



BIR meets in Rome

Enduring challenges faced in Eternal City

The Trevi fountain is one of Rome's most famous landmarks.

Given all the pressures bearing down on the recycling industry, it was certainly no Roman holiday for delegates at the latest Spring Convention of the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR) where even some of the sector's most committed bulls were succumbing to bearish sentiment. But the well-attended event in the so-called 'Eternal City' also highlighted the resilience of the industry in the face of major economic turbulence in Europe and slowing momentum in the key Chinese market. At the same time, it was reported that BIR itself goes from strength to strength.

More than 1300 delegates and a further 300 accompanying persons from more than 60 countries attended BIR's latest Spring Convention. Of this total, more than 200 were under the age of 35 - a sure sign of the continuing vitality of the world recycling organisation, it was suggested in Rome.

'The industry is growing worldwide and we will grow with it,' stated BIR World President Björn Grufman of Sweden-based Metallvärden AB to a gathering of the international recycling press. He added that this growth would be reflected by changes within BIR; to this end, the world body recently created a Latin America committee to help develop links and membership in Central and South America. BIR is also working with contacts in the region in a bid to boost Latin American participation in the world organisation's Convention to be held in Miami, USA, in June 2014.

A busy recent few months for the BIR has also seen the finalisation of the body's revamped arbitration rules as well as a survey of members to gain a better understanding of the depth and nature of fraud and theft issues currently afflicting metals recyclers. These same issues were discussed in greater detail at an eye-opening BIR International Trade Council meeting in Rome (see box).

Mr Grufman also told the media that defence of free and fair trade remains 'at the top of the list' of BIR priorities. The trade restrictions favoured by some of the recycling industry's customers are 'very negative,' he stated. 'Nobody in the world will gain from trade barriers - even if they think they will in the short term.'

'Great success'

Speaking subsequently at the BIR General Assembly in Rome, Mr Grufman highlighted

'a great success' for the recycling industry in his review of the events of 2011. 'After decades of lobbying by the European BIR daughter associations EFR and Eurometrec, we were finally given the possibility within Europe of extracting our end products from the waste regime,' he said. 'End-of-waste criteria have already been introduced for iron, steel and aluminium scrap, and the industry's efforts to secure a similar result for copper and recovered paper are well under way.' In the future, 'we might see similar



The 'Adams family' enjoys BIR's welcome reception. From left to right: Dolores and George Adams Sr, Kalvin Adams and his father George.



Ahmad Sharif (left) and Salam Sharif of Sharif Metals in the United Arab Emirates.



Bob Emery of SCRAP magazine and his wife Chris.

legislative developments in other BIR member countries and regions of the world,' he added. A video shown during the General Assembly highlighted some of the other BIR milestones in 2011. These included the launch of 'Tools for Quality Management' and the second edition of 'World Markets for Recovered and Recycled Commodities', as well as the first-ever 'Young Traders Gazette' which has been introduced by the BIR Young Traders Committee in a bid to convince recycling companies' decision-makers to increasingly involve younger employees in their activities within BIR and to send them along to the world body's Conventions.

Membership boost

Mr Grufman also drew attention in his address to the on-going success of BIR in attracting new members. A further 93 companies had joined the organisation in the 12 months since its 2011 Spring Convention held in Singapore, as well as two national associations: the China National Resources Recycling Association (CRRA) and the Japan Recovered Paper Association (JRPA). 'BIR has many important member organisations in many countries throughout the world that are actively contributing to making BIR the voice of the global recycling industry,' said Mr Grufman. 'We need to increase our membership; we need to expand that membership to other parts of the world; and we need to ensure BIR's leadership ranks contain representatives from as many different regions of the world as possible.'

He added: 'The global recycling industry must be allowed the scope to develop - and with a healthy measure of profitability - in order to continue to make its important contribution to the sustainable society of the future.'

Spain 'pivotal'

An innovation in Rome was a Keynote Session addressed on this occasion by John Authers, Senior Investment Analyst at the 'Financial Times' and the newspaper's main commentator on international markets.

Inevitably, his focus was the Euro-zone crisis which, he said, would put 'a definitive lid on growth for a number of years to come'. China had taken the global lead following the 2008 crisis and now the US economy was leading the world; both of these countries were continuing to experience growth whereas 'Europe is not', the guest speaker said. The Euro-zone could be 'extremely boring' in growth terms 'for some considerable time'.



Robin Wiener, President of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI).



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Former BIR President Heinz de Fries is in his eighties but still visits the BIR conventions.



BIR World President Björn Grufman of Sweden-based Metallvärden.

Mr Authers identified Spain as a 'pivotal country' in the Euro-zone crisis. 'It is too big to be allowed to leave the Euro and too big for current rescue funds,' he said. 'It cannot be allowed to crash. It is the single most important risk.' He also suggested that the odds favour a Greek exit from the Euro-zone at some point, although he did not expect this to happen in the current year.

