



where
digital
happens

DJM Aerial Solutions

Established: 2017

Owner: Dan Maine

Based: Middlesbrough

Staff: 2

Principal product:

Aerial Surveys and Visual inspections

Case Study



“We're still having to work hard to sell the new service, but it has put us on the map and allowed us to compete on the same level and for the same work as others already established in the market. **”**

Dan Maine – Managing Director, DJM Aerial Solutions

From an industrial boiler on Teesside to a 250km pipeline across the desert, from a burned-out cathedral in Paris to a rig in the North Sea. All these places require inspection for damage, quality and safety.

Hard to reach areas are what DJM Aerial Solutions does best, sending in commercial drones or unmanned aerial vehicles to inspect and survey at height or in confined space.

After ten years in heavy engineering overseas, followed by a further decade off-shore, managing director Dan Maine began planning an alternative career after seeing drones being used to inspect flare stacks and ballast tanks in the oil and gas industry. Research revealed there were very few companies on Teesside that were offering the same service, so Dan used money he'd put aside to develop a website and build up his own company's presence online.

After a year he approached DigitalCity having spotted a niche for which he needed a specific piece of equipment. Industrial biomass boilers have to be inspected internally at least every year, but operators face immense cost and interruption in shutting them down and installing scaffolding to complete a manual inspection. A 300mm diameter highly technical drone can do the same job.

Enrolling Dan on their Fellowship programme, which comes with support and business coaching as well as investment, DigitalCity provided £5,000 towards the drone and linked DJM Aerial with Tees Valley Business Compass (TVBC), which matched the amount, together providing around 45 per cent of the £25,000 equipment.

"We're still having to work hard to sell the new service, but it has put us on the map and allowed us to compete on the same level and for the same work as others already established in the market," says Dan.

It is difficult work using costly equipment that the operator must 'operate blind' from a distance, controlling it in a confined space with only what is visible on a screen to guide you.

The market has enormous potential, however: close visual inspection of industrial assets and infrastructure like buildings, bridges and pipelines; internal inspections of boilers and tanks in the power generation industry; thermography to identify energy loss or leaks. DJM can also create 3D models and high resolution maps using the data they capture for clients to use for analysis.

Scott Watson, of DigitalCity, says: "As a new Tees Valley-based business offering a technology-based solution to problems in the wider sectors, DJM Aerial Solutions ticked all of our boxes. Dan was investing some of his personal savings in to essential equipment and we were able to help via a business development grant.

"The mentoring and coaching offered on the Programme helped DJM to explore commercial opportunities, leading to it becoming one of the first businesses in the Tees Valley to offer drones and UAVs in site inspection and installation services."

The next step is to work towards ISOs and other certifications to meet rigorous regulations to take DJM to the next level.

Dan adds: "It might be six months before we see the commercial impact of the new equipment to our business, but there have been other benefits to the Fellowship Programme: We've had help to get our name out - such as being in a video produced with TVBC, Teesside University Business School students developing a marketing plan for us and further support from DigitalCity to attract investors."