

Eye-to-Eye Report: Charities in Focus: Tuesday 14th June 2022

This month's Eye-to-Eye saw us focus on *#Thinking Green* – how the Optical Sector & all of us can do everything we can to be more sustainable & strive to achieve more eco-friendly working practices to care for the planet we live in.

We were joined by many people, for whom this Eye-to-Eye was their first time & we are very grateful to them for joining & we hope they found the session enjoyable & informative. At these sessions we aim to mix-up subject matter to be as all encompassing as we can – general interest, optics/medicine specific, charitable interests & more.

First to speak was Jayne Abel, an optometrist by profession and co-founder & co-managing director of the frame company Eyespace working closely with her sister Julie who is an accountant by profession. It was predestined that sisters Jayne & Julie would enter the optical sector as their parents – Phillip & Barbara – are known to many within the sector as the founders of International Eyewear. Jayne is also a Board member of the Optical Suppliers Association (OSA) & chairs its Sustainability Committee.

Jayne kicked off our session by introducing us to the concept of waste & the damage it can do to our planet. Today's fast-paced lifestyles many people lead have driven the demand for convenience & this in turn has generated an excess of waste from products that are difficult to dispose of. Jayne highlighted startling statistics such as 5 million tonnes of plastics waste are generated every year in the UK, and almost 32% of this end up in our oceans! Another statistic: 40% of all plastics produced is 'single use' plastics and once discarded can take up to 500 years to decompose! Jayne highlighted that of all the plastics produced in the last 100 years is only 20% of the way through its journey to decomposing – a stark fact indeed!

Jayne shared a model which we might all utilise in our 'day jobs' & looks at 5 key areas:

- Facilities: use of LED bulbs, 'green' energy, 'green' travel – cycling to work etc
- Operations: sea freight, consolidating orders/deliveries etc
- Marketing: digital marketing channels, reduced Point of Sale or 'green' alternatives
- Supply Chain: use of bio-acetates/sustainable materials such as wood/leather etc
- Benchmarking: International standards, accountability & transparency

Our next speaker was Liveryman James Conway, CEO of the Millmead Group, and like Jayne his involvement in optics was somewhat inevitable as the grandson of Walter Conway, the founder of the Optoplast Group. James heads up a group of companies with interests in frames, lenses & optical accessories such as cases, and consumables. James is also a Board member of the OSA & he chairs its Frames Focus Group.

James also shared startling statistics with the attendees – he highlighted that 3000 tonnes of lens waste is sent to landfill in the UK every year. Making spectacle lenses produces a thick slurry like paste which is usually collected, bagged & sent to landfill. Several attempts have been made in the past to change this process with little success – real efforts are now being sought such as drying out & incinerating for power & James was excited to share, he 'thinks' they have a solution but is some 6 months off – so watch this space!

Manufacturing processes in the production of spectacle cases has changed to involve 'flat pack' cases with bio-adhesives which are kinder to the planet & easier to ship and bio-frame bags which are used abundantly in the sector are now very much in evidence. James was also able to tell us that much of their manufacture of spectacle cases was here in the UK which is a huge bonus to those practicing here in the UK and reduces delivery times & costs.

As has become our custom a lively Q & A session rounded the evening off & a vote of thanks was given by our Master, Ian Davies.

A resource both Jayne & James were keen to share was a project they had both been involved in through their work with the OSA which is a Sustainability Glossary hosted on the OSA website & also the SEE Hub hosted by ABDO. Links to both are here:

<https://www.osa-uk.co.uk/sustainable-choices/>

<https://www.abdo.org.uk/dashboard/see-hub/>