wolff, Team Principal of the [Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS Formula One Team](#).

Great to see so many of you at Wales' leading automotive networking dinner.



WAF 2023 EVENTS

Hopefully, the New Year brings with it greater optimism and stability from both a sector and societal perspective. Our events programme in 2023 will feature the much-respected Autolink conference and exhibition as well as our flagship event – the annual networking dinner. Our informal and very informative regional meetings return as will a new feature whereby our successful virtual round tables will take to the ROAD.

SECTOR NEWS



The sluggish recovery post pandemic continues with **UK car manufacturing -10.8%** lower compared with the same period in 2021 (YtD October). The supply chain opportunity and value associated to UK made Battery Electric Vehicles continues to grow with a YtD (October) market share of just over 16%.

The availability of semi-conductors is expected to improve through 2023 and we are witnessing some green shoots at certain OEM's. However, recovery will be prolonged as Ian Henry (AutoAnalysis) showcased in his revised bespoke (for WAF) UK Production Outlook update released at Autolink which would indicate in 2022 c890k (cars and LCV) being manufactured. To contextualise, this would result in a **-35%** deviation against 2019 and nearly **-50%** compared with the exceptional performance of the sector in 2017. Using different modelling scenarios, Ian's forecast for 2027 does portray the extent of a protracted recovery but suggests growth to 1.2m à 1.3m vehicles. In December, Ian produced for WAF an [updated report](#) with a revised figure of ca 855k vehicles.

In terms of **new car registrations**, there are grounds for optimism as November recorded the fourth consecutive month of growth. The November YtD figures reflects a decline of **-3.4%** compared to the same period in 2021 reflecting a weaker start to the year. Interestingly, recent figures published by the SMMT highlighted that sales of new electric vehicles (BEV, PHEV & HEV) in 2022 have accounted for nearly 34% of market share demonstrating the trajectory of sector transition towards low emission and net zero powertrains. With the roll-out of public charging points not aligned to the acceleration of plug-in vehicles entering the marketplace (through Q3/2022, just one charger for every 50 new plug-in EV's) and the cost-of-living crisis, it will be interesting to see if the up-take of such vehicles continues at the pace of change already witnessed.

Competitiveness

The consistent message emanating from our members is that they simply want a level playing field to compete in. Electricity prices are the highest across Europe and WAF continues to lobby incessantly with both devolved and UK Governments on the major factors that influence our members' overall competitiveness.

Whilst there are several initiatives and mechanisms that support overall performance improvement and greater efficiency, we continue to encourage our members take advantage of Welsh Government subsidised programmes that include the excellent refreshed **Toyota Lean Clusters Programme** (see below) and the [Flexible Skills Programme](#), both of which can support your associates to retrain or upskill.

WAF member [Sector Intelligence and Competitiveness Survey](#). Your input is pivotal as we re-evaluate our supply chain in Wales and the challenges that have faced our members over the past 2.5yrs, making it an uneven playing field. Please download and complete the survey and return your feedback to us as soon as possible. (Deborah.stewart@welshautomotiveforum.co.uk) – essential to maintain Voice of Sector – we kindly ask you to participate.

SECTOR SUPPORT

We're in Your Corner

The Welsh Government is investing in jobs, skills and training to help businesses grow and meet the needs of Wales' changing economic landscape and build a stronger, fairer and greener economic future. They are offering expert advice and financial help if you are growing, diversifying, or just need a hand to get through these hard times:

- Recruit staff and train them in the specific skills you need (Apprenticeships, ReAct+, GO Wales, Access to Work, Community Employability Programmes and Jobs Growth Wales+).
- Upskill your workforce to support business survival, growth and development (Apprenticeships and Wales Union Learning Fund).
- Support the health and wellbeing of your workforce (In-Work Support Service, Out of Work Service and Healthy Working Wales).
- Create a more equal and inclusive workforce through attracting, recruiting, developing new talent (Disabled People's Employment Champions and online toolkit, Disability Confident, ReStart Migrant employment and Inclusive Apprenticeships).

Plus, under the Young Person's Guarantee, the Welsh Government is helping businesses create new opportunities for young people under the age of 25 to join your team through work experience, work placements or employment.

