

The Northern Echo - Business

Engineers make a move into the nuclear market

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A TEES Valley engineering company has taken its first major steps into the nuclear decommissioning market, in a move that safeguards 130 jobs and will create 30 more.

Mech-Tool has won a £1.5m contract to design and build a multi-services processing module for the Sellafield nuclear plant in Cumbria.

And the deal – its first in the nuclear decommissioning market – is believed to have secured work for Mech-Tool's 130-strong workforce in Darlington until the project is completed in March next year, as well as paving the way for the creation of 30 more posts.

The business, which has its headquarters in the town's Whessoe Road as well as a facility on Teesside, is thriving despite the economic downturn.

In just over a year, turnover has nearly doubled from £9m to more than £17m, with that expected to rise again to £22m next year.

The work, to create the Sellafield module which is designed to withstand earthquakes, was awarded by Balfour Kilpatrick's Projects Unit.

The module will house a range of equipment for Sellafield's Sludge Packaging Plant, and will be delivered in eight split units after being created in Darlington.

Phil Dunn, Mech-Tool's business development manager, said: "Mech-Tool has been a leader in blast, fire and acoustic protection for nearly 40 years, supplying products to many sectors, including the nuclear industry, but this is our first major role in nuclear decommissioning. It represents a major breakthrough for the company.

It is estimated that the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority will spend in the region of £500m decommissioning civil nuclear sites in the UK over the next few years.

"We hope that the successful conclusion to our work at Sellafield could provide an avenue for us to compete, not only for other decommissioning work, but on future newbuild projects within the nuclear market."

Mech-Tool has recently invested in its Darlington site, where a new 1,200sq-metre building has increased production space to 7,750sq metres, which is aiding its expansion plans.

Other projects for the firm include making living quarters for one of the SeaDragon Offshore rigs made on Teesside, and Hartlepool-based Heerema's Greater Gabbard project.



BRANCHING OUT: Carl McNicol, of Balfour Kilpatrick, left, and Phil Bullock, director of Mech-Tool

