



finalised. They selected 2.4 and 3m high Defender fencing with 200kg ballast every 2.5m giving optimum balance between portability and the level of security required.”

But how could 200kg ballast be hand portable?

“We developed a stackable, 50kg, plastic coated ballast block called BraceBlok, which is a two-person lift. Four of these blocks stacked together provided the 200kg ballast required. We also have water-filled ballast options using tanks made from recycled plastic, which provide an environmentally friendly alternative to concrete and uses locally sourced water. Weighing only 20kg when empty, these are easy for a single person to carry and position.”

Do clients install the system themselves?

“It’s a three-way split. Some customers install themselves; some will have agreements with their preferred contractors who will install as part of a larger framework contract and some ask our own nationwide installation team to do so.”

What was the industry’s reaction to Defender?

“Pretty much all positive. Contractors for the National Grid were naturally the early adopters, and many are still using the same components they bought five years ago. Contractors working on high-profile civil engineering projects such as HS2 are drawn to the flexibility of the system combined with the extra stability and security that it provides against physical assault.”

So, why update the system?

“Simply, customer feedback. Firstly, while hand portability is still an important consideration for some users, for others it isn’t. For them, we have developed

a more environmentally friendly, 275kg, cement-free ballast block, which saves 35tonnes of embodied carbon per 1,000 blocks. Because a single lift 275kg block needs to be correctly placed from the outset, provision for the use of a setting out space bar is incorporated into the new Base.

“Secondly, the Base units are now stackable – saving space on haulage and, when stacked, they can be fork-lifted off its transport and carried directly to the fence line. These Bases also accept our full range of ballast blocks from 40kg to 750kg. Next, the posts have additional slots which provide more flexibility when stepping the fence on sloping ground, and we have reduced the number and variety of fixings.

“In all, the changes enable a significantly quicker and simpler installation, reducing labour and associated costs, which results in further considerable savings when installing hundreds of metres.”

So, it’s very much evolution, not revolution?

“Exactly!” ●

With over 20 offices and depots in the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe, Blok ‘N’ Mesh is a market-leading manufacturer, supplier and installer of temporary fencing, site hoarding and barriers. Every year it manufactures more than 1.6-million units, leading the industry in both innovation and sustainability to suit a wide range of industries, from construction to security.

For further information go to www.bloknmesh.com

UPDATING A CLASSIC

Tim Stewart reveals how Blok ‘N’ Mesh went about improving its Defender fence system

The frequently repeated cliché of: ‘if it isn’t broke, don’t fix it!’ is often rolled out as manufacturers strive to update products over time. The results can range from ‘evolution’ to ‘revolution’ and this was on our mind when we spoke to Blok ‘N’ Mesh’s Head of Product Design, Tim Stewart about updating the company’s popular V-mesh, Paladin-style fencing system, Defender.

Tim, you were instrumental in the development of the original Defender system, how did that come about?

“It was a system that was already being called for by customers. We had the industry-standard temporary fencing product, which uses mesh panels and rubber blocks – which you’ll see on most construction sites. At the other end of the scale, we had developed a very high-security product called PolMil for the 2012 Olympics and that has since been approved for use at

all manner of sensitive locations such as airports, government facilities and licensed nuclear sites.

“What was being asked for was something in between these two extremes. A competitively priced, on-ground system, which was more secure than standard temporary fencing but not as heavy duty as PolMil.

“The National Grid was in contact with us, looking for such a system as it was embarking on a major upgrade of substations around the country. In addition to wanting this intermediate system, it also specified all components, including the ballast, should be hand portable as many locations would not be accessible by a forklift.”

And that was how the system was developed?

“Yes. The National Grid’s engineers and security personnel twice visited our factory and test facility in Knowsley during development, which included physical ‘mob’ attack testing, before the design was

Above: Water-filled ballast options using tanks made from recycled plastic provide an environmentally friendly alternative to concrete

Right: The Base units on the Defender system are stackable – saving space on haulage

