

HUBER 150th ANNIVERSARY interview by Elaine Coles at Waterbriefing with Steve Morris, Managing Director HUBER Technology

Steve Morris takes a look at how the unique strengths of being a family-led business have enabled HUBER Technology to grow from a small copper smithy in Germany set up 150 years ago into a leading wastewater technology company with a global presence.



Steve Morris: From what started as a small copper smithy established in Germany in 1872, to a global firm with a strategic presence in many world markets today, HUBER has certainly come a long way from its relatively humble beginnings.

During that time, the company's strength and resilience has enabled it to successfully negotiate changes in the political and business landscape, economic cycles and financial markets, together with profound changes in the pace and development of digital technologies in the 21st century which continue to be implemented at astonishing speed.

In the 20th century, the shift to using stainless steel in its production processes was welcomed by customers, marking the start of a period of considerable expansion and innovation which continues to this day, with more than 50,000 installations now in place worldwide.

In the last two decades, HUBER has embraced considerable technological change, including digitisation. This is an ongoing process, which takes into account the challenges both HUBER and its customers alike face in their own business activities.

These include the urgent need to tackle carbon emissions, the energy transition, the rise of the Circular Economy, which is driving the transformation of previously unused waste materials and energy into valuable resources and the need to achieve Net Zero in a relatively short timescale.

All key features in the water sector where HUBER has a significant skills set, experience and expertise. From the very beginning, the company's activities have been strongly rooted in the treatment and enhancement of both potable and wastewater.

Growth and expertise underpinned by unique strengths of a family business

When I look at HUBER now, its long-standing presence represents a considerable achievement – and in my view this is due in no small measure to the fact that it is underpinned by the unique strengths of a family-led business which is ready to invest in the future

Since its foundation, HUBER's financial independence has resulted in a business strategy which has provided the basis for long term planning, and development leading to sustainable future growth.

Where other companies have come and gone, been merged or swallowed up by larger organisations, the solid foundations which come from shareholders who understand what it really means to look at the long-term has seen HUBER go from strength to strength.

Part of this was HUBER's strategic decision around 30 years ago to expand its operations to other countries when it set up its first overseas subsidiary outside Germany here in the UK.

Since that time HUBER has established itself as a global presence in every continent - Europe, North and South America, Asia and the Middle East, Africa and Australia.

And the company continues to grow and develop, with investment channelled into production, development and innovation on an ongoing basis. HUBER now has manufacturing facilities in both the United States and China, while in Germany it has embarked on a massive expansion programme.

In the year of its 150th anniversary, HUBER is expanding its corporate headquarters ([HUBER SE expands the company headquarters for its 150th anniversary](#)) in Bavaria which includes the construction of a new production hall, which will see its production facilities increase to some 35,000 square metres.

Looking ahead – resilience, digitalisation and innovation combined

So looking further ahead, what's coming down the line at HUBER and what is likely to feature in the company's business development?

Firstly, HUBER will continue to focus on resilience and innovation – they're part of the company's DNA and undoubtedly two important factors in its remarkable longevity.

The ability to capitalise and build on years of expertise and experience, while still looking at challenges with fresh eyes, are key to delivering the solutions our customers are looking for.

In this context, the use of stainless steel in all our products – unlike other companies who still use less robust materials in cheaper alternatives – delivers significant advantages to customers in terms of quality, longevity and Whole Life Costs, to mention just a few.

This is particularly relevant in the water and wastewater sector, where providers have to build and maintain infrastructure in often harsh environments and resilience and asset health are critical to operational performance.

In the UK, the water companies are currently in the spotlight on issues surrounding operational performance. Widespread public, government and regulatory criticism over excessive sewage discharges mean that ultimately the water companies must work towards the removal of all Combined Sewer Overflows from the sewerage network.

However, scale of investment required to achieve this means that for the foreseeable future investment will focus on upgrading existing treatment facilities prior to discharging into rivers. [HUBER Solutions for Sewer Systems](#) play an important role in this process – and we will be drawing on decades of experience in this technology to help our customers maintain existing asset health in the meantime.

Digitalisation and servitisation

We're also focusing on the twin pillars of digitalization and servitisation - how can we think innovatively in this space around our existing products to deliver real benefits to our customers?

I'm particularly talking here in terms of asking the right questions:

- How we can use data to turn information into actionable intelligence?
- How can we capture and process meaningful and relevant data?
- How do we then use it to make more informed decisions in order improve the performance of the asset, the operational processes?
- How can we add service components to those assets to open up new ways of delivering value to our customers?
- How can we incorporate service capabilities to deliver outcomes like enhanced reliability and reduced downtime, increased operational efficiency, reductions in maintenance costs and new product capabilities?

Carbon reduction – at the forefront of HUBER's thinking

The other key issue which occupies a central place in HUBER's thinking is undoubtedly climate change – the drive for carbon reduction and the water sector's ambitious net zero goals. We know these issues are at the forefront of our customers' thinking – and they are likewise firmly in our approach to how we can best help our customers.

They are undoubtedly facing massive challenges in these areas which are set to continue and we already have technologies to address them.

Solutions already in place to help our customers to maximise energy output from their operational processes and reduce their operational carbon emissions include our innovative [ThermWin® Solution](#) and [HUBER CarbonWin® Process - YouTube](#).

With some 50,000 pieces of HUBER equipment now in place in a worldwide asset base, this offers our customers in the UK and overseas unique access to a global resource capability we can draw on to help them find the solutions they need.

It also provides us as a technology company with a dedicated focus and a clear window into the areas which are set to be the source of ongoing challenge – and the opportunity to explore potential new solutions.

We know more will be coming down the line – so HUBER will continue to innovate both in terms of enhancing and evolving existing products, alongside developing new technologies to deliver water and wastewater systems fit for the 21st century, to develop our workforce and bring in new talent.

We are confident about our long-term future and our ability to help our customers and really make a difference – and all of this is done on the solid foundations of a company that has been around for 150 years.

Further details of all the HUBER products and solutions – www.huber.co.uk