

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES

Focus on Entrepreneurship



Muck and Magic: An entrepreneur's journey from garden waste to golfing bliss



Any golf enthusiast will appreciate the innovation provided by one Armagh company that turns garden clippings into high quality compost used to perfect the greens at Old Head in Kinsale and Royal Portrush.

At 28 years old, Caolan Woods stands out not only for his entrepreneurial flair but for the fact that he is leading one of the most dynamic recycling company's on the island. Natural World Products (NWP) the company his father Brendan Woods founded in the late 1980's, after developing a compost recycling system based on processes used in the USA, is one of the most successfully family run business in the recycling sector.

NWP has come a long way as attitudes towards recycling have slowly developed over the last 20 years. Real growth has only come in the last five years as the challenges around waste management have really sunk in with local councils and progressive businesses. Caolan Woods has led the company during a period of growth by winning waste contracts from local councils valued in excess of £30 million in the last year.

NWP employs 65 people and its main operation consists of a green waste recycling plant in Keady.

"We have completed a £2 million investment in the Keady plant, which uses Dutch technology to recycle garden and degradable household waste and turns it into compost," says Caolan. "The final product is sold in garden centres around Ireland under the Rosey Lee brand." Woods has also developed a higher grade compost product that he sells as a top dress covering for the fairways on golf courses.

Rapid expansion has brought with it many challenges especially in recruiting senior management talent. In meeting this challenge Caolan had no doubts about outsourcing the executive search to Clarendon Executive. He said: "We have brought in outside expertise to guide us along the process. These expert inputs combined have been a big advantage."

NWP is set for further growth under the direction of Caolan having recently secured planning permission to build a 100,000 tonne per year recycling plant near Belfast representing an investment of £12m. "We have undergone a period of significant investment over the last number of years and our expectation is that this will now allow for rapid growth over the next five years."