

## Chief Executive's Update

### Q4 2011

**This is always a particularly busy time of the year as the year end approaches. The weather is proving to be a 'normal' winter, certainly compared to last year. This is helping production at all our locations and, with two weeks left to go as I write this, I am confident that we will meet the forecast performance for 2011, which is a very robust one in light of the ongoing market conditions and wider economic climate.**

Looking at our health and safety performance, it is very heartening to see that the Accident Severity Rate is, at the time of writing, at an all time low of 1.24. The number of accidents remains stubbornly stuck at broadly similar levels to 2009 and 2010, with an Accident Frequency Rate of 0.34. So all in all a very encouraging trend in terms of the seriousness of accidents, and a reminder that we need to continually keep a focus on preventing all accidents.

In Cubis, this has been a very strong

year, with September being a record month in terms of both sales and profitability. The division held a very productive and successful Strategic Growth Conference in Liverpool at the beginning of December, organised by Andrew Wright. The feedback received has been tremendously positive about the prospects, both at home and abroad, evidenced recently by another potentially very large overseas order, this time from Rio Tinto in Australia for chambers. All three factories continue to perform well, and a specific mention goes to Derek Williamson and Sheila McGuire, who have been splitting their time between Lurgan and Liverpool, helping to streamline the operations more efficiently against the backdrop of huge increases in outputs.

Farrans will also have another strong year. I visited the three regions recently to hear briefings on the outlook and prospects for 2012 onwards, and to go out and visit some of the sites. I found these visits to be very motivating, to meet the people that are making the business tick and to witness the strong team spirit that prevails in the three operations. The work already secured for 2012 is very encouraging as well,

with the focus now being on making sure that the current contracts perform as forecast, and to secure work for 2013 onwards. It is worth noting that, for the second year running, Farrans walked away with the award for overall 'Construction Project of the Year' at the recent CEF awards ceremony, beating off some very stiff competition.

Things are also moving in the Materials division, with North Down quarry particularly busy, transporting well in excess of 5,000 tonnes of aggregate per day to the Farrans job at D1 in Belfast Harbour. Blacktop volumes are also very good, although we are not helped by the huge increases in commodity prices, most notably bitumen. Good progress continues to be made on getting prices up to more sustainable levels across the product range. Keith Wood organised a divisional Sales Training Programme, held recently in Lisburn, an event similar to one held earlier in the year for Roadstone Wood. This was a very productive two days, despite the gloom in the marketplace, and resulted in some good recommendations and initiatives for 2012. In terms of new markets, sales of roof tiles have now commenced, tentatively, into the GB market,

in conjunction with our sister CRH company, Forticrete. Good volumes of aggregate are also being shipped into the UK and this is a market that the guys are looking to increase in 2012.

At group level, work is progressing well on a £500k investment in a new I.T. network at Dunmurry, something that you will all see the benefit of in early 2012. Another £1m investment is also being rolled out; the Command Alkon integrated software and hardware solution for the whole Materials business, replacing the old outdated LCS system, and this is also going along well. In Cubis, the Javelin system, formerly known as Jobshop, is well on its way to being fully implemented. Both Command and Javelin will result in much more information about the whole process from the order, manufacture and dispatch stages through to invoicing and getting cash in and this will help management drive through greater efficiencies in production.

It only remains for me to wish all of you and your families a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year, and may 2012 be healthy, enjoyable and profitable for us all.

**Mark Lowry Dec 2011**

## Make Safety Your Right Choice

**As we approach the end of another year the effort and commitment dedicated to improving health and safety standards remains undiminished across the Northstone divisions.**

However, it is with great sadness we report that it has not been a good year in the wider CRH family across the world in relation to health and safety. In 2011 to date there have tragically been 12 fatalities with 7 of these being in CRH Group subsidiaries and 5 occurring in joint ventures. A review of circumstances of these fatalities reveals work activities with which we are familiar in Northstone such as isolation of fixed plant, electrical hazards, falls from height and site transport operations. This is a salutary lesson to us all that we MUST comply fully with the CRH Europe Materials Fatality Prevention Rules. There are no exceptions.

