

Thomas Earley

SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER — FOOD & BEVERAGE CAPITAL PROJECTS

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Alliance Engineering Solutions Ltd · Company No. 6546746 · Available for contract assignments, UK & Europe

PROFILE

Project manager with 45 years in high-speed filling, packaging and process engineering, delivering capital schemes end to end — feasibility and URS through design, procurement, installation and commissioning to final handover. Track record across brewing, soft drinks, dairy, bakery, confectionery and snacks, including a £76m creamery extension for Arla at Stourton and a £9.5m greenfield packaging facility for Pladis at Aintree. Equally at home running a multi-site capex portfolio of £20m, embedded in a client's central engineering team, or managing site contractor teams of 80–120 people to a 24/7 programme. Time-served turner/machinist and draughtsman; BA (Hons) Business Administration; PRINCE2.

CORE EXPERTISE

Project & programme delivery

Full lifecycle: feasibility, user requirement specifications, functional design specifications, RFP and tender evaluation, design review, procurement, installation, commissioning, SAT and handover. Stage-gate management, PRINCE2, capex forecasting, multi-site portfolio control.

Process & utilities

CIP and pigging product recovery, ESL and aseptic filling, pasteurisation, carbonation, hydrogen peroxide sterilisation. Refrigeration and cold store, compressed air to 40 bar, boilers, CHP, water treatment, heat recovery. Complete utilities and civils packages for greenfield sites.

Leadership

Built and led in-house project departments of up to eight engineers; directed site contractor teams of 80–120; trained and skilled client engineering and operations teams to take ownership at handover.

Packaging & filling lines

Glass, PET, HDPE and can lines to 60,000 bph / 2,200 cpm. Blow moulding, filling and capping, labelling, inspection (Heuft/EBI), bottle washing, case and wraparound packing, shrinkwrap, robotic pick-and-place, palletising. Line efficiency and OEE studies.

Commercial & compliance

MF/1 (rev 3) engineering contracts, procurement and supplier negotiation, financial control and baseline investment. CDM regulations, CE marking, method statements, risk assessment, FMEA, BRC audit preparation.

SELECTED PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Arla, Stourton (Leeds) — £76m creamery extension.** Seven pot-filling lines producing cottage cheese, fermented creams and custards at what was then Europe's largest dairy; delivered from installation through commissioning to final handover.
- **Arla, Stourton — £1.4m recurring annual saving.** Pigging product-recovery optimisation retrofitted across seven lines.
- **Pladis (Jacob's), Aintree — £9.5m packaging facility.** Project lead for a new-product launch delivered as a vertical start-up at 1,400 units per minute; site taken to BRC grade A+.
- **Northern Foods — OEE lifted from under 40% to 86% in six weeks.** Introduced Schubert robotics achieving 96% line efficiency, which became the blueprint for a £25m group investment programme; built and led an eight-strong project department.
- **Müller UK — £20m capex portfolio.** Senior project controller for five sites and six depots with a team of six, reporting to the German PMO; led the £10.5m group lightweight-bottle programme across every line in the business.
- **AB InBev, Chernihiv (Ukraine) — 32,000 bph PET beer line.** Complete process-to-palletising scope (Sacmi); commissioned at 96% line efficiency against a 92% target.

- **AB InBev, Samlesbury & Magor — multi-year capital programme.** Sidel filler replacement with Heuft EBI inspection, a Krones 2,200 cpm can line, high-speed palletising, KHS packing upgrades and NPD across five new bottle formats.
- **Arla, Oakthorpe (London) — £5m HDPE milk line and £7.8m utilities upgrade.** JBT/Stork, Krones and Isoma line for 2.0L milk, plus refrigeration, CHP, compressors and water treatment.
- **SmithKline Beecham, Coleford — £6.5m bottling plant** (two complete Krones lines). **Bass/Tennents Wellpark, Glasgow** — two high-speed palletisers commissioned at 98% and 99% effectiveness.
- **PepsiCo, Leuven and the Netherlands — Lay's line relocations.** Six lines with new Tronrud case packers, platforms, conveying and civils; 24/7 working, delivered four days and two days ahead of programme respectively.

