

Supagard turns to silver in bid to become even greener

Sustainability starts with a twelve stage process.



Paint protection business Supagard and its retailer partners have good reasons to celebrate in 2023.

The Glasgow-based company marks its 35th birthday this year and, in a display of its commitment to continuous improvement, it is claiming another segment first – new, sustainable packaging that will help customers to reduce their environmental footprints.

“It was an important, although not easy, thing to do,” said James Smyth, technical director at the company which was the motor industry’s first paint and fabric protection

provider when it launched in 1988.

Because of the difficulties involved in recycling black plastics effectively, many end up in landfill and that meant that Supagard’s directors had to agree on a major step: the decision to change its historic black-coloured bottles to new silver ones which can be easily recycled.

The new bottles, which will be rolled out to clients through this year, enhance Supagard’s sustainable credentials further by themselves being manufactured from 40% recycled plastics.

In addition, its handover aftercare bags – which dealers present to

customers after their protection products have been applied – now use thread made from recycled plastic bottles.

Smyth said another indication of how serious the company is about this is that it has set a target to recycle 10 million bottles a year.

Managing director David Paterson said he is proud that Supagard is making leaps forward in terms of sustainability.

When Glasgow hosted the COP 26 United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2021 that event helped Supagard’s leadership team take stock and consider what it, as a

chemical company, could do further to support the environment.

“We were already on the journey, recycling things within the company etc., but we thought what could we possibly do,” Paterson added.

Smyth said Supagard’s OEM and dealer group partners have been amazed that it could still provide such a high quality handover bag made from recycled bottles. Supagard has had the bag analysed independently to identify the number of bottles recycled into it – 33 in the case of its most popular bag – and this gives even more confidence to its partners that they are working with a responsible company that is doing the right thing, just as they themselves are increasingly aiming to do the right thing by reducing their own impact on the environment.

He added that because Supagard has “the correct chemistry to do the correct job at the right time” it is not over-used or wasted, and 95% of Supagard’s products are made in the UK, meaning products are not being shipped thousands of miles unnecessarily.

With the new packaging Supagard is pushing the boundaries, because, ultimately, the bottles still need to hold chemicals safely and not react or become permeable.

In the next five years Smyth and his team will re-examine its products’ chemistry, to make use of any better raw materials that emerge, so in the long term it will become even greener.

Supagard’s car shampoo is already pH-neutral, so it can be washed off down the drain with no impact on the environment.

Paterson said: ““We can help the OEMs and dealer groups meet those sustainability targets. If it helps them get there quicker, then it is better for everyone.”

Smyth added that Supagard’s greener credentials might attract back former customers who had been tempted away to rivals with cheaper products.

“I know price plays a part, but for many consumers now there’s more than price to consider when shopping, there’s also ethics,” he said, although he added that he hopes Supagard sets a new trend in the long term.

“If we lead in this market, then it would be great if everybody followed in our footsteps. If we, alone, can turn around 10 million recycled bottles and out in the market there’s tens of millions more to be recycled by our

competitors, why not share that message? A plastic bottle takes 450 years, roughly 16 generations, to decompose. So let’s not put it in the ground; let’s recycle it and start doing something great.”

A business that has been serving the motor industry for 35 years has to regard customer service as highly as product innovation, and much of Supagard’s business is repeat business.

“We’re a family-owned business and we’re very proud of what we stand for. It’s more than just selling a product; it’s about providing treatments for our customers’ vehicles which enhance their lifestyle by making them easier to clean and visually maintaining or improving their appearance,” said Paterson.

It was his father-in-law Brian Quinn who co-founded Supagard with business partner John Orrick based in Gavinton Street, Glasgow. Today, the business is still in the same street, but has steadily expanded to occupy most of it.

Paterson added that any customers who call the head office about an issue could easily end up talking to a director. Supagard has an excellent 4.3 out of 5 Trustpilot



WE’RE A FAMILY-OWNED BUSINESS AND WE’RE VERY PROUD OF WHAT WE STAND FOR

DAVID PATERSON



public rating and Smyth responds personally to thank customers for their positive comments and to offer direct contact to customers with issues.

Smyth added: “We still take our customers very seriously, in fact from an email I’ll telephone the customer, even if it’s seven- or eight o’clock at night, because it’s important to us to get a solution. That’s what we’ve built our reputation on.”

“We aren’t scared of admitting we’re not the cheapest in the market, but we spend a lot of money making sure that what we do bring to fruition is of the highest quality. That’s backed up by the Paint Research Association (PRA), which means if I come up with a new product we send it to the PRA for a third party to verify it. We have to go through lots of different gates to ensure the product is correct and ready for sale to the public.”

When Quinn opened the doors of the business in 1988 his ethos was to make friends in the motor industry, build trust and be transparent.

Now, 35 years on, it is evident that approach rings true. With a reputation that has been built on high quality products and reliable service, Supagard is looking to the future with confidence.



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JAMES SMYTH



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