

L@b Brief | June 2023

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Comment

Hello again,



IT IS no wonder that economics has been called ‘the dismal science’ when it’s most prominent exponents can think of no better way of curtailing inflation than to send us into recession.

In difficult times, even the relatively insulated lab industry is thinking about how best to manage resources, especially as war-chests built up during the pandemic are now being eroded by inflation.

In economic downturns, one of the earliest casualties is often investment in productivity improvements or product innovation. So at the ‘Trade Unlocked’ conference this month, calls were made for the government to increase support to allow companies to innovate, export and make investments in productivity improvements at the same time. There was however, a general consensus that much-needed interventions were unlikely from a government which is currently doing very little and which according to chair of the International Chambers of Commerce, Paul Drechsler ‘has pretty much run out of steam’.

It is interesting to note that Oxford Economics, which provides the economic forecasts for GAMBICA, is considering making it a central assumption that the next government will be led by the Labour party.

Labour seems to be listening closely to business. Paul Dreschsler, commented at the conference that the party’s industrial strategy, ‘...has all the right headings. It now just needs the strategy, the resourcing and the follow through’. GAMBICA chief executive, Steve Brambley has already meet twice with Bill Esterson (Labour Shadow Minister for Business and Industry) to propose what we think should be included in an Industrial Strategy. Bill is keen to meet again, so we are positioning ourselves to help.

Toodle pip

Jacqueline

PS We hope you like the new look of L@b Brief which has been redesigned in line with your feedback. Do let me know what you think.

UK News

From benign hyper-globalisation to systemic competition – a new world for UK exporters

DR HELEN Belopolsky, global head of geopolitical risk at HSBC, warned this month of the impacts on the UK’s foreign trade of the world’s move from hyper-globalisation to systemic competition and the increasing politicisation of commerce. Speaking at a conference on trade she noted: “We are evolving foreign and trade policies while we are facing war in Ukraine and a rapidly worsening relationship between the US and China. Fragmentation, protectionism, investment screening, securitisation of trade and national security have



become the lens through which we view all trade now and this is leading to near shoring and friend-shoring.” Solving the conundrum would require dialogue, initiative and strategic foresight, she said, “but we do have opportunities in soft power”.

Paul Drechsler, chair of the International Chambers of Commerce agreed: “We have to get the economy right, and to do that we need much better relationships with the EU, especially now we don't have a single unified market, even within the UK. But we have the best universities, the best life sciences, financial services, fintech, every type of tech in fact. We are at the epicentre of the technological developments and of the arts and culture which is a source of enormous soft power. We have a fantastic hand of cards, but we need a vision to know what we want to achieve and a strategy to achieve it.

“The technological revolution is coming and if we don't take advantage of that it's over for us.”

The conference, *Trade Unlocked*, was called to discuss mechanisms for improving the current trading relationships of the UK in order to grow exports and ease imports.

One particular failing of the last few years, according to Lord Darroch, former UK ambassador to the USA, was the way the UK has cut back on its diplomatic staff. He said the government; “no longer uses the Commonwealth as well as it used to. It needs to invest in showing its influence; to show that we can make our way outside the EU as one of the leaders on the global stage. Often now we are not even in the room. For example, Sunak has been trying to persuade the US to act on regulation of AI but it's likely that the US and the EU will look at this together and we will be cut out, however good our ideas are, because size matters.”

He was particularly concerned about our failure to capitalise on our Universities.

“International students come to this country for many years and they have acted as advocates for the UK.” Paul Drechsler agreed: “Now we can't do a fourth year study at a European university, and the European students can't come to us. Young people will be angry when they learn that we have taken from them benefits we enjoyed and took for granted.”

The Office for Budget Responsibility says that the impact of Brexit so far has been to reduce UK GDP by 4%. Research from the UK Trade Policy Observatory (UKTPO), based at the University of Sussex, indicates that the true figure may be nearer to 5% but the unanimous view of those at the event was that it would be extremely unwise to try to undo Brexit.

Instead, a new effort to improve the deal for the UK, and reduce the impacts of Brexit on business, are required.

