

EPS OPENS NEW €4 MILLION MALLOW HEADQUARTERS

This Friday, EPS officially open their new, 2,000 square metre headquarters at Quartertown in Mallow. The state-of-the-art €4 million facility, featuring the latest technology and video conferencing facilities to link all of the EPS branches around the island, incorporates the new Research & Development and Export divisions and accommodates 130 staff.

Gerald Buckley, founded EPS - then called Kanturk Electrical and Farm Services - some 38 years ago and was quickly joined by his brothers Paddy and Tadhg and sister Betty. Initially employing six people, EPS now employs over 280 staff between branches in Mallow, Ballyhaunis in Co Mayo, Mountrath in Co Laois and Naas in Co Kildare. The company also now has subsidiary companies in Cookstown in Co Tyrone, Enniskillen in Co Fermanagh and Naas Co. Kildare.

In 1970 about 60% of the people living in the west of Ireland had no running water. EPS recognized the huge opportunities and hit the ground running. Tadhg Buckley, who moved permanently to Galway in 1970, was at one stage installing five group water schemes a week in the west of Ireland. The provision of strategically placed branches has always been central to the Buckley's business ethos. Tadhg notes: "You can't service a market unless you are actually in that marketplace."

Liam Sheahan joined the company in 1978 as financial director and In 1981, EPS acquired the Lister Group's Water and Wastewater business and whereupon Tom Ruddy joined the Buckley family as a director and shareholder in the expanded businesses. The new EPS moved into the provision of regional water and wastewater schemes and hence provided a new platform to launch the company into collaborations with major consultancy firms, and on the path to significant local authority contracts.

In 1983 EPS worked on the many large Regional Water Supply Schemes, constructed a full scale wastewater treatment plant in Portarlinton and other sewage schemes across the country.

There was yet another landmark in the early 1990s with the provision of the Dorisland Water Treatment Plant in Northern Ireland and with the acquisition of Aquapure in the UK, new markets opened in Cyprus, Bahrain, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Scotland and Wales. During the 1990s, EPS became the leading supplier to Welsh Water and enjoyed significant success at home and abroad.

In 1995, the first National Development Plan specifically targeted water and wastewater treatment facilities for major infrastructural investment. In that year, EPS worked on the largest municipal industrial facility in the country at the time as part of the Clonmel Main Drainage scheme, and on the Clara Water Treatment Plant, Dundalk Wastewater Treatment Plant - a facility serving a population of over 180,000 people; and the Killarney Sewage Scheme, the first ATAD digester in Ireland.

The year 2000 brought the formation of the country's first every consortia for a D.B.O. (design, build and operate) project for Cork's Main Drainage. Four additional partners came on board, three international expert groups and Hegarty's of Cork. The project treats the wastewater generated by a population of some 380,000 people.

A new division of the company, BISON, was established in 2002, and has since provided wastewater treatment solutions for in excess of 30,000 Irish homes. That figure is set to grow considerably in the coming years as, by June 2008, a new EU standard for the certification and testing of sewage treatment systems is to be enforced across all EU member states including Ireland. EPS currently has two products tested to this new standard and will launch a third later this year and these will comprise a very short list of systems available in Ireland which are tested to this new mandatory European wide standard.

With the future in mind EPS Bison has formed a number of strategic alliances to ensure the continued delivery of innovative solutions to the Irish market and beyond.

The next tranche of funding under the National Development Plan will focus on the upgrading of the country's group sewage schemes. EPS is, once again, ahead of the game, pioneering a vacuum system technology, which is being utilized as part of the 'Seven Villages Project' and which also incorporates the innovative Pilot STEDS Project in Co. Tipperary.

The Department's confidence in EPS is well-founded, given the company's prioritization of quality & health and safety. EPS has already been awarded ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 certification - and was the first wastewater company in the British Isles to achieve the latter. EPS is the only accredited UVDB Quality Standard contractor in the country at the moment; UVDB is the recognized quality standard in Northern Ireland. The company is currently working on achieving ISO 18000, a standard pertaining to health and safety. Gerald Buckley MD confirmed: "Health and safety is an absolute driver in our company. The health and safety of our employees is of paramount importance as part of the drive towards growth and product development."

With branches in Mallow, the centre of Munster; Ballyhaunis, the centre of Connaught; Mountrath, the centre of Leinster; Cookstown, the centre of Ulster and Naas, on the edge of the pale, EPS has got the country covered. Economic vision, the seizing of opportunities and the right investment at the right time have allowed for the remarkable expansion of a wholly Irish-owned, indigenous and vital industry. Gerald stresses: "We wouldn't be where we are without, number one, our staff, present and past; our customers and clients; the local authorities and our national network of agents – who are all a crucial part of our business."

The future looks extremely promising, with ongoing investment under the National Development Plan, vital works to comply with stringent EU directives on water and wastewater quality, the upgrading of the country's vast network of group water and group sewage schemes and a re-entry into the export market, with a significant involvement in Scotland's equivalent to the National Development Plan. EPS is the first and only Irish contractor appointed to the Scottish water-spend programme. It took a significant amount of work and effort to make it through the pre-qualification process and EPS is once again poised to make a significant mark on the international stage.

At home EPS is well represented by its current management team comprising of the original founders and directors together with the rest of the management team for the various business units within the group.