



GWO INCLUSIVITY CASE STUDY

Inspirational Wind Technician returns to offshore industry after tragic accident





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An aerial photograph of a wind farm in the ocean. The image shows several dark, parallel lines representing the wind turbine foundations extending across the choppy, blue-green water. The perspective is from a high angle, looking down at the sea.

Background

In 2018, Darren Hoadley worked as an Offshore Wind Turbine Technician for Siemens Gamesa until a tragic and life-changing accident sadly resulted in the loss of his arm. The accident, which tore his arm off completely, left Darren with no mobility or functionality in the small part of the limb that remained.

Heartbreakingly, this meant Darren could no longer work in the offshore wind industry.

Darren felt as though the accident had removed part of his identity. “For a long time, I felt as though part of my identity was missing,” he said. “This haunted me for a while, and I struggled with the uncertainty that flooded my future.”

If Darren would ever return to the renewables industry, he had a long road of recovery and rehabilitation ahead of him – a challenge that he was ready for. In 2019, Darren began working again but with limited duties. For Darren to be able to return to his former job, he needed to be fitted with a prosthetic arm, a process which he began in 2020-21.

In 2021, Darren reached a point in his journey where he felt he had the confidence to explore the possibility of retraining - an idea he was keen to discuss with his employer. Darren’s line manager and the training team at Siemens Gamesa agreed they wanted to support Darren and reached out to Complete Training Solutions (CTS) to begin the initial conversations on how GWO training would look for Darren.



Preparation and planning

Darren began working closely with Danielle Kershaw, Head of Renewables and Mike Warburton, GWO Instructor at CTS to develop a robust and bespoke training plan that would support him to achieve the qualifications needed to return to his former job. Darren credits CTS for the exceptional planning and preparation that went into his training.

Darren said: "I had some doubts going into this, but the team made me feel so comfortable and at ease. No stone was left unturned in the planning phase."

During the initial planning stage, Mike used his wealth of industry experience to systematically identify any potential modifications that would need to be implemented to support Darren's training. He also assessed the likelihood of risks and completed thorough risk assessments.

"Every possible risk was methodically thought out, and measures were implemented to reduce potential risks. CTS made the process easy and enjoyable." Darren said.





Life is 10% what happens to you,
and 90% how you respond to it



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Working at Height /Manual Handling

Initially, Darren believed the Working at Height/Manual Handling module of his training would be the most challenging however he noted that it was the most enjoyable. The modifications that he initially believed he needed, were not required.

“There was no need for double hooking on the ladder rescue exercise. I am a strong advocate for individuals being on one side of the ladder and the rescue on the other, so this method worked extremely well for Darren,” the GWO Instructor explained.

When it came to hooking onto the ladder, Mike identified that Darren could use the forearm of his prosthetic to stabilise himself. To reduce the risk of damage to the prosthetic material, Mike suggested working with his prosthetist to add padding to avoid damage. Another small modification was made to the hook of Darren’s prosthetic - this was to reduce the risk of the hook sliding. Insulation tape was wrapped around the hook as a solution.

“Many of the issues we predicted we would encounter, were not an issue. The issues we faced centred more around the functionality of Darren’s prosthetic – and all those issues were remedied quickly with easy and accessible solutions.”



Fire Safety & Awareness

Mike highlights that no modifications were needed for Darren to complete the Fire Safety and Awareness training.

Mike said: "the most important aspect of the Fire Safety & Awareness was positioning. Darren would not be able to lead, which is an easy fix as other team members could take this responsibility."

First Aid

When it came to the First Aid training, Mike highlighted that although Darren was completing many of the exercises single-handed, there were no issues with doing it this way. "In the GWO standard, there is no requirement to do certain tasks with both hands," Mike said.

Darren was able to mobilise the spine, using his knees to maintain control of the spine and his hand to maintain the airway – a method which Mike advocates for all delegates. CPR training did not pose any risks either - Darren delivered compressions at the necessary depth.



A close-up, high-contrast image of a fire. The flames are bright yellow and orange, with a dark, almost black background. The fire is intense and appears to be burning vigorously. The text is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

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Sea Survival

It was during his Sea Survival training that Darren encountered the most challenges. Initially, one of his prosthetic hooks didn't work as well but after changing to a more curved hook, his grip improved.

"This was my first time climbing a ladder in nearly four years, I thought it would be a challenge. Whilst it wasn't easy, once I had developed the right technique it came naturally to me." Darren said. "Any small obstacles we encountered were handled, we had a solution for everything."

