

Northern Ireland's materials handling success story

Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland. Courtesy of Tourism Ireland, photographed by Chris Hill

Welcome from Invest Northern Ireland

It is a privilege to introduce this series of articles celebrating one of Northern Ireland's greatest industrial success stories – our world leading materials handling sector.

Few regions of our size can claim such global impact. Yet here in Northern Ireland, we have built a cluster that not only competes with, but often surpasses, the biggest and best known engineering names in the world.

For more than sixty years, our companies have combined ingenuity, craftsmanship and determination to design and build machinery that performs in the harshest environments on earth. From crushing granite in Canada and screening aggregates in the Middle East, to washing sand in Qatar and powering recycling plants across Europe, Northern Ireland's engineering excellence is recognised on a global scale. What strikes me most – and fills me with genuine admiration – is the spirit of collaboration and ambition that defines this sector. These companies do not just build machines. They solve problems, anticipate future needs and continually redefine what is possible. Northern Ireland truly punches above its weight, and nowhere is that more evident than in the materials handling industry.

Hillhead has long been a landmark date in the diary for Northern Ireland's materials handling sector. When we first attended in 1993, just ten companies represented the region. By Hillhead 2026, that presence will have grown to 52 companies, with 18 exhibiting within the Invest Northern Ireland area and a further 34 showcasing independently.

Together, they will demonstrate the depth, capability and innovation of the sector, with several companies using the event to launch exciting new products to an international audience.

As director of advanced manufacturing and engineering at Invest Northern Ireland, I could not be more proud of the people, the products and the partnerships that make this industry so exceptional. Our companies continue to set the standard internationally, and I firmly believe the next chapter will be the most exciting yet.

Northern Ireland has always built machines that move the world. Now, together, we are building its future. **AB**

Brendan McGuigan
Director, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering at Invest Northern Ireland



Image: Invest Northern Ireland



A global powerhouse in crushing and screening

It was a pleasure and an honour for the *Aggregates Business* team to put together this 18-page supplement on the Northern Ireland materials handling equipment sector, in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland.

The country is renowned as a global powerhouse in the design and production of mobile crushing, screening, washing and conveying equipment, with a global market share of 60-65 per cent of the tracked screens sector and 35-40 per cent of crushers.

In this special supplement, we speak with a range of industry insiders and experts to trace the sector's development from its 1950s and 60s origins, through to the highly-developed industry supported by a strong distribution network that now exports world-class and innovative equipment to over 100 countries.

Based largely in County Tyrone, the industry has grown from serving local quarrying needs into a leader in materials handling that supplies equipment to the quarrying, mining, construction and recycling sectors worldwide.

Driven by Northern Ireland's strong engineering and fabrication heritage, the quarrying equipment sector employs more than 8000 people producing crushing and screening equipment in addition to mobile stackers/conveyors and wet processing plants.

World-leading brands include Powerscreen, Finlay, McCloskey, CDE Group, Terex Washing, Smiley Monroe, Telestack, Prostack and Edge Innovate, in addition to

multinationals with important manufacturing bases in the country such as Sandvik, McLanahan and Tesab-owner Metso.

The industry's success is underpinned by a robust ecosystem featuring the major original equipment manufacturers, a network of specialist components suppliers, and a highly skilled talent pool. The early adoption of mobile technology has allowed producers to move machines to the materials, drastically cutting transport costs. Northern Irish mobile manufacturing expertise now extends to recycling waste and increasing global sustainability efforts in aggregate processing.

The mobile and modular machines are ideal for crushing, screening, washing and conveying construction and demolition material that would otherwise end up in a landfill, creating revenue streams in recycling.

In terms of future prospects, Northern Ireland's quarrying equipment industry is ideally-placed for further success with its strong focus on research and development, innovative products and maintaining competitiveness in a global environment.

The country's firms innovate and respond quickly due to tight-knit clusters and strong supply-chain integration. This enables them to meet rising global demand for sustainable, low-carbon, high-efficiency machinery with further opportunities in electrification, telematics and hybrid systems. **AB**

Liam McLoughlin
Editor, *Aggregates Business*



Image: Prime Creative Media

A history of excellence

With roots in the pioneering mobile screening technology of Finlay and Powerscreen, Northern Ireland has grown into a global leader in materials handling and quarrying equipment.

Drawing on the region's rich engineering and fabrication heritage — from shipbuilding and aerospace to textiles and machinery production — Northern Ireland's quarrying sector now commands a strong international reputation.

Its development dates back to the 1950s when John Finlay, who subsequently established the Finlay company, introduced the first self-contained mobile screening unit in 1958.

In 1966, Ulster Plant (later Powerscreen) was founded, pioneering the concept of bringing machinery to the quarry face.

From these beginnings, the "Tyrone Cluster" developed, a highly concentrated, globally dominant engineering and materials handling manufacturing hub in County Tyrone.

Hubert Watson, who worked at Powerscreen for 20 years and is now a consultant at Roco, which produces diesel-electric crushing and screening machines, shared his insights into the sector's beginnings.

"The difference between Finlay and Powerscreen was probably that Finlay was more of an engineering company, and Powerscreen was more a marketing-led company," he said.

"Powerscreen really took off in the mid-1980s when the world market started to grow."

Terex Materials Processing president Kieran Hegarty said the area's preponderance of small engineering workshops serving the agriculture sector helped create the conditions for growth in quarrying equipment, initially in the screening sector.

Terex's range of quarrying equipment brands includes Powerscreen, Finlay, MAGNA, EvoQuip, Cedarapids, Simplicity, Canica, Terex Washing Systems (TWS), MDS and ProStack.

Hegarty said he would compare the industry's organic growth to that of the US car industry in Detroit.

"Somebody would leave one company and set up another, and you end up with a cluster multiplying," he said.

This growth included expansion beyond the industry's initial mobile screening focus.

Northern Irish companies produce crushing and screening (including Finlay, Powerscreen, EvoQuip, MAGNA, Metso-owned Tesab Engineering, McCloskey International, Anaconda Equipment, RM Dungannon and Roco), conveying (Smiley Monroe, ProStack, QK Conveyors, Ezystack and Conveyortek) and washing equipment (Terex Washing Systems, CDE, Dernaseer Washing, Bruce Engineering and Circular Group) for the quarrying sector. Watson said that there has also been expansion into the concrete mixing and batching sector, with businesses including Rapid International, as well as major diversification in terms of engineering into the agricultural sector and the green waste sector for shredders and wind sifters.

