

Area 8 signs up to HIP



Highways Agency Area 8 is embarking on several major re-signing projects, with 3M™ High Intensity Prismatic (HIP) Reflective Sheeting as the material of choice throughout the region.

From his desk overlooking the A14 near Kettering, Kevin Sands surveys the northern reaches of Area 8. And it's from here that he has overseen the introduction of HIP signs to major routes such as the M1, A1(M), and M11. He's currently working on the replacement of 200 signs on the A5, all of which will be made using HIP.



Microprismatic technology

HIP uses similar technology to that employed in the high performance Diamond Grade materials, although it has to be stressed that HIP is strictly a Class Ref 2 material. Nonetheless, the microprisms used in HIP are much more efficient than glass beads at reflecting more light back to the driver. So a HIP sign is brighter and easier to read in all light and weather conditions.

“They are better without a doubt,” confirms Kevin. “I’ve noticed a significant difference even in the daytime, but the difference is especially noticeable at night. HIP is much better than the old glass bead sheeting.”

The improvement is not just apparent in the superior reflectivity, but also in the colour contrast and angularity.

Preferred choice

HIP is available in white, yellow, red, blue and Interstate green, and it isn't just the specifiers who consider it their material of choice. Many signmakers prefer HIP because it is easy to work with, and because they can offer a 12 year Performance Guarantee on the product, rather than the 10 years available on glass beaded materials.

“When the situation demands a Class Ref 2 material, I can't see why anyone would opt for anything less” concludes Kevin.

Positive response

As project engineer with URS, seconded to the joint venture with Carillion, Kevin is part of the team contracted by the Highways Agency to manage Area 8. He first specified HIP soon after its launch in October 2004 in a major project to replace many of the one mile ADS signs on the Area 8 motorways. “I was introduced to HIP as a material with a superior reflectivity and performance guarantee compared to other High Intensity materials, but with an equivalent price,” he recalls.

Of course, since January 2006, BS EN 12899-1 has replaced BS873 part 6, so HIP is now designated as Class Ref 2, rather than class one. What hasn't changed is the fact that HIP is the best performing material in its class.

