

RECOVINYL

news

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WELCOME to issue 25 of the Recovynyl Newsletter. This issue includes features on Epwin's new fully recycled PVC-U window and Tarkett-Marley, one of the flooring manufacturers taking part in the Recycled Flooring trial.

Epwin produce first fully-recycled PVC-U window

The Epwin group has produced a PVC-U window made entirely from recycled PVC. Due to be unveiled this month at the Ecobuild exhibition (Earls Court Feb 26-28th), the group are claiming a 'world-first'. The window has been manufactured solely from post-consumer waste, collected and processed by its recycling operation, Recovynyl recycler, Dekura.

The waste has been recovered from a social housing refurbishment project where old, single-glazed first generation PVC-U windows were being replaced. Producing a new window from the recovered material posed a number of technological challenges including the successful removal of all contaminants including wood, concrete, sealants and paint. Using the latest technology, Dekura recycled the waste and a polymer of near virgin quality was produced.



David Wrigley technical director at the Epwin group said: "PVC-U in itself is hugely recyclable, in fact research suggests it can be recycled up to 10 times without losing performance - based on a BRE recognised lifespan of 35 to 40 years and each product could have an overall lifecycle of up to 400 years."

Dekura has invested in sophisticated technology, providing an advanced processing system capable of recycling a range of end-of-life, first generation PVC-U building products. David outlines the process:

"Post-consumer waste is first processed in our size reduction equipment. Once broken down, powerful magnets remove and separate out ferrous metals. Following further manual inspection, shakers help to sort material sizes ready for shipment for reprocessing. This begins with more refined processing to remove any remaining debris, for example tiny fragments of metal or rubber."

"This is followed by colour sorting. The equipment used to do this is incredibly advanced and can be calibrated to pick out even the slightest variation between individual fragments. This completes the process and the material is ready to be compounded into pellets or pulverised material ready for use in a new generation of advanced products."

Epwin's fully-recycled PVC-U window is a great example of 'closed loop' recycling. As David Wrigley comments: "PVC-U is now sustainable in the truest sense. Old products can be recycled, reprocessed and recovered material used in a new generation of advanced sustainable and energy efficient products."

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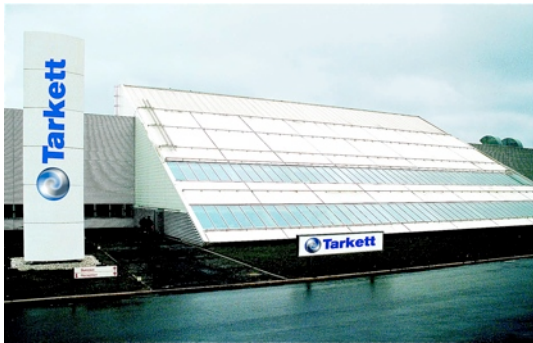
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Tarkett's recycling plant strengthens eco-profile

Industrial, commercial and household waste in England and Wales amounts to over 100 million tonnes annually. With current oil reserves predicted to run out in as little as the next twenty years, it comes as no surprise that the issue of waste minimisation, recycling and working with sustainable sources is high on everyone's agenda. It is no longer enough to look just at our financial and capital commitments. We all need to be able to demonstrate our 'green credentials' by contributing to a cleaner environment.



Tarkett – the world's largest manufacturer of resilient floor coverings - has been running recycling facilities since the 1960's and now recycles more than 130,000 tonnes of waste material each year through its operations around the world, where the company has invested heavily in dedicated equipment. "Our Swedish factory has established a scheme that collects sorts and recycles back into flooring the majority of flooring offcuts produced in Sweden, comments Pete Thomas, Tarkett's Environmental Manager. "And in Luxembourg the company has created a large scale recycling operation, which not only takes production offcuts from the group's own factories, but also reprocesses material from many of the other flooring manufacturers around Europe. This plant converts 120 tonnes a day of old flooring into the backing for new vinyl flooring and carpet."

Tarkett was a founder member of AgPR which was set up in Germany 15 years ago to show that it was possible to recycle post consumer vinyl flooring. Over the years Tarkett has processed many thousands of tonnes of post use flooring waste back into first grade flooring via AgPR. Unfortunately the cost of the AgPR processing makes it difficult to increase the use of the material produced by this route.

Three years ago Tarkett implemented a scheme to collect post installation waste both from large contracts such as hospitals and schools and from specific flooring contractors. This benefited all

parties, as it gave the installers a route to safely dispose of their waste in an environmentally responsible way, as well as supplying Tarkett with a consistent waste stream for use on its large processing plant in Luxembourg. For large contracts, Tarkett will supply cages to store the off-cuts and although they are not the only company to provide such a collection service, they actually take the collected material back to Tarkett's own Recovinyl-accredited PVC recycling plant in Luxembourg where it is reprocessed and re-used to produce a calendered backing for new flooring.

The quantity of post installation waste available is limited and the real prize is to be able to collect and reuse flooring at the end of its life. To this end Tarkett has joined forces with Axion Recycling to trial a collection system for end of life in the UK and to develop a new process to include this post use material into new first quality flooring.

Pete Thomas, points out that in order for this recycling to work effectively it is essential to be able to segregate the used flooring for recycling as early in the waste collection process as possible. If it is mixed with general waste then it dramatically increases the cost of recovery and reduces the quality of any product produced.



Tarkett's manufacturing processes are also closely monitored, with the company's main European production centres cutting total organic emissions by 50%, water consumption by 30% and non-recycled waste by 30%. During production all scrap material is routinely recycled, with nothing going to waste. Recent investment has also increased the level of the recycled component in the company's vinyl flooring, resulting in an average recycle content of around 25%.

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