

Relentless machinery investment



By Glass Systems Group

Four years ago the Glass Systems Group embarked on a renewed process of investment that included online gas filling and new cutting tables ahead of legislation change.

This investment strategy continued and by the end of this summer a further £3million will have been spent on new machinery in the last 24 months alone.

Two tempering furnaces have been replaced, along with two extra Lisecc arising lines, including a KSR capable of grinding shapes.

This has resulted in the company's toughening capacity being increased to 35,000m² per week. This extra capacity has allowed the Glass Systems Group's conservatory roof division, Climate, to further expand, as well as keeping up with the increased demand from the two sealed unit sites, Glass Systems and Glass Systems Direct.

Both Glass Systems and Glass Systems Direct have seen the addition of another Bystronic sealed unit line, a Hegla laminated cutting table, and the group's first Super Spacer applicator, which have all contributed to increased capacities and efficiencies.

These major purchases aside, the Glass Systems Group has made numerous smaller investments including a Viprotion online scanner, improved software systems, new vehicles, personnel and more.

This aggressive investment strategy has continued in impressive fashion, with the Glass Systems Group becoming the first

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company in the UK to acquire a twin headed Super Spacer applicator. The applicator will enable Glass Systems to produce both warm edge triple and double glazed sealed units with increased efficiency, preparing the business for the expected increase in demand for this type of product.

In an economic climate when many companies have chosen to cut back, why has Glass Systems continued to invest in the business? Managing director Alan Atkinson said: "There are multiple reasons for our investment, but ultimately it's all about ensuring we can give our customers cutting edge glass products, exceptional service and competitive prices. The need to manufacture more energy efficient sealed units to comply with the Building Regulations was the catalyst for some of our machinery purchases, while others were to improve quality and speed up operations. Admittedly the market has been tough over the last few years, but through making these improvements we've been able to weather the economic storm and come out stronger the other side."

logical step

Glass Systems' most recent purchase, the twin-headed Super Spacer applicator, is an example of the company improving efficiencies and gearing up for the future. "We've been using Edgetech at our conservatory roof division Climate for the past four years and last autumn successfully installed a fully automated Bystronic single

head applicator at Glass Systems Direct, our sister company," Alan said. "Edgetech Super Spacer became our standard warm edge offering at Glass Systems Direct, and the next logical step was to continue the strategy at Glass Systems.

"The increasing demand for warm edge, combined with an anticipated increase in triple glazed resulted in us going down the twin-head option from Bystronic. This is a major acquisition for Glass Systems, but there is no doubt both us and our customers will benefit. It not only further automates production, increasing our efficiencies and quality, but also offers our customers that 'something extra'. As well as ticking all the boxes in terms of WER requirements, the brand awareness and marketing help available from Edgetech for our customers, and in turn their customers, is a major plus for all concerned."

The trend for more warm edge IGUs is one that Alan does not see slowing down. He said: "Two years ago warm edge represented about 10% of our business, but this is now at the 50% mark. With the new Building Regulations due in October this year, we envisage more and more demand and are gearing up for 80% warm edge. Fulfilling this demand with Super Spacer is the natural choice and allows us to continue to be not only the largest independent IGU manufacturer in the UK, but also the most productive."

The Glass Systems Group will soon be opening a factory in East Anglia, enabling them to supply a geographical region that was previously off limits. "The new factory will be opening later in the year and my fellow directors and I believe it will herald a new chapter in the Glass Systems success story," Alan concluded.

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