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# HIRE NEWS

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# MAKING IT HAPPEN

Eagle Plant Hire is rightly regarded North of the Border. With the company expanding its services and eyeing a larger premises, business is plainly thriving. We caught a chat with the senior team.

If Eagle Hire has 'humble beginnings', as its website proclaims, the present company is anything but – the team running the show nowadays has transformed the business; adding new depots and services, growing its customer base and radically improving its financial position in the process.

The Eagle estate currently comprises an outpost in Loanhead near Edinburgh, a specialist site survey and safety division in the Baillieston suburb of Glasgow and its headquarters in a small industrial estate to the east of the city. With blue chip clients in utilities, demolition and construction, and business continuing to boom, the company is currently exploring a new location within the Central Belt that offers the potential for further growth – and a good chance of realising an ambitious financial target.

The Eagle story begins with two Martin Plant fitters, George Deacon and John McGinn, who formed the company in the late 1980s as a small plant and tool hire operation. Present MD Colin Inglis and his brother Alan

acquired the business around 2004, then Colin and wife Claire became the sole owners in 2016 after buying out brother Alan, with the aim to significantly develop the company. Fellow directors Iain MacDonald, John Cummings and Douglas Smeaton – all Nationals alumni – came on board in 2018. Things have apparently moved at pace since...

"The difference between the two companies is like night and day," explains Sales Director Douglas Smeaton. "Our reputation has grown substantially in the Central Belt, and in the last five years we have grown our turnover by five-fold.

"Another reason for our success is that we are an independent company – much less



In spite of outgrowing its current premises, Eagle keeps everything in good order.



L-R: Director Iain MacDonald and Sales Director Douglas Smeaton.

bureaucratic in our processes and I think our clients would say that we're much easier to deal with."

*The majority of your customers are in utilities, construction and housebuilding sectors. What have been the advantages of working in these sectors?*

"As a result of winning and attracting more national accounts, other similar businesses have come on board. This has led to the development of our utilities service based at this depot. We used to have to cross hire much of this equipment at great expense, so this has resulted in a substantial saving."

*It's interesting to note that you go a little bit larger on your excavators. What's in your plant fleet?*

"We have well over 100 excavators, which is always being added to, mainly Kubota and Wacker Neuson machines from micros to eight tonnes. The eight tonne machines are always on hire, probably breaching 85-90%

## FLYING HIGH

Change and growth is afoot at Eagle Plant Hire. Keep up with the latest developments at [www.eagleplanthire.co.uk](http://www.eagleplanthire.co.uk)

utilisation," says Commercial Director John Cummings. "Would I buy any more? Yes, because we have a large order in place for next year. However, we have recently been concentrating on kit that brings a better return on capital."

*Eagle has established a substantial profile now. Are there any downsides to that?*

"I'd worked with Colin Inglis for six months, helping to reshape his business before we bought into it," says John. "I remember saying to him that once we raised the profile, which is what we've done really well, we'd be on everybody's radar. That might make us fair game for pot-shots, but I'm very proud of that."

*I'm a fan of the phrase you use, 'We make it happen', which is very confidence-inspiring. But is it more than just a slogan?*

"We'd like to take the credit for that, but it was suggested by the guy who looks after our IT and website, and it stuck," explains Iain. "We want to take the hassle out of every enquiry – our clients can know that whenever they pick the phone up they can rest assured that it's dealt with by experienced staff who know what they're talking about. Just leave it with us, and we'll sort it."

*The site survey depot is a relatively recent addition. How did this come about, how well is it doing and how is it resourced?*

"We were looking for a clean trades business, and this was the easiest to set up, as our existing customers were keen on this service," says John. It took us a long time to

find this site in Baillieston, but it's run by four – headed up by our Operations Director, Gary Reynolds with three staff – and it's generating a five figure turnover every week."

*Has this expansion given you the appetite to explore other specialisms or locations?*

"We're certainly looking to expand our fleet, and add to our depots, simply because we are running out of storage space at the this location," says Iain. "We've been looking to find new premises for the last 18 months. However, we have found a five-acre site on the M8 corridor. This would allow us to expand into access and welfare equipment, which is a natural fit with what we do."

*I've got to ask about electric machinery. It's all very well for certain projects, but do you see much demand for battery-powered plant?*

"It's not something we really get asked for – I'm not going to invest in a market that could potentially cost us our name," says Iain.

