

MBO at Auspac and Elopak UK

Auspac and Elopak Plastic Systems (UK) have been bought by a management team, creating the UK's largest privately owned HDPE bottle manufacturer, with a 10% market share.

The three senior managers involved in the buyout, Kim Potter, Dave Dennie and Neil Powell, have set up a new company, FourFourTwo, to run operations.

Following the purchase from Norwegian parent company Elopak, Auspac will continue trading under its existing name, but Elopak Plastic Systems will become a separate brand under the name EPS (Foston).

The new company has a turnover of approximately £15m and 60 employees. Elopak produces HDPE bottles for the drinks and dairy industries.

Absolute takes on Wrapid arm

Absolute Packaging, the Sheffield-based flexible packaging supplier, has bought Wrapid Holdings' contract packing division for an undisclosed amount.

Absolute, which produces a range of bulk containers and paper sacks for the food, chemical and pharmaceutical industries, has used Wrapid Contract Services for several years, and the decision to bring the two businesses together was described as the "natural step".

Absolute director Nick Storton said combining the two operations would provide excellent opportunities for growth.

In particular, there are plans to further develop Wrapid's cleanroom facilities to improve the company's offering to the food and pharmaceutical industries.

Wrapid Contract Services, which will retain its base in Astley, near Manchester, provides collating, auto-feeding, checkweighing and labelling services to a range of industries.

Mixed fortunes for Searle with stores

by Gordon Carson

Packaging Federation chief Dick Searle has commended Asda for staging a packaging forum for the Women's Institute but blasted other retailers that have failed to respond to his call for the supply chain to unite to explain packaging's role.

Searle will field questions from 200 WI members at the meeting at Asda's Leeds headquarters on 12 June (see box), and said the event sounded "extremely constructive".

He has also secured meetings with Sainsbury's, Tesco and Marks & Spencer after he sent a letter in April to the heads of the major retailers, asking them to look at how to improve consumer understanding of packaging.

However, as *Packaging News* went to press, he had not heard from Morrisons or Waitrose. Searle labelled their attitude "discourteous", adding: "Whether supermarkets



like it or not, their existence depends on our products."

In his letter, sent on 17 April, Searle said packaging would remain an "easy and soft target" until there was a "much better understanding" of its benefits and the "huge difference" it had made to retailing, and society's shopping and eating patterns.

ASDA AND THE WI

- Each WI member has been asked to bring along two examples of packaging they consider to be 'excessive'
- Asda chief executive Andy Bond, and Packaging and Films Association chief executive David Tyson will make presentations
- Asda packaging buyer Shane Monkman said: "The WI has done some fantastic campaigning, but we need to do more to educate the WI."

Meanwhile, Marks & Spencer is to charge customers in Northern Ireland for carrier bags in the next phase of its £200m 'Plan A' to change its environmental impact.

The retailer is to give away free 'bags for life' during a trial in Northern Ireland in June, and will charge 5p for regular carrier bags.

Factory carries on Sunpaq style

The Packaging Factory says it will continue to produce its own version of the Sunpaq-format pack even though Mailway Packaging Solutions has gained the exclusive support in Europe of Sun Industries, which owns the process (*Packaging News*, May 2007).

Hampshire-based The Packaging Factory will carry on producing its version, which is called Stretchpaq, on its Sun Industries equipment. It has produced more than 20m units in the Stretchpaq format since 2001.

Sun Industries president Carl Potsch told *Packaging News* that The Packaging Factory could still produce the format under its own name.

Mailway's deal includes a partnership agreement with Field Packaging in Bradford for printing.

Box Design and Contract Packing Services has also produced Sunpaq. However, it was unavailable for comment as *Packaging News* went to press.

Brands and converters win at Starpack awards

Brand owners and converters shared the top honours at the Starpack Industry Awards 2007.

Novartis, Unilever, SCA Packaging and Nicholl Food Packaging were among the winners of the 14 gold stars, while judges also awarded 25 silver stars and 27 bronze in the 15 categories.

Nicholl Food Packaging's entry, Visiopac Alu – The Dome, which won a gold for best food and drink consumer pack, was described by head judge Sally Bowden as a potential 'Holy Grail' of packaging for the food retail sector.

In the business and people categories, Bradman Lake Group chairman Graham

GOLD STAR WINNERS INCLUDED...

- Unilever – best toiletries/cosmetics pack and best designer/design house
- Adnams and Owens-Illinois – best innovation to reduce waste, for 299g lightweight glass bottle
- Dairy Crest – best use of innovative materials for converting post-consumer HDPE waste into milk packaging
- SCA Packaging – best transit/bulk/logistics pack
- Novartis – best in creative cartonboard packaging and best pharmaceutical pack for its Nicotinell L pack

Hayes was named packaging personality of the year, while Clear Packaging was business of the year.

Meanwhile, a college from Finland won the most awards at the Student and Schools Starpack Awards.

The Lahti Institute of Design received the Eric

Dickens Memorial Award after winning 24 awards in the competition.

Attention now turns to the UK Packaging Awards, organised by *Packaging News*, which take place on 12 September.

For more information on the awards see page 2.

Blackstone buys £900m Klöckner

Klöckner Pentaplast (KP), the rigid plastic films manufacturer, has been sold to an affiliate of investment company Blackstone for almost £900m (€1.3bn) as part of the "next step of the company's evolution".

Cinven and JP Morgan bought the German company in 2001 and are now selling a much larger company – the expansion into new territories and widening of the product base has increased revenues by 44%.

Cinven partner Peter Gangstedt said KP had been a "successful investment", despite rising oil prices, and was now in a "much stronger competitive position, which is opening up further growth opportunities".

Klöckner Pentaplast has 21 plants in 11 countries worldwide, employing around 3,400 people.