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returns during its seven year life. At the end of the contract period, the DETR regains rights over the service and may choose to let another concession contract, bring the service back in-house, or sell it outright."

The Mouchel management consultancy team advised DETR on all aspects of the contract, from initial advertisement in October 1997 to award of public/private partnership contract in July 1998. Key tasks undertaken by Mouchel included market assessment, valuation of the Constructionline undertaking, specification development, financial and technical evaluations, recommendation of preferred bidder, and advice on transaction arrangements and contract management.

BG IN CONTROL IN ARGENTINA

Pipeline and exploration company BG plc is taking control of Metrogas, the Buenos Aires gas company. The arrangement extends BG's influence over South American gas markets through pipelines to Uruguay and Brazil.

BG is gaining a controlling interest in Metrogas's parent company Gas Argentina by purchasing a 25% stake for £46 million. Metrogas supplies 1.9 million customers and made £30 million profit last year. The company is the major buyer of gas in the region, and the largest holder of gas capacity. Argentina has large, unexploited gas reserves in Patagonia, and BG intends to export gas to neighbouring countries.

A consortium including BG, Pan American Energy of Argentina and the Uruguayan state energy company ANCap is developing a pipeline linking Buenos Aires with Montevideo. The two-year project, crossing the River Plate, will cost £72 million. An extension of the pipeline to Porto Alegre in southern Brazil is also planned.

DRILLING IN ITALY

Research into directional drilling projects in Italy has given a better understanding of the principal causes of delays and failure. To date, CSELT and Telecom Italia have built up a database on 150 projects comprising 700 bores totalling 56 km in length.

The study has shown that 68% of bores were completed with no significant difficulties. Of the remainder, most problems were caused by mass gravel, and by buried objects such as foundations and existing utilities. Gravels and sandy gravels caused particular problems during pull-back, putting a high stress on the drilling machine. The most common cause of total failure was mass rock, followed by gravels and existing utilities.

Telecom Italia has also been progressing the use of dry guided boring techniques which, in urban areas, avoid the risk of fluid leakage into basements and reduce the impact on traffic by allowing the machines to operate from existing chambers.



WORLD NEWS



The drilling and steering systems are designed to work in hard rock. A 5 km project in Trentino Alto Adige to install three 50 mm diameter HDPE ducts has recently been completed by this method, using an SE 503 D rig.

Projects have also been undertaken with fluid-assisted rigs in Friuli Venezia Giulia and Rome. The first used a Vermeer D24 to install 350 metres of 140 mm pipe beneath a lagoon, whilst in Rome a Tracto-Technik Grundodril 10S and an Elletari Geotecnica EG2031 are being used to install six 50 mm diameter ducts in a 12.3 km urban ring.

VERMEER EXPANDS IN EAST EUROPE

With two new dealers, Vermeer is currently expanding and consolidating its dealer network in Eastern Europe. Vermeer Technics Baltic now covers Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and IPSO is the Vermeer dealer in Rumania. The contact at Vermeer Technics Baltic is Dimitri Zhuhhovitski, tel: +372-2213278 or +372-6380470 and at IPSO the contact is Christophe Richard, tel: +401-223-1400, fax: +401-223-2744.

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OLDEST MOLE SEARCH

Having been designing and manufacturing construction equipment for more than three decades, Tracto-Technik is establishing a 'Mole Museum'. The Grundomat pneumatic hammer range has been a mainstay of the company's product line since 1970 and as such Tracto-Technik is running a competition to find the oldest Grundomat still in active service. To enter the competition, which offers a good priced buyback of the Grundomat, display in the new museum, a company profile of the last owner in Tracto-Technik's Tractuall newsletter and one week hotel accommodation in the romantic Burg Schnellenberg castle in Attendorn, Germany, simply search out the Grundomat serial number on the units rear casing and send it along with a contact name, full company address, telephone/fax and email details to: Tracto-Technik, Fax: +49 2723808 by October 15, 1998 at the latest.

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