An integral part of the ecosystem is a robust supply chain of companies servicing the major manufacturers. Watson said the existence of this supply chain has been critical.

"Without them, the crushing and screening sector would never have taken off. You can get pumps, motors, belts, electrics, and there are companies such as Specdrum in Dungannon who make drums for our industry," he said.



Roco consultant Hubert Watson.

"That whole supply chain is largely in Northern Ireland."

Watson estimated the global market for tracked crushing and screening machines is about 7000 units per year, with a value of around £2bn. He said that, of this, Northern Irish manufacturers have a 60 to 65 per cent share of the tracked screens sector and 35 to 40 per cent of crushers. The country's mobile crushing and screening equipment sector now employs 8000-plus people in over 100 companies, according to equipment dealer Finning. Following Northern Ireland's early success in the screening sector, it came to prominence in crushing machine production in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Watson said the qualities of Northern Ireland's workforce have driven the development of the industry and can help its future success.

Northern Ireland's quarrying equipment timeline

1958

John Finlay pioneers the world's first self-contained mobile screening unit in Omagh.

Mobile screening company Ulster Plant (subsequently rebranding as Powerscreen in the 1970s) is founded in Dungannon.

1985

Mobile crushing and screening company McCloskey International is founded in Canada by Northern Ireland native Paschal McCloskey. The company then establishes a major footprint in County Tyrone.

1966

1999

Telestack established in Omagh, as the specialized material handling division of Loughside Engineering, bringing radial stacking technology to Europe.

Northern Ireland cements its reputation as a global leader in tracked mobile crushing and screening equipment.

2007

Sandvik buys mobile crushing and screening companies Fintec and Extec, which both have manufacturing facilities in Northern Ireland.

The sector sees widespread adoption of hybrid technology to improve fuel efficiency and lower emissions in mining and recycling.

2000s

2010s



Terex Materials Processing president Kieran Hegarty.

"Irish people are very adaptable. Historically, it comes from the agricultural background. If a tractor broke, you couldn't get a new tractor – fix the tractor," he said.

Watson said that continuing its history of innovation and differentiation is crucial for the future expansion of Northern Ireland's quarrying equipment sector.

He cited the example of Culloville, County Armagh-based Roco's development of dual-powered hybrid electric crushers which provide more fuel-efficiency than standard diesel-hydraulic models. The sector has established a strong distribution network that is comfortable operating globally.

"A lot of Northern Ireland-based companies have established a very focused distribution network with specialised distributors who only sell materials processing equipment," Hegarty said.

"They're very knowledgeable in how to apply the equipment and I think it's that mixture of very strong focussed distributors and high-quality equipment that has helped Northern Irish companies to be global leaders."

He said there were other factors that have driven the country's quarrying equipment sector, meaning it continues to be well-positioned.

"Northern Ireland benefits from its geography. If you're shipping both to Europe and to North America, it is fairly short transit times. You can get a screen to America in less than 10 days," he said.

"Also, the products that come out of Northern Ireland tend to be industry-leading, their designs and their names are considered to be quality."

Hegarty said that 30 years ago, the majority of aggregates would have been produced by large stationary plants, but the market is now 50 to 60 per cent mobile-based.

"Mobile plants have advanced in terms of their capabilities," he said. "Our MAGNA [high-capacity mobile crushing, screening and conveying] brand is an example. Ten years ago, no one would have thought you could buy a mobile plant that would process a thousand tonnes an hour.

"That greater capacity is the single biggest change, and the value proposition for mobile is so much stronger now globally."

Northern Irish manufacturers have an estimated 60-65 per cent share of the tracked screens sector and 35-40 per cent of crushers.

Hegarty said that business and economic development agency Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI) provides invaluable help in developing the quarrying equipment sector.

"Over the years, they have given a lot of support, but kept it really focused on research and development [R&D], which I think has a lot of correlation with success. There is a continuous culture of [R&D] and Invest NI has helped stimulate that," he said.

Invest Northern Ireland manager for the materials handling sector Andrew Greer said

they were eager to help support the sector with its full range of services.

"We have a range of services and R&D is a big part of that," he said.

"We can provide help with labour costs, design, prototype build, testing, right up to the finished product.

"We provide grants for small, and large companies as well. Some of these companies have been supply chain companies with the potential to develop their own product."

The agency had its first stand at the UK Hillhead quarrying equipment show in 1993.

"We had 10 companies in that first year, and that has grown and grown," Greer said

"It was Hillhead first and we then went on to do the 'trifecta' of shows with bauma in Munich, Intermat in Paris, and ConExpo in Las Vegas, and this was the first time we'd taken these companies outside of the UK."

Greer said that a major objective of Invest NI is to help smaller companies gain worldwide distribution and set up dealerships, and that the organisation has a range of international offices to facilitate this endeavour. The quarrying equipment manufacturing sector in the region continues to grow and diversify, according to Invest Northern Ireland head of western region Ethna McNamee, whose area covers where many of the companies are based.

"The sector started with screening and crushing, and now it's much more than that with a lot of engineering systems, soil remediation, blending machines," she said.

"Other digital niches are growing that are allied to the sector including electronics software, and IT capabilities aligned to automation.

"In a year, there might be 50 start-up companies or new projects just in our local office, and maybe half of those will be engineering companies, so it's often second-generation people whose father worked in Terex, and it's very much a cultural thing now.

"People see that you can set up a business and be really successful in your own area. There's a formula." **AB**

The sector increases its focus on global exports, with companies like Powerscreen and Finlay establishing international reputations.

1990s

1992

CDE, a global leader in wet processing and sand washing, is established in Cookstown, County Tyrone.

Powerscreen buys Michigan, US-based mineral screening equipment manufacturer Simplicity Engineering.

1994

1999

Terex acquires Powerscreen, Finlay and US mobile crushing and screening company Cedarapids.

2014

Telestack acquired by Astec Industries.

Continued innovation with new impact crushers and heavy-duty scalpers introduced by NI-based manufacturers.

2018-19

2020-22

The sector focuses on environmental sustainability, producing equipment for recycling waste and providing low-emission mobile processing solutions.

Northern Ireland's material handling OEMs take a prominent role at ConExpo 2026 in the US and Hillhead 2026 in the UK.

2026

McLanahan production facility in Dungannon, County Tyrone covers more than 1,951m².