The health and safety performance at Northstone in the year to date indicates an increase in accident frequency and a decrease in accident severity when compared to the same period last year. The table below illustrates our performance.

On a very positive note, our safety observations continue to rise with some 3484 being recorded so far this year. We have exceeded our target for the number of safety training hours delivered to employees at 14.66 per employee. Every operational employee has also had the opportunity to engage in a health and safety related discussion this year.

A review of incidents at Northstone over the last few years would indicate that we should all pay more care and attention when undertaking routine, none hazardous or low risk tasks. Typical examples of these tasks which have resulted in accidents are as follows:-

- stepping out of mobile plant and vehicles
- closing doors on vehicles
- not following safe pedestrian routes during icy conditions
- stepping off ladders onto the ground
- wearing personal protective equipment incorrectly
- using improper access equipment
- using the wrong tool for the job
- not keeping work areas tidy

Our New Year Resolution should be to prevent accidents by paying more attention to our own health and safety when undertaking day to day activities.

The Northstone Safety Practitioners Group of David Smyth, John Evans, Joe Brankin and Alex Anderson have met since the September edition of Northlink was published with Mark Lowry chairing the meeting. At the meeting the recent CRH health and safety audits of the Cubis factory in Lurgan and the Farrans sites at Skainos and Belfast Harbour were reviewed. Our practitioners also continue to play an important role within the industry on raising standards in relation to working in the vicinity of underground services and overhead electricity lines.

**It only remains for the Northstone Health and Safety Team to wish you all a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.**

Period	No. of Accidents	Days Lost	Accident Frequency	Target	Accident Severity	Target
11 months to 30/11/2011	18	66	0.34	0.30	1.24	2.50
11 months to 30/11/2010	14	93	0.28	0.30	1.90	2.50



Receiving their long service awards (l-r) Margaret Baxter and Mary O'Neill with Graham McQuillan.

Northstone people across the three divisions have many characteristics but perhaps the most defining of these is the number who have spent most of their working lives with the Company. This level of service, commitment and experience sets us apart from our competitors. 2011 is certainly a milestone year in the working lives of Materials Division employees Margaret Baxter and Mary O'Neill as both completed 25 years service with the Company. The occasion was marked with a presentation of gold watches by Divisional Managing Director, Graham McQuillan.

Margaret joined R J Maxwell & Son Ltd, Coleraine on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1986 as a Purchase Ledger Payment Clerk following the closure of the Monsanto Plant in Coleraine. Her current role involves managing plant hire for the contracts department which ensures that the right machine and associated paperwork is always in place.

Mary also joined R J Maxwell & Son Ltd, Coleraine, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1986 as an accounts clerk. She is now a key member of the contracts team assisting the engineers in a range of duties.

Northlink congratulates Margaret and Mary on their long service awards.



*Michael Davy (assistant supervisor) uses the Javelin touch screen facility at the goods inward station in the CUBIS, Roscommon factory with Dominic McDonnell (day supervisor) learning more about the system from the employee manual.*

large reliance on manual input of data and massive duplication of labour in maintaining largely manual systems and as a result the potential for human error was high with these old systems. Implementation of Javelin began in early 2010 with the first module becoming active in Lurgan in July. By December 2010, Javelin was active across all three sites. Since implementation, more than 5000 different parts have been created on the system, which gives an idea of just how complex CUBIS' manufacturing processes can be. In the next twelve months, the system will also have fully operational 'MRP' (Materials Resource Planning) and shop floor data capture and capacity planning which already is being tested at all 3 locations. Patricia Burns, Director of Commercial Operations, said: "The task has been challenging to say the least as 2 years ago we operated primarily as 3 different locations and I believe Javelin has been the catalyst in the integration of Cubis. Whilst we have seen benefits in terms of increased capacity, delivery performance, stock control, standardised internal procedures and the culture change across the business we are now thinking as one! I believe in 2012 we will capitalise on the time and effort in terms of real time costings and essential management information enabling the Cubis business to grow and achieve its full potential."

