DRIVING DOWN ACCIDENT RISK
Local authorities turn to high friction surfacing to help make local roads safer.

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Welcome to the new look RSTA Ezine. Appropriately renamed ‘Renew’, the magazine examines the issues facing the maintenance and renewal of our greatest asset: the road network.

The parlous state of the UK road network is becoming ever more evident with a range of reports calling for greater certainty of funding. The Public Accounts Committee has criticised the Department for Transport’s piecemeal approach to road maintenance. The Local Government Association has described current funding systems as ‘dysfunctional’. Meanwhile, a recent national poll has found that 83% of people want a further £1 billion a year injected into roads maintenance.

Against this background, the road surface industry continues to work closely with councils, highway departments and road user groups to examine and develop cost-effective, long-term solutions. One such solution is high friction surfacing. The benefits and use of this proven road safety surface are now being re-examined by local authorities supported by new codes of industry best practice and training.

Working together will be the theme of next year’s RSTA Annual Conference details of which are available in this issue. The event will examine the need for greater collaboration between the major stakeholder groups serving the needs of different parts of the supply chain operating within the roads sector. Successfully combining examination of issues affecting the road maintenance sector, industry networking opportunities and a full social programme, the conference is usually a sell out with tickets selling quickly so you are advised to book your place sooner rather than later.

Howard Robinson
RSTA Chief Executive

RSTA is published twice a year by the Road Surface Treatments Association. For editorial and advertising enquires, contact Steve Elliott, Constructive Dialogue
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ABOUT THE RSTA
The Road Surface Treatments Association (RSTA) aims to raise awareness of the benefits of road surface treatments and promote work force competence and safe working practices.

Membership covers the whole supply chain and includes large national and regional contracting companies, Local Authority Direct Labour Services Organisations, materials and equipment suppliers, test houses and consultants.

Members are required to be registered with the National Highway Sector Scheme 13 or BBA/HAPAS Product Certification and Approved Installers Schemes as appropriate.

For further information on the RSTA, its objectives, membership and programme of industry initiatives and training visit www.rsta-uk.org.
The Department for Transport’s (DfT) piecemeal approach to road maintenance has been severely criticised by the Public Accounts Committee. Launching its report, ‘Maintaining strategic infrastructure – roads’, the Rt Hon Margaret Hodge MP, Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts, said: “Public satisfaction with the condition of our roads is at its lowest level since surveying of this began in 2008. In the last survey only 30% of the public were satisfied with the condition of the roads and the speed and quality of repairs.”

The report called for road investment to be spread more evenly throughout the year and pointed out the Highways Agency spent 3% of its roads maintenance budget in April 2013 and 21% the following March. Such inconsistency is inefficient and expensive. The Committee supports what the RSTA has long been campaigning for with its report stating that: “long-term programmes of preventative work are the most efficient way of maintaining road infrastructure.”

The inconsistency of funding was also criticised with the Committee stating that: “It seems ludicrous that in 2010 the Department cut road maintenance budgets by £1.2 billion over the four years to April 2011, but then has intermittently given £1.1 billion additional funding on nine separate occasions for various reasons, including response to flooding or winter damage to the roads.”

In particular, the Committee wants to see the DfT adhering to the long-term budget allocations that it has set out to allow local authorities’ supply chain to plan ahead confidently and efficiently. It wants inefficient local highways authorities to be identified and targeted with the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme. As part of this, DfT, the Highways Agency and local authorities should develop appropriate data and understanding of their road infrastructure, how this deteriorates over time and the cost of maintenance interventions.

“Long-term programmes of preventative maintenance are the most efficient way of maintaining road infrastructure.” RSTA

A new survey from the Local Government Association (LGA) found that 83% of people in recent national poll called for the Government to inject a further £1 billion a year into roads maintenance by investing the equivalent of just two pence per litre of existing fuel duty. This should not be paid for by increasing fuel duty rates. The poll also found that one in five respondents said they would be more likely to vote for a party which committed extra money to fixing the road network in next year’s General Election.

Councillor Peter Box, LGA Transport Spokesman, said: “We are all fed up with driving on crumbling roads that are not fit for the 21st century.

Councillors work hard to fix millions of potholes every year despite deep funding cuts and multi-million pound compensation costs. We want to do more but are trapped in a frustrating and endless cycle of only being able to patch up our deteriorating roads.