Image: McLanahan

Innovation drives further expansion

A culture of innovation and engineering expertise, together with strong ties to academia and an integrated local supply chain, is sustaining long-term growth in Northern Ireland’s quarrying equipment sector.

The density of Northern Ireland’s quarrying equipment manufacturing sector and its engineering excellence has created an environment of competitiveness, efficiency and innovation.

The region has developed an integrated supply chain that incorporates belting, fabrication, components, hydraulics, electrics and control panels.

Combine this with a global footprint driven by a strong distribution network that is comfortable operating globally and the sector’s outlook continues to look healthy.

Not that anyone in the industry is taking this for granted.

Telestack commercial director (part of the Astec crushing, screening and material handling business) Malachy Gribben said the Tyrone area specifically is “the heartbeat of the global mobile crushing and screening sector, and mobile material handling.”

“A lot of our competition from outside Northern Ireland are playing catchup on what we did ten or 15 years ago. It’s vital for us to keep innovating and we are very focused on new technologies and new designs,” he said.

“At Telestack, we are developing new solutions around the intake and loadout systems at quarries.

“Tied into our quarry business is also our ship-loading business, as a lot of the quarries we deal with globally are processing the material and loading it onto boats to export, as well as importing aggregates.”

He said that Astec is developing new multi-frequency screening technology to improve the handling of difficult and sticky materials, that is being unveiled at the Hillhead quarrying equipment show (Buxton, UK, June 23-25).

Gribben said that the established ecosystem of suppliers in Northern Ireland, particularly in the Tyrone Cluster, has improved competitiveness.

“Having so many core components providers locally has been critical to helping the factories be more efficient and offer shorter lead times on the delivery of products than competitors outside of Northern Ireland,” he said.

Gribben said digitalisation is another area where Northern Ireland is well-placed for success going forward.

“At Astec, we have a dedicated team that deals with innovation around digital technologies, with one of the key aims to drive the operational efficiency, uptime and energy efficiency of the equipment,” he said.

As part of this, Astec has introduced the Signal Connectivity Suite, which includes mobile telematics to support customers in how they manage their operations.

Astec does its digitalisation research and development in-house, but Gribben said a whole network of digital solutions companies is developing in Northern Ireland to support equipment manufacturers on that path.

Northern Irish companies, such as Telestack, that started in the quarrying equipment industry, are now using the manufacturing and engineering expertise they have built up over decades to pivot very successfully and profitably into other sectors.

“We are really well-placed in the global mining industry,” Gribben said.

“Our conveying solutions are used in mines to handle iron, gold, copper and bauxite, and we are also helping these mines to export their products via our ship loading and unloading systems.

“We’ve used the expertise we’ve built up over several decades in quarrying to move into mining and help drive that business.”

He said that such diversification into other sectors is important for Northern Irish companies that have traditionally operated in quarrying, but face increasing competition from equipment manufacturers in Europe, India and China.

Gribben said that another factor strengthening Northern Ireland’s position in the quarrying equipment sector is its close ties with educational institutions.

“In the last number of years, there has been a very proactive approach to working with academia from manufacturers like ourselves,” he said.

The region’s mobile crushing and screening sector supports over 8000 people in more than 100 companies.



Images: Invest Northern Ireland

Invest Northern Ireland's Ethna McNamee.

"That has been critical to help us develop the next generation of leaders and innovators within our industry, not just in engineering but in manufacturing and the supply chain."

Invest Northern Ireland's head of western region Ethna McNamee highlighted the work of South West College (SWC) in supporting the growth of the sector in the region. The college operates across three main campuses located in Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh and is specialised in advanced manufacturing and engineering, with the objective of servicing the skills needs of the region's manufacturers.

It supports the local engineering sector through apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships and collaboration with industry to drive growth.

Invest NI alongside Mid Ulster Council has also supported MEGA (Manufacturing, Engineering, Growth and Advancement) in this area. MEGA is an industry-led network in mid-Ulster, established in 2019, to address skills shortages by attracting, developing, and retaining talent.

"They have alongside SWC have helped ensure the manufacturing companies here have a skilled pipeline of suitably qualified people with the expertise that's needed for the future growth of the sector," McNamee said.

Invest Northern Ireland's Andrew Greer said Northern Ireland's history in mobile machines, remained a key factor.

"The flexibility and scalability of the mobile concept, with modularity and linking machines together, has driven and is still driving the sector," Greer said.

A Sandvik UJ443E electric mobile jaw crusher.



Image: Sandvik

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Invest Northern Ireland's Andrew Greer

"There is mobile equipment for block making, concrete batching plants, waste picking and recycling. That is something we still lead with. It means that companies and customers can scale up as required. You've got crushing, screening and recycling all in one product and that came from Northern Ireland."

Sandvik has a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant at Ballygawley, County Tyrone. Sandvik Rock Processing Solutions mobile crushing and screening division president Manny Maloney is an Australian national based in Sweden who spends a lot of time in Northern Ireland on business.

Maloney said it is impressive to observe the scale of the Northern Irish mobile crushing and screening equipment ecosystem.

"You see this area that at face value looks quite rural and idyllic, but you have this very competitive landscape of mobile crushing and screening companies," he said.

"The density and competition drive significant levels of innovation, and it's a very good example of the economic theory of creative destruction – you need to evolve or you'll perish."

From Sandvik's perspective, Maloney said this drives the company to try to accelerate its development cycle.

Speed to market is important, but it is also vital to differentiate from competitors.



"We're a premium supplier, so we want to support our customers maximising productivity, safety and sustainability," he said.

"We're constantly looking to innovate features maximising those benefits versus our competition, and you see that across the industry."

Maloney said the region's integrated supply chain for equipment manufacturers has proved to be one of its great strengths.

"Over the last 20 to 25 years the overriding trend has been for globalisation, but COVID-19 showed the inherent risk in having these long supply chains," he said.

"Subsequently there has been a push to 're-shore' manufacturing and portions of the supply chain to build in security and resilience."

Maloney said the vast majority of Sandvik's suppliers for its Ballygawley facility are locally based.

"The benefit of that is you can build up partnership relationships rather than having a purely transactional relationship where you're just trying to get the lowest possible price," he said.

"This helps you with innovation and agility, and frankly, it's much easier if you need something urgently to just go down the road and get it rather than trying to ring someone in a different time zone, a different language and a long delivery time. We've found that hugely beneficial."

The area's decades of engineering expertise and background in crushing and screening continues to have benefits. Maloney said there are units in Sandvik's current offering that are based directly around legacy designs.

