

AT ISSUE

 Martin Coles, Matrix Polymers



Making Rotomoulded Products Using Ocean Waste

We can all agree that plastic waste in the ocean and on our beaches is terrible. It blights our environment, needlessly injures and kills marine life, and seriously damages the reputation of the whole plastics industry.

What if we could collect plastic waste from our coastlines and reuse it? What if this material were used to make rotomoulded products? Is this at all feasible or realistic?

Rob Thompson had the vision to collect plastic from beaches and coves around the coast of Cornwall in South-West England, and turn the waste into rotomoulded kayaks, which he could then use to paddle to inaccessible areas on the coast to collect more ocean plastic, to make more kayaks. True circularity!

Rob founded Odyssey Innovation and set about organising an army of volunteers to help collect plastic waste, and he did a fantastic job of persuading Exeter City Council to support him in the complimentary transportation and recycling of this waste.

Rob discovered that a considerable volume of the waste he was collecting was abandoned fishing nets. The reason for this was there was no system in place to help fishermen dispose of their waste of end-of-life fishing gear. Together with Exeter City Council Odyssey established the Net Regeneration Scheme, which provided



drop-off points on the quayside of ports where fishermen could leave their damaged and redundant nets. The plastic waste and nets are collected by Exeter Council and taken to their recycling center where they are sorted.



'Rob Thompson, Odyssey Innovation'

Extruded polyethylene is the most common material used to make fishing nets. After eventually finding a company that could adequately handle the recovery of this material, Odyssey established a regular source of Polyethylene that could be used to make kayaks.

Clearly, extruded fishing net Polyethylene is not suitable on its own for rotomoulding, so the material has to be compounded together with other grades of Polyethylene and additives to make it rotomouldable and tough. Blackening the material helps to mask the variety of net colours and creates a consistent look.

Today Rob Thompson is fulfilling his vision, using ocean waste, he has rotomolded kayaks and has set up his "Paddle for Plastic" programme where volunteers are using these boats to collect more plastic from our beaches and oceans.

It has taken tremendous dedication and commitment to make this a reality and we should all applaud what Rob and his team have done.

I am also pleased to see that people in local government have taken action and have not only backed this initiative but are also providing practical support.

It's inspiring, and if you're interested in learning more, or want to help us in supporting Rob in some way, please check out his website www.odysseyinnovation.com, or contact myself. 