

Glasgow Company wins Prestigious UK Construction Award

Glasgow Company, Turner Access Ltd., was announced as the winner of the Access and Scaffolding Specialist of the Year, a prestigious Specialist in Construction Award 2005, on April 19.

The company, employing 129 people, was nominated largely because of their innovative access solution to the problems of strengthening the Tinsley Viaduct, Sheffield, a two-tier bridge with the M1 on the top tier and the A631 running underneath on the bottom tier. This was done using the suspended access platform system Safespan[®] and PlusEight[®] System scaffold.

Throughout the past two and a half years, Turner Access Ltd. have been responsible for providing what are the two longest single working platforms ever built (now claimed as an official world record), each one measuring 1km long by 35m wide.

Turner Access has used a form of access equipment that is entirely new to the European market, Safespan[®], for which they have been appointed as exclusive distributors. The safe and efficient installation of this patented system, developed in the USA in the mid-1990s, has enabled this £85 million Highways Agency contract to run successfully throughout.

The Safespan[®] Platform System's much lower self-weight in comparison to traditional scaffolding also eased the load imposed on the bridge, which in the 1990's had spectacularly failed an assessment carried out by the consulting engineers, Owen Williams, for compliance with an EU Directive for load bearing capacity.

As of March 2005, over two and a half million man-hours had gone into the project, an average of 35,000 hours per week. There have been no serious accidents and it has been over 1.4 million hours since there was a lost time accident.

At a time when health and safety in the construction industry are under the microscope and with the release of the new working at height regulations on the 6th April 2005, the Tinsley project has a virtually unblemished safety record. Turner Access, using Safespan[®] and PlusEight[®] system scaffolding, have been integral in the project winning RoSPA awards, a Working Well Together award.

Safety has been the primary concern throughout and Turner Access leads the industry with innovative ideas to keep not only the user of the platforms safe but also the scaffolding/access installer. PlusGard[®], a newly patented innovative advanced guardrail system was a Finalist in the Quality in Construction Awards 2004 – The Judge said "This one product could make a huge difference to safety on just about every site in the UK".

End.

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Notes:

The Tinsley Viaduct is a two-tier bridge with the M1 on the top tier and the A631 running underneath on the bottom tier, one of the busiest traffic routes in the country.

One of the main benefits recognised was the fact that nothing hangs below the platform level. This meant that the traffic clearance gap could be maximised, allowing the road system to remain open.

Tinsley Viaduct has motorway junctions at both ends, which give access to some of Britain's busiest leisure destinations. Meadowhall (one of Europe's largest shopping centres) is only 200 metres to the west of the viaduct and within a kilometre lie Sheffield Indoor Arena, Don Valley Stadium, and the Magna Centre.

The area around the viaduct is also Sheffield's industrial heartland including major steelworks and manufacturing plants. In short, the knock-on effects of any traffic disruption during the installation of the access works would have had a serious impact on the local economy and on traffic flow through this critical access route linking the north and south of the UK.

At one point between 400 and 450 tradesmen were working on the Safespan® platform and gaining access to it using the PlusEight® towers provided, which were also fully clad with steel sheeting to prevent unauthorised access. Steel Fitters, Welders, Painters and Inspectors etc all had to pass through specially designed integral steel doors fitted to all of these towers.

Four of the most impressive supplementary scaffolding structures provided are each 61m long x 4.9m wide PlusEight® mobile access towers with full working platforms, approximately 3m high to allow the painting contractor to blast and paint the underside of the longitudinal box beams on the upper bridge from the roadway.

More recently, Turner Access have made use of their newly patented innovative system, PlusGard® (an advanced guardrail), which, for the first time gives scaffolders a guardrail in advance (a measure that will be required under the hierarchy of measures now proposed in the new Work at Height Regulations).

The new regulations will require prevention of falls before mitigation and this will be applicable to those erecting dismantling or altering scaffolds, as well as for those for whom the scaffold is built. Turner Access is therefore probably the first scaffold company to adopt advanced guardrails within their standard systems of work.