CLEAN2ANTARCTICA

First expedition to the South Pole in a recycled solar vehicle

By Sabine Virgin

The Danish adventurer Edwin ter Velde prepared dinner one day with his wife Liesbeth and threw away another plastic package. Suddenly the penny dropped and the two of them asked themselves the question: Why actually throw everything away? Can’t we continue to use our garbage and create things from it? They couldn’t let go of this idea. They first began to melt down plastic and print out plates on a 3D printer. Later they refined the idea and printed octagons from recycled plastic on industrial printers. They assembled them into a solar-powered mobile that was light and durable. They found support for their idea at the Japanese company Teijin, which also manufactures solar modules. The result is an approximately 48-metre-long solar powered mobile vehicle, which has become so long mainly due to the solar panels, and was built largely from recycled bottles and other plastic waste. It is expected that Edwin and Liesbeth will set off from Argentina on a 2,300 kilometre journey to the South Pole in the cleanest continent, Antarctica, on November 28.

With this action they want to prove how a small impulse can cause rethinking and great things. “We will be there in the wilderness on our own. With the solar modules we can drive, and we will also get our drinking water and cook food. It is a great adventure and above all a call to people to rethink. Everywhere we are, we feel like ambassadors on a mission: a call not to demonise our plastic waste, but to use it again as a resource”, explained Edvin, who will set out with his wife Liesbeth on this great adventure. At the port of Santa Cruz, he had also invited Island President Carlos Alonso and the new Port President Pedro Suárez López de Vergara to promote the idea of waste recycling at this level.

“An island offers real advantages because it’s like a small laboratory, and the waste produced here can also be used to create new jobs through recycling,” suggested Edwin ter Velde. Island President Carlos Alonso was open-minded, “But we also have very different islands. El Hierro, for example, is largely self-sufficient in energy from renewable sources. But El Hierro also has only around 11,000 inhabitants. With an island like Tenerife with around one million inhabitants and six million tourists a year, this is a completely different challenge,” he pointed out. Port president Suárez said “But even in Tenerife, there are already attempts with interesting recycling ideas to recover oil from plastic. As soon as these ideas are ready to be discussed, we will report in more detail.”

Carousel of ideas on a sailing ship

“No company will be a lucrative business because it harms the environment. But we at the ‘Morgenster’ are a think tank for Teijin...”

The ‘Morgenster’ is a sailing ship.