

THE MAGAZINE WITH INSIGHT

**BUSINESSFOCUS**

# BRIAR CHEMICALS GREAT CHEMISTRY

*briar*   
chemicals



BRIAR CHEMICALS IS A COMPANY WITH A STRONG PEDIGREE,  
LONG HISTORY AND AN EXCITING FUTURE...

# GREAT CHEMISTRY

PROJECT MANAGED BY: JAKE REEMAN

**Briar Chemicals is a contract manufacturing business that primarily works in the agrichemicals industry. The firm has made a name for itself dealing with very complex chemistry, building partnerships around the world with big chemical brands focused on the agrichemical sector. Its work is instrumental in terms of food security and better crop yields.**

It is a world-class manufacturer, one of the biggest CMDOs in the UK. But it is also based in Norwich, in the UK, and has worked hard to be an integral part of that community.

"We sponsor the Norwich Science Festival and support local schools with science days. It is important to us that the firm be engaged with the local community," says Shaz Rashid, CEO of Briar Chemicals. "We are a chemical site, so having that regular engagement is really important. People outside the industry will naturally have concerns about what goes on at the site. So, we want to be as communicative as possible."

But this engagement is about more than PR. For Rashid, it is about ensuring and maintaining the company's future talent pool.

"We are a scientific business. We are engineers, chemists, operators, technicians and many more," Rashid points out. "So,

we engage with the community to nurture our future talent pool, and we'd like that talent pool to be local."

The Science Festival is a key part of that outreach, although as Rashid talks about it, it is clear the festival is also great fun.

"We like to inspire younger children. It is great doing the science festival. We do really simple chromatography, stuff like that which shows how separation techniques work so the kids can have little play with it," Rashid enthuses. "Kids love it and our scientists and staff love engaging with them."

As well as the Science Festival, Briar Chemicals also has a collaborative relationship with the local University of East Anglia, and the company plays a role as part of the Norwich community. This has all helped to make Briar Chemicals an appealing prospect for potential recruits. >>







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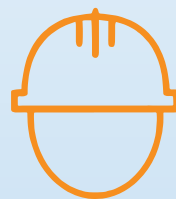
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## INSPec SYSTEMS LTD

Inspec Systems Ltd are a team of multidisciplinary engineers skilled in delivering complex, turnkey, multifaceted, projects to a wide range of industries.

Our relationship with Briar started in 2019 when we were engaged to carry out a feasibility review into the best available technologies to replace an oversized and obsolete Gas Turbine and Waste Heat Boiler providing electricity and steam to the site as a combined heat and power (CHP) system. Given the challenge of meeting the latest emissions requirements, our review identified that the implementation of a Gas Engine based CHP would offer improved efficiency, meet future environmental requirements, whilst giving attractive cost benefits to Briar. The scheme chosen provides optimised onsite electrical power and steam generation.

Moving from feasibility, through front end engineering design (FEED), to detailed design, Inspec acted as Principal Designer and Designer. With a re-validated budget following detailed design, Briar engaged Inspec to deliver the full project as Principal Contractor under CDM, operating as Engineering, Procurement, and Construction (EPC) Contractor under NEC 4 contract terms.



The requirement to disinvest significant heavy plant and introduce new production critical plant within a very rigid plant outage has required meticulous planning and high levels of commitment from all parties. The introduction of a new steam raising boiler called for the implementation of an entirely new ventilation scheme meeting combustion air requirements. Working closely with our ventilation subcontract, Glen Wilson, together we designed and integrated the new system to closely track the ventilation demands using variable speed drives to optimise energy efficiency.

At a time of heightened environmental awareness with the objective to reduce NOx emissions and address global energy instability, close attention was given to all aspects of sustainability, with the chosen gas engine being delivered as "Hydrogen ready". The site energy demand profile was assessed, and a solution developed blending solar power with power provided by the new CHP scheme meeting the sites power requirements whilst efficiently producing process steam.

One of the most complex aspects of the project has been the disinvestment of existing systems and the integration of new plant and equipment, whilst maintaining production availability. This involved the disentanglement of steam distribution, electrical and control systems which drew on the systems integration expertise we have developed over the past 20 year of business. The piping and civil engineering detailed design was developed using 3D laser scanning and point cloud modelling to ensure successful tie-in with existing plant services.

