

# All systems go

Manufacturing over 100,000 IGUs a week and employing over 1,000 people at six sites across the UK, Glass Systems is the largest independent sealed unit manufacturer in the UK and has recently announced plans to build a brand new, state of the art factory in Port Talbot, Wales. Glass Times editor Luke Wood, speaks to Glass Systems MD, Khaled Elleboudy, to find out more.

**Luke Wood (LW): Tell us more about the decision to invest in the new factory?**

**Khaled Elleboudy (KE):** Currently, we have three sites in South Wales all in close proximity of each other, so the decision was made to amalgamate these into one factory. Growth and development are key to Glass Systems. The new factory in Wales will work alongside our other facilities in England and Scotland and represents a significant development and investment for Glass Systems.

**LW: Why choose Port Talbot?**

**KE:** The 30-acre development site is located in the Port Talbot Enterprise zone very close to one of our current sites, Vizor Tempered Glass (Climate Glass). It is in a central position to the three sites in Wales and has easy access to the M4 corridor which is a key trading area within the UK.

The decision to remain in this area was made to safeguard the 400 plus jobs at our existing sites in Wales and it will ensure a smooth transition into the new facility.

We also own and manage our transport fleet comprising of over 100 vehicles, and we operate nationally. The locations of our factories in the UK and owning our transport fleet enables us to offer shorter lead times to our customers and provide the best service available in the UK.

**LW: How long will it take for the new factory to become operational?**

**KE:** We are planning to start production in the summer of 2024, and there will be a gradual transition to the new factory to ensure there is no operational impact to our customers.

**LW: How will your customers benefit from the new factory.**

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L-R: Marcin Szczepanski, project manager, Press Glass; Lukasz Matlingiewicz, engineering director of Glass Systems; Khaled Elleboudy, managing director of Glass Systems; Andrew Cartwright, regional production manager of Glass Systems; Simon Hall, commercial director of Glass Systems

**KE:** This new factory and state-of-the-art machinery and equipment will further improve the high product quality we currently offer to our customers, as the manual handling of the glass is reduced. This gives us even better quality and also creates a safer environment for our employees to work in.

This, coupled with the increased capacity, gives us the opportunity to respond to changes required from the customer market and provide the best service possible.

**LW: What are the environmental /**

**sustainability considerations for such a project?**

**KE:** The environmental and sustainability considerations have played a major part during the planning stages of this project, as we are committed to our organisational goal of reducing our CO2 emission, reducing waste, and saving energy by investment in sustainable technologies and processes.

This innovative factory will ensure we are in a good position to achieve this going forward, as our new equipment will use less power and we have invested in solar panels



The new Glass Systems factory in Port Talbot will bring three existing factories in Wales under one roof, including the existing workforce

covering most of the building which will provide the factory with renewable energy – but these are just two examples.

We have also invested a considerable amount of time and resources planning the landscape with an expert team to protect the natural habitats and local environment surrounding the factory.

**LW: How much additional capacity will the new factory deliver?**

**KE:** We will be able to increase our production capacity from between 40,000 to 60,000 IGUs per week from our current factories in Wales and this will also enhance current support to customers within the IGU sector for the residential market in the UK.

**LW: Have you seen an increase in demand for particular product ranges?**

**KE:** Definitely, the glass market changes as new 'project ideas' get more innovative and demand higher specifications from glass suppliers, so we have seen an increased interest in oversized glass and triple



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glazing from our customers and we have responded with the introduction of new products.

**LW: Automation is obviously a key part of modern glass manufacturing – what machinery will you have in the new factory?**

**KE:** We have invested in state-of-the-art manufacturing machinery and software alongside robotic technology. We will be using automated spacer bar applicators and we are sourcing new and innovative solutions and systems.

**LW: Are you anticipating greater demand for triple glazing ahead of the Future Homes Standard in 2025?**

**KE:** We are already seeing an increased interest in triple glazing from our customers in the new build sector as we approach the new regulations in 2025. This new site will future proof us, giving us increased capacity to produce triple glazing units as the demand increases.

**LW: In your opinion what are the key opportunities in glass manufacturing going forward?**

**KE:** There are lots of opportunities ahead for us, as glass technology has advanced over the years in terms of performance and what we are able to offer. Our focus is on providing the best service and quality to our customers and building strong customer relationships.

The investment made now in this new factory is enhancing our sustainability journey, minimising our environmental impacts and conserving energy.

It will also provide us with more capacity to introduce new products which will offer more choice to our customers and keep us as the UK's number one choice for insulated glass units.