



Bringing the City Back to Life

IHT Effective Partnership Award 2008

Portsmouth's road network and the city overall have been transformed. From a starting point of underfunded, deteriorating highways in 2005, a partnership of Portsmouth City Council and Colas, has raised the condition and cleanliness of Portsmouth's roads and streets – and lifted quality of life in the city. This highly effective partnership has been developed with the Portsmouth public during the procurement and operation of a pioneering highway and street maintenance PFI contract.

Planning and shared goals

At the outset, a Network Board of senior level representation from Portsmouth City Council (PCC) and Colas was established to oversee delivery and an early partnering workshop was held to establish shared goals and objectives.

Rejuvenating the city by bringing its roads up to a good condition and then maintaining that standard were vital targets. As were developing a proactive approach, encouraging a team spirit, delivering innovation and seeking excellence in customer service.

Demonstrating a clear identity for the partnership also became a high priority. This resulted in the 'Portsmouth – Streets Ahead' brand, which is now displayed on all literature, clothing, signs, vehicles and the website of the PCC/Colas partnership. The Portsmouth public can identify a consistent and courteous face of the Colas maintenance teams – with smart, branded workwear and equipment – and streets left clean after work is finished.

Portsmouth - Streets Ahead



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Implementation and management

The partnership developed a five year programme of capital works to be carried out alongside routine cleaning and maintenance activities. The public has been kept informed – through the Streets Ahead website and through regular letter drops carried out in affected streets before work is due to start.



Colas and PCC managers also attend monthly Resident Committee meetings in all of Portsmouth’s wards, to inform communities and listen to feedback and the concerns of residents.

This effective communication has led to the Partnership taking on more responsibility and helping other community groups. With private sector developers, for example, PCC and Colas have agreed a programme of road and streetworks improvements to compliment major commercial regeneration projects – including the redevelopment of Portsmouth’s Northern Quarter. Gone are the days of new prestige developments being adjoined by poorly maintained streets.

“We have seen a remarkable transformation in the city as a result of the council’s pioneering partnership with Colas. The improved condition of roads, pavements and streetlighting is making a vital contribution to the well being of the city’s economy.”

Dr Paul Edmonson-Jones, Portsmouth Local Strategic Partnership



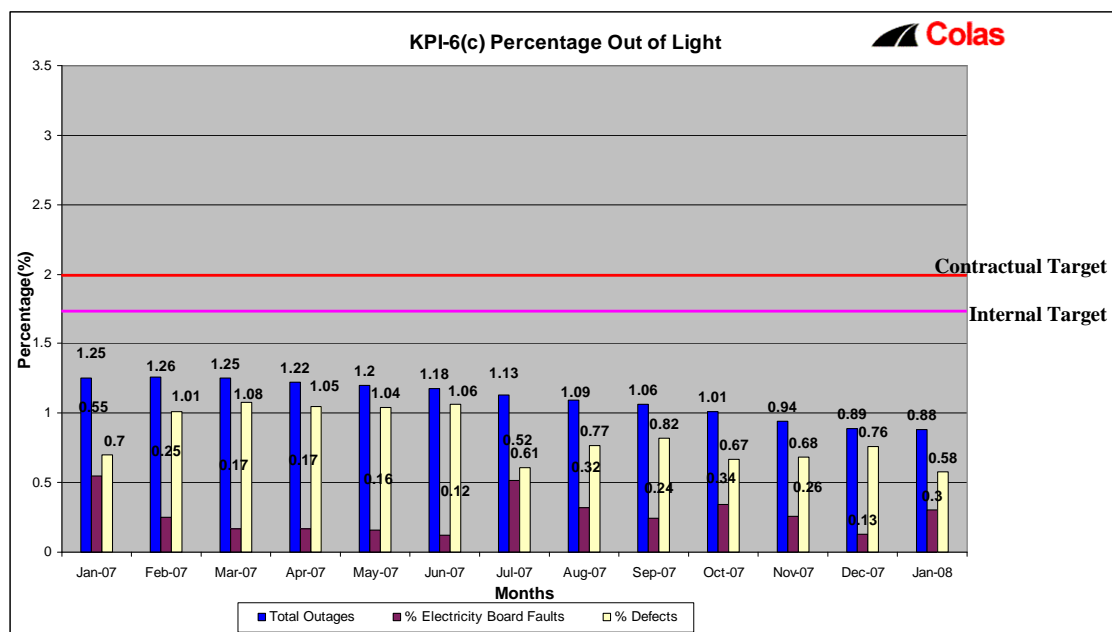
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Performance measures

