

Unipart builds new Panel Lifter technology in Coventry

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Unipart Rail and Unipart Manufacturing Group have successfully built their first McCulloch Rail Panel Lifter at a new production facility in Coventry, bringing cutting-edge rail industry technology to the city.

The new Panel Lifter production line is a unique collaboration bringing together the revolutionary Panel Lifter technology of McCulloch Rail, the automotive industry experience of Unipart Manufacturing Group, and the global customer network of Unipart Rail. It will also create jobs in Coventry.

McCulloch Rail designed and developed the unique Panel Lifter technology, which is revolutionising the method of removing and replacing rail panels. The Panel Lifter system can move up to 18 tonnes at a time and can be used to move panel lengths of up to 90ft in a swift and safe manner and with greater efficiency in comparison to all other methods.

Based at the site linked to automotive manufacturing for over a century, the new Panel Lifter production facility will benefit from Unipart Manufacturing's extensive automotive industry expertise in powertrain systems.

The Panel Lifters will meet market demand from McCulloch Rail in the UK and from Unipart Rail's international customers, who are keen to improve their performance with this cutting-edge technology.

Earlier this year, Unipart Rail won funding from the Department for Transport and InnovateUK to develop a 'TRT-e', an electric version of the McCulloch Rail TRT (Trac RailTransposer), in conjunction with Hyperbat, a joint venture between Unipart Manufacturing and Williams Advanced Engineering to develop electric vehicle battery technology.

The new Panel Lifter production facility is a further extension of Unipart's relationship with McCulloch Rail and will be located adjacent to the Hyperbat facility at the Coventry site.

Neil Walker, Managing Director, Unipart Rail and Unipart Manufacturing Group said: "The production of the McCulloch Rail Panel Lifters at Unipart Manufacturing's highly skilled Coventry site is great news for both the City and Unipart. Bringing this under one roof, in partnership with McCulloch, highlights our continued investment in the city and will benefit the rail industry worldwide. Panel Lifters are the safest, fastest and most efficient way of replacing track panels. Through Unipart Rail's global customer network the Panel Lifters produced in Coventry will be shipped to customers all over the world."

Carol Burke, Unipart Manufacturing Group Managing Director said: "This partnership diversifies the manufacturing portfolio at our Coventry site, where we are already leading electric vehicle battery technology through Hyperbat, our joint venture with Williams Advanced Engineering. Our team will apply their significant expertise in the automotive industry to manufacture McCulloch Rail Panel Lifters using lean and just-in-time techniques, and will pass on their knowledge through the creation of new apprenticeship roles for this production."

Billy McCulloch, Engineering Director, McCulloch Rail said: "As we scale up our international sales activity, it is critical that the production capacity is matched to meet the market demand. Successfully partnering with Unipart Group was fundamental to our mutual goals - where we can each focus on our core competencies and exploit our respective resources and experience to achieve this. Undoubtedly, this will be the first of many systems built by Unipart Group as we continue to succeed together on the global stage."



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