

RMC

Providing proven product performance

Innovative asphalt products can offer performance or financial benefits but clients need proof that materials will meet their expectations before specifying them. According to RMC, HAPAS is the solution whatever the product.

Pavement engineers tend to be cautious about specifying new products and they have every right to be – experimenting on a live carriageway can be a risky business. Cost and safety are important issues in the surfacing market so proven products will always win favour and the Highways Authorities Product Approval Scheme (HAPAS) provides the means to gain it.

Many thin surfacing products now boast HAPAS approval but the process can be equally beneficial to providing performance and quality guarantees for less conventional materials. One such product is RMC's Glasphalt base and binder course which uses crushed glass to replace up to 30% of the primary aggregate. Glasphalt has just gained HAPAS approval – probably the first recycled base and binder course to do so.

But Glasphalt is not RMC's first non thin surfacing product to gain the HAPAS stamp

of approval and it certainly will not be the last. The company's innovative manhole construction solution ReadyRaise received its HAPAS certificate in 2000 and there are several other RMC products in the early stages of approval.

"HAPAS certification not only gives customers greater confidence in specifying the material, it also shows the quality of the whole process has been assessed and approved"

Andy Nevitt

"Having one route for product approval is better for everyone," says RMC National Technical Manager Gordon Lemon. "Before the days of HAPAS, we had to go through the process of demonstrating a material to every client and the approvals were all structured differently so information had to be re-evaluated each time to suit.

"Now, once a product has a HAPAS certificate we do not need to go through the process again and specifiers can quickly decide whether to use a particular material."

The route to approval under the scheme, which is administered by the British Board of Agrément (BBA), may now be simpler, but it is still rigorous and takes a structured approach. However, the standard template for approval is more geared to conventional materials, such as thin surfacings, which fit into HAPAS's predetermined categories. "Taking a more unusual product through

HAPAS is less straightforward but not impossible," says RMC Technical Services Manager Andy Nevitt.

RMC believed that ReadyRaise had great potential but because it was so different from other manhole construction techniques, it needed third party accreditation to encourage more acceptance. "We first developed ReadyRaise in 1995 and looked at a number of independent bodies for the best way to get accreditation but HAPAS seemed to be the best route because it is widely recognized," explains RMC Technical Services Manager John Lay.

The key to ReadyRaise is its specially designed polyurethane bedding compound which holds the manhole ironwork within a precast concrete collar and absorbs traffic loading. Conventional methods create a rigid structure with little or no resistance to loads exerted on it, so most of the force is transferred to the top of the chamber often resulting in failure.

"To get ReadyRaise's HAPAS certificate we worked with BBA, the Highways Technical Advisory Committee (HiTAC) and companies likely to be the product's users, to develop methods to assess manhole construction," says Lay. "Through this discussion we jointly developed test methods with the BBA and adapted HAPAS's six stage approval process to create a new template to suit this type of product."

Glasphalt's path to approval was a little more straight forward because it is a surfacing material, but the thin surfacing HAPAS model does not cover use of secondary aggregates. "Glasphalt is probably one of the first materials

ReadyRaise was RMC's first non thin surfacing product to gain HAPAS approval.





RMC worked with the BBA to develop new test methods to take Glasphalt and ReadyRaise through HAPAS

containing recycled materials to gain HAPAS approval and will smooth the way for others to follow," says Nevitt. "As with ReadyRaise's approval, we worked closely with BBA and TRL to revise the testing and assessment stages. The adaptation was initially done to suit Glasphalt but it has created a working template which can be used for approval of other green surfacing products."

RMC's other two products which are

currently undergoing HAPAS approval are an as yet unnamed cold mix base and binder course material and Viacrete, a grouted asphalt. Both are working products but Lemon, Lay and Nevitt are all tight lipped about the actual specifications of the materials.

"Confidentiality is one of the beauties of HAPAS," says Lemon. "Approval by HAPAS, or anyone else for that matter, requires complete disclosure of all available information which may not be ideal with cutting edge technology. But although the BBA has in depth knowledge about every

product undergoing HAPAS approval, it operates Chinese walls and only necessary details are included in the final certificate."

There is no obligation for materials suppliers to get their products HAPAS approved although many companies, including RMC, are advocates of the system. "Certification not only gives customers greater confidence in specifying the material but also shows that the quality of everything from the raw materials and production through to installation and end performance has been assessed and approved," says Nevitt.



Laboratory testing of products is an integral part of the HAPAS approvals process

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SIX STEPS TO APPROVAL

HAPAS's approval process can actually help shape product development by giving it a defined structure. The initial stage involves submitting information to BBA for assessment and is followed by an appraisal of the manufacturing process and laboratory analysis of the material. A demonstration installation is carried out next and once this has been completed satisfactorily, the process moves onto performance trials involving visual surveys at live sites over a period of two years. The sixth and final stage of the process is issuing of the certificate.