'Contagion' risk

Mr Authers underlined the importance of ensuring that Greece's likely departure from the Euro-zone is effectively managed; failure so to do would increase the risk of a 'contagion' effect and of a more general Euro-zone collapse which would potentially lead, he believed, to double-digit percentage declines in annual GDP across the region. 'This is not alarmist,' he insisted to delegates. Having noted that a 'drastic imbalance' has developed between the US dollar and the Euro, Mr Authers argued that a necessary correction would adversely affect the USA and emerging markets but that the alternative - a disorderly collapse of the Euro - would hit them even harder. He remained 'tentatively optimistic' about prospects for the USA so long as the

Euro-zone works through its problems and China achieves a 'soft landing' for its own economy, going on to describe China's more balanced approach to growth as 'significant news' for the rest of the world.

IEC looks at EPR

Extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes must not be allowed to exceed their use-by date, it was suggested at the International Environment Council meeting in Rome. Robin Wiener, President of the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries (ISRI) argued that EPR programmes have a 'limited' role to play where markets are not yet established; however, 'sunset' provisions should be agreed to ensure these initiatives are ended as markets approach maturity. Adopted in July last year, an ISRI policy on producer responsibility states that the existing recycling infrastructure must be given an equal opportunity to participate in any producer responsibility programme and that these 'should not include recyclables that are currently manufactured into commodity-grade products and sold into viable markets'.

Future BIR Conventions

2012

October 29-30
Barcelona (Spain)
Princesa Sofia Hotel

2013

May 27-29
Shanghai (China)
Shangri-La Hotel

October 28-29
Warsaw (Poland)
Marriott Hotel

2014

June 2-4
Miami (USA)
Fontainebleau Hotel

October 27-28
Paris (France)
Hotel Pullman
Paris Montparnasse

Changes at BIR

At the Rome Convention, Ranjit Baxi of UK-based J&H Sales International was formally approved as Treasurer of the BIR; he had been appointed to the role on an interim basis in 2011 following the elevation of his predecessor, Björn Grufman, to the position of World President. Mr Baxi went on to confirm at the General Assembly in Rome that a financial surplus had been achieved by the world organisation last year and that sums were being set aside in the 2011 and 2012 budgets to cover the search for the individual who will ultimately succeed Francis Veys as BIR's Director General. Mr Baxi subsequently announced that, in order to devote the necessary time to his role as Treasurer, he would be stepping down as President of the BIR Paper Division. The divisional meeting in Barcelona later this year is likely to be his last at the helm, he confirmed.



In Rome, Ranjit Baxi of UK-based J&H Sales International was formally approved as Treasurer of the BIR.

'Frightening' revelations at ITC meeting



Pottengal Mukundan, Senior Director of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB).

The eagerly-awaited meeting of the BIR's International Trade Council (ITC) did not disappoint as a succession of guest speakers in Rome illustrated the recycling industry's vulnerability to theft and fraud. Indeed, the presentations were described as both 'frightening' and 'eye-opening' by ITC Chairman Robert Voss of UK-based Voss International. There has been plenty of anecdotal evidence of thieves breaking into containers and stealing all or part of the contents without disturbing the seal. At the ITC meeting, a video showing exactly how this can be done was shown by Bashar Ehsan, Director (Operations) for the Ala Metals LLC international scrap trading company based in the

United Arab Emirates. His advice was to 'fix the seal on the bottom of the container called the Cam keeper whenever possible' and to avoid fixing it on the hub bolts. According to fellow guest speaker Pottengal Mukundan, there are at least five techniques to opening a container without breaking the seal. The Senior Director of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a department of the International Chamber of Commerce which specialises in fighting crime relating to maritime trade and transportation, also alleged that every document used in the shipping process can be forged 'with ease', adding that 'there is no exception to this'. It was confirmed by Mr Voss in Rome that BIR has become 'an active member' of the IMB. A more detailed review of the ITC meeting - which also featured presentations from Marc Beerlandt, CEO of privately-owned container shipping line MSC Belgium, and former Deputy Editor of Recycling International Gert-Jan van der Have - will be carried in the August issue of the magazine.



Kamiel van Wijk of Dutch lead smelter Uzimet and Chairman of BIR's Communication Committee.



Harmeet S. Baxi is running J & H International's metals and plastics operations.



BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley.



BIR's General Director Francis Veys.

'Balanced' code

The draft 'Code of Conduct on the Transboundary Movement of Scrap Metal and Semi-finished Products of the Metal Recycling and Production Industries that may inadvertently contain radioactive material', developed under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is a 'well-considered' document that takes into account many of the concerns and arguments put forward by the recycling industry over many years, BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley told the IEC gathering.

For example, the draft code recognises that, in most cases, radioactive material found at a metals recycling facility has been delivered by a third party 'without the consent or approval' of the affected facility. It also notes that 'the absence or loss of proper control has led to the inadvertent incorporation of radioactive material into scrap metal'.

Mr Bartley went on to describe as 'balanced' the acknowledgement that it is technically impossible to guarantee no radiation is present in a

consignment of scrap given shielding and types of radiation being detected.

The Code of Conduct encourages the development of radiation safety awareness and appropriate training programmes for operators of metal recycling facilities among others; in this context, noted Mr Bartley, the BIR has produced posters in a number of languages to help with the identification of possible radiation sources. The code is voluntary for IAEA member countries although elements could be adopted into national law, he added. □

Flag waving during BIR's welcome reception in the gardens of the Villa Miani.



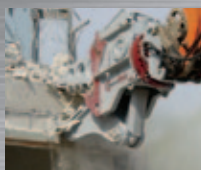
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