

# Moulding a Successful Future

**'Manufacturing Ireland' speaks to Colm Cuffe, Operations Director, Tool & Plastic Co Ltd, about the company's future investments and the new co-operation agreement with Irish Micro Moulding.**



In 2006, the company invested €5 million in a new manufacturing facility that includes a state-of-the-art 5,000 sq ft Class 100,000 clean room

Tool & Plastic Co Ltd has an excellent reputation in the contract injection moulding sector in Ireland. The company was set up in 1968 in Longford Town, and has established itself since then with an enviable position in technical moulding, reliability and customer service. In 2000, Declan O'Rourke, and Colm Cuffe, bought the company from its then US owner and changed the direction of the business. The company is now in business for 42 years with manufacturing operations in Ireland and the Czech Republic employing 70 people altogether. In 2007 Tool & Plastic Co Ltd moved to a state of the art manufacturing facility in Longford town where 85 per cent of their business is in the medical device and

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healthcare sectors. The company also opened a new manufacturing facility, known as InnovaPlast in the Czech Republic in April 2008 to service the Central and Eastern European markets. "In 2000, 65 per cent of our business was in the electronic side of moulding, and our turnover averaged at €2 million," Colm Cuffe told 'Manufacturing Ireland'. "Since then our turnover has increased by on average 20 per cent year on year. Today we are averaging 50 customers on an annual basis while 85 per cent of our business is in the medical device/healthcare sector and we have added six new customers this year already. Our largest customer is in the healthcare sector with 17 per cent of our annual turnover while our top ten

customers average 45 per cent of our turnover. This shows how much we have changed the business focus in only the last nine years," Cuffe continued.

## New Merger Means New Future

In March this year, Cuffe and O'Rourke, announced, with Pat Whyte, Irish Micro Mouldings (IMM), that their companies have entered into a co-operation agreement. Both companies will share functional resources and each will concentrate on core competencies.

The Longford facility will concentrate on injection moulding, cleanroom manufacturing, Proprietary product development and program management. Irish Micro Mouldings will concentrate on the painting, shielding, decorating, finishing and assembly of metal and plastic components. Both companies will jointly focus on developing micro moulding technology and a national micro moulding centre of excellence is being established. The purpose of the centre is to focus on product development, design, tooling, automation and assembly of micro components for the pharma, medical device and electronic sectors.

## Move to Longford for Expansion

Irish Micro Mouldings



The unique merger will see all operations based in Longford under the Tool & Plastic branding

was formed in 1985 as a medical moulder of small plastic parts. It is the oldest manufacturing company in the Gaeltacht, located in Inverin, Co Galway. The company primarily serves the healthcare and medical device industry sectors. It is ISO 9001:2000 accredited.

Irish Micro Mouldings was the first company in Ireland to pioneer specialist micro injection moulding technology and has state of the art micro moulding equipment. As well as being a specialist assembler and finisher of plastic components involving printing, shielding and painting, the company has particular expertise in medical device product development.

"Irish Micro Mouldings offers advanced micro-moulding technologies, painting and finishing, assembly operations and moulding equipment which will be beneficial to our current business. Tool & Plastic will concentrate on injection moulding and we are also in the process of setting up a National Micro Moulding Centre which will

**"Our ultimate aim is to start developing propriety products with a focus on our own micro-moulding products"**



Tool & Plastic's high-tech automation machines

build our company's reputation further. In the next 12-18 months we expect to see consolidation taking place in the Irish markets. Irish Micro Moulding has technologies which we need to move forward into the future. Our ultimate aim is to start developing propriety products to offer our existing and future customers," Cuffe said. Tool & Plastic was awarded the EN ISO 13485:2003 registration for the manufacture and assembly of plastic components for the medical device and healthcare sector in December last year which is a significant stepping stone for them also.

## Continued Investment for Tool & Plastic

With the new co-operation already showing benefits for Irish Micro Mouldings and T&P, Tool & Plastic Co Ltd have been continuing their investments into expanding and developing their Irish and Czech facilities.

"We built a new facility in

April 2006 investing a significant figure of €5 million into our Longford site. We also coincided this investment with a €2 million investment into our Czech operation purely to develop a good business base in Central and Eastern Europe," Cuffe said. In the next three years Cuffe says the company wants to set up a base in the US, through a JV/other route - options that they are already exploring and have to date, developed a number of possible options. They also want to expand operations in the Far Eastern markets. At present Tool & Plastic exports as far a field as the Dominican Republic, China, Germany, France, Belgium and to the Irish and UK markets. "Essentially, we want to align ourselves with all major markets and develop our presence on a larger global scale. The combined business of T&P and IMM gives the new company a much stronger offering to its customers - The combined operation will employ over 105 persons, with a machine base of 48 injection moulding machines, added value capabilities such as RFI shielding, painting, printing (tampo, silk screen and hot oil stamping), assembly, and, over 80,000 sq ft of manufacturing floorspace. This begins to get us where we need to be positioned for the future - We want to be recognised for our manufacturing, customer service, product development and micromoulding technologies. With continuing development and investment, Tool & Plastic will have a positive future to look forward to as a new and continuously improving company," Cuffe concluded.