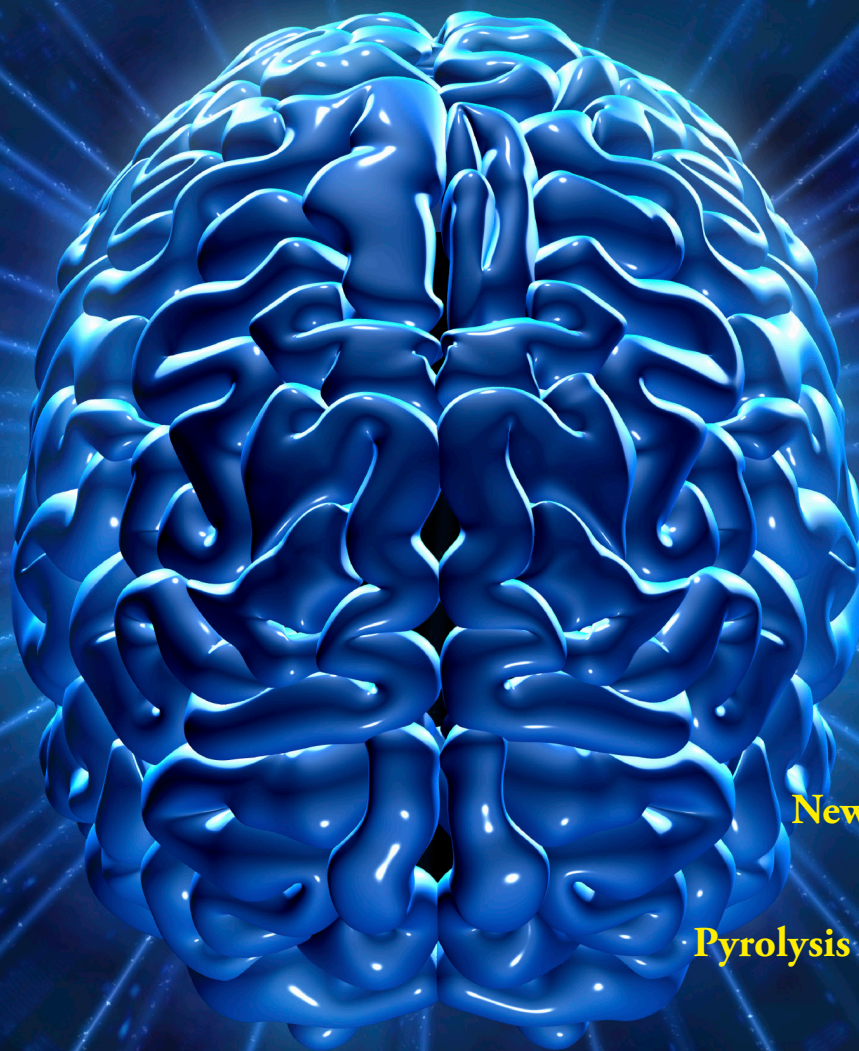


# advances

THE JOURNAL FOR SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY IN **wales**

ISSUE 62 ■ WINTER 2009



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## **Minds that matter**

**How innovating through  
technology gives businesses in  
Wales the competitive edge**



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

### Case study: Concrete Canvas

Concrete Canvas initially moved to Wales in 2007 to set up a new production facility on the Treforest Industrial Estate in Pontypridd, South Wales. This was a big step for the company as it involved developing, installing and commissioning bespoke production equipment to manufacture its two product lines, Concrete Cloth and Concrete Canvas Shelters (featured in issue 58 of *Advances Wales*). Both products were completely new technologies and required a novel manufacturing approach. As Will Crawford, Co-Director, says, ‘The Welsh Assembly Government was incredibly supportive in helping us meet this challenge, both in terms of filling a funding gap through a grant and also through support and advice at all stages in the process.’

The key step for Concrete Canvas in taking its ideas to commercialisation has been the development and installation of efficient and cost-effective production equipment that has enabled the company to manufacture its products competitively. ‘As a start-up SME we have extremely limited resources and we have had to steer a fine line between growing sales and increasing our production capacity to meet demand,’ Will explains. ‘Funding support has made that job easier by allowing us to develop both sides of the business in parallel. The result is that we have grown rapidly, trebling in size since our move to Wales.’

The supportive environment in Wales has been greatly beneficial to Concrete Canvas. Support has come in many forms, from manufacturing consultancy through export support to research and development funding. The company works closely with its Innovation Manager, who has been

instrumental in providing focused advice at many different stages, such as critical information on intellectual property and tapping into and applying for funding routes.

With the production line up and running and sales growing to include exports to Europe, the Middle East and



America, the company is now looking to increase its market share by developing new product variants – but the support doesn’t stop there. It is currently in the process of applying for support to develop a new Concrete Canvas Shelter variant which will meet the specific needs of its customers.

Will believes Wales is the perfect environment for innovation and support: ‘Wales is an excellent place to set up and grow a business. There is plenty of available factory space, skilled labour and access to major road transport routes. The support encourages innovation like nowhere else in the UK – plus it’s a great place to live!’

[www.concretcanvas.co.uk](http://www.concretcanvas.co.uk)

### Innovation Manager in profile

Gwion Williams is the Innovation Manager for North West Wales, acting as the ‘middle man’ for industry to access the resources and support available from the Welsh Assembly Government. He works with a wide range of companies, but because of his location, he deals largely with start-ups based at Technium® CAST (Centre for Advanced Software Technology) and spin-out companies from Bangor University.

Gwion is highly qualified in electrochemistry, and his industrial experience as a senior engineer has allowed him to

gain experience in managing R&D projects, commercialising technology and handling intellectual property issues. Now, as an Innovation Manager, Gwion distributes his specialist knowledge to benefit the entire technology sector in Wales. ‘My specific areas of expertise are new product development for SMEs, intellectual property, commercialisation of electrochemical technologies, advanced charge storage devices, commercial use of conducting polymers, technology commercialisation, product development process and R&D,’ he says.