Examples of this are Sandvik's QH332 cone crusher, which builds on the Fintec 1080, and Sandvik's highest volume products, the QJ241 and QJ341 mobile jaw crushers, which are based on the Extec C10 and C12 units.

Sandvik bought mobile crushing and screening companies Fintec and Extec in 2007, both of which had manufacturing facilities in Northern Ireland.

Maloney said that the industry's importance in Northern Ireland – with material processing equipment accounting for 20 per cent of all regional manufacturing employment – helps in attracting ongoing fresh talent to the sector.

"You often talk to people in our business, and they'll say that their mother or father worked in the industry," he said.

The strong global distribution and dealer network of many Northern Ireland manufacturers, established and expanded over many decades, is a further driver of growth.

Maloney said a prominent Northern Irish presence throughout the global sector helps to reinforce this region's proud legacy.

"A number of our dealers in the US have very strong connections to Northern Ireland," he said.

"I was in Australia last year, and our dealer in the Northern Territory is from near Ballygawley.

"They are very proud of the mobile crushing and screening heritage of Northern Ireland, and have a lot of industry knowledge, experience, and global connections." **AB**

The future of Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a proud manufacturing history and, through clever initiatives and technological innovation, is set for a bright future ahead.

Northern Ireland has a rich manufacturing history, particularly in the quarrying and aggregates sectors.

That long history is littered with stories of how family businesses saw an opportunity and took it with both hands on their way to establishing a business that serves a global market today.

Take Rapid International, which started as Craigavon Engineering in a small garage in 1969. Craigavon Engineering co-founders Jim Lappin and Bertie Pickering specialised in agricultural equipment before receiving a request for a concrete batching plant.

The rest, as they say, is history: Rapid International, as it's now known, has been exporting its mobile concrete batching plants worldwide for more than 40 years, with over 1000 installations.

"It started from very humble beginnings. Like a lot of businesses in Northern Ireland, those two gentlemen can trace their roots back to John Finlay; they all worked at an engineering firm 60-plus years ago now, and then branched off to start their own company," Rapid International managing director John Pickering said.

"Northern Ireland was a very different place all those years ago.



Smiley Monroe
managing director
Chris Monroe.

Image: Smiley Monroe

"It took a lot of courage for those two men to start their own business and make it on their own.

"We're extremely proud of our heritage and what the business has become.

"We have a mobile product range that we export worldwide, including to the US, Australia, the Middle East, and a growing customer base in Central Europe."

Northern Ireland has a proud history in the manufacturing sector.



Image: Rapid International



Image: EDGE Innovate

EDGE Innovate has been established for nearly two decades.

of the world and the level of quality we produce," EDGE Innovate managing director Darragh Cullen said.

"It is a heritage that the people here want to continue to invest in; there's a sense that we [Northern Ireland] are world-leading in this particular market segment."

These companies, and many others, have become part of Northern Ireland's rich fabric, starting small and then becoming competitive players on a global stage.

Their contributions to manufacturing have also supported the nation's prosperity.

Data from MEGA that manufacturing represents 11 per cent of Northern Ireland's total employment. Manufacturing accounts for approximately 15 per cent of Northern Ireland's gross domestic product.

Mid Ulster's manufacturing accounts around 12 per cent of the country's total exports, with material processing equipment accounting for 20 per cent of all regional manufacturing employment. Cullen shared the often-quoted statistic that 40 per cent of mobile crushing and screening equipment is manufactured in County Tyrone which further underlines the sector's importance to manufacturing. Now, the challenge for the historically dominant manufacturing powerhouse is to remain competitive as challengers emerge. Manufacturing is now prevalent in other countries, including China, Turkey and Italy. It presents a new wave of challenges that Northern Ireland businesses must face to remain competitive.

There is not just one way to remain competitive in a global market. For example, as Smiley Monroe's customer base, which includes Northern Ireland manufacturers such as Terex, McCloskey, Sandvik and CDE, has expanded globally, so too have the conveyor belt specialists to match the growing demand for its products.

Or take the story of Smiley Monroe. The company's origins began in a barn in Northern Ireland in 1979, when Mark Smiley and Vaughan Monroe supplied conveyor belting and services to local quarries.

By 1986, the company was supplying quarries in Great Britain, and by 2026, it was exporting to more than 60 countries.

These are the stories that make up Northern Ireland's rich manufacturing history.

"Northern Ireland is where my dad started Smiley Monroe in 1979, together with the support of my mum, and I grew up right next to the business in Lisburn.

"I have so many great childhood memories from that time and the energy and craic that I had in the yard with those first team members," Smiley Monroe chief executive officer Chris Monroe said.

"I also think about the sacrifices and determination of my parents to grow a business and a family simultaneously.

"It therefore makes me proud of our home and business in Northern Ireland, how far it has come, and I consider it a privilege and responsibility to continue to provide opportunities to the local community and to keep growing at home, but now with a very global reach."

Then there's the story of EDGE Innovate, established during the 2007 downturn. The screening and material handling equipment manufacturer has been on a sharp trajectory ever since, with 100 per cent of its products exported, with a strong research and development focus and an expansive dealer network.

"Being from Northern Ireland is hugely important for us, and it is a badge of honour for us. Our customers know the pedigree of manufacturing from this part





Rapid International
managing director
John Pickering.

Image: Rapid International

"Technologies enabling this transition, including magnet-equipped conveyor systems and eddy current separators used in processing incinerator bottom ash, are critical in recovering metals and producing usable recycled aggregates for concrete and road construction.

"Our focus remains on delivering belts that maximise lifespan and performance, helping customers reduce waste, lower total cost of ownership, and support more sustainable operations."

For manufacturers like Rapid International, the company has broadened from mobile concrete batch plants into environmental sectors such as soil mixing and soil recycling.

This environmental focus will be on display at Hillhead 2026 when the company will launch a product specifically designed for these sectors.

"In terms of being competitive, we differentiate ourselves through quality and the actual efficiency of the products themselves," Pickering said.

"We're really pushing into the environmental sector now, and that's something we want to keep pushing and continually developing."

EDGE Innovate has taken a progressive approach to developing its product range with the aim of introducing two to three new products to its range every year, with input from its customer base that encompasses 60 markets.

One example of this approach will become apparent when EDGE Innovate showcases its ScreenPro Scalping range, including the ScreenPro S16, at Hillhead 2026 as part of the range's first-ever showing in the UK.

