



## Case study

Name: Kier Highways Solutions  
(Project Reseal)

Sector: Infrastructure

Location: Based out of Norwich  
(Regional / National Gangs and Factory)

## Benefits beyond the surface

Kier is a leading provider of construction and infrastructure services, offering specialist design and build capabilities. Within Highways, Kier has a significant presence and manages over 30,000km of the UK's strategic and local authority road network.

Through Kier Highways Solutions the company has the business capability to deliver surface dressing footway and slurry works, Microasphalt surfacing and Bituminous Road Emulsion manufacturing through their in-house production plant in Wymondham, Norfolk.

During the summer season, which runs from the beginning of April to the end of August, circa 80 operatives deliver a programme of surface treatments, predominantly for local authority clients.



*"The way that the Managementors team quickly integrated into the business was impressive. They had incredible resilience and fitted into the team extremely well. They were able to articulate the fundamentals of the business as though they had been with us for years after just a couple of weeks."*

Barry Jupp, Finance Director - Operations, Kier



### Key challenges

- Few performance measures in place (focus on square metre output mainly) and insufficient accountability for performance
- Inconsistency in terms of process, tools and agreed best practice across contracts with limited issue escalation and resolution
- Work planned to fit the programme duration leading to pacing and under-utilisation of gangs
- Lack of visibility of true production capacity and coordination of orders/fulfilment
- Disjointed interfaces between sales, manufacturing, logistics and operations

### Key gains

- Real-time performance now visible on a daily, weekly, monthly basis by gang, contract or business-wide and targets/expectations clear
- Enhanced processes and tooling for planning, scheduling, and managing orders through to fulfilment, providing greater visibility and control of works
- Upskilled and more proactive supervisory team, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities creating accountability at the right levels to drive performance and quality
- More effective quarterly forecasting using 'MOS' metrics allowing greater confidence and manufacturing/operations now closely aligned with forecasting and daily order requirements
- Demonstrable performance improvements and financial benefits:
  - o Just over £1m seasonalised financial benefits demonstrated through:
    - Gang productivity improvement of up to 38% (leading to improved margin per m<sup>2</sup> and £ total margin per gang day)
    - Management team restructure supported and embedded by Managementors
    - Modelling/validation of manufacturing production utilisation/capacity

## Background

Following a previous successful engagement with Kier, as a first step the Managementors team was invited to carry out an in-depth analysis of the whole operation from manufacture to installation.

Senior management recognised that whilst the business generated good contribution and delivers quality work, there was an opportunity to enhance this further through optimising the effectiveness of the operation, without substantial capital expenditure.

Following the analysis phase, Project Reseal commenced in June 2021 and was a 16-week engagement with the teams, concluding in September 2021.

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*“We knew it was a good, profitable business, with great individuals but we knew it could be even better with some help. Sometimes we concentrate too much on the struggling parts of the business alone. This was an opportunity to improve something further that was already performing well.”*

Barry Jupp,  
Finance Director - Operations,  
Kier

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*“Every now and again, all of us need a refresh in terms of the way we do things, the way we think about things, the things we can achieve, the things we think we can’t achieve. This engagement with Managementors has proved that in the right circumstances, you can introduce a group of people into a business and make a big difference in a relatively short space of time.”*

Barry Jupp,  
Finance Director - Operations,  
Kier

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## The Challenge

During the analysis phase, it became clear that there were inconsistencies in process execution, use of management tools available and agreed best practice in place across the teams, alongside limited issue escalation and resolution practices.

Kier’s Finance Director, Barry Jupp, commented, “Kier Highways Solutions is effectively in full operation through the Spring and Summer months. With this short window, it’s incredibly important to have an up-to date and consistent way of working that can be maintained all year round, across seasons so that we are always ready to deliver.”

As well as this, there were limited performance measures in place (mainly focusing on square metre output) and not enough accountability for performance. Furthermore, planning issues with work planned to fit the programme duration led to pacing and the underutilisation of gangs. This, combined with a lack of visibility of the true production capacity and coordination of orders/fulfilment on the Wyndham production side, meant that the business wasn’t hitting its full potential.

Another key challenge came from the lack of established interfaces between sales, manufacturing, logistics and operations. Barry explained that “In terms of the relationship

between the manufacturing and contracting teams, one can’t survive without the other, but there wasn’t complete collaboration between the two. We have the best people, they just needed bringing closer together.”

Various other issues also became apparent, such as:

- Works information and reporting formatted differently across the teams
- Complicated roles and responsibilities making it difficult to drive performance
- Commercial processes needed to be simplified and standardised
- Standard job times were not in use
- Work was required to optimise gang size to deliver different work types

“Ultimately, we weren’t seeing optimum productivity in terms of the outputs. The teams needed coaching and the local management systems needed refreshing. We brought Managementors in to improve productivity, but also to change some behaviours to improve the integration between manufacturing and contracting so that they were working toward the same goals” Barry highlighted.