Head to [Business Wales](#) for more information or call 03000 6 03000 to speak with a Business Wales adviser.

Winter Edition



Winter Edition

Toyota Lean Clusters Programme: Update and Future Events

Over 30 companies and 100 participants have been through this current [Toyota Lean Clusters Programme](#).

A [booklet](#) is available outlining case studies from the first Lean Start, and please also see this [news piece](#) where Rototherm advocate the programme.

Some results from the case studies:

1. Over 40 hours of additional change capture
2. Reduction of drawing re-work equivalent to £175K
3. Clearer understanding of business wastes and how to reduce them
4. 25% increase in net productivity
5. Cultural changes and further staff involvement and engagement

The programme is not wholly for manufacturers, the approach can be applied successfully in services - the importance on having a focus on flow efficiency and not only resource efficiency. We all know how too many emails trigger stress and the effects of an inefficient finance system!

Toyota Lean Cluster activities for 2023:

Lean Network South Wales, 26th January, Tata Steel Port Talbot

Open to all participants and those interested in Lean. An opportunity to get together, network and learn from others. Speakers include Toyota, TATA, Made Cymru, a 'Lean in Healthcare' case study and a Lean Simulation. [Register here](#) (Date for North Wales event 23rd March, registration details to follow)

Eye Opener, 1st February

For companies who are new to the concept of lean, an introduction to lean principles and the Toyota Way through a 1-day taster sessions held at Deeside. With 50% support from Welsh Government, these sessions will cost £190 per person excl. VAT

Lean Start, May 2023

A hybrid programme for companies ready to change - 3 days coaching at Toyota Deeside plus 5 days practical project assistance from a Toyota coach at your company site. After 75% Welsh Government support, the cost per company for up to 3 delegates is £1,703 excl. VAT. You don't need to go on an Eye opener before Lean start. The Eye opener is also used by companies to involve more employees in the process.

More activities will be coming and posted on the website or sent via these updates, please direct all enquiries to TLMP@gov.wales

WAF Project Update – Electrification & Fuel Cell landscape mapping



Our Welsh Government commissioned project to identify competence and capability pan Wales in electrified and fuel cell net zero emission mobility supply chain solutions, is gaining

momentum and we are delighted that our new Project and Operations Manager, Dana Williams, is already contributing significantly to the project.

Together with Welsh Government, our objective is to recognise all organisations pan Wales that are already or have the business vision and strategic intent to operate in **net zero emission supply chains** in the domain of battery and battery energy storage solutions, e-machines, power electronics, light-weighting, infrastructure, and recycling. There will be cross sector synergies and creating a local critical mass of expertise is essential to showcase Wales on the global stage. Our project output, by way of marketing collateral, will be published and made available worldwide through international and domestic events, trade missions and shared with trade and investment departments at both devolved and UK Governments. If you want your organisation, or indeed a company within your supply-chain to be identified and showcased, then please contact Dana.Williams@welshautomotiveforum.co.uk

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DE&I)


In September, we welcomed to our HR Virtual Round Table, Eman Martin-Vignerte, Director at [Bosch](#) to discuss how the sector is beginning to embrace initiatives associated to DE&I. A very well attended session which incorporated excellent discussion and debate around the deployment of DE&I business strategies and policies that must influence change given the evidenced based correlation on profitability and value creation.

Eman played an integral role in the first [Automotive Council Report](#) into DE&I which focuses on gender diversity within the automotive sector.



NEW MEMBERS

Clenergy EV
Telephone: 01443 565400
Website: www.clenergy-ev.com

 Clenergy EV is accelerating efforts to switch to electric vehicles across the UK by powering up their EV chargers. Our charge point management software is used to monitor, manage and maintain 1000s of charge points for over 200 clients, from local authorities to multinational organisations. Clenergy EV is able to control charge points that are due to be, or are already, installed across multiple sites for businesses of all sizes within Wales. Our aim is to provide simple, fair, and accessible electric vehicle charging - all from one platform, for one cleaner planet.

Maverick Diagnostics Ltd
Telephone: 01978 856190
Website: www.maverickdiagnostics.com

 Maverick is the only provider in the UK to support dealer diagnostic tool (OEM tools) for the independent aftermarket. Providing both vehicle technical support and specialist Automotive IT support services.

