

INDUSTRY PROPOSALS FOR FLAT GLASS RECYCLING SCHEME

LAST month, the BMF met industry colleagues from the Glass & Glazing Federation to discuss the Future Homes Standard and glass recycling. In this article, Chris Beedel (GGF Head of Stakeholder Relations) explains how the GGF is seeking to encourage and promote trials of a flat-glass collection & recycling scheme.

Concerns about resource efficiency and the finite nature of the resources we use are shining a brighter light on construction firms and how they reduce their environmental impact. According to the UK Green Building Council, construction is one of the biggest consumers of materials and produces more waste than any other sector. Although a lot of waste is being diverted from landfill, little is being recycled or reused.

Meanwhile, Building Regulations continue to adjust the minimum expectations for construction. As part of this, the glazing industry has its own important role to play, and with the comprehensive recycling schemes now available to fabricators and installers, there is no excuse not to recycle.



Chris Beedel, GGF Head of Stakeholder Relations

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

In the summer of 2021, the GGF and FENSA launched a uPVC recycling scheme for installers and manufacturers. Since then, we have extended the programme to include the recycling of aluminium, timber and most recently Insulated Glass Units (IGUs). We believe it is important for the GGF to show leadership when it comes to environmental initiatives - as well as supporting our Approved Installers and Members in playing their part.

The collection of the flat glass, alongside the uPVC and aluminium

frames, will continue to be free of charge if the collection criteria are met. The minimum collection volume is 20 frames/IGUs and all units must be deglazed due to different transport methods required for uPVC and glass. We are using trusted partners to provide this service with:

- CNC Recycling collecting uPVC frames and IGUs;
- aluminium recycling specialists Alutrade collecting aluminium frames.

This means installers can be assured that old materials are handled responsibly. All the flat glass collected is recycled back into the industry as clean cullet which is sent for flat glass processing.

CLOSED LOOP SCHEME

The 'closed loop' nature of the recycling scheme is key for us as an industry to be genuine in saying we are a sustainable sector that can make an impact on the country's net zero targets. The GGF wants to see the glass that we recycle go back into the manufacture of flat glass. We want to be able to tell homeowners that their new windows and doors not only save them money on their bills and give their house a fantastic modern look - but they are made from recycled material and their old windows will go to help someone else do likewise.

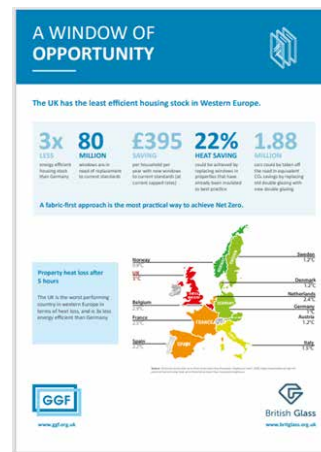
A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY

In October 2023, the GGF published new research called 'A Window of Opportunity'. We presented it as a simple but hard-hitting infographic which shows that the UK is the worst performing country in western Europe for heat loss in dwellings. This initiative demonstrates the benefits of changing older double glazing with new windows to today's standards and the savings that homeowners can make on their energy bills. Older double-glazed windows were not designed to perform to today's energy efficiency standards.

The GGF have been told by Whitehall officials that windows do not represent a good return on investment - and that homeowners change their windows without the need for any taxpayer-funded grants or incentives. The GGF

has repeatedly challenged this misplaced assumption. For example:

- modelling shows that the average home that has already benefited from all of the insulation upgrades can save a further £395 a year by having new windows installed.
- we are in a declining market with a difficult second half to 2023 and the same trading conditions continuing into this year. And while there are glimmers of growth expected in 2025, we need to ensure that government and homeowners understand the benefits of replacing their windows and doors.



In addition to the homeowner cost savings, the GGF argues that the savings in CO2 are a real eye opener too. If all the pre-2002 double glazing were to be replaced, it would be the equivalent of removing 1.88 million cars off the road.

In talking to Whitehall and stakeholders, it also became clear that energy efficiency was not the only point of interest - sustainability and recycling was also top of their agendas. In the UK, we send 500,000 tonnes of flat glass to landfill. Using FENSA's figures, if all the glazing taken out were to be recycled that would be 82,000 tonnes of flat glass going back into the process. For each tonne recycled 1.2 tonnes of raw material is saved and 580kg (approx.) of CO2 is saved throughout the supply chain. With less than 2% recycling at present, this represents an incredible opportunity for the industry - which is the motivation behind the FENSA and GGF recycling schemes for frames & flat

glass which are free at the point of use.

BOOSTING OUR INDUSTRY'S GREEN CREDENTIALS

Recycling responsibly is key. The increasingly eco-conscious consumer wants to buy from suppliers that can prove their sustainability credentials. It is no longer enough to say you are green, you need to prove it. This means working with recycling partners you can trust. Unfortunately, because waste removal is such a lucrative business, there are many less scrupulous service providers operating in the market. These companies remove waste and dispose of it illegally and as a result are putting installers and homeowners at risk - with legal ramifications for both if the waste is traced back to source. By offering a free and convenient alternative, we hope we can help Approved Installers and Members boost their green credentials, avoid any unnecessary risk to their reputation and of course, benefit the environment.

GLASS PILOT SCHEME

The GGF recently visited the Netherlands to look at a glass recycling scheme run by Vlakglas, which has now been going for over 20 years. Its brilliance and effectiveness are its simplicity. They have 350 sites across the country for trades to drop off any old glass they have used and know it will be recycled appropriately. It is a free service where no company would have to drive more than 10 miles to recycle.

There is no reason why a system such as this could not be replicated in the UK and it is our aim at the GGF and FENSA to do just that. We will be setting up a pilot scheme in the next 6 months in areas of the country we can service - and where there is a high concentration of Approved Installers and Members within a short distance of a drop-off site.

CONCLUSION

We have made headway in the last few years and the new pilot scheme is the next step in turning the glass & glazing sector into one that is at the forefront of sustainability in construction.