

LOCATE IN AND



SECTOR: **ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING**

Several of Northern Ireland's largest manufacturing firms and global companies proudly call Ards and North Down home. Among the leading brands located in the area are Spirit Aerospace, Denman, 3M and Whale, which is part of the huge American multi-million dollar Brunswick Corporation. Renowned for its exceptional talent, highly educated, skilled workforce, strong staff retention rates and superb high quality of life, the region is a proven location for success.

SUCCESS SHOWCASE: **WHALE (PART OF NAVICO GROUP, US BASED BRUNSWICK CORPORATION)**

If you're an advanced manufacturing firm, Ards and North Down is a superb location. Just ask **Patrick Roberts** from Whale, which has been in Bangor since 1969.

Founded in 1810 as an import-export business, it's now part of the Navico Group within the massive multi-million-dollar Brunswick Corporation. Employing 230 people in Bangor, Whale had a £32m turnover last year and serves the marine, healthcare, industrial and RV markets.

"We design and manufacture water systems and heating systems for mobile applications and healthcare," said Patrick, Vice President & General Manager Performance Components at Navico Group

He added: *"From inception through to delivery, it's all done internally. Everything we sell, we manufacture ourselves."*

Originally based in Belfast but relocated following a bomb explosion during The Troubles, it's now a centre of excellence within the Brunswick group, thanks to its strong technical expertise and skilled, locally-sourced staff.

Whale's strong engineering team works closely with Queen's University's engineering department for innovation product testing work; another reason the engineering workforce is second to none.

"Education is very strong here, and we've got really good universities nearby," Patrick said.

Whale, which boasts an advanced 3D printing facility, is a long-standing engineering and innovation hub. It's also one of several advanced manufacturing businesses located in Ards and North Down, which includes Spirit Newtownards, Denman, Denroy, Valpar and 3M in Bangor.

Patrick believes it's beneficial to be sited in the area for the benefits of strategic collaboration and shared engineering excellence.

"We work closely with Denroy and Valpar," he said.

"Valpar is a considerable supplier. We've always worked with their development teams in developing pipework for the marine industry. We do some 3D printing for Denroy. They help us with tooling and have also assisted in times of overflow. We've sent tools to Denroy and they've run them in their machines."





SUCCESS SHOWCASE: **CONT'D** **WHALE (PART OF NAVICO GROUP,** **US BASED BRUNSWICK CORPORATION)**

Partners, strong logistics and transport links are essential, with the proximity of Dublin another plus.

"We sell to 52 countries globally. Our business is roughly 60% in the UK, 30% in Europe and 10% in America," he said.

"From a travel perspective, we're close to both the City and International airports, which is great for suppliers visiting and for our team that covers all of Europe. There isn't a day when we don't have people travelling. I fly to the US often and the two-hour trip from Belfast to Dublin airport on the express coach is great."

Staff retention can sometimes be a challenge – but not for Whale. Many employees live locally to avail of a strong work life balance, while also benefiting from high quality, affordable housing and excellent schools.

"We've a very low turnover in employees," Patrick said. "We've been offering flexible working for 10 years, which has been good for attracting and retaining staff."

With turnover having doubled in the last seven years, success is primarily due to people and innovation.

"We can only be innovative and lean and have a culture of continuous improvement with great people – ultimately, they are our biggest asset," he said.

The Bangor facility has impressed the US leadership team with its positive attitude to work, innovation, leadership and management, as well as its high staff retention.

"We are cost competitive with a significant part of continental Europe and we have a highly skilled workforce. It's all of those things. The talent base is very good, the education system is excellent and North Down and Ards is a great place to live."

Ards and North Down

A great place to live, work and invest

Ards and North Down is a proven location for success.

With some of the most enviable assets in terms of companies, people and physical resources, this is a thriving centre for business growth.

Located adjacent to Belfast, this borough boasts strong connectivity both in transport links (beside Belfast Harbour major port and airports and under 2 hrs to Dublin by road and rail) and a leading digital infrastructure.

Home to a hub of world leaders across a wide range of industries including Creative and Digital, Tourism – Hospitality and Leisure, Agri-food, Business / Professional Services, and Advanced Manufacturing.

With a highly educated skilled workforce, strong retention rates cited by employers and an exceptionally high quality of life, it is an ideal choice for professional relocation.

With an abundance of mixed-use, greenfield and water's edge investment opportunities backed up by pro-business Council support, now is the time to locate in Ards and North Down.

Find out more: ANDbusiness.co.uk

Get in touch: Email: signaladmin@ardsandnorthdown.gov.uk | Tel: +44(0)300 013 3333