

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT VISITS TEESPORT



SEEING FOR HIMSELF Left, Stephen Hammond on his visit to Teesport, with the chief executive of PD Ports group, David Robinson

UNDER Secretary of State for Transport Stephen Hammond has sung the praises of a North East port, following a visit on Monday.

Mr Hammond got an insight into operations on the ground and took a harbour launch trip to see Teesport from the River Tees.

PD Ports, which owns and operates the port, has invested almost £17m in infrastructure improvements in the last 18

months, among them the introduction of a new terminal operating software system to improve productivity and provide greater visibility for customers.

The container terminal facilities have also been upgraded and include the arrival of new rubber-tyred gantry cranes with GPS-assisted technology.

Chief executive of PD Ports group David Robinson said: "We were delighted to welcome the

Under Secretary of State for Transport to Teesport.

"During his visit he could see the vital role Teesport plays as a key economic driver in the region, as well as the benefits our customers are realising through our port-centric logistics activity.

"Teesport is well-placed to make a material difference to the way companies organise their supply chain markets and we are looking to build on our

existing platform to position the North East, and in particular the Tees Valley, as a leading centre for UK logistics."

Teesport, the UK leader in port-centric logistics, is home to large import centres for Asda, Tesco and others.

Mr Hammond said: "The ports and the maritime sector are vital to the economy, and Teesport plays into this both nationally and regionally."

AMS wins submarine equipment contract

MANUFACTURING

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A MANUFACTURING specialist has won a six-figure contract to supply the Norwegian Navy with submarine equipment.

Analox Military Systems (AMS), which specialises in the design and manufacture of gas analysis equipment, has signed the contract with Norwegian Defense Logistics Organisation (NDLO) to supply the Norwegian Navy with two carbon monoxide monitoring systems for six ULA-class submarines.

Established more than 30 years ago, the Stokesley-based firm already exports to navies around the world including the USA, Brazil, Holland, Australia and

Sweden.

It will undertake the development, manufacture, installation and commissioning of the new system, with the first due to be delivered in February.

Analox Ltd divided its operation into two divisions in 2011, launching Analox Military Systems Ltd to help it continue the business growth.

AMS, which also won Exporter of the Year Award at the North East Business Awards 2006, delivers services and products for military cus-



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tomers around the world. It is currently working with Hakon Rygh, its Norwegian distributor, on the installation and commissioning phase.

Vicky Brown, sales and marketing director at AMS, said: "We're very proud to be supplying the Norwegian Navy with gas analysis equipment.

"Historically, carbon monoxide monitoring has been problematic for submarines owing to the presence of hydrogen.

"AMS's new system uses an accurate infra-red technique and as a result, is not sensitive to hydrogen, giving the submariners confidence in the accuracy of the monitoring."

Commander Baard Gjerstad, project manager submarine projects for NDLO, added: "We needed equipment which would not be affected if hydrogen was present,

and Analox Military Systems is able to deliver systems which meet this specific need. We are looking forward to working with AMS on this contract."

The submarine has people living and working within a confined space. It is therefore essential the atmosphere is carefully managed at all times to limit exposure of the crew to potentially harmful substances.

The new CO monitoring system, which is designed specifically for submarines, will be officially launched at DSEI, a major defence and security exhibition in London, from September 10 to 13.

Brown added: "We are expanding our team and boosting our engineering capability. This contract win, and the growth of our team, is testament to the commitment and hard work of everyone at AMS."

SARAH PITTENDRIGH



Don't let heart rule your head

"CASH is king" may be one of the oldest business cliches in the book, but, like most cliches, it's repeated so often because it's true.

When I started my business in a precarious economic climate, and having learnt from a previous failure, I knew it was vitally important to ensure fluid cash-flow.

Keeping fixed overheads to a minimum was very much on my mind when writing the business plan for Simply Bows and Chair Covers. To anyone starting out, I would advise accounting for every conceivable cost and building in a contingency for extraordinary costs along with a plan should sales not meet forecast.

High fixed overheads should be avoided if possible at start-up. My model was based around working from home to reduce cost and to give me a flexible working environment to fit around my family life. This is not always possible, but there are some great managed work space offices that are very affordable for business start-ups.

Hard work and patience are vital. I ran all aspects of the business myself at the beginning to keep overheads as low as possible. You also need to be prepared to live frugally - don't expect to draw large sums of money out of a fledgling business and where possible re-invest as much as you can rather than taking on a business loan. I am a huge believer you get out what you put in.

The biggest lesson I've learnt from the past is to grow my company slowly, ensuring it has a solid foundation and is self-funding. When the economic downturn hit the UK in 2008, our fixed overheads were high and when sales dried up, we ended up over-geared.

This time around I took the decision to grow my company from a local to a national business, using franchising as the vehicle. I feel this has been the best decision I ever made for cash-flow.

I could've employed managers around the country, resulting in high fixed overheads, but instead I'm generating revenue from a skilled team of franchisees/brand ambassadors.

Another difficult lesson I've learnt is to take the sentimentality out of business. As painful as it may be, don't keep ploughing money into your business if it's failing. Seek advice, dispassionately evaluate the situation and get out quickly if needs be.

It's easier said than done when you've put your heart and soul into something, and I understand the fear of knowing you'll be unemployed, will have to make redundancies and could lose your home, but there is no point in building debt upon debt. Do not let your heart rule your head.

The best advice I can give is never be complacent. As we say in our business, we are only as good as our last event.

Sarah Pittendrigh is managing director of www.simplybowsandchaircovers.co.uk. Ask a question via Twitter: @simplybows