"That's showing where we're going internally with our product development in the aggregates sector," EDGE Innovate marketing manager Adrian Donnelly said.

"It is absolutely amazing what they're doing in terms of robotics and automation."

"We're moving from being able to just transfer material to helping customers process their materials and this is the start of that journey."

For many manufacturers, adapting to the increasing technological capabilities of their equipment has been important, with Smiley Monroe, Rapid International and EDGE Innovate no exception.

At Smiley Monroe, artificial intelligence (AI) and analytics are helping the company refine its operations for efficiency and to maintain a competitive edge within the industry.

"Technology is playing an increasingly important role in our business, and we're genuinely excited about the opportunities it brings. Innovations like AI, and data analytics are helping us better understand

our operations, improve efficiency, and make more informed decisions in real time," Monroe said.

"These tools give our people better insights, reduce manual or repetitive tasks, and enhance safety and reliability across our operations. Ultimately, it allows our skilled workforce to focus on higher-value work where their experience and judgement make the biggest impact."

Another clear example is EDGE Innovate's recent investment in a £1 million robotic welder to support its manufacturing operations. It comes as manufacturers in Northern Ireland, including EDGE Innovate, struggle to find skilled workers.

"The robotic welder is a must because there's a lack of available welders, so we've streamlined the process so we can use automation and robotics in all processes. The robotic welder is only the first stage of automating our production," Cullen said.

The workforce shortage in Northern Ireland's manufacturing sector is a key talking point among industry professionals.

The Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's report on economic growth in Northern Ireland, released in March 2026, noted that the country faces a shortage of skilled labour, especially in STEM and vocational fields, with the need for technologically adept workers becoming increasingly prominent.

Manufacturing and Engineering Growth and Advancement (MEGA) network managing director Barry Taylor knows the country's manufacturing sector inside and out.

He's worked in the sector in various capacities for 36 years and is passionate about its future.

For the past year, he has worked at MEGA, which aims to engage schools with the manufacturing industry as a potential career pathway.

He's seen first-hand the impact of the labour shortfall.

"It's very difficult, for example, to get a good maintenance engineer right now, who is multi-skilled across the different technologies," he said.

"In my mind, we need to push



EDGE Innovate
managing director
Darragh Cullen.

Image: EDGE Innovate

In 2012, it opened a manufacturing base in Hosur, India, to complement its Northern Ireland facility before expanding its manufacturing network to include Kentucky, USA, and, more recently, Derbyshire, England.

Northern Ireland manufacturers are also broadening their horizons beyond traditional strongholds in quarrying and aggregates and diversifying into new revenue streams to solidify their manufacturing future.

For Smiley Monroe, this has included working closely with customers to develop solutions for emerging aggregates markets such as recycled aggregates.

Through consultation with its customer base, the conveyor belt manufacturer is evolving its products to meet new industry demands.

"We're seeing a clear shift in the quarrying and aggregates sector towards sustainability, circular construction, and higher-performance materials," Monroe said.

"Customers are placing greater emphasis on the full lifecycle impact of the products they use, ensuring materials are responsibly sourced and deliver long-term value.

"At the same time, the industry is rapidly adopting recycled aggregates, such as crushed concrete and secondary materials, as part of a broader circular construction model.



MEGA network
managing director
Barry Taylor.

Image: MEGA

apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships as much as we push graduates.

"Manufacturing can be regarded as just a factory job, but in reality, it's so much more than that; it can be a one-stop shop for your entire career where you can travel the world and gain really valuable knowledge."

The labour shortage is being felt heavily at the manufacturing level as companies, like Rapid International, try to find the next generation of workers to replace their retiring workforce.

"Getting people at all is probably our biggest challenge right now, and the ability to recruit people is becoming harder and harder," Pickering said.

"I think education plays a huge role in that. If you look at MEGA, I think initiatives like that are fantastic, and in terms of our recruitment, we're looking heavily at the high-level apprenticeship scheme [in Northern Ireland]."

While the outside perspective might see manufacturing as "just factory jobs", MEGA is working with the industry to show that it is a strong pathway with many opportunities, from sales to engineering to electronics and beyond.

MEGA is undertaking a feasibility study to see whether a "super cluster" approach, as seen in Scandinavia, would work within its manufacturing sector.

The model, in effect, works by having competitors within the sector come together to solve issues that affect the entire sector, such as the labour shortage, while remaining competitive in the marketplace.

"Rather than everyone fighting for the same funding, we're trialling a collaborative approach through this cluster [model] so we can support and strengthen the Northern Ireland economy," Taylor said.

"It's about coming together to address problems affecting the entire industry."

In response to the need for apprentices, MEGA is launching a manufacturing apprenticeship programme with South West College in September 2026, aiming to produce work-ready graduates who can hit the ground running in the workforce. The programme will cover the basics through to advanced manufacturing concepts.

"Through this initiative, we will be supplying the industry with ready-made, valuable workers with real knowledge," Taylor said.

"Aside from the basics like science and maths, we're hoping this generation will have a digital awareness and an awareness of automation options, as well as a willingness to gain a deeper understanding of them.

"This is going to be important as this next generation is going to be fundamental to the industry's growth.

"Especially when the industry is talking about robotics and automation, it doesn't yet have that skill set. So, this next generation is going to come in and close that loop."

Cullen said it was important to promote the variety of opportunities within the sector.

"There's plenty of opportunity for people who want to get involved in manufacturing. Universities are educating people for jobs that won't exist [due to AI]," he said.

"It is time to refocus on the jobs that AI isn't going to replace, physical jobs like manufacturing."

Manufacturers are already clearly integrating these aspects into their operations, with uptake only set to increase in future years.

"AI optimisation and autonomous equipment are going to have a big impact [in the future], particularly through predictive maintenance, computer vision and quality control," Monroe said.

"The challenging and often hazardous quarry environment can benefit from technologies that help predict equipment issues or damages before they become a problem, reducing both downtime and the potential for on-site accidents.

"It's important to note, though, that these trends won't remove the need for skilled workers — they'll change the nature of roles, with more emphasis on monitoring systems, maintaining equipment, and making informed decisions using data. The sector will benefit most when technology and human expertise work together."

Taylor said improving the manufacturing workforce will further enhance the sector's future viability, especially as technology and automation are increasingly important.

"It is absolutely amazing what they're doing in terms of robotics and automation," he said.

