

Written by Murray Pollok

Belle Group and Altrad consider merger

French scaffolding and cement mixer manufacturer Altrad Group and the UK's Belle Group are considering a merger, with the deal likely to be completed during the first quarter of 2009.

The transaction would combine Altrad's €419 million turnover business with Belle's £52 million (€65 million) sales, with both companies particularly strong in exports.

Belle manufactures a wide range of small and compact equipment, including compaction tools, concreting equipment, cement mixers, mini-dumpers and breakers. Altrad produces a wide range of scaffolding products as well as wheel barrows, cement mixers and temporary grandstands and furniture used by French local authorities.

Although the two companies do share some products -primarily cement mixers -many of Altrad's non-scaffolding products are sold through DIY and builders merchants stores in continental Europe, whereas Belle's products are designed for rental and professional users.

Ray Neilson, Belle's managing director, told IRN that the two companies had always had a friendly relationship and that the distinct identities, products and sales teams for each brand would be retained after the merger. He said it was too early to speculate on what manufacturing synergies there might be: Belle currently manufactures its products in the UK and Poland.

Ron Blackhurst, chairman and the majority shareholder in Belle Holdings Ltd, said he was excited about the merger because it «will ensure the product development that has been achieved over recent years can be continued and the strategy to become the ideal supplier to the rental customers, retail customers and professional users can be progressed. This will be positive for the employees based at the factories in the UK and Poland and offices around the world.»

Dr Mohed Altrad, chief executive officer and the majority shareholder of Altrad, said; «I believe this merger is in line with the long term strategy of Altrad».

The announcement comes just weeks after Belle Group was presented with a UK Queen's Award for Export. Last year, the company grew by 30% and export sales rose 45%, reaching over 93 different countries.

<http://www.khl.com/magazines/international-rental-news/detail/item27422/Belle-Group-and-Altrad-consider-merger/>

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