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FUEL EXHAUSTS

This rapidly-growing aftermarket exhaust manufacturer started out in a chicken shed



Fuel Exhausts may not yet be a household name, but with an ever-growing base of loyal customers, they're certainly getting there. Run by husband and wife team, Damian and Louise Turner, this Kendal-based firm produce top-quality exhausts that are still within reach of the average biker's pocket. The story began back in 2001 when Damian, armed with £1000 of savings and a Prince's Youth Business Trust loan of £3k (along with a bucket-load of encouragement from Louise), moved into his first business premises:

an old shed on a chicken farm that had previously been the egg room. Perhaps a fitting location for the birth of his new business. "It was pretty basic," laughs Damian, "we didn't even have our own toilet. It helped get us started though. One of our first products was a re-packing kit which we advertised in MCN." Damian designed and adapted most of the tooling himself, mainly because he couldn't find anyone else to do the job neatly enough. Each exhaust is hand-built and carries a lifetime guarantee. Fuel's philosophy is to ensure a perfect fit

every time, but while end cans are relatively universal, how they attach results in assorted link-pipe options needing to be built. "To begin with we had to buy in link pipes," says Damian, "but the quality was terrible and we were forever bending and twisting parts to make them fit. In the end I'd cut the old stuff up and weld it back together on our own jigs. We just did whatever we had to do until we could afford to invest in our own pipe bender." But there's more to making a successful business than just having a good product, you need to



FUEL EXHAUSTS' MILESTONES



It's 2001 and Damian founds Fuel Exhausts in an old chicken shed. Although set up to make bike exhausts, local farmers were soon dropping by to get their tractors patched up, which actually helped get the business on its feet.

ROUND THE BEND



Two years later Damian invests in an industrial pipe bender which means that link pipes can now be manufactured in-house for the first time.

FAMILY FIRM



In 2004 Louise joins the business full time and drives the marketing side of the operation. Discovering the power of eBay was a game-changer. "It was like flicking on a switch," says Louise. "Our sales increased tenfold overnight."

GROWING FAST



2011 sees Fuel move into new premises on an industrial estate. They have since built an all-new workshop on the site, which was completed in 2018 (pictured above).

NEXT TIME IT'S...

R&G protection
 The kings of crash protection, radiator guards, tail ties and engine case protection.



THE INSIDE STORY



1 Rolled and welded
 At the start of the production process all exhausts begin as a flat blank that is rolled into the desired shape (either round or oval), tacked and then seam-welded.



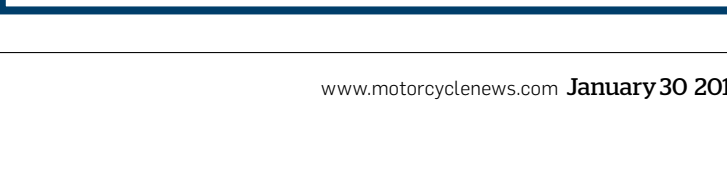
2 Laser cutting
 Individual pressings for the end caps are laser cut. They're welded on the inside before the outside is polished.



3 It's a wrap
 The perforated inner tube is wrapped in fibreglass before being tapped into the outer tube with a rubber mallet.



4 Final fixings
 Rivet bands form the final fixings to hold the exhaust can together. Damian uses special rivets to ensure they fasten correctly to create a long-lasting product.



5 Making the link
 Link pipes are formed on the pipe bender and if necessary reduced on the swaging machine.

6 Final touches
 All items are finished by hand and thoroughly inspected. If the result isn't flawless, it won't be sent out.