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*“The information flow between teams has improved massively.”*

Daniel Farrington, Sales Manager,  
Kier Highways Solutions

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*“I’m really looking forward to next season and to using the new Scheduling Tool for planning the new programme of works!”*

Ollie Ashmole, Contracts Manager,  
Kier Highways Solutions

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## Approach and Outcomes

Taking a facilitative approach, Managementors worked in partnership with key Kier stakeholders to implement processes and management controls, as well as establishing improved interfaces to form a more resilient, efficient and collaborative operation.

At the start of the project, it was crucial to gain visibility and consensus with regards to the key issues hampering the end-to-end order to fulfilment process. To achieve this, workshops were organised involving all stakeholders to map and critique the ‘as is’ process and tooling, and identify gaps, frustrations and bottlenecks. Lack of visibility and control quickly surfaced as key themes through the end-to-end process, and the working group quickly moved onto looking at how to improve this going forwards, with the group rapidly reaching a consensus with regards to a solution. The subsequent development and implementation of the Central Order Book was an important focus for the project, providing a central, single version of the truth, better coordination of orders and reducing the duplicative administration process, enabling the Sales Team to focus on generating sales.

A series of training workshops were also held during the project, accelerating the supervisors’ and managers’ understanding of the project and key principles such as active management, short interval control and the Management Operating System (MOS).

At the heart of the project was the development and implementation of a bespoke MOS – providing management with the tools and reporting needed to gain control of the operation and build a strong platform for continuous improvement.

Key elements of the MOS included new planning, overtime, scheduling and order to fulfilment processes, supported by simple and effective tooling and clear targets to enable effective programme planning.





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*“The new ops meeting has been brilliant, previously it was informal and ad-hoc but now we have a structured forum for all the teams to feed back.”*

Daniel Farrington,  
Sales Manager,  
Kier Highways Solutions

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Another key element introduced was the daily scheduling and reporting against operational performance measures such as utilisation, effectiveness and productivity. With this came various additional benefits such as:

- Increased accountability for performance at supervisor level
- Improved visibility of performance by gang, contract or business-wide, daily/weekly/monthly
- Indication of daily planned and actual contribution
- Trends and recurring issues e.g. causes of downtime
- Ensuring that overtime was appropriately justified, preauthorised and tracked

A robust daily/weekly/monthly review structure was also introduced supporting the suite of reporting, focusing on performance, planning and tackling operational issues.

Supervisor, Stuart Read expressed, “I had my reservations at first but I can now see how capturing the issues can really help us to try and stop them from happening again, ultimately saving us stand down time on site.” Kier’s Operations Manager, Brian Mercer, added “By introducing the local review structure, Managementors have helped us to achieve greater consistency across our business.”

Additionally, the enhancement of forecasting using MOS metrics helped to improve forecasting accuracy so that it could be managed against on a daily/weekly basis. “By using the MOS metrics and optimal gang sizes for our QR1 forecast, we have a more scientific approach to forecasting and planning” commented Kier’s General Manager, Lee Draper.

Managementors also developed Planning Guidelines (PGLs) to provide clarity on how long each task type takes and the expected daily output.

Close coaching was provided to support the Supervisors, Contract Managers and Senior Management team in shifting towards a more 'active' style of management and in using the data daily, weekly and monthly to understand their team's performance and achieve a step-change in performance. Contracts Manager for Kier Highways Solutions, Ollie Ashmole, commented that "The supervisors are now proactively supporting their gangs to achieve the plan."

Alongside the development and implementation of the MOS, the existing management structure was also reviewed and a streamlined structure proposed and agreed, addressing inconsistencies in reporting lines, spans of control and the 1:1 relationships that existed. The new roles and responsibilities were reviewed and enhanced, providing greater clarity and appropriate accountability at each supervisory level.

Finally, detailed analysis of the manufacturing arm of the business at Wymondham, was undertaken to gain visibility of current production utilisation and the true capacity available to increase the output of bulk products. This quantification and validation of production capacity, combined with a better controlled and coordinated order to fulfilment process and the step change in gang productivity achieved, enables senior management to plan next season with confidence and look to realise the ambition of growing this part of the business over the coming years.

Managing Director of Kier - Local Highways, James Birch concluded that "Working with Managementors was a big investment decision and one, which when initially discussed, was challenged as to whether it was necessary. Kier Highways Solutions is an effective and successful business with a good track record, delivering for internal and external clients.

What the project led by Managementors demonstrated, however, was that by looking at things through a different lens, and by engaging with the workforce from the start, we have been able to further refine our solution, increase manufacturing capacity, and improve productivity and effectiveness of our on-site operations. This has given us the scope to do more for our existing clients and customers with the same resource and has presented the senior management team with robust management information to make the right strategic decisions as to how to further grow our surfacing and infrastructure solutions capability to existing and prospective clients. We now have to own this and make it part of our DNA. The full impact of the improvements would not have been realised without the support from the Managementors Team."

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*"The experience has made everyone think differently and that's a big deal. The language has changed – there's a more formal nature to what's happening. It's been great to develop and invest in our people. The team have reacted really well and I know it will be an improved, more effective business that is able to exceed our clients expectations into the future."*

Barry Jupp, Finance Director - Operations, Kier

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Contact us to find out what Managementors can do for you

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