

# Lake Asphalt: paving the world

A CORPORATE PROFILE OF LAKE ASPHALT

Trinidad Lake Asphalt is widely regarded as the 'Rolls Royce' of the asphalt industry

Lake Asphalt of Trinidad and Tobago (1978) Ltd (Lake Asphalt) is a state enterprise falling under the purview of the Ministry of Energy & Energy Industries. It is the Company charged with the commercial development of the Pitch Lake at La Brea and is the supplier of asphalt and asphalt-related products locally, regionally and internationally. The Pitch Lake at Brea which is approximately 113 acres in extent is a hydrocarbon deposit and is the largest commercially mined natural asphalt deposit in the world. The Company's flagship product Trinidad Lake Asphalt (TLA) is used throughout the world as a modifier for refinery bitumen.

## HISTORY

Prior to becoming a state enterprise in 1978, the Company was owned by the Preville Company based in the UK which comprised approximately 24 joint stock companies around the world through which TLA was sold. As a result of this distribution network, TLA was sold and used in every continent in the world. Over the decades, TLA has been used to pave famous landmarks such as Pennsylvania Avenue and the Lincoln Tunnel in the US as well as the Mall in front of Buckingham Palace. TLA has also been used for airports including John F. Kennedy, Beijing and our own Piarco International Airport; the autobahns in Germany and bridge-decks in Japan. TLA has been referred to as the Rolls Royce of the asphalt industry.

According to Winston Wiltshire in his book entitled: *The Commercial Development of Trinidad Lake Asphalt*, "TLA was for Trinidad, the most widely traded product

ever to have originated locally... In an important sense, TLA was the earliest principal engine for integrating first the Trinidad economy, and then the Trinidad and Tobago economy into the world economy in its broadest geographical dimensions." Apart from TLA, the company also produces and distributes other products such as Asphalt Cement, TLA pellets, Bitumen Emulsions, Refinery Bitumen and the Lasco range of products.

## MARKETS

Situated in the south-western part of the island, Lake Asphalt is a Company with a global reach impacting on economic development throughout the world. As governments struggle to offset the negative impact of the global economic crisis, infrastructural development has come to the forefront and TLA has already been established as the premium product for this activity.

Over the years, the company serviced its markets via a network of distributors in China, Germany, the UK, the US, Nigeria and Brazil. Today, the company is seeking to extend its reach and is actively pursuing new markets as well as changing its modus operandi to service the needs of its customers.

## RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

To ensure the sustained viability of the company, significant efforts have been focused on research and development activities within the company as well as on the refurbishment of the Laboratory which is well on its way to becoming ISO certified. The objective of these activities is to ensure that the company

Mining raw asphalt at the Pitch Lake, La Brea, Trinidad, c. 1910

Photograph courtesy of Paria Archive



continues to meet and exceed the needs of our niche market customers. Over the past few years, significant resources have been expended on the development of TLA in a pellet form and in 2007, the company commissioned a state-of-the-art pelletisation plant. To date, pellets have been successfully used on the Trog Neck Bridge in New York and the De Sota Race Track in Florida. In addition, a test strip has been laid at the National Centre for Asphalt Technology. Pellets have also been exported to Canada, Germany and Brazil.

Prior to the development of pellets, the end user was required to invest significant amounts of money in specialised heating equipment since TLA in fibre-board drums had to be transported, removed from the fibre-board drums and melted in specialised melt tanks, blended with refinery bitumen, kept stirred, stored and then integrated in the final mix. The advent of pellets eliminated the need for such expenditure since TLA in a pelletised form could be added directly to hot mix asphalt, thereby reducing the cost to the end user.

Lake Asphalt was the first company in the world to pelletise asphalt and to provide pelletised asphalt on a commercial basis. This technology resulted from three patents, one of which is held by Lake Asphalt. Pelletised technology has allowed the company to develop different combination products which, although in the pilot stage, we believe have the capability to impact on the asphalt industry in a significant way and become another first for TLA. Prior to this, TLA was the first bulk bitumen sold to the world as well as the first asphalt modifier used on a commercial scale. In addition to the patent for pelletised asphalt, the Company also holds over 20 other patents.

