

Success story



Cast Iron Welding Services (CIWS)

The business

Cast Iron Welding Services based in Coalville, Leicestershire is a firm of cast iron welding engineers which serves markets worldwide. Its gas fusion welding process is known throughout the world and the company remanufactures and repairs cast iron components in the marine, power generation, industry, heritage, steam locomotive and vintage car markets.

The business has well over 70 years' experience working with and repairing cast iron and can work on any component, from the smallest broken manifold lug to the largest diesel marine engine block.

Some of the company's work is done at the customer's site but most is undertaken in at Cast Iron Welding Services' own premises.

The problem

Many items to be remanufactured or repaired by Cast Iron Welding Services come to the UK by sea. Director Marie Palmer knew that the UK's exit from the EU would have a negative impact on the company's operations, but because of Brexit uncertainty it was difficult for the business to understand the level of disruption to be expected.

"We needed help and advice on international trade and Brexit," said Marie. "Brexit was always a concern for us. We tried to put plans in place but the way it was presented in the media – a deal has been done, everything will be fine – meant that a lot of people underestimated the paperwork and bureaucracy that we still had to go through."



Marie Palmer, Cast Iron
Welding Services

“There’s a lot of friction there now that didn’t exist before. It’s probably not too bad for a UK business that’s trading with one or two EU countries, but we deal with many countries. Most of our work is repairing or remanufacturing items that are broken, and that can happen anywhere, at any time.

“Most of our customers are in shipping, which is a sector that requires a quick turnaround. The margins are quite tight and so any increase in administrative costs can make it harder for us to secure that work – and our customers don’t want the hassle either!”

The solution

Marie contacted the Department for International Trade, who signposted her to the **Business Gateway Growth Hub**. That led to a connection with Andrea Collins, International Trade Specialist and Managing Director at Global Trade Department in Swindon, and also highlighted some other avenues of funding for different projects.

“We’d always been in touch with DIT during the pandemic as there was no international travel to speak of and so they were a good resource to tap into,” said Marie. *“We were talking to them about setting up online Teams meetings with target businesses, and I registered for the expert adviser support they offered. We had also been in touch with the Growth Hub before and they’ve been a great help, providing us with lots of information. We’d already done some research ourselves but they gave more structure and strategy to it and kept us focused. It was very helpful but there are still a lot of unknowns.”*

Andrea supported Cast Iron Welding Services via the Growth Hub’s EU Exit Support Programme, focusing on customs special procedures and management of import duty/VAT on the goods they need to import for repair. *“We had three meetings with Andrea. She really did understand the business by the end and was able to provide us with all the relevant advice regarding obtaining a European VAT number and dealing with the new VAT situation. We were thinking we might have to set up our own facility in Europe to get round Brexit, and Andrea advised us on where we’d have to go to set that up and connected me with experts in that area.”*

At the end of the process Andrea produced a report for Marie which condensed all the information and key areas that the business had to concentrate on.

“However the situation was still difficult because there were some uncertainties that had to be clarified,” said Marie. *“Andrea and her colleagues worked really hard to try to tell us what the situation would be after 1st January, but there were still a lot of unknowns at that time.*

“I’d definitely recommend the service. It took up quite a lot of our time but it was worth it. We were a business that was already trading internationally, so you’d like to think we were well placed to deal with Brexit, but we still needed support. It created huge uncertainty for businesses like ours and a lot of people underestimated the impact it would have.”

About Global Trade Department

A business management consultancy specialising in International Trade, Compliance, Sustainability Planning, Business Resilience, and Growth.

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Fully funded by the East Midlands
Growth Hub Cluster