Maverick develops, evaluates and in some cases manufactures tools and software for automotive aftermarket. Maverick has also consulted and created tooling and technical support programs for many large organisations and has partnerships with Global brands. Our focus over the last few years has switched to EV and hybrid program development, training and use of the diagnostics equipment and tooling related to EV and Hybrid vehicles.

Microchip Technology Caldicot Limited
Telephone: 01291 435351
Website: www.microchip.com/aps

 Microchip Caldicot delivers a competitive advantage for customers through miniaturising electronic circuits, enabling wireless connectivity and custom/complex power modules with a track record of successful designing, developing next generation miniaturised electronic modules and pioneering power modules.

Microchip Technology Inc. HQ is a leading provider of smart, connected and secure embedded control solutions. The company serves more than 120,000 customers across industrial, automotive, consumer, aerospace and defence, communications and computing markets.


Tungsten Corporate Solutions Ltd
Telephone: 02922 400918
Website: www.tungstencorporatesolutions.co.uk

 Tungsten Corporate Solutions are an accountancy and engineering firm specialising in corporation tax relief for clients. Tungsten has expertise in carbon transitioning for net zero and offers third party accreditation for companies wishing to truly know their carbon footprint and require a common-sense affordable strategy to implement change. Tungsten also assists clients with corporate finance and succession planning together with the usual mundane accounting services. In the past two years Tungsten has delivered in excess of £12 million of corporation tax relief for Welsh SME's.

Weston FM Group
Telephone: 01495 248199
Website: www.weston-security.co.uk

 Established in 2013 by Simon Weston CBE AND Paul Hartshorn, Weston FM Group has grown to become an award-winning supplier of Security Services and Commercial Cleaning both in Wales and Nationally across the UK. We take a professional attitude to your specific needs and as a group, we manage our business proactively, making continual improvements to achieve the very best outcome for our services. We work continually to deliver quality services by meeting the latest industry standards and providing highly trained professional personnel.

MEMBERS' UPDATE

 **Clenergy EV** have recently secured £2m investment from Smart Metering Systems Plc (SMS) to scale up its operations and support its major growth plans in the EV charging industry. Clenergy EV is a UK leader in charge point software, for use for both workplace and public charging infrastructure. SMS Plc is a fully integrated energy infrastructure company owning and managing decarbonization assets across the UK, who have made a strategic investment into Clenergy EV to develop its own EV charging infrastructure projects.

The investment into Pencoed-based Clenergy EV has allowed the company to upscale their business from 13 employees at year end 2021 to 27 employees as of November 2022. Clenergy EV CEO Will David said: "This investment will ensure Clenergy EV can develop its software further into emerging technologies within EV charging and fleet electrification, allowing South Wales to maintain its rich automotive history as we switch to zero-carbon electric vehicles."

Winter Edition



Winter Edition




 **Crabb Engineering:** Investing in Wales – Investing in People

Quality and investment remain at the forefront of everything we do. Recent capital investments include the purchase of a new 5 axis machine and CNC lathe for our Flint facility, bringing our machine count to 30+ units; with even further capacity now available,



following the opening of our Wrexham CNC manufacturing facility in June 2022. Our current manufacturing team now includes three engineering apprentices. With the help of Coleg Cambria and work experience placements, our commitment to North Wales and its people continues, as we plan a further expansion of our apprentice program, both this year and next.

This "investment in equipment and people" approach, whilst working with industries in Wales and throughout the UK, has reaped many benefits. As more customers join us, we are now experiencing one of our busiest periods since the company was founded in 1994.

 **Cummins-New Power** (formerly Meritor), who are based in Cwmbran, have some exciting developments in the commercial vehicle sector. In collaboration with Electra Commercial Vehicles, based in Blackburn, they integrated a 14Xe ePowertrain into an IVECO

EuroCargo, and created an Electra eCargo. This vehicle will be a great test and marketing asset, to highlight the benefits and efficiency of an integrated eAxle. This 19t vehicle has a 200kW motor, and provides market leading startability and gradeability, along with exceptional drivability.



