

News story: Defence Minister launches new military 'FireDragon' fuel production line

FireDragon, produced by 164-year-old Cardiff-based survival equipment manufacturers BCB International Ltd, is a pioneering new fuel used by British troops in-the-field to heat their combat rations, where regular catering facilities does not exist. Almost eight million of the tablets have now been supplied to the British Army.

Unlike alternative fuel tablets, FireDragon gives off no potentially harmful noxious fumes. It burns cleanly, is non-toxic and is made from sustainable natural ingredients.

The MOD's contract with the Welsh manufacturer has an estimated value of £3.6 million, with the company supplying stoves and fuels to service personnel. The deal reinforces the department's industrial commitment to companies around the UK, as well as the environment.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

From fighter jets to fuel rations, it is essential that our troops have the best kit possible. FireDragon sees our armed forces benefit from a cleaner, safer and more sustainable fuel source.

BCB International has 164 years of industry experience in survival equipment, and this new production line will ensure the company can meet growing demand and continue to expand its workforce in the years ahead.

UK Government in Wales Minister Stuart Andrew said:

For decades, BCB International has been at the forefront of pioneering new innovative products that safeguard lives in extreme conditions around the world. Whether half way up a mountain, in the middle of the desert, deep in the jungle or in rough seas, their commitment to innovation can often mean the difference between life and death.

And this commitment continues to its workforce and to its operations in Wales. The opening of this new production line is a vote of confidence in the skills and expertise of its workforce and in the confidence the company has for continued growth in the future.

Fifteen new jobs will be created as a result of the £750,000 production line. FireDragon is a further example of the relationship between defence and Wales, where the MOD spends £300 for every member of the population, £20 more per person than last year. The work being done in Wales includes the UK's biggest single order for an armoured vehicle in 30 years: the £4.5bn Ajax vehicles being built at General Dynamics' Merthyr Tydfil factory.

In tribute to Wales and its capital city, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson recently named one of eight brand new, cutting-edge, anti-submarine warfare frigates, HMS Cardiff. She will go on to provide advanced protection for the likes of the UK's nuclear deterrent and Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, and offer an unrivalled anti-submarine warfare capability.

BCB International's Managing Director, Andrew Howell, said:

We are delighted to welcome the Minister to our FireDragon fuel facility. FireDragon is a safer and cleaner alternative. It is made from sustainable natural ingredients, it is non-toxic, burns cleanly, can be ignited even when wet and if necessary can be used as a hand cleanser.

The British Army were the first military to have the vision and make the switch to FireDragon. This move has encouraged other Armies to consider FireDragon as a fuel for the future.

Note to editors:

- BCB International Ltd (BCB) is contracted to supply Operational Ration Heaters (ORH) – consisting of stoves and associated fuel – to the UK Armed Forces. ORH is used to boil water for preparing hot drinks and heating pouched meals within the Operational Ration Packs (ORP).
- The fuel is supplied with a small lightweight cooker which can be packed with 3 FireDragon fuel blocks.
- The contract is a legacy MOD contract which is now managed by Team Leidos as part of the Logistics Commodities and Services (Transformation) contract.
- The four year ORH contract was awarded on 6 October 2015 and has an estimated value of £3.6 million.

For more information contact the MOD News Desk on 0207 218 7907 or the Defence Equipment & Support Press Office on 01179130537.