

Investing for the future

Europe Materials

Two new 10,000-tonne capacity bulk cement silos at Irish Cement's Platin plant near Drogheda. The company invested €6 million in state-of-the-art road dispatch facilities to allow fully automated driver operated loading. Using a swipe card system customers can collect cement 24-hours a day seven days a week throughout the year. The highly flexible system geared towards customer needs is part of the company's ongoing customer service improvement programme.



An integral part of CRH's development is its investment in four fundamental areas: people, market leadership, the environment and technology.

Investment in people consists of training and development to provide all employees with a platform for progress, a best practice programme to guarantee an efficient, safe and healthy place to work, and a market-based remuneration policy to attract, retain and motivate the right people.

While investing in acquisitions and development projects is important to attain market leadership, being the leading producer with the lowest costs is also critical. This is achieved by investing in those existing businesses which offer a strong foundation for sustained and profitable organic growth while driving continuous improvement in products, processes and strong regional brands.

Environmental investment programmes help us to improve

Europe Products & Distribution



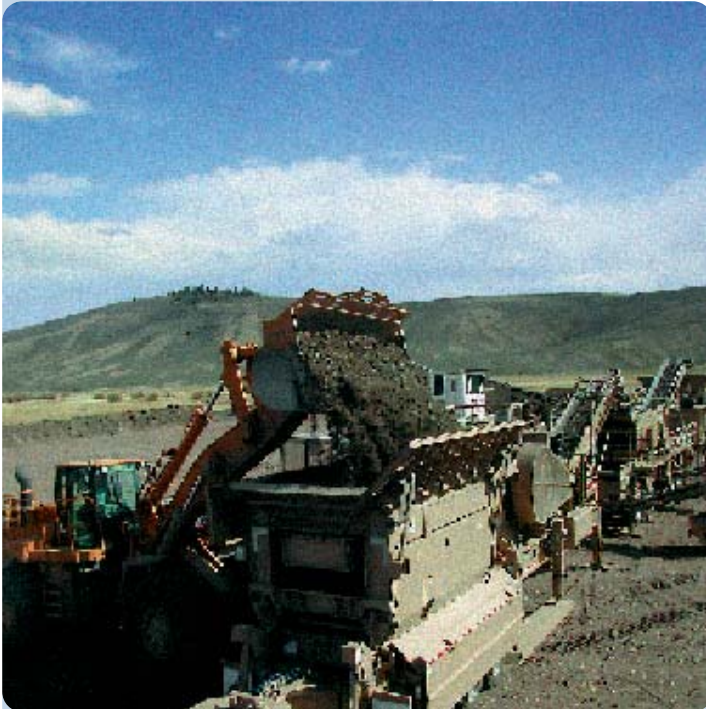
Ibstock Brick has successfully completed a major €9 million investment project at four brickworks – Ellistown, Leicester, Lodge Lane and Atlas, to realign capacity between wire-cut and soft mud products. The project provides manufacturing flexibility, the ability to produce a new continental style brick range to compete with imported products, and cost savings in the manufacture of engineering and blue bricks.

continuously in line with best industry environmental practice, to optimise our use of energy and resources, and to be good neighbours in the communities in which we operate. Environmental investment includes projects to reduce dust and noise, minimise effluent and waste, improve energy efficiency, increase the use of recycled materials, and to restore worked-out facilities through extensive tree and shrub planting.

Investment in technology enables us to run more efficient plants; to create more effective processes; to develop innovative products; to offer better and more focused service to customers; and to measure and communicate international best practice throughout the Group.

CRH continues to invest in a wide range of projects which contribute to overall profitability, drive continuous improvement of products and processes to deliver long-term performance and strongly underpin the future development of the Group.

Americas Materials



In the summer of 2002, United Companies, a Materials Division company in Grand Junction, Colorado, purchased a 2002 Astec Fast Pack portable crushing plant. The prototype Fast Pack is a new concept in portable crushing technology using hydraulic lifts to eliminate the need for cribbing and the rigging of electric cables. This reduces the mobilisation and set-up times from two days to only four hours and significantly enhances the safety of the plant. United expects to gain a month of production time through use of the new portable crusher. The Fast Pack has an output of 270-360 tonnes per hour and exceeds the combined work capacity of the two crushers it replaced. The plant is also capable of producing higher value materials such as asphalt aggregates and concrete sand.

Americas Products & Distribution

The Precast Group's South Bethlehem plant, near New York City, which forms part of its building systems division, has been upgraded and expanded utilising state-of-the-art manufacturing technology along with Elematic's new hollowcore plank design, resulting in improved competitive advantage. The upgrade also included a modern computerised batching plant and a 315-foot building expansion. This investment in the future improves quality and efficiency while doubling the prior output capacity, much needed to serve the New York City building market.