“This survey shows that the vast majority of people agree that a small amount of the billions they pay the Treasury each year at the pumps in fuel duty should be reinvested in local areas to bring our decaying roads up to scratch.”

[We are] trapped in a frustrating and endless cycle of only being able to patch up our deteriorating roads

LGA Transport Department
The Department for Transport has released the second impression of the “Safety at Street Works and Road Works, A Code of Practice” affectionately known as the ‘Red Book’. The Code was effective from 1st October 2014 when it superseded the 2001 edition.

The Code sets out the statutory requirements for signing, lighting and guarding at street works and road works.

This is the core reference manual for utility companies, local authorities, street work contractors and others whose day-to-day business involves street works (works by statutory undertakers and other utility companies, etc) and road works (works to maintain or repair road infrastructure).

The Code, which covers all of the UK and includes national variations, is now compulsory for highway/road authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It applies to all single carriageway roads and dual carriageways with a speed limit of 40 mph or less. The code is now divided into three parts: Basic Principles, Operations, and Equipment and Vehicles; site layout diagrams have been redrawn to make them easier to understand.

Within the new Code there is: increased emphasis on using risk assessment and guidance on what to consider in such assessments; strengthened guidance on providing for pedestrians and cyclists and new guidance on traffic control measures related to road closures, one-way working and temporary road obstructions; enhanced advice on other traffic control measures including works near tramways and railways, and mobile/short duration works; and updated advice on high visibility clothing and the signing and visibility requirements for work vehicles.

Click here to view the Code of Practice.

The RSTA has called for a measured appraisal of road surface dressing which is currently the subject of various motorcyclist e-petitions calling for its use to be banned.

Far from being dangerous, the use of surface dressing offers a proven and effective way to maintain the skid resistance and waterproofing of a road surface. Both are crucial for safe driving by removing the danger of polished road surfaces, reducing the problem of aquaplaning and preventing the ingress of water and the potential development of potholes. Furthermore, its application means that roads can be treated quickly and efficiently thereby reducing the need for lengthy road closures and subsequent congestion.

Surface dressing technology, particularly for the chipping binder, continues to develop and improve. In addition, the availability of Road Note 39, a RSTA Code of Practice and bespoke training courses ensure best practice installation.

Following completion of surface dressing there is a need for temporary speed restrictions to remain in place for 2-3 days to prevent the chippings from being torn out of the new road surface before being properly embedded. It is here where those drivers and motorcyclists who fail to abide by the advised speed restrictions report problems of loose chippings.

Abiding to the advised speed restrictions together with ensuring that contractors use the correct design and binder specification will minimise any loose chipping problem. Surface dressing is an established, proven process that, when properly designed, specified and executed, significantly improves the safety and performance of roads.
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DO POOR ROAD CONDITIONS INCREASE ROAD CASUALTIES?

Whilst there are no official studies into the correlation between poor road surface condition and road casualty figures, it should come as no surprise that the sharp increase in road accidents comes at a time of growing concern over the £12 billion backlog in road repairs.

Figures released by the Department for Transport (DfT) show a significant increase of 17% of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) on our roads in the first quarter of 2014 compared to 2013.

Worryingly, DfT figures also show that traffic volume has only risen by 4.1% over the same period leading to the conclusion that traffic casualties are rising much faster than traffic volume. In total, casualty figures, including slight injuries, rose to 45,960 – a rise of 15% from 39,751.

Although there are no actual figures to support the correlation, it would be surprising if there was no link between the deteriorating condition of road surfaces and the increase in road casualties. Potholes and reduced skidding performance have a direct impact on the safety of road surfaces.

A well-maintained road surface is a safe road surface.

The significant increase in road casualties points to the need for correct investment in long-term maintenance of our road network.

INTERNATIONAL REPORT UNDERLINES IMPORTANCE OF ROAD MAINTENANCE

A major report from the World Road Association calls for the importance of road maintenance to be recognised by decision makers, funded appropriately and be well managed to ensure maximum value is achieved. Inadequate levels of investment or poor management of the road network will have serious consequences for economies and social well-being.

The report draws on evidence from around the world and is available here.

IMPROVING DYSFUNCTIONAL ROAD MAINTENANCE FUNDING

The Local Government Association has published a report ‘Better Roads for England’ that highlights how the current systems for funding decision-making for road maintenance are broken and dysfunctional and that simply patching up roads and increase increasing capacity is not the long-term solution.

