

CASE STUDY: Crown Paints

Turning the tide of plastic waste, one paint container at a time



Paint manufacturer Crown Paints is doing its bit to address the problem of plastic pollution, having recently become the first paint manufacturer in the UK to launch paint containers made from 100% recycled post-consumer waste (PCW) plastic, potentially saving many tonnes of PCW plastic from ending up in landfill unnecessarily.

Background: With more plastic being produced now than ever before and almost all plastic ever manufactured still in existence in some form or other, the strength of public feeling against plastic waste has intensified in recent years, and demand for more sustainable solutions for single-use plastic containers has grown rapidly.

As a business, Crown Paints is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its operations. Plastic is a major concern for Crown's customer base, whether they're decorating contractors working on huge refurbishments worth millions of pounds, sole tradesmen, or DIYers tackling one room in their home. Being able to offer a more sustainable product choice is increasingly important to today's environmentally conscious consumers, and packaging is a core part of that process.

The challenge: There are a number of reasons why plastic is ideal for the manufacture of paint containers; it's incredibly durable and stable, but is equally lightweight and cost effective to produce. While Crown was determined to break the 100% recycled plastic barrier for its new sustainable paint containers, it had to ensure there would be no compromise to the performance, especially in terms of the durability of the packaging.



How did Crown break the 100% recycled plastic barrier?

By working with some of the UK's leading packaging experts during a lengthy research and development process, Crown identified a new packaging solution which is manufactured entirely from recycled PCW plastic that would otherwise end up in landfill. The paint containers are an industry first, marking a huge improvement on the 25% recycled plastic paint cans previously available.

The innovative manufacturing process involves separating commonly found polypropylene plastics such as shampoo bottles, yoghurt pots and plastic water bottles, from unusable plastic waste collected. Once sorted, the PCW plastic is turned into individual pellets which are then dyed and moulded to create paint containers in various sizes for Crown, with the dark grey shade making them instantly recognisable on the shelf to consumers.

The materials used in the manufacture of the new plastic paint containers have been designed and rigorously tested in order to achieve optimum durability – to compete with its standard plastic counterpart. The technical requirements of these containers were very challenging but working in co-operation with packaging solutions expert Emballator and leading plastic recycler ImerPlast, using its innovative and unique compatibilisation of the post-consumer waste, ensured the success of this project.

As well as potentially re-using many thousands of tonnes of PCW plastic, the containers are also fully recyclable once empty and clean, further supporting the circular economy.

The introduction of 100% PCW packaging is a positive step for the industry in terms of reducing waste, and as manufacturers like Crown continue to invest in more sustainable solutions, these changes will add up to make a big difference.

What else is Crown doing to reduce plastic waste?

Crown's earthbalance scheme, which was launched in 2008, sets out the company's commitment to being more sustainable and less wasteful. The scheme touches on all aspects of Crown's business, from manufacturing to packaging, and applies to all staff and operations at Crown's two UK manufacturing plants in Darwen and Hull as well as its network of more than 150 Crown Decorating Centres in the UK.



Over 10 years through the earthbalance scheme, Crown has reduced its overall electricity consumption by 15%, reduced packaging waste by approximately 15% and has recycled more than 800 tonnes of paint cans.

Crown also works in partnership with social enterprise company, NIMTECH, which is based at Crown's two manufacturing plants in Darwen and Hull, and was set up a little over a decade ago. As well as offering local employment opportunities, it also provides a dedicated on-site waste recycling service for all of Crown's operations. Working closely with NIMTECH has enabled Crown to dramatically improve its waste reduction programme so much so that by 2017, 65% of all waste created at the company's two manufacturing plants, head office and network of decorating centres was either re-used or recycled.

For more information, please go to www.crowntrade.co.uk.