

m a n u f a c t u r e r

Paramount Conversions



There is a new kid on the minibus/coach conversion block – Paramount Conversions of Tullamore in County Offaly, Ireland.

Paramount Conversions was founded by Willie Daniels and Aidan Farrell. Both men have plenty of knowledge in the conversion business having worked for many years for KVC at nearby Kibbegan. Aidan was involved in the design and



The men behind Paramount, Aidan Farrell (left) and Willie Daniels.

production of the conversions whilst Willie was Sales Manager.

When KVC went into liquidation both men found themselves redundant overnight but they wasted no time in setting about opening up their own conversion business; Paramount Conversions. It was a brave decision in view of the economic and business climate in Ireland.

'We knew it was going to be tough,' said Willie, 'but we equally knew there was business out there provided we could be competitive. There was also

a sense of not wanting to let down all the friends we had in the industry from our years at KVC.'

'We received a lot of encouragement from the local enterprise boards,' said Aidan, 'who were keen to find employment for some of the people made redundant by the KVC closure and also to maintain the skill base in the area.'

With the help of the enterprise boards and perhaps more surprisingly, sympathetic banks, they located an ideal 5,000sq ft industrial unit in the Cloncollig Commercial Park in Tullamore. 'We were so lucky,' said Aidan, 'This unit was ideal. It is right at the back of the estate with good security. The building is larger than the standard units and that has proved a real bonus. If we had just taken a standard unit, which was what we were intending to do, we would already have outgrown it.'

Although the boys consider themselves primarily as minibus and coach builders they aren't so precious that they won't do other work. 'We'll build anything,' says Willie. 'We are used to building crew vans, taxis and even just ply lining vans because we used to do plenty of that at KVC. We won't turn any job away. It all helps build our reputation, keeps the lads fully employed and hopefully makes us a Euro or two.'

The team also offer a

refurbishment business and are finding that to be quite lucrative in the current circumstances where operators are unable to raise finance to a buy a



Inside the unit at Tullamore with conversions being carried out on a range of vehicles.

new vehicle but can cover the costs of a refurbishment.

At the recent Dublin Show they showed a



A Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 518 converted by Paramount into a luxury minicoach.



The 518's interior is luxuriously trimmed with 18 Politecnica Rally seats and full length rack systems incorporating individual passenger control panels.



The well planned entrance with plug door.

luxurious conversion of the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 518 with V6 engine and automatic transmission. The vehicle had double glazed, bonded, tinted windows; powered door and modified entrance, air conditioning; 18 Politecnica Grand Rally leather seats; and a full in-coach entertainment package including WiFi. They also showed a conversion of a 313 Sprinter with a modified entrance with extra step, seating for 10 in the saloon and a large rear boot. The standard of finish was very good as you would expect with this team's pedigree.

Emphasising the breadth of work they undertake, when I visited their Tullamore premises they were converting a Mercedes Vito having installed an Unwin Innotrax floor and seating for five passengers in the saloon to be followed by a Ricon in-board wheelchair lift. They were also converting another Sprinter which would have 14 saloon seats and the ability to carry two wheelchairs, again using a Ricon in-board wheelchair lift. Alongside that they were undertaking a new conversion on a VW Crafter CR50. Next to that was another luxury Sprinter which was to receive 16 seats plus a courier seat, large boot and a power door.

Waiting outside the unit were three Nissan Interstars which were to be converted with 14 saloon seats.

Paramount employs six full time staff plus another two who work part time. In addition, Willie and Aidan's wives, Paula and Michelle – both of whom also worked previously for KVC and Esker Bus and Coach – take active roles in the business, handling all of the administration.

The company doesn't have its own vehicle electrician preferring instead to utilise the skills of Pat Tobin of Teams Auto Electrics, who fortunately also lives in Tullamore. Pat is revered throughout Ireland and even by many UK coach operators that visit Ireland for being an absolute wizard with vehicle electronics.

You have to take your hat off to Willie and



The Sprinter dash area with re-trimmed driving seat and storage box.

Aidan. Having just been made redundant it takes a lot of guts to go out and set up your own operation. You'd think twice about it in normal times but the current circumstances in Ireland are not normal. That the boys (and the girls) are succeeding is a testament to their innate skills, their dedication and their tenacity. If you would



A wheelchair accessible Mercedes-Benz Vito under construction. It will have five passenger seats and an in-board lift.



The stylish Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 518 has bonded tinted glazing and full air conditioning.

like to know more about the services they can offer, whether you are based in Ireland, Northern Ireland or the rest of the UK, you can contact them on 00353 57 9320170, or e-mail info@paramountconversions.ie or check out their HYPERLINK <http://www.paramountconversions.ie> website.

By Rob Orchard