“With suitable EU regulatory alignment, work on the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) and with a council set up to work closely on negotiations with the EU, it might be possible for us to regain about half of the five per cent we have lost” said Professor L Alan Winters, director of UKTPO. “We can never achieve the full five per cent because even if we align, we have to prove we align, and that has an impact on costs.”

The conference discussed *‘Trading our way to prosperity - a blueprint for policy makers’* published by the UK Trade and Business Commission which calls for:

- A UK Board of Trade, equivalent in remit to the Office for Budget Responsibility which would scrutinise new and existing trade deals and their impacts.
- Regulatory and standards alignment with the EU, except where there is good reason not to align.
- A new UK-EU Regulatory Co-operation Council, to ensure regular dialogue and the building of positive relations with the EU.
- Reform of temporary and business visas to allow increased flexibility including for artists and seasonal workers and for young workers to travel for work.

Speakers at the conference reflected many of the issues being raised by GAMBICA members and discussed at length the issues of travel for work, now that every EU country has its own specific rules for UK nationals and in Germany, different states have different rules.

Questioned about whether the EU would be willing to reciprocate if we sought to align, David Henig, Director of the European Centre for International Political Economy acknowledged that it may be difficult, partly because of the EU’s lack of trust in the UK government to stick to its word, and also because some parts of the EU have benefited significantly from Brexit and may be unwilling to relinquish that advantage. Examples given were of the now total domination of fashion by Paris, with many UK fashion designers now working there, the financial jobs which have gone to Germany and the haulage business which has moved to the Netherlands.

Dynamic alignment

So far the UK has only deviated marginally from the EU in terms of regulations and standards. According to another speaker, MP Hilary Benn, if we were to ‘dynamically align’ with the EU by aligning our regulations and standards and when EU standards change, changing ours with them... “we have the opportunity to get back into much closer agreement with the EU, but we will need a skilled government to make this work.”

The productivity challenge

According to the Productivity Institute, one in three UK businesses don't see growth as a main priority. Making the link between productivity, innovation and exports, Bart van Ark, MD of the Institute suggested the government should target firms with highly innovative products with help to export and to export consistently. “Support needs to stay in place for longer because exporting and innovation have high costs and to do those two things well

needs investment. To really capitalise on innovation also requires investment in productivity” he said, and the government needs to be there to help give firms access to bigger markets so they can sell more and can become more productive.

Skills and industrial strategies needed

There were calls for a fully worked-up and properly integrated trade, industrial and skills strategies to ensure that UK businesses have the resources they need to grow and the supply chains they need, irrespective of geo-political developments.

The Labour Party position

David Lammy MP, labour shadow Secretary of State for Business for Foreign Commonwealth and Development Affairs, announced that labour would carry out a strategic review of where diplomats are posted to optimise their value to exporters. “The current government has cut representation in crucial markets like India and those countries are central to the critical supply chains of the future.” He also undertook to bolster the UK’s presence in standard setting bodies and said: “We will make it a priority to improve our relationship with the EU because business thrives on certainty. But we won't rejoin the EU or the single market because it is mistaken to think that after such a messy divorce it's possible to propose marriage again. We will seek instead to improve the trade deal when it comes up for renegotiation in 2025. We will consider the proposals put forward by this conference and will launch a Global Supply Chain Commission to examine and address vulnerabilities such as the fact that 90% of our imports come by sea and 80% of large container ships sail through the Taiwan straits.”

He was also aware of the impact of leaving the EU on students from Europe coming to UK universities saying that that there are now more people from China studying in the UK than from the whole of the EU. “This is constantly raised with me by contacts in the EU who want to get the Erasmus project back on the table - they feel it's important. At present there is no way of effecting this because there is currently no structured dialogue with the EU. This will change.”

Duty suspensions – applications invited

THE GOVERNMENT is inviting suggestions for a new round of duty suspensions which are intended to help UK firms by suspending import duties on unlimited quantities of certain goods used in domestic production and are normally for two years. Autonomous tariff quotas (ATQs) allow limited quantities to be imported at a reduced rate. Two years ago, in the first round post-Brexit, there were 232 requests and more than 100 suspensions entered into force on 1 January 2023, covering sectors including chemicals, automotive, renewables, and food and drink.

In 2021, some applications for suspensions were hotly contested as the government sought to find the right balance between competing interests.

