Since April 2013, Colas Ltd has been responsible for renovating and maintaining more than 250 kilometers of roads in central London within the framework of an eight-year contract secured as part of a consortium. A prestigious reference, once again allowing the subsidiary to promote its expertise in long-term road maintenance contracts. We report from the heart of the British capital.
CVU, a joint venture comprising Colas Ltd, VolkerHighways and URS, is maintaining and improving Central London’s streets as part of an 8-year contract.
London, a city that never sleeps. It's midnight. Roadworks are under way outside the imposing façade of Harrods, the capital's famously chic department store located on Brompton Road, in Knightsbridge. Site machinery goes back and forth. Buses, taxis and cars crawl along in single file. “More than 28 million journeys are made every day in London and 86% of them are by road”, explains David Craik, Executive Director, Colas Ltd. “Traffic in the city is extremely dense, due to the sheer concentration of business and tourist activities. Users need a well-maintained network and fully integrated transport infrastructures. This network, managed by Transport for London, is currently divided into four zones, each covered by a specific contract. At the end of 2012, the contract relating to the central area of the city, called Central London, was secured by CVU, a joint venture made up of Colas Ltd, Volker-Highways and URS.”

Transforming London's streets

Since April 1, 2013, as part of the CVU joint venture, Colas Ltd - Colas’ British subsidiary - has been contributing to the renovation and maintenance of more than 250 kilometers of roads in the heart of central London (see map p.27). The eight-year contract covers the improvement and maintenance of roads, sidewalks and curbs, including road surfaces, traffic signs, street lighting, road safety features, drainage, earthworks, landscaping, bridges and other civil engineering structures, as well as urban furniture. Additional services are also provided under the terms of the contract, such as winter maintenance, emergency call-outs, street cleaning, traffic management, design and inspection.
services (safety, bridges and other structures), together with specific services associated with major events such as the London marathon. “The global contract represents a total of around £420 million, i.e. €520 million, of which 40% goes to Colas Ltd”, adds David Craik. “This contract is a unique opportunity to promote our expertise, particularly in the field of long-term road maintenance contracts (see p.30), as well as our innovation culture. Cooperation between the three joint venture partners is crucial at every level. Together, we deal with the same problems every day, we develop a common culture hinged around the same values – particularly when it comes to safety – and we share the same objective: to transform London’s streets.”

Adapting and integrating into the life of the city
Bank Junction. This intersection in the “City”, located right in the heart of London’s historic and financial district, is the point where nine streets converge. More than 25,000 people pass through here every day. Between July and November 2013, teams from CVU were asked to replace and modernize the traffic lights and road markings. A genuine challenge, given the volume of traffic and various constraints, such as the presence of the London Underground’s Central Line just a few meters below the surface... Work on the subterranean networks and signaling infrastructures had to be carried out manually to a depth of just 300 mm to avoid undermining the below-ground structures.

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David Craik, Executive Director, Colas Ltd
Another constraint to be taken into account was the Lord Mayor’s Show, traditionally held on the second Saturday in November with some 6,000 people taking part. A festival of color, costume and music, the parade moves slowly along a 5-km route through the streets of the City of London, from Mansion House to the banks of the Thames. “Transport for London insists that the scheduling of any work is meticulously planned and that deadlines are met”, underlines David Craik. “Work cannot be allowed to cause disruption to traffic and it has to integrate seamlessly into the life of the British capital, taking account of the numerous events that take place each year: the marathon, the veterans’ parade, etc.”
In Central London, there are close to 40,000 call-out requests every year, which are prioritized depending on their degree of urgency, with the most urgent attended to within the hour.
Working under close scrutiny

“Day and night, CVU’s teams are kept busy maintaining the network”, continues David Craik. “It’s a real challenge to carry out work without closing the roads to traffic. We have to intervene quickly, implement an effective logistics organization and work well as a team in order to minimize traffic disruption and inconvenience to residents.” Performance criteria are set out in the contract, particularly relating to road availability. Work is therefore carried out between 10.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. or at night between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m. to avoid traffic disruption and prevent jams. CVU’s teams operate from a control center in a main depot at Canning Town and two satellite depots at Croydon and at Park Royal. In order to ensure rapid and effective call outs, the center is operational round the clock, 7 days a week. In Central London, there are close to 40,000 call-out requests every year. These interventions are prioritized depending on their degree of urgency, with the most urgent attended to within the hour.

Innovating and improving

Another objective of the contract is to improve safety and road access for users. CVU deploys the full range of its innovative and creative capacities to provide its customer with solutions. For the marking of cycle paths, for example, on the London cycleways, CVU is working with Aximum, Colas’ road marking subsidiary, to develop a blue-colored surfacing. Innovative
techniques are also employed to meet a variety of other objectives: cold mix asphalt techniques to reduce the energy impact of the work carried out, noise reducing mixes to minimize traffic noise pollution. Sometimes, the quest for innovation and improvement goes well beyond the techniques employed. Back in June, to mark world environment day, CVU’s network and inspection teams were quite happy to don their hard hats and high-visibility jackets and take to the streets of central London on self-service Barclays Bikes. ‘Objective: to put themselves in the place of the cyclists who ride through the center of the capital every day, allowing them to get a feel for the impact of road defects and sharing the space with other types of vehicles.

In terms of the environment, CVU has worked with The Edible Bus Stop TM Ltd, an organization responsible for turning derelict public spaces into community gardens. In April 2014, for example, CVU created community vegetable gardens in West Norwood, Croydon. Finally, as a member of The London Tree Officers Association (LTOA), CVU is helping to protect the capital’s trees, particularly via awareness-raising in initiatives targeting its teams and subcontractors.

Innovation, integration and cooperation underpin the work carried out by CVU’s teams to transform London’s streets.

* CVU has installed almost 180 self-service bicycle docking stations (“Barclays Cycle Hire”) in London.
CAMBRIDGE ROAD
Each year, teams from CVU apply 25,000 m² of asphalt mix, including low temperature and noise-reducing designs.