



Eco mission at 100%

Arriving at 100% Optical 2020, with my equally eco-conscious 11-year-old in tow, our mission was to visit as many stands as possible to hear what manufacturers and suppliers were doing to be greener.

Without doubt, there has been a sea-change in attitudes and habits over recent years, as people seek different ways to be more eco-conscious. Even as we walked into the ExCeL we were greeted by a digital billboard telling us about its aim to send zero waste to landfill – with more than 50 per cent of its waste already being recycled and the rest being turned into fuel. This is all impressive stuff, but is something that a small business might find harder to achieve.

On our arrival at the show just outside hall 10, we noted that our badges were printed onto card and put into a plastic wallet attached to a neck cord. However, we were specifically asked to bring these wallets back at the end of the show so they could be reused.

The familiar sight of delegates walking around loaded up with plastic laminated goodie bags has long since fallen by the wayside – with eco-friendly canvas bags much more the trend today. We also noticed that reusable coffee cups and refillable water bottles were in abundance, with visitors happy to queue for ExCeL's water fountains rather than buy a single-use plastic bottle from one of the many cafes.

Turning our attention to the exhibitors, we were already aware that several suppliers have eco eyewear collections within their portfolios, while others pitch themselves as offering a complete ethical and sustainable solution. Those that didn't expressed a desire to look into it – with several sales managers we spoke to saying they had been asked about it over the weekend. While I'm unsure that bringing out an 'eco' range of frames is the answer to the much wider problems we face, it's a great start.

GOING THE EXTRA GREEN MILE

So who impressed us with their green credentials? Newcomer Coral Eyewear is



LANYARDS AND BAGS ARE NOW ECO-FRIENDLIER

the creation of father and son team, Calvin and George Bailey. With backing from the University of East Anglia, where George studied, their story has already caught the attention of the BBC and various business journals.

The classic frame styles and cases are made from recycled fishing nets and waste plastics. I was particularly impressed that they have considered the full 360°. Frames can be returned to them at the end of their life where they can be recycled into new styles as fashion trends change.

Italian company Feb31st offers another solely sustainable concept. Made from wood from either controlled

plantations or sometimes wood recovered from storms or fires, the frames are customisable and made to order so there is no waste and no unnecessary use of material or energy.

Barcelona-based Sea2See, now distributed in the UK by Henry Beaumont, offers a range of sustainable eyewear crafted from recycled ocean plastic, fishing nets, ropes and bottles – all collected in collaboration with fishermen in Spanish ports and coastal areas of Ghana.

Charmant's Esprit ECollection claims to be 100 per cent recyclable and biodegradable since they are made from cotton-seed, wood fibres and bio-



SUSTAINABLE EYEWEAR AT SEA2SEE

plasticisers. And for every frame sold by 31 July 2020, the company will plant a tree in collaboration with NGO, WeForest. Frames also come with a pencil, which can be planted when it comes to the end of its life to then re-bloom as a basil plant.

We also discovered that Centrostyle has released a new bio-based collection, called Neyeture. The five models come in a range of sizes and colours, all with a magnetic clip. The cases and cloth packaging are all made from recycled materials.

Continental Eyewear told us about their efforts to become carbon neutral at their head office. They made a point of saying that their new policy influenced all future decisions but at the same time, they would use first what they already had. New business cards would be made of bamboo, cars in the fleet were now hybrid, and plans were afoot to make future packaging from plant-based materials.

Eyespace launched its new Eco Conscious frames at the show, made from bio-based acetate. The material is cotton-based with the addition of a natural, non-toxic plasticiser. I was told that this type of acetate is a completely



Eyespace's new Eco Conscious collection

renewable and sustainable alternative to regular acetate.

Demo lenses are made from a new optical grade material, said to be completely biodegradable within five years, while packaging and cases are fully recyclable. Eyespace has also partnered with the One Tree Planted programme and a tree will be planted for every Eco Conscious frame sold – with an initial target of 1,000.

SEEDS OF CHANGE

ABDO and ABDO College are also making changes: the College has dispensed with disposable plastic cups and now gives students a refillable sustainable plastic cup and water bottle. ABDO Membership

renewals have gone paperless and the wrap for *Dispensing Optics* is now compostable to be disposed of with food waste.

We didn't manage to speak to everyone, but I'm sure others are making changes to be greener too. With all these positive innovations with packaging, dummy lens manufacture, and cases made from recycled materials, it would be good to see these changes rolled out more widely.

I asked several case manufacturers if there was a case I could stock made from recycled materials to sell or give away separately, but it seems this doesn't exist yet (if you know otherwise, please do let us know). As a whole though, it looks like our suppliers are listening – and that changes are happening.

Next month's article will focus on how to reduce waste in practice. Any members or suppliers who would like to share their eco practices, activities and processes are invited to get in touch by emailing apage@abdolondon.org.uk

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