

GOWERCROFT IN £350,000 MACHINE INVESTMENT

Strategic growth at Gowercroft has seen a significant expansion of machining capabilities as part of new range aimed at the Passivhaus market

In 21 years Gowercroft has grown from a modest three-man joinery team using borrowed machinery to an award-winning manufacturer with a reputation for quality and innovation and a string of high-profile projects to its name.

Although in the early years, the company grew organically on the back of repeat and referral work, based on personal service and its ability to provide bespoke solutions, a more strategic product-focused and sector specific approach was required to ensure its long-term success.

Gowercroft therefore began its transition from joinery company to a manufacturer of high-end windows and doors, with the launch of its Classic range in 2013. This combined

modern glazing and performance features with a traditional look, aimed largely at renovation and extension projects. Made from sustainable hardwood or Accoya and coated with a specially formulated protective finish, the Classic range offers unmatched longevity and low maintenance and is still a core part of the business.

The next major step was the introduction of the Heritage range in 2015. Designed as a high performance like-for-like replacement for single-glazed windows in listed properties, its unique combination of ultra slim (6.2mm) energy efficient vacuum-glazing with traditional craftsmanship has been recognised in several industry innovation awards.

Building on this pioneering

technology, Gowercroft is now preparing to launch a third exciting range of windows and doors, which is set to challenge the Passivhaus market with its slim traditional elegance, sustainability and superior energy efficiency.

"Defining our target markets and product offerings very clearly has been central to our growth, as has controlling and streamlining our operations to enable us to meet increased demand, particularly as the woodworking sector is suffering from ongoing skills shortages," said managing director Andrew Madge.

As part of this strategy the company has recently made a £350,000 investment in two new machines to improve efficiency at the front end of the business. The installation of

an SCM Dogma window line and an SCM M100 5-axis CNC is expected to deliver the company's entire product offering efficiently with very minimal tooling changes and downtime.

In addition, the new customised end-to-end software system, complete with barcoding and an integrated dealership module will help rationalise the business, whilst allowing an expanding network of resellers to price directly through the system and see exactly where their products are in the production process.

"We believe that these additions together with a few minor reorganisations in other areas of the factory will allow us to comfortably double our turnover through the same facility," said Mr Madge.

Despite seeing some market uncertainty and delayed buying decisions likely as a result of Brexit, the company is optimistic of the future growth. Customer enquiry levels are growing and there is a noticeable swing back towards UK manufactured products – possibly driven by currency exchange rates, the fear of future tariffs and a consumer-led desire to "Buy British".

"My opinion is that as the market gets more competitive and increasingly transparent, it is those companies which can truly differentiate their offering who are likely to expand – and that is exactly where we plan to be." ■



Above: Production director Darren Young (left) and production manager Simon Gayton run final dimensional checks during machine configuration