



The Eggborough site of Saint-Gobain Glass UK produces float, coated and laminated materials and has won many accolades since its establishment in 2000.



On the Spot... Steve Severs

Having previously spoken to *Glass Worldwide* in 2010, Steve Severs, Managing Director of Saint-Gobain Glass Industry UK, discusses the progress made by the industry giant's UK operation that produces float, coated and laminated materials.

GW: The Eggborough site of Saint-Gobain Glass UK has won many accolades since its establishment in 2000. What makes the operation stand out?

We have a good strategy in place and a balanced portfolio of industrial and product capability but a major factor that differentiates us is clearly our people. We look after our employees, building engagement and interaction with strong reward and recognition programmes. Above all, there is a genuine desire to do well. The culture of the site has enabled many people to make promotional moves, with the opportunity to progress open at all levels. There are many positive examples of this, including me, having

started as Coating Manager, before progressing through operations to become Managing Director.

We operate high quality equipment and have been well invested in by Saint-Gobain to ensure we produce very good products. We've had to respond to major market changes and build a strategy for long-term business sustainability to make sure we will still be successful in a generation's time.

And although we still make glass in the same way, we've also been very strong at adapting. Not only have we often adopted productive techniques from the wider field for use at Eggborough, we've been very early adopters of such programmes.

So, there is a good blend of

attributes and not just one element that makes us stand out... but even with the best techniques, approaches and programmes, success still depends on the workforce and our people perform in a manner that's fitting for Eggborough.

GW: How is the float line performing?

Very well, producing well over 600 tonnes/day and with a consistently strong yield. But with the site now 17 years old, we are currently considering our future approach to a cold repair and restarting the line. We want to see the same success in the second lifetime of the furnace as we have enjoyed in the first.

GW: Having originally invested in technology at Eggborough from leading players including Bystronic, CNUD, Grenzebach, Lahti and Sefpro, what are the criteria for identifying suppliers for new investment such as a cold repair?

When the time is right, a project team will be drawn together, combining expertise from our site and from within ▶

Saint-Gobain. They will evaluate all capable partners based on the best technology and value available. There will be choice; some companies will be previous suppliers and others will be new but all the main players are well known to us. In terms of technology for our specific line, it's a fairly contained

GW: How closely does Eggborough fit the ideal Saint-Gobain model?

It sits extremely favourably and strongly within the European operations of Saint-Gobain. We are one of the leading players in the WCM (World Class Manufacturing) programme and were the first of a still limited number to reach formal

GW: How many people are employed at the site and how easy is it to maintain a skilled workforce?

We have in excess of 200 employees. To provide enhanced service, we have more people in technical development, process development and innovation than in previous times. There is a very low turnover of workers, especially at operator level. We employ a multi-skilled approach to training, providing guidance to employees in a number of different ways.



Dave Dalton, CEO of British Glass, presenting Steve Severs (right) with British Glass' Company of the Year accolade last year. The winner was chosen by British Glass members.



Samantha Coolledge (right) receiving the Apprentice of the Year award at the 2017 Glass Focus Awards.

list of capable suppliers, each with pros and cons to their value proposition.

GW: Having introduced the then first magnetron coater to the UK industry, how has this technology developed over the years?

The coater is making a completely different suite of products to when we last spoke in 2010 (in fact, in general Saint-Gobain prides itself on producing 60% of product that wasn't around five years ago) and there has been an upgrade in the formulation and technical capabilities of the coating products. In addition, we have significantly extended our range of products, both those we make and those we import and distribute on behalf of other Saint-Gobain operations in Europe.

GW: How is the plant's laminating facility meeting the needs of the safety glass sector?

It's a market in growth. We are seeing a large increase in demand for laminating products in the UK, mainly due to the Document Q legislation that requires new dwellings built in England to include a minimum level of security. This has added awareness for 'Secure by Design' capabilities of laminate products, leading to many more laminate glass installations compared to a few years ago.

accreditation at Bronze level. And now, we are already progressing to the next level, from Bronze to Silver.

We have extremely powerful production metrics when ranked alongside other SG glass plants and the best set of logistics and service metrics within Saint-Gobain Glass in Europe.

In this aspect, I consider there to be informally four stages to a glass plant evolution. Firstly, when the plant is commissioned, everything is new and substantial external assistance is required. The second stage sees the plant becoming self-sufficient, without the need for such assistance. At the third stage, the expertise at the plant is then borrowed in return by other factories in terms of project management, start-up and problem solving etc. To that effect, our staff have visited other plants in Colombia, Brazil, India and Korea in recent times, for example and increasingly, our expertise is requested elsewhere. And we are now witnessing a transition to the fourth stage in Eggborough becoming a nursery and developer of people to the highest of standards, so they can in return take that capability back to other plants.

GW: With Samantha Coolledge, an electrical maintenance apprentice at Eggborough, winning the Apprentice of the Year accolade at British Glass' Glass Focus Awards last year, what importance do you put on attracting young blood into the operation?