The process is online this time and applicants no longer have to show a saving of at least £10,000.

Suggestions should be lodged online no later than the close of August 6th.

Application form, guidance and enquiry email are [here](#).

List of suspensions resulting from the process in 2021 are [here](#).

Check current suspensions (and other trade details) [here](#).

Perkin Elmer spins off its life sciences business

INVESTMENT FIRM, New Mountain Capital, has bought the life sciences division of Perkin Elmer. The new life sciences and diagnostics company, to be known as Revvity will focus on supporting pharmaceutical and academic scientific advancement from the earliest stage of discovery all the way to entering the clinic. In diagnostics, the aim is to develop new assays, systems, and complete workflows to help better diagnose disease.

New Mountain Capital is a New York-based investment firm which currently manages private equity, credit, and net lease real estate funds with over \$37 billion in assets.

“The unveiling of Revvity is the capstone of a nearly year-long journey that has transformed who we are and reinforces why our work matters,” said Prahlad Singh, president and chief executive officer of Revvity. “At Revvity, we are united with our customers to impact health across the lifespan. We’re a translational company in the sense that our capabilities facilitate decision making between research and clinical customers,” remarked Singh.

With 2022 revenue of more than \$3 billion in 2022 and over 11,000 employees, Revvity is present in more than 190 countries.

Cardiff lab scheme gets green light

DEVELOPER, PIONEER Group has secured planning permission to deliver 54,500 square feet of purpose-built lab space at the company’s Cardiff Edge Science Park development.

The space is being delivered for maximum flexibility to cater for companies across the life sciences spectrum – from start-ups and scale-ups to multinational blue chips.



Plans to deliver 10,000 square feet of amenity space have also been approved by Cardiff City Council, which will provide occupiers with access to facilities such as a restaurant, café and flexible meeting and work spaces.

Cardiff Edge Science Park was acquired by Pioneer Group in April 2021. The 30-acre site comprises

180,000 sq. ft of high-quality life sciences, R&D and office space across seven buildings. Occupiers based at the campus include Cytiva, Cardiff and Vale University Local Health Board and DEFRA.

Update on Horizon Europe

GAMBICA HAS continued its lobbying on Horizon Europe to encourage the government to commit to joining with the European collaborative research scheme, rather than setting up a second-best UK-only alternative called Pioneer. GAMBICA has briefed Make UK on members' views and has received the following feedback from Chloe Smith, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology.

The current government line is that it wants the UK to be associated with Horizon Europe and to progress as fast as possible but insists on finding the balance 'between what we are paying to what we receive in grants and won bids' and is looking for guarantees on winning bids or receiving grants.

Meanwhile, the Royal Society is reporting a drop off in bidding for funding within Horizon Europe.

Some commentators believe that the existence of Pioneer strengthens the UK's hand in negotiations but generally believe that it would take years to optimise a stand-alone scheme which could never have the collaborative benefits of Horizon Europe.

Make UK made the following points to the Secretary of State on behalf of GAMBICA:

- UK equipment supply chain benefits from being able to supply into international markets through Horizon projects
- UK can attract skills and labour to the UK from within Horizon – important for the critical labour shortage in science and technology roles

The Secretary of State asked for any additional information, especially on non-financial benefits to be sent to her.

Time for you to win an award!

THE LAB Innovations Awards 2023 have now opened. Obviously, there are no guarantees, but as a judge on previous occasions, I have a reasonable insight as to what might work well with other judges and I would be happy to nominate you if you have a product or service which could fit into any of the following categories:

| Best Diversity Inclusion and Culture | Commitment to Skills and Training
| Best Technology Innovation | Best Consumable Innovation | Sustainable Product of the Year | Supplier Excellence | Best Collaborative Project

This year, some new categories have been introduced which enable you to enter your clients. This could be a very effective way of cementing your relationship with important clients, especially as the awards will be presented this year at a gala dinner rather than on the floor of the exhibition.



The new categories are:

| Lab Technician of the Year | Laboratory of the Year | Smart Lab of the Year
| Sustainable Lab of the Year | Rising Star | Outstanding Achievement

I'm happy to help with either type of award, just let me know what you want to enter and who to contact in your marketing team to get the underlying information and I'll take it from there. Email me at jacqueline.balian@gambica.org.uk. There is no charge to enter the awards. Last year's award winners included GAMBICA members, Ellutia, Haier Biomedical, Elemental Microanalysis, Molgen, and SLS.