## Javelin Hits the Target

The biggest change within CUBIS in 2011 has been the full implementation of Javelin, a common production planning and control system. Now providing a fully integrated IT platform for the entire division, the software has completely changed the way that the business operates internally. Previously known within the Company as Jobshop, it is a mere coincidence that the new athletic-styled name will really come into its own for CUBIS in an Olympic year. Javelin's major benefit is that it is a flexible system which can be adapted to suit the individual business' requirements. For CUBIS, it provides sales and purchase order processing and purchase order processing, stock control with multiple store locations and full integration with the COINS accounting system. Reports that analyse areas of the business can be easily created and used again with 'live' information. The team, which consisted of Patricia Burns, Graeme Pringle, Joe Brankin, Aoife Quinn, Darren Molyneux and Clive Kells, had a number of mammoth tasks to overcome in bringing three separate businesses together. Each had completely different IT systems and collectively had only spent £500 in IT software. There was a

## CUBIS builds for the future with successful sales conference

CUBIS has laid the groundwork towards further success with its first Strategic Growth Conference. The four-day event took place at the Albert Dock in Liverpool in the last week of November and involved 33 different people from across the organisation. The conference was designed to identify blockages that were limiting growth within the business and find resolutions so that the same problems would not still be encountered in 2012. This included issues surrounding customer service, inter-site communication, product development and sales and marketing. There was a lot of positive news to be heard with continued growth in the UK and French markets, a promising start to market entry into Germany and several exciting new products to come. There was also time for some team bonding in the evenings, with one of the highlights being a crazy golf competition where some of the more than occasional golfers let themselves down with very poor showings. The event was chaired by Andrew Wright, CUBIS Sales and Marketing Director, who was delighted with the impact the conference had.

"Everyone attended the conference with positivity and determination to resolve some of our issues," he said. "It was also a great opportunity for everyone within the company to see the good work that is being done across the business. Everyone walked away at the end of the week assured that we have great people and great products and thanks to events like this, will hopefully have a great future."

*(l-r) James McNaught and Graeme Pringle take time during a break out session at the Conference to keep in touch with their customers*



## Continuous Improvement at Liverpool

**The CUBIS Industries Liverpool site has undergone many improvements in the last twelve months, with changes that affect productivity, the working environment, energy efficiency and other operational aspects. Andy Hobbis, the Director of Site Operations at Liverpool, and his team are on target for 100 site improvements in 2011, which range from small ideas to large projects.**

*"The most pleasing development this year has been the very evident cultural change in the factory," remarked Andy "which has seen more of our people taking personal responsibility for their own health and safety as well as the general factory environment. This has been driven by Charlie Gibson with the help of the shift leaders and I have no doubt that this has resulted from the achievement of the key performance indicator in employee involvement."*

Other improvements in the factory include installing shadow boards for tool storage and the purchase of a new multi-headed spindle tool that massively improves the rate of cutting of duct entries in access chamber sections.



*(l-r) Charlie Gibson identifies another potential improvement at Liverpool to colleagues Simon Leak and Matt Conway.*

In addition, all compression tools now have been coated with paint which contains insulation beads (as developed by NASA) that improves heat transfer.

A new meeting room has also been constructed with the technical and product development staff now located in the former conference room. This has provided better facilities for the busy technical team and will allow other office-based staff to make the most of the additional available space. Drinking water throughout the factory and offices is now filtered through the mains. This is better for housekeeping as there are no empty containers and it doesn't have to be re-ordered. In addition, the supplier of the filters also makes a donation to the charity, Water Aid, for every one fitted in the factory which helps provide safe drinking water to the world's poorest countries. Congratulations to Andy, Charlie and the whole team at Liverpool on their various initiatives and here's to another year of continuous improvement at the CUBIS Liverpool factory and in the Division's other locations.



