



NEWS

Expanded Polystyrene Packaging Group
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BPF
EPS Packaging Group is part of the
British Plastics Federation

UK's first EPS Horticulture Recycling Scheme sets up in Sussex

For the first time in the UK, horticultural waste — used expanded polystyrene (EPS) bedding trays and pots — is being collected and successfully recycled.

EPS Packaging Group member, Styropack UK, spearheads this pioneering scheme: "We take back used EPS bedding trays from the horticultural companies that we supply," says Andy Wood, Logistics Manager, Styropack in Ford, W. Sussex.

"We compact the waste EPS to about 25 per cent of its original size, making it easy to store and economical to transport. However, finding a recycler that could reprocess the material was not straightforward. There was no-one in the UK who could do it, so we approached our sister company, Synbra Technology, who supplies our raw material, to see if they could help."

Synbra Technology is the leading recycler of EPS packaging in the Netherlands and had already developed techniques to deal with difficult materials collected in its home market.

The material from Styropack was a challenge as Jan Noordegraaf, Managing

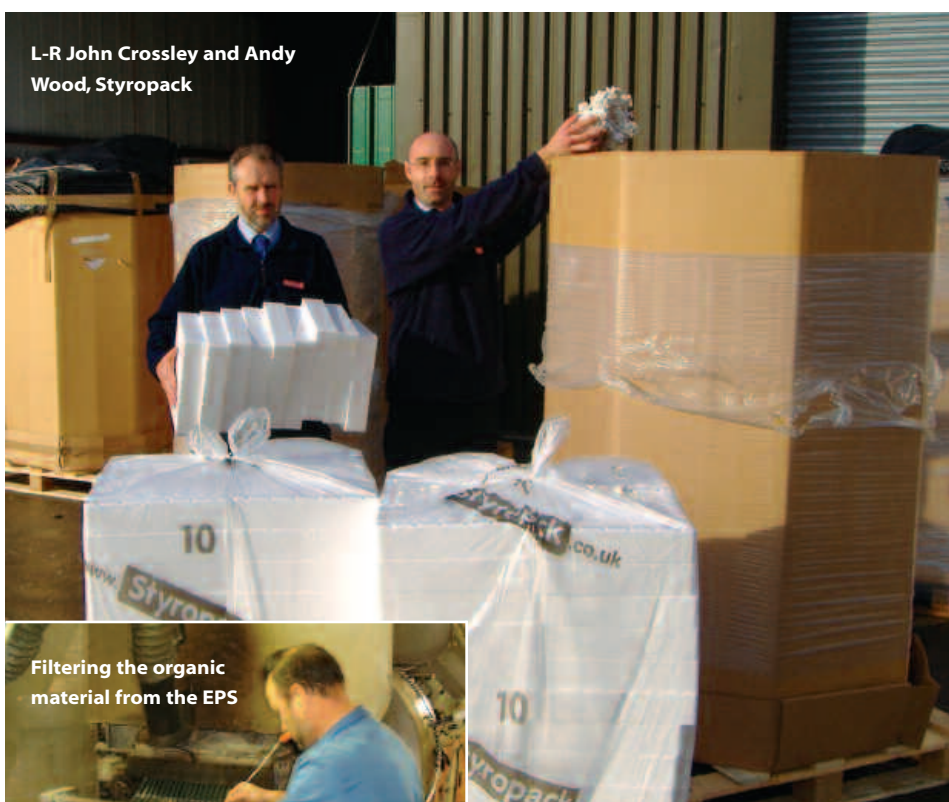


Jan Noordegraaf,
Synbra Technology

Director, Synbra Technology explains: "The compacted bedding trays from the UK had compost — and even whole plants — left in them, so we had to develop completely new methods to separate this from the EPS, before it could be re-processed.

"We experimented with different processes until we found a solution. Now we have one line that is dedicated to handling the material from Styropack, it includes a process to separate the organic material, which is composted.

"The end result is a very clean bead that we colour black or grey. It is supplied as a reprocessed grade, that can be added into prime material and used to manufacture items like picture frames or disposable cameras. An



L-R John Crossley and Andy Wood, Styropack



Filtering the organic material from the EPS

added benefit is that it is all sold within Europe and it helps to make our manufacturers more competitive," concludes Noordegraaf.

