

# Quality & innovation

*Bridgend, South Wales-headquartered TBD – formerly known in the GSE world as TBD Owen Holland – is well known for its ground support equipment, but it has many other strings to its bow*

**T**BD's business development manager, Gareth McAuliffe, explains that the company produces equipment for three main areas, all of which overlap and interrelate: base maintenance (hangar equipment, docking systems and the like); line maintenance (towable access and other maintenance-related equipment for aircraft on-stand); and ground handling equipment such as baggage trailers and dollies and boarding stairs.

With an industry-leading reputation for its ground handling equipment, the company is working hard on boosting its profile in the base maintenance market as well as other areas of its product mix.

Right across the various product portfolios, the standards of quality are high, McAuliffe notes. Employing approximately 120 people at its Welsh facility, TBD handles all aspects of

An Etihad paintshop; the UAE flag-carrier is one of many Middle Eastern airlines that TBD counts among its customer base

solutions from design through manufacture in its 60,000 sq ft premises to delivery and training.

TBD stresses the quality and innovation of the British design/manufacturing that is recognised worldwide as: 'Engineered in Britain: trusted worldwide.'

While many of TBD's longstanding customers are certainly British – including British Airways, Monarch and Thomas Cook – many others are from further afield. Globally active handlers such as Swissport are valued customers, as are foreign carriers including seven in the Middle East. TCR is also a big client, its leasing business seeing plenty of TBD products employed around the world. Roughly 60% of TBD's business is actually export-based, McAuliffe confirms.

### INNOVATION

TBD has continued to upgrade its equipment right across the portfolio, with changes resulting in safer and more efficient equipment and improved profitability for airlines. For example, about a year ago it brought to market a system that it calls Main Landing Gear (MLG). TBD's MLG is actually an innovative piece of equipment that allows maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) engineers easy access to the main landing



Gareth McAuliffe, TBD's business development manager

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gear of all of today's widebody aircraft – B747s, A330s and A340s, B767s and the latest B787s, and the A380. Meanwhile, TBD's complementary Nose Landing Gear access system gives similar access to the nose wheel of these same aircraft.

In the GSE field, a simple but effective safety feature was implemented by TBD for its baggage/ container dollies. The safety loop is a distinctive yellow loop that is fitted between the dollies to block operators attempting to pass between them. A simple idea, likely to save serious injury and even lives, McAuliffe believes. TBD has put 750 of these specially equipped dollies into London Heathrow's Terminal 5, and is implementing this patented system into other equipment in its range.

Another improvement is currently ongoing: TBD is redesigning a new variant of flip top maintenance steps. This and a number of other new designs are expected to be in situ at TBD's stand at *inter airport* in Munich, where the company will be greeting visitors within the large UK pavilion.

## EVOLUTION

TBD's product improvements are taking place within a changing market, of course. One trend that McAuliffe points to is the increasing propensity of operators to lease, rather than purchase, equipment. Such a trend makes TBD's relationship with leasing specialist TCR particularly important, McAuliffe points out.

Any leasing contracts are won only as part of very competitive tender processes, he continues. And, especially in terms of maintenance systems, we are just entering the busy time of the year (MRO ramps up in the winter months, McAuliffe observes, as aircraft have more downtime in the quieter months following the busy summer period).

Whether it be in the MRO or the ground handling segments, however, he and his colleagues are clearly looking to maintain TBD quality while raising its profile in the market. ■



**The MLG offers engineers access to B777s amongst many other widebody aircraft types**