**Charlie makes his Debut**

*Mr Song and Dance Man - Charlie Dunne takes centre stage.*

**The Longford Variety Group, which has raised in excess of Euro 75,000 for local charities over the last ten years, has a new cast member – the one and only Charlie Dunne, site production manager at the CUBIS Roscommon site.**

Alongside his wife Maureen, Charlie and a host of local talent from the Longford region formed a cast of over 70 people recently to produce the show "Oh What A Night!" in the Backstage Theatre, Longford.

The show was a marvellous success with songs and dance sandwiched between comedy sketches with the theatre echoing to laughter throughout each night of the week long run. Charlie performed in a number of group songs and delivered dance routines throughout the show but his solo effort of 'What's Another Year' was a real show stopper given that this was his debut performance.

All the monies raised by the show went to a range of local charities, with in excess of Euro 6,000 being donated to Longford Homecare Hospice.

The show has been produced by Brian Murray for the past decade and he was ably assisted by choreographer, Aimee Duignan. It provides an opportunity for young people who want to get involved in song and dance and for them to grow in confidence. The Longford Variety Group can also avail of the musical talents of a five piece professional band under the leadership of Paul Guerny with all concerned providing their services voluntarily.

*"It feels great to be part of something so worthwhile that is doing something for worthwhile causes in the local community," said Charlie. "I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the worthwhile causes. Roll on next year!"*

**Take a bow Charlie Dunne.**

## Company of the Year

*A proud moment – Eamonn Sweeney (right) receives the Company of the Year Award from John Power (Director General of Engineers Ireland).*

promote innovation and sustainable improvements in quality and efficiency of service.

Eamonn Sweeney, the Farrans Managing Director, was clearly delighted with the Award; "The winning of this Award is further recognition of the progress we have made under the Farrans Advance Training Programme and other initiatives that we have implemented in the last year or so. There are very few organisations who are investing as much in the training and development of its people as we are. Hopefully this will give encouragement to more of our people at Farrans to continue with their own professional development and achieve their personal objectives."

Congratulations to Sean Bradley, Alex Anderson, Wendy Armstrong, Kevin McKeown and the rest of the team at Farrans for developing the Award submission and delivering the presentation for the 2011 Company of the Year.

**Engineers Ireland have a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Accredited Employer Scheme which seeks to encourage businesses to adopt best practice in the ongoing professional development of their engineering staff. Farrans Construction became accredited under the Scheme in 2010.**

In October 2011, Farrans Construction applied for and received the coveted CPD Company of the Year Award 2011 in the large sized company category. The Award recognises the Farrans alignment of its business need with the development and implementation of Lean Construction techniques to



*All smiles from a winning Farrans team. From the left Mark Lowry, Donald Doyle, Jim Keith (Belfast Boys Model School), Alan Logan (Belfast Boys Model School), Paul McClements, Damien Toner (Amey), Neil McStravick, John Cooper, Geoff Connor (Belfast Education and Library Board), Robert McAlister.*

Farrans Construction has again confirmed its status as the "Contractor of Choice" in Northern Ireland by winning the Overall Award for the Belfast Boys Model School project in the recent Construction Excellence Awards 2011 competition. The impressive school, which also won the Education Infrastructure award category in the competition, emerged as the ultimate winner for 2011 against strong competition from the other 14 award category winners. John Cooper, the contracts manager responsible for the project, told Northlink a little about what made the Boys Model School so special; "Every member of the Farrans project team on the Boys Model School deserves great credit because this accolade has been won by them. They produced a new build 15,000m<sup>2</sup> facility for over 900 pupils by taking design, innovation, buildability and their learning from other school projects to a new level. Their attention to detail was first class and this is vitally important when working on a school project. The true testimony of this is the fact that

we handed over a £27m contract to the client which was defect free. I could not be more proud of their performance." The Boys Model School is now very much the flagship of the Belfast Education and Library Board estate as it provides a template of how a school can not only meet the needs of its pupils and staff but also those of the wider community. The Farrans design also provided over 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of community facilities in the form of youth clubs, workshops and a medical centre within the socially disadvantaged area of north Belfast. Northlink congratulates John and the rest of the Farrans team on this magnificent effort.