Speaking on Darren's Sea Survival training, Mike said: "Surprisingly, getting into a life raft was the biggest challenge we faced.

"We developed a technique with other delegates to get Darren aboard safely. If a life raft is deployed, this would be because of a sunken vessel, in which case Darren wouldn't be in the water alone, and so having a method in place that requires the support of his team is logical."



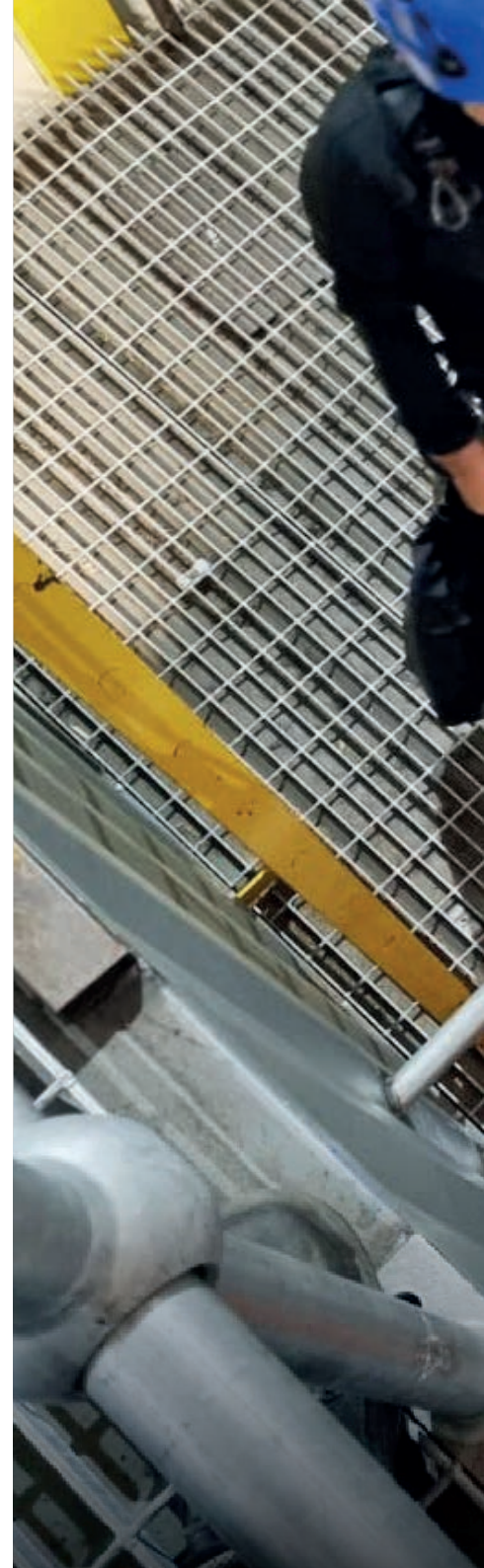
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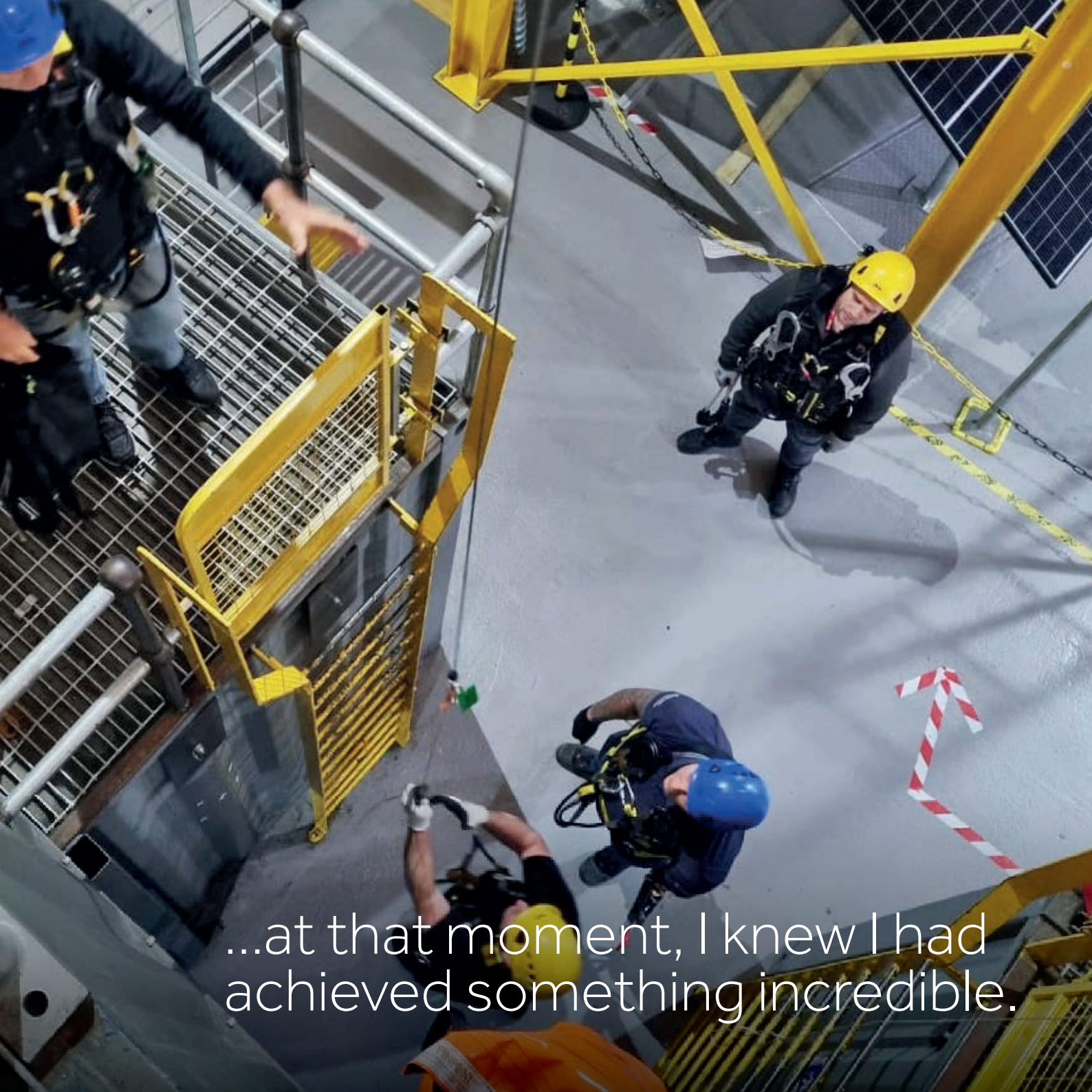
After completing his training Darren expressed how enjoyable and beneficial he found the whole experience. "Some things I thought would be a challenge weren't an issue, and any problems we did encounter, we overcame. As someone who works away from home, it was really beneficial to complete my GWO certification as a blended learning course, meaning that the training was completed over three days – this allowed for more time with family during the week. Not to mention it is extremely cost-effective."

