

RELEASE



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OWEN MACE BECOMES DIRECTOR OF THE BPF PIPES GROUP

Owen Mace has taken over as Director of the British Plastics Federation (BPF) Plastic Pipes Group on the retirement of Caroline Ayres. He was previously Standards and Technical Manager for the group.

Owen's background is in engineering, with a BSc in Sustainable Energy and Innovation and a BTEC HND in Manufacturing Engineering and Management. He is chairing the UK National Standard Body (BSI) committee on Plastic Pipes Systems.

He brings a fresh perspective to the BPF Pipes Group, with both supplier-side and certification-body experience. He has been visiting manufacturing sites across the UK to see first-hand how member companies are developing and how they view the future. Here, Owen shares some insight into the workings of the UK plastic pipe systems industry, its status, and what lies ahead.

The UK plastic pipe systems industry has strong heritage, expanding rapidly after the Second World War, widely displacing iron pipe and more recently copper pipe in the UK, and is now the material of choice for many construction applications. The UK trade association of plastic pipe and fittings manufacturers was established in 1962. Members have a long history of working together to find common ground and achieve goals that are only possible through collaboration.

BPF Pipes Group members operate mainly in the construction market, a flagship sector that has been earmarked to provide UK economic growth and skilled jobs.

The UK plastic pipes systems industry is investing in advanced technology such as AI supported mechanical recycling systems, and developing innovative products such as pre-insulated pipe systems for low carbon heating, solutions demanded by a changing UK construction market. This is attractive to those considering employment options, with wide ranging opportunities in disciplines from engineering to sustainability, design to distribution.

Members are making big investments in UK manufacturing. At the same time, the construction sector is expected to make a significant contribution to UK carbon reduction targets and demonstrate a high level of compliance demanded by the government backed reform of the UK construction products regulatory system that is underway.

BPF Pipes Group member operations and products are well placed to deliver this. They make plastic pipe systems that are recyclable after a long life, as they are engineered to last for a long time. In the meantime, they can be manufactured from other sources of recycled material and members are working together to update UK product standards to enable more use of recycled material.

Construction in the UK is taking on a wider definition. Infrastructure has recently been added to the scope of the RICS Whole Life Carbon Assessment standard for construction, and the government proposes that infrastructure products are brought under the UK construction products regulatory regime. Product related requirements over the entire life of a product are being strengthened. Addressing this, BPF Pipes Group members develop and publish common guidance on the specification and technical application of products, covering both buildings and infrastructure. Members are working together to support their products beyond the factory gates.

This information is agreed and made publicly available through the trade association website www.bpfpipesgroup.com. It is frequently reviewed for relevance, accuracy and clarity, and aligned with the Code for Construction Product Information (CCPI) that is important for the construction supply chain.

An interesting challenge of the BPF Pipes Group is to ensure that the numerous application areas - utilities, drainage, sewerage, plumbing, heating, rainwater, surface water, etc – keep pace with each other because there is a tendency for areas to develop at different paces, for example sustainability. A new wider definition of construction in the UK and the ongoing work of the BPF Pipes Group will help. Owen concludes: “As a trade association, it’s our job to help our industry navigate these challenges and to be responsive to future change.”