



# THE HIRE OF SURFACE PREPARATION EQUIPMENT IS WHAT THE WORK IS ALL ABOUT AT W. H. SURFACE PREPARATION UK LTD

NICK Forbes, Director at W.H. Surface Preparation tells us more about the business and the industry at large...

W.H. SURFACE Preparation was formed in 2002 to fill a gap in the hire market for a specialized hire company to offer a unique service across the UK for a range of equipment dedicated to the surface preparation market.

Another important aim of the company was to offer add-on products and ancillary items to give customers a full service from the start of a job or project where a surface had to be removed using blasters, planers, grinders, scabblers and strippers prior to new coating or covering being applied, but then hire of mixing, spraying and application equipment to apply the coating, followed by use of scrubbers, sweepers polishers and biodegradable chemicals to keep the surface looking good.

And so the creation of our tag line

*"If you fail to prepare your surface, prepare for your surface to fail"*

## EXPERT SERVICES

From day one, we have strived to ensure we take the time to offer an expert service with concentration of the correct equipment for the task in hand, combined with expert knowledge of its use and application added to a strong service regime on all items. Following each hire items are fully serviced with sometimes up to a 50 per cent strip down and rebuild to make sure there is less chance of mechanical failure whilst being used- since most contractors work evenings and weekends when everyone else is shut. We always have the back up to make sure someone is available to sort out any technical problems even if it means having to travel to a site 200miles away after hours.

We have also tried to network between contractors and clients and are frequently asked whether we know contractors who could do the job rather than the client doing it themselves - just as we have networked between manufactures and end users to ensure right product at the right price.

Our client base has grown over the years and you will now find our products are hired by national and local tool hire companies. At the same time, we can offer our customers general hire on a local basis, so if we have a customer who hires a machine from us and travels to a job 100 miles away and then realises they need an alloy tower or something of a general hire nature just one call to us and we can access a hire company within proximity and arrange what they need

while they get on with the job.

In the early days we were asked what the "W H" stood for, it means many things but mainly "We Hire" since we are not contractors (as we would upset 50 per cent of our customers who are) and yet with over 15 years in the surface prep hire industry we can offer valuable hands-on experience and pass that on to you. In turn we are always being asked for the names of contractors and looking to add them to our database for future use.



## DELIVERY

We have always tried to offer a nationwide delivery service either through our own dedicated vans (which are enclosed large space hi top vehicles fitted with state of the art sat-nav, computer tracked, one-ton capacity integrated folding ramps yet are economical to run and comfortable for our drivers) that helps us maintain an excellent cost effective service - so to get equipment to London or Birmingham next day before 12 can cost as little as £125.00. Additionally, we can offer to our experienced contractors a next day pallet service for less than £75.00 helping to keep their costs down. We also use parcel companies to send smaller attachments and accessories around the UK for less than £20.00.

## SAVINGS THROUGH HIRE

One major saving is that most of these machines can cost several thousand pounds to buy and need regular preventive maintenance to keep them fully operational, whereas they can be hired at a fraction of the cost from us. Customers also have the advantage that

if it breaks down or stops working we can swap it usually the same or next day and when they are finished using it we clean, service, test, and store it ready for next user.

Should customers want to buy equipment, then when WE sell them a machine we offer the service that should the machine break down, they can hire one from us the same or next day at a greatly reduced rate while we inspect and advise what is wrong with theirs. If it is found to be covered under warranty

they may get the costs covered and can be assured that we will give back the item in a better condition than when we had it following our in house policy of only allowing clean machines in our building and to be worked on.

If you buy a machine from a manufacturer or other agent all you will get is a RTB (return to base) warranty and so you could lose the machine for several days and would have to hire one in (hopefully from us).

## STAFF

There are currently eight people here including myself and my co-director who offer many years experience within the hire industry from workshops and transport to hire desk and administration.

Our staff are very flexible and are able to operate within various roles in the business to make sure all departments are kept operational - from our service staff who can also do technical deliveries, to hire desk staff who can service our equipment.

Being the founder of the company (over 10 years ago) and having over 25 years experience in the hire business with

many roles from sales manager, depot manager, plant manager and general manager for a variety of market leaders, I have a greatly varied role at W.H., from Technical Director which involves being able to read the job being requested, convert it into an approx price to hire with plenty of technical literature and instructions, then visit the job and advise best use and practices, train and certify operators too managing the direction internally on a technical and financial level to ensure the company maintains its standing in the market place.

