



New invention is an inspiration

An innovative product with a Broadland connection provided the inspiration for its inventor to fight back from a life-threatening stroke.

The invention, D-TX Fuel Safe, which detects water-contaminated fuel before it can cause an engine breakdown, was enthusiastically received when it made its debut at the boat show.

Orders are flooding in for the product, not only from the marine industry but from across the engines spectrum.

Yet only two years earlier, its inventor Michael Folan, whose parents, Jim and Janet, live in Cromer, was left paralysed and unable to speak when he was cut down by the stroke at the age of 41.

The marine engineer had been rebuilding a former trawler with a view to sailing it with his family to a new life in New Zealand when he was taken ill. Instead he found himself facing an uphill battle for life. "It would have been quite easy to have given up," he said. "But I have always been the sort of person who has only seen solutions rather than problems. I know I had to get well before I could look after my family. I had to learn everything again – to speak, get out of bed, walk, make a cup of tea."

As part of his rehabilitation, his wife Laura took him to see his long-time friend Paul McCarthy – now his partner in D-TX – and it was then that the idea for Fuel Safe was born.

"It was literally conceived between us on the back of an envelope," said Mike. "I am extremely close to Paul. It was a meeting of minds ... what else can I say? And it gave me added will to combat my own problems."

They quickly realised that they had come up with a real innovation and set about applying for world patents.

"An estimated 90 per cent of problems with boat engine breakdowns stem from contaminated fuel," said Mike, pictured above left, with Paul.

The unique thing about Fuel Safe is that it can be retro-fitted to any inboard boat, and triggers an alarm as soon as water is detected. This allows the engine to be stopped and the water drained off before it can enter the engine.