

Siemens Rail Automation Commissions Crewe to Shrewsbury Modular Signalling Scheme

Over the weekend of 12 – 14 October, Siemens Rail Automation successfully commissioned the Crewe to Shrewsbury Modular Signalling Pilot Programme, with control of the line now being undertaken from Network Rail's Regional Operating Control Centre in Cardiff.

This pilot scheme contains many of the application scenarios required to prove the generic modular signalling solution - and nearly all the configurable scenarios with which most rural or secondary routes can be re-signalled. Covering 30 miles of bi-directional signalling, the project included seven level crossings - five of which have now been converted to manually controlled barriers with obstacle detection (MCB-ODs) - and two complex fringes.

Siemens installation work began on site in March 2011 and the company's Trackguard WESTRACE Mk2 interlocking is at the heart of the scheme, which also features, object controllers, plug-coupled cables axle counters and lightweight signals. With trials of the train detection equipment beginning in July 2011 and extensive testing of the programme continuing through 2012 and 2013, the pilot scheme has proved the case for the design work, validation and verification, installation and operational effectiveness of the system.

In the last five years, the concept of modular signalling has been developed by Siemens (formerly Invensys Rail) and others. Essentially the development team not only examined products, but also every element of a signalling scheme to see where different products and new processes could be introduced to deliver both operational and cost benefits.

Working in close partnership with Network Rail, the system enables secondary lines to be cost-effectively upgraded, providing a positive economic case for much needed investment. Siemens's solution is rooted in a number of core principles, primarily on the basis of simplicity of design and ease and repeatability of the installation processes.

The system has also been developed to operate via Network Rail's Fixed Telecommunications Network (FTN). By using internet protocols (IPs) over the ethernet, it can connect to Network Rail's control architecture, meaning that fewer signallers can control greater areas and so reduce operator costs.

Rob Cairns, Regional Delivery Director for Siemens Rail Automation said: "Modular Signalling is arguably the most significant signalling development since the introduction of solid state interlockings in the 1980s and this technology shift becomes increasingly important as more and more schemes in Network Rail's Control Period 5 call for a modular approach.

"Developed specifically for low-density rural lines, our modular signalling solution incorporates products and technologies from across the Siemens Rail Automation group and provides a future-proof, ETCS-compatible system which delivers reduced material and maintenance costs as well as rapid and low-cost installation. As a result of this pilot programme our technology is now established and proven; we also know how to effectively apply it."

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