Research round-up

Obesity drug cuts alcohol consumption in rats

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE has been circulating that patients prescribed semaglutide, sold as Ozempic, for obesity or diabetes have found that their craving for alcohol lessened while taking the drug. Now, the results of a study in *eBioMedicine* indicates that treatment of alcohol-dependent rats with semaglutide, significantly reduced their alcohol consumption.

In the study, the treated rats cut their alcohol intake in half compared to animals that did not receive treatment.

According to the researchers it is likely that these results will carry over to humans, as results from other studies on alcohol dependency medications made with the same research model have shown similar effect in humans as in rats.

You can read more on this story from the University of Gothenburg [here](#).

Forever chemicals broken down by soil bacteria

SCIENTISTS AT the University of California have identified two species of bacteria found in soil that break down a class of PFAS, the 'forever chemicals,' giving hope for a low-cost biological cleanup option.

The bacteria destroy a subgroup of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) that have one or more chlorine atoms within their chemical structure.

PFAS have unusually strong carbon-to-fluorine bonds which is why they are useful, but the UCR team found that the bacteria cleave the pollutant's chlorine-carbon bonds, which starts a chain of reactions that destroy the chemical structures, rendering them harmless.

The two bacteria species – *Desulfovibrio aminophilus* and *Sporomusa sphaeroides* – identified are naturally occurring and are known to live in the subterranean microbiomes where groundwater may be contaminated with PFAS. For expedited cleanups, an inexpensive nutrient, such as methanol, could be injected into groundwater to promote bacterial growth. This would greatly increase the bacteria's presence to destroy the pollutants more effectively. If the bacteria are not already present, the contaminated water could be inoculated with one of the bacterium species.

For more on this story see *Nature Water*, [here](#).

Upcoming GAMBICA Events

After-Sales Group meeting | 12th July | 10.30-13.00am | Starlab office, Milton Keynes

CALLING ALL service managers! Your next after-sales group meeting will give you a chance to brush up your communication techniques and to help increase the value of each of your customers. Many lab suppliers now routinely gather data from their equipment with the intention of using it to predict breakdowns or schedule services. However, much of that data remains under-utilised in data lakes. By making data more easily accessed, one GAMBICA member has used it to remotely monitor, and predict potential issues and even better, it has further exploited the data by providing an interface for customers to see in real time, what is happening with key equipment. This greater access has not only encouraged the customers to take up additional service and maintenance activity, it has also reduced the likelihood that they will buy equipment from alternative suppliers.

As members look for ways to increase the stickiness of their equipment, and to provide additional services, identifying and implementing data exploitation systems is a big opportunity. In this meeting, Binary Vision will set out the steps you need to take to develop easy-to-access and genuinely meaningful data and will discuss the frameworks service managers might use to increase the contribution of their data to their company.

We will also have a presentation from Steve Vaughn of training company George James on communication techniques for after sales staff.

I hope you can join us. To book your place, click [here](#).

Industry Events

Solutions in Science (SinS) | Cardiff | 4-6 July 2023

THIS NEW conference for analytical scientists, offered by the publishers of *International Labmate*, promises three days of cutting-edge presentations and discussions on applications, techniques and solutions in food science, forensics, pharma, sustainability, next generation medicines, hyphenated techniques, emerging modalities, contaminants of concern and green techniques. With over 150 scientists already registered, this is the perfect opportunity to network and collaborate with like-minded professionals. The SinS Team have secured [discounted rail fares](#) with Great Western Railway, [travel grants](#) for those who qualify and [reduced rates at local hotels](#). There will be a small exhibition running alongside the conference. You can view the conference and get more information [here](#).

AXREM Sustainability and social value conference | London | 12 July 2023

THIS EVENT, run by GAMBICA's sister organisation, AXREM, which represents manufacturers of medical imaging equipment, will feature speakers from NHS England sustainability team and NHS Supply Chain, Healthcare Ocean, EPSCOT, DHSC and a panel session with opportunities to ask questions. The event costs £85 per person. To book your place email: sally.edgington@axrem.org.uk Places are limited.

