

Company update



Pat O'Donnell (L) with Lee Shortland at the control panel of the Ecolab Aquaheater Smart which heats with minimum energy cost the water for the five washer/extractors in the Fishers Plant



(L to R) Lee Shortland, (Ecolab), John Welford, Fishers Tyneside plant manager, and Mark Ferguson, operations manager, Fishers Tyneside Plant, in front of storage water tanks with pre-heated hot water stored for the batch washers

Fishers re-visited

The original Fishers plant on the Tyne Tunnel Estate, east of Newcastle-on-Tyne, is now five years old and is remarkable for several things that have changed since 2010. This is the second plant built by Fishers on this industrial estate and it was built to cope with the huge expansion in workload which the original plant experienced within six months of opening in late 2008.

The first plant was designed to process 350,000 pieces of flatwork linen each week, but this figure was achieved in mid-2009. It was obvious that demand for Fishers service far exceeded the original estimates and that a much larger plant was essential. The second plant – a mirror image in machinery layout of the original but with the addition of an additional batch washer, three more dryers and two new ironer lines – is now processing 650,000 pieces each week, working 6/7 days as required and running three shifts each week day allowing for reduced processing at the weekends.

This expansion of Fishers Tyneside operations has been marked along the way with a succession of improvements and significant upgrades to the equipment in the plant and to the chemistry in use. There has also been a seamless introduction of new managers at most senior levels, ably assisted by encouraging levels of technical support from Ecolab who have been instrumental in implementing progressive efficiencies and cost savings in processing technologies as well as visibly brighter, whiter linen by introducing OxyGuard40™ to the wash process.

In the provision of water and steam the Tyneside plant is now enhanced in performance, as well as in economies in processing, by the Ecolab systems for energy savings in water heating. Heat recycled

from the three ironer lines is piped back to the Aquavent water heating system, where the incoming conditioned water is heated to the temperature required for use in the two batch washers in the plant.

Using re-cycled heat to carry what is in effect the base load of the heat requirement for water in the washing process reduces energy costs. Any additional heat energy required to provide hot water for the two batch washers is provided by an Ecolab Aquaheater Smart T 180, a genuine 'steam free' system providing instant hot water as required. All the water



Pat O'Donnell(L) and Lee Shortland (Ecolab technical support staff) dwarfed by the imposing height of the Ecolab Aquavent System, which utilises the waste heat energy exhaust from the ironer lines to heat water for the batch washers – with massive cost saving to the laundry

heating systems installed at the plant are a significant part of Ecolab's constant initiatives to reduce operational costs in all laundry plants where Ecolab chemical and energy saving systems are installed.

Five years on from the commissioning of the second Fishers Services plant in Tyneside, Irving Scott pays a return visit.



One of the striking things seen at the Tyneside plant is the commitment shown to Fishers by the Ecolab technical support team. The team is on site on regular scheduled visits to record and report on all aspects of the chemical performance. The support delivered by Ecolab has resulted in significant performance enhancements over the past years as each new product was introduced, culminating some three months ago with the implementation of OxyGuard40 as a low temperature washing emulsion for use in both the batch washing machines.

OxyGuard40 is the first industrial laundry wash system which complies totally with the stringent design and production process requirements of the EU Ecolabel Directive DE/039/002. OxyGuard40 has been specially developed to meet the Ecolabel criteria which ensure environmental protection at every stage of its lifecycle from manufacture through to its demonstrably high, cleaning performance.

OxyGuard40 offers a number of other important benefits to the commercial laundry manager and it was these that encouraged the Fishers management to install the product and evaluate its real-time performance. The OxyGuard40 product is also inherently 'green' in action in the wash, a characteristic which fits very well with Fishers stated ecological objectives as a business operating in the supply of hygienic linen to the hospitality businesses of Scotland and the north of England.

Oxyguard40 also offers complete colour protection and

enhanced whiteness both during and after processing and in use the product delivers lower operating costs through reducing water and energy consumption and the operational temperature requirement of 40°C is designed to reduce costs in day-to-day operations.

The results of the OxyGuard40 implementation at the Fishers Tyneside plant are already showing encouraging results in terms of energy saving and water consumption results. So far after three months of operation the OxyGuard40 chemical system is showing delivered saving to Fishers Tyneside of 26.7 per cent saving in gas consumption of the plant. This is a substantial reduction through application of efficient technical processes - developed by Ecolab Textile Care division.

All in all the combination of Ecolab water heating systems and the introduction of OxyGuard40 from Ecolab Textile Care has transformed the processing regime efficiencies at Fishers Tyneside plant, both in terms of energy cost savings, water consumption reduction as well as in the visual improvement in the quality of the processed linen.

Our visit to the Fishers' Tyneside plant was led by the Tyneside operations manager, Mark Ferguson, who is in charge of the plant management on a weekly basis under the oversight of Steve Pitts, group technical manager for all plants in Fishers Services Group, based in Coupar. We saw detailed demonstrations of the Ecolab chemicals and water heating equipment installed at



Pat O'Donnell, Ecolab technical support, checks settings on some of the dosing pumps for the OxyGuard40™ at Fishers Tyneside plant

the plant by the two Ecolab technical support team for the north of England and Scotland, Lee Shortland and Pat O'Donnell.

Ferguson has been with Fishers for a mere two years having spent the early part of his career outside the laundry business with a major logistics specialist. His grasp of the nature of the challenges facing him in his new role at Fishers is admirable and his adaptability and application to the task are plain to see.

As he says: "My focus in the job is to listen and learn and never to assume that any problems which occur are insoluble. This is a very old industry to be in and the level of technological application seen in the processing machinery which Fishers use in the business is amazing. The help and assistance which there is around the group is always available and given without quibble. There is still a huge amount of the attitude of the founding family here even though this plant was built more than 10 years after the last of the Fisher family left the business. There is a great deal of effort employed in ensuring that our customers are properly dealt with and we try very hard to deal successfully with each and every new service required by our large 'family' of housekeepers.

"We have three experienced customer account managers looking after our customers and they try and visit or call on as many customers as possible each month. Our service

territory covers everywhere north of the M62 and we deliver and collect as far west as Dumfries and as far south as York and Manchester. In fact our largest trucks are in Manchester at least three times each week servicing large hotel customers, so we can truly claim as a group to service the hospitality business wherever it requires our service.

"Our new engineering manager comes also with outside the industry experience and this is Neil Marsh. He has showed immediate effect on our operations since his arrival and he has injected a considerable degree of professionalism into our engineering routines. We are particularly focused on PPM (planned preventative maintenance) in Fishers and in a business like laundry there is an absolute requirement to keep the machinery under constant oversight. Modern laundry machines are highly complex in some respects and the finished product of our processing output is always closely inspected by our eagle-eyed customers and the machines must be kept in good working order."

This is a well managed plant showing remarkable recent gains in processing economy and with parallel uplift in delivered linen appearance and quality. Now a significant laundry business in its own right, Fishers Tyneside, is still able to demonstrate the main virtues of the founding family, simply put and very briefly, these are: 'Look after your customers and they will look after you'.