



Polymer Compounders starts 2016 with expanded capacity



Houlter: Capacity expansion is a sign of good health

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Durham-based Polymer Compounders has added manufacturing capacity from two new compounding lines to its existing three at the beginning of this year.

The two new twin-screw extruders, manufactured by Chinese manufacturer Useon and supplied by Rotherham-based QualConvey, were installed in September last year. At the same time, one of its existing production lines has been refurbished to increase throughput in conjunction with the development of a computer-based production programme to support the production team and allow operators to optimise processing conditions by reducing waste and delays between production lots.

Grahame Houlter, Polymer Compounders' managing director, says: "This capacity expansion is a sign of the good health of the manufacturing industry in the UK in general. It also clearly demonstrates that we are expanding our customer base and our share of the market, both domestically and across Western Europe."

Stuart Hurst, site manager at the facility, says: "The two new lines show that we are listening to what our customers need. Our new larger line is perfect for all the market sector projects we are now taking on. Our smaller new line allows us versatility to effectively service both mould and end-users."

Last year Polymer Compounders increased the footprint of its facility from 4,650 sq metres to 5,600 sq metres and invested in new offices, warehousing facilities, factory lighting and an analytical testing and research and development laboratory. The compounder also carried out groundwork on the land it owns at the back of the factory so it is ready for expansion when needed, giving it an additional 4,650 sq metres.

The compounder has invested "close to £500,000" on work done on the factory and on the purchase of production equipment, boosting its manufacturing capacity by 50% from 4,000 tonnes to 6,000 tonnes.

Polymer Compounders' biggest markets are consumer goods and automotive followed closely by trade moulding and medical and hygiene.

The Durham compounder says its PC-Abscom B200C is becoming the material of choice for instrument panels in Europe with leading vehicle manufacturers.

Stephen Blair, technical and quality assurance manager at Polymer Compounders and who oversaw the development of B200C over several months, says: "Not only is the resin lighter than most commercial alternatives; its outstanding mechanical properties allow for a design which can again save weight. That is a massive advantage, and not just in the automotive industry."

In addition to low density in black, the material exhibits improved ductility and impact resistance, especially at low temperature. Polymer Compounder developed B200C internally, in partnership with a tier-one customer and an external laboratory. The grade has now been approved for producing instrument panels on the automotive producer's leading models.

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meanwhile, Polymer Compounders has recruited Richard Gray as area sales manager. Gray will mainly focus on the North, an area he knows well, in order to develop the firm's relationships with thermoplastics moulders and OEMs in that region.

Houlder says: "We are very pleased to have Richard joining us. With his wealth of experience, his strong network of contacts in the industry and his extensive technical knowledge, he is the ideal addition to an already strong team. All our employees are hand-picked and I believe we've succeeded to build the most formidable, highly trained, team in Europe."

Clay, a mechanical engineer from Warwick University, has more than 20 years' experience in technical sales within the polymer and composite industry, including 14 years as advanced development specialist at GE Plastics. Before joining Polymer Compounders, Clay was working in the F1 and automotive industries at TenCate Advanced Composites.

Established in 1993, Polymer Compounders specialises in manufacturing and distribution of engineering thermoplastic compounds for the injection moulding and extrusion industries.

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