This year is an exciting year for the European eMobility Centre of Excellence team in Cwmbran, as they are growing their eMobility headcount within Wales, and look forward to

a growing fleet of electric vehicles over the next 18months. The team are busily working on their 44tonne integrated axle, the 17Xe, and recently integrated this into a Volvo FH tractor unit (APC EPIC Project with Electra and Danfoss). This vehicle will undergo a rigorous test program in 2022, and is sure to create a real buzz around South Wales.

 **Dawson Shanahan** Precision Engineering & Cold Forming

Dawson Shanahan are delighted to have seen phenomenal growth in 2022

order intake of automotive components, particularly e-mobility, up by 37% compared to 2021. This growth has come from a mix of both new and long-standing customers that include OEMs and Tier 1 automotive manufacturers.

As part of our investment plan and to help meet orders, a further two rotary transfer machines with CNC controls have been delivered. These will be used to meet the increased demand for Power Connector parts for electric vehicles in response to high customer demand. In addition, we have also taken delivery of two new high precision lathes to increase capacity. Sales for 2021 were 27% up on 2020 and 17% on 2019 so the latest figures are encouraging for a very promising year here at Dawson Shanahan.



Les Reeves, Joint Managing Director, explains: "It continues to be incredibly busy in 2022 and we're bucking the trends that are being seen globally in manufacturing. Our strategy to focus on continual investment in new machinery and having an outstanding workforce means we can withstand economic pressure and meet our customers' wide range of needs."

 **Energizer Holdings, Inc.**

[Economy Minister Vaughan Gething has visited Energizer Auto UK in Ebbw Vale](#) to celebrate a quarter of a century in the Valleys and reaffirm its partnership with

the Welsh Government. The facility, established in 1997, now employs 50 skilled staff producing more



than 700 automotive fragrance and appearance products ranging from fuel additives to car wash



products across 43 different countries. The company has a long-standing partnership with the Welsh Government and is benefitting from the Flexible Skills Programme which helps employers to develop their staff's technical, professional and leadership skills.

Economy Minister Vaughan Gething said: "I'm delighted to be in Ebbw Vale, visiting Energizer Auto UK, to celebrate their achievement of 25 years of success in the Valleys. "Supporting businesses like this one to adapt, grow their workforce and develop skills is essential to our ambitions for a more prosperous Welsh economy post-pandemic. The Flexible Skills Programme is central to this. "The Welsh Government is committed to changing people's lives for the better and ensuring no one is left behind."



The industry leader in knitted wire mesh products, **KnitMesh Technologies**, is proud to announce the launch of WeldMesh™, a new welding technique that greatly improves the integrity of weld strength between knitted mesh, porous media, and solid metallic substrates.

WeldMesh™ was created by the company's highly trained engineers to improve joint strength by over 50% compared to previous methods. It is a remarkable feat of engineering that has increased equipment efficiency and decreased scrap for customers by as much as 25%. This innovative technology has limitless potential uses, but it shines brightest in the field of hydrogen production, fuel cells, automotive anti-vibration components, and filtration. WeldMesh™ can be easily automated and scaled up or down depending on production volume. Get in touch with our technical experts today to talk about your application and order samples.



Bridgend-based manufacturing software specialist **POET Systems Ltd.** is looking forward to a successful 2023 after a year of growth. The company's award-winning cloud-based platform helps manufacturers cut waste and boost productivity. POET recently signed deals to integrate its platform into two major international



manufacturing businesses with bases in Wales. It has also started making inroads into India, joining with a local business to launch the platform into the Indian market. POET's success has led to it being invited to take part in the University of Wales Trinity St David's SMART Digital Accelerator project. The Welsh Government-funded project involves a team of industry expert advisers working with manufacturers in Wales to help them identify the right technology to boost their bottom line.



POET Director Lynn Davies said: "We're looking forward to not only showcasing POET's technology through the project, but also helping our manufacturing colleagues to weather the economic turbulence ahead."



The UK arm of global packaging specialists, **Tri-Wall**, have continued their ambitious expansion program with the acquisition of The Corrugated Case Company, a Derbyshire-based sheet plant manufacturer. Tri-Wall UK Ltd, with its HQ in Monmouth, signed the deal in August 2022 to take over CCC, located in Chesterfield, presenting a great opportunity for both parties to expand and grow into a stronger position.

