

[New facility for Zip-Clip helps secure new contracts as business ramps up global exports drive](#)

Zip-Clip's international growth plans were outlined by CEO Steve Goldsworthy at the official launch of their new £1.8m facility on Offa's Dyke Business Park in Welshpool which was built by the Welsh Government and opened by Economy Secretary Ken Skates.

Exports currently account for 38% of sales by the company which designs and manufactures innovative suspension systems for installing heating, ventilation and air condition systems in industrial and commercial buildings. It also supplies the electrical market and specialises in Seismic bracing for the building services industry.

Zip-Clip has more than 50 key distributors globally – many of whom were present at their opening – and plans to increase its presence overseas.

This year it is opening a new distribution centre in Melbourne, appointing two distributors in Japan and has already appointed a global manufacturer of cable management containment systems to represent their range in South America, Portugal and Spain.

It is currently in discussions regarding representation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and has appointed a new commercial manager to support its exports and liaise with a number of OEM clients operating across Europe.

Its export drive has benefited from support from the Welsh Government's Export Support Programmes which enabled the company to explore and access new international markets including New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, the Middle East, India and Europe.

Congratulating the company on their export growth Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"This is a great illustration of how SMEs can really benefit from exporting and find new lucrative markets for their products. The Welsh Government can offer companies a raft of help, advice and support to target overseas markets and I am delighted Zip-Clip has benefited from these programmes.

"I am also pleased the Welsh Government is supporting the company's expansion and that Zip-Clip is already reaping the benefits from operating from larger premises having already secured a new £1m plus contract and taken on five new members of staff to service growing orders."

At 17,500 sq ft, their new premises are more than twice the size of their previous facility in Newtown and since moving they have hosted business visits from Finland, Italy, US and Australia.

Managing Director Matthew Clay-Michael added:

“Without this new facility we couldn’t even consider growth and now we have the space to expand and target new markets. As well as securing a three year £1m contract with a major global manufacturer of electrical containment systems we are in talks with one of the world’s largest manufacturers of lighting products to make a bespoke lighting suspension system.

“We experienced a 24% growth in UK and overseas sales last year and plan to achieve at least 15% growth year on year over the next three years which is achievable given the increased capacity in our new facility and new products being developed.”

Zip-Clip’s products have been used on numerous prestigious buildings worldwide – ranging from Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi to the Dallas Cowboys Stadium in Texas – from Kuala Lumpur Tower in Malaysia to The Gherkin and Shard in London.

[Site works pave the way for new HQ and e-commerce centre for Charlies Stores in Welshpool](#)

To mark the start of work Economy Secretary Ken Skates joined Charlies Stores Managing Director Designate Rebecca Lloyd on the seven acre site to cut the first turf.

They met representatives from Alun Griffiths Ltd civil engineering and construction contractors that are undertaking works valued at £676,000 to prepare site for the planned 108,000 sq ft facility.

Separate orders totalling £76,000 have also been placed with Scottish Power, Severn Trent Water and Wales & West Utilities for the diversion of the electric, water & gas mains on site.

Ken Skates said:

“The Welsh Government has worked closely with Charlies Stores to support their plans to expand and grow in mid Wales and I am

delighted work is now underway preparing the site for development.

“Charlies are a very important employer and their planned investment will ensure its continued long term sustainable growth in Mid Wales, supporting and creating jobs locally and helping to develop the competitive edge of this particular region of Wales.”

Rebecca Lloyd said:

“We are delighted to see groundwork begin on our new headquarters and distribution centre. We are proud to call mid Wales our home and are pleased we can continue to do this with this new state-of-the-art facility. As a growing business, this represents an exciting time for us and will give us the option to expand even further in the future.”

The company employs more than 400 staff across eight stores, selling goods ranging from footwear and cooking utensils to chainsaws and camping equipment. Online sales have seen an 80% year on year growth with ambitions for internet sales driving its future growth.

It currently operates across multiple sites in Newtown and Welshpool, many of which are reaching full capacity – consolidating these operations under one roof at the planned new e-commerce centre will enable the company to increase efficiencies, serve a larger number of stores and grow its web based business.

It has outlets in Newtown, Welshpool, Aberystwyth, Carmarthen, Deeside and Shrewsbury. Last year it opened a second outlet in Aberystwyth.

The work includes levelling the site, diverting a public footpath, the demolition of existing infrastructure works including a length of road and an electricity sub station. The completion in summer August 2017 will trigger the sale of the site to Charlies Stores.

Updated planning policy to strike a chord with live music fans

The Cabinet Secretary wants an explicit reference to the ‘Agent of Change’ principle within updated national planning policy. Under this principle, if new developments or uses are to be introduced near a pre-existing business, such as a live music venue, it is the developer’s responsibility to ensure solutions to address and mitigate the noise are put forward.