The report outlines a number of recommendations to address the pothole backlog and carry out maintenance at a lower cost. These include:

- Removing ring-fencing that divides transport spending into separate pots and is creating a dysfunctional and broken system – the report identified 20 different funding streams.
- The Government to inject an extra £1 billion a year to address the pothole backlog by investing the equivalent of 2 pence per litre from existing fuel duty to fix our local roads.
- Councils in England to have the same traffic management powers as London and Wales to reduce disruption, emissions and costs caused by congestion.
- Five-year transport funding allocations so councils can better plan preventative work.

The report is available here.
Here, at the IHE we have long championed the view that good asset management is more effective than reactive maintenance. The way forward is a proactive approach to highways maintenance with a significant, sustained and planned approach to asset renewal. This is underlined by the recent report from the Public Accounts Committee which concurs with our view that unpredictable and fluctuating budgets put value for money at risk.

In order to address this, the Department for Transport must ensure that the Highway Agency has the right capital and revenue balance. A healthy revenue balance is essential to maintaining the asset and ultimately reduces the pressure on the capital spend to replace worn out and poorly maintained infrastructure.

In addition to a deteriorating road network, budget cuts means that local authorities have been losing a significant number of experienced engineers. As a result, many do not have the resources or will to support quality continued professional development which has led to a shortage of registered engineers in local authorities. These engineers are essential in delivering change and developing good practice which is a key objective of the government’s Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme.

Without sustained and sensible funding of strategic infrastructure, the physical state of the UK’s road network and the availability of skilled engineers to undertake the necessary maintenance is at risk.

At the IHE we are taking steps to ensure that highway practitioners can maintain the long-term asset management of the road network by promoting highway asset management principles and training, encouraging high engineers to maintain an asset register and plan and encouraging collaborative working particularly between the Highways Agency and local authorities for better coordination of works and co-procurement.

The way forward is a proactive approach to highways maintenance with a significant, sustained and planned approach to asset renewal.

Traditionally, funding has been distributed according to a fixed formula that has outgrown both its relevance and its usefulness – a figure was calculated to support a timeworn analysis of assets that neither encouraged nor rewarded innovation and efficiency. Each year funding would go up and down using the formula, based solely on availability of funding, rather than on an assessment of needs. However, as the damage inflicted on our road networks by extreme weather has highlighted all too clearly, this formulaic approach is no longer working.

ADEPT has long argued for change. While we know that full-blown ring fencing will not be on the agenda, we still need a system that recognises that different elements of our road infrastructure, particularly the less obvious such as drainage, foundations and bridges, need to be properly resourced.

What is needed is a new analysis. We must define what is the optimum condition for our road networks in terms of serviceability and resilience and from there determine what level of funding is required to bring all our local and national infrastructure to that level over a period of time. With that starting point we can then assess what future funding would be required to maintain our roads at that optimum level.

Understandably, particularly with local authorities under pressure, much of the available funding has gone to the more visible elements of road maintenance that are high profile in the public perception. This has meant that the long term stability and resilience of some of the highways network has been progressively undermined.

We need to change this. Welcomed increased in capital maintenance funding offers a promise of stability. This is important as long term investment certainty leads to sector confidence. Alongside this, in response to increased pressure the public sector is undergoing a drive for transformation, bringing increases in efficiency of delivery that also have the potential to bring positive change. The time is right for the development of a new, more sustainable mechanism for maintenance funding.
Despite being used throughout the UK since the 1960s and being recognised as playing a major role in improving road safety, high friction surfacing has been prevented from gaining wider acceptance in the UK over the past few years as a result of client concerns around increasing cost and perceived poor durability. This is now changing as the cost balance is turning in favour of high friction surfacing and forward-thinking local authorities are reappraising its road safety benefits.

High friction surfacing is a proven road surface treatment that increases skid resistance and reduces braking distance thereby reducing the potential for accidents. Typical locations for high friction surfacing include road junctions, approaches to traffic lights, pedestrian crossings and roundabouts as well as road stretches that have high accident levels.

With a skid accident reduction of often 50% being reported its success speaks for itself. It saves lives and money. Treatment with high friction surfacing makes potentially high risk road locations far safer for both drivers and pedestrians and the financial savings of achieving this are considerable.

Despite the benefits of high friction surfacing over the last few years the market has witnessed a serious decline due in large part to local authority perceived concerns about surface life (durability) and increasing costs. However, since the 1980s this cost has been able to be balanced against a broader savings strategy with allocated accident investigation and prevention budgets proving the investment savings from high friction surfacing against the cost of accidents and casualties. A third issue was the lack of best practice guidance and practical operative training.