JASIS 2023 Symposium | Japan | 6-8 September 2023

THE MAJOR event for scientific analytical systems and solutions will take place as an in-person event again this year with an online exhibition starting in July. For information about exhibiting click [here](#).

Lab of the Future congress Europe 2023 | Amsterdam | 26-27 September 2023

DESIGNED TO cater for life-science research leaders and biotech start-ups and dedicated to gaining seminar participation Lab of the Future aims to shape the ideas that drive the future. For more information click [here](#). Super early bird rate saves 800 Euros, apparently.

SEHTA International MedTech Expo | London | 3 November 2023

APPROXIMATELY 220 delegates are expected to this MedTech/NHS sector event at the Tower Bridge Hotel in London. Early bird stand price is £575 plus VAT. Details [here](#).

Future Surgery 2023 | ExCel, London | 14-15 November 2023

THE SHOW claims to offer access to thousands of surgeons and operating theatre staff, and to have over 100 exhibitors. Stands start from £1,926+ VAT. To book contact a.stewart@closerstillmedia.com

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Export News

Reports on overseas markets

GAMBICA IS a member of EUROM II, an umbrella organisation for lab tech trade associations and at the last meeting, there was some discussion of the state of the various international markets which may be of interest to exporters.

The US market: Lab tech companies in the US are currently encountering some problems with funding, due to the parlous condition of some US banks. “Funding issues are huge,” says Mike Cops the head of the American Analytical, Life Science and Diagnostics Association, “Public markets are also having some difficulties. Where we had thrived across Covid, we are now seeing market capitalisations dip and IPOs are not coming in. Life science tools companies are also struggling. There’s no clear narrative though, except that customers in the bio pharma side no longer seem to be so robust and clearly it’s generally a dicey time even without China, Russia and Ukraine. It’s a hard time to be a CEO but as usual

our lab companies are proving resilient. Research is currently going well as the government is funding it, although it's not clear how much longer that will go on."

He also pointed to spin offs from Perkin Elmer and Danaher as perhaps indicative of a more general move to concentrate firms on specific end markets.

The German market: The German market was reported to be somewhat weaker than expected in the first quarter with growth around the 3.5% mark with a result that the 7% expected for the year may have to be scaled back. The Chinese market was felt to be re-opening only slowly and major changes are evident according to Mathis Kuchejda, the Chair of Spectaris, the German Lab Trade Association: "We see a lot of competition within China which has developed during Covid. They seem to be decoupling from imports and our expectations of this market are now a little cautious. The German government is seeking to de-risk our relations with China which means being sure we can source from elsewhere if necessary. As a result, the US is a highly important market."

"We used to have lots of joint research projects with China but these are now under pressure."

The Japanese Market: By contrast, the Japanese teams from trade associations JAIMA and JASIS, are seeing growing interest from their largest trading partner, China. "We are seeing many delegations coming from China looking for partners in overseas developments for products like semi-conductors," who nevertheless added: "Companies face some difficulties on how to extend their relations with China."

The French market: The education market in France is still growing thanks to public funding, particularly of universities. However, the trends may be less reassuring as there is a growing debate about whether grants should be tightened.

The Spanish market: One indication of the state of the Spanish market is the fate of national exhibition Expoquimia. This was reported to have had as few as 20 exhibitors this year and to be likely to close.

Japanese plan for floating medical city



PLANS HAVE been developed to build a futuristic floating city with cutting-edge medical care. Japanese startup N-Ark describes its '**Dogen City**' concept as a response to climate change and population growth. It hopes the idea will be pursued by a team drawn from industry, academia, and government.

The groundwork for the floating city is being laid at Hamamatsu City, a port

about 200km southwest of Tokyo. Here N-Ark has worked with the city government, the Hamana Fisheries Cooperative Association, and construction group Shimizu to demonstrate floating technologies.

The firm argues that the effect of climate change requires the development of the ocean as a new economic area. It says that to do this, it is necessary to create three industries: a



‘maritime city with functions to adapt to climate change’, a ‘constellation’ of underwater data centres, and a tourism industry that ‘connects the space, the sea and the ground’.

