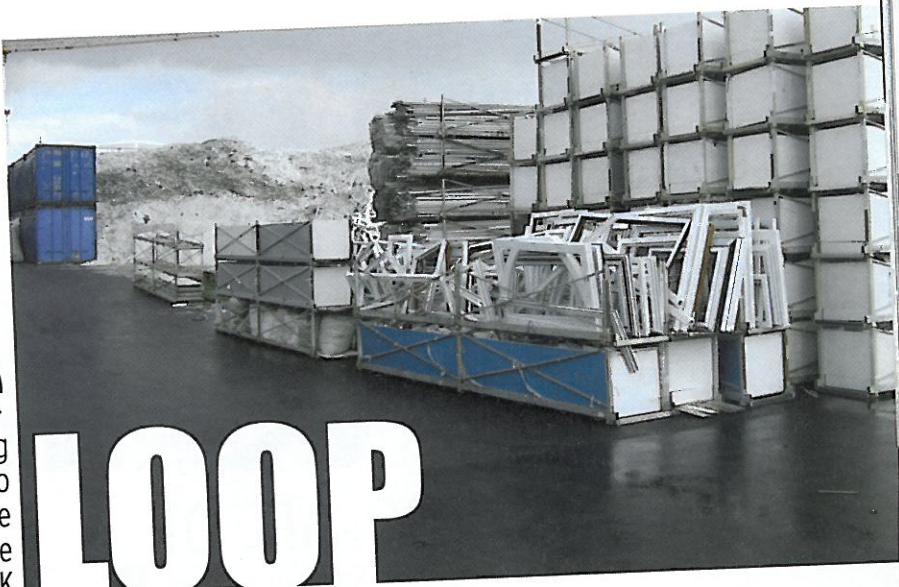


Waste PVC from various stages of the window industry is delivered to VEKA's recycling facility in Germany



VEKA closes the

In environmental terminology, VEKA is closing the circle by recycling old PVC-U windows into new extrusions. Dominic Bentham visited the company's plant in Germany, a model soon to be duplicated in the UK

LOOP

In environmental terminology, VEKA is closing the circle by recycling old PVC-U windows into new extrusions. The Veka recycling plant in Behringen, Germany, is a sophisticated facility where PVC-U offcuts, waste extrusions and large quantities of post-consumer windows are delivered for recycling. The plant accepts frames from all brands of extruder, not just Veka profiles.

Through various material separation and cleaning processes, uncontaminated PVC-U is captured for re-use within Veka's own window systems and for sale to other extrusion companies. In theory, there is no limit how many times this circle can be repeated.

UK facility

Veka is already providing a collection service in the UK for post-consumer windows through a series of established routes. VEKA Recycling Ltd, based in Swanscombe, Kent, has machinery to remove hardware from de-glazed frames, which are then shredded into small pieces for cost-effective transportation to Germany.

The plant at Behringen has additional mechanical processes for separating gasket and other material from PVC-U, and for sorting separating coloured PVC-U from white product. There are plans to build a £5 million plant in the UK, which will include these processes. This will make the UK completely closed loop, as the plant will accept waste from each stage of the window industry – extruders, fabricators and installers – producing PVC-U pellets for re-use by Veka plc.



Simon Scholes is Sales Manager for VEKA Recycling Ltd

The new facility will be operational within four years. The company is currently looking for a new site. Simon Scholes is Sales Manager for VEKA Recycling Ltd. He is enthusiastic about the potential of PVC-U recycling.

Landfill tax

Veka Recycling (vekarecycling@btconnect.com) makes financial sense because companies no longer need to pay Landfill Tax to dispose of their old PVC-U windows. This tax will continue to rise, increasing the pressure to recycle. Germany has already gone a stage further, having banned PVC-U from landfill four years ago.

Recycling customers in the UK are providing with appropriate containers and given certification to prove that they are meeting the requirements of the Environmental Waste Act 1900.

Total recycling

Veka guarantees the properties of its recycled PVC-U pellets. EN12608 states that recycled material cannot be used on the surface of window profile. But by co-extruding recycled PVC-U with a 0.5mm outer skin of virgin material, Veka says that it is possible to produce a 97.5% recycled profile.

From 1995 to 2007 an estimated 109 million windows were fitted in the UK, 82 per cent of them with PVC-U frames. Given the potential quantities of windows involved, recycling must eventually become a regional operation. We can expect to see several facilities like Behringen operated in the UK.



Used window frames are loaded on to a conveyor for shredding

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