The compacted bedding trays are transported to Synbra Technology in their own empty trucks, on their return trips from delivering raw material to Styropack in the UK — making the whole operation as environmentally and economically efficient as possible.

Around 26 tonnes of used EPS bedding trays have been recycled since August 2005 when Styropack began sending the compacted material to Synbra Technology: "On average we send back five tonnes a

month," says John Crossley, Works Manager, Styropack UK.

"That comes from ten customers and it is roughly equivalent to three articulated lorries of new bedding trays. A lot of valuable material that would have been sent to landfill is being recycled and used again."

A Styropack customer, Roundstone Nurseries in Sussex, is very pleased that their EPS waste is being recycled: "We have been pleased and impressed by Styropack's determination to find a viable recycling route for our horticultural waste," comments Martin Squires, Technical Manager, Roundstone.

"Our main customer is B&Q, an extremely environmentally-aware company, that expects high standards from its suppliers, so I know that they will be very pleased that this recycling scheme is working so successfully."

EDUCATION SPECIAL

Scunthorpe schools learn about EPS

For the past four years LINPAC Moulded Foams in Scunthorpe has been assisting local school students to complete their GCSE in Manufacturing.

So far, four secondary schools have taken part in the scheme — Frederick Gough, Baysgarth, North Axholme and South Axholme. The schools send 12 pupils at a time to visit the plant and to learn about the manufacture and recycling of EPS packaging.

Manufacturing Manager, Steve McCready, runs the tours: "The first thing we do with each group is tell them about LINPAC Moulded Foam and brief them on health & safety, then we introduce them to the material and our products.

"We ask them to try to guess what some of the more unusually-shaped items might be — which always gets a good response! We show them the Exceptional Packaging Solution DVD and after that we take them around the site, so that they can see the whole process for themselves."

The visits have proved so successful, that each year the participating schools request a return trip and new schools have asked if they can join in.

"They arrive not knowing anything about EPS, or even having thought much about it. By



Steve McCready,
Manufacturing Manager,
LINPAC Moulded Foams

the time they leave — three hours later — they have a good understanding about the material and why it is so useful as a protective and insulating packaging material

"And, they've learnt that an EPS box can be recycled and they know that they can use our EPS Recycling Point for their own used EPS packaging," concludes MacCready.

Did you know that you can re-use your old bedding plant trays?

If you have just planted a colourful array of new bedding plants and you are planning to throw away the white expanded polystyrene (EPS) trays that they were grown in — think again — that would be a waste of a very useful material.

You can re-use that old bedding tray to help other plants grow.

Break it up into big chunks and place the pieces in the bottom of your window boxes, pots, tubs or hanging baskets, put the compost on top and plant up as usual. It will work in exactly the same way as the broken terracotta pots that many gardeners use.

The additional advantage is that EPS provides extra insulation and, will not only prevent your plants from getting waterlogged, but will also reduce the risk of their roots being frozen in the winter.

If you are creating a new flower or vegetable bed; the bedding trays can be broken up — as small as you can get them — and incorporated into garden compost. The benefits include an improvement in the aeration of the soil, less compost is required and the soil is lighter with better drainage.

If you would like more information about the re-use of EPS bedding trays email: info@eps.co.uk or visit our website www.eps.co.uk



The EPS Packaging Group is sending this leaflet to every local authority in the country to use as information for gardeners who buy bedding plants. We thought it might be of interest to readers of EPS News too...

RECYCLING UPDATE

Big Changes for Highwood

Highwood Consultants Ltd, the originator of Synthetic Timber profile utilising recycled EPS packaging, has undergone some major changes. These changes followed the purchase of the majority shareholding in July 2004 by Mr John Hargreaves better known as the founder and major shareholder of the Matalan chain of retail stores.

"We are still committed to using recycled EPS packaging and we buy all our re-processed bead from a UK recycler. Environmental responsibility is important to us and it is something we

have identified as a product plus point in the marketing of our business," explains Keith Parrott, Managing Director of the Isle of Wight-based outfit.

"Creating a product that can be used in place of natural timber from irreplaceable hardwood forests is a

central plank of our business, all our internal systems have been adapted to minimise the impact on the environment and we are continually assessing our performance and looking to improve it," continues Parrott.