Founded in 1996, The Corrugated Case Company is recognised as one of the UK's leading specialists in the design and manufacture of corrugated packaging products, establishing a firm reputation for quality, innovation and delivering value to its customers. The strength and breadth of Tri-Wall UK's Network means rapid, effective response to the demands of an increasingly sophisticated customer and economy; an economy that depends, every single day, on safe, efficient, and sustainable operations.

VIRTUAL WORKSTREAMS

- Why not join SME, HR, Tier 1
- Benefits – share best practice, proactive collaboration, bespoke generic summaries, provide guidance, discuss topical and relevant challenges (e.g., supply chain, sector transition, utilities, skills etc)
- 2023 format will include in person sessions to be hosted by members to the three groups (at site)
- Looking for members to host our much respected Tier 1, SME and HR Virtual Round Tables. If you believe that your organisation should wish to host, showcase your competence, capability, and facility as well as any best practice, please reach out to [Dana](#) as we formalise a 2023 calendar of monthly events

Meet Lawrence Davies MBE – our new WAF Chair



CEO, Rob O'Neil, met recently with Lawrence to understand how Lawrence intends to position the WAF in the future as the sector transitions whilst also identifying his Welsh roots.

Rob: Why do you believe that you can make a difference at the Welsh Automotive Forum?

Lawrence: Firstly, I come from Industry so understand the needs of our Manufacturing companies and issues but also from central Government so have a clear picture of what support is possible and how do we access it.

Secondly, I have a passion for Wales with my family background in Wrexham so I have a deep feeling of 'wanting to do the best' for our highly successful sector.

Rob: What are your long term objectives and visions for WAF?

Lawrence: I was delighted with what is already in place by Rob, Mark and the Board, it's crucial that the Welsh Automotive Industry is ready for 2030 and we don't lag behind so I will be driving the move to Electrification and most defiantly not forgetting Hydrogen, more will change in next 10 years than in the last 100 Years and we need to play our part in this Transformation.

Lastly, I would like to see us work even closer with the other regional bodies like the NAA and NEAA, both already work with WAF but I feel one voice at times from us all could have a greater impact.

Rob: Why and how should companies engage with the WAF?

Lawrence: Initially I would say attend our events, read our newsletters and ask questions of us, we are truly here to help companies and be their voice into Government and to the OEM's.

Rob: How well received is WAF on the national stage (i.e., by other regional bodies, Automotive Council, UK Gov depts etc)?

Lawrence: WAF hits well above its size in UK Automotive, as an example we now have 2 members on the Governments Automotive Council supply chain committee, so we are able to get our voice heard, secondly both within the Welsh Government and Whitehall they truly value our opinion as do the SMMT so let's continue the good work".

Rob: Outside of automotive, what are your interests?

Lawrence: Well, I am a great sport follower, I have challenging weekends as a Spurs supporter (along with Rob) I also support Wrexham and hope the new money brings us success, but I also enjoy jogging, playing the guitar badly and driving my much-loved UK built Morgan car.

At the WAF Autolink event in September, the Minister for the Economy officially announced that Lawrence Davies MBE had been appointed as the new Chair of the WAF taking over from Mark Langshaw MBE, who had provided excellent support, direction and leadership as interim Chairman following the sudden and sad passing of Richard Parry Jones in April 2021.

Lawrence Davies has had a 35-year career in the automotive industry. He started at General Motors (GM) in the UK within purchasing and supply chain, after which he spent 4 years at Opel in Germany, and spells in France and the USA. He became Director of GM (UK) Purchasing and Supply Chain in 2006.

In 2013, Lawrence joined UK Trade & Investment's Automotive Investment Organisation (AIO), later becoming its CEO. The AIO is now the Automotive Team in the Department for International Trade (DIT), and he was its Chief Advisor.

He was made a fellow of the Institute of Procurement & Supply in 2015.

Auto Express car magazine named Lawrence in their top 50 most influential Brits in the automotive industry for 4 years running.

He was awarded the MBE in the Queen's 2016 New Year's honours list for his services to the automotive industry.

In 2021, Lawrence was asked to become a fellow of the UK Government (BEIS) company mentoring programme which supports companies across various sectors, and in 2022 Lawrence was invited to join the Silverstone Technology Cluster Advisory Board.

