

# Brighter future for Dearne Valley

The regeneration of the Dearne Valley has involved the construction of new roads and new signs made from 3M™ Diamond Grade™ VIP Reflective Sheeting.

For decades, the Dearne Valley was home to some of the richest coal seams in Yorkshire. Towns to the east and west of Barnsley that were once synonymous with a thriving UK coal industry became associated with the closures that took place during the 1980s and 1990s.

These closures left the area in need of new jobs, new infrastructure and a major environmental improvement programme. In 1995 the area was designated a 10 year Enterprise Zone, offering employers and investors significant financial incentives to help rejuvenate the area. Since then, more than £200 million of private funding has been invested in offices, light industrial and distribution schemes and over 50 major employers have been attracted to the area. This has resulted in the creation of at least 10,000 new jobs, and the Dearne Valley is now seen as one of the UK's most successful regeneration initiatives.

## Road improvements

The regeneration of local industry has also resulted in the need to upgrade many local road links. One of the first phases of the scheme was the completion of the Shafton Bypass.

A steadily increasing build up of traffic at the junction of the A628 (linking Barnsley and Hemsworth) with Engine Lane (the back road to Grimethorpe) had convinced Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) engineers of the need for the bypass. The bypass was also seen as the next stage in the development of important business links.

The scheme involved the construction of 2.2km of new single carriageway, incorporating 3 new roundabouts, 1 mini roundabout and a pedestrian overbridge.

## Very important project

All signing on the new route was constructed by Signature Ltd, using 3M™ Diamond Grade™ VIP Reflective Sheeting.

*"I was already familiar with Diamond Grade sheeting from my involvement with the Sheffield VIP Demonstration Project in 1996 and its all round performance made it ideal for this project,"* says Gary McNaught, Principal Engineer Traffic Management & Road Safety, Barnsley MBC.

Diamond Grade VIP Reflective Sheeting is a wide-angle prismatic retroreflective sheeting that performs especially well for drivers at disadvantaged positions, such as high up in the cab of a lorry. Given the amount of commercial traffic anticipated for the new route, especially once it is linked to the M1 at Junction 36, its benefits to lorry drivers were a valuable consideration.

## Long lifetime

Ironically, despite the long lifetime of the signs (all have a 12 year guarantee), several of the new signs are due for an early retirement. More new roads are under construction, and the Shafton Bypass is due to be extended up around Cudworth in the near future.

*"New signs will have to be erected to accommodate these changes," says Gary. "When that happens, we'll also be adding 3M™ Dew Resistant Sheeting to the signs, since the new road is sited in a part of the Dearne Valley that can be prone to fog and mist cover."*

It seems clear that the prospects for the Dearne Valley look a lot brighter now than they did ten years ago.