"I think that electric plant machinery will succeed eventually, but we're a good five years away from that happening – the battery technology is still miles away," adds Douglas.

*Others have certainly said the same. Wrapping up, then – what does the year ahead hold for the company?*

"We can compete on a local level, and I think we'll do that very well, but we will extend our product range into powered access and welfare, we'll open up another greenfield site, we're going to develop the

## Eagle Plant Hire - Profile



Looking after the numbers, Hazel Stark and Claire Inglis.

site survey business and I'd be disappointed if we hadn't moved into new premises by the end of 2023," says Iain.

"That's where we're taking the company, but we're looking to double our business over the next five years – and then the same again," adds Douglas, with Iain nodding in assent. "We base our projections on where we are right now, also looking at slightly different markets and providing a full service for our clients in Scotland."

“...we're looking to double our business over the next five years – and then the same again”

And that strident goal is where we leave it. Eagle certainly has the experience, the spirit and the wherewithal to achieve it – a memorable brand message too. My thanks to Iain, who I finally tracked down at the Glasgow Roadshow, and to John and Douglas for taking time out of their day and a highly enjoyable visit. ■



A selection of equipment in the Eagle Yard. Slightly unusual to see the large cable reels behind the mini dumpers.

# LITTLE AND LARGE

It's all change at C&F Mini Dumpers, including a revised product range and a snappy new name – 'CNF'. We were obviously keen to find out more...

What's with the new name, you might reasonably enquire? Well, as looking a bit smarter in logo form, it also works better as far as internet search engines are concerned – the added 'n' being a contraction of 'and'. Perhaps of even greater interest are the two new machines in the range, being the diminutive Traker T70 and the heavy-lifting T150.

*We kick off with a quick question about trading – how has it been since the company exhibited at the 2022 Executive Hire Show?*

"It has been a period of expanding our dealer network, but we sold a number of machines at the show," explains Philip Oldham, MD of Arnold Plant, which distributes CNF dumpers in the UK. "Also, our product range has been updated this year – we've always had a smaller dumper, although never with the hydraulic joystick controls as seen on the larger machines. The T70 runs on a Yanmar or Honda petrol engine and tips to the same height as the other dumpers, but it is narrow enough to fit through a conventional doorway."

"We're also bringing in the T150, which is a 1.5tonne capacity high-tip. We'll have one of these on display at the Executive Hire Show. We're using the 2023 show to almost relaunch our range, which is now the T70, the T95 and the T150."

"It will be a bit of a squeeze on our stand," adds Sales Director, Andrew Buckley. "However, we're near the end of the aisle and we're not boxed in, so there is space to

move around and chat to customers off the stand if we need to."

*Material shortages and lengthening lead times remain an issue for some manufacturers, but has this been a problem for you?*

"We have more machines available from stock now – which is nice – and we have already ordered for the first quarter of 2023. Lead times are usually 12 weeks, but if a customer asked us for one today, they could have it," says Philip.

*Which of your machines is the biggest seller at the moment?*

"It's always the T95, as that's what we've always had most of. However, the T70, being smaller and narrower, looks set to overtake it. We have ordered more T70s than T95s for 2023."

*The larger T150 is competing with wheeled mini site dumpers. What are the other advantages?*

"I see the T150 is a replacement for such equipment," says Andrew. "It is more stable, it has much lower ground pressure and the lower height means it is more manoeuvrable. It can still tip into a standard skip, though."



*You previously told me that you have been able to influence the design of the machinery to better suit the UK market. Is this still the case with the new machines?*

"We think the products are now right for the UK, as much as they can be, but in 2023 we will be introducing an electric handbrake to replace the manual version. Cables can stretch or break, so this is definitely a move in the right direction."

*Wrapping up, how do you see company and the CNF brand developing in the year ahead?*

"We have around a dozen UK dealers at the moment, so we want to appoint more in 2023. We have six large dealers, the others being smaller companies. However, our dealer network map will look quite a bit different by the time we come to the show!"

And that promising note is where we leave it. See CNF on Stand K40 at the show, where the new machines will make their official UK debut. ■

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



Hydraulic joystick controls make steering a breeze.

*All of your machines are petrol or diesel fuelled. Is CNF also thinking about battery power?*

"Funnily enough, CNF is already working with a company on this, but there's nothing to see or announce for the time being."