My role is supported by my co director Mark Gater who, with over 30 years in same industry, looks after the sales, marketing and general ops of the business. Since joining the company a few years ago his job has been to give the company its corporate colours and identity to make sure the name looks the same across all mediums, his aim is to make sure we remain available and reliable and offers a service second to none.

Between us we are constantly updating our websites, marketing our products and giving great technical advice on the full range of equipment.

for hire in the uk with over 10 machines on the fleet as well as selective specialist machines that very few if no one else hires out, such as ride on tile strippers, DFG700 grinders and 3 phase bench saws to name a few.

We can arrange a site visit where we come along with a selection of equipment to establish which works best for you and leave it there for hire with the knowledge that it does work.



**PRODUCT RANGE**

Our wide variety of equipment ranges from the smallest hand tool to the largest ride on scrubber with vast stocks of diamonds and blades to chemicals and coatings - just about everything you would need to keep your surface prepared, cleaned, coated, and maintained, we try to keep a minimum of 3 machines available which in some cases means we have a core stock of 15 to 20 machines. We are currently have the largest stock of SPE Floor blast machines



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equipment across the UK as well as local tool hire to the local market of builders and DIY-ers.

We have invested in a world leader Orion software (Sirius) in a hire industry computer system which is based in Canada but has many varied users across the globe where a combination of backgrounds constantly feedback to ensure the system is at the leading edge of technology.



Some of our equipment can be technically challenging and may fail in inexperienced hands. We therefore offer to train your workers on site or at your premises, and this training can be certified and is approved by most manufactures such as SPE on the range of their equipment.

So from our approx. 4000sqft facility here in South Wales we endeavor to offer a full range of surface preparation

**GETTING THROUGH THE RECESSION AND FUTURE GROWTH**

Using modern technology, keeping control of costs and investing in the core equipment of our business as well as searching out new markets and new opportunities has helped us greatly in getting through the economic recession.



NICK

With this system we can offer immediate hire and sale quotations which can be emailed to you within seconds. They can easily be converted into reservations that give us the daily operational needs and then quickly converted into hire contracts and delivery, pick up slips and finally invoices all of which can be emailed immediately. Furthermore, it also gives us our workshop and fleet information which has helped us invest almost £500,000 in our hire fleet equipment and accessories.

It has always been believed that hire shops should grow through a recession as there is less reason to buy and more reason to hire to keep costs down. Also, a lot of people take on work themselves and so don't have the money to buy and maintain new equipment or invest in major capital purchases, but still need to get projects done within budget.



We have looked at how the market has changed through facilities such as online websites for used equipment which can be purchased for a fraction of new cost and following a small refurbishment can perform the same as new. We have also offered to purchase from our customers any unwanted equipment for surface preparation and after refurbishment either resold them to other contractors or grown our own hire fleet without major capital outlay. Additionally, we have identified our vehicle fleet to be modern and fully loaded to help deliver our goods safely and on time. We have invested in our workshops to make sure it can handle the variety of equipment by daily testing using modern PAT testers with printers to computerised service records that are completely traceable and help keep track of any or all work carried out after each hire.

Looking to the future, our ambition is to have a network of depots across the UK in most major cities: London,