The company is looking to expand its business – and has already established a second manufacturing plant in Warrington to be nearer to its customer base on mainland Britain. There are further plans to move into a new purpose built unit in Carrington, near Manchester later this year.

Developing new lines is a key part of Highwood's new growth strategy and to that end the company has successfully achieved Class 1 Spread of Flame Certification for a white UV stable material.

"We've put a lot of work into researching new materials. This latest development means we can supply products into a number of specific areas; for example to the building sector for use in products such as high altitude cladding," explains Parrott.

Highwood has a strong presence in the door manufacturing sector and has formed successful relationships with customers whereby they collect all

product off-cuts so they can be re-processed back into the customer's new orders.

"That means we can slightly reduce their cost price and they don't have the burden of disposing of waste materials in expensive and unwelcome landfill sites. It is a closed loop system that eliminates waste and benefits the environment," concludes Parrott.

Robust goes from strength to strength

The Wales Environment Trust's accredited partner, Robust Ltd has moved its EPS recycling plant to Ebbw Vale where it has the capacity to re-process 350 tonnes of compacted EPS a month. And, Robust has recently started extruding the re-processed bead and now manufactures plastic wood profile that can be used in the construction industry.

"Currently, Robust is processing between 100 and 150 tonnes of compacted EPS a month," says Dr Keith Parry, Chief Executive, Wales Environment Trust. "Clearly, we'd like to increase that, so we are always interested in talking to businesses that generate waste



L-R Dr Keith Parry and Stuart Bush

EPS to see if we can set up a long-term, fixed price contract to buy their EPS."

The Wales Environment Trust has been a

crucial partner to Robust, Stuart Bush, managing director of Robust, explains: "The Trust has been an invaluable support to us, not only has it assisted us with procurement, but it also helped us to get accredited as a re-processor and it assisted in the setting up of a long-term deal to issue Packaging Recovery Notes generated through Compliance Wales.

"Anybody who sends their compacted EPS to this plant can be sure that as an Environment Agency approved and accredited re-processor of expanded polystyrene, all the material is recycled and used to manufacture 'plastic wood' products or to go back into new packaging."

A New Vice Chairman

The EPS Packaging Group has appointed Tony Pruchniewicz, Site Manager at LINPAC Moulded Foams in Scunthorpe as its new Vice Chairman. Tony will take over from Gavin Birnie, as Chairman on 7 June 2006.

"I am pleased and honoured by this appointment," says Tony. "The EPS Packaging Group has done a lot of good work for our industry over the years



and I'm looking forward to continuing the good work.

"In particular, I am sure we will continue to strengthen our links with young people through education. The Group has sent the 'Exceptional Packaging Solution' DVD to 225 specialist science colleges in England and Wales and to 450 secondary schools in Scotland. Currently, we are looking at other ways to provide schools with useful educational tools about EPS and the

properties that make it such an outstanding packaging material.

"School students are the designers and buyers of the future and teaching them about expanded polystyrene is a great way to support our industry in the future."

Tony is positive about the outlook for expanded polystyrene: "EPS is a widely-used, cost effective packaging material that provides customers with an excellent performance they can rely on. Its protective and insulating properties are superb and I am enjoying working with the EPS Packaging Group to promote the material and to maintain its strong position as a popular packaging material."

Serving the Cold Chain



Following queries about the role that EPS packaging can play in securing the cold chain for temperature sensitive goods, the EPS Packaging Group has produced an information leaflet that answers many of the questions we often get asked.

The insulating properties of EPS are much higher than other packaging materials such as cardboard, glass or china because EPS is 98% air and air has a very low rate of thermal conductivity. The closed-cell foam structure

of EPS, consisting of microscopically small air bubbles, makes it the simplest and most cost effective thermal insulator around.

If you want to pack fresh fish, meat, seafood or vegetables and fruit, the inert nature of EPS ensures that it does not contribute to bacterial development and its excellent protective characteristics help to prevent deterioration through bruising or other shocks during transit. EPS is fully approved to package food and an

additional bonus is that it helps food to retain its nutrients.

The inertness of EPS and its insulating properties combined with its hygienic, clean appearance makes it perfect for the pharmaceutical sector where it is widely used for transplanting organs and temperature sensitive vaccines.

Find out about all this in more detail by downloading the leaflet *EPS Packaging: Serving the Cold Chain* from the Downloads section of our website www.eps.co.uk.