

## Is There a Need for Another Recycling Body?

Recently there has been some talk amongst tyre recyclers of the lack of any representation of their industry across Europe. Now, that statement will immediately raise hackles at the European Tyre Recycling Association, but, like it or not, it is a statement of fact. A number of recyclers feel the need for a body that represents their interests. A body that talks to government but also talks to industry. So much so that early last year a number of recyclers met with the ETRMA to try and find a way forward – a path that would allow the recyclers to talk through their association, with their sole suppliers, and for some the target market, the tyre manufacturers. However, the ETRMA does not have it within its remit to deal with recycling or recyclers directly, though it does have close links with EPR bodies throughout Europe (and further afield).

The Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) has tried to establish a tyre committee on more than one occasion but it has never really built any impetus. And there is of course, EuRIC representing the wider recycling sector.

When an industry sector is in need of support, that is when it needs its trade association. That is when it needs a unified voice. Right now, the tyre recycling sector is under a great deal of pressure and it should be coming together as one, not drifting into factions.

The reality is that a body that represents the tyre recycling sector already exists. No-one is saying that there are not issues to be addressed, but surely the best way of addressing those issues is to become involved and help develop the association in the direction that the industry needs it to go. At this time, the tyre recyclers across Europe need to come together and put their weight behind the body that can best represent them be it ETRA, BIR or EuRIC.

You can change the world if you make the effort. It isn't always easy, but either you accept the status quo, or you make an attempt to change direction. Sitting back and bemoaning the state of the industry is not going to get any laws changed, nor will it bring about better relationships with the tyre manufacturers, nor will it open new markets.

Now, tyres are an unusual waste stream. They can quite clearly have a single waste chain, they are generally collected separately from other waste (although there are exceptions). They are easily identified and they require a specialist treatment process – they cannot be processed in volume in mixed waste, so they therefore have an industrial sector of their own. Tyres make up about five to eight percent of the waste stream in Europe. Tyre disposal is a producer responsibility. The producers have one main goal in mind – getting rid of tyres – not recycling, but getting them out of circulation, out of dumps and out of mind. One might argue that this is a motivator for using the quickest route to disposal and the single route with the highest volume capacity – cement kilns. It is clear that tyre manufacturers have a preferred route to disposal – incineration. Moves to increase the use of tyres in iron furnaces show a continued support for disposal rather than recycling. So, tyre recyclers should be careful of where working with the tyre manufacturers will take them.

Having said that, it is surely an error not to talk to the tyre manufacturers, for surely with the tyre manufacturers on board, true recycling projects stand a better chance of development and success? One of the biggest demands from recyclers is that there should be a body acting on their behalf that speaks with the tyre industry and other markets. Here is where there is a disjoint. If a recycler produces 10,000 tonnes of rubber powder, that in theory could be incorporated in solid tyres or off the road tyres or conveyor belting, he is one small David, talking to any number of Goliaths. He often does not know who to talk to or how to approach a global tyre manufacturer to lobby for the adoption of the use of his materials. In the rCB sector there is no single rCB producer who could meet the potential rCB demand if rCB were widely adopted, so there needs to be a joint lobbying/market research body acting in their interests, talking to the tyre manufacturers.

There needs to be a body representing the wider industry to take the materials produced by recyclers to the asphalt industry, to government, to those bodies who will be able to help open new

markets and help drive tyre recycling from its underdog position in the recycling world to become a prominent supplier of raw materials.

Today's solution of burning or exporting is simply not good enough. Cut it any way you like, putting tyres into cement kilns is a disposal route, and the tyres cannot be recycled, other than as an element of the clinker in the cement. Exporting tyres to developing nations where they invariably do not have the capacity to deal with their own waste tyres, never mind imported tyres, is a short-term folly that will someday bite back environmentally. Exporting ELT to the Far East is surely madness. There is no control over the final destination or use, and few final destination certificates ever come back to the EA in the UK. The same will undoubtedly be true of those exports from other nations. (Other nations that officially deny exports in any volume, but anecdotal reports from traders suggest otherwise!)

If a recycler is looking for a body to represent his or her interests, then it needs to look at the existing options and take action to ensure that body represents their interests. Not to do so is like waiting for someone else to do the job – it never gets done.