The roll of honour is as follows:- Robert McAlister (Director), John Cooper (Contracts Manager), Paul McClements (Project Manager), Donald Doyle (Site Agent), Gerry Higgins (Quantity Surveyor), Lee Simpson, Julie McGuigan, Mark McCormack (Engineers), Michael Murnin (General Foreman), Neil McStravick (Design Manager), Siobhan White (Planner), Gary Blair (Buyer) and Sarah Wilson (Site Secretary).

## David Retires

**David Megaw, our well respected Commercial Director at Farrans, retires at the end of 2011 after 32 years of dedicated service and commitment to the business. David took time recently to share his thoughts with Northlink as he contemplates leaving Farrans;**

"I leave Farrans in a few weeks time with much fondness for the Company and its people. I joined Farrans in 1979 having worked previously for another large contractor. At the time I had no doubts whatsoever about my decision to join the Company as Farrans was renowned in the industry as being a first class Company and employer. For many years before this, the Farrans yard, with its many items of plant was always a landmark for me as I travelled along the adjacent M1 motorway.

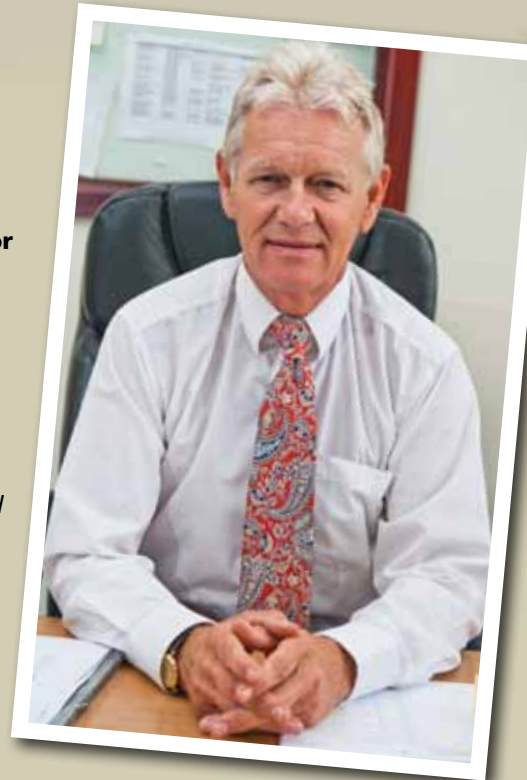
In 1979, private and public sector housing was a major contributor to the Farrans workload. The social housing stock in Belfast was in poor condition and the Farrans logistical and organisational capability enabled the winning of many large Housing Action Area contracts across the city. These were followed by Improvements to Purpose Built Stock (IPBS) housing schemes and Farrans also won its fair share of these substantial contracts. The Farrans civil engineering contracts team were also busy at this time.

The early 1980's saw the commencement of the divisionalised structure that we see in Farrans today. I remember the establishment of the commercial building department which undertook industrial, commercial, retail and education sector contracts for a wide range of clients. The civil engineering department was also beginning to focus on and secure contracts in Scotland at this time.

From my earliest years in Farrans, I have always firmly believed that the management systems, which continue to be developed, have given us a major competitive advantage. This has delivered a standard of performance that few other contractors can match.

The 1990's began with the decline of public sector housing opportunities for Farrans in Northern Ireland as well as a move away from traditional lowest price tendering. We saw the advent of design and build type projects in which clients sought to direct much of the commercial risk to contractors. Farrans again adapted to this market development and secured a number of major projects with the Bangor Flagship and Yorkgate the ones which come immediately to mind.

