

AWC launches total-solutions welding offering

African Welding Company (AWC), the Afrox-owned welding company originally set up to distribute voestalpine Böhler Welding (vaBW) products in South Africa, has been relaunched as the channel to market for all Afrox's welding and hard goods products and services. *African Fusion* talks to Gerhard van Wyk, the Head of the new entity.

AWC was originally formed following a visit to Essen in Germany, where Afrox and voestalpine entered negotiations regarding Afrox's consumables factory in Britz. The end result was the formation of a joint venture partnership to share the ownership of the factory, giving voestalpine a 51% share and leaving Afrox with 49%. "Arox subsequently became the exclusive distributor for all voestalpine Böhler Welding consumables in South Africa and a selection of other countries in sub-Saharan Africa," Gerhard van Wyk tells *AF*.

AWC was then formed as a totally separate but wholly owned subsidiary of Afrox to take vaBW brands to market, with Gerhard van Wyk as its Head since its inception in 2020/2021.

In parallel, however, Afrox continued to service the region's welding market with

consumables, gas equipment, PPE and a range of welding and cutting machines and accessories through its Hard Goods division, while its welding shielding gases continued to be made available through the Industrial Gases division. Afrox also has an extensive network of Gas & Gear outlets throughout the region for the supply and distribution of a wide range of welding and cutting products to cater for the needs of local industries, small and large.

"It therefore began to make more and more sense to bring all of our offerings together so that we could benefit from the expertise of all of our product specialist and Afrox's extensive footprint. So we negotiated a release from the exclusivity agreement with Böhler and we have now relaunched AWC as a non-exclusive distributor of our full basket of welding products and services. We have retained the distribution rights for vaBW products on a non-exclusive basis, but have also taken on full responsibility for the Afrox Hard Goods range and the 360° welding solutions service offering from our Manufacturing Industries division," says van Wyk.

And while still wholly owned by Afrox, AWC remains and will continue to be independently run as a separate business entity, enabling Afrox to focus on its core atmospheric gases business and AWC to take care of all welding-related products and services. "We are now completely separate companies," adds Gerhard van Wyk.

From a resource perspective, he says AWC combines all of Afrox's welding expertise, products and facilities into one entity. "We still have access to the same basket of products but it is now far easier



AWC is the exclusive distributor of the Miller brand of welding power sources, including the Miller Big Blue 800 Duo, a powerful diesel-driven welder that offers robust welding and auxiliary power output.

for us to offer a total welding solutions to clients, rather than having to compete with each other to sell a particular consumable or brand," he explains.

Subsequently, a few other Böhler Welding distributors have been appointed in South Africa, but AWC remains fully supportive of the full range, both out of the Brits factory and imported products from overseas. "We can now also handle all of our Afrox branded products, as well as the imported brands we have always carried," he adds.

In terms of consumables, Afrox's Vitamax 6013 SMAW electrodes remains a leading brand in South Africa, and these are still locally manufactured. Also manufactured in Britz are low hydrogen Afrox LH 7018-1 electrodes as well as our low-alloy and Stainless Steel ranges. And AWC can also now offer a comprehensive range of GMAW and FCAW welding wires, imported from leading overseas suppliers.

"On the gas equipment side, our Sapphire and Legend cutting and welding torches and associated gas equipment ranges and gas regulators are widely used. They are now manufactured overseas under the Afrox licence, which is still based on the original design from the 1960s that meets the two different connection standards, 3/8 and 9/16, that still apply in South Africa today.

"We are also proud of our PortaPak gas cutting and welding solution, which is a light and robust gas equipment kit that is ideal for difficult-to-get-to jobs," he says. This whole range is supported by our internally developed 'Afrox Safety Solutions Programme', which assists our customers to conform to legal requirements as well as



The Saffire® Legend 916 acetylene cutting torch with Saffire® 6000 regulators can cut steel up to 450 mm thick with an 8F cutting tip.

local and international standards.

