



## Teesside launches facility to make steel

Steel making has returned to Teesside with the launch of a facility to make high-quality steel in the area devastated by the closure of SSI's plant last year.

The Materials Processing Institute (MPI), a not-for-profit company which conducts industrial research for the steel, chemical, energy and mining sectors, is to offer small-scale commercial production of highly specialised steel. The development is a rare piece of good news in the UK steel sector, which has seen more than 5,000 jobs lost in the past year due to cheap imports of Chinese steel and high costs.

Almost half of these jobs were lost when, in September, SSI's plant just three miles from MPI collapsed into administration. MPI is using its existing facilities and staff at its Normanton plant to produce small production runs with profits being reinvested, but hopes



it could be successful enough to be spun off into a separate business.

Chris McDonald, MPI chief executive, said the development shows that despite its current troubles, steel making in the UK is not dead and warned of the dangers of such pessimistic attitudes.

"Thirty years ago, many doubted if the British automotive and aerospace makers would still be around today, but they are now

among the best in the world and underpin our economy," he said.

"That's why those who dismiss steel and other materials as 'sunset' industries risk creating a self-fulfilling prophecy despite their current difficulties." While Britain's steel-making industry struggles to compete against commoditised low-quality steel produced in countries such as China, Mr. McDonald said the UK is at the "forefront" of innovative steel products. As an example of such advances, according to the MPI two thirds of the types of steel currently made in UK steel plants had not even been invented 15 years ago.

MPI hopes to capitalise on this research base to ensure the survival of the industry, and is lobbying the Government for the creation of a so-called Materials Catapult research centre, allowing the industry and universities to come together to develop further steel products. Such "catapults" have been successful in other sectors such as transport, manufacturing and medicine, bridging the gap between ideas that come out of research and innovation.

Mr. McDonald added, "This new operation enables MPI to be the hub for steel-making on Teesside, and continue the area's steel legacy, while supporting our position at the forefront of materials and product research and development for industry."

## Primetals Technologies modernises an annealing and Pickling Line of Aperam Genk



Amsterdam, Paris and Luxembourg. The most important European production sites for stainless steels are Châtelet and Genk in Belgium, and Gueugnon and Isbergues in France. In Genk, Aperam produces hot and cold rolled AISI grades 300 and 400 in coils

weighing up to 45 metric tons.

Primetals Technologies successfully realized the modernization of an annealing and pickling line of Aperam Genk in Belgium. The objectives of the project were to upgrade the drive technology and optimize the strip tension control. Under the turnkey project, Primetals Technologies has been responsible for engineering, procurement and supply as well as construction work and commissioning. The upgrade was carried out during end-of-year break in just three and half weeks, followed by fast production ramp-up. The modernized plant went on-stream mid-January 2016.

Aperam operates six production locations in Europe and Brazil, with an annual capacity of 2.5 million metric tons of stainless flat products for a wide range of applications. The company is quoted on the stock exchanges in

For the upgrade, Primetals Technologies supplied new electrical equipment, such as automation material, motors and drive for the annealing and pickling line. This included 30 main drives for the entry section, the pinch rolls, the bridle rolls, and the exit section. A total of 99 geared motors were also installed, for example for strip transporting at the conveyors, the furnace and the pickling plant, as well as for the paper winders and unwinders 25 adaptation frames for new motors and existing motors were installed, as well as 17 new gear boxes including their adaption frames. The reducer units for the pinch and bridle rolls were replaced. The coilers and uncoilers retained their gear units. These measures increased the processing speed of the line from 100 to 120 meters per

minute. At the same time, the head and tailing-out speeds in the entry and exit sections were prepared for an increasing from 20 to 50 meters per minute. To increase the capacity of the three loopers, their length was extended and new dolly cars and winches were supplied. The two existing loop pits were removed, and were replaced by new bridle rolls and an advanced tension control system. At the entry of the line, a new pinch roll was installed. Also, an additional bridle roll was installed and an existing one replaced.

Primetals Technologies also improved the strip tension control and strip stabilization on the line by modifying the plant layout. The strip looper was decoupled, and new components installed upstream of the furnace entry and the entry into the pickling section. Furthermore, the plant was equipped with a new strip tension measuring system required for strip tension control.

Modernized bridle area of the annealing and pickling line of Aperam in Genk in Belgium which was modernized by Primetals Technologies.