"If we can help [manufacturers] maximise what they're already doing, it will create new jobs and help build the Northern Ireland economy." **AB**

MEGA aims to promote the benefits of a career in manufacturing in Northern Ireland.



Image: MEGA

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Anaconda

Anaconda, a proud member of the McLanahan family of companies, specialises in equipment designed to tackle challenging terrains and process abrasive and bulky materials. Ranging from conveyors to crushers, screens to washing, Anaconda equipment combines decades of innovation and expertise in engineered to deliver products which keep your operation running.

www.anacondaequipment.com



Astec Europe

Astec delivers innovative equipment and integrated solutions for the asphalt, concrete, mining, and aggregate industries. The company focuses on productivity, durability, and sustainable performance, offering advanced technologies and dependable support that help customers improve efficiency, reduce downtime, and achieve consistent results across demanding material processing environments.

astecindustries.com



Barford Equipment

Barford Equipment manufactures mobile screening, crushing and materials handling machinery. Known for robust, reliable, easy to maintain designs, the company supplies crushers, screeners, trommels, conveyors, pugmills and trailers for demanding construction, aggregate, recycling and mining applications, supported by a rapidly growing global dealer network.

www.barford.com



Bruce Materials Processing Solutions

Bruce Materials Processing Solutions has delivered intelligent washing solutions for over 65 years. The company manufactures modular aggregate and sand washing plants for the materials-processing and recycling-industries. It has been an official Hardox Wearparts Centre for more than 20-years, using Hardox and branded components across its equipment.

www.bruce-eng.co.uk



Cabragh Engineering

Cabragh Engineering is an established provider of concrete and quarry plant. Its range includes mobile and static batching plants, crushing and screening systems, silo storage, conveyor systems, blending plants and block moulds.

cabragheng.com



CDE

CDE is a global leader in wet processing technologies, designing and manufacturing advanced systems for sand, aggregates, mining, industrial sands, construction and demolition waste, and environmental applications. The company delivers high performance solutions that maximise material recovery, reduce environmental impact and enhance operational efficiency across multiple regions worldwide.

www.cdgroup.com



Circular Group

Circular Group provides tailored wet processing solutions for the sand, aggregates and recycling sectors. The company delivers customer focused, technically robust systems that optimise material recovery and support sustainable resource use. Its flexible, personal approach serves customers from small family firms to major producers, meeting evolving environmental and industry demands.

www.circulargroup.co.uk



ConveyorTek

ConveyorTek is an ISO 9001 accredited manufacturer specialising in conveyor systems and metal separation technologies for automation, logistics, recycling, quarrying and mining. The company delivers modular and bespoke conveyors, belts, components and advanced magnetic and eddy current separation equipment, supported by strong research and development and immersive design technologies.

www.conveyortek.com



Coote Engineering

Coote Engineering manufactures precast concrete machinery, moulds and the Finlay range of block making equipment. It also supplies interlocking block moulds and the RONCO range of low loaders and dump trailers.

www.coote.co.uk



Distag QCS

Distag QCS imports, manufactures and distributes machinery components and sub assemblies for the materials processing and agricultural machinery industries.

www.distag.com



EDGE Innovate

EDGE Innovate manufactures advanced mobile technologies for shredding, stacking, screening and sorting materials in recycling and production. Its range includes stackers, feeders, conveyors, screens, trommels, waste shredders, picking stations and truck off loaders, enabling customers to efficiently process and stockpile diverse materials.

edgeinnovate.com



Euro Auctions

Euro Auctions is a global auctioneer of industrial, construction and agricultural equipment, providing live and online sales. It offers valuation, asset management and full auction logistics, connecting sellers with a worldwide buyer base. Visitors can learn how to buy or sell machinery efficiently and explore tailored fleet disposal or acquisition options.

www.euroauctions.com



Euro Springs

Euro Springs is a family-run manufacturer specialising in high-quality compression, tension and torsion springs, along with die springs, wire shapes, hose guards and tension bars. Accredited to ISO 9001:2015 and a member of the Institute of Spring Technology, the company supplies precision engineered components supported by experienced staff and a strong commitment to quality.

www.eurosprings.co.uk



EvoQuip (Terex GB)

EvoQuip provides compact crushing, screening and conveying equipment for construction, quarrying, agriculture, landscaping, plant hire and recycling. Its product range includes crushers, screens, shredders and conveyors with telematics and hybrid options, delivering efficient, mobile, low-impact material processing for small to mid-scale operations.

www.terex.com/evoquip



Finlay (Terex GB)

Finlay has led the way in tracked mobile crushing, screening and conveying equipment for more than 65 years. Trusted worldwide across the quarrying, mining, construction and recycling sectors, Finlay delivers productivity, efficiency and long-term value through innovative, customer-focused engineering.

www.terex.com/finlay



FSL Electronics

FSL Electronics designs and manufactures wireless remote controls, industrial displays and custom electronic systems. For over 35 years, it has supplied innovative technology that improves safety and productivity across global industries.

www.fslelectronics.com

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Harpscreen

Harpscreen supplies high-quality screening media including conveyor rollers for a wide range of crushing and screening machines. The company focuses on durability, precision manufacturing and responsive customer support, helping customers maintain efficient material processing through reliable, custom-engineered screening solutions.

www.harpscreen.com



Herbst Machinery

Herbst Machinery designs and manufactures crushing and screening machinery for the quarrying and recycling sectors, alongside trailers for the agricultural and construction sectors. The range is trusted worldwide and supported by a growing dealer network. The company's success is built on a reputation for quality, reliability and continued innovation.

herbstmachinery.com



Hill Engineering

Hill Engineering is a global manufacturer of award-winning excavator attachments, specialising in advanced hydraulic quick couplers and heavy-duty buckets. The company designs and produces the TEFRA fully automatic, double-locking coupler range and TITAN buckets, supplying leading OEMs and end users worldwide with innovative, safe, high-performance solutions.

www.hillattach.com



Irish Manufacturing Services

Irish Manufacturing Services (IMS) designs and builds specialist equipment for the quarrying, mining, recycling and port sectors. Its range includes pugmills, blending plants, scalpers, stackers, conveyors and bespoke machinery, delivering robust, innovative material-handling solutions worldwide.

www.ims-ltd.ie



Jefferson Tools

Jefferson Tools supplies professional-grade tools, equipment and workshop solutions for trade, industrial and agricultural users. Its extensive range includes power and hand tools, compressors, generators, lighting, welding equipment and consumables, supported by strong stock availability, competitive pricing and reliable after-sales service trusted across industry.

