

Cobra Automotive

CobraUK Automotive Products Ltd, together with Cobra Technical Mouldings, Cobra AS and Cobra Products are at the forefront of innovation and new technologies in the automotive interior sector and are working towards bringing that same work ethos to the aerospace sector. They supply customers including Volvo, the VW/Audi group and General Motors, from their factory in Waymills Industrial Estate, Whitchurch.

After unprecedented growth and receiving numerous business awards, a year ago the company was gripped by the global economic downturn, which reduced its order books by 90 per cent, with luxury vehicles worst affected but they are now fighting back to beat the recession.

Cobra won a major order to provide safety barrier nets, which it developed through an innovation grant from Advantage West Midlands, for a Swedish car manufacturer following a market visit with UK Trade & Investment. The business is worth approximately €8m [euro] over seven years.

Now, the company is moving into the aviation industry with a lightweight airline seat which can also be used in the railway sector and, by virtue of the design, at venues such as football grounds.

Cobra attended a UK Trade & Investment Aerospace Cluster visit to the MAKs air show near Moscow in August and has just signed a letter of agreement with two of Russia's largest aircraft makers, the first stage in a process which could lead to potential sales of over £150m.

Managing director Gary Seale said: "About 80 per cent of our annual turnover, which was £2.35m last year, is export business. We expect our turnover to rise to at least £4m next year and the vast majority of this will be for overseas clients.

"We have worked with UK Trade & Investment for a number of years, firstly through the Passport to Export programme for new exporters, and have continued with market visit support. We received excellent service on a visit to Russia, which was a very professionally organised event with very useful overviews from legal, employment, regulatory, taxation and industry specialists in the market".

More good news from Cobra comes in the form of their recent announcement about the opening of a German office, which will support newly won orders from Audi and General Motors.

Established in 2002, Cobra has 37 employees and relocated its main headquarters to Buttington Cross, Welshpool early last year to provide more space for future expansion.

After reducing its workforce by four in October, it has since taken on five additional production staff and two indirect design programme management staff.