

## Foster Yeoman

Highly ambitious – that is the best description of Foster Yeoman Contracting, a road surfacing and civil engineering contractor with an attitude out of proportion to its size

# Materials specialist turns to contracting

**F**oster Yeoman's name is well known, as is the fact the company supplies aggregates and coated stone. Much less well recognised is Foster Yeoman Contracting, the name of the parent company's construction business.

This is because that company is relatively new and operating mainly in the south east only. But if ambition is anything to go by, Foster Yeoman Contracting could soon be acknowledged as a substantial player in surfacing and specialist civil engineering.

As an ideal accompaniment, in practical terms, to its materials based parent.

"From small beginnings, we've substantially increased our turnover in each of our first two years' of trading," says Foster Yeoman Contracting's contracts director Ro Hall.

"The Highways Agency is starting to come on side and Foster Yeoman anticipates our notation being increased which means that we can bid for bigger contracts. We have a satisfactory strike rate in winning reasonable work, both as a specialist

surfacing contractor under subcontract and as principal contractor in our own right.

Foster Yeoman Contracting owes its existence to West Country-based Foster Yeoman Limited actively seeking to expand its sphere of coated stone operations in southeast England. Coated materials supplier RJ Maxwell with plants in Kent and Essex proved an ideal prospect for takeover and the deal was struck in May 1997. Foster Yeoman also acquired RJ Maxwell's contracting business.

The company's principals decided that the time was right to move into contracting. Everybody in Maxwell's contracting business was taken on. Ro Hall himself is an ex-Maxwell person and so are most of his colleagues.

Simon Eeley is FYC's business development manager, which he says, is a title that succinctly describes his role. "I'm here to develop new business, that's my brief and – with the backing of Ro Hall and our parent company – that is exactly what I am going to do." The impression given is that FYC is actively pursuing new work.

FYC parent Foster Yeoman is a privately owned company and successful. This means that capital is available for investment in new plant for its contracting subsidiary.

FYC's headquarters is sited at the former Maxwell yard in Northfleet, Kent and a new office has been opened further west, at Theale in Berkshire in close proximity to junction 12 on the M4, for strategic reasons. FYC is principal surfacing contractor to Amey on the Highway Agency's Super Agency 5, which covers trunk road and motorway maintenance in that area.

Foster Yeoman has also recently purchased Oakleaf Civil Engineering, a successful firm which specialises in term maintenance of urban infrastructure, for housing associations and Local Authorities. "Oakleaf's activity will be absorbed by FYC giving a foothold into new markets," Eeley says.

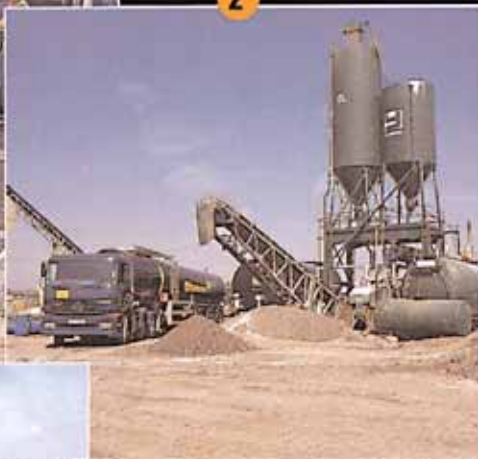
Oakleaf has skills in hard landscaping, streetscaping, drainage, footway works and pedestrian precincts.

Useful as this additional expertise will be, it is in road surfacing that FYC is strong and from where it will build in the immediate future. Apart from the Area 5 work, the company is also working for Amey in North Somerset.

FYC is a term maintenance contractor for the London Borough of Merton, and Barking & Dagenham. It has a notation with the Ministry of Defence, which has acknowledged its capabilities



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- 1. Foster Yeoman Contracting has seen its turnover increase substantially during each of its first two years of trading
- 2. FYC has emerged from the efforts of its parent company to expand its coated stone operations

- 3. The contractor has been involved in several high profile jobs including surfacing work at the Bluewater development in Kent
- 4. Access to Foster Yeoman's proprietary materials, knowledge base and laboratories is one of FYC's major strengths

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**Ro Hall**

in runway and pavement construction – FYC has all the necessary QA accreditation.

The company has also been carrying out work in its own right for the Highways Agency on the A21 in recent months, near Robertsbridge in East Sussex; and on the M4 near junction 10, where it has been involved in cable laying and ducting as well as surfacing. Resurfacing the M1 between junction 8 and junction 10 and a major contract for surfacing work at the Bluewater shopping centre development in Kent have been other major awards.

Perhaps more challenging is a job associated with contract 330 of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link. FYC has at all stages associated with the pavement design ensuring cost savings. The work is basically surfacing to haul and permanent roads in advance of railway works.

"We're hoping to innovate here, using recycled materials and non conventional mixes to achieve our objectives," says Ro Hall. One of FYC's strengths is the access it has to Foster Yeoman's proprietary materials like Foamix and Premier Pave; and to its parent's technical capabilities.

What ever it wants to do on contract 330 will be the result of extensive negotiation. FYC has to satisfy three authorities: the local one, Medway; the Highways Agency; and Kent County Council. The contract is being run under an open book, partnership arrangement which means keeping contract 330 joint venture partners Alfred McAlpine and Amec totally involved.

"It has worked well. We are very keen on the concept of partnering," Hall says. FYC may have an aggressive stance towards expansion in the future but that is where the aggression ends.

"We are actually a very friendly, non aggressive contractor. Partnering suits us because it breeds the kind of conduct that we feel is appropriate in business. Foster Yeoman has been a family firm for 76 years and the values it holds dear are good ones with which to work."