

## Nuttall

**Strong pedigree in road construction and maintenance gives contractor Edmund Nuttall all the skills, experience and capability required to put the UK 's latest highway plans into practice.**

# Pursuing perfection in highway practice

**C**urrent vitality in development of innovative road construction and maintenance, in terms of procurement and techniques employed to get the work done, appears to suit Edmund Nuttall. The contractor has been at the forefront of innovations in highway practice for some years and now seems well placed to implement the latest road network plans.

Latest policy for road project procurement is laid out in the Highways Agency's (HA's) strategy for delivering highway aspects of the Government's 10 year transport plan. According to the HA's document, greater efficiency and value for client and supply chain is the aim. Partnering and early creation of project teams selected on the basis of skills and quality, as well as cost, will feature heavily in the pursuit of this aim.

The HA's initiative is forming a path for other clients to follow. But as a leading supplier, Nuttall needs no introduction to targeting greater value and efficiency through modern road practice.

Nuttall was selected as preferred contractor in

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**Ruban Muruganandan**

one of the first trials of private sector maintenance of trunk roads in 1986 for a section of the highway network in north west England. The contract was let by the Department of Transport, which was at the time responsible for trunk roads and motorways, and developing the first use of partnering in the highways sector.

"A traditional form of contract was used but an unofficial agreement was drafted to create the understanding that all main parties would work and communicate as a team to get the work done efficiently and without a claims based adversarial relationship," says Nuttall's Highways Maintenance Manager Ruban Muruganandan.

"Partnering frameworks have progressed and are now a standard part of our road contract documents, usually including open book accounting and some form of profit or savings benefits share."

Nuttall won repeat business following the initial two year term contract in the north west. Currently, it holds the Term Maintenance Contract (TMC) for the Area 17 trunk road and motorway network in partnership with the HA and the HA's Managing Agent (MA), Lancashire County Council.

According to Muruganandan, innovations developed by the Area 17 project team have produced significant increases in efficiency and customer satisfaction.

These include a computer system based on Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology. This immediately optimises gritting routes in the event of short notice depot, road or weather changes during the winter maintenance period. Route changes are then instantaneously communicated to drivers by GPS units fitted to the trucks.

Nuttall is currently bidding for a number of the HA's Managing Agent Contracts (MACs). Enlarged trunk road maintenance "areas" are being re-let to contractor led MAC partnerships to replace the TMC/MA arrangement with the aim of developing



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3: Nuttall's Highways Maintenance Manager Ruban Muruganandan.

4: Nuttall is working on all three types of Highways Agency project including the Area 17 term maintenance contract.

1: Major project involvement has included the A406 North Circular road widening in London.

2: A national term maintenance business with strong links and resources in all regions has resulted from Nuttall's strong highways pedigree.

5: Innovative technology for optimising gritting routes has gained efficiencies in Area 17.

further efficiencies and savings for client and suppliers.

"Nuttall now has a national highways maintenance business with local resources and links to suppliers and partners to allow us to bid effectively for work in any region," says Muruganandan.

"So far we have bid for MACs as part of the Enhance team with Halcrow and our surfacing partner Hanson. But we like a flexible approach. We will choose to bid as Enhance or with other partners depending on which arrangement provides the most competitive bid and best value in that particular region as well as delivery of the optimum service to the client and end users."

The HA is currently procuring three different types of highway projects, generally separated on the basis of project value.

Routine maintenance contracts involve all work

up to a value of £500,000 under the new MAC arrangement. Above this threshold and up to £5M, contracts are defined as Regional Road & Bridge Works and Technology Projects.

These are let regionally and discretely to one of a select number of suppliers holding framework agreements for that region and form of work.

Finally, major projects, those worth £5M and above, are also being let as single items, but the stated intention is to tender them to a new form of Design & Build (D&B) contract called the Early D&B.

Nuttall is currently working on all three project types including the Area 17 TMC, the Midlands Bridge Maintenance & Refurbishment Framework and the first Early D&B, which was awarded in 2001 for the £33M A500 Stoke Pathfinder project.

This contract was awarded in May 2001, months ahead of the procurement stage at which a D&B

contractor would usually be appointed. The HA is looking to save 18 months on overall construction time by giving Nuttall greater time to build its project team and provide an innovative outline design before statutory planning procedures are completed.

"Development of new procurement methods has helped us, as in many cases our management strategy and tendering procedures have already been established and modified to suit them," adds Muruganandan.

"For instance, in tender assessment, greater weighting is now being applied to quality criteria such as employee policies, investment in people, training and development, partnering culture and supply chain management. These are all key aspects of our business strategy."

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