

RMC

Partnerships key to strong Scottish surfacing

As Scotland pursues partnering with the private sector for its road maintenance services, RMC has positioned itself well to serve the highways industry north of the border.

Scotland is taking a new approach to the challenge of maintaining its trunk road network. Following the lead of the Highways Agency in England and Wales, the Scottish Executive has contracted the work out to private sector partnerships and RMC has placed itself well to make the most of this trend.

RMC Surfacing is carrying out highway maintenance work north of the border and RMC Materials is supplying the asphalt and aggregates needed to build and maintain Scotland's roads. RMC has secured itself a strong position in the Scottish market, by developing long term partnerships and a strategic network of asphalt plants and quarries.

One of RMC's leading partnerships is that with Amey, the Scottish Executive's management contractor for all trunk roads in the country's southern half. Amey's three-year contract, the first of its kind in Scotland, began in 2001 and has since

"We supply Scottish Borders with all of its asphalt needs over a very large geographical area." Steven Bebbington

been extended to five years. Amey's responsibility extends to virtually all road management tasks.

RMC has also formed a partnership with Scottish Borders Council to supply all

of its surfacing material. Such close relationships with customers are viewed by RMC as crucial to the company's future. As part of these arrangements, an already wide geographic spread of asphalt supply has been supplemented with new high capacity coating plants at Leith Docks near Edinburgh and Cowieslinn near Peebles.

RMC Materials' Marketing Manager in Scotland, Steven Bebbington, says: "We entered an alliance with Amey, with whom we had previously worked on other schemes in England, to provide surfacing 24 hours a day to meet its requirements in Scotland. We were already well placed to meet the challenge at the time of the tender in 2001, but installed another multi-million pound asphalt plant in Leith to meet future growth."

The partnership with Amey includes surfacing work in Scotland's central belt – the Glasgow to Edinburgh transport corridor – and the heavily trafficked roads within it, for which 24 hour supply of asphalt is essential.

"We have to take into consideration the traffic movements within the city and work off-peak," explains Bebbington. "The output of the Leith plant is being used to its maximum potential, as is its storage capacity, to ensure round the clock supply and meet the Scottish Executive's requirements for maintaining traffic flows."

Road closures are not allowed and to minimise disruption, RMC Viatex and

RMC Surfacing is maintaining highways in Scotland and RMC Materials is supplying the asphalt and aggregates



RMC has developed its strategy in Scotland with new plants at Leith Docks and Cowieslinn

Viapave thin surfacing materials have been used extensively. "This enables single lane working, with no need to lay chippings separately," says Bebbington.

Thin surfacing has, until recently, been used with caution in some areas in Scotland, where hot rolled asphalt has been the norm. However, RMC Materials has been undertaking an awareness-raising campaign to communicate the merits of the newer materials to local authorities and contractors (see box).

Thin surfacing materials such as Viatex and Viapave are relatively new to Scotland, says RMC Materials National Technical Manager Gordon Lemon. "Traditional rolled asphalt wearing course and chippings have been used successfully on the network and this is still the best solution for some Scottish roads. But in areas where noise reduction is a requirement or where working conditions are difficult, thin surfacing systems are extensively adopted," says Lemon.

Viatex and Viapave have a number of advantages and are laid in accordance with a strict quality assurance scheme. The actual mechanics of laying are less labour intensive than hot-rolled asphalt and laying can be carried out with less traffic disruption. RMC Materials' Marketing Manager in Scotland Steven Bebbington

The Cowieslinn plant came on stream in 2004 under the company's partnership agreement with Scottish Borders Council. "It's part of our strategy of developing close relationships with customers," explains Bebbington. "We supply Scottish Borders with all of its asphalt needs over a very large geographical area."

The council's Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) is very successful as a contracting organisation in its own right and most of the material it lays both for

adds: "We have carried out a programme of workshops with selected local authorities and other clients to raise awareness and inform them of the attributes of the new systems."

Surprisingly, the weather in Scotland is less of an issue than might be expected. Reasonably thick layers of thin surfacing, coupled with a relatively high bitumen content, have at times proved to be tolerant to quite adverse weather conditions. The Scottish Executive has been very proactive in its methods of specifying the requirements for new roads and have adopted mixtures with defined performance criteria.

"This, coupled with mandatory use of bond coats and particular attention to drainage, has resulted in a very forward-thinking method of pavement construction unique to Scotland," says Lemon.

the council and other clients is supplied by RMC Materials. The DLO also provides and applies bond coats as a subcontractor on RMC Surfacing jobs.

"The arrangement works incredibly well," says Bebbington.

Not all of RMC Materials' work in Scotland is carried out within the road maintenance partnerships. RMC Surfacing is currently working on the A80 Auchenkilns overpass where, as well as supplying surfacing materials, extensive amounts of temporary and permanent fill are being supplied from the company's quarries.

RMC Materials significantly expanded its position in the aggregates market in Scotland with the acquisition of Russell Quarry Products in 2000. The RMC Materials network of asphalt plants, strategically placed along the M8 corridor, means it is well positioned for work on the west of Scotland's motorway network too. "Our all round capability has proved an important factor," says Bebbington.

Following the recent acquisition of RMC Group by global building materials supplier CEMEX, RMC Materials and RMC Surfacing are now part of CEMEX UK Operations.

email hotline: info@modernasphalts.com