

ATPLAS IN THE PIPELINE





AS ATPLAS APPROACHES ITS 50TH BIRTHDAY, THE COMPANY IS ACCELERATING INTO AN EXCITING AND INNOVATIVE FUTURE.

IN THE PIPELINE

PROJECT MANAGED BY: AMANDA JONES

Atplas celebrates its 50th anniversary this January, marking half a century of supplying water meter boxes and house connection fittings to the water industry in the UK and globally. While the bulk of its business comes from working with British water utility firms and distributors, its products can be found in 35 countries around the globe.

But even the impressive five decades of history that Atplas is celebrating this year do not tell the whole story. The water meter box manufacturer, "Atlantic Plastics" was founded in 1974, and was taken over by Tyco in the late 90s, alongside Talbot, a firm founded over a century ago in 1904 to sell a device for tapping under pressure water lines and installing a valve without interrupting the supply, and Edward Barber & Company (EBCO), a metalworking firm established in 1908. The Talbot and EBCO businesses were incorporated into Atlantic

Plastics at its Bridgend site. There was another change of ownership in 2010 when Tyco sold these businesses to a private equity firm to form the TALIS Group, with the British firms forming together as TALIS-UK, now Atplas.

Our history is from a number of smaller family businesses with their own strong brands and identities that have all been pulled together as one," says James Fry, the Managing Director of Atplas today. "Having that history as a business is a great foundation to operate from."

In the last 18 months, the firm was acquired by the AVK Group, a firm whose core values were a good fit for Atplas and gave it a greater platform to work from.

A NEW PLATFORM

"Ten years ago, we underwent a fundamental change in culture" Fry explains, "We carried out an employee engagement survey, formed working parties and focus groups and found ways to drive improvement in the business." >>



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Ukraine conflict saw huge disruption to the supply chains,” Fry says. Materials shortages have meant we were facing a great deal of uncertainty, but I think actually that whole period has made us significantly more resilient.”

“The whole business has had to pull together on a daily basis, firefighting and troubleshooting,” says Fry. “We got through it with teamwork and the dedication of our people focussing on keeping our customers happy.”

A PROMISING FUTURE

Atplas’s goals go beyond simply managing supply chain issues, however. The company builds and nurtures the relationships it has with its customers looking to provide solutions and go beyond

just supplying product, it believes the industry can improve by partnering with businesses and developing deeper relationships beyond the tendering process.

“Championing change in the water industry poses its own set of challenges,” Fry acknowledges. “Water utilities have established practices, and while our company sees the potential for improvement, introducing innovation is a gradual process. Developing new ideas, navigating regulatory and legislative processes, and educating clients require time and effort from our dedicated sales team.” What we do well is focus on our customers. Our customers know what to expect from us. We aim to make life easy. We innovate alongside our clients, aiming to develop the

sort of long-term partnerships that go beyond any given transaction. We connect with the water utilities firms across as many touch points as possible to improve relationships at all levels,” Fry says.”

Most recently, Fry and his team have been working to replace the use of gunmetal in their products with a plastic equivalent, reducing the carbon footprint of each product. It is part of an ongoing sustainability agenda.

Several years ago, Atplas launched a project to transition the manufacturing of its range of meter boxes to recycled plastics, and that project is just now reaching its final stages with the launch of our new range of Matrix Multi four and six port meterboxes early in 2024.



The work paid off, seeing Atplas winning and being shortlisted for several leadership and employee engagement awards, but as Fry points out, the change went deeper than that.

“You can feel the difference in the business, and that helps with attracting the right people,” Fry says.

These changes were part of what made Atplas of interest to the AVK Group, a billion-euro firm owned by its founder, Niels Aage Kjaer with more than 100 companies and 4,800 employees worldwide.

“His journey is quite incredible,” Fry relays. “From designing one valve to building a billion-euro business, and his DNA is present in every part of the company. It is a global organisation that acts locally and cares deeply about quality and innovation. Kjaer really digs into the details and knows his businesses inside out.”

“When the owner cares about the business it gives it a different feel,” Fry says. “We operate with a huge degree of autonomy and trust.”

TROUBLED WATERS

Atplas has undergone a cultural transformation and has the support of a global new owner, but it has not been unscathed by the tumultuous events of the last few years. The company has seen growth of 33% since 2019, most of that in the post-Covid era. During the first three months of the pandemic, Atplas saw its sales drop dramatically, although those figures recovered rapidly after the lockdown and have continued on an upward trajectory ever since. But Fry is the first to admit that it proved to be a challenging environment to work in.

“Operating in a post-Covid, post-Brexit world compounded by the impact of the Russia-



“It has been a good project, with significant investment in new machinery and new tooling to get us to that point,” Fry tells us. “We have received platinum accreditation for our carbon reduction, we have achieved zero-waste-to-landfill, and as part of the AVK group, we will embrace the sustainability target to be carbon neutral by 2030.”

This is part of an ongoing process of investment and innovation. Atplas is currently renovating its facilities, improving its manufacturing layout, office, and storage facilities, and equipping the company for the growth ahead. Creating the road map for Atplas’s future and the opportunities being part of AVK generates, combining the product portfolio and cost efficiency of a global leader with the flexibility and adaptation of a local team. We have an exciting time ahead.” ☺



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