



For immediate release

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**SAPPHIRE ENERGY RECOVERY ANNOUNCES
ACQUISITION OF WILLOW TYRES**

Sapphire Energy Recovery has announced it is acquiring the tyre collection business of Willow Tyres as owner Ray Bates makes plans to retire later this year.

“Willow has been a long trusted and reliable supplier of around 1.4 million tyres a year to Sapphire, and it was important to us that we could maintain that security of supply despite Ray’s retirement,” explained Clive Roberts, who is Supply Chain Manager for Sapphire Energy Recovery.

Willow Tyres has two depots, one in Lingfield, Surrey and the other at Sapphire’s processing facilities in Thurrock, Essex, making the companies an ideal fit.

“After 30 years in the business it does feel hard to say goodbye, but I’m pleased that Willow has found a good home with Sapphire and wish it all the very best for the future,” said Ray Bates, who will be staying on with the business until November 2009 to ensure a smooth transition.

“The time was right for me to sell as I look forward to enjoying my retirement, but it was important to me when I looked at the options that the business could continue to thrive and my employees could continue in their roles too.”

Drivers working for Willow and the collection vehicles will transfer to Sapphire Energy Recovery as of July 1 2009, with vehicles currently operated by Willow eventually being rebranded with the Sapphire name.

The casings side of the business will continue to trade at the Lingfield and Thurrock sites under the ownership of Joe Bates, Ray’s son, ensuring the long-established Willow name will remain.

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“I’m very proud of what we have built as a family business, and pleased that its future now lies with such a forward looking and ambitious company,” continued Ray. “I’m also pleased that the Willow name will carry on through my son’s side of the business.”

Willow Tyres currently serves a network of tyre retail outlets in the South East, supplying tyres to a number of processing companies. Clive Roberts sees no reason for that to change despite the new ownership.

“We want to keep the supply chain intact which is the main reason we stepped in when we became aware of Ray’s plans,” he said. “We intend to build on Ray’s foundations by making investments in automated booking systems and, in time, additions and replacements to the vehicle fleet – but for Willow’s many retail customers it’s very much ‘business as usual’.

“We are looking forward to the benefits that having direct access to the waste tyre stream will bring us in terms of consistency and guarantee of supply – and we intend to make the most of those benefits in terms of improved service to our own customers.”

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For media enquiries contact:

Kirsten Parrish, KDPR - 01295 780152 / 07766 561930 / Kirsten@kdpr.co.uk or
Michele Wheatley - 01453 833838 / 07881 731658 / michele@wheatleypr.co.uk.

Notes to editors:

Sapphire Energy Recovery

- Sapphire Energy Recovery Limited is a resource recovery business owned by Lafarge Cement UK Plc. It sources alternative fuels and raw materials for use by the cement industry, and carefully manages the introduction and use of such materials in cement kilns around the country.
- Sapphire provides waste producers with an alternative to landfill or other disposal routes, and cement producers with replacement materials that can turn waste to energy and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. It also provides alternative raw materials thereby reducing reliance on natural resources.
- Sapphire also offers a sustainable solution to the processing of end-of-life tyres in the UK by providing them for use as an alternative fuel for the cement industry.
- Sapphire manages the used tyre supply chain to:

- facilitate collection of end of life tyres from all sources including wholesalers, vehicle dismantlers and local authority schemes
 - bring tyres to a Sapphire processing centre via a regional collector network
 - produce a specific grade of chipped tyre proven to be the best size for combustion in the cement industry.
- All Sapphire's processing centres in the UK are certified to ISO 14001, registered to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and regularly monitored by the Environment Agency.

Lafarge Cement

- Lafarge Cement UK Plc is part of the Lafarge Group of companies which is headed up by Lafarge SA. The Lafarge Group is the world leader in building materials, with top-ranking positions in all of its businesses: Cement, Aggregates & Concrete and Gypsum. With 90,000 employees in 76 countries, Lafarge posted sales of Euros 17.6 billion and net income of Euros 1.9 billion in 2007.
- Lafarge has been committed to sustainable development for many years, pursuing a strategy that combines industrial know-how with performance, value creation, respect for employees and local cultures, environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources and energy. It offers the construction industry and the public innovative solutions bringing greater safety, comfort and quality to their everyday surroundings.