The Partnership is more than half way through a £60M core investment programme. In three years, close to 1Mm² of carriageway has been resurfaced and over 7000 streetlights replaced – in line with the contract’s built-in ‘step-ups’ in road condition index and exceeding the KPI (Key Performance Indicator) lighting target of less than 2% ‘out of light’ (Colas has achieved 1% and it’s still falling).



(Source; KPI 6 - (BVPI 215a&b) Street Lighting, 2007)

These are typical of excellent KPI results achieved so far. Also noticeable from comments received from the people of Portsmouth, are the knock-on positive effects to their quality of life.

“Members of the Portsmouth Pensioners Association recognise improvements made in the quality of roads and pavements across the city and compliment Colas on the quality of its work and its workforce. This is our city and the roads and pavements are of paramount importance, especially to older people.”

PPA President, Muriel Deacon



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Benefits for the partners

Transfer of risk and long term maintenance to Colas has given opportunity to demonstrate in Portsmouth a wide range of innovative solutions; surfacing products and techniques which would otherwise be difficult to pursue. These include Colas's Streetprint footway surfacing, it's Retread and Repave pavement recycling techniques, as well as the Vegecol non-hydrocarbon, vegetable based asphalt binder.



In return, PCC is gaining an entire road and street network maintained to a good standard, in just five years. It is also getting immediate response to any emergency or urgent situation due to Colas's front line role and deployment of a knowledgeable, locally based workforce.

Benefits for the wider community

Queen Street and the Carnegie Library project are examples of the Partnership working effectively for Portsmouth's local communities. In the case of the latter example, working with Portsmouth's Probationary Service and Community Services teams, Colas crews have been training young offenders while supervising their work on the library gardens – to get them into employment and out of the cycle of re-offending.



On Queen Street – previously a wide road with insufficient safety features – a series of accidents led to protests from local residents. Colas and its partners were able to commence safety improvements – traffic calming, resurfacing and other features – within two weeks and combine all maintenance and capital work in one project.

Such combining of tasks is now being done all over Portsmouth. Public consultation has shown residents prefer their roads to be treated in one ‘hit’. Colas’s deep cleanse treatment is now a total maintenance procedure. Residents of each street receive a letter drop; cars moved if needed, then street and gully cleaning, road and footway repairs and new lighting activities performed in one visit.



Best value and cost benefit

Benefits in terms of cost and value developed by the Partnership can be considered at a macro and micro level. At a macro level, added value is being provided to the Portsmouth environment through an enhanced transport network, which is attracting tourism, investment and development projects, such as the Northern Quarter and its associated economic and social benefits.

At the micro level, the contract achieves best value and cost benefits through protection of assets, preventative maintenance and adoption of a long term, sustainable approach.



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For the first time, engineers are able to consider best value and cost benefits through a strategic outlook, with an eye on long term maintenance and whole life cost.



Summary

Life has improved for the public and community groups of Portsmouth – as a direct result of the PCC/Colas partnership. The Portsmouth PFI stands as a Best Value Pathfinder Project in UK road maintenance for unitary authorities. But it is the PCC/Colas approach to consulting, listening and acting on the public’s wishes and the partnership’s close and highly visible work within the community that are the most telling signs of how effective the partnership has become.

“The ground breaking PFI is really lifting the city, reducing fear of crime and making people feel that the whole city is clean. The Carnegie Library project was actually borne from the vision of a man called Clive Garnet who is working to improve facilities for disabled persons. He approached Colas and the community service teams and was delighted at the result. It was a pleasure to see a vision turned into reality by effective partnerships and a desire to work together to get things done.”

Portsmouth City Council, Clean City Manager, Clive Rankin