jeffersontools.com



JJ Loughran

JJ Loughran is one of the UK and Ireland's most diverse electrical and mechanical engineering companies, providing electric motors, gearboxes, pumps, industrial electrical installation and custom switchboard and control-panel manufacturing. The company supports sectors from renewables to quarrying with in-house and on-site installation, maintenance and repair, backed by extensive engineering expertise.

www.jjloughran.com



JMG Systems

JMG Systems provides reliable control solutions, supplying hybrid, AC, DC and battery-driven systems with a strong focus on green technologies. It also develops alternative power-control solutions and is ISO 9001 accredited with UL certification.

www.jmgsystems.co.uk



LDG Datum

LDG Datum provides specialist foundation pile testing, structural and geotechnical monitoring and environmental systems. The company delivers advanced remote and automated technologies, including patented test systems that improve safety and efficiency. Its expertise spans pile load testing, asset integrity monitoring, micro-piling, anchoring and bespoke instrumentation for civil engineering and infrastructure projects.

www.lloydsdatumgroup.com



MacGen Power Generation

MacGen Power Generation supplies, services and maintains mobile and static generator units for customers across multiple sectors. Offering generators from 20kVA to 1000kVA, along with message signs and air compressors, the family-run company provides fast, reliable power solutions supported by qualified personnel and extensive stock.

www.macgen.co.uk



MAGNA (Terex GB)

MAGNA is a large-scale equipment brand from Terex, delivering high-capacity machinery for quarrying, mining, construction and recycling. Its portfolio includes jaw, cone and impact crushers, along with trommel, scalping and horizontal screens and heavy-duty conveyors, supported by Terex's global manufacturing, parts and service network to ensure reliable, high-volume processing.

www.terex.com/magna



McCloskey International

McCloskey International is a global manufacturer of mobile crushing, screening and stacking equipment for aggregates, construction, demolition, mining, landscaping, waste management and recycling. Its comprehensive range of jaw, cone and impact crushers, screeners, trommels and stackers is renowned for durability, high performance and continuous innovation, supported by a strong worldwide dealer network.

www.mccloskeyinternational.com



McCrorry Engineering

McCrorry Engineering is a leading manufacturer of construction equipment, supplying high-quality static and mobile concrete plants worldwide. Its innovative approach has secured a long-standing position at the heart of the concrete industry.

www.mccrorryengineering.com



McGirr Engineering

McGirr Engineering is a leading supplier of mobile block-making equipment, supporting producers from small operations to facilities manufacturing up to 45,000 blocks per day. It provides solutions for block-making operations of all scales.

www.mcgirrengineering.com



McLanahan Corporation

McLanahan Corporation provides engineered processing solutions for aggregates, mining, industrial minerals, agriculture and recycling. Its equipment range includes crushers, feeders, scrubbers, filter presses and complete wet and dry systems, supporting operations from primary crushing through to tailings and water management.

www.mclanahan.com



M-Tech Solutions Ireland

M-Tech Solutions Ireland specialises in electrical control systems, diagnostics and repair services for the crushing and screening industry. The company designs, installs and maintains control panels and automation systems, providing expert fault-finding, optimisation and responsive engineering support across the materials-processing sector.

www.mtechireland.com



NBC Group

NBC Group provides engineered solutions and precision-manufactured components for heavy industry, supporting construction, quarrying, recycling and material-handling sectors. The company focuses on reliability, technical expertise, and responsive service, delivering products that enhance performance, reduce downtime and meet demanding operational requirements.

www.nbcgroup.co.uk

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Nordmann Equipment

Nordmann Equipment develops and supports crushing and screening equipment for demolition, recycling and quarrying. It focuses on track-mounted crushers and screens in the sub-30-tonne class, providing robust, high-performance and durable solutions.

www.nordmannequipment.com



Omega Crushing & Screening

Omega Crushing & Screening manufactures electrically driven mobile crushers and screeners that reduce fuel use, emissions and costs. Serving the quarrying, recycling and construction sectors, Omega applies advanced engineering to deliver productive, cost-effective and environmentally efficient solutions.

omegacrusher.com



Pneutrol International

Pneutrol International supplies batching control systems for concrete plants and automation systems for conveying, crushing and screening. It also provides industrial spares including load cells, silo components, VSDs, pneumatics, Castell safety systems, water meters, vibrators and flow aids.

www.pneutrol.com



Portafill International

Portafill International manufactures highly mobile, cost-effective screening, crushing and washing equipment for construction, demolition, recycling, sand and gravel and natural rock applications. Its range of screeners, crushers, trommels, conveyors and wash systems is recognised globally for durability, innovation and practical engineering, supported by an expanding international network.

www.portafill.com



Powerscreen (Terex GB)

Powerscreen is a world-leading manufacturer of mobile crushing, screening and conveying equipment for quarrying, mining, recycling, construction and infrastructure. Celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2026, Powerscreen's portfolio includes jaw, cone and impact crushers, mobile screens, trommels and conveyors, supported by a dedicated global dealer network delivering reliable, high-performance material-processing solutions.

www.powerscreen.com



ProStack (Terex GB)

ProStack designs and manufactures bulk material handling solutions, including conveyors, feeders and stockpiling equipment. Its systems focus on efficiency, mobility and reliability, supporting industries that require high-performance material movement and streamlined operations through innovative engineering and robust, user-focused design.

www.terex.com/prostack



Quarry King

Quarry King delivers reliable, high-performance equipment and support for material handling operations. The company focuses on durable engineering, efficient workflow design and responsive service, helping quarries and pits optimise production, reduce downtime and achieve consistent results through practical, industry-driven solutions.

www.quarryking.com



Rapid International

Rapid International manufactures advanced mixing technology for the concrete, construction, environmental and recycling sectors. Its high-performance mobile and static batching plants, continuous mixers and pan, planetary and twin-shaft mixers are used worldwide, delivering durable, efficient solutions supported by strong engineering expertise and a customer-focused dealer network.

www.rapidinternational.com



Rapid Power Generation

Rapid Power Generation delivers reliable power solutions, specialising in EU Stage V and Tier 4 Final (T4F) emission-compliant generators built for harsh environments. Its products support much of Northern Ireland’s material-processing industry, combining engineering expertise with a commitment to safety, quality and responsiveness to ensure dependable power when it matters most.