He has that rare mix of business knowledge, having worked at senior levels in both the private and public sector. He has recently stepped down from his day to day Government role but has been invited to remain on the UK Government's Automotive Council Supply Chain Committee.

Lawrence has strong contacts across all OEMs, Government funded bodies and the supply chain, with immense sector knowledge. In his Government role, he was involved in the investment into future technologies, especially with regard to Electric/Hydrogen vehicles plus connected and autonomous.



WAF welcomes a new member of staff – Meet Dana Williams



Dana Williams CEng (IMechE), is our new Project and Operations Manager, responsible for Member liaison and also the delivery of our Net Zero Mobility Wales project.

With a 22-year career in the automotive and aerospace industry, she started as a graduate at Ford Motor Company (Bridgend), within Manufacturing Engineering, after which she spent 4 years at BAE Systems running the Typhoon Electrical Operations, before joining JLR Engine Manufacturing Centre in Wolverhampton. In 2017 she joined Aston Martin Lagonda as Senior Manufacturing Engineering Manager, launching the new DBX manufacturing facility in St Athan.

Dana is passionate about the automotive industry with a keen interest in people development, and has been responsible for Graduate and Apprentice development in both Aerospace and Automotive.

She is delighted to have joined the WAF team who are currently supporting her through initial induction and she has already visited several members in her first two months. She will continue to visit members over the coming months outlining the WAF operational footprint, our vision for the future as the sector transitions as well as listen to membership feedback on how the WAF can continue to represent members as the Voice of the Sector in front of key stakeholders, decision makers and investors.

WAF CEO Rob O'Neil commented "We are delighted to welcome Dana into the WAF team, Dana brings a wealth of automotive experience and knowledge that will undoubtedly benefit our members and support future initiatives. After the myriad of challenges that we have all endured over the past two years, it is imperative that we continue to connect with our members and site visits by Dana will support membership positioning for future opportunities as we increase our awareness of your bespoke offerings, competence and capabilities. The appointment of Dana supports our drive and ambition as well as your investment for the future operational footprint and presence of WAF"

If you would like to get in touch with Dana, please email: dana.williams@welshautomotiveforum.co.uk

Winter Edition



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There are also short courses of two 16 week modules starting in February, both Level 7 modules which can count towards an MSC.

You can find an introduction to the courses on the UWTSD page here: <https://www.madecymru.co.uk/enrolling-now-fully-funded-made-cymru-courses-starting-february/#>

One of the oldest automotive parts businesses in Wales is also one of the latest beneficiaries of the UWTSD MADE Cymru programme.

Established in 1911 as bicycle components manufacturer, **Fibrax** of Wrexham has been supplying rubber and plastic moulded components and assemblies to the automotive industry since the 1970's and counts among its OEMs; JLR, Bentley, Aston Martin, Renault, Nissan, PSA, Stellantis, Daimler and more. Fibrax's rubber and plastic wiring harness products typically go into OEMs and T1 Suppliers across the UK, Europe and North Africa, and can be found in cars around the globe.



Craig Jones is Tooling and Process Development Manager at the business which has two plants in the North Wales city and employs nearly 200 people.

Fibrax has a dedicated R&D team in Wrexham which work to support customers' teams as a Development

Partner, Build to Print, and Full Service Supplier. Fibrax is IATF16949 accredited and operates to the highest industry standards whilst remaining flexible to the ever-changing market requirements, using new and innovative designs, materials, and process solutions.

Fibrax boasts its own internal tooling capabilities and works closely with external tooling companies to create new prototype and production level components for clients, maintaining a continuing relationship throughout a product cycle and so ensuring complete satisfaction at every stage.

It also means they can quickly respond to changing circumstances if they arise.

The components' supply shortages of the last three years have been challenging, but Fibrax also have manufacturing sites in Poland and Morocco and can therefore call on global resources to fulfil orders and is sufficiently flexible to amend its own deliveries in line with the changing needs of its customers.

Turning to the assistance Fibrax has enjoyed under the MADE Cymru scheme, Craig said, "There are quite a few elements to it; Education with short courses, there is upskilling and networking elements with cohorts and dipping into other industries.

"You have collaboration with MADE Cymru or someone else you have met on the courses and that's worked for us."