The contractual landscape



continued to change in this decade and we saw the emergence of the first Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes and joint venture projects also becoming more common.

It would be remiss of me if I did not mention the fortitude of Farrans people in the 1980's and early 1990's. At this time, civil unrest in the Province was at its peak with construction sites often suffering from various incidents. Throughout these difficult times, our Farrans people delivered on site and this makes me immensely proud.

Joint venture projects with other contractors continued to contribute much to the Farrans workload from the 1990's to this day with some of the highlights being the Cross Harbour Road and Rail Links, Northwin, Westlink DBF01 and the FMP Schools projects.

Every project Farrans undertakes is unique and I never cease to be in awe of how our site teams deliver time and time again in highly challenging environments in which the contract programme does not allow for any degree of underperformance.

I was also delighted with the appointment of Mark Beacom as Regional Surveyor and I know he has the necessary talents and attributes for today's construction marketplace.

It has been my privilege to be part of Team Farrans for some thirty two years and I leave the 'Contractor of Choice' knowing that the people and the systems are in place to ensure continued commercial success."

**All at Farrans wish David a long and healthy retirement and we understand he and his wife, Lyn, intend to travel to various far flung places across the world and spend more time with their two grandchildren.**

## MEN with MOS



During November each year, 'Movember' is responsible for the sprouting of moustaches on thousands of men's faces across the United Kingdom and the world. The aim is to raise awareness and funds to help address male cancers which all too often do not receive the necessary publicity and awareness level they require. In 2010, some £11.7 million was raised by the initiative.

Our own Northstone Materials Mo Bros stepped forward this year to do their bit in the fight against male cancers and sacrificed their usual clean shaven appearance and upper lips for 'Movember'. The



Six of the best (l-r) Nigel Mairs, Stephen Kelly, Jonathan Gault, Stephen Smyth, Phelim Conlan and Darren Stewart.

photograph above clearly depicts a fine display of moustachery, all in aid of a very worthwhile cause as Stephen Smyth, Regional Sales Manager and team captain explains;

"'Movember' is an initiative which is growing in popularity each year. Men all over the world grow moustaches for the month of November with the stated aim of "changing the face of men's health" by raising funds for male cancer charities, specifically prostate and testicular cancer. I decided to get a team together to join this year's effort and seek donations throughout Northstone (NI) Limited and via a mail shot to our Materials division clients.

Our MO's were certainly a talking point during the month and I have to say the response was tremendous with the total donations, at the time of writing approaching £3,000. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the sales team members for getting into the Movember spirit and everyone who so generously donated."

### STOP PRESS

Northlink has just been informed that the final amount collected by our people stands today at £3,250 and congratulates Stephen and the team on this magnificent effort.

Smiling with Success in Health and Safety (l-r) David Smyth, Brian Watt, Richard McDermott and John Evans.



## Northstone Materials Receives President's Award in Health and Safety

The Northstone Materials commitment to and ongoing improvement in health and safety have been recognised by a President's Construction Award in the Major Category from the Northern Ireland Safety Group and the National Irish Safety Organisation under their 2011 Annual Occupational Safety Awards Scheme. The award is for significant contributions to workplace health and safety demonstrated through strong management leadership, proactive health and safety management systems and related initiatives.

The award is also a worthy acknowledgement of the hard work of Health and Safety Manager, David Smyth, and Health and Safety Adviser, John Evans. Both men have been unstinting in their efforts to continue to raise standards in what is the most diverse range of work activities to be found across the Northstone divisions. The outgoing Materials Division Health and Safety Director, Brian Watt, echoed these sentiments when he spoke recently to Northlink;