www.rapidpowergen.com



Roco9

Roco9, part of the Ballytrain Group, provides innovative crushing and screening solutions backed by extensive practical experience. The company prioritises long-term customer relationships, delivering high-quality, sustainable equipment for the recycling, demolition and quarrying industries, with a strong focus on practicality, reliability and maximising uptime for operators.

www.roco9.com



Sandvik

Sandvik delivers advanced mobile crushing and screening equipment for the mining, quarrying, construction and recycling industries. The company focuses on productivity, safety and sustainable performance, providing innovative solutions that enhance material processing, support efficient operations and help customers achieve reliable, long-term results in demanding environments.

www.rockprocessing.sandvik/en/products/mobile-crushers-and-screens



Screenpod Design & Manufacturing

Screenpod Design & Manufacturing engineers recycling, screening and dust-suppression equipment for construction, quarrying and waste sectors. It supplies robust, high-performance solutions that reduce environmental impact and improve operational efficiency. Trusted by industry leaders, the company is proud to drive sustainable growth worldwide.

www.screenpod.co.uk



SFM Engineering

SFM Engineering specialises in steel fabrication and manufacturing for the screening, quarrying and recycling industries. It delivers high-quality, competitively priced products on time and in a safe environment, supported by continuous improvement and ongoing investment in technology.

www.sfmengineering.co.uk



Smiley Monroe

Smiley Monroe, known as the Giants of Belting, is a leading global supplier of conveyor belts, rubber and plastic parts and accessories. It delivers high-quality products, technical expertise and reliable service worldwide.

smileymonroe.com



Telestack

Telestack is a global leader in designing, manufacturing, installing and commissioning mobile bulk-material-handling systems. The company provides innovative conveying, stacking, loading and unloading solutions for quarrying, mining, ports, terminals, stockyards, power, steel and cement operations, delivering operational savings, environmental benefits and strong engineering support through an international dealer network.

www.telestack.com



Terex Washing Systems (Terex GB)

Terex Washing Systems delivers advanced wet-processing solutions for aggregates, recycling, industrial sands and mining. The company provides complete, tailored systems spanning feeding, screening, scrubbing, washing, classification and water-management technologies. Renowned for robust performance, efficiency and sustainability, it supports global customers through an extensive dealer network and a long-term service focus.

www.terexwashing.com

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Tesab Engineering

Tesab Engineering manufactures heavy-duty crushers, screeners and bulk-handling systems for quarrying, mining, recycling and shipping. Known for robust design and long-lasting performance, the company offers jaw, impact and cone crushers, mobile electric units and scalpers, delivering flexible, application-focused solutions backed by extensive engineering expertise and global support.

www.tesab.co.uk



Titus Attachments

Titus Attachments manufactures high-quality excavator and machinery attachments for construction, demolition, forestry and earthmoving. Using precision engineering, 3D modelling and modern production methods, the company delivers durable, high-performance tools. Its range includes buckets, grapples, rakes and other heavy-duty attachments supplied directly and through international partners.

www.titus-solutions.co.uk



Tyrone International

Tyrone International manufactures advanced wet and dry processing solutions for aggregate production, including concrete, C&D recycling and industrial sand. Continuous research and development and superior engineering deliver reliable, high-throughput solutions with a lower total cost of ownership and make sure our game changing solutions meet the challenges ahead.

www.tyroneinternational.com



Vulcan Asphalt Group

Vulcan Asphalt Group is the UK's leading asphalt plant product and service provider, home to the Vulcan and Vortex burner ranges. It delivers bespoke solutions that improve efficiency and reliability, with a strong focus on future fuels and carbon reduction.

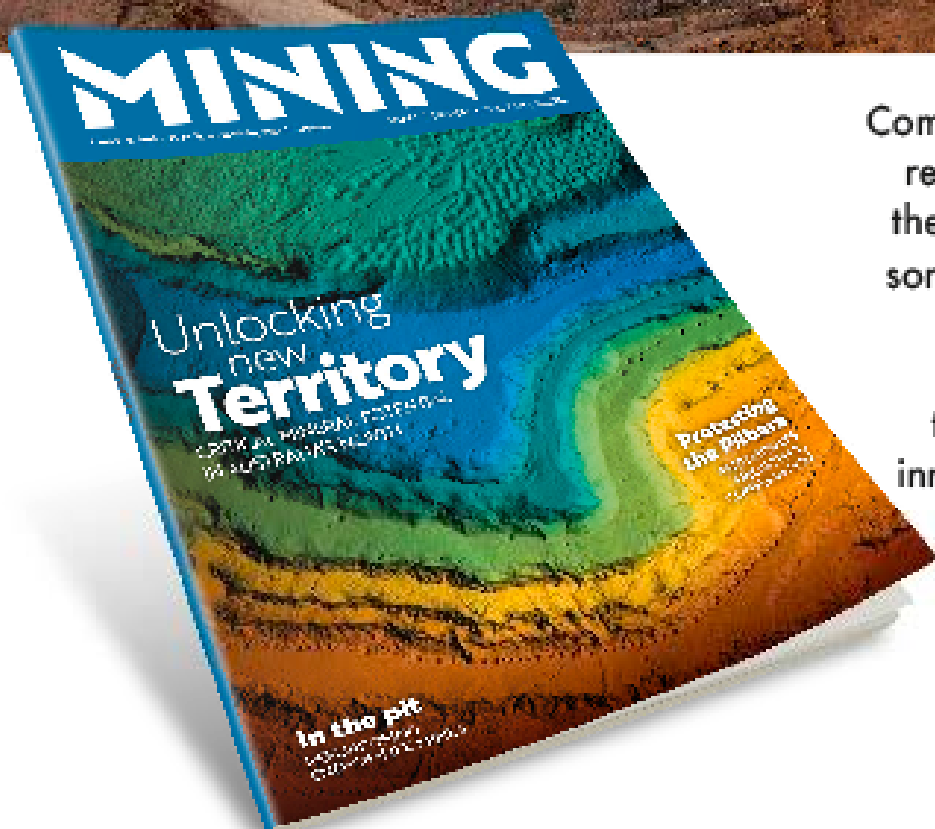
www.vulcanasphaltgroup.com



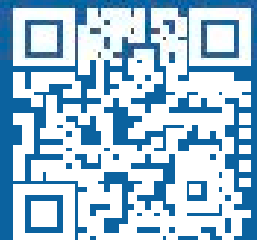
Northern Ireland has a proud past, present and future in manufacturing crushing and screening equipment.

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