

BIR meets in Singapore

'This industry is ripe for expansion'

There is life after 'China', scrap market experts agreed at the latest convention of the Bureau of International Recycling (BIR). But that assurance does not come easily because quality is the key for future success. Crucially, recyclers have to build new partnerships, and strengthen existing relationships, with product manufacturers to survive.

'We used to believe that capitalism is costing the earth but that story has changed. In fact, a large part of the solution for the global environmental challenges we are facing has to come from businesses.'

So says Dr Gabrielle Walker, an expert strategist who helps companies in their response to global challenges such as sustainability and the Circular Economy.

Speaking at the BIR convention in Singapore, Walker insisted that climate change was no longer the preserve of 'tree-hugging' environmentalists but instead has become 'something which hard-headed businessmen need to be thinking about, and are thinking about' - not least because of the associated 'risks to global financial stability'.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

According to Walker, who has been described as 'a beacon of clarity' by former US vice president Al Gore, the last two years have brought 'a seismic shift' in the attention paid by the business community to the many risks associated with climate change. With

experts increasingly agreeing that more recycling can deliver major cuts in carbon emissions, she declared:

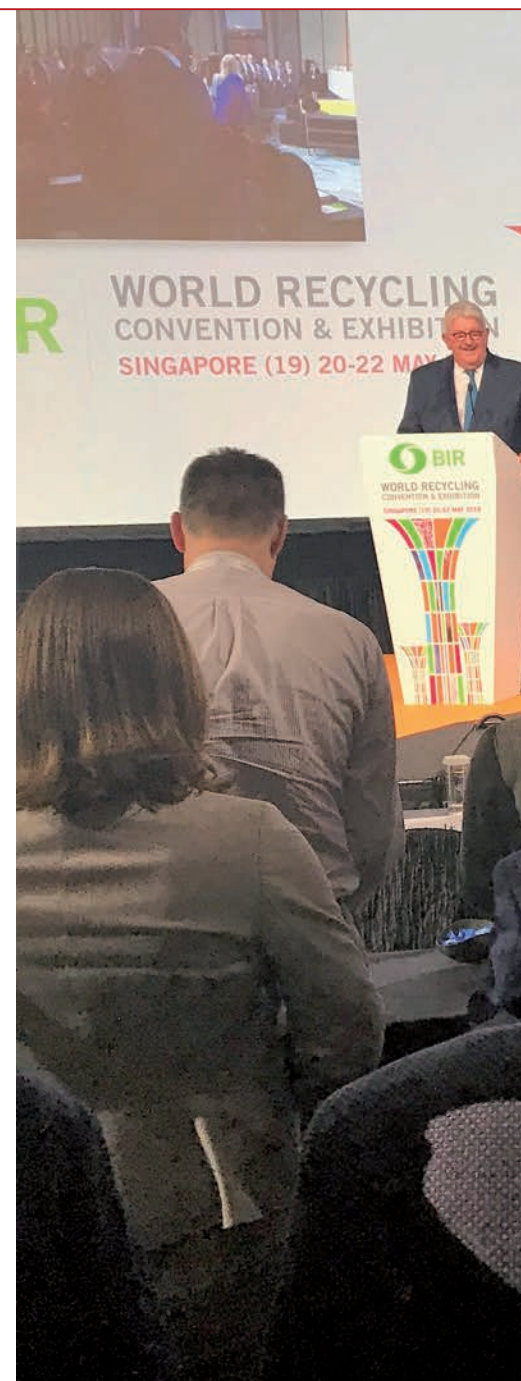
'This is going to put the recycling industry right in the spotlight'.

'I couldn't wish you more well,' she added, 'not only in continuing what you do but also in exploding it. This industry is ripe for expansion.'

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Is the best yet to come for the global recycling sector? Big brands and industries, be they automotive, electronics or food producers, are part of a fast-growing trend to use more recycled materials in their products. Multinationals like Procter & Gamble and Coca-Cola have set the target of using 100% recyclable and reusable packaging materials by 2030. McDonald's wants that achieved by 2025.

Consumer goods producer Unilever plans to use 25% recycled content in its plastic packaging by 2025, according to the company's procurement manager Aurore Belhoste. Some of Unilever's products are already delivered in packaging with a 100% recy-



clad content, she told the Singapore audience, 'and the aim is to extend this to more brands'.

HIGH HOPES, BIG BARRIERS

Major brands are indeed introducing more recycled materials in their packaging, noted the new BIR plastics committee chairman Henk Alssema, of Vita Plastics in the Netherlands. He acknowledged the plastics recycling industry was experiencing 'a lot of growing pains' amid the transition from a linear to a circular economy. 'This must not paralyse us as an industry,' he said,