In response to environmental concerns raised about hot mix asphalt in Europe and other places, Lake Asphalt has successfully developed a warm mix product called TLA-X. This product is designed to reduce emissions to the environment by operating at lower temperatures, thereby requiring reduced energy during the production and installation of the product. Over the next few months, efforts will be focused on commercialising these products as well as different types of pellets that will undoubtedly benefit the end user.

#### **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Lake Asphalt is very conscious of its role as a corporate citizen and apart from providing the world with a first-class product, Lake Asphalt also plays a key role in sustaining the community of La Brea in which it operates. Of the 177 permanent employees and 129 casual workers employed by

Lake Asphalt, 80 per cent reside in the community of La Brea. In addition to providing direct employment and by extension sustaining the livelihood of the families of the employees, the company also supports the community through donating to a variety of causes and sponsorships of various groups such as the Lake Asphalt Community Chorale, the La Brea Football Academy as well as the La Brea Carnival Improvement Committee. The Company is also involved in a wide variety of sports, cultural and educational activities in the community.

Lake Asphalt is committed to furthering the development of the people of La Brea and over a period of time, will expand its initiatives in ways that will lead to the growth and development of the community.

#### **FUTURE**

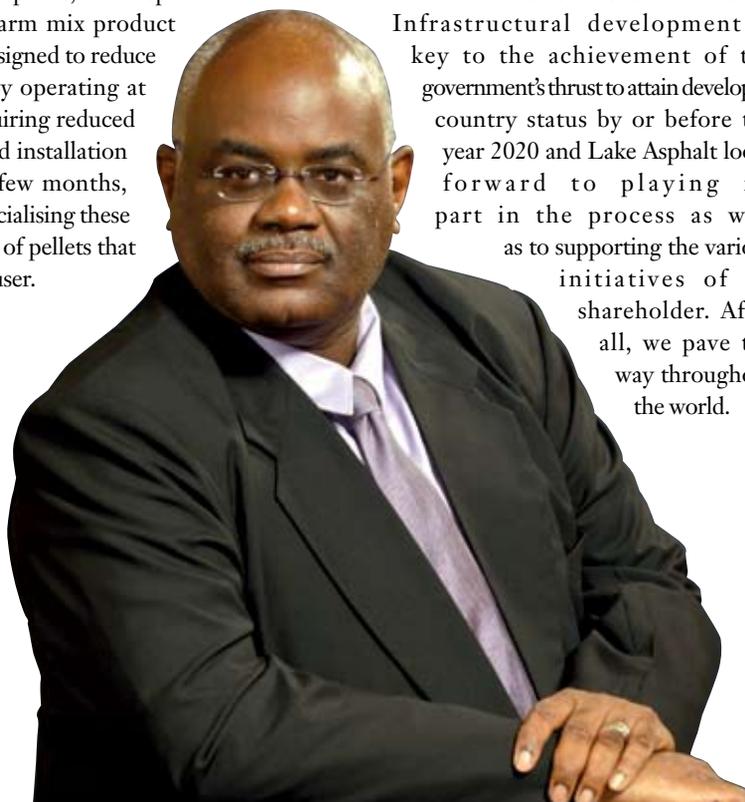
As the Company continues to evolve, efforts will be focused on re-establishing the TLA brand globally. TLA has in the past and will in the future continue to represent value for money to the end user. Empirical data has proven TLA to be a superior modifier for refinery bitumen which when used will result in:

- *Improved skid resistance*
- *Less rutting*
- *Reduced ageing*
- *Improved resistance to deformation*
- *Improved structural strength*
- *Reduced maintenance costs*

Chief Executive Officer of Lake Asphalt, Wayne Wood, believes that through this re-branding process Lake Asphalt will play a greater role in the development of the Trinidad and Tobago economy as well as in the other economies of the world.

Infrastructural development is key to the achievement of the government's thrust to attain developed country status by or before the year 2020 and Lake Asphalt looks forward to playing its part in the process as well as to supporting the various initiatives of its shareholder. After all, we pave the way throughout the world. 

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Wayne Wood, Chief Executive Officer, Lake Asphalt