



# LIGHTNING STRIKES TO BOOST NETWORK



IN THE TOP 10: Andy Redfern, Charles Stewart and Chris Beard of Lightning Aerospace

By Jenny Waddington  
BUSINESS REPORTER

**A COVENTRY manufacturer has become the 10th firm to join a world-first group working to secure new business to the region.**

Lightning Aerospace has become the latest company to join the Midlands Assembly Network – a group of sub-contract manufacturers who pool their expertise and capabilities to secure work.

Employing 32 people across its three sites in Coventry, Lightning Aerospace is already setting its sights on inter-trading, sharing best practice and winning new business in the commercial, nuclear and marine sectors.

The firm has significant expertise supplying specialist fabrication and harnesses to the Ministry of Defence and is expecting to open up this demanding marketplace to other MAN companies.

This latest development marks a milestone year for the firm, which has seen it complete a buy-out by manufacturing entrepreneur Andrew Redfern and secure annual sales of £3million for the first time. “We pride ourselves on our ability to do things differently so when the opportunity came to be part of MAN we jumped at the chance,” said Andrew, who finalised the deal at the end of July.

“Naturally, the new sales opportunities that will come from being part of the group was a major at-

traction, but we are also keen to tap into the knowledge of the nine other businesses when dealing with everyday issues.

“The fact we can split exhibition costs is a big benefit and we are looking forward to really exploring the strength of the brand in all of our marketing material.

“Our contacts with the MoD may also help other members of the group to secure work in this area for the first time.”

Originally established as part of an Advantage West Midlands-backed automotive initiative, MAN has evolved into a self-sustainable group that boasts a combined turnover of £70million and employs in excess of 600 people.

By pooling expertise and capabilities, the coalition has secured in excess of £10million of contracts, including new orders in automotive, aerospace and renewables.

Gerry Dunne, chairman of MAN, added: “We are delighted to welcome Lightning Aerospace to the fold and to have the group back up to 10 members.

“It’s expertise in fabrication and specialist harnesses ensures we can offer the customer a complete ‘manufacturing solution’, including all mechanical, electrical and electronic engineering processes.

“The firm also operates to the same principles as many of our members so will fit seamlessly into the way we work.”

## Inflation rate rise was ‘to be expected’

**BUSINESS** leaders in Coventry and Warwickshire say they are not surprised that inflation rose last month to 4.5 per cent – but they still believe the figures are cause for concern.

A hike in the cost of living saw the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation rate climb from 4.4 per cent in July, according to the latest figures from the Office for National Statistics – released yesterday.

Although it is only a slight rise, the new figures mean inflation is still well over double the Bank of England’s two per cent target rate.

And according to the August figures, the Retail Prices Index (RPI) measure increased to 5.2 per cent from five per cent. Local experts say interest rates must now remain unchanged to avoid damaging the ‘already low economic growth’.

Louise Bennett, chief executive of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, said: “The inflation figures are expected but that does not mean they do not cause concern.

“That said, our colleagues at the British Chambers of Commerce believe they will fall back next year and remain low throughout 2012.

“It is for that reason that the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee must maintain its steady hand on interest rates because a rise now could damage already low economic growth.

“It is one of the subjects that we will be looking at during our annual conference on Friday as we look at how the economy can continue to grow despite the pressure it is facing.”

## Licensing advice is personal for expert

A COVENTRY licensing lawyer has gained a greater insight into the industry after qualifying to become a licensee himself.

Neil Ireland, of Button Legal LLP, in Warwick Road, has earned the British Institute of Innkeeping level 2 award for personal licence holders, and now holds a personal licence.

Mr Ireland said the qualification added another dimension to his knowledge of licensing issues and would enable him to appreciate matters even better from his clients’ side of their business.

“Rather than purely advising clients on black letter law relating to licensing issues, this qualification has given me a fresh perspective in seeing things from my clients’ point of view,” he said.

## Visitors meeting for networking group

**A LOCAL** networking group is opening its doors to new potential members this month.

The BNI’s Godiva Chapter is organising a visitors meeting on Wednesday, September 21, at the Village Hotel on the Coventry Business Park.

Starting at 6.45am, the event gives firms the chance to meet existing members and see how well the group’s referral system works.

The event aims to finish by 8.30am and there is a £10 meeting fee, which also includes the cost of breakfast.

Anyone who wishes to come to the meeting is urged to email [zoe@bnigodiva.co.uk](mailto:zoe@bnigodiva.co.uk) to reserve their place in advance.

# Friends reunited at Leamington travel firm

A WARWICKSHIRE travel firm has strengthened its management with the arrival of two familiar faces.

It was a case of friends reunited at TMG Corporate – part of the Travel Management Group – for new account managers Mark Ellis and Joanna Donaghy.

The duo previously worked together in the cor-

porate travel team at American Express in Birmingham and are now both leading teams from TMG’s headquarters at Dormer Place in Leamington.

Mark, who is from Redditch in Worcestershire, said: “I’ve been in the travel industry my entire working life and will celebrate my 20th year in corporate

travel next year. I knew from an early age that working in the travel industry is what I always wanted to do when I left school. Civil aviation and travel are my main passions in life and I’ve travelled to more than 70 islands and countries worldwide during my career.

“I love working in the in-

dustry, no two days are ever the same and it’s great to have joined a well respected firm in TMG.

“I’ve known quite a few staff members of TMG for many years now and they’ve made me feel really welcome since I joined, I’ve also worked with Joanna before and it’s great to be working together again.”

Joanna, who previously worked for WGT Sports and UK Athletics, said: “I’d been freelancing for around two and half years in the promotional and events industry which I enjoyed but was keen to return to my roots and pursue a career path in travel, having wanted to get my foot in the door at TMG for quite a while.”