

# ZOONTJENS

## General Press Coverage



### COMPANY PROFILE ZOONTJENS

Zoontjens is a leader in its field. So much so that it has almost outgrown its home market of The Netherlands. Its response? To cast a net as wide as possible to find new markets for its product – a concrete promenade tile.

RCi editor, Nathan Bushell, visited the company's head office and recent projects near its headquarters in Eindhoven to find out why the UK is ripe for the picking.

## Dutch courage

**P**aul Heerkens, the sales and marketing director of the Dutch promenade tile manufacturer Zoontjens, is a confident and relaxed man. He should be – his company has little competition in the Netherlands, allowing it to outgrow its market. The only option, he said, is to tap into other markets.

Since Zoontjens' key product is a concrete promenade tile, the cost of distribution limits this expansion to under a 500-mile radius. The UK is in that catchment area, and the early signs are that it should do well here.

### Storming the French

It is very easy to fit in a full day's travel to The Netherlands, and Paul had four site visits lined up before visiting the company's factory.

On the way to the first roof, Paul described how Zoontjens had taken the French refurbishment market by storm. The main reason for the company's success was the difficulty in insuring asphalt roofs in France. Employing its own team of contractors, Zoontjens was able to come to a project, strip off the old asphalt, fully bond a membrane to the concrete deck, lay the insulation, and then install the concrete tiles. This tried and tested method of laying concrete promenade tiles has helped Zoontjens turn over a projected 4.5 million euros in 2007 in France, from a standing start in 2003.

Since 2003, Zoontjens has worked in the UK, and two products in particular have been suitable for roofing or roof-top car parks. The first product is the 'Dreen' tile, which is a lightweight concrete tile, which comes as part of a system, and is suitable for roof gardens, roof terraces,

Car park in Newcastle, laid with Zoontjens' Pardak tile.



balconies, and plaza roofs.

The first job I was taken to use this tile on a social housing project where homes and gardens opened out onto a rooftop plaza. The Dreen tiles were installed on a series of podium feet, which could be adjusted to level out any undulations in the roof, and which locked the tiles into place. The result was a charcoal grey roof with clean straight lines that looked almost effortless, but which, assured Paul, required a skilled contractor to install.

Zoontjens wants to secure two routes to market in the UK for this product. The first is the specifier-led route where Zoontjens provides an approved contractor to install the Dreen tiles, and the project is overseen by one of its supervisors. The second route is where roofing contractors can pick up the smaller-sized tiles in roofing merchants, such as SIG.

The Dreen tile has received a lot of attention from specifiers recently because Zoontjens has allowed the end user to design the surface of the tile (or choose a novel design from a broad selection), and the second project I saw was a school where the specifier had chosen the tile in place of ordinary concrete tiles on the pathways leading to the school gate. On the surface of the tile was a child-like design of a four hands with six fingers, which fitted with the adjoining tile to complete the image. Paul said that this freedom of design had led to enquiries coming in from as far away as California.

The day's third project was an intensive green roof sanctuary, where the Dreen tile was used to create pathways and communal areas surrounding a heavily planted area. This roof was overlooked by higher levels within the complex, which gave the impression of being at ground level.

### Like new

Zoontjens' second product, which has already been used on car parks in the UK, is the 'Pardak'. It is an incredibly robust tile, designed specifically to withstand heavy traffic. However, it is not just the tile that is responsible for coping with the uneven pressures of hundreds of cars passing over it each day, it is also thanks to the locking mechanism which secures Pardak to the

roof. Once the tiles have been set out on the feet – which, like the Dreen tile, sit at the corner of each tile, and thus supports four tiles each – a mechanism is triggered. This mechanism effectively locks the tiles and resists the sideways pressures from the car wheels running over them.

The fourth and final project of the day was a car park which used the Pardak tile. The car park had been laid for some ten years, and not a single tile was out of place. It also looked very neat and professional.

But there was another benefit that was not immediately apparent to me, and that was because of the way Pardak is installed – dryfixed and locked like the Dreen tile – there is a 1mm-2mm gap between each of the tiles. This means that in heavy rainfall, water runoff is immediate. Rather than sitting on the surface, the water runs off onto the membrane below, and drained away accordingly. The benefit, of course, is that in heavy rain, shoppers are not forced to negotiate lakes of sitting water, or run the risk of being splashed by passing cars.

### Designed for roofs

It was then onto the production facility.

During the factory process, each tile is subjected to pressures of 650 tonnes, which squeezes out the water and makes it very dense. After a day, it gets coated with grit or sand – depending on the required finish – before it is left to cure for seven days. Paul said that 90% of what the company produces is laid on roofs. As a result, everything else is designed accordingly – for example all the tiles are double-wrapped so in the unlikely event that one strap should break, it is backed up with another one.

Furthermore, Paul said that 1 million m<sup>2</sup> of the company's tiles are laid each year, of which 150,000m<sup>2</sup> come from export sales. He said that with a strong economy in the UK, coupled with high standards of construction, he hopes that that 15% will grow rapidly.

For more information about Zoontjens, tel 0031 135 379379, or visit [www.zoontjens.com](http://www.zoontjens.com)

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