

**RMC**

# Innovating to meet demand

High performance coloured asphalt is the latest product to join a succession of innovative new materials that have emerged from RMC's Product Development Group in recent years.

**P**redicting future customer demand, developing new products to fulfil these needs and creating innovative solutions is vital to continued commercial success in the asphalt industry. RMC's Product Development Group (PDG) is a breeding ground for new ideas and has driven development of a number of products including Viatex thin surfacing and Glasphalt – set to become the first HAPAS approved recycled binder course.

Viashade is the latest material to emerge from the company's development hotbed, and its high performance specification looks set to revolutionise the coloured overlay market. The material is a surface course but, unlike many coloured asphalts and overlays,

it is capable of withstanding heavy loading and can be used on high stress sites such as bus lanes.

Birmingham's busy bus lane on The Hagley Road was one of the first sites in the

Birmingham City Council Resident Engineer George Underhill says: "One of our policies is to use green coloured surfacing materials on bus lanes to assist in enforcement and to emphasise that the lane

**"Knowledge and solutions used in one region can be transferred through the PDG to other areas so everyone benefits."** Richard Jenman

UK to get the Viashade treatment when it was surfaced with 400t of green coloured asphalt in August 2003. The material was the brainchild of the PDG whose members recognised the need for high performance coloured surfacings which could provide high skid resistance and stand up to heavier trafficking than overlay alternatives.

is for buses only. Use of coloured overlays has not always been successful because of their tendency to wear after a few years."

RMC's PDG was established six years ago but has gained an added focus through the recent appointment of Richard Jenman as Business Development Manager for specialist products. Jenman's role is to act on ideas from the development team, which draws its members from RMC's technical, operational and commercial sectors, and champions new products from concept to production.

"Through the PDG we can bring solutions or ideas developed in response to problems identified in one area of the company and give them a more central focus and stronger technical backing," says Jenman. "Knowledge and solutions used in one region and applicable to nationwide problems can be transferred through the PDG to other areas of the business so everyone benefits.

"Identifying gaps in the market and developing new products ready to meet future demand is also important. Some of the products we are currently looking at

Viashade will be launched nationally early next year to provide a high performance alternative to overlays.





Birmingham's Hagley Road bus lane was one of the first UK sites to get the Viashade treatment

could revolutionise surfacing but are just too hi-tech to be economic in today's market. They will have an important role in the future."

Nonetheless, Viashade is a product which RMC believes is ideal for today's market. "Many local authorities use coloured overlays for demarcation but they tend to wear out after a few years," says Jenman. "Viashade uses naturally coloured aggregate, a 'clear' binder and UV stable pigments to create a surface with the performance and lifespan of a conventional thin surfacing but with permanent colour." Viashade is currently only available in the

London and Birmingham areas but RMC is planning to launch the new product in the rest of the UK from early next year. The new surfacing comes in three colours – green, red and buff – but the PDG is already working on expanding the range.

The PDG was initially set up to spearhead development of an RMC thin surfacing by re-engineering stone mastic asphalt (SMA) materials used in Europe to suit the UK road market. "The UK is one of the few countries to have strict policies on skid resistance and the overfilled texture of a generic SMA does not meet current requirements for surface courses," says RMC Aggregates Divisional

Technical Manager Gordon Lemon. "We created Viatex by adding a high PSV aggregate and altering the binder content to create a negative texture."

The PDG's efforts also soon led to the development of a binder course – known as Viabase – which uses the principles of Viatex, but without the high PSV aggregate. "Detrunking of roads created a need for a bridge between surface course replacement and full reconstruction," says Lemon. "Viabase helped fill that gap in the market."

Development of Glasphalt, another of RMC's binder courses, came hot on the heels of Viabase, providing an innovative and durable material that replaces virgin aggregate with crushed glass. RMC is on the verge of gaining stage four HAPAS approval for the material which will make it one of the first – if not the first – product containing a large quantity of recycled material to gain this level of certification.

RMC is currently involved in a number of contract discussions which seem to indicate that Viashade will follow in the successful footsteps of Viatex and Glasphalt. But Jenman will not be drawn on exactly what the PDG is currently working on, other than to say: "It involves road safety enhancements and further specialist surfaces."

## GETTING THE EURO MESSAGE ACROSS

Deciphering the new European Standards for aggregates has been simplified thanks to two initiatives by RMC which contain all the necessary information. The business card size CD and pocket sized 'ready reckoner' are designed to provide an easy to use and highly portable means of understanding and applying the changes.

"Our aim is to help people understand and interpret the new standards in as simple a way as possible,"



says RMC Communications Manager Ian Southcott. "From the customer's point of view the actual materials will stay the same and it is only really the descriptions that will change".

The CD contains a PowerPoint presentation that customers can use to get the message over to their own staff and clients. The CD and 'ready reckoner' can be requested by visiting

[www.rmc.co.uk](http://www.rmc.co.uk) or by email from Ian Southcott at [ian.southcott@rmc.co.uk](mailto:ian.southcott@rmc.co.uk)

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