Darren pinpoints a standout moment of his training and describes how overwhelmed with positive emotions he felt at the time. "It was the helicopter rescue exercise, and I remember letting out a huge somewhat primal cheer," he said. "I felt so much pride, joy, and relief and at that moment, I knew I had achieved something incredible."

Reflecting on his experience with CTS, Darren outlined how the bespoke support provided by CTS helped break down his mental barriers. "It truly was an amazing and exciting experience," he said. "I had some mental barriers that made me doubt if it was possible to return to offshore work, but thanks to CTS those barriers are broken down and I feel like my future has no limitations. This experience has changed my life forever, now a disability no longer dictates my life, and I am in control of my future and CTS made it possible."

Darren was keen to share his experience in the hope of encouraging others who may be in a similar situation to take a leap of faith. He said: "If I can offer any advice for others, it would be to go for it. There is nothing to be afraid of – the world is your oyster. If you have the right people around you, you can make it happen."





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On the first day of training, Darren noted a moment he described as 'sending shivers down my spine.' He noticed a quote on the wall of the training facility that said, "life is 10% what happens to you, and 90% how you respond to it." Darren explained that the same quote was written on the brake disc of the wind turbine where his tragic accident occurred. After the accident, his colleagues wrote the quote as a reminder that he could overcome the challenge he now faced.

What's next?

Not only has this experience changed Darren's life, but it has sparked a much-needed conversation around inclusivity in the wind industry. Darren's case study is a shining example of how disabled people can work safely in an off-shore environment. Danielle Kershaw, Head of Renewables at CTS said: "Darren's experience has demonstrated that with the right people in place anything is possible. We want to use his experience as an example to others and open the conversation with the Global Wind Organisation around inclusivity."

Darren's journey has only just begun, and thanks to Complete Training Solutions and Siemens Gamesa his future has no limits or boundaries.