The Dogen City element of this triad would be circular in form, with a circumference of around

4km. This would give enough space to accommodate some 10,000 people. The floats would be ballasted by data centres that would run the city’s operating system and carry out high-value tasks such as healthcare data analytics and pharmaceutical research.

The inner rings would be relatively sheltered, and would offer the usual elements of a land-based city, such as schools, parks, hotels, and offices.

Altogether, the city’s infrastructure would be able to produce 2 million litres of drinking water, 7,000 tons of food, and enough solar panels to power the city’s systems and server farms.

N-Ark describes the concept as a “medical city on the sea”. Its computers will analyse residents’ genomes, blood, and bodily performance to “accurately evaluate the health status of individuals and receive cutting-edge medical care such as ... remote robotic surgery”.

N-Ark did not give any costs or schedule for the floating city, although it did say that it hopes to have it built by 2030.

For more information see the N-Ark website [here](#).

HMRC launches customs intermediaries consultation

HMRC IS inviting views on introducing a voluntary standard for customs intermediaries in an effort to improve the quality of the service across the sector. The consultation closes on 30 August, and can be viewed in full [here](#). Participants can give feedback by emailing customsintermediariesconsultation@hmrc.gov.uk The consultation will seek views on:

- the objectives of a voluntary standard, and what format it could take #
- how a voluntary standard could be designed and implemented
- the potential content of a voluntary standard
- training and educational offerings for the intermediary sector, which would support the introduction of a voluntary standard.

As part of the consultation, HMRC will be holding a number of broadcast events in July for businesses, trade association representatives, customs intermediaries and SMEs, to provide an overview of the consultation and answer questions. If you would like to attend one of these events, please email HMRC at customsintermediariesconsultation@hmrc.gov.uk

HR round up

HSE warns about pop-up toilets

THE HSE has issued a warning about pop-up toilets after someone was killed when working underneath a raised telescopic pop-up toilet. He was in the void below when the pop-up toilet lowered, crushing him. The HSE notes that there are two hazards associated with pop-up toilets:

- the lowering of a raised pop-up toilet during cleaning, maintenance or inspection activity, and
- the intentional or unintentional access to the chamber underneath a raised, unpropped pop-up toilet

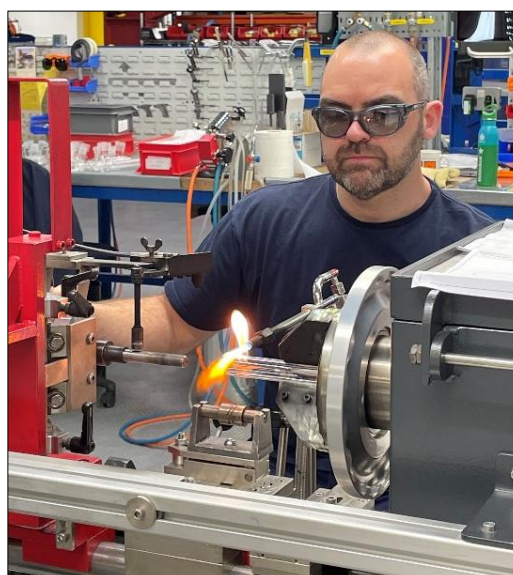
While the mind boggles at the potential for ‘unintentional’ access to the chamber underneath a toilet, building owners and managers are asked to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by using suitably rated engineering controls to prevent a raised pop-up toilet from lowering when someone is accessing the chamber below.

Company profile

Radleys brings high-energy focus to sustainability

RADLEYS, ONE of GAMBICA’s longest serving members, has one of the one of the biggest scientific glassblowing teams in the UK. Renowned for their innovative chemistry equipment and high-quality lab glassware, the company has been growing as fast as the constraints of its location in Saffron Walden, Essex will allow. Managing Director, Mark Radley, who serves on the GAMBICA Lab Board, is convinced that growth and sustainability can work hand in hand, “It’s no longer acceptable to wait for legislation to drive more sustainable actions, industry has to start doing things off its own back.”

