

# The permanent loop

**CEO Justin Ratcliffe looks at why the Council for Aluminium in Building, in its 25th anniversary year, will be highlighting aluminium's recycling qualities with the development of a closed loop recycling scheme that kicks off as a pilot**



At the start of the year, many of us are still trying to predict the future for everything from stocks and shares to interior design – as if it is a natural tendency to try to fathom out the ‘bulls’ from the ‘bears’ or the next fashionable colour. I’ll pass on the former but can confirm that Pantone announced its ‘colour of the year’ for 2019 late last year, and its prediction is living coral, a bright cheerful peach – something of interest to a number of companies in CAB’s supply chain membership. Another trend that members might take an interest in is the switch to blinds and shutters in the window coverings market which, according to AMA Research, is expected to rise 15% to £1.6bn by 2022.

Unsurprisingly, further trends in the home are for the increase use of recycled materials in everything from homewares to towels to mattresses and one should applaud many leading manufacturers for highlighting and bringing focus to the recycling cause.

However, it sometimes comes across that recycling is some sort of early 21st century phenomenon and we forget that aluminium, for instance, has been recycled for so long that 75% of the total production since the 1880’s is still in use. What’s more, recycling aluminium brings no loss in quality and crucially creates an ‘aluminium bank’ for re-use in the future as only 5% of the original energy required for primary extraction is required for re-smelting.

In 2019, CAB’s 25th anniversary year, it is totally appropriate that we will focus on the metal’s recyclability, one of its outstanding and best known characteristics. In many ways, we take this for granted and forget not only about the recycling journey for pre and post

consumer aluminium scrap, but also how valuable and important that scrap is in ultimately helping to meet peaks in demand from a variety of sectors, especially construction.

CAB’s pilot scheme is open to members as part of their membership package.

Aluminium is a ‘permanent’ material, which means, as noted above, that its inherent properties do not change after repeated recycling. In order to keep aluminium in the loop, it must be collected and sorted properly. While there is always an economic incentive to recycle aluminium, one of the aims of this scheme is to increase closed loop recycling by encouraging the collecting and sorting of scrap into specific wrought alloy groups.

While such closed loop recycling of construction materials is currently voluntary, requirements could be placed on ‘embedded carbon’ content in the future and main contractors are increasingly seeking evidence to demonstrate the sustainability credentials of their supply chain. Scrap is an important resource and we should maximise the quantity and quality of recovered aluminium scrap in the UK to build the circular economy of the future.

The benefits of joining the scheme are:

- Generate higher quality aluminium scrap with increased value compared to mixed scrap
- Promotion of members’ sustainability credentials to customers and (for the full scheme) use of the scheme logo
- Development of the aluminium closed loop recycling value chain

Why we are starting with a pilot project:

The focus of this pilot project is to test the scheme at the ‘start’ of the closed loop with systems companies, hardware manufacturers, fabricators, installers and scrap processors.

Once we have demonstrated the concept, it is our intention to roll out the full scheme and bring together the complete value chain.

An important element of the scheme is the collection of monthly data returns from members. All data will be collected in strict confidence by CAB and should allow us to compile aggregated data that demonstrate the quantity of aluminium recycling in the UK market. □

**Justin Ratcliffe**

Full details regarding membership criteria and how to join can be found at: [www.c-a-b.org.uk/pilot-scheme/](http://www.c-a-b.org.uk/pilot-scheme/)

If you are interested in joining the scheme or finding out more information, then contact Jessica Dean at the CAB office on 01453 828851 or email [jessica.dean@c-a-b.org.uk](mailto:jessica.dean@c-a-b.org.uk)