

Innovation is key to a successful future

THE OBAN-BASED COMPANY LOOKS BOTH BACK AT THEIR HISTORY AND ON TOWARDS TOMORROW'S FISH FARMING WORLD



From humble beginnings repairing poor quality imported polyethylene (PE) fish farm pens, Fusion Marine has undergone a remarkable transformation over the last 19 years. Indeed, it has become one of the leading aquaculture equipment manufacturers in the world and is renowned for the quality of its products combined with excellent customer service.

Fusion Marine was established in 1991 as the marine division of the Chesterfield based Fusion Group – a major utility supplier of water and gas pipes, fittings and associated equipment. It was recognised at the time that the technology applied in the manufacture of PE piping and associated fittings had considerable potential to be used in the rapidly growing fish farming industry.

'We had a fantastic resource at Fusion to develop new products for the fish farming industry and that this was the spur that led to the founding of Fusion Marine,' says Stephen Divers, managing director.

Originally based in Livingston, most of the company's initial work was repairing

and upgrading imported pens. But it was not long before the first Fusion Marine designed pens hit the market. The first sale was for a two-ring pen for Golden Sea Produce Ltd, which was quickly followed by an investment and upgrade programme that led to the launch of a new three-ring design, complete with safety decking.

This new design proved an immediate success, with orders from Harlosh Salmon and Uyeasound Salmon launching Fusion Marine for the first time as a serious player in the fish farm market. In 1993, the company located to new premises in nearby East Kilbride that enabled it to set up a dedicated service centre and development base, resulting in the design of several new types of robust and innovative circular and square fish farm pens for both marine and freshwater, as well as pontoons and other associated products.

Further significant investment resulted in the development of a new and unique form of extra-strong fish farm pen bracket which, when combined with the use of unique electrofusion components, resulted in Fusion pens gaining a global

reputation for their toughness and versatility.

In 1995, the increase in the export trade resulted in the opening of a new support base in Chile. Four years later Fusion Marine became a limited company, which was a fully owned subsidiary of the newly restructured Fusion Group.

Whilst the overall market was burgeoning, there were also difficult times to overcome – most notably the ISA outbreak in Scotland in the late 1990s. Such problems led Fusion Marine to embark on a new strategy of diversification – by expanding into different export markets and bringing in new products such as polyethylene workboats.

Relocation

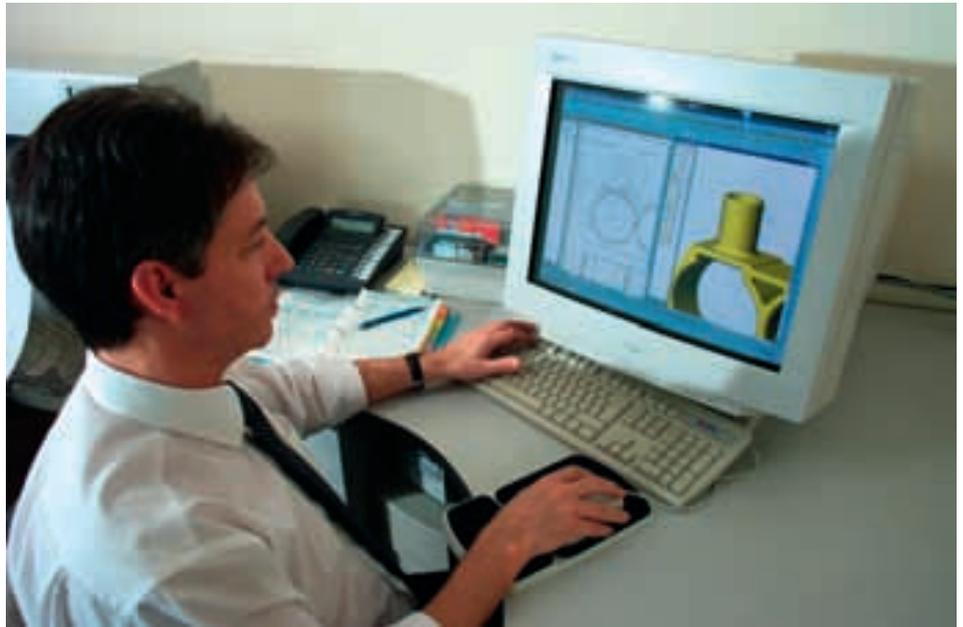
In 2001, the business relocated to Oban to enable it to provide an even better service to the fish farming industry. This was a significant development, as the new coastal base at the Marine Resource Centre provided the space and environment for a fully functional manufacture and repair centre handily placed in the heartland of the Scottish fish farming industry. It also meant that many pen deliveries could be towed direct to the fish farm sites, pen designs could be trialled in the adjacent sea loch, and workboats put through their paces nearby. It was the perfect location.

Fusion pens gained a global reputation for their toughness and versatility

In 2004, new Health & Safety Executive legislation resulted in Fusion Marine developing a new and successful design of anti-slip safety decking that could also be retrofitted onto existing pens. As well as pens, Fusion Marine supplies a wide range of associated equipment – including bird net supports, moorings and nets – enabling it to offer a complete package for fish farmers.

Further diversification included a move into the utility sector by providing PE piping and associated sophisticated welding techniques for hydro-electric and other similar schemes. The company also developed a very successful business manufacturing shore-mounted pontoons for the leisure industry, as well as a separate recycled plastic division that manufactures a range of outdoor furniture.

In 2007, the company came under independent control following the successful completion of a management buyout from parent company Fusion Group, spearheaded by directors Stephen Divers



Whilst the company has over the years diversified into a range of different operations, fish farming has been, and always will be, at the heart of the business. One of the most significant milestones was the development in 2004 of the large Triton fish farm pen that is suitable for salmon and tuna, and which has considerable potential for farming in exposed offshore sites.

The Triton pen, and its various subsequent models, has proved a tremendous success and currently completes the jigsaw of the Fusion Marine range – one that includes the highly popular Oceanflex and Aquaflex pens, along with square pens. Fusion Marine sees the

their fish farm operations by providing new equipment and upgrading existing infrastructure.

‘We are looking ahead to the future with confidence. We never believe in standing still and are continually investing in new technology and designs to ensure that we stay ahead of the field. Stock biosecurity is one of the most important issues facing the fish farming industry today and the robustness and versatility of our pens ensures that this is one of our greatest strengths.’

Clockwise from top left: Triton ring, Kilbrannan sound; design system; Loch Fyne; Kuwait, 1996.



and Iain Forbes.

Divers says: ‘We had grown to such an extent that it was now possible for the company to confidently stand on its own two feet and continue to expand under the full control of its own management.’

‘The MBO enabled us to react quickly to changing industry requirements, ensuring that our customers throughout the world continue to receive the best possible service.’

new trend towards large robust pens as the future and believes it is now better placed than ever to continue to serve the global aquaculture industry and lead the way in the development of new products.

‘We have forged a strong relationship with all our customers based on our reputation for service and support, combined with the sheer quality of our products,’ states Divers. ‘We work closely with our customers to “future-proof”

We are continually investing in new technology