As a top tier COMAH site, Briar rightly set a high standard of health and safety requiring close compliance with statutory and internal standards. Working closely with Briar, Inspec developed Safety Management Systems which bridged between Briar and Inspec standards ensuring procedures were appropriate and effective.

This is just one of the many demonstrations of good co-operation and co-ordination exercised on the project. This co-operation with all parties has delivered positive results in the exceptional site safety performance.

Inspec are proud of their achievements which were only possible due to the close partnering arrangement with Briar.

[www.inspecsystems.co.uk](http://www.inspecsystems.co.uk)

## BRIAR CHEMICALS

"We are a very diverse organisation. We have seen a change in how the organisation works. Many more young people are coming through the company, and from across the UK as well," Rashid says. "I think the reason for that is that because we are not a huge chemical business, we can give people experiences and development opportunities much faster and earlier in their careers with appropriate support. We like to help our people develop as quickly as they can."



## A COMPANY WITH MANY NAMES

Briar Chemicals has been part of Norwich's community for a long time. The site it occupies has been used for chemical manufacturing since 1956 when it was owned by the chemical firm May & Baker. By 1988 May & Baker had become Rhône-Poulenc, and shortly after that, it became part of the Bayer Group. >>



Then, in 2012 the firm was divested again as Bayer shifted focus, leading to the plant becoming part of Aurelius AG, finally taking on the name Briar Chemicals.

"They held us for ten years, and then in October last year the private equity firm sold us to the fast-growing Indian agrochemical company, Safex Chemicals," Rashid says.

It has been quite the journey.

"We were part of a large chemical business, then under the ownership of a private equity firm, we became a self-sustaining independent business. Now we are still independent, but our shareholding is through Safex Chemicals India," explains Rashid. "It is nice to be back in the chemical fold because they understand the terms we use and the market that we are in. In some cases, they understand it even better than we do because they are an agrichemical company where we are a contract manufacturer for chemical businesses."

This history means that Briar Chemicals is a relatively young company in its current form, but it still boasts an enviable track record.

"We have got a long track record of manufacturing safely, managing complex chemistries for our customers within the industry," Rashid tells us. "What is unique is that we are constantly working with that complex chemistry. Plenty of chemical firms exist who will do a campaign once every couple of years, but we work with these complex chemistries day in, day out, on a regular basis."

But while the company has an impressive track record, it is also a forward-looking business, particularly in terms of sustainability.



"We take our environmental and climate responsibilities very seriously," Rashid insists. "A good portion of our site is given over to water treatment. We even capture and treat rainwater. Nothing is released into waterways. We have a very large solar power farm, which generates 4 MW of electricity."

This year Briar Chemicals also invested heavily in a more efficient, low-emission, combined-heat-and-power plant. This £5 million investment puts the company ahead of the curve in terms of climate change.

"Targets are being set. We are using less gas to produce the same electricity, resulting in less emissions," Rashid says. "We are looking to the future to ensure where we can invest in sustainability."

#### A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Climate change is not the only challenge Briar Chemicals is facing, however. The firm is an international business, trading all over the world, particularly in Europe. It means that Brexit has set a number of challenges in front of the company.

"There are challenges around bureaucracy and processing times are getting longer," Rashid acknowledges. "There is a longer lead time than there used to be. We need focus from the government and

industry as a whole to mitigate that. If our competitors outside of the UK can provide products to our customers more quickly, that is a risk for us."

In response, Briar Chemicals has invested in extra steps in the logistics process, including recruiting a new agent to deal with the regulatory burden.

"We work much closer with the customer to provide material when they need it," says Rashid. "We have had to look at how we manage everything, including cost, but that's what we have to do to keep moving forward."

Moving forward is what Rashid intends to do, and he is excited by the possibilities of the firm's new ownership.

"They are very engaging," Rashid tells us. "It is a big investment for them, and they have big plans. We want to expand our existing customer base, achieve better reach for our products, and work with our partners to bring new products to our site."

This is no small achievement, as Rashid points out.

"In our industry bringing a new product to the site is a major event, it can take several years," he continues. "It takes effort time and investment. At the same time, our workforce has grown by 25% over the last three years. We have a lot of positive indicators for the future." ☺

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