CAREER HISTORY

Owner & Principal Project Engineering Consultant

2006 – present

Alliance Engineering Solutions Ltd

Independent consultancy providing project management, engineering and CDM services to food and beverage manufacturers and equipment OEMs across the UK and Europe. Typically engaged into a client's central engineering team as site or programme project manager, either directly or via Lorient and Sidel. Selected assignments:

2024	PepsiCo, Leuven (Belgium) via Lorient — site manager for the relocation of six Lay's bagging lines and six new Tronrud case packers, including platforms, conveying, flooring, drainage and offices. Testing, commissioning and handover to production; delivered four days ahead of programme.
2023	Mondelēz, Bratislava (Slovakia) via Lorient — site manager for the first Toblerone line placed outside Switzerland. Conditioning cold room and nougat transport/handling, chilled milling and product-blowing systems (Rospen), Sacmi conveying and accumulation reinstated across two floors.
Dec 2022 – Feb 2023	Britvic Soft Drinks, Rugby — four projects: hydrogen peroxide can-rinse sterilisation dosing and bulk tank relocation across four canning lines; CIP reclaim tank for water saving; hot-well heat recovery for CIP pre-heat.
Dec 2022 – Feb 2023	PepsiCo, Netherlands via Lorient — relocation of six Lay's bagging lines into a 180° back-end reconfiguration with new case packers, platforms, conveying, clean room and civils. Delivered two days ahead of programme.
Feb – Sep 2022	Lidl, Foston via Sidel — greenfield factory. Site project manager for services, utilities and civils in phase 1: storage tank installation, tank and process pipework, electrical mains and substations, coordinating GMI Construction, Tetra Pak, Envirogen and specialist subcontractors.
Aug 2019 – Feb 2022	AB InBev, Samlesbury, Magor & Preston — central engineering project manager on a rolling capital programme: Sidel filler replacement and Heuft EBI systems, a Krones 2,200 cpm can line with high-speed multipack palletising, KHS packer and conveyor upgrades, sterile filtration for Camden, Ecolab COP filler sterilisation, and NPD for 620ml, 610ml, 330ml and 300ml formats.
Nov 2019	Nampak, Livingston — new factory relocation; HDPE bottle NPD and low-volume air/fluid moulding technology.
2018 – 2019	Princes, Long Sutton via Lorient — user requirement specification, hygienic line design and feasibility documentation for a new can filling line; relocation and removal of existing seasonal lines.
Mar 2017 – Aug 2018	Arla, Oakthorpe (London) — £5m HDPE 2.0L milk line (JBT/Stork, Krones, Isoma); £1.5m consolidation of two packaging lines into one shrinkwrap facility; £7.8m site utilities upgrade including refrigeration, cold store, compressors, water treatment and CHP.
Feb – Nov 2016	Pladis (Jacob's), Aintree — £9.5m packaging facility for a crispbread launch, delivered as a vertical start-up at 1,400 units/min. Automated recipe control across three bake lines, BRC upgrade to grade A+, and a full project workbook (charter, RACI, milestone plan, risk register, FMEA, steering group reporting). Vendors included Bosch, Blueprint Automation and Sapcote.

Jan – Oct 2015	Müller, Manchester — North capex senior project controller across five sites and six depots; £20m portfolio with a team of six; £10.5m group lightweight-bottle programme covering mould changes, change parts and line adaptations.
Mar 2010 – Nov 2014	Arla, Stourton (Leeds) — £76m creamery extension (seven pot-filling lines); £11m ESL process, tank and CIP project for 1.0L and 500ml PET; £1.6m flavoured milk PET line conversion; pigging optimisation saving £1.4m per year. Annual capex planning for the central engineering group, plus eco-bottle development, lean implementation and energy/waste studies.
May 2008 – Aug 2009	Soreen, Manchester — consolidation of two factories into one. Business plan, project management and implementation; redesign of mixing, baking and packaging processes; civils and infrastructure for the new factory; change management across centralised operations.
2006 – Jul 2008	AB InBev, Ukraine & Romania — Chernihiv: installation and commissioning of a complete 32,000 bph PET beer line (Sacmi), from process and blow moulding through filling, capping, labelling and shrink packing to palletising; commissioned at 96% efficiency. Mykolaiv: complete 60,000 bph returnable glass line (Krones) from crate depalletising and bottle washing to palletising. Support to the InBev Zone Brewery Support teams.

Head of Projects

2005 – 2006

Northern Foods (Fox's Biscuits) — Batley, Uttoxeter & Lytham

Joined on contract to recover a new biscuit line running below 40% OEE; six weeks of targeted improvement and investment lifted it to 86%, and the role was made permanent after three months. Built a department of eight project engineers covering three sites and a £4.2m annual capital spend. Introduced Schubert robotics — the group's first robotic packaging line — achieving 96% line efficiency and forming the blueprint for a £25m manufacturing investment programme. Set new engineering standards for the group, ran a 3–5 year manufacturing strategy, and led outsourcing negotiations rolled out at group level.