“We are in a relatively energy-intensive industry, using gas, oxygen and electricity. That had made us feel that doing anything serious about sustainability would be difficult, but I was inspired by one of the speakers at a GAMBICA conference a couple of years ago. He made me realise that there were things we could do that would make a significant difference and that that we shouldn’t be frightened of starting, even if it was only small. So, we started with the simple behavioural things, like making sure the glassblowers turned the gas burners off whenever possible, recycling our



packaging by using cardboard shredders, installing LED lights, investing in our first electric cars. One of the big changes we have committed to this year is the installation of solar panels on the roof of our manufacturing unit and we have continued to invest heavily in more fully electric cars across our fleet. We are also intending to take part in the GAMBICA Environmental Impact Survey which was launched at this year's conference, as soon as it becomes available. It will set our baseline so that we can demonstrate our improvements to our customers. It's absolutely clear that our customers are working towards net zero and that has huge implications for us, and every other supplier."



Because quality is central importance to the users of Radleys' equipment, flaws in glassware are simply not acceptable and as such Radleys has a rigorous quality control process. Sales Director Gemma Scott is very clear about what that means: "We have a team of highly skilled glassblowers, and if we didn't have such skilled people, there would be more waste and that has a huge financial and environmental cost. Some of our large items can take more than a week for a glassblower to produce. If it isn't perfect, that means scrapping of expensive glass, wasted energy consumption, a week's wages and of course delays to the customer. So, getting it right, to the quality we demand, first time is really important."

Recruiting skilled staff is an ongoing issue and Radleys has set up its own apprenticeship scheme to develop glassblowing talent. Mark Radley is pleased with the results, but disappointed in the lack of help from the education and training establishment. "There is no apprenticeship nationally for scientific glassblowing. So, we've had to develop our own scheme from the ground up. It typically takes 3 to 5 years to train a skilled scientific glassblower. It is annoying that despite all the funding you hear of for apprentices, we haven't been able to get any support for ours. However, training highly skilled glassblowers is key to our success and growth plans. These unique skills are crucial to maintaining our competitive global advantage."

Radleys was founded by Mark's father, Bill Radley, as a glassblowing company, but he quickly became a niche lab equipment provider of everything from glassware to lab consumables and small instruments. The introduction of the company's patented Carousel 12 Reaction Station was an important turning point for the company. The Carousel 12 was developed in partnership with GSK, who wanted to develop a compact, affordable parallel synthesiser that would fit on a standard stirring hotplate. That partnership was a huge success and sowed the seeds for many other product introductions, both with GSK and other chemistry research organisations.



Before Radleys' innovated, a jacketed glass reactor was typically mounted in a dedicated frame that made changing or cleaning vessels between synthesis projects very time consuming. Radleys' patented Reactor-Ready reaction system became hugely popular because it allowed a single framework to be used for multiple vessel sizes. Over time the company has also added the complimentary Huber brand of heating and cooling circulators and Heidolph chemistry instruments to their core offering.

In a company focused on chemistry, Sales Director Gemma, is something of an outlier; her training was as a Zoologist. True to the ethos of a company which believes in developing its people, Gemma joined at the bottom, starting in a sales and technical support role with the idea of staying for a year. She's now been with the company for 21 years and held most jobs before eventually becoming a director seven years ago. "The business is constantly changing but we are very clear who our customers are. We are looking for the people with the dirty lab coats at the lab bench. For us it's all about heating, stirring and wet chemistry."



Sales and Marketing work very closely at Radleys, Gemma believes that you can only sell what customers really need, and you can only understand what that is if you actually asking them. The team are keen travellers and like to get out to meet customers and distributors, but nonetheless a lot of the marketing heavy lifting is now done digitally. "We have a sophisticated web and sales IT system which, if you have provided consent, can tell us what a visitor has been looking at and identify the kind of things you are interested in and automatically share more relevant information."

"COVID put physical distance between us, our customer and their needs, it made it harder to get to know what customers want and what problems they are facing, so we have launched a 'Voice Of Customer' project to engage with both users and potential users to get feedback from them."

"For the future we have noted an increasing focus on localization in purchasing, particularly in India which is one of our biggest markets. While localization is not threatening our business, we recognise that it may become important and that's where our Voice Of Customer project will be invaluable in helping alert us to any changes."

Gemma sees a bright future for Radleys; "We are relatively small, so even when the markets are tough, the opportunities are big. People will always need healthcare, paint and fabrics and Radleys will be here to help chemists improve them".
