

Recycling's message begins to spread

Ringway is evangelical in its promotion of roads recycling and practising what it preaches in an increasing number of UK counties.

Some 85% of the arisings from highway maintenance in Kent that used to go to landfill now ends up back in roads. Recycling is big in the garden of England and the Kent model has been introduced to Gloucestershire and Surrey, with other counties taking note.

Principal driving force behind development and adoption of the technology employed is Ringway Group, in particular the company's specialist subsidiary Ringway Highway Services (RHS). Ringway displays missionary zeal about the reuse of road materials and is becoming increasingly successful in converting clients to its sustainability beliefs.

The company states there is now sufficient knowledge in place for recycling no longer to be considered a 'dark art'. "The secret of our initial breakthrough was having the right client, right consulting engineer and right resources to seed then support our activity," says RHS Managing Director Scott Wardrop.

Ringway is part of the mighty Vinci group, its parent is Eurovia and it has access to a vast knowledge bank. Ringway is highways term maintenance contractor to – among others – Kent County Council, whose consultant is Jacobs Babbie. Kent has a reputation for forward thinking, Jacobs Babbie a reputation not least for

leading edge materials consultancy.

Ringway found that, up to a point, it was knocking on an open door when it proposed in general terms a novel roads recycling process for the county.

Both client and consultant were enthusiastic in principle. Getting the business case accepted was harder: as Scott Wardrop says, vis-à-vis virgin materials, it is less easy to justify recycling financially than it is ethically, even taking into account landfill and aggregate taxes that have helped level the playing field. But Kent was duly convinced and sanctioned the long term programme. An agreement to proceed was reached between the three parties – Ringway, KCC and Jacobs Babbie – and formalised within the 'Kent Highways Partnership'.

The scheme works like this. All arisings from highway maintenance work around the county are taken to a central recycling centre at Faversham to be crushed and screened.

Top soil is taken out for reuse. Some of the crushed material becomes recycled sub base (it more than meets the new Highways Agency specification for Type 1); but most of it is 'Foambased' – ie put through Ringway's Wirtgen KMA 200 and mixed with foamed bitumen – to produce two highly usable cold lay carriageway materials. These are a structural grade of Foambase for immediate use on all types of road including motorways; and a storage grade, less strong but which can be stockpiled and

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Two grades of Foambase are produced using Ringway's Wirtgen KMA 200

used in lower category pavements as and when required.

As Jacobs Babbie's Project Director Ian Walsh describes it: "Ringway is producing a material which is a direct substitute for hot mix asphalt in all applications. It is good stuff and in Kent is already the material of choice for all housing residential developments, for instance."

Ringway's input to the project includes manpower, considerable capital investment in plant and access to Eurovia's extensive knowledge of all things asphalt and sustainable, banked principally in Bordeaux. This has been made available to Kent Highways Partnership through Ringway Group Technical Manager Dennis Parkinson, a prime mover, incidentally, behind establishment of the new Ringway Technical Centre in Warrington where (inter alia) the best of French and other technology will be anglicised.

Parkinson has been much involved in the work headed up by Ian Walsh. "Jacob Babbie's principal contributions have been in mix design, testing and quality planning," says Walsh. "From our laboratories in Maidstone, we have helped make sure that the recycled materials coming out of Ringway's Faversham depot meet all necessary needs."

What has been learned in Kent has been taken up and is being exploited by

Gloucestershire and Surrey, both of which employ Ringway as highways term maintenance contractor. In Gloucestershire, Ringway is in a best value partnership with the county and consulting engineer Halcrow. According to Scott Wardrop, Halcrow's pavement design and technical staff in particular have embraced recycling with considerable enthusiasm.

"It is an absolute imperative in making recycling work that the engineers are both

"The company states there is now sufficient knowledge in place for recycling no longer to be considered a dark art". Scott Wardrop

thoroughly professional in their approach and willing to explore new techniques," he says. Gloucestershire is currently producing close to 30,000t of Foambase a year at the present time.

Surrey represents a broader challenge than other counties in one particular respect. The county is not just going for crushing, screening and Foambase, but for reprocessing gulley arisings as well.

This means containing the waste, taking the metals out, drying out the sludge cake, reusing organic waste and cleansing the water into a state fit for discharge into sewers.

Lincolnshire is Ringway's other county success story, in terms of recycling, but

here its subsidiary LCR Highways is doing the work. Lincolnshire is another authority which is displaying a highly enlightened approach to reuse of arisings, and is a stop on the Ringway Wirtgen's 'milk round', the circuit that the reprocessing machine takes to visit recycling centres and process recycled materials.

Last word goes to Kent County Council. The county's Highways Maintenance Manager is Gary Fitch who has a close

interest in Kent's recycling work. "We've taken things forward in terms of compiling guidance notes for maintenance engineers to promote the use of recycled materials, and also in holding seminars and site visits to discuss the materials and specifications plus demonstrate performance."

These moves are effectively formalising the county's approach to roads recycling. "It was all very new when we started. Speaking personally, I am very satisfied with the way things have gone. Kent as a county is definitely benefiting from the work of Ringway, Jacobs Babbie and ourselves."

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