Project Manager (contract)

2004 – 2005

Arla Foods Ltd — Ashby de la Zouch

Brought in to manage a new Krones aseptic filling line — £5.5m packaging scope within a £22m contract — completing the packaging elements and pre-delivery inspections at Krones in Germany within seven months. On the project's suspension, assessed alternative sites across Arla's ten UK dairies, ran packaging optimisation and turnkey feasibility studies group-wide, and assisted with final commissioning of seven new packaging lines at the £70m Stourton facility.

Sales Manager

2002 – 2004

Central Bottling International Ltd — Doncaster

Led technical sales for a supplier of new and used packaging equipment and complete turnkey lines, building a department of ten and delivering £6.7m of sales in two years. Negotiated mainline contracts with Coca-Cola, Interbrew, Bacardi Martini, Diageo, Coors and Campbell's. Recruited agents and developed markets across Europe, Eastern Europe and Africa; introduced a CRM and customer database and realigned sales and reporting procedures.

Machinery Sales Manager

2001 – 2002

Viscose Closures Ltd — Crawley

Machinery sales across the UK and Ireland for a filling, capping and closure specialist, plus responsibility for the service and spare parts division (team of four). Introduced two Italian beverage equipment manufacturers — Bertolaso and Robino & Galandrino — to the UK market. £500k of sales.

Senior Project Manager

1980 – 2001

Krones UK Ltd — Bolton

Progressed through the projects department of the UK subsidiary of Krones, world leader in packaging technology, handling mainline and turnkey contracts for blue-chip bottling and packaging clients. Full scope from feasibility and design through plant evaluation, specification, procurement, layout design, site programmes and line efficiency studies to commissioning and handover. Contracts regularly exceeded £5m and involved substantial third-party equipment integration.

- Senior site engineer for a £6.5m two-line bottling plant at SmithKline Beecham, Coleford (1991).
- Senior project manager for two high-speed palletisers and pack conveying at Bass/Tennents Wellpark Brewery, Glasgow (2000–01), commissioned at 98% and 99% effectiveness.
- Project manager for two mainline high-speed bottling lines for Britvic Soft Drinks, leading 4–5 staff internally and site contractor teams of 80–120.
- 26 major projects as senior project manager in the final decade, contributing to a further 18 across the period — clients including Britvic, A.G. Barr, Coca-Cola, United Distillers, J&B, Whitbread, Watney, Colman's, Highland Spring, Merrydown, Princes, Hall & Woodhouse and Guinness Nigeria.

Trainee Draughtsman

1978 – 1980

Royles Ltd — Manchester

Drawing office for a steam, heating and fluid-control engineering company, reporting to the chief draughtsman and technical director. Produced drawings to customer requirements and British Standards, liaising between the drawing office and workshops.

Craft Apprentice — Turner / Machinist

1975 – 1978

British Steel Corporation — Warrington

Full craft apprenticeship in the general maintenance workshop of a heavy industrial plant, attending Stretford Technical College.

EDUCATION & QUALIFICATIONS

- **BA (Hons) Business Administration**, 2:1 — University of Bolton, 2006
- **Full Higher Mechanical & Production Technician Certificate (TEC)** — Trafford Technical College, 1979–81
- **City & Guilds Technician's Certificate** in Mechanical & Production Engineering — Trafford Technical College, 1976–79
- **Full Certificate of Craftsmanship**, Turner/Machinist — British Iron & Steel Federation apprenticeship
- **PRINCE2** Project Management
- **AutoCAD** training · **First Aid at Work** (2023)

CLIENTS & TECHNOLOGY

Clients — AB InBev · Arla Foods · Britvic · Coca-Cola · Diageo · Guinness · Lidl · Mondelēz · Müller · Nampak · Northern Foods · PepsiCo · Pladis · Princes · SmithKline Beecham · Soreen · United Distillers · Whitbread

Equipment & partners — Krones · Sidel · KHS · Sacmi · Bosch · Schubert · Tetra Pak · JBT (Stork) · Heuft · Tronrud · Blueprint Automation · Ecolab · APV · Rospen · Isoma

References available on request from clients and suppliers across the UK and European packaging industry.