With the RSTA soon to launch a new video highlighting the benefits of high friction surfacing, Renew takes the opportunity to spotlight this proven road safety surface.

With the associated accident and investigation costs of non-motorway fatal accidents calculated to be £1.4 million, the application of high friction surfacing offers considerable financial value.

With a skid accident reduction of often 50% being reported its success speaks for itself.
RSTA with support from ADEPT (Association of Directors of Economy, Environment, Planning and Transport), has developed industry guidance to address client concerns over product durability. Two key documents are available: a Code of Practice and a Service Life document.

The Service Life of Surface Treatments establishes the service life of a range of road surface treatments including high friction surfacing and by doing so provides a nationally agreed baseline for durability. Having such an agreed baseline is invaluable for lifecycle planning and asset management. The service life is dependent upon a number of important factors including site location and traffic volumes, surface preparation, method of working and workforce competence based on training and qualifications.

The Code of Practice provides best practice guidance for ensuring that the baseline service life is achieved. Aimed at both client and contractor, the Code examines the application of both hot and cold high friction surfacing systems and provides practical guidance and technical details for their specification and installation. All issues concerning planning, health and safety and work execution are examined and full reference is made to relevant regulations, standards and training. In all, the Code provides definitive guidance on the right way to specify and apply high friction surfacing.

A common theme to both publications is the need for practical NVQ level training to ensure operative and supervisor competence and technical knowledge.

A new BBA survey has underlined the performance of High Friction Surfacing (HFS). In 2013, the BBA agreed with its high friction stakeholder group (SG1) to complete the visual condition survey of BBA HAPAS Approved High Friction Systems. Consequently, a study has been undertaken of 220 randomly selected sites that include all generic HFS types and sites from the BBA extensive assessment database plus witnessed installations.

In early 2014, interim findings covering 209 of the 220 sites investigated were reported to SG1 and HiTAC – the BBA Highways Technical Advisory Committee. The findings included:

- All systems achieved a visual condition rating of ‘acceptable’ or better up to and beyond five years.
- Only 12 sites were found to be of ‘suspect’ visual condition before five years. Of these, seven were found to be affected by factors other than the material while five had no obvious contributory factors.
- Substrate type, condition and preparation had the greatest visual condition impact

The findings supported SG1 discussions on what factors affect the visual condition of HFS. To explore this further it was agreed that the survey would continue and be expanded to include additional sites and analysis to include:

- More sites older than five years
- More sites identified from installer records where no third party audit of installation had taken place
- Impact of time of year
- Recommendation to Highway Authorities to carry out physical testing of older sites to correlate visual condition with skid resistance.

BBA has used the 2014/15 season to incorporate the first three points. The fourth may form part of future works. The final report will be available at the end of 2014 and available on the BBA website early 2015.

Copies of The Service Life of Surface Treatments and the Code of Practice for High Friction Surfacing are available as downloads from www.rsta-uk.org/publications.

Details of training courses are available on the RSTA website: www.rsta-uk.org/calendar.
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SECTOR UPDATE

Surface Dressing

A critical issue resulting from the growth in surface dressing over recent years is aggregate availability and a shortage of hauliers particularly during peak season.

With the upturn in the asphalt market expected over the next few years driven by new government investment in roads this situation could get worse before it improves. The integrated quarrying industries will obviously feed aggregate into asphalt in preference to surface treatments so unless preferential supply agreements are put in place the sector looks set to struggle to secure the necessary volumes of aggregates from mainland suppliers. This will further encourage contractors to look overseas to bridge the supply gap. Likewise there is a growing shortage of contract hauliers particularly during peak season to transport and deliver chippings for use in surface dressing. Again there would appear to be no quick fix.

High Friction Surfacing

The main issue facing HFS over the past few years has been the decline in the HFS market driven by client concerns over perceived poor durability. This has resulted in a campaign initiated by RSTA and supported and driven by the BBA to produce a definitive study based on a two year audit of over 200 sites around the UK to once and for all prove the durability is 5-10 years not 2-3 years as many authorities perceive.

The RSTA will be working closely with all of the major client bodies during 2015 to raise awareness of this new report to rebuild confidence and reverse the recent trend in the market.

Geosynthetics & Steel Meshes

The sector has been particularly industrious over recent years and months in drafting a new specification clause 936 with the Highways Agency for inclusion in the Specification for Highway Works and contributing to a new chapter in HD37 part of the Design Manual (DMRB).

Clause 936 is expected to be published as an Interim Advice Note early next year and later included in the SHW at the next revision. In addition the sector has also recently become incorporated within Sector Scheme 13 for the supply and application of surface treatments to road surfaces demonstrating workforce competency particularly for installation.

Slurry Surfacing

The Slurry Surfacing market has also continued to grow in recent years and aggregate availability is again an issue with a very limited number of quarries that can supply the sector. This is because the aggregates used have to have the right chemistry and mineralogy to ensure good coating and compatibility with the bitumen emulsions used to manufacture the end products.

The Code of Practice has recently undergone a peer review with ADEPT and has subsequently been amended and re-issued available at www.rsta-uk.org/publications.

Six of the eight European Standards for Testing Slurry Surfacings are under 5 year review and are expected to go to CEN enquiry during the first half of 2015. A new Airfield standard is also progressing through CEN.

Specialist Treatments

The Specialist Treatments Sector is a catch all for other types of surface treatments including; Patching products and services; Asphalt preservation systems; In-situ Recycling; Re-texturing and Surface Re-profiling; Grouted Macadam; Crack & Joint Repair Systems and Skid Resistance measurement.

The sector is divided into a number of sub-sector committees who meet on a regular basis and progress industry level initiatives ranging from the development of Codes of Practice, training courses, marketing/communication activities, stakeholder engagement and dealing with standardisation matters.

A new guidance document has been published by RSTA covering installation of Geosynthetics under Surface Dressings to extend the range of application onto cracked roads and to extend the service life of surface dressings. A new CPD training course has been developed by RSTA with support from CITB and will be available in the new year for anyone who needs to understand more about Geosynthetics and Steel Meshes.

The RSTA will be hosting a seminar next Spring in Wolverhampton to further raise the profile of these products.
The RSTA has launched a tablet and smartphone app for its programme of training courses and events. The app provides instant access to and updates on RSTA event presentations and seminar programmes. For iPhones and iPads, the app can be downloaded via the Apple App store and typing 'RSTA Events'. For Android phones or tablets go to Google Play and type RSTA Events. Windows 8 and BlackBerry phone users need to go to www.rstaapp.com or www.rstaevents.com

"The RSTA app is the latest in the range of information dissemination tools used by the Association to further its work with and for the road maintenance sector", said Howard Robinson, RSTA Chief Executive. "Currently it is used for our events and training programme but we hope to expand it as a news service of RSTA road maintenance initiatives."

The theme for the 2015 RSTA Conference is based around the need for greater collaboration, a ‘better together’ approach between the major stakeholder groups serving the needs of different parts of the supply chain operating within the roads sector.

All of these groups have common areas of interest and priorities that overlap so in theory there should be opportunities for these groups to work more closely together on matters such as lobbying for more funding, training provision, working to make the industry more attractive for new entrants and improving standards on health and safety.

The 2015 conference will explore how the Highways Term Maintenance Association (HTMA) is playing a leading role in the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) providing new standards and toolkits for improving local authority services; examine how the Local Government Technical Advisors Group (TAG) is serving the needs of its members; learn from the Midlands Highway Alliance on how to extract better value from the supply chain and understand how the new Go-Co emerging from the Highways Agency becoming a government regulated company will operate and what this will mean for its supply chain partners.

With government looking to significantly increase expenditure and investment on the road network over the next spending period it makes sense to reconsider the current challenges facing the roads sector particularly regarding our capacity to meet growing demand for improved efficiencies, better products and services and importantly working towards a safer working environment including better training provision for our workforce.

The 2014 RSTA conference was a sell-out. With demand growing year-on-year it is strongly advised to book your place and tables early to avoid disappointment.

For further information click here.

The University of Derby in partnership with RSTA and the Institute of Asphalt Technology has launched a new nationally recognised qualification to help equip highway engineers with the skills they need to fix the UK’s crumbling roads.

The University Diploma in Road Surface Technology is a nine month distance learning course. Learning materials are delivered online and students are supported by tutors online and via the telephone. Subjects covered include paving materials, environmental management, health and safety, treating surfaces, maintaining pavements and contracts management.

Launching the new diploma, programme leader Dr Tony Stock said: This is the first higher education qualification for road surface treatments and is a real step forward for those who wish to set themselves apart from the rest of the industry.”

For further information click here.

Road maintenance app

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