Lesley Griffiths also confirmed [Planning Policy Wales](#) will be updated to allow the designation of areas of cultural significance for music within Local Development Plans.

The Cabinet Secretary has decided to update Wales' national planning policy following a high profile public campaign, based around Womanby Street in Cardiff city centre, home to a number of popular live music venues. The adoption of the 'Agent of Change' principle into national planning policy and the designation of areas of cultural significance for music are two of the campaign's central aims.

The Cabinet Secretary said:

"Live music venues contribute greatly to Wales' thriving cultural scene and our night time economy. I am aware of the efforts to protect the future viability of these venues, including the "Save Womanby Street" campaign, in Cardiff and I would like to pay tribute to the hard work and commitment of all involved.

"Although the continued vibrancy of areas like Womanby Street depends on the ongoing participation of a number of different parties, including local authorities, the venues themselves and their customers, I have heard the calls to update our national planning policy to protect live music venues.

"I am delighted, therefore, to confirm I have asked my officials to start revising Planning Policy Wales at the earliest opportunity.

"I am sure this news will be music to the ears of Wales' live music fans and I hope local planning authorities will have the confidence to apply these measures when considering planning applications.

ACE expansion plans – investment will treble manufacturing capacity and create jobs for unique Welsh firm

Backed by £50,000 from the Welsh Government's Growth and Prosperity Fund, the company is investing in new equipment that will treble manufacturing capacity and speed up production time to meet the growing UK wide demand for its services.

The £116,000 total investment will see staff numbers rise from to 20 to 30 and also safeguard twelve jobs.

Ace Orthotics, trading as Ace Feet in Motion is based on Sanatorium Road and was established by Bob Cooper in 2001 to provide biomechanical gait analysis using state of the art dynamic pressure plates to help accurately assess movement through the foot and lower limb.

It provides specialist podiatric sports injury biomechanical services to the public and high profile sports associations including the WRU, Disability Sports Wales, Welsh Athletics, Welsh Netball and Cardiff City FC, as well as the NHS. It has also worked very closely with the regional Welsh rugby teams and several Premier League football clubs.

Ace's clinical service is supported by a manufacturing arm that designs and makes all forms of modular and bespoke functional insoles intended to correct an abnormal or irregular gait.

Its lab currently makes around 10,000 pairs of bespoke insoles every year, many manufactured utilising state of the art CAD CAM technology. However, 20% of which have to be made completely by hand as its machinery can currently only make insoles to a depth of 30mm. This investment in new machinery will allow the manufacture of insoles up to 66mm in depth.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"Ace Orthotics provides a highly specialised and bespoke service and is the only business of its kind in Wales and I am delighted Welsh Government support will help it expand, create new jobs and win new business. The expansion is vital for its long term sustainable growth."

Thomas Cooper, Clinical Director at Ace, said:

"We have seen year on year growth and are experiencing growing demand throughout the UK for our products and need to invest to meet that demand. This investment is absolutely vital to take advantage of these opportunities and will speed up production, cut costs and enable us to both produce more quality products and win new business."

Skills and Science Minister, Julie James added:

"Ace Orthotics is a great example of how Wales' thriving life sciences sector continues to go from strength to strength and I am pleased we have been able to support this company's ambitious expansion plans in what is a very competitive and cutting-edge UK marketplace."

In addition to providing specialist podiatry and sports injury biomechanical

services Ace also has a specialist footwear centre which is open to the public selling specialist sports footwear and wider fitting comfort footwear.

It has developed its own modular insole range – Feet in Motion insoles (FiMs) as well as Paediatric FiMs which have become the insole of choice for clinicians working with children across the UK. Ace is currently exploring exporting this range across Europe and were part of an extremely successful Welsh Government Life Sciences Trade Mission to the Medica trade fair in Dusseldorf last November.

[First Minister marks the first year of Government](#)

The last 12 months has seen record levels of employment in Wales, with nearly 40,000 jobs supported by the Welsh Government and highest ever levels of inward investment; with nearly 100 new projects brought to Wales, worth at least £660 million to the economy.

With record levels of investment in the NHS, the past 12 months has seen the delivery of the £80m New Treatment Fund, an extra £55 million for social services and successful new campaigns to encourage doctors and nurses to train and work in Wales.

On education, the First Minister spoke of Wales' generous student finance support package and major investments to reduce infant class sizes, raise school standards and support Wales' most disadvantaged pupils.

Speaking from his office in Cardiff Bay, the First Minister said:

“The past 12 months have been an exceptional period in British – and Welsh – politics. Yet, throughout this time, we have remained focused on delivering on the promises we made to the people of Wales.

“We will continue to work hard to deliver on our promises, and to fight for you and your communities. Together, we will build on the achievements of the past 12 months and continue to Take Wales Forward.”