

Accredit where it's due

Qualifying for road maintenance accreditation schemes takes a lot of work. Malcolm Chalmers, managing director of Rhino Asphalt Solutions outlines the advantages.

Every industry has a seemingly endless list of accreditations for companies to strive to achieve, and the road maintenance sector is no exception. The British Board of Agrément (BBA) alone offers a variety of approvals - but only if you are prepared to work for them.

So how many companies are actually prepared to do what it takes to achieve such accreditations? What is the true value to the accredited companies and their customers? And, most importantly, does the value of accreditation outweigh the cost - i.e. is the investment worth it?

What are they?

The BBA is the UK's major approval body for new construction products and installers. Its Agrément Certificates are recognised by specifiers and other industry decision-makers as proof that the products covered by them have been rigorously assessed, will allow compliance with Building Regulations to be achieved and will last for a defined period.

The most relevant accreditation for the highways industry is undoubtedly HAPAS - the Highway Authorities Product Approval Scheme. HAPAS was set up by the Highways Agency, CSS and the British Board of Agrément, with the objective of developing national approval arrangements for innovative products, materials and systems for use in highways and related areas. This removes the need for individual authorities to carry out their own assessments and tests.

Benefits

I know the advantages of being a fully-

accredited supplier. At Rhino, last month alone, we received two new accreditations - HAPAS approval for our crack and joint repair solution, Jointmaster™, and ISO 18001 Health & Safety standard - there is little doubt in my mind that they are a valuable asset.

Accreditations provide our customers with a cast-iron quality assurance and, for us as a company; this 'badge of trust' inspires confidence in our products and services. More importantly, it enhances our reputation and underpins our core company value: excellent customer service.

But, however clear the benefits of achieving accreditations, arriving at this stage entails a considerable investment of both time and money. HAPAS approval can take anywhere between one to two years to achieve and costs at least £20,000 per product. This time-consuming and very involved process involves laboratory and witness testing, site inspection and evaluation of the source of production of the material under assessment, plus the investigation of existing test or performance information. I believe that this is probably why so many road repair and maintenance companies only seek a minimum number of accreditations. For some, the focus is just on the ones that the industry requires in order for them to be allowed to conduct business. In fact, a company could probably operate at present without a single accreditation.

For me, the accreditation process clearly separates the dedicated from the uncommitted. It highlights those companies that are forward-thinking



enough to understand the advantages (despite the cost and consumption of senior executive's time). These are the companies that realise that the investment will benefit their customers and therefore themselves in the long-run.

Accreditations represent a company's commitment to customers - going a step further, beyond the required and committing to continuous improvement.

At the outset, the Directors of Rhino agreed that striving for continuous improvement would underpin our corporate culture. Our commitment is highlighted by our already extensive list of accreditations which (in addition to the previously mentioned ISO 18001 & Jointmaster BBA HAPAS) include:

- ISO 14001 environmental accreditation
- CHAS accreditation (Contractors Health & Safety Assessment Scheme)
- Quality Assurance to ISO 9001
- BBA HAPAS approval for the unique 5 year guaranteed ironwork repair system

Accreditations stop companies becoming complacent and set in their ways, and in any industry, that can only be a good thing.