

Innovating engineered solutions at STS Rail

This article takes a look at the specialist manufacturer's work in solving problems for the UK railways and examines some of its new developments.

STS Rail is an established British manufacturer of electronic and electro-magnetic products for international railway customers. From factories in Wimborne in Dorset and Cradley Heath in the Midlands, they manufacture products ranging from relays to AWS/TPWS systems and from "legacy" token systems to sophisticated telecoms concentrators. Across the range, the company is small enough to be flexible to customers' needs but, as part of the STS International Group, big enough to bring in significant resources when they are needed. Whilst it has become well known for its standard products, the company really comes into its own when a customer has a problem to solve or where a customised solution is needed.

Take, for example, a recent situation where Network Rail wanted a number of concentrator systems to replace those originally manufactured by a company that ceased to exist many years ago. STS engineers developed a solution to meet the customer's needs, supplying custom-made keyboards to meet the constraints of the signal box. The replacement systems incorporate tried-and-tested STS standard features, such as non-blocking circuitry.

"With a long history of solving problems for the railway industry, STS Rail is looking for its next technical challenges."



Elsewhere, users of signalling relays found that their supplier had stopped making relays some years ago and STS was asked to provide a solution. STS developed variants of its existing ranges so that relays could be quickly and economically provided. More generally, the company has streamlined its relay production as part of a substantial investment in a new clean room. "Fast track" lead times of as little as 7 days are being offered, compared with over 20 weeks from the company's competitors.

Last year, Network Rail invited bids for the development of a new system to test and validate the AWS system. STS's new AWS tester has been formally endorsed by RSSB and many of the TOCs now have the testers in daily use. The unit is designed to be used as a diagnostic tool to test AWS receivers, in situ on the vehicle. Unlike the hand-held magnet that it replaces, it is capable of providing repeatable testing of the train-borne AWS equipment, using test criteria determined by the operator and accurately simulating service conditions for AWS.



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