

Tarmac

Streetprint is set to revolutionise the block paving market – it looks like brick pavers but is quicker to lay, harder wearing and requires little or no maintenance.

Printing to perfection

Block paving has been the architect's favourite surfacing material for many years thanks to its aesthetic qualities and suitability for use in car parks, pedestrian areas and road demarcation. Nonetheless, many block paving owners soon become disillusioned when the weeds start to grow through and differential settlement occurs leaving a less than perfect surface with a costly upkeep.

Tarmac North East & Cumbrian Region General Manager Martin Riley believes that Streetprint could be just the product to switch favour from block paving back to asphalt. He explains: "Streetprint uses a stencil to create a texture in the asphalt surface which looks just like block paving but with the added benefit of the predictable pavement performance of asphalt.

"The Streetprint technique was originally developed in America by BTM International where it was aimed at the domestic drive market. Tarmac

gained a licence to use Streetprint because we believe that the technique has a huge potential to revolutionise both the commercial and industrial block paving market as well as the domestic market."

Streetprint's block paving look is achieved by compacting a metal stencil into a freshly laid asphalt surface and can be completed in a fraction of the time it would take to block pave the same area. The method is easily applied and the only specialist equipment required is the texturing stencil.

"Streetprint is an ideal material for creating an attractive surface ... and widens the range of potential road surfacing applications." **Martin Riley**

Use of asphalt in this surfacing technique is where the most fundamental advantages of Streetprint over conventional block paving stem from. The asphalt used in Streetprint can be designed to cope with trafficking by heavy vehicles which is often the main cause of differential settlement in block paved surfaces.

"Reduced deformation characteristics mean that Streetprint is an ideal material for creating an attractive surface to vehicle access areas of pedestrianised streets and widens the range of potential road surfacing applications," says Riley.

Block paving often creates drainage problems and shallow channels are needed to direct surface water towards drains. Surface water can also drain between blocks which can cause washing out of the surface below, leading to differential settlement and creating hollows in which puddles form in heavy rain.

Riley says: "Streetprint, in common with other asphalt surfaces, can be laid to create a positive drainage fall removing the need for drainage channels. The impermeable nature of asphalt also prevents washing out of the base course material and removes the problem of weed growth through the surface which greatly reduces the need for on going maintenance."

Texture stencils can be applied to coloured asphalt or used on conventional black top which can be painted using a specially developed,

coloured, fuel resistant coating. The ability to match Streetprint to the colour and shape of old, damaged cobbles and flagstones means that the product can be used to restore traditional style streets.

"Streetprint was recently used to resurface a cobbled street in Newcastle outside a handicapped training centre where the old cobbled surface made wheel chair access difficult and uncomfortable. Texture stencils and coloured coatings were carefully selected to closely match the existing cobbles to produce a smoother surface. Surfacing work was completed in under 24 hours and was carried out over a weekend to minimise disruption to the training centre," reveals Riley.

The appearance of block paving is often marred by poorly repaired streetworks excavations. "Block paving can be difficult to reinstate satisfactorily and to reduce costs and prevent creating a trip hazard utility excavations are often resurfaced using asphalt. Repairs to Streetprint are easily carried out by reapplying the stencil to the repaired surface which does not spoil the overall surface appearance. Stencils and surface coatings can be supplied to contractors with guidance from Tarmac," says Riley.

Streetprint has proved to be popular with local

Newcastle City Council (NCC) has specified the use of Streetprint on a number of urban regeneration projects within the city. One of the most recent projects to benefit from the use of Streetprint was the Benwell Regeneration Project, situated close to Newcastle city centre. The project involved demolition of a row of derelict terraced houses for redevelopment as a park area.

Riley says: "Speed of laying was one of the main reasons why NCC selected Streetprint for the footpaths but it also had other benefits. Block paving schemes are often plagued by theft and vandalism as the blocks make ideal missiles for smashing windows or are stolen for use elsewhere, all problems which NCC was keen to avoid."

The Benwell project involved laying of over 1300m² of Streetprint by hand to give a good finish to the curved pathways. Surfacing the same area using block paving would have taken considerably longer particularly given the twisty layout.

"Streetprint fits in well with local authority best value policies. In the long term it costs less than traditional block paving because it is quicker to lay but needs relatively little maintenance," explains Riley.

1 Freshly laid asphalt is prepared for the Streetprint process by roller compaction which creates a smooth, even surface.

2 The Streetprint stencil is laid over the surface and further compaction is applied to complete the texturing process.

3 Streetprint copes well with small, awkward and curved shapes and application of a fuel resistant coloured coating not only adds to the aesthetic benefits of Streetprint, it also increases durability.

authorities which are concerned about reducing maintenance costs while retaining a high quality appearance. Nonetheless Tarmac believes that commercial and industrial developments present a relatively untapped market.

Riley explains: "The public sector has been quick

to recognise the benefits of using Streetprint over block paving but the private sector has been slower to respond. Tarmac is confident that with the increasing numbers of PFI projects and the drive towards more sustainable construction method the benefits of Streetprint will come into their own."