Sam is a real success story and a very worthy winner. The award being won by a female increased awareness that we are a highly inclusive recruiter, with a strong desire for a diverse spectrum within our workforce. We also want to show young people that if Saint-Gobain apprentices like Sam are winning awards, it emphasises the solid foundation and very good training on offer here. In turn, that should attract better apprentices into the organisation and we have indeed noticed the quality of applicants improving year on year. ▶



Saint-Gobain has witnessed an increase in demand for laminating products in the UK.

Traditionally, we have always taken on two or three apprentices per year in the electrical, control and instrumentation fields but this year, our programme has been extended to an additional two or three apprentices annually, ultimately to work in production. We recognise we would rather have home grown, tested and ready people to add to the workforce when needed. Our desire is to support young people in our local area by providing high quality vocational training programmes and ultimately, employment opportunities to prepare the next generation of glassmakers.

GW: Which markets are served from the site?

We sell to the UK and Ireland, only occasionally supporting sales into Europe within Saint-Gobain's operations.

GW: To date, how has Brexit impacted glass demand in the UK?

Even with a reduction in production from other UK manufacturers, there was still overcapacity in the market up to 2015 but Brexit stemmed the flow of imports into the country and created a better balance of supply and demand. As one of three float suppliers in the UK, each with one line these days, Saint-Gobain enjoys a proportionate market share.

GW: Have any recent product launches proven particularly successful?

We have witnessed good delivery into the market of a number of high selectivity coated grades made in Europe and distributed by us in the UK for the commercial glazing market. Saint-Gobain developed EASYPRO in 2017, a protective hydro-carbon coating, designed to aid processing and we have seen impressive growth in the commercial market (shops, offices, schools and hospitals etc), where it has been very well received.

We're also very pleased with a suite of coating grades in the SGG BIOCLEAN range that have been upgraded and developed for coloured glass in conservatory roof applications. With a lower g-value, we've seen good growth and capability within those product launches.

Other successful recent product launches include a whole range of contemporary patterned glasses. With the pattern market not necessarily being a growth sector, it was important for us to innovate and upgrade, in order to



The float line produces in excess of 600 tonnes/day, with a consistently strong yield.

introduce more modern and contemporary designs to increase interest.

GW: What is Saint-Gobain's approach to the principles of sustainability and the delivery of improved environmental performance for its products and production capabilities?

Overall, with Saint-Gobain having a stated purpose to produce great living places and improve daily life, our products are designed to have a powerful role in ensuring a built environment fit for the future. In support of this goal, we actively seek to reduce our environmental impact, CO2 emissions and use of resources, which is why we lead the way in the recovery of cullet for return to our melting furnace.

With the Saint-Gobain Building Glass cullet return scheme providing a mechanism to easily collect cullet from the customer in a receptacle that can also be transported back in the same vehicle that delivered the glass, we can maximise the volume of cullet used in our operation. We are now moving on to develop closed loop supply and recovery systems to augment our cullet levels and further preserve resources, minimise energy consumption and reduce our CO2 footprint.

But as a nation, we need to recycle more post-consumer glass. Although the industry is very good at recycling post-industrial glass and post-processing glass, too much ends up in landfill from domestic and commercial installations. The industry has a duty to recycle more than is consumed and there has to be better collecting facilities, more in line with container glass. Government legislation could assist with the demolition process and better relationships need to be formed with de-installers of glass.

The industry as a whole recognises

these challenges and opportunities. Saint-Gobain and other organisations such as British Glass are supporting activities to try and unlock these future requirements.

GW: What is Saint-Gobain's approach to responsible sourcing?

Everybody has a duty to responsibly source and we have been awarded 'very good' in the BES6001 accreditation scheme specifically referencing responsible sourcing, where an external verifier is used to review all our practices, procedures and approaches to sourcing channels.

To further underline this, each supplier is required to sign up to our charter of performance. We actively audit supply chains for their standard of EHS and CSR-related issues, including checking the local risks in areas of third party service provision such as cleaning, catering and waste services for modern slavery issues.

GW: Is Saint-Gobain UK adopting new practices in the wake of Industry 4.0?

In terms of the change in existing technology, we are talking more about evolution than revolution. For us, it means more awareness and control and display information; we are seeing a higher level of digital capabilities in terms of equipment, control, monitoring etc. We continually keep up-to-date and adapt where required.

Saint-Gobain Glass overall has a dedicated team to assess the increasing capability to augment production and control that can be delivered from an Industry 4.0 platform and thus steer investment and upgrade to take advantage of this.

GW: How will Saint-Gobain UK support Glass Futures, the UK's planned global centre of excellence for glass in R&D, innovation and training?

Although we will continue to use our own pilot-scale equipment within Saint-Gobain, anything designed to strengthen the understanding, comprehension and capabilities of glass and its contribution to the industrial base is very much appreciated. So we will support Glass Futures and get involved as and when appropriate. ●



The future approach to a cold repair and restarting the line is currently under consideration.

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