

Delivering outstanding track and drainage design

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Rail Business Daily talks to a team whose new business is already growing, picking up opportunities, adding staff and delivering outstanding track and drainage design services.

Guided Rail was built on a vision that seems simple but, in reality, is not: its creators wanted to ensure outstanding customer service while delivering quality at an affordable price. They have the expertise to not only deliver straightforward schemes but they can go back to first principles and deliver very complex track and drainage designs.

They are determined to make **Guided Rail** an ally in track and drainage design and establish themselves as a team that consistently adds value. They want to help strategically shape any project they are a part of and always be ready to put boots on ballast to understand clients' requirements.

The three directors behind that vision: James Backhurst, Neil Andrews and Matthew Staveley, have a solid foundation, namely a half-century of combined industry experience. They have successfully worked on and delivered numerous schemes from simple track on/ track off to the more challenging enhancements at King's Cross and on the Transpennine Route Upgrade.

All of them have built strong reputations with the likes of Amey, Colas, and Atkins, and they are members of the Permanent Way Institution (PWI).

They also bring know-how from engineering assurance roles at both CRE and CEM levels.

Accordingly, **Guided Rail** has developed a range of design capabilities, taking clients from feasibility to detailed design. Their service includes:

- Plain line design
- Switch and crossing design
- Gauging clearance analysis
- Condition assessments
- Platform extensions
- Depots and sidings
- Line speed increase feasibility and implementation schemes
- Drainage design
- Topographical surveys

The **Guided Rail** team believes that delivering great service means going against the status quo; it means interrogating existing plans. James Backhurst said: “When we begin working with a client, we bring everything back to first principles. The outcome is the focus, not adhering to a tried and tested solution that might not be the best choice.

“Whenever we apply for work, we explain how we would deliver on the client’s plan, but we also challenge the situation. We know in some ways that comes with a risk of missing out on work, but we would rather be transparent and give a client the best possible answer to their problem. So, although that approach may not be popular with everyone, it is something that means we deliver extra value before we’ve even signed a contract.

“We believe in being a true partner to businesses we work with and delivering on both cost and quality.

“In doing so, that means we can help our client break a scheme down into stages or parts to make it easier to coordinate and execute.

“And as we are a smaller team, we’re also able to adapt to delivering more complex designs more efficiently. We will head out on site where it’s needed to get a real sense of a situation.”

The trio began planning their business in 2020, during the pandemic; they knew circumstances were against them during this time, but they put in the preparation work for a bright future.

Now, that bright future is being realised. The team has been to the first post-pandemic rail conferences, reaching out to future colleagues with encouraging results.

“You get the feeling now that rail is truly recovering from the pandemic, and there is a real appetite for doing business that delivers quality, long-lasting results,” James said. “The people we speak to are not

about cutting corners but actioning carefully tailored designs that think about a project from the ground up.

“This is something we can truly deliver on.”

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