"John and David have a portfolio of operations which ranges from sand pits, barge operations, quarries and concrete plants to factory environments, roofing contracts and civil engineering projects. Each one is fundamentally different when it comes to inherent hazards and risks as well as the type of fixed and mobile plant which is utilised in each. As well as the regular audits and inspections this year, they have found time to deliver initiatives such as the CRH Transport Campaign, a Fire Safety Week, the development of an Employee Safety Handbook and have also embarked on a CRH Contractor Safety Campaign and led specific health and safety training for our quarry supervisors. Both men have been instrumental in achieving the Northstone key performance indicator (KPI) of 100% employee involvement in health and safety this year and contributed much to the development of industry wide protocols. David has also done some auditing work for CRH plc in Finland and Switzerland during the year. I was privileged to work with them in my time as health and safety director and have learnt much from them."

Northlink congratulates David, John and Brian on their tremendous effort and wishes the incoming Health and Safety Director, Richard McDermott, every success with his new responsibilities.



Silverware for Tom (right) with his skip, Neil Booth

## Tom Bowls Us Over!

The Northstone Materials Credit Control Manager, Tom Rainey, has been a keen outdoor bowler for many years, representing Old Bleach Bowling Club, in his home town of Randalstown.

In this, his 30th year as a member of the Club, Tom, along with his skip, Neil Booth won the Northern Ireland Private Greens pairs at Jordanstown. Tom pays great credit to Neil, an ex Irish, British Isles, Commonwealth and World 4's champion. Regrettably, in the semi final of the Irish Championship, Tom and Neil were beaten by the eventual winners.

In an ageless sport such as bowls, it shows you are never too late for success!

Tom is particularly proud of Old Bleach, which is essentially a small country club, whose membership is drawn largely from the local area. This year has been a particularly successful one for the club with the Old Bleach 4's (skipped again by Neil Booth) winning the Northern Ireland Private Green Rinks, again to be beaten in the Irish semi finals by the eventual winners. One week later, Tom, as part of the Old Bleach "A" Team won their first major cup in 62-years and back in March, another member, James Talbot won the World Cup Singles in Australia.

Tom is really looking forward to the challenges of the 2012 season ahead.



## TENDER SUCCESS FOR MATTEST

**MATTEST, the Northstone materials testing business, has had excellent recent tender success and secured the testing contracts on three of the five road projects released by the National Roads Authority (NRA) in the Irish Republic this year. The projects are the N3 Belturbet By Pass, the N5 Cork Southern Ringroad and the N22 Tralee By Pass.**

Gordon Ellis, the Mattest Director and General Manager, acknowledges the contribution of his team in winning these contracts;

"Whilst I am involved in the day to day negotiation leading up to the award of these projects, it is the reputation of our people on the ground and our senior staff who have over the years demonstrated a first class capability to deliver the contracts on time and to a very high standard, that has swayed many clients towards us in the face of severe competition."

MATTEST has now successfully completed the testing contracts on some of the biggest road projects in Europe, let alone Ireland, including the DBF01 Belfast and DBF02 Newry projects, the M3 Clonee to Kells motorway, the Dundalk Western By Pass and the N6 Kinnegad to Kilbeggan

Gordon's Management Team at MATTEST (l-r) Gordon Ellis, Barry Gilroy (Dublin), Neil Cooke (Belfast) and Rory Egan (Cork).

motorway to name a few. In total MATTEST has carried out the contract testing for in excess of 200km of motorway or high grade dual carriageway throughout the whole of Ireland.

Gordon went on to say, "People sometimes underestimate the importance of the work we do and the requirement to deliver test results on time. Effectively, work on the project does not progress unless the testing confirms that it can. We are responsible for the contract testing for everything on site from drainage to road surfacing which includes providing results to demonstrate that the earthworks, sub formation materials, sub base materials and structures all comply with the specification. Any delay in the issue of this information results in delay on site with the obvious consequences this would entail. Considering all of these processes are likely to be going on at the same time and along the length of a motorway contract, then it is clear that workloads for the MATTEST site laboratories are challenging, to say the least."

**Northlink congratulates the MATTEST teams on their recent tender successes.**