

Hanson

Materials on demand

A new urban distribution centre has been opened by Hanson Aggregates near Gloucester to quickly supply contractors and builders with small quantities of construction materials.

Minor works contractors from Gloucestershire in need of a ready supply of asphalt and aggregate are making use of a new service geared towards the small works trade.

Materials specialist Hanson Aggregates set up its first urban 'Utility Centre' at Quedgeley near Gloucester earlier this year and held an open day for existing and potential customers in the summer. The centre allows customers to turn up, collect small quantities of construction materials – including a range of asphalt products – and drive away with the minimum of fuss.

Hanson supplies fresh asphalt, MOT Type 1 aggregate, sand and gravel, bagged aggregates and bricks – even wheelbarrows and shovels. The service is used by contractors and utility companies who need to repair or reinstate highways and builders who are carrying out general roadworks.

Hanson moved into the call-and-collect

asphalt market four years ago by establishing a depot in Gloucester. Last year a decision was taken to relocate the Gloucester centre and expand the product range.

The Gloucester centre is home to a total of 16 Mobile Asphalt Containers (MAC –

"The centre is aimed at customers who are after one to three tonnes of material but there is no minimum order – one customer recently drove away with a quarter of a tonne." Lionel Cave-Ayland

see box) that have been developed by Hanson Aggregates to keep asphalt fresh for up to 48 hours. Customers do not take MACs away with them – but drive to the containers to pick up material.

"We offer three types of asphalt material – a 20mm limestone binder course, and a 10mm and a 6mm hardstone surface course," says Hanson Aggregates'

district sales manager Lionel Cave-Ayland.

The beauty of the Gloucester distribution centre is that customers in need of small tonnages of asphalt can turn up unannounced and receive the quantity of material they need very quickly. "The centre is aimed at customers who are after

one to three tonnes of material," says Cave-Ayland.

"Many of our customers turn up without pre-ordering the asphalt and drive away with their load within 10 minutes of arriving. There is no minimum order – one of our clients recently drove away with just a quarter of a tonne of asphalt."

Hanson's distribution centres are essentially set up to supply asphalt to minor works customers in urban areas where a good number operate. The centre in Gloucester helps contractors to avoid spending hours travelling to and from large asphalt coating facilities which may be located far away. "Minor works contractors arriving at a traditional coating plant may also have to pre-order and queue for a couple of hours to wait for the material they want to be mixed," adds Cave-Ayland.

Large coating works, he explains, are often not geared towards providing small quantities of material on demand, often choosing instead to focus on customers

Hanson specially developed the new mobile asphalt containers to keep asphalt materials in the optimum condition for up to 48 hours.





Gloucester's 16 Mobile Asphalt Containers are checked throughout the day and taken back to a nearby Hanson asphalt plant for refilling to ensure a ready supply of material is always available.

who repeatedly order large quantities of material.

When orders for asphalt are placed at such a facility, it may have to be for a minimum tonnage that is far in excess of the quantity actually required. This can lead to additional cost to the client and wastage of material.

The distribution centre has proved a huge success with new customers turning up every week, and Hanson is planning to open two further centres at Bridgwater in Somerset and Plymouth in Devon.

MAC controller Brian Willson says that some of the success is due to recent changes in the dynamic of the asphalt supply market. "Today there are many sub contractors who are signed up for a few years to carry out minor works, such as surfacing, roadway repair or reinstatement works. Many of these contractors don't have their own yards in which to store quantities of asphalt and find the service we provide very useful," he says.

Customers can turn up at the Gloucester Utility Centre without preordering and usually drive away an asphalt load in ten minutes

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DEVELOPMENT OF MOBILE ASPHALT CONTAINERS

Each of Hanson Aggregates' Mobile Asphalt Containers (MAC), which are effectively large insulated 'thermos flasks', can hold 15.5 tonnes of asphalt when full. Mains power provides an element of trickle heating to maintain the material's temperature. Hanson Aggregates makes sure that there is a ready supply of asphalt at its distribution centre throughout the day. The container is returned to Hanson Aggregates' asphalt facilities at Chipping Sodbury or Tytherington to be refilled.

Cave-Ayland recognises that Hanson's mobile asphalt containers are not an entirely new concept. "The MACs are superior versions of asphalt hotboxes because the material is at a constant temperature throughout the unit," he says. "This gives the customer a consistently high performance product."

Hanson's new containers have been developed with the support of bitumen supplier Esso, which has also had a hand in the monitoring and quality control of materials used in the containers. Trials were carried out prior to the launch of Hanson's MACs to design asphalt materials that perfectly suit storage for up to 48 hours without the risk of deterioration to binder quality or performance of the asphalt.