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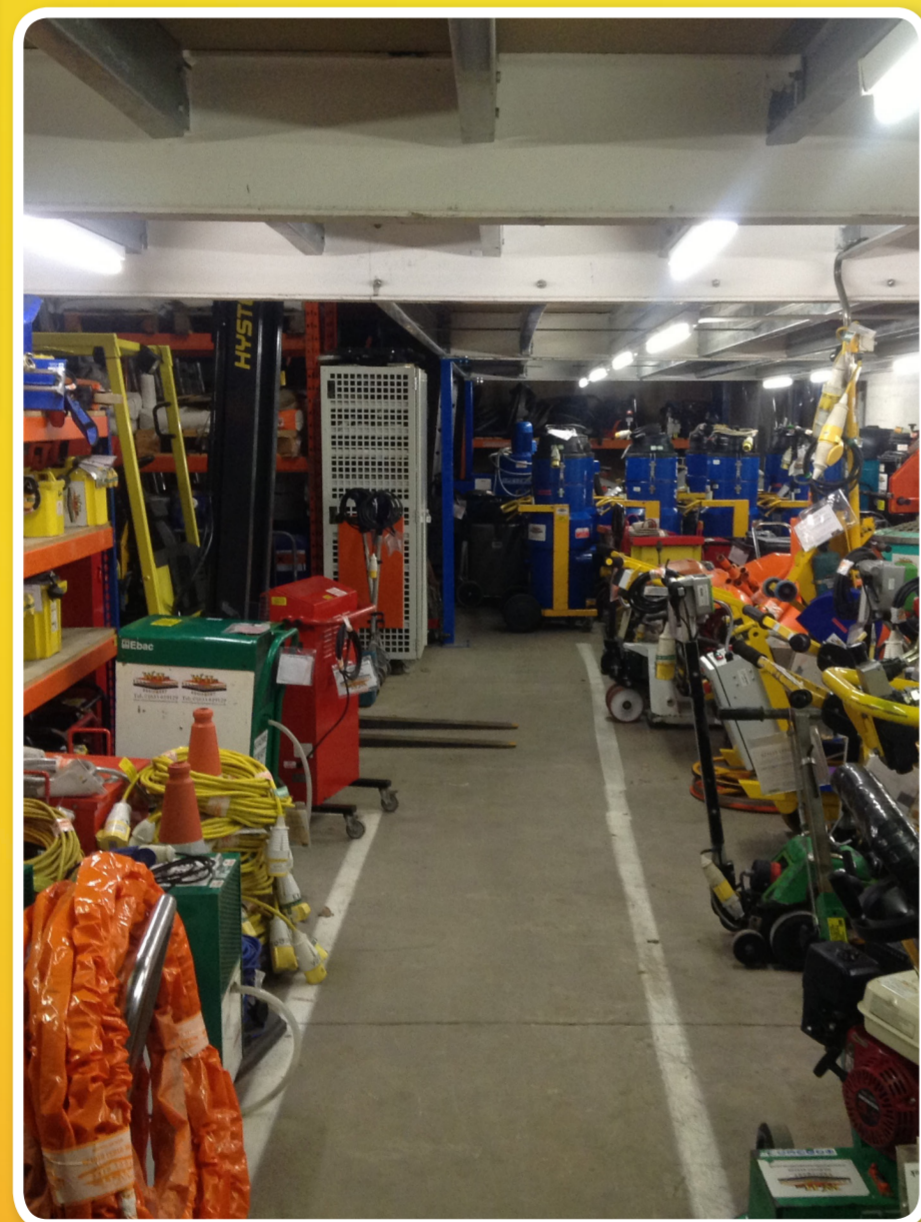
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Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, Exeter, and others, all within a few hours of each other, all offering the same level of availability, reliability, and service, on a local basis with national support. We want to be the first choice for contractors, factories, construction sites, end users and most equipment and coating manufacturers.

We are constantly searching for new ways to make hiring the right equipment with the right accessories affordable and achievable to current and future customers. This will involve looking at geographical areas where we could benefit from having remote satellite branches to give better service to our customers and save them time and money, but all controlled from a central point so it is just 'one call does it all'.

### TRAINING

The hire industry does suffer from a lack of training. On a local basis there is no facility to get a young person trained with basic requirements needed to get them ready for the complex world of the hire industry, so we are the same as most companies, meaning that we have to use our experienced staff to teach and learn from each other based on daily use

and feedback from our customers. We try to make sure that our staff have the right facilities, tools, vehicles as well as achievable targets and bonuses to make sure the company can maintain its high standards of customer support across the UK.

looking to the future of employment and thinking outside the box so the facility to be operational 24 hours a day running staff on a shift basis to help support an industry that works outside normal working hours but having three times



We use the support of our equipment manufacturers such as SPE who can offer on site or in house sales and technical training on their full range of surface preparation equipment. We are also

the amount of staff in each depot to have a lot more flexibility so that they do not get overworked, the same as other industries are currently doing.

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**IN CONCLUSION...**

The hire of surface preparation equipment can be less than 25 per cent the cost of a job and yet can have the biggest impact on a coating failure or having to redo the same surface on a regular basis, so regardless of whether you spend £500 or £5000 on your choice of coating just remember our tag line:

**"If you fail to prepare your surface prepare for your surface to fail"**



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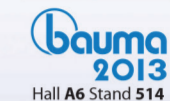
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