AWC is also the exclusive distributor of the Miller brand of welding power sources, along with the rugged Afrox Industrial range of power sources for MMAW, GTAW, GMAW and FCAW, along with a full range of accessories and PPE.

In addition, the Manufacturing industries department now sits inside AWC to provide development services for welding solutions, including welding procedure development, welder qualification and training, and on-site application solutions. "This department gets involved in project work, to assist companies to be more efficient in

their use of our suite of welding products with tailored application solutions.

"On the shielding and purging gas side, we will still pass on enquiries to Afrox's Gas Division, unless the order is part of a 360° application solution, which AWC will now offer through Manufacturing Industries," he says.

"What we have created is a welding focused company with products to suit a wide range of applications and customer needs, from the DIY welders looking to build palisades to the process equipment manufacturers making pressure vessels and heat exchangers," he continues.

Van Wyk is looking forward to the time when South Africa starts to see some serious infrastructure growth in the country, where we can grow jobs and build a stronger welding industry. "The new AWC is geared up for that growth in the economy. Whenever it happens, we will be ready to provide customers with advanced welding technology and solutions.

"Our bigger, better and more flexible AWC will be able to deliver exceptional service to customers from and extended 'one-stop-shop' offering, with a highly experienced sales and welding applica-



The PortaPak gas cutting and welding solution is a light and robust gas equipment kit that is ideal for difficult-to-get-to jobs.

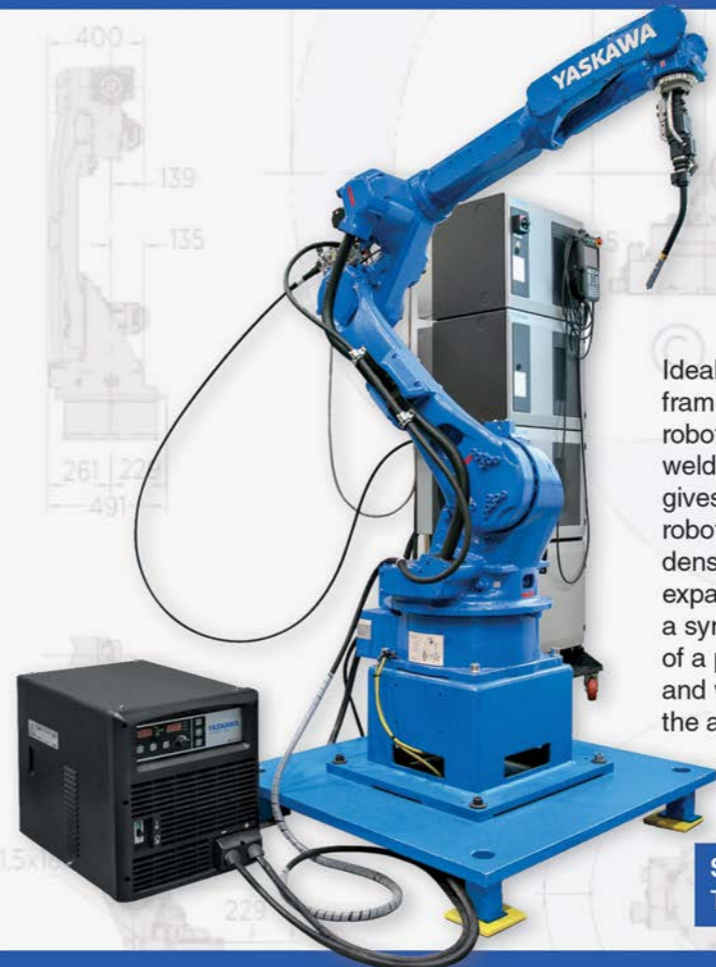
tions teams supporting the day-to-day welding, fabrication and development needs," he adds.

"With this differentiated offer, we believe AWC is in a better place than ever to support South Africa's welding industry," concludes Gerhard van Wyk.

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One of the solutions from the Manufacturing Industries Department, which now sits inside AWC, uses Miller ArcReach technology coupled the Afrox-developed Multi-User Pressure Panel (MUPP) for distributing gas to multiple welders working at height.



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