So, you have educational and personal development as well as improvements for the business, he said.

"I am enrolled on the Innovation Management

course with some colleagues, and there is a marked change in the way we contribute to the business since starting on it. It encourages a more strategic outlook on business activities and the innovations surrounding them."

Fibrax has about a dozen employees working on the courses, evenly spread over the Innovation Management and Lean Six Sigma courses.

The kind of modular approach can be made to work for individual students to suit themselves from term to term while working and fitting in the rest of their lives.



Graham said no special qualification was needed to start on the MADE Cymru programme. "The reality is they come to the programme with plenty of experience," he pointed out.

"The challenge for us is helping the students to relearn how to learn and on

the Master programme the Module in critical writing skills is very helpful."

In four or five years' time it will be different technology we will be looking at and we need to ensure students deeply understand this new technology and how it affects their businesses. The idea is as they work through assessments they can make continuous improvements, he said.

Students can do more courses within their organisations to keep on top of changes and challenges they face.

Fibrax has its roots in the bicycle business but some of its products easily morphed when the automobile industry took off, including braking materials, wiring, cables, and fittings especially rubber components.

Customers are a mixture of direct OEM and T1 suppliers and because their base is broad both in terms of clients' locations and products they can better cope with changes in order deliveries reflected by assembly plants' needs and showroom orders.

In addition, Craig said, "Another critical impact of collaboration, particularly through SMART Partnerships, is the access to funding routes which we as a business would otherwise be unaware of. I know through interactions with other WAF members that funding opportunities can be hard to identify or difficult to access. Our partnership with UWTSD has given us a foot in the door, so to speak, and provided an opportunity to invest further in innovations that would be otherwise be inaccessible."

Graham said that it is difficult to quantify what management savings may be achieved by undertaking the MADE Cymru courses but significant efficiencies have been realised by many companies and importantly there have been reductions in waste throughout operations of at least 25%.

There is a lot of potential waiting to be unlocked on the MADE Cymru programme and Welsh automotive companies cannot afford to simply lock their front doors and walk away from the issues they face.

AN INTERVIEW WITH...

Fibrax & MADE Cymru UWTSD

As the automotive industry in Wales faces global issues and survival, the majority still overlook a helping hand on their doorstep.

University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) has been running the **MADE Cymru** programme of courses over the last three years. They are designed specifically to upskill manufacturers in Wales. Thanks to the funding (European Social Fund via Welsh Government), over 360 students have obtained qualifications in Continuous Improvement with Industry 4.0 (Level 5); Smart Manufacturing with Industry 4.0 and Business Improvement with Innovation Management (Levels 6 & 7).

"The MADE Cymru programme is working with just over 130 companies in Wales," said Graham Howe, Executive Head of MADE Cymru. "For many companies, this is their first engagement with academia, and all the Universities in Wales could be considered a resource to support Industry.

MADE Cymru was set up to be industry led and provide what practical and educational assistance lies within Welsh academia, but it's not a bottomless pot of funds which might otherwise go down a widening and deepening drain in a struggling business, or the Welsh economy.

The symbiotic scheme is a partnership between industry and university supported by a team of academics, researchers and technical experts with a business and student support service quietly working in the background.



"We're Industry led, businesses can come to discuss their current challenges, and we then look at these and suggest possible ways to assist, pointing them towards possible answers," said Graham.

That may be getting selected employees to undertake modules in Industry 4.0 or Smart Manufacturing or putting other students into the business to assist as part of their own degree courses or apprenticeships, but always with supervision.

Nothing is imposed on a business, as the object is to achieve results that address challenges specific to each organisation.

In the case of Fibrax, said Graham, they have been working with UWTSD for just over three years, starting before the Covid pandemic, and like other businesses UWTSD have been working with on the programme, one individual element of activity is not often a silver bullet answer to a particular set of challenges or circumstances.

"What we have done with Fibrax is an example of upskilling, engagement on the MADE Cymru programme from collaborative R&D, networking and economic activity between students on programmes and how they can use the academics and universities we have in Wales to the very best effect across a number of activities."

Students undertake 16-week modules which include for some courses a 1,500-word assignment on Industry 4.0 about technology a company may employ and the impact that would make on the business.

