

GLASTON CNC96 upgrade enhances PILKINGTON AUTOMOTIVE FINLAND line performance

Having recently modernized its Laitila plant by upgrading a legacy glass cutting line with a GLASTON CNC96 retrofit, PILKINGTON AUTOMOTIVE FINLAND has made a strategic investment that further enhances reliability, efficiency and usability - all whilst extending equipment lifespan and demonstrating the company's commitment to innovation and operational excellence in automotive glass manufacturing.

PIONEERING GLASS SOLUTIONS FOR DECADES

Since its establishment in 1962, Pilkington Automotive Finland has been at the forefront of manufacturing high-quality automotive glass windshields - contributing to vehicle safety, efficiency and comfort. Operating from two plants in Finland, the company collaborates closely with its clients to develop innovative solutions tailored to specific market needs. Its Laitila plant, situated in southwestern Finland, specializes in laminated wind-



shields for buses and specialized transport vehicles - including offroad tractors and harvesters. In 2006, Pilkington Automotive Finland became part of the esteemed NSG Group, a globally recognized leader in glass manufacturing. Under the Pilkington brand, NSG Group now supplies cutting-edge glass products and solutions to leading automotive manufacturers, the construction sector and technical markets worldwide.

REVITALIZING A LEGACY CUTTING LINE

By 2023, Pilkington's Laitila plant faced a critical decision regarding its nearly 30-year-old glass cutting line. Many components were approaching

obsolescence and securing replacements in the future was becoming increasingly challenging. To address this, the company opted for a strategic upgrade through Glaston's CNC96 retrofit. "We decided to extend the lifetime of our Bystronic (now Glaston) automotive glass cutting equipment with a Glaston CNC96 upgrade kit and ensure that we can continue to get spare parts," says Matti Säynväjärvi, Technical Services Group Leader, Pilkington Automotive Finland Oy, Laitila plant.

A RELIABLE, COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

Rather than investing in an entirely new cutting line, Pilkington opted for

the CNC96 upgrade - a decision that significantly extended the equipment's lifespan at a fraction of the cost of new machinery. "The investment in Glaston's CNC96 upgrade was the best way to extend the lifetime of our equipment and ensure uninterrupted processing performance," says Eerik Meriö, Automation Engineer at the Laitila plant, who led the CNC96 update project for Pilkington Automotive Finland. The company worked closely with Glaston teams in Finland and Switzerland to evaluate the retrofit's benefits. Site visits to comparable installations, including a similar machine at Pilkington's Tampere factory, provided valuable insights and reinforced confidence in the upgrade.

SEAMLESS EXECUTION AND AHEAD-OF-SCHEDULE COMPLETION

The upgrade was strategically scheduled for August 2024 - coinciding with a rare full-facility maintenance shutdown. This timing provided an optimal window for installation and commissioning. "Such a total production shutdown is very rare for our Laitila plant, but it gave us sufficient time to carry out this particular upgrade project," Matti explains. The project was executed efficiently, with installation completed within one week and testing in the following week. Remarkably, production resumed ahead of schedule, reflecting the meticulous planning and

execution by both Pilkington and Glaston “Glaston scheduled the upgrade to make 100 percent certain we’d be back up and running as planned,” Eerik affirms. The cooperation with Glaston’s team, which included specialists from Switzerland and Finland, was seamless. Having previously worked with some of the team members fostered a smooth and collaborative working environment.

ENHANCED USABILITY AND OPERATOR EFFICIENCY

One of the standout improvements following the

upgrade was the enhanced user interface, which made operations more intuitive and streamlined for operators. “Once the upgrade commissioning was completed, running the line went better for our operators than I expected,” Eerik notes. “The new interface was easy to use and simpler than the earlier one. By working with Glaston closely, our operators quickly learned how to run the upgraded machine.” Quality remained consistent with previous production standards, but the machine’s reliability saw a noticeable improvement. The enhanced interface also allowed operators



to control multiple devices from a single workstation, eliminating the need for separate user interfaces for different processes. “Another benefit to the new interface is that we can operate several devices from the same computer. With the old system, we had different user interfaces for the cutting machine and the breaking machine. Now, we can easily control these processes with just one interface,” Eerik explains.

EXEMPLARY CUSTOMER SERVICE AND ONGOING SUPPORT

From the initial planning stages to post-upgrade fine-tuning, Glaston’s customer service remained exceptional. The collaboration between Pilkington and Glaston ensured a smooth transition, with minor adjustments handled promptly and efficiently. “Production started on time, as planned,” Matti confirms. “There was some minor fine-tuning, which is normal for this

kind of upgrade project. But we had very good service, even for the smaller issues.” With the successful completion of the CNC96 upgrade, Pilkington Automotive Finland has not only extended the lifespan of its cutting equipment but also enhanced efficiency and usability for its operators. The investment underscores the company’s commitment to continuous improvement and operational excellence in the evolving automotive glass industry.



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