

Media information

Issued August 5 2005 at 7.00am

**ACQUISITION SIGNALS THE WAY AHEAD FOR
HILL & SMITH**

Hill & Smith Holdings PLC, the transport infrastructure, construction and building products group, has bought one of the UK's leading suppliers of electronic information displays for road and rail transport and airports in a £0.9 million deal.

Techspan Systems Limited (Techspan), based in Aylesbury, has been bought from Jarvis plc, which is in the process of disposing of non-core activities.

West Midlands-based Hill & Smith's chief executive David Grove said: "Techspan is 'a natural fit' with our core business and, though it has not been profitable in recent times, it has innovative products and a reputation for quality.

"The business is complementary with our product portfolio and we have already made detailed plans to generate strong returns for the group from its purchase."

Techspan, which has annual sales of around £2 million and employs 21 people, manufactures and supplies the latest electronic information display systems for the transport sector.

The business uses many major technologies for customer and user information systems, including the display of variable messages, warning of road congestion, events, parking information, accidents or local speed limits.

Such signs are in operation on many parts of the UK motorway network, including the M4, M6, M25, M74 and the M62. Techspan is currently working on projects with the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly for the supply of the latest generation of MS4 pictorial message signs.

The company's customer information systems are installed at a number of rail stations including London Kings Cross and Manchester Piccadilly and also Gatwick airport.

Techspan designs, develops and manufactures its own products and provides a comprehensive installation, maintenance and support service across the UK and Europe.

Its products range from complete control systems with bespoke software to products that can be integrated with existing IT systems.

Techspan also supplies data loggers that report such data as speed, acceleration and temperature. These devices are used to monitor safety critical rail signalling equipment.

Mr Grove said: "We have bought Techspan because it is a highly innovative business operating in a growing market.

"With the pressure on to improve transport systems, cope with increased usage and reduce congestion, a market leading business that supplies the latest in electronic signs will integrate well with our core transport infrastructure businesses."

The Techspan deal is another strategic purchase by Hill & Smith, which has built a formidable business, with leading positions in many of the markets in which it operates.

It is less than two months since the group turned itself into a global player with a €35m investment in a leading European company with US interests, specializing in hot dip galvanizing.

This resulted in the group taking a one third stake in a German investment company, Zinkinvent, which controls Vista NV (Vista), a leading galvanizing and lighting column supplier operating across Belgium, France and the US.

In March this year, Hill & Smith announced record profits for the year ended December 31, 2004, with profit before taxation up by 35.7 per cent to £8.4m. Trading results for the six months to 30 June 2005 are due to be announced on Tuesday 6 September,

Ends

515 words

Issued by Quantum Freshwater UK Limited on behalf of Hill & Smith Holdings plc

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