Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon Meeting on 17 November 2025

RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS: THE APETITO APPROACH

Presentation by Lee Sheppard

Lee trained as an accountant and first worked for Apetito in that capacity. Following 29 years with the company he is now Group Sustainability Director and has a seat on the board.

Our speaker began by giving us some background on the company: Waldens was an established food business at Trowbridge's Canal Road Estate in the 1980s. Its offshoot, Wiltshire Farm Foods, prepared meals for home delivery. The business was acquired in 1995 by Apetito, an established family-run company based in Germany. It is active in ten countries, mainly in Europe where the UK is second in size to Germany.
The UK's turnover is £250 million with 2,000 employees. It supplies 700 hospitals, 700 care homes and 70% of Meals on Wheels which offers a personal service by delivering to people's homes.
Apetito's strapline is 'Making a Real Difference'. The business aims to create a competitive advantage which pays off. Their environmental concerns include Carbon and Climate; Natural Resources and Biodiversity; Animal Welfare; Circular Economy and Waste. Ingredients for their meals contribute two-thirds of their carbon footprint, whereas food miles and packaging relatively little.

Apetito is engaged in 50 decarbonisation projects which include menus to encourage customers to eat less red meat. Recycled food trays contain 80% of recycled material in a closed loop recycling system. The company has been extremely active in lobbying the government in framing its Plastic Packaging Tax so that the eventual legal framework recognises that these systems can use a very high % of recycled material, which is both beneficial for the environment and good for business.

The company has mounted solar panels on the roof of its works, as well as on canopies in car parking areas. However, its planned super new factory in Trowbridge will have sufficient solar panels to provide 15% of its electricity needs, much more than is achieved at present. apetito's fleet of delivery vehicles is being electrified with 250 of its fleet of 400 already electrified. A problem was that the necessary freezer compartment on vehicles demanded a large share of the power generated by the battery so required a fundamental redesign.

The new factory, due to be constructed next year, aims to be net zero by 2040. It will be built of recycled steel and will capture rainwater which falls on its roof and aims to create a 25% net gain in biodiversity. The old factory is being deconstructed, rather than demolished, and much of its material repurposed.

Our speaker presented a fascinating and entirely positive account of a large company which is striving to minimise its carbon footprint. It provides a shining example of what can be achieved by considering every aspect, no matter how seemingly insignificant, of its production process, with the aim of minimising its environmental impact and carbon footprint. An excellent evening in